

2023 Annual Report, Division of Rehabilitation Services

Illinois Department of Human Services



**DIVISION OF
REHABILITATION
SERVICES**

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From Empathy to Equity.

A message from the Director...

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is proud to honor the invaluable contributions and achievements of people with disabilities. People with disabilities are taking pride in themselves and their circumstances which aligns with IDHS Division of Rehabilitation (DRS)'s overall Mission and Goal to improve independence and achieve full community participation.

At IDHS, through all the Divisions and Offices, equitable access to work, recreation, and home enhances the lives of Illinoisans with disabilities. The resources and support provided to people with disabilities benefit our entire state. When people with disabilities are included and appreciated, our workforce, neighborhoods, and lives are better.

In 2022, IDHS-DRS increased customer contacts and revolutionized direct services in ways that allowed us to serve more people with disabilities. The Division continued its hard work in 2023, embracing the guiding values of IDHS: Human Dignity, Equity, Community-informed, Urgency, Transparency, and Kindness.

2023 Goals and Accomplishments:

1. Actuate Division Reorganization

In 2022, IDHS-DRS reinvented and realigned itself to better meet the needs of our customers with disabilities. In 2023, the IDHS-DRS:

- partnered with Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to examine staff engagement as understanding staff experience is an integral component to addressing the challenges we face as a division, and
- conducted an all-staff DRS Resource and Education Fair Series to educate staff on the newly designed Bureaus within DRS.

2. Change IDHS-DRS Culture to Disability Neutral

- Advanced individual and collective growth in cultural fluency, agility, and competency across IDHS-DRS through:
 - Creating a Targeted Populations Unit to address disability neutrality. IDHS-DRS now has specific programs in place to ensure equal access to VR services for all populations of disability, specifically:
 - Individual Placement and Support for individuals with severe mental illness,
 - Deaf and Blind Services,
 - Hispanic populations, and
 - Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- **Collected external feedback from more than 21,000 Illinoisans through the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.**
- Assembled stakeholder groups to identify and remedy barriers to social justice and equity, developing a culture of inclusivity and respect through:
 - Engagement of the Statewide Rehabilitation Council and others to develop a survey for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to identify barriers to employment for Illinoisans with Disabilities.
 - Partnership with Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Illinois Division of Developmental Disabilities to redesign career counseling presentations for Subminimum Wage workers. Presentations included peer self-advocates as co-presenters who shared lived experiences of transitioning from subminimum wage employment to competitive integrated employment.
 - Doubled Individual Placement Services (IPS) training and programs.
 - IDHS-DRS arranged multiculturalism and diversity training for all local and central staff.

3. Increase the competitive employment rate of disabled people

- **Served 38,012 Vocational Rehabilitation customers, successfully placing 4,456 customers in competitive, integrated employment.**
- Commenced the **\$14M Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Demonstration (SWTCIE Illinois) Project** to supporting six geographically diverse community rehabilitation providers in creating a new business model to end subminimum wage for Illinoisans with disabilities.
- Introduced the Dignity in Pay Act which would phase out 14c/Subminimum wage in order to safeguard the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities.
- **The State of Illinois hired 53 IDHS-DRS customers** into competitive state employment.
- **Outreach to more than 4,000 Williams/Colbert class members** to offer VR services.
- Expanded Supported and Customized Employment programs, Increasing provider contracts to 14.
- Business Engagement Unit engaged 1650 employers, connecting talent with workforce needs.
- IDHS-DRS collaborated with Illinois Center for Transition to Work at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, as well as with several representatives from both the Illinois State Board of Education and local education agencies, to develop a [transition guide](#).

4. Strengthen the Home Services Program

- **In FY23, 237 individuals were transitioned out of nursing facilities and into the community.**
- **Served nearly 34,000 in the Home Services Program**, supporting people with disabilities to remain in their homes and out of nursing home care.
- CILs serviced all of Illinois' 102 counties. **Services were provided to over 65,000 individuals regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or disability.**
- **Increased customer contact by nearly 2,000, 6% over FY22.**
- Rates **were increased by 7.9% for Homemaker services and more than 25% for Home Health Agency Services** to ensure provider capacity exists to meet the thousands of HSP customer who rely on these services.
- Identified and initiated the recovery of more than \$1.78 million in overpayment for a total of 325 cases.

As we exit Fiscal year 2023 and enter the new fiscal year, we also say goodbye to Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary Grace Hou and thank her for her steadfast dedication to the Division. During her tenure, Secretary Hou worked with IDHS-DRS and the Governor's Office to:

- Identify new funding resources to support Home Services Program costs, caseload management, and wage increases.
- Achieve rate increases for homemaker services, adult day care, and adult day transportation.
- Reassign the Client Assistance Program outside of IDHS to Equip for Equality to promote impartiality in program appeals and to dedicate resources to improve client advocacy, offering customer-focused solutions to programmatic issues.
- Receive \$13.9M in federal funding to establish the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) Illinois program designed to develop innovative strategies whereby people with disabilities can achieve competitive, integrated employment rather than accepting subminimum wage employment. Only eleven states received this type of funding.
- Eliminate the inherited backlog of 7,000+ people awaiting a determination of eligibility for Home Services Program supports (Personal Assistants).
- Maintain the required goal of 97% Net Accuracy on Initial Cases adjudicated, helping 22,386 Illinoisans secure Social Security Disability benefits.
- Led the country in % of individuals receiving an education or training program that leads to a credential or employment for people with disabilities.
- Safely transition IDHS-DRS school learning to remote in response to the pandemic and reintegrated in person instruction safely.

DRS looks forward to working with the new IDHS Secretary [Dulce Quintero](#) to further eliminate barriers to employment and close more service gaps in 2024. IDHS-DRS will respond to the results of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment to eliminate employment barriers and remain focused on and improve upon our service to the community, enhance the disability experience, remain customer focused, and provide excellent, on-time service.

We value human dignity, equity, informed community, urgency, transparency, and kindness. Our accomplishments in 2023 highlight our Department's and the Division's pledge to these values.

Together, let us renew our commitment to upholding the principles of the ADA and championing the rights of individuals with disabilities. By fostering environments that embrace diversity and provide equal opportunities, we can create a society that values and respects all its members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rahnee K. Patrick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rahnee K. Patrick, Director

IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services

A Look into the Future

IDHS-DRS made great strides in 2023 and we look forward to the continued delivery of excellent supports and services to Illinoisans with disabilities in 2024. The Division remains committed to enhancing the quality of life of our constituents by building services and programs that allow people with disabilities opportunities for meaningful participation and inclusion in their community and through employment. IDHS-DRS has outlined the following goals for FY 2024:

1. Increase Equity in Employment and Housing

- a. Respond to internal and external feedback from employees, customers, and constituents:
 - Implement recommendations from Boston Consulting Group
 - Implement recommendations from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
 - Launch a third customer satisfaction survey and adjust to feedback.
- b. Create equity and unity throughout IDHS-DRS.
 - Fill vacancies from retirees with qualified employees.
 - Revise/update the MOUs with DDD and ISBE

2. Increase Reach of the IDHS-DRS

- a. Increase outreach and services to adults with disabilities.
 - Fully utilize federal dollars to assure zero dollars lapse in the VR program.
 - Open all four categories under the Order of Selection, opening the doors to more Illinoisans with disabilities who have the desire to work.
 - Apply uniform and consistent criteria for services to reduce the number of prematurely closed VR cases.
 - Improve office locator online search mechanism.
- b. Increase outreach and services to youth with disabilities.
 - Reach 100K disabled students.
 - Engage youth and adults working under SMW- through the SWTCIE IL demonstration project.
 - Engage youth at an earlier age providing Pre-Employment Training Services.

3. Increase Awareness and Inclusivity

- a. Improve the landscape to incentivize employment for Illinoisans with disabilities.
 - Passage of the Dignity in Pay Act
 - Passage of the Economic Freedom Act in Illinois
 - Include retirement accounts as exempt assets in the IDHS-DRS Home Services Program.
 - Improve IDHS-DRS self-employment processes and opportunities.
- b. Increase awareness of IDHS-DRS services and who DRS serves.
 - Incorporate outreach to local high schools, colleges, and universities.
 - Ensure key staff are attending collaborative meetings with transition teams, WIOA partners, and local employer groups.
 - Develop media outreach materials.
- c. Strengthen partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Providers
 - Change accreditation requirements for nonprofits to be employment service providers paid by Illinois vocational rehabilitation at IDHS-DRS. Formal application and review process for agencies who wish to become CRPs.
 - Disseminate Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) best practices and alternative business models developed with the SWTCIE IL demonstration project to community rehabilitation providers statewide.

We look forward to a year full of change and continued connection. Our goals are robust, but we are confident in the abilities of our disability community, staff, providers, and other partners. We will reach new heights together. The people of Illinois are our greatest strength, and thus our duty to invest in everyone, including those with disabilities.

Bureau of Customer & Community Services (BCCS)

The Bureau of Customer and Community Services (BCCS) consolidates all the direct field and ancillary support services into one Bureau to provide a holistic approach to the provision of services.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program assists individuals with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, and maintaining quality competitive employment. Our goal is to help our customers find quality employment that pays a living wage and offers a chance for advancement. Services include evaluation, guidance and counseling, education, training, physical and mental restoration, assistive devices, job development, job placement, and post-employment services.

Over 500 field staff working in 45 field offices located throughout the state provide these important services. **IDHS-DRS staff provided services to over 38,000 customers** in SFY2023 through direct services and contractual partnerships. VR was able to **successfully place 4,456 in competitive, integrated employment** with an **average annual salary of \$24,104**. Our goal for SFY2024 is 5,000 outcomes!

Customers Served in 2023

Disability Category	Served	Employment Outcomes	Percent of Outcomes	Percent of Served	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Earnings
Blind-Visually Impaired	1,653	128	2.87%	4.35%	\$20.96	\$673
Deaf-Hard of Hearing	1,641	302	6.78%	4.32%	\$18.07	\$591
Physical Disability	2,005	178	3.99%	5.27%	\$19.23	\$585
Mental Illness	7,002	1011	22.69%	18.42%	\$15.96	\$443
Intellectual Disability	11,762	1,230	27.60%	30.94%	\$15.27	\$390
Learning Disability	9,571	1,104	24.78%	25.18%	\$15.64	\$471
Brain Injury	325	42	0.94%	0.85%	\$18.16	\$512
Other Condition	3,985	440	9.87%	10.48%	\$16.94	\$492
VR Total	38,012	4,456			\$14.70	\$413

Top Employers of IDHS-DRS Customers

Industry	Successful Placements
Jewel Osco	165
Wal-Mart	120
McDonald's	94
Goodwill	73
Amazon	59
State of Illinois	53
Mariano's	51
Schnuck's	40
FedEx	38
Portillo's	36
Hy-Vee	36

Bureau of Customer & Community Field Services (BCCFS)

The Bureau of Customer and Community Services (BCCS) consolidates all the direct field and ancillary support services into one Bureau to provide a holistic approach to the provision of rehabilitation services. The Bureau assists individuals with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, and maintaining quality competitive employment. Services include information and referral, evaluation, guidance and counseling, education, training, physical and mental restoration, assistive devices, job development, job placement, and post-employment services. The Bureau also provides a wide range of services to individuals with the most significant disabilities to enable them to remain in their homes and live as independently as possible.

FY23 Highlights

- Successfully placed 4,456 customers in competitive, integrated employment.
- Served 38,012 Vocational Rehabilitation customers.
- Outreach to 4,204 Williams/Colbert class members to offer VR services.
- IDHS-DRS field office staff are engaging customers, employers, and providers within the community.
- Solicited feedback from 110 Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) and STEP/Transition providers throughout the state for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment survey.
- Engaged the Illinois State Board of Education, facilitated by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition at UNC Charlotte, to strengthen partnerships and revise the MOU.
- Collaborated with Illinois Center for Transition to Work (ICTW) at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, Illinois State Board of Education, and local education agencies to develop a [transition guide](#) which serves as a roadmap for customers, parents/guardians, and others providing transition services.
- Commenced the \$14M **Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Demonstration (SWTCIE Illinois) Project** funded by U.S. Department of Education — Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The project aims to transition or divert customers from subminimum wage employment to competitive employment, along with assisting agencies in learning new strategies to support disabled Illinoisans in finding competitive employment.
- Provided thousands of subminimum wage workers career counseling and guidance related to obtaining competitive integrated employment through IDHS-DRS Vocational Rehabilitation services.

BCCFS Vision for 2024

- Increase timeliness of case progression.
- Increase referrals to IDHS-DRS programs; in part, through improvements to our referral process and reduce the number of referrals closed prematurely.
- Provide excellent customer service.
- Increase engagement with Local Workforce Investment Boards, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners, and the IDHS-DRS presence and involvement in local OneStop centers.
- Increase engagement of youth with disabilities at an earlier age providing Pre-Employment Training Services
- Engage participating Williams and Colbert Consent Decree prime mental health agencies to assist class members who are seeking VR services.
- Fully executed MOU with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to increase outreach to students with disabilities throughout the state of Illinois.
- In partnership with ICTW and ISBE, finalize and distribute the Transition Guide to all IDHS-DRS field offices and over 800 Local Education Authorities across the state.
- Expand the Vocational Rehabilitation program by striving to achieve 5,000 successful outcomes and contacting up to 100,000 youth with disabilities.

Program Services

Competitive Employment

Competitive Integrated Employment is work that is paid at least minimum wage, performed in the community alongside non-disabled workers, and presents opportunities for advancement. Services in support of competitive employment placement generally include:

- Information and Referral
- Counseling and Guidance
- Vocational assessment
- Career development
- Job development and placement
- Job retention and stability
- Job coaching

Customers are provided employment services both directly by vocational rehabilitation counselors and/or through contracted services with community rehabilitation providers. An individual must be stable in a competitive integrated employment placement for a minimum of 90 days before the placement is considered successful.

- FY 23 Customers Closed Successful in Competitive Employment: **4,456**
- Average State Spending per Successful Customer Placement: **\$7,657**
- Average Customer Weekly Wages: **\$520**
- Average Customer Yearly Wages: **\$27,026**

Supported Employment

Supported Employment services are ongoing support services needed for individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve and maintain competitive integrated employment. Services are individualized and customized to be consistent with the individual's unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice. Supported employment are provided on a short-term basis and typically last 24 months after initial job placement; but can be extended as needed.

- FY 23 Customers Closed Successful in Supported Employment: **219**
- Average State Spending per Successful Customer Placement: **\$7,657**
- Average Customer Weekly Wages: **\$241**
- Average Customer Yearly Wages: **\$12,517**

Customized Employment

Customized Employment is competitive integrated employment for an individual with a significant disability that is based on individualized determination of the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. The provision of customized employment takes many months, if not over a year. Discovery with the customer, job development, and then 45 weeks of support on the job, are integral to customer success and the success of the program, yet do not lead to rapid outcomes. Customized employment is designed to:

- meet the unmet needs of the employers,
- match with the skills and interests of the individual,
- can be carried out through flexible strategies, and
- services can include job creation, self-employment, and a business within a business.

Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act was enacted effective January 1, 2020. The Act required that IDHS, through its IDHS-DRS and in collaboration with the DDD, establish a 5-year Customized Employment (CE) Pilot

Program. The implementation of a CE contract that took effect 7/1/2020 to serve at least 25 new CE individuals over the course of the five-year pilot period.

- FY 23 Customers Closed Successful in Customized Employment: **60**
- Average State Spending for completion of all phases: **\$13,450**

Self-Employment

IDHS-DRS can assist customers interested in self-employment. The VR counselor provides counseling and guidance to a customer to explore the possibility of self-employment opportunities consistent with the customer's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. The VR counselor assists the customer in connecting with a business mentor to build a business plan. Tools, equipment, supplies and initial stock necessary to begin a specific business may be provided to a customer in order for him or her to obtain a successful employment outcome.

Individual Placement and Support

IDHS-DRS funds, administers, and provides technical assistance for the 56 Illinois teams that provide specialized services based on the Individual Placement and Support Model of supported employment (IPS) to thousands of Illinois' citizens with most significant disabilities in all parts of the state. IDHS-DRS and Department of Mental Health (DMH) have worked with the IPS Employment Center (formerly the Psychiatric Research Center) to implement a fidelity-based service model that has proven to be very effective in assisting individuals with serious mental illness in becoming employed. The IPS model

- is designed to help people living with behavioral health conditions work at regular jobs of their choosing.
- places an individual into employment as soon as possible, placing less emphasis on the traditional concept of employment "readiness" and more emphasis on the idea that working is therapeutic for many individuals with a serious mental illness and therefore contributes to their recovery.

The IDHS-DRS and DMH have a cooperative funding model in which DMH utilizes Medicaid funding to the greatest extent possible and IDHS-DRS provides VR funds to support the vocational aspects of the IPS model.

- FY 23 Customers Closed Successful in Individual Placement and Support: **352**
- Average State Spending per Successful Customer Placement: **\$7,657**
- Average Customer Weekly Wages: **\$420**
- Average Customer Yearly Wages: **\$21,816**

College Training

IDHS-DRS supports customers that wish to pursue their post-secondary education through two-year Associates programs in community colleges, vocational and technical degree or certificate programs, bachelor's degree awarding colleges and universities, and post-graduate studies. Support services available through programs like these may include tutoring; mentoring; assistance with goal setting, organizational and study skills; structured social gatherings and support groups; counseling services; and possibly occupational or speech therapies.

IDHS-DRS has expanded its support of college transition support services throughout the state.

- FY 23 Customers Closed Successful in College Training Programs: **924**
- Average State Spending per Successful Customer Placement: **\$7,657**
- Average Customer Weekly Wages: **\$689**
- Average Customer Yearly Wages: **\$35,828**

Transition

In FY23 IDHS-DRS **served more than 20,000 students with disabilities**. DRS offers employment age youth with disabilities a continuum of coordinated transition services. Services primarily surround:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Counseling on Post-Secondary Education
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Instruction in Self-Advocacy

In FY 23 a comprehensive [Transition Guide](#) was drafted for use statewide.

- FY 23 Customers Closed Successful in Non-Step Transition Services: **173**
- Average State Spending per Successful Customer Placement: **\$7,657**
- Average Customer Weekly Wages: **\$458**
- Average Customer Yearly Wages: **\$23,798**

STEP

Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) is a program of transition services provided through a cooperative agreement of IDHS-DRS and a Local Education Agency, typically high schools. The purpose of this program is to provide pre-employment transition services (PTS) to students with disabilities through contractual arrangements with high schools, school districts, and cooperatives across the state. Local high schools are the largest referral source and are key partners in the coordinated services provided to students. STEP is an assessment and work experience program that helps students with disabilities prepare to transition to employment and community participation during and after high school. Students learn to become productive, self-sufficient adults through a variety of STEP experiences. These experiences assist students in:

- Developing desirable work habits and realistic career goals,
- Opportunities for students to explore career,
- Develop the social and personal skills needed to maintain successful employment, and
- Offer meaningful work experiences in support of the overall goal of achieving competitive integrated employment. Meaningful work experiences can include in-school and work site training options, including internships and apprenticeships.

In FY 2023, IDHS-DRS had contracts with 149 local education entities, 132 of which are third-party cooperative agreements. Collectively, these arrangements result in provision of pre-employment transition services (PTS) to over 10,000 students each year. As of May 2023, a total of 12,890 students were enrolled in STEP in 679 schools.

- FY 23 Customers Closed Successful in STEP Transition Programs: **11,797**
- Average State Spending per Successful Customer Placement: **\$7,657**
- Average Customer Weekly Wages: **\$423**
- Average Customer Yearly Wages: **\$21,944**

Fast Track Transition

Fast Track Transition is a program that serves students with disabilities who qualify under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as potentially eligible individuals. These individuals must be at least 14 and not older than 21 years of age; enrolled in an education program; and not already a participant in the IDHS-DRS vocational rehabilitation program. Fast Track transition services provide pre-employment transition services.

- Engaged nearly 3,000 students.
- FY Fast Track Transition contracts: **21**
- Youth Initiative Contracts: **17**
- Fast Track Customers Closed Successful: **23**

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH prepares young people with significant disabilities for success in competitive integrated employment. The program provides work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness, job exploration and skills training through on-the-job internships. Project SEARCH is a collaboration between the host business, customer/family, school district, the Community Rehabilitation Program, Workforce Investment Board, Developmental Disabilities, and the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Success Stories

Competitive Employment



Kyle, who works at Streator Unlimited, was recently **promoted** from a Direct Service Provider (DSP) to a Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional (QIDP). Kyle was able to receive the education and assistance needed with his training thanks to the help of IDHS-DRS.

Kyle has also just recently **written an essay** on people who have Cerebral Palsy and also developed a **YouTube video** on Tips for new DSP's. Says his supervisor, "The **level of insight** from someone who's only been a DSP for a couple of years and isn't even 30 yet just **blows me away**".

[A YouTube video of Kyle, a Qualified Intellectual Disability Provider \(QIDP\), sharing tips for other Direct Service Providers \(DSP\).](#)

Supported Employment



Pictured: Matthew at work doing cart retrieval.

Matthew is doing very well at the Target in Niles. He is a cart attendant with several other responsibilities that he manages when not out collecting carts. He works anywhere from 22 to 30 hours a week.

Sarah Meyerson, a job coach from Search Inc made all the difference in the world. She was with him at every stage of the process from finding job openings to tweaking his resume to practicing for his interview and then she spent as long as it took being hands on when he started his job. She was **knowledgeable, firm, caring, intuitive, creative**, etc. In a nutshell, she did anything she could to help Matthew be successful at his job.

Transition Training Success Story

Project Search

Ethan has been the intern who has made the **most improvement** this year. I was unsure if employment would be an outcome for him. We discovered that Ethan enjoys working in a kitchen and were able to place him in the Food Service department at Kish, where he has **grown exponentially**. Ethan interviewed for a dishwasher position at DeKalb High School this week and **got the job!**

A You tube video of Ethan's job offer: [Project Search- Ethan - YouTube](#)

STEP Transition Program

Apprenticeship Story



Keyshawn was the first to earn his Department of Labor apprenticeship certificate. Since Keyshawn, six more students have been awarded their Department of Labor apprenticeship certificates.

Keshawn received his **Apprenticeship Certificate** and was honored by members from all levels of government. The City also honored his coworker for being such a wonderful mentor and trainer for Keshawn

Madison County's Employment and Training Department serves as lead agency on a four-year \$5.8 million grant award from the U.S. Department of Labor to launch the Gateway Registered Apprenticeship Programs Hub. In addition to building capacity and awareness for apprenticeships as an 'earn-as-you-learn' model for workforce development, the Gateway Hub will emphasize the inclusion of underserved populations in apprenticeship opportunities. METC partnered with the Collinsville STEP Program and the City of Collinsville to create a positive and innovative apprenticeship program for students with disabilities. Full Story:

[Madison County apprenticeship programs fulfill pivotal role in developing next generation workforce – Illinois Business Journal \(ibjonline.com\)](https://ibjonline.com)

<https://fox2now.com/news/illinois/collinsville-employee-honored-after-completing-program-for-students-with-disabilities/>

College Training Success Story



Sarah started benefitting from the different services she received in high school, it only seemed appropriate to continue receiving support through her transition into adult life. As the end of high school grew near, Sarah was provided information about The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation (IDHS-DRS). IDHS-DRS connected Sarah with a vocational rehabilitation counselor, to learn about programs and services. After an initial interview and career assessment, the counselor explained that DRS would be able to pay for Sarah's tuition & fees, and books and supplies towards an Associates of Arts degree. In 2017, Sarah accomplished that goal, graduating with a degree in General Studies from the College of Lake County. In 2020, Sarah continued down her path to success and graduated from Northeastern University in Chicago with a bachelor's degree in social work. Upon graduation, Sarah began working for Lutheran Social Services of Illinois as a Child Welfare Specialist. She is working full time as a social worker and is working on her master's degree. Read [Sarah's full story here](#).

Transition and Community Rehabilitation Services Unit (TCRS)

TCRS monitors and manages statewide Vocational Rehabilitation contracts for job placement services to adults and Transition services to both students and youth with a disability. TCRS is the lead for ensuring Transition services are being provided statewide. We provide training, technical assistance, and outreach to both IDHS-DRS Staff and external Vendors. TCRS is engaged with and participates in numerous community and state organizations, boards, and committees. Additionally, TCRS participates in Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) and Interagency Agreements (IGA) that apply to our work.

FY23 Highlights

TCRS underwent a reorganization during FY23. With the reorganization, additional staff were hired, duties were reimagined, and streamlining of processes began.

- An Assistant Manager was hired.
- A Technical Assistance and Vendor Support section was created with an Executive II hired into that lead position.
- Two additional Contract Advisors were hired to monitor and manage contracts in the Chicago-area and surrounding counties.
- Streamlining, simplifying, and reviewing our process to determine if there are any unnecessary steps became our focus. We continue to brainstorm and make implementations. This is a long process, but we are excited for our future!
- We monitored and managed 400 different contracts during the fiscal year.

TCRS Vision for 2024

TCRS will continue to grow and improve the services to providers and IDHS-DRS Field Offices. We will continue to be a valued and respected resource to our partners.

We will accomplish our goals through:

- improved knowledge of TCRS and Vocational Rehabilitation
- consistent engagement and collaboration with Providers, IDHS-DRS Field Offices, and IDHS-DRS Leadership,
- providing well informed guidance and responses, education, and support to all who work with us.

We are successful because of our ability and willingness to adapt to an ever-changing environment.

Bureau of Customer & Community Blind Services (BCCBS)

The Bureau of Customer and Community Blind Services (BCCBS) oversees all Vocational Rehabilitation Services for individuals who are visually impaired, blind, and deafblind including the Business Enterprise Program and the Illinois Center for Rehabilitation & Education - Wood. Our Blind Services staff teams coordinate services from 25 local offices located in communities throughout the state. We offer programs for adults with visual impairments to enable them to work and participate fully in family and community life. Our goal is to help these people rediscover their independence and freedom.

FY23 Highlights

- ICRE Wood served 94 students in FY 23 with a total of 24 graduates.
- Customers receive vocational rehabilitation, rehabilitation instructor, and orientation and mobility services. We are currently serving 1,398 customers. Year to date, we have placed 176 individuals in competitive employment earning an average wage of \$20.81 working an average of 31 hours per week.
- The blind vending program is excited to expand our micromarkets and has purchased our first accessible kiosk.
- Three Wi-Fi hotspots have been provided at ICRE Wood for the training center, BEPB training unit, and classroom.
- The Older Individual Blind grant program is proud to have served 2,280 people in FY23 by its grantees providing assistive technology and support services to people over 55 years old in Illinois.

Disability Type	Average Wage	Average Weekly Wage	Average Hours Per Week	% with Insurance
Visual Impairment	\$20.96	\$673.26	30.73	26.56%

BCCBS Vision for 2024

- hiring within the different sections of the Bureau to fill positions.
- improving the accessibility of documents and forms
- develop best practices to increase the provision of pre-employment transition services to students who are blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The Bureau of Customer and Community Blind Services (BCCBS) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program assists individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind to prepare for, obtain, and maintain competitive integrated employment. A multitude of services are provided, by various staff and community partners, to individuals ages 14 and up. Our staff work with individuals with severe visual impairments to help them find jobs or get ready to go to work. They also recommend assistive technology to help people perform tasks on the job.

BCCBS works with customers on their employment goals, as outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This includes:

- educational goals,
- updating job skills to maintain employment,
- assistance with job searching,
- preparing for job interviews,
- counseling,
- communication skills,
- Orientation and Mobility, and
- Independent Living skills.

Currently BCCBS has Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and coordinators who provide vocational counseling and guidance to the visually impaired and

- assist in determining an employment goal,
- physical restoration (which may include funding for assistive technology necessary for visual and communication access),
- transition services including job exploration, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary training, workplace readiness training, and instruction on self-advocacy,
- possible funding for post-secondary training, and
- job placement and follow-up services.

On a statewide basis, BCCBS field services also has Rehabilitation Instructors (RI) who provide vision rehabilitation and education services. Individualized and group training may include:

- use of adaptive communication,
- Braille,
- access and assistive technology,
- indoor orientation and basic mobility techniques,
- job site modification, and
- home management and safety skills

The Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists employed with BCCBS provides training to teach customers how to utilize their senses to determine their position within the environment to safely move from one location to another. The training includes, but is not limited to:

- skill development in the areas of environmental awareness using body, senses, and motor skills,
- white cane techniques
- human guide,
- locating dropped office,
- crossing streets, and
- the use of public transportation.

BCCBS VR FY 23 Program Highlights

- A total of 1,653 individuals who are blind, or visually impaired and an additional 57 DeafBlind customers were provided Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- Zoom for Government was obtained which allowed the Rehabilitation Instructors (RI) to meet virtually with customers who are blind and visually impaired. This tool gave the RIs virtual access to provide comprehensive independent living skill training to customers. Customers were able to effectively and successfully obtain the skills needed to lead independent lives and obtain competitive integrated employment.
- The Bureau developed and implemented the Comprehensive Assessment for Rehabilitation Services (CARS). CARS is a tool used by Rehabilitation Instructors (RI) as part of the assessment process to determine the need for specific blind skill training services; it is the method through which the RI determines the present skill levels and develop future training goals of the customer. CARS addresses eight essential areas of an individual's life and is used to develop the Blind Skills plan outlining the services the person needs to live independently.
- Created the Blind Skills plan in the VR case management system to document the unique and individualized independent living services and orientation and mobility services need by the customer. This plan demonstrates the services customers need, how they accomplished their goals, and the successful outcomes of the services provided.

BCCBS VR Program Vision for 2024

- Increase the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with visual loss. Work within IDHS-DRS to enhance services to students through Fast Track and STEP contracts. Work directly with students to offer transition services.
- Increase the number of self-employment cases supported by the Bureau. Provide customers with the resources, guidance, and comprehensive services to obtain and maintain an entrepreneur employment opportunity.
- Increase the number of customers to assist them in obtaining competitive employment.

BCCBS VR Program Success Story

In February 2017, an individual with a vision loss was seeking services with BCCBS to advance his career. He was legally blind due to myopia, nystagmus, and other congenital conditions. He had goals of working in human services. This customer had independently completed an associate degree but needed support for continuing his post-secondary education. With support from BCCBS, he earned a bachelor's degree from University of Iowa in May 2020. He went on to complete his Master of Social Work degree in September of 2023. In addition to financial support for tuition and fees, books, and supplies, he was provided with blind instruction which included rehabilitation technology assessments, purchase of assistive technology and assistive technology training, adjustment counseling, and keyboarding training. He worked with his rehabilitation counselor and rehabilitation instructor throughout his case. While completing his master's degree, customer was employed with Chestnut Health Services. Customer continues to be employed with a Mental Health Agency as a Clinician. Upon receipt of his signed closure notification, customer wrote:

"I am thankful and very appreciative with the services you and your offices have provided me. This was a major milestone in my life. You all made it possible for me to achieve. Again, thanks to you all. "

Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education - Wood

The Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education-Wood (ICRE-Wood) is a facility which provides a concentrated short-term residential and day training commuter program for adults 18 years or older, who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind. It is located in Chicago and offers a 13-week vocational and independent skills training program. All services are coordinated to provide an individual with an enhanced opportunity to prepare for employment, school and/or living independently.

Vocational training services	Support services provided by the social worker
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Braille,• computer technology,• health and wellness,• orientation and mobility, and• independent living skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• counseling,• housing help, and• employment assistance.

ICRE-Wood Program Highlight

- A total of 94 individuals who are blind or visually impaired were provided Rehabilitation Instruction Services and 24 graduates from ICRE-Wood's program.

ICRE-Wood Priorities for FY24

- To increase awareness of various speakers from private sectors to inform customers on different employment opportunities.
- To continue to provide training on adaptive devices and technology to blind, visually impaired and deaf blind customers to become suitable for employment.



Teresa Fabre Lopez and Juan Ortiz

Losing my vision has been challenging. In October 2019, from one day to the other my career path came to a dead end and my independence was taken from me. Gladly, I soon came in contact with Juan Ortiz, who is my counselor at the Bureau of Blind Services. He connected me with Cindy Colon, and she started my rehab process while I awaited to be admitted into ICRE Wood. During my assessment period, the Pandemic started, and everything was shut down. My life and rehab were on stand-by for months, until Nancy Schultz got a group of clients together and trained us in how to use Zoom. This was a tool that I used not only while virtual training happened, but I used it while going through school and even nowadays. Over a year after that memorable March 2020, ICRE Wood reopened, and I was able to complete the portion of the rehab that I needed to be ready to pursue a new career path. I enrolled to become a graduate student at Northern Illinois University and started classes on August 2021. I just graduated this May in the field of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, and I could not be happier. I was inspired during my own rehab process to pursue this dream of helping others the way I was helped. I feel incredibly thankful to the Bureau of Blind Services and all of the people that work there and believed in me because I found my passion and now have a job at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Washington State.

Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (BEPB)

The Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (BEPB) provides training to blind and visually impaired customers in the BCCBS VR program. Customers are trained in the operations of and provided business ownership opportunities in the professional food service businesses including a variety of high-tech vending machines, customized snack stands, cafeteria management, and sundries/gift shops.

The BEPB has 61 successful entrepreneurs, with an average income of \$51,726, operating small businesses offering a variety of services in federal, state, private agencies, and businesses statewide.

The BEPB program offers management opportunities in the food service industry to individuals who are legally blind. After completing a six-month training course, certified graduates can bid on and operate vending facilities throughout the state.

BEPB FY 23 Program Highlights

- With Covid-19 restrictions lifted, many public and private sector offices have seen their daily employee occupancy numbers begin to rise. Some have even returned to their pre-Covid attendance numbers. The vendors of the Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (BEPB) have been there to meet the snack and food needs of returning employees as well as the public that they serve. A micro-market concept was launched at the Illinois Department of Revenue in downstate Springfield, Illinois. Considered to be the wave of the future, micro-markets are a retail sector closely related to the vending machine industry that provides an unattended market employing self-checkout technology. Additional micro-markets opened include the Par-A-Dice Hotel and Casino in Peoria as well as two micro-markets on the grounds of the Scott Air Force Base.

BEPB Vision for FY24

- As the micro-market concept has a proven track record of customer convenience, as well as vendor success and profitability, BEPB aims to erect a micro-market at the Illinois Department of Transportation within quarter one of 2024 and are seeking to expand micro-market opportunities for more of our Program vendors.

- The payment kiosks BEPB previously utilized in our micro-markets proved not to be very accessible, but thanks to the ever-changing world of technology, we've identified a unit called the Cantaloupe Go Plus 100 which has accessibility features for the visually impaired on the front end and the back end for our Program vendors. These previously unavailable units will be integrated into the system going forward.

BEPB Success Story

Meet Janet! A Program vendor for 29 years, Janet has successfully overseen vending services at snack shops, Illinois correctional centers, Rest Areas, and took the pioneering step with the BEPB of launching the first micro-market within a State of Illinois site. Janet is also a leading part of the Illinois Committee of Blind Vendors as she was voted by her constituents into the Vice Chair position. Janet has helped other managers through hard times and with her experience is always one that can be called on to answer questions related to best practices. She truly has the best interests of the Illinois Committee of Blind Vendors and the Business Enterprise Program for the Blind in mind each day. A ribbon cutting ceremony took place at the micro-market opened at the Illinois Department of Revenue.

Older Individual Blind Grants & DeafBlind Contracts

The Older Individual Blind Grant Program (OIB) provides services for individuals ages 55 or older whose severe visual impairment makes competitive employment difficult to obtain but for whom independent living goals are feasible. These services are open to all citizens of Illinois who meet the criteria; they do not need to be VR customers.

Funds are used to:

- provide independent living services.
- conduct activities that will improve or expand services for individuals.
- conduct activities to improve public understanding of the barriers faced by individuals.
- help the individuals served adjust to their blindness by increasing their ability to care for their individual needs.

Qualified Centers for Independent Living Centers throughout the state of Illinois implement this grant. The services implemented through this grant will enhance the ability of older blind individuals to access information and resources, to receive rehabilitation technology and the training to utilize devices that promote Independent Living opportunities.

The DeafBlind contract is funded through Title XX and services are available for all citizens of Illinois who are DeafBlind and need assistance in the following areas:

- independent living skills,
- advocacy,
- sign instruction, and
- outreach to professionals who serve this population.

There are no age restrictions for use of this contract. The services provided are designed to help persons served by this program to promote independence by increasing their ability to care for individual needs. Currently the program works with six (6) non-profit organizations to provide Deafblind and Sign Language services to the Deafblind and Deaf population.

OIB and DeafBlind FY 23 Program Highlights

- 2,280 people were served successfully through the Older Individual Blind Grant Program in federal FY22, and we are on the way to serving even more individuals in FY24.

OIB and DeafBlind Vision for FY24

- Our primary goal for FY24 is to continually improve our processes. We are working to improve communication with the grantees and to make our report collection processes electronic, accessible, and easily compliant.

The goals and driving factors to shaping the program for FY23 include moving forward despite COVID restrictions to ensure all consumers are provided with the best service possible. Division of Rehabilitation Services will work continue to work closely with all our Providers to maintain open communication and support necessary to ensure all programs are successful.

OIB and DeafBlind Program Success Story



Ruben has diabetic retinopathy resulting in low vision. One of his eyes became infected, which could only be treated by a specialist in Chicago. His Managed Care Organization is supposed to provide transportation to and from his medical appointments, but they were very unreliable, and he missed several crucial appointments. The cost of private transportation to and from these appointments was \$150.00 each way, and sometimes he had multiple appointments in one week. He lives independently in his community, but because of the cost for transportation, he was not able to pay his rent, and was at risk of nursing facility placement. His local CIL was able to use charitable trust/unrestricted funding to provide rental assistance for Ruben, thereby deflecting nursing facility placement. The CIL was also able to provide a One-Sight voucher to Ruben for new glasses, a 3x lighted magnifier, a 3x lighted floor full page daylight magnifier, a smartlux digital reader and a talking thermometer. Last, but not least, Ruben enjoys attending Options CIL Peer Support meetings.

Bureau of Engagement & Support Services (BESS)

The Bureau of Engagement and Support Services (BESS) administers the workforce development unit and consolidates all specialized field support functions into one Bureau to provide a well-rounded approach to customer engagement that allows for multiple customer touchpoints. BESS manages and oversees Business Development, Benefits Planning, and Targeted Populations with the mission of building an inclusive workforce through employer engagement.

BESS employs staff dedicated to business services, including the newly created title of business services consultant as well as staff in the titles benefit specialist and program specialist. Members of the team will work in partnership with business services teams organized in each of 22 Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA). The workforce development unit provides information to employers on key issues relating to hiring people with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, hiring incentives and the benefits of VR services. Workforce development staff also communicate with Rehabilitation Counselors about employment opportunities they identify through contacts with employers and business groups.

BESS Program Services

Business Development

Business Services

IDHS-DRS provides a wide range of services to assist employers with matching the talents found in the disability community with their individual business needs. Some of these services include:

- Disability Awareness Training
- Assistive Technology Presentations and Assessments
- ADA Considerations (help businesses understand the law and connect with experts)
- Federal Bonding
(hiring incentive tool providing employers security in hiring certain at-risk Individuals)
- Tax Incentives
(help businesses better understand tax credits and incentives available)
- Customized Training Information and Planning
- Job Analysis (identify observable work activities to determine candidates for available positions)
- Targeted Hiring Events
- National Employment Team (NET)/Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP)
- On-the-Job Training Contracts
(employers are provided financial incentives along with technical support to assist in hiring individuals with disabilities)
- Apprenticeships
- Interagency Referrals

Workforce Development Activities	Number of Contacts
Workforce Partner Contacts	381
IDHS-DRS Introductions/ Follow-up	538
Job Fair Presentations / Webinars/Hiring Events	266
Job Leads/ Job Referrals	416
Candidates Hired	7
Apprenticeship Information	42
TOTAL	1650

FY23 Highlights

A total of 1650 employer contacts were conducted in FY23 as we get further away from the pandemic.

- More than 200 in-person engagements with the Business Community
- Assisted the business community in discovering the talents of persons with disabilities through more than 400 Job leads/referrals.
- Participated in 266 business networking events (job fairs or hiring events).
- Provided apprenticeship information to 42 businesses.
- Participated in a Statewide initiative with the Department of Corrections (DOC) for early engagement of returning citizens. Returning citizens with disabilities will also have an opportunity to open up cases with IDHS-DRS offices to help them readjust to civilian life and employment.

Vision for 2024

A priority was set for 2024 to conduct in-person presentations engaging 2000 employers. To reach our goal, we will:

- Work with businesses to expand competitive employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Increase IDHS-DRS service awareness by increasing employer contact by at least 20%
- Participate in collaboration meetings with other Statewide Workforce Partners
- Participate in statewide Apprenticeship initiatives.
- Increase the number of candidates hired through direct employer connections.

BESS Success Stories

McDonald's USA collaborated with the State of Illinois Vocational Rehabilitation Program



Pictured: Tim Ledger, McDonald's Operations Consultant; Susan Armstrong, McDonald's Regional manager; Biswa Phuyal IDHS-IDHS-DRS Business Consultant

Division of Rehabilitation Services, to build a more inclusive working environment in the Romeoville Innovation Restaurant. Through this collaboration, McDonald's USA is recruiting more candidates with disabilities and exploring how to best implement inclusive hiring practices, including enhancing interview processes; engaging with candidates, as needed, to identify reasonable accommodations; and providing job coaching as part of the onboarding process.

By the end of November 2022, four disabled candidates had accepted offers to work at the Romeoville Innovation Restaurant, and

McDonald's was awarded the Employer Innovation Award by the State of Illinois. McDonald's USA continues to evaluate the success of this program and aims to set a roadmap for corporate-owned stores going forward. IDHS-DRS was highlighted in McDonald's [Global Diversity Annual Report](#).

Employer Networking Event for People with disabilities

The Employer Networking Event for People with Disabilities, located at the Central West Community Center in Chicago, IL, took place in July 2023. The event was hosted by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and co-sponsored by community rehabilitation provider, Ada S. McKinley, and the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation. In total, 26 employers attended as exhibitors, many of whom are IDHS-DRS workforce partners, as well as over 100 job seekers. Employers had the opportunity to meet talented individuals with disabilities seeking career opportunities. Watch the full report [here](#).

Cook County Career Pathway Navigator Program Press Event



Pictured: IDHS-DRS staff, workforce partners from ScaleLIT and SERCO, local government officials, job seekers with disabilities, local employers, and Cook County Board President, Toni Preckwinkle.

IDHS-DRS joined partners at scaleLIT, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, IDES, SERCO and other workforce systems in Cook County on May 17th to celebrate the successes and collaborations of workforce agencies, employers and most importantly job seekers that tirelessly put in the effort to advance disability hiring in Cook County and the rest of the State. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and her office joined us and gave a brief overview of systems and resources in place in Cook County to advance this collective mission.

Benefits Planning

In FY23, more than 100 individuals who receive SSI or SSDI contacted a benefits planner to understand how working will affect their benefits. Anyone who is eligible for Social Security disability benefits (SSI or SSDI) and wants to work can receive free benefits planning services. In FY24, the Statewide benefits planning process will be evaluated through the SWTCIE IL demonstration project with the goal of increasing and improving services to customers contemplating competitive employment.

In FY22, Illinois launched a disability benefits website. Disability Benefits 101 gives you tools and information on employment, health coverage, and benefits. You can plan ahead and learn how work and benefits go together. <https://il.db101.org/>

Our staff can:

- Explain how all of your benefits will be affected if you go to work,
- Give you a written report that show how earnings from your job will change your benefits,
- Tell you about other community services that can help you,
- Be available to answer any questions you have about your benefits, even after you go to work,
- Provide ongoing benefits management, which can include a new analysis if you get a raise, and
- Make a referral to help you resolve any legal barriers related to employment, such as employer accommodations that will help you do your job.
- Connect customers with Work Incentives Planning and Assistance

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance

The goal of the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program is to enable beneficiaries with disabilities to receive accurate information and use that information to make a successful transition to work. Each WIPA project has Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWIC) who will:

- provide in-depth counseling about benefits and the effect of work on those benefits,
- conduct outreach efforts to beneficiaries of SSI and SSDI (and their families) who are potentially eligible to participate in federal or state Work Incentives programs; and
- work in cooperation with federal, state and private agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve SSI and SSDI beneficiaries with disabilities.

Targeted Populations

The newly formed Bureau incorporated Targeted Populations (e.g., Deaf and Blind Services and Hispanic Services). IDHS-DRS staff members take their previous experiences and build on them through training opportunities offered through IDHS-DRS. The training learning modules cover all aspects of working with persons with disabilities and creating employment/entrepreneurial opportunities and partnerships with businesses in both the public and private sector as well. The focus of this unit is to

- develop next level services, programs and trainings in areas that are available to non-disabled communities but are lacking presence in communities for persons with disabilities.
- eliminate real world barriers facing persons with disabilities,
- launch services and programs promoting social and economic inclusion through community-based organizations, governmental agencies, and IDHS-DRS staff.

These collaborative projects merge innovative processes and techniques into traditional protocols and current best practices for persons with disabilities in the following areas:

- Programs for job creation in non-traditional settings, such as hospitals, airports and rehabilitation schools)
- Cutting edge pre-apprenticeship programs that equip persons with disabilities for opportunities currently in demand.
- Trainings on best practices and protocols that will keep persons with disabilities at the forefront of economic progress.

Vision for 2024

The targeted populations unit staff has been assigned to this unit since June 2023 and has finalized staging platforms that will govern and administer the following projects to be launched in 2024 predicated leadership approval.

1. Housing Initiative

The housing initiative would allow options for transitional housing to support individuals with disabilities or severe mental illness to have a place to live for up to six months while they explore, search and obtain gainful employment.

2. Pilot Programs and Trainings to Launch In 2024

- **The ADA Emergency Preparedness Program** (for Administrators) - activities geared towards educating public, governmental agencies and private institutions and their staff on best practices and protocols to adhere to when serving persons with disabilities during times of crisis.
- **The ADA Hub Ownership Program** (for Administrators) - program operations training for administrators, governmental agencies, executive-level private and public entities to enter into a relationship with IDHS-DRS by hosting an ADA hub in their institutions.
- **The ADA Hub Ownership Program** (for Persons with Disabilities) - training sessions for IDHS-DRS agency and staff on how to equip, prepare and certify persons with disabilities with skills, tools, and the curriculum they will need for ADA hub for entrepreneurial/employment opportunities.
- **The We See Them for You Pilot Program** - geared towards training IDHS-DRS staff, rehabilitation counselors and instructors on best practices and protocols to maximize protective measures for preventing sexual harassment when engaging in rehabilitation processes with the disabled.

3. Business Engagement Database. The IDHS-DRS maintains a business engagement database documenting:

- growth in employer contacts,
- information dissemination activities
- facilitating job interviews for candidates, and
- successful employment outcomes at targeted businesses.

4. **The Business Services Consultants and Employee Resource Specialists** are bridging that gap between the customer and the business to obtain successful competitive integrated employment opportunities. Each member of the team has been assigned as

- a contact between community colleges and four-year public universities
- responsible for reaching out to community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Centers for Independent Living, Veteran’s Group and similar groups to share information about our agency and how we can assist businesses within the community with their hiring needs.
- work with the Department of Economic Development representatives throughout the State of Illinois.
- participated in a training conducted by the workforce network.

Deaf Services

The word “deaf” is used to include persons who have any type of hearing loss. These persons may or may not have residual hearing and speech. There are various communication modalities used by the deaf population. IDHS-DRS work with deaf individuals to ensure individuals have the knowledge and skills needed to seek, obtain, and retain employment. We serve as a resource for internal and external partners, including persons within IDHS-DRS, other professionals, state agencies, as well as community organizations. We work to ensure that our partners have the information and resources needed to serve deaf persons.

Our Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) are trained to provide targeted services to individuals who are deaf to

- Develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) outlining the services that will be provided.
- Ensure the individual receives the resources needed to obtain and maintain employment.
- Ensuring programs and services provide communication accessibility.

In FY 2023, we served more than 1600 persons who were deaf or hard of hearing. In addition to the free vocational rehabilitation services that are provided to all IDHS-DRS customers, persons who are deaf may receive assistance with

- rehabilitation technology purchases, including, but not limited to hearing aids, cochlear implant upgrades, and assistive listening devices.
- when appropriate, postsecondary training at national programs that provide total communication accessibility.
- in-house recommendations as it pertains to the use of sign language interpreters, Computer Assisted Real Time captioning (CART) services, and audiological services.

Programs

The **Deaf History, Culture, and Arts** is a non-profit organization that works to reframe what it means to be Deaf, leading towards existential & economic justice for all Deaf people. We make impact by providing classes, workshops, professional development and consultations either in-person or virtually.

Allies in Deafhood (<https://www.deafhood.org/courses/allies-in-deafhood>) is offered to IDHS-DRS staff who do not have hearing loss. The Allies in Deafhood workshop focuses on how hearing persons can become allies to the Deaf community.

IDHS-DRS Deaf Services engages with the DeafBlind community. Persons who are DeafBlind have any degree of hearing and vision loss. We aim to provide DeafBlind customers with the technology and training needed to obtain and retain employment. Persons who are DeafBlind often miss visual and auditory cues in their environment. Some states in the U.S. have a Support Service Provider (SSP) program. SSPs are also known as Co-Navigators (CNs). These individuals provide the DeafBlind person with environmental information which empowers the DeafBlind person to make his or her own decisions. Title XX funds are currently being used to develop a support program.

Deaf/Deafblind/Hard of Hearing Unit	Existing Programs	New 2023 Programs	# Clients Served
Allies In Deafhood for Parents & Friends of Deaf & Deaf/blind People	0	YES	24
Presentations:			
Illinois Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ITDHH)	YES	0	65
National Technical institute for the Deaf	YES	0	15
Ideation- New Technology	0	YES	0
Deaf Vs. Hard of Hearing & Deafblind	0	YES	50
Training:			
Deaf & Deaf/Blind Best Practices	0	YES	Statewide
Deaf & Deaf/blind Resources	0	YES	0
Illinois Association of the Deaf	0	YES	0
Services:			
Southern Illinois University- Edwardsville Deaf & Deafblind Interpreter Access	0	YES	0
Total Deaf, Hard of Hearing & Deafblind Served:			1689

Deaf Services Success Stories



Brian was initially referred to the IDHS-DRS Joliet Office in 2001 while he was attending Tinley Park High School near Chicago, Illinois. He participated in the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP), where he began learning work skills and planning for life after high school.

Brian’s IDHS-DRS counselor assessed Brian’s skills and abilities determined higher education was an appropriate goal for him, and in the summer of 2002 worked with him to initiate a goal of attending Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. Brian graduated from Gallaudet University with a Business Administration degree in May '08.

Brian envisioned a career in public service and was hired by the United States Mint. He also works as Equal Opportunity Assistant in the Office of Assistant Secretary Civil Rights at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Read Brian’s full story here: [IDHS: Brian Lucas \(state.il.us\)](https://www.idhs.state.il.us/index.cfm?id=12345)

Services for People with disabilities who are Hispanic or Latino

To better serve Hispanics/Latinos throughout Illinois and address their needs, the Illinois Department of Human Services created the Hispanic Services (April 2023) unit under the Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDHS-DRS), Bureau of Engagement and Support Services (BESS). The mission of the Hispanic Services Unit is to work with and help Hispanics/Latinos with disabilities (ages 16-64) obtain employment, education, training, and access to IDHS-DRS services, including community resources. The Hispanic Services Statewide Specialist (Hispanic Services Unit) has focused on two main areas: Outreach and capacity building. **In FY 23, the Division of Rehabilitation Service (IDHS-DRS) had more than 6,000 Hispanic, Latino, or Latin X contacts, of whom IDHS-DRS served 1488, and 576 gained competitive employment.**

Demographic	Customers Served	% of total Served	Competitive Employment Outcome	% of Total Outcomes
Hispanic/ Combination	6512	17.3%	576	8.8%

Our Spanish-speaking staff offer culturally sensitive services:

- Vocational Rehabilitation assists customers in preparing for and finding quality employment.
- Hispanic/Latino Rehabilitation Project provides statewide outreach, information, and referral to assist customers in Vocational Rehabilitation and Home Services programs.
- Leadership Development Training Program prepares Hispanic/Latino customers to serve as advocates on boards and committees.

Our IDHS-DRS bilingual staff refers customers and their families to the Rehabilitation Services, the Home Services Program, and other needed services. Currently, **IDHS-DRS employs 72 bilingual staff** (English/Spanish) across the State who provide technical assistance and support to Hispanic/Latino communities and serve as liaisons to Hispanic/Latino organizations throughout the State.

Outreach

To support IDHS-DRS ' outreach efforts, the Hispanic Services Specialist coordinated the development and production of media products.

- Reviewed the more than 50 current IDHS-DRS (English/Spanish) forms, brochures, and flyers,
- Developed two (2) new brochures and three flyers to support Hispanic/Latino community events, including Careers de Mayo, Northern Cook Job Fair, Individual Placement and Support Services, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).

Internal Capacity Building

To engage IDHS-DRS staff and to educate them about Hispanics/Latinos with disabilities, the Hispanic Services Specialist

- Conducted eight (8) presentations to different administrators (Bureau Chiefs, Assistant Bureau Chief, and IDHS-DRS Agency Supervisors) and technical staff (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Coordinators, Home Service Program Counselors and Coordinators, Rehabilitation, and Rehabilitation Counselors).

Engaging Bilingual Staff

In coordination with the Hispanic Services Specialist, Statewide IDHS-DRS Bilingual staff established an Advisory Committee. The committee includes eight bilingual staff members representing most of IDHS-DRS 's regions. Meetings with the advisory committee are weekly but monthly with all the bilingual staff statewide. Some expected outcomes include an annual plan of work (2024), support for a non-bilingual team, and new programs, projects, or initiatives targeting Hispanics/Latinos statewide.

Hispanics/Latinos in Illinois by Type of Functional Disability

Disability	Number	%
Mobility	319,147	36%
Cognition	296,351	33%
Hearing	182,370	21%
Vision	91,185	10%
Totals	889,053	100

Sources: [CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities – DISABILITY IMPACTS ILLINOIS](#); [United States Census Bureau: State Profile](#)

Hispanic Services Unit	Existing Programs	New 2023 Programs	# Clients Served
Presentations:			
Hispanics with Disabilities Advisory Board Ideation	0	YES	8
Training:			
(Bi-lingual Staff) Hispanics with Disabilities in Rehabilitation	0	YES	40
Hispanics with Disabilities SWOT Analysis and Strategic Planning for Services	0	YES	40
Assessing Conditions of Hispanics & Latinos with Disabilities	0	YES	70
Hispanics with Disabilities in Leadership & Advocacy	0	YES	0
Total Hispanics with Disabilities Served:			1582

Services for Williams and Colbert Class Members/IPS

IPS Services

Individual Placement and Support supported employment (IPS) is the only evidence-based practice model of vocational rehabilitation. Over 30 randomized controlled trials of IPS in the United States and Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand have consistently shown multiple times higher employment outcomes for IPS when compared to any other vocational model. Long term studies of up to ten years have shown that persons who received IPS services have quadruple the sustained employment rate, including higher incomes and growth in work careers, when compared to those who received traditional vocational rehabilitation services.

Most of the studies of IPS have focused on persons with severe mental illness commonly co-occurring with other disabilities such as Substance Use Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and learning disabilities. IPS services exist in all Veterans Administration hospitals for veterans with mental illness and, because of the research findings and record of success with these populations, are being expanded in these facilities to veterans with spinal cord injuries and with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Illinois has for over 15 years been recognized as one of if not the leading state for best practice IPS services and for research and innovation in IPS. The Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDHS-DRS) established the standard funding model for IPS services by state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in the United States, developed a set of standards and practices for IPS services for state Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) that became a model for other states, was the first to show through research that IPS was a good fit for persons with IDD and other developmental disabilities, and assisted in the formation of and continues to support the only IPS team in the United States focused on serving persons who have severe mental illness and who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, late deafened, or deaf blind.

IDHS-DRS is the primary funder of IPS services in Illinois. **In FY23, 2,467 persons received IDHS-DRS funded IPS services. Of those, 338 were Class Members as defined under the Williams and Colbert Consent Decree.**

IDHS-DRS staff develop and administer the contracts for IPS services and determine eligibility and develop rehabilitation plans for IPS customers. VRCs are assigned as liaisons to each of the over 60 IPS teams in our state to

- collaborate with the community IPS providers to monitor customer progress,
- develop and share job leads,
- develop plans and assist customers in accessing resources for accommodations for co-occurring disabilities, and
- assist in accessing other resources necessary for persons with severe and often multiple disabilities to acquire and sustain competitive employment.

IPS/Williams and Colbert Unit staff provide mentor-level consultation and technical assistance on IPS and related practices and resources to:

- IDHS-DRS administration,
- Regional IDHS-DRS staff,
- local IDHS-DRS office staff,
- community agencies who field the IPS teams,
- disability advocacy organizations,
- other state agencies,
- other state’s VR and mental health authorities,
- federal agencies,
- research and academic institutions, and
- other countries who have or wish to establish IPS programs.

Individual Placement Services (IPS) Mental Health Services	Existing Programs	New 2023 Programs	# Clients Served
Program:			
William Colbert Class Members Pilot Program Best Practices	YES	0	338
Individual Employment Services In (SNAP) Supplemental Nutritional Services	0	YES	Statewide
Individual Employment Services in Correctional Institutions	0	YES	Statewide
Individual Employment Services in Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers	YES	0	Statewide
Training:			
Substance Abuse & Individual Employment Support Services	0	YES	70
Individual Employment Services In (TANF) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	YES	0	170
Division of Mental Health William/Colbert Class Best Practices	YES	0	200
Case Managers on Individual Employment Placement Services	0	YES	50
Total Persons with Mental Illnesses Served:			2467

IPS FY 23 Program Highlights:

IPS/Williams and Colbert Unit staff:

- Conducted in collaboration with expert staff from the Division of Mental Health (DMH) 34 two-day IPS fidelity reviews of community IPS teams using a scientifically validated IPS fidelity scale and set of review protocols.
- Responded to reviews by providing ongoing targeted technical assistance and training to those teams and the IDHS-DRS local and regional offices with which they partner.
- Developed, scheduled, and conducted, in collaboration with DMH, three statewide IPS training programs. One of those three-hour sessions was devoted to the employment services component of the Williams and Colbert Consent Decree (W/C) state mandate. IPS is the core employment service model for W/C.
- Presented a webinar on Illinois IPS services for case managers and others involved in W/C. The webinar was recorded and remains on the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing W/C website.
- Assisted the Jane Adams School of Social Work in conducting a study of the W/C employment services, including sharing earlier interviews with IPS providers to Williams and Colbert Class Members conducted by IPS/Williams and Colbert Unit and DMH staff.
- Consulted with the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry, the International IPS Learning Community, and a number of states and several countries on incorporating or expanding IPS services and providing IPS services and affiliated resources to new disability populations.
- Assisted the International IPS Learning Community to establish Illinois as the permanent site of the Learning Community annual conference. The conference draws participants from the 28 US states and 12 countries that are official members of that organization. IPS/Williams and Colbert Unit staff have been designated as a founding member of the Learning Community.
- Provided substantial technical consultation and assistance to research and academic programs and institutions conducting high level research projects in Illinois pertaining to IPS on topics including:
 - development and accessible use of sophisticated Artificial Intelligence (AI) based training and support technologies in IPS practice for adults and transition age youth with disabilities,
 - making IPS accessible to SNAP/TANF recipients with disabilities,
 - persons with disabilities residing in or exiting correctional facilities,
 - incorporating IPS services into primary healthcare settings including Federally Qualified Health Care Centers (FQHC) and Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHC),
 - Substance Use Disorder treatment systems,
 - services for persons on the Autism Spectrum, with IDD including Downs Syndrome, and
 - making IPS and employment related Supported Education accessible and available to transition-age youth with multiple disabilities.

IPS Services/Williams and Colbert Unit staff were listed as authors on published research articles pertaining to research on incorporating AI technologies into IPS services. One of the articles was featured on the cover and in a special section of the American Psychiatric Association Journal: Psychiatric Services.

- Served on boards and committees pertaining to IPS services in Illinois including the W/C employment services workgroup, the DMH Youth Academy, and the Committee on Rehabilitation and Employment advisory panel. IPS/Williams and Colbert Unit staff were appointed by the IDHS Secretary to a two-year term on the Illinois Advisory Council on Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorder Impacts on Employment Opportunities within Minority Communities.



“I was at Greenwood for 17 years and I had no hope going forward in my life. Lots of personal things happened to me when I got to Greenwood Care, but I overcame them. My Dad and Mom died that year, but I know they were proud of me the years I was at Greenwood Care. It was the best thing that happened to me, now I am sober, and I have not been in psych hospital in over 10 years. I have my own apartment; I pay my own bills. I have been with Trilogy for 11 years and that is how long I have had my own apartment. I am very happy, I got what I wanted for myself, and I have a lot of support from family, Trilogy, friends, girlfriend and et. I have found employment with Trilogy’s IPS Supported Employment Program at Sam’s Club.”



Ericka first began working with her local CIL in May of 2022 after being referred from AgeOptions. Ericka has been living in All American Village Nursing and Rehabilitation since 2019 after struggling with her health and losing her job. Despite being diagnosed with MS, participant has been denied Social Security twice already. This prevented her from moving out of the nursing home quickly unless she found another source of income. Ericka had a long history of successful employment before the nursing home and wanted to find another both to move out and to work towards her other life goals. The local CIL assisted Ericka in drafting a resume, applying for positions, and preparing for interviews. Her employment counselors advocated with employers on Ericka’s behalf and worked through her anxiety about returning to the work force. Ericka was also lucky to have the full support of her nursing facility in allowing her out into the community to work. After almost a year of looking, Ericka has been able to find work at a Jewel-Osco right down the street from her nursing home. She’s working in the front end to bag groceries and operate the cash register. AgeOptions is already working to help her find housing in the community and her case is being opened with IDHS-DRS. Ericka is so incredibly happy to be out working again. She can’t wait to begin looking for apartments and making progress in her life again.

Bureau of Home & Community Based Supports (BHCBS)

BHCBS distinguishes the role of the former “Home Services Central Office” into a Bureau that provides technical support, management, and oversight over the provision of the Home and Community-Based waivers for persons with disabilities, brain injuries, and HIV/AIDS. BHCBS will provide oversight for the Independent Living Unit.

Home Services Program

The Home Services Program (HSP) was established in December 1979, to prevent the premature or unnecessary institutionalization of individuals with disabilities by providing services in the home that do not exceed the cost of comparable services in a nursing facility. The program is dedicated to promoting customer independence, their choice, and their control of services. The program's goals support the desires and abilities of individuals with disabilities by enabling them:

- to remain at home rather than in a nursing facility with real choices and options for quality care,
- to retain control over the services they receive, and
- to live self-directed lives that enable them to actively participate at home and in the community.

HSP is designed to allow eligible individuals in need of long-term care and who meet the criteria for disability as defined by the Social Security Act, to receive any or all the following services to remain in their homes:

1. personal assistant services
2. homemaker services
3. home health services
4. home-delivered meals
5. electronic home response
6. adult day care services
7. specialized services for customers in the brain injury waiver
8. home modification and/or assistive equipment
9. and other specialized services

FY 23 Highlights

- **A total of 33,897 customers were served in the program at an average monthly cost of \$2,127.**
- The Home Services Program (HSP) received approval from Federal CMS on its renewal application for the Persons with Brain Injury Medicaid Waiver. The five-year renewal has an effective date of July 1, 2022.
- To remain competitive with market standards, agency provider rates were increased by 7.9% for Homemaker services and more than 25% for Home Health Agency Services to ensure provider capacity exists to meet the thousands of HSP customer who rely on these services.
- Identified and initiated the recovery of more than \$1.78 million in overpayment for a total of 325 cases.
- Through restitution and repayment agreements, the State will largely be made whole for these overpayments.
- Terminated a total of 111 providers in connection with provider fraud, or due to the abuse, neglect or exploitation of a person with a disability as determined through an Adult Protective Services investigation.

Waiver	Number of Customers Served	Average Cost per Month	Total Spending
Persons with Disabilities	30,121	\$2,090	\$755,364,627
Persons with Brain Injury	2,650	\$2,703	\$85,942,176
Persons with HIV/AIDS	1,126	\$1,753	\$23,690,171
Total	33,897	\$2,127	\$864,996,974

BHCS Vision for FY24

In FY 2024, our goal is to ensure the continued growth of the Home Services Program to help individuals achieve and maintain their independence, to maintain timeliness of required assessments, to achieve long-term integration of select pandemic era policies and further invest in modernizing the program.

BHCS Program Spending

Type of Services	Number of Customers	Total Spending
Personal Assistant	30,991	\$810,726,576
CNA	120	\$2,582,440
LPN	26	\$997,190
RN	22	\$821,552
Homemaker	2,149	\$42,110,522
Maintenance Home Health	28	\$109,272
Home-Delivered Meals	527	\$1,311,449
Electronic Home Response (duplicated Count)	1,365	\$322,596
Adult Day Care (duplicated count)	73	\$3461,954
Brain Injury Services (duplicated count)	27	\$198,449
Home Remodeling	168	\$1,762,497
Assistive Equipment	46	\$100,716
Background Checks	310	\$11,400
Case Management Services	2,721	\$3,308,239
Other Misc. Services (duplicated count)	539	\$48,191
Prescreening	1,201	\$123,930
Total (with Prescreening)	33,897	\$864,996,974

BHCS Operational Spending Overview

Category	FY23 Spending
Program Administration	\$30,007,113
Other Provider Costs & Benefits	\$122,506,203
Total Waiver Services	\$864,996,974
Persons with Disabilities	\$755,364,627
Persons with Brain Injury	\$85,942,176
Persons with HIV/AIDS	\$23,690,171
Total Spending	\$1,017,510,290
Percent Administration to Total Spending	2.95%

Program Services

HSP services are designed to preserve the dignity of individuals with disabilities, as well as to provide options that reflect their personal needs and preferences. Over 97% of HSP customers utilize Personal Assistant, Homemaker and/or Home-Health services. Other program services are used either alone or as a supplement to these services to address the customer's unique needs. Brief descriptions of all available services follow below:

Personal Assistant (PA) Services:

Services provided by individuals who are selected, employed, trained, and supervised by the customer. These individuals may assist with household tasks, personal care and, with the permission of a physician, perform certain health care procedures. In order to use PA services, the customer or representative must be able to appropriately supervise a PA.

This service has a uniform reimbursement rate statewide per a labor agreement with Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Homemaker Services:

Personal care and household tasks provided by trained and professionally supervised staff employed by homemaker agencies. Instruction and assistance in household management and self-care are also available. This service has a uniform reimbursement rate statewide that is provided under a rate agreement with HSP. Homemaker services are used by customers who are unable to direct a PA, who have not found a PA, or who do not wish to direct a PA.

Home Health Services:

Home health services include services prescribed by a physician that are provided by a registered or licensed practical nurse, home health aide or certified nurse assistant, or physical, occupational or speech therapist. HSP home health services are beyond the scope of services covered under the Medicaid State Plan or private health insurance. These services must be provided in the customer's home and may be provided through an agency or by private individuals who are appropriately credentialed. The private individuals who provide this service have a uniform reimbursement rate statewide per a labor agreement with Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Home-Delivered Meals:

One or more ready-to-eat hot meals per day which are delivered to the home. This service is provided to individuals who can feed themselves but are unable to prepare a meal and is more cost effective than personal assistant services.

Emergency Home Response:

A signaling device that provides 24-hour emergency alerting coverage for medical, fire or other emergencies. The device may be worn in a variety of ways and may have a variety of mechanisms to signal an emergency need. This service has uniform rates statewide and is provided under a rate agreement with HSP.

Adult Day Care:

The direct care and supervision of customers provided in a location outside the home by a community-based organization to promote social, physical and emotional well-being. This service has a uniform reimbursement rate statewide and is provided under a rate agreement with HSP. Transportation to adult day care may also be provided, if needed.

Brain Injury Services:

Specialized Services for customers receiving services through the Brain Injury Waiver which include day habilitation, pre-vocational services, supported employment, and behavioral services.

Home Modifications & Assistive Equipment:

Devices, equipment and/or home modifications that increase an individual's independence and capability to perform household or personal care tasks safely in the home. Must be able to reduce the need for another service or address a health or safety need. Respite Services: Intermittent care for adults and children with disabilities designed to relieve caregiver stress.

Background Screening:

Background screenings are now provided through the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Illinois Medicaid Program Advanced Cloud Technology (IMPACT) program on all Medicaid providers including PAs and agency providers to ensure the safety of the customer and the suitability of the potential employee.

Case Management:

The Division utilizes Case Management Agencies to provide targeted services to Customers eligible for the Medicaid Waivers it administers who have either HIV/AIDS or Brain Injury to assist with the management, monitoring, and follow-up of these specialized cases.

Prescreening:

Prescreening of individuals conducted prior to nursing facility admission to ensure they receive the same minimum Determination of Need (DON) score required for eligibility for the HSP or the Department on Aging Community Care Program (DoA CCP), and to ensure they are offered the option of receiving home care. The screening of individuals coming from hospitals to nursing facilities is performed for both programs by community-based Case Coordination Units. Prescreening for individuals under age 60 who are going from home to nursing facility may be conducted by either CCU or HSP staff.

Special Services:

Home Services also provides specialized services for people with HIV/AIDS and/or Brain Injuries.

The Home Care Ombudsman Program helps customers of the Home Services Program receive quality services by advocating for their interests and helping them identify resources, understand procedures, resolve problems, and protect their rights. You can learn more about the Home Care Ombudsman Program by visiting the Illinois Department on Aging's [Long Term Care Ombudsman Program](#) website.

Program Eligibility Determination and Service Planning

Prospective customers, or those representing them, may request services by contacting any one of the Division of Rehabilitation offices around the state, or they may submit a request via a web-based referral for services on the Department of Human Services (DHS) website at <http://www.dhs.state.il.us>.

A counselor or case management representative will assess the individual in his or her home and administer the Determination of Need (DON) tool to determine program eligibility. The tool evaluates an individual's care needs and identifies an individual's available resources for meeting those needs. Based on the results of the DON, a service plan is developed jointly with the customer to address his or her unmet needs and to assist the customer in coordinating safe, quality, consumer-directed (when possible) services that are also cost-effective. In order to be eligible to receive HSP services, an individual must:

- Be **under age 60** at time of application unless applying for the HIV/AIDS or Brain Injury Waiver Programs. Have a severe disability lasting at least 12 months or for the duration of life.
- Be **at imminent risk of nursing facility placement** as indicated by receiving a minimum of 29 points on the Determination of Need (DON) eligibility determination tool, with at least 15 points in the "Need for Care" category.
- Require services whose **cost will not exceed that of nursing or other health care facility services**.
- For customers aged 18 or older, have less than \$17,500 in non-exempt personal assets; for customers under age 18, have less than \$35,000 in family **assets**.
- Apply for **Medicaid** and cooperate with the application process.
- Be a **resident of Illinois and a U.S. Citizen or legal resident**.

Additionally, given the multiple Medicaid Waiver programs in Illinois, including those through the Department's Division of Developmental Disabilities; individuals who are eligible for more than one waiver are evaluated and assisted in making an informed choice as to which waiver most appropriately meets their needs.

DON Score (Ave. DON Score= 46.57)	Number of Customers	Percent of Customers	Total Spending	Percent of Spending	Average Monthly Cost
Under 29	390	1.2%	\$2,855,114	0.3%	\$610
29-32	4,730	14.0%	\$73,331,553	8.5%	\$1,292
33-40	7,781	23.0%	\$153,181,881	17.7%	\$1,641
41-49	6,871	20.3%	\$159,654,725	18.5%	\$1,936
50-59	5,899	17.4%	\$163,497,381	18.9%	\$2,310
60-69	4,008	11.8%	\$134,387,487	15.5%	\$2,794
70-79	2,678	7.9%	\$104,499,176	12.1%	\$3,252
80-100	1,540	4.5%	\$73,589,658	8.5%	\$3,982
Total	33,897		\$864,996,974		\$2,127

Home Services Success Story

In 2005, an independent 39-year-old man was hit by a car while walking across the street. After being in a coma for three or four days, he woke up in the hospital; he doesn't remember the accident. Due to being hit by a car, his lower body was severely damaged. His left leg required placement of a metal rod inside of it to stabilize it and he had to have surgery on his right hip as well. The customer stayed in the hospital for three to four months to recover from his injuries. Medical staff told him he was **lucky to survive the accident**. After being **discharged from the hospital in a wheelchair**, he went to a **nursing facility** to further **recover and rehabilitate**. Although he participated in extensive physical therapy, he continues to have lasting injuries and pain from the car accident. Currently he can only stand with a walker for a very brief period and has **never recovered the ability to walk**.

After **residing in the nursing facility for about three years**, he discharged to his nephew's home. For the next several years, he moved in and out of several other family members homes. He became frustrated and upset because none of his family members had homes that were wheelchair accessible. All their homes either had stairs or they lived on the second floor. Due to this inaccessibility, he was left inside most of the time. Ultimately, he decided to go back to residing in a nursing facility. During this last nursing home stay, he was assigned a case manager from Trilogy. His case manager, whom he is still in contact with today, explained the **Williams and Colbert consent decree** and what services could be provided to him. He agreed to participate in the assessment process and received a qualifying score to be **eligible for services from the Home Services Program**. Shortly afterwards, his Trilogy case manager helped him find a **wheelchair accessible apartment**. He has **now lived independently in his apartment for over three years and is happy** there.

Since transitioning out of the nursing facility, he **has gained** some of his **independence** back. Although he cannot walk and still utilizes a wheelchair for mobility, his upper body strength has increased. This increase in strength has allowed him the **ability to complete most of his activities of daily living (ADL)'s independently**, thus also **improving his confidence and self-worth**. He utilizes his **Homemaker services** to help with meal prepping and cooking, washing his laundry, cleaning his apartment, grocery shopping, and scheduling his appointments. He feels blessed to have **Homemaker services that allow him to continue to live independently and happily in the community**.

Centers for Independent Living

Many individuals in Illinois nursing facilities have the capability to live independently within the community. For over two (2) decades, Centers for Independent Living (CIL) have worked to move individuals with disabilities out of nursing facilities and other institutions and back into community-based independent living situations of their choice. CILs provide the necessary resources to offer the start-up essentials (i.e., 1st month's rent, furniture, cooking equipment, peer support) to help individuals successfully transition into the community. **In FY23, 237 individuals were transitioned into the community.**

A Center for Independent Living (CIL) is a private, non-residential, community-based, not-for-profit, consumer-controlled organization that is mandated to provide five (5) core services:

- Advocacy,
- Peer Support,
- Independent Living Skills Development,
- Information and Referral, and
- Transition.

Independent Living means different things to different people. For those involved in the Independent Living movement, it means having control of one's life. Living independently does not mean doing everything for oneself. Rather, it means being in control of decisions made about oneself. This is the foundation upon which Centers for Independent Living are built. **Consumer control exists on every level, where at least 51% of staff, management staff, and the Board of Directors must be individuals with disabilities.**

Staff serve as role models, demonstrating that individuals with disabilities can be independent and productive. Their knowledge, support, and guidance help to create informed choice options that give consumers the confidence to pursue their own independence and to realize their dreams and aspirations. Attitudes are perhaps the most challenging barrier for individuals with disabilities to overcome. CILs work to dismantle this barrier by:

- advocating for changes in legislation,
- providing disability awareness-related activities,
- developing technical assistance initiatives regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and
- working in a committed fashion to deinstitutionalize individuals with disabilities who can and want to live independently.

The work of CILs is guided by a federally approved State Plan for Independent Living that is written in collaboration with the Division, Center for Independent Living, and the Statewide Independent Living Council. The current plan can be accessed here: <https://silcofillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Plan-For-Independent-Living-2024-Amendment-Final-2.14.2023.docx>

FY 23 Highlights

CILs service all of Illinois' 102 counties. **Services were provided to over 65,000 individuals regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or disability.**

Core Service	Number of Customers Served
Information and referral services	51,095
Independent Living/Life Skills Training Services:	5,135
Peer Counseling	2,432
Individual System Advocacy	2,027
Transition Services	2,973
Fast Track	2988

Personal Assistant Training

To help meet the growing need for personal assistants (PA), the Home Services Program partnered with the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL) and targeted CILs throughout the state to recruit and train individuals wishing to work as a PA for individuals with disabilities. Upon completion of the training, PAs are added to a registry that is available to individuals with disabilities in the community who need assistance.

INCIL uses a toll-free help line, 1-800-587-1227, during normal business hours to assist customers with identifying potential providers. INCIL subcontracts with CILs lead outreach efforts to educate the public about the need for PAs, educate potential providers about the profession, and provide mentoring with individuals in the community to assist them with the development of better skills toward managing their care.

Employment and Transition Services

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 made significant changes to the Rehabilitation Act which governs CILs, including their provision of vocational services. Across the state, the Division partnered with 18 CILs to provide employment services to individuals with disabilities in a variety of ways. There are programs that teach independent living skills for those who wish to enter the workforce and programs that work statewide with youth within the schools.

CILs also work with individuals statewide on career exploration, workplace readiness, self-advocacy skills, outreach, job development, pre-employment services, and assistance with job placement to youth with disabilities.

In an effort to better prepare youth for transitioning into employment after high school, many of the CILs attend Individual Education Plan meetings within the schools to advocate for the student and the family in obtaining needed services.

Independent Living Services for Individuals who are Blind and DeafBlind

The Older Blind Program is awarded through a competitive process to eligible service providers statewide. Eight (8) CILs, of a total of 12, were awarded funding to provide services to individuals who are age 55 and older and who have severe visual impairments which makes it difficult to obtain competitive employment.

Individuals benefit from independent living services provided by CILs, which include:

- outreach services,
- braille instruction,
- guide services,
- reader services,
- transportation,
- supportive services, and
- rehabilitation teaching services.

Separate of the support offered through the Older Blind Program, funding is allocated to provide specialized services to individuals who are DeafBlind and to increase public awareness activities of available services and supports offered.

SUCCESS!! Older Individuals who are Blind Services (OIBS)

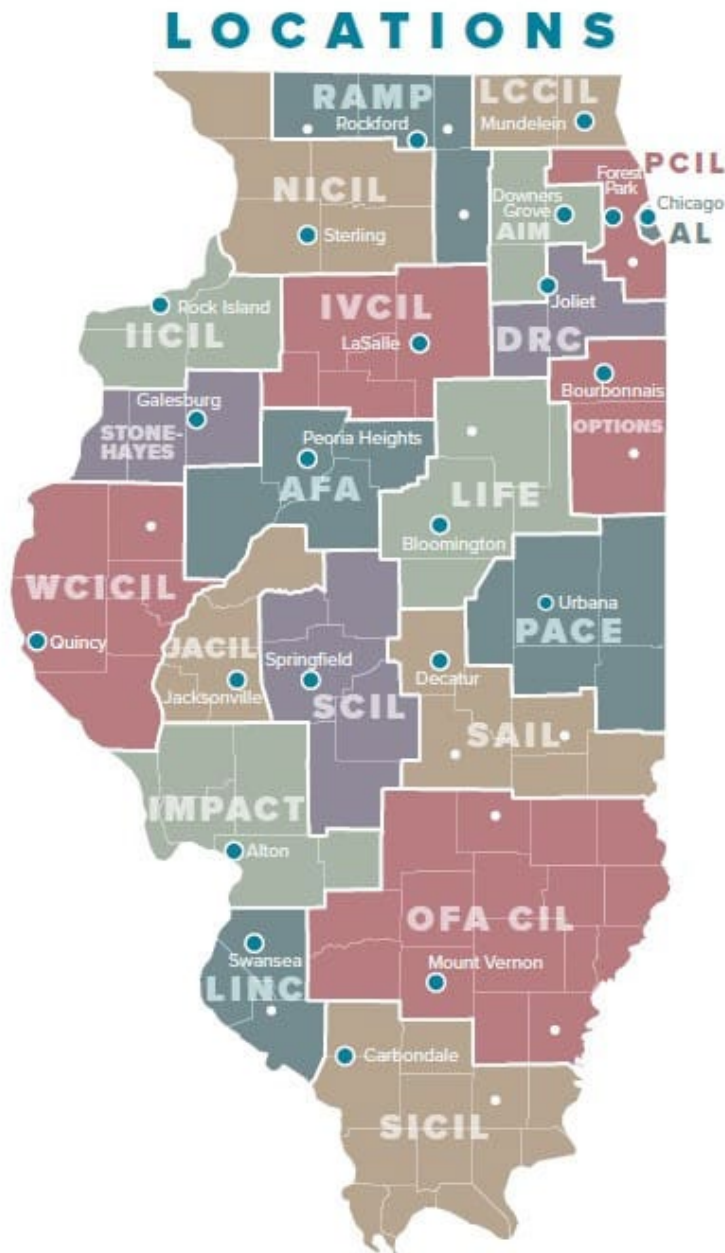


Juventino' physician referred him to the Low vision program (OIBS). He has diabetes and diabetic retinopathy which has affected his vision drastically. His health continued deteriorating and his kidneys began to fail leaving him needing dialysis. He felt he had also lost his independence. Now at 61 years old, he couldn't work because of his health and needed to apply for social security so he could support himself and have medical coverage. His advocate provided guidance and training on the process to apply for these benefits. Since Juventino is not able to drive, he had to learn how to apply for and use public transportation. He and his advocate worked on setting up his transportation for his dialysis appointments and he felt accomplished. Additionally, since he lives alone, cooking with vision loss was a challenge. His advocate made recommendations for different kitchen aids and devices that would help him to cook safely. He learned how to use the devices and now he is able to cook for himself! Juventino expressed that he now feels he is on the right path. He is working diligently to maintain his newly gained independence and hopes to teach his children that with perseverance, one can overcome adversity.

SUCCESS!! Independent Living



A CIL assisted a 63-year-old woman with several disabilities transition from a long-term care facility into her own apartment in the community. She worked with our Community Living Advocate while in the nursing home to complete an application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and housing applications. Through funding received by DHS, we were able to pay a security deposit and first month's rent for her subsidized unit. She also received a referral to our local Catholic Charities and now receives Homemaker services



AL (Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago)

AFA (Advocates for Access)

AIM (Achieving Independence and Mobility)

DRC (Disability Resource Center)

IVCIL (Illinois Valley CIL)

IICIL (Illinois/Iowa CIL)

IMPACT CIL

JACIL (Jacksonville Area CIL)

LCCIL (Lake County CIL)

LIFE (Living Independence for Everyone)

LINC (Living Independently Now Center)

NICIL (Northwestern Illinois CIL)

OFA CIL (Opportunities for Access CIL)

OPTIONS

PACE (Persons Assuming Control of their Environment)

PCIL (Progress CIL)

RAMP (Regional Access and Mobilization Project)

SICIL (Southern Illinois CIL)

SAIL (Soyland Access for Independent Living)

SCIL (Springfield CIL)

STONE-HAYES CIL

WCICIL (West Central Illinois CIL)

Educational and Training Services

The Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services offers three residential education and outreach programs for children with disabilities. Our Next Steps program trains parents to plan, advocate, and identify resources for their child with a disability. Any Illinois resident who meets the age and disability criteria can attend the residential schools.

Our educational programming includes extra-curricular activities, vocational rehabilitation and transition services, vocational education classes, training in daily living skills, orientation and mobility skills, and independent living skills.

Any Illinois resident whose child has a disability can participate in Next Steps. Local school districts, professionals and parents can make referrals for children to attend.

- **Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD)**, located in Jacksonville, serves students from birth to 22 who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI)**, located in Jacksonville, serves students from birth to 22 who are blind or visually impaired.
- **Illinois Center for Rehabilitation & Education-Roosevelt (ICRE-R)**, located in Chicago, serves students ages 5-22 with severe physical disabilities.

Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD)

The Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) was founded in 1839 and is in Jacksonville, Illinois on a 50-acre campus in central Illinois. The school offers accredited educational services for children from ages three to twenty-two, who are deaf or hard of hearing and live more than 25 miles from Jacksonville, and day programming for students who live within 25 miles of Jacksonville.

The vision of the Illinois School for the Deaf is to provide an environment in which students will thrive and succeed to their optimal potential. The mission is to engage students in a supportive, safe, and nurturing environment to achieve personal excellence academically, socially, physically, and emotionally.

FY 23 Highlights

- ISD provided educational instruction to 209 students on a continual basis. One hundred fifty-four (154) were served on campus as either residential or day students and 55 were served through the Birth to Three (0-3) program.
- The Parent/Infant Program serves Illinois children diagnosed with hearing loss from birth to age three (3) and their families.
- ISD provides a full range of academic, career, and support services to meet the needs of each student.
- Jr and Sr High students have choice in academic individualized educational programming that provides a transition plan to support the students in preparation for their post-secondary journey:
 - Students may choose classes through the Career Technical Education (CTE) program, which emphasizes pre-vocational and vocational subjects.
 - Students may choose to take advantage of agreements established with area schools if they are interested in a course not offered at ISD.
- Provides a wide variety of sports and extracurricular activities such as boys and girls basketball, volleyball, swimming, bowling, track, and cheerleading that help them become well-rounded and productive adults.
- Provides a bilingual environment in American Sign Language (ASL) and English so individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing can learn and work together to ensure effective communication.

- Services are free and available to parents, students, teachers, and educational personnel who work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing in Illinois including training on:
 - Topics associated with hearing loss.
 - Conferences for parents
 - Assessments to identify educational and vocational needs.
 - Annual conferences for educational personnel
 - Cochlear Implant support.

ISD Success Story

Governor Pritzker signed a proclamation celebrating our Battle of the Books students!



Blue Division

Champions – Washington School for the Deaf
 Second Place – California School for the Deaf, Riverside
 Third Place – Indiana School for the Deaf
Fourth Place – Illinois School for the Deaf
 Sportsmanship – Heathlands School

All Star Readers

Clodia Kuhn, Illinois School for the Deaf
 Outstanding Reader –Heathlands School

Bison Division

Champions – Illinois School for the Deaf
 Second Place – Rhode Island School for the Deaf
 Third Place – Willie Ross School for the Deaf
 Fourth Place – Metro Deaf School

All Star Readers

Ava Lyons, Illinois School for the Deaf

Most Outstanding Reader

Celine Kuhn, Illinois School for the Deaf

Battle of the Books students had a wonderful experience at Gallaudet University! The Battle of the Books is a reading competition for deaf and hard of hearing students in grades 5 to 8. Students across the nation read the same assigned books and then compete against each other by answering true or false, short answer, multiple choice, and presentation style questions about the books they read. The competition promotes literacy among deaf and hard of hearing students and is rooted in a spirit of academic competition and sportsmanship.

There are three divisions to accommodate participants varied reading levels. The Bison Division is reserved for 3rd and 4th grade reading levels; the Blue Division is reserved for 5th and 6th grade reading levels; and the Buff Division is reserved for 7th grade reading level and above.

The competition includes preliminaries, the playoffs, and the national competition. In the preliminaries, teams compete with rival schools and programs around the nation, providing an excellent opportunity for these students to meet other deaf and hard of hearing students their age who enjoy reading as well. The top performing teams advance to the playoffs where the presentation round is introduced. Of these, six final teams from the Buff and Blue divisions (and the Bison championship team) are invited to Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. for the national competition. All transportation, lodging, and meals for the National-bound teams are covered by the Gallaudet University Youth Programs office.

Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI)

The vision of the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired is ipsto provide a quality, comprehensive education and serve as a statewide resource to students in Illinois with visual impairments, assisting them in becoming personally productive and self-sufficient citizens.

The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI), established in 1849, is a residential/day school for students who are blind or visually impaired. Located in Jacksonville, ISVI provides accredited educational and related services for children from birth to 22 years of age through preschool, elementary and high school.

FY 23 Highlights

- In FY23, ISVI provided educational instruction to 58 students and 78 Birth to 3 babies and their families.
- Strong academic programming emphasizes independence and vocational skills, instruction in Braille, daily living skills, orientation and mobility training, and assistive technology.
- In FY23 ISVI put an increased emphasis on Expanded Core Curricula. They worked with the Minnesota Schools programs and others across the nation to adapt a curricular checklist and provided professional development to the educational and dorm staff.
- Students enjoy a variety of extracurricular and dormitory activities, including track, cheerleading, swimming, wrestling, goalball, bowling, forensics, yearbook, student council, and choir.
- The available curriculum units provide for easy credit transfer from and into public schools. Students can be referred for enrollment by their parents or their local education agency.
- Educational services are provided at no cost to parents. Personal belongings, health care, and spending money are the responsibility of the parents. The home schools are responsible for transportation cost for home-going breaks and personal assistants.
- ISVI has an outreach program that offers conferences for parents and educators across the state, training in assessments, and a Braille Challenge annually.

ISVI progress toward IDSH-DRS goals:

Goal #1: Students will improve/increase self-advocacy skills.

- Educators and/or Transition specialist will work with students individually to set personal goals exploring self-advocacy skills.
- Student's data on self-advocacy skills will be collected at the beginning of the school year and additionally at various times during the school year to compare the rate of growth.

ISVI developed a PACE framework and completed professional development with educational and dorm staff on the Expanded Core Curricula. ISVI is a Leader in Me School and has devoted advisory period to the development of the 7 habits. These habits will be used in all areas of the transition planning and advocacy development.

Goal #2: Schools will increase student enrollment.

- Schools will promote themselves in a positive light on social media and school websites to encourage student enrollment.
- Keep social media and websites up to date with school events and activities.
- Schools will work with school districts to encourage IEP placement in an IDHS-DRS school.
- IEP team meetings

ISVI maintained the same enrollment for campus students as in FY 22 however, the 0-3 program saw an increase. This is likely related to in person services and an increase in Outreach services. Parents are noting they are wanting in person services and are willing to attend Opening Doors for a longer period and in person. We also saw increased attendance at the Braille Challenge, Low Vision Clinics, and conferences that we were featured speakers.

ISVI has begun the journey of the 175 years celebration. This has caused an increase in activities open to the public, items that are streamed, and work done in conjunction with alumni, outside stakeholders and our PTO. It is our hope that these types of events will increase awareness and support parents to make informed decision on all the services that ISVI offers as services to the State of Illinois.

Vision for FY 24

Goal #1: In FY 24, 100% of ISVI students 14.5 and over will set personal self-advocacy goals using the new PACE rubrics, and Leader in Me curricula to support achievement.

- Educators and/or Transition specialist will work with students individually to set personal goals exploring self-advocacy skills.
- Student’s data on self-advocacy skills will be collected at the beginning of the school year and additionally at various times during the school year to compare the rate of growth.

Goal #2: In FY 24 ISVI will increase enrollment for on campus services and 0-3 programs by 10% given increased social media presence, in person services, and in person outreach events.

- Schools will promote themselves in a positive light on social media and school websites to encourage student enrollment.
- Keep social media and websites up to date with school events and activities.
- Schools will work with school districts to encourage IEP placement in an IDHS-DRS school .
- IEP team meetings

ISVI Success Stories



Students Deejaing the opening celebrations over the summer as camps.



Mrs. Kerhlikar and Lexie planting flowers on campus.



Opening Doors family celebrating the 175th.

ISVI will be 175 years old on January 13th of 2024. In February of 2023, a committee was formed to support the celebration of this monumental achievement. This committee met monthly and is derived from current staff members, previous superintendents, previous administration, PTO executive committee members, Alumni committee members, Lions Club members, student Council representatives, and current staff. The committee was tasked to design educational activities, community events, alumni events and Gala. The committee’s goal was to uncover the history, educate the state the long-standing educational options offered by the school and to #uncoverthehiddengem. They agreed upon an expected outcome of “raising community awareness of the school and needs of the students as well as celebrating those who have come before us, their legacy, and the ongoing legacy of the school.” The committee along with ISVI administration developed a calendar of events that would occur monthly throughout the yearlong celebration. This included items such as being in the state fair parade and parades in Jacksonville to raise awareness. There were service projects that included planting flowers and trees to beautify the campus. Musical celebrations, trivia games, and alumni and current student body challenges! There will be a Gala for both students and community members. The student Gala will occur on campus and the community Gala will occur at Hamilton’s in Jacksonville. The calendar items will culminate with a ISVI alumni retreat weekend that will be supported by IDHS-DRS and BCCBS in June of 2024. This retreat will focus on employment needs, assistive technology supports, and a dinner/dance with alumni and staff.

Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education- Roosevelt (ICRE-R)

The mission of ICRE-R is to provide transition services including independent living, post-secondary education, vocational training, advocacy, community participation, and services to assist students with disabilities in achieving the highest level of independence in community living and employment. ICRE-R, first opened in September of 1946 under the name Illinois Children's Hospital-School (ICHHS), provides a comprehensive transition program for students with physical disabilities and other health impairments who have completed their high school education, but have deferred their high school diplomas. The program is four (4) years in length and is available to students for four (4) years or until they reach 22 years of age, whichever comes first.

ICRE-R works with students, parent/guardian, local education, and community agencies to assist with coordinating services from high school to adult living. Students may attend ICRE-R as a residential student in the dormitories or attend the day program Monday - Thursday, as a day student. Each student's program is tailored to his/her individual needs, skills, and interests and each have the opportunity to learn:

- Living Skills,
- Vocational Skills,
- Employability Skills,
- Self-Advocacy,
- Social Skills,
- Leisure Skills,
- Medical Management, and
- Mobility Skills

Students participate in College Education and Vocational Training. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are part of the students programming and help coordinate the services that will best suit the needs of the students and their families. ICRE-R offers a wide variety of evening extracurricular programs in the arts, music, drone program, rock climbing, swim, and dance. Services at ICRE-R are offered at no charge to Illinois residents.

FY23 Highlights

- ICRE-R provided educational instruction to 32 transition students and 6 Pre-Employment Preparation students.
- Six students were able to live independently in their own community apartments with support from skills learned from the ICRE transition program.
- Students participated in the Mobility Access Program (IMAP) whereby, through the efforts of a mobility trainer, students learned independent mobility throughout the entire Chicagoland area.
- Successfully expanded our culinary arts program to include a pop-up kitchen and coffee shop.
- Students performed dance routine for the mayor of Chicago during the Mayor's community program.
- Education Department restructured and implemented new assessment tool to measure student progress.
- Collaborated with the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) to Implement ICRE-R Self- Employment program.

Vision for FY24

- Ensure that all eligible students are connected with appropriate housing options, including PUNS and the Statewide Referral Network (SRN).
- Increase enrollment in college for current students attending the ICRE program and provide ongoing support.
- Ensure students with apartments are prepared for successful independent living, including budgeting, and having access to community resources.
- Maintain current infection control practices to assure healthy/safe learning environment.
- Expand job and internship opportunities.



Raven Harvey, a dedicated 4th year student at ICRE-R, proudly manages Coffee Corner, ICRE-R's popular coffee shop, where she also showcases her culinary flair with her own range of baked goods.

Beyond her management and baking skills, Raven's commitment to personal growth shines through. She was honored with the 'Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities' award from the UIC Department of Disability and Human Development. Furthering her passion, she also attended The Food Tech Innovation Summit, delving deep into the advancements of food technology. Raven's multifaceted involvement speaks to her determination and drive, setting her apart as a notable figure in our community.

Bureau of Planning and Strategic Management (BPSM)

The Bureau of Planning and Strategic Management (BPSM) is one of six Bureaus within the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) which consolidates mandated administrative and reporting requirements of all employment and independent living related programs to ensure the expectations of customers are met and the internal goals and guiding principles of the Division are maintained.

BPSM has four units under its umbrella: Auditing, Data Analysis, Quality Assurance, and Assistive & Information Technology Support. This particular Bureau provides support and direction to central office staff within the Division, including employees working directly with our customers.

BPSM FY 23 Highlights

Over the past fiscal year, there is much to note. The highlights include:

- Audits transitioned the following duties and responsibilities into its auspices: represented Title IV as a member of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) work group, collaborating with other Titles; coordinated several program Compliance, Financial, and Single Audits.
- Data Analysis provided data support and technical assistance to numerous reporting projects and programs that included: Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE); Qualtrics; Staff Appreciation and Customer Satisfaction Survey; Equity and Racial Justice Act (ERJA).
- Quality Assurance provided quarterly, and annual audit summaries of audits conducted in the HSP and VR programs, and special audits.
- AITS initiate a plan to visit each Field Office, meeting with IDHS-DRS employees to answer any hardware/software questions; provide each office with a tailored in-service; help surplus old equipment; and prepare for the FY25 computer refresh.

Vision for FY24

BPSM's vision for FY24 runs parallel to that of the Division. Supporting our customers in living where and as they want; and working competitively in the job of their dreams is paramount. BPSM recognizes that to achieve not only the overarching vision of IDHS-DRS but the goals of each individual four units, mandates that we refocus. We conceptualize a second set of customers, our peer group, and colleagues. Providing support to our employees as we work collaboratively as part of IDHS-DRS' team, is the way in which BPSM will position itself to reach for the goals perpetually moving ahead of us.

Program Services

Auditing responds to state and federal accountability standards through transparency. Auditing provides a coordinated and formal response to how dollars are spent, and how other resources are allocated. When needed, Auditing works with other departments to formulate and report any corrective action to our agency stakeholders.

Data Analysis is responsible for guiding the Division driven by data and logic. Data Analysis determines through quantitative data how the Division is doing in reaching identified goals. Data Analysis also works closely with Quality Assurance. The two units, Data Analysis and Quality Assurance are different sides of the same coin.

Quality Assurance ensures that policies and rules for providing services to our customers are done with excellence and within the parameters of directives and regulations. The Quality Assurance unit monitors and assesses the provision of services to our customers in both the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Home Services Program (HSP). In contrast to Data Analysis's quantitative evaluation, Quality Assurance takes a more qualitative approach to auditing the services provided.

The **Assistive and Information Technology Support** unit works with field and central office staff by coordinating the technology used within the Division. Thus, supporting IDHS-DRS' employees in performing their jobs. Assistive and Information Technology Support is the first stop for those in this Division in fixing and refreshing malfunctioning hardware and software.

BPSM Success Stories



Denise Merle standing at the stove in the IATP Smart Home Kitchen

In 2012 Denise experienced a blood clot that led to hemorrhaging in her brain, doing damage to her optic nerve. While she regained her ability to walk, she **lost her vision** and was diagnosed with **permanent and severe neuropathy** in her hands.

Denise began to work with IATP staff in 2022. With their assistance Denise has shown **significant improvement** in her ability to be **independent**. She has now learned how to use **screen reader technology**, and also different assistive technology configurations to **reduce the limitations** from her neuropathy. She has also learned many useful methods for utilizing items in her home, specifically her kitchen. Through the assistance of the **SmartHome and Tech Kitchen**, IATP has provide instruction on meal preparation, accessing appliances, and utilizing different kitchen safety devices.

Denise has also begun to learn how to use smart phone devices and will now have the ability to use a smart phone.

The success story above is made all the more significant because represents the partnership of IATP and IDHS-DRS who came together to impact a life in a positive way. The smile on Denise' face radiates joy and that is why we are here.

Bureau of Support Services (BSS)

BSS realigns the Operational Support functions in the Division focusing on budget, fiscal analysis and payment management, ensuring operational efficiency and oversight of funding, contracts, and expenditures.

Funding, Allocation, and Spending

Total All Funds Allocation & Spending

\$ in thousands

Funding	Final Enacted	Final Spending
Federal	\$337,087.9	\$205,162.3
General Revenue & Other State	\$1,105,574.	\$1,070,843.
Total	\$1,442,662.	\$1,276,006.

Federal Allocation & Spending

Appropriation/Program Name	Final Enacted	Final Spending
Total Federal Allocation & Spending	\$337,087.9	\$205,162.3
Disability Determination Services	\$118,183.8	\$66,918.5
Personal Services	\$39,982.4	\$24,426.4
Retirement	\$22,438.9	\$13,026.2
Social Security	\$3,502.4	\$1,966.9
Group Insurance	\$11,691.5	\$7,158.0
Contractual Services	\$11,601.8	\$5,733.3
Travel	\$198.0	\$2.4
Commodities	\$379.1	\$14.5
Printing	\$384.0	\$153.1
Equipment	\$1,600.9	\$3.5
Telecommunications	\$1,404.7	\$341.5
Operation of Auto Equipment	\$0.1	\$0.0
Services to Disabled Individuals	\$25,000.0	\$14,092.7
Vocational Rehabilitation Program & Related	\$181,906.3	\$119,146.4
Personal Services	\$45,218.1	\$32,316.8
Retirement	\$25,377.3	\$17,200.3
Social Security	\$3,563.6	\$2,386.3
Group Insurance	\$13,745.2	\$9,086.7
Contractual Services	\$8,689.8	\$2,495.7
Travel	\$1,455.9	\$75.5
Commodities	\$313.2	\$49.6
Printing	\$150.1	\$5.6
Equipment	\$1,669.9	\$114.7
Telecommunications	\$1,493.2	\$645.4
Operation of Auto Equipment	\$30.0	\$7.4

Federal Vocational Rehabilitation programs and related costs, including Case Services	\$65,000.0	\$43,049.9
Supportive Employment	\$3,500.0	\$2,558.6
Federal Assistive Technology Act Services	\$8,000.0	\$7,345.0
Business Enterprise Program for the Blind	\$3,700.0	\$1,808.7
Educational & Training Facilities	\$2,370.0	\$953.6
Federally Assisted Programs	\$2,000.0	\$730.0
Vocational Programming	\$200.0	\$154.3
Vocational Programming	\$50.0	\$30.9
Vocational Programming	\$120.0	\$38.4
Independent Living & Related	\$8,852.7	\$6,063.8
Independent Living Centers	\$5,807.2	\$4,531.0
Independent Living Older Blind	\$3,045.5	\$1,532.8
Client Assistance Project	\$1,179.2	\$0.0
Client Assistance Project	\$1,179.2	\$0.0
Indirect Program & Administrative Support	\$19,102.2	\$11,549.0
Personal Services	\$5,449.2	\$3,514.2
Retirement	\$3,058.2	\$1,874.1
Social Security	\$416.9	\$257.1
Group Insurance	\$1,652.1	\$1,084.0
Contractual Services	\$1,500.0	\$0.0
Leased Property Management	\$5,076.2	\$4,819.1
Travel	\$136.0	\$0.0
Commodities	\$136.5	\$0.0
Printing	\$87.0	\$0.0
Equipment	\$298.6	\$0.0
Telecommunications	\$1,226.5	\$0.4
Operation of Auto Equipment	\$50.0	\$0.0
Tort Claims	\$10.0	\$0.0
Refunds-Vocational Rehabilitation Fund	\$5.0	\$0.0
Indirect/Direct Management Information Systems	\$5,493.7	\$531.1
Personal Services	\$477.8	\$292.1
Retirement	\$268.2	\$156.1
Social Security	\$36.6	\$21.5
Group Insurance	\$76.2	\$61.4
Contractual Services	\$705.0	\$0.0
Contractual Services IT Management	\$2,280.7	\$0.0
Travel	\$10.0	\$0.0
Commodities	\$30.6	\$0.0
Printing	\$5.8	\$0.0
Equipment	\$50.0	\$0.0

Telecommunications	\$1,550.0	\$0.0
Operation of Auto Equipment	\$2.8	\$0.0

General Revenue & Other State Allocation & Spending

Appropriation/Program Name	Final Enacted	Final Spending
Total State Allocation & Spending	\$1,105,574.1	\$1,070,843.8
Home Services Program	\$1,042,063.8	\$1,015,847.7
Personal Services	\$3,068.3	\$3,068.3
Social Security	\$223.1	\$223.0
Home Services Program	\$782,772.4	\$782,349.7
Home Services Program	\$256,000.0	\$230,206.7
Vocational Rehabilitation Program & Related	\$18,423.8	\$15,983.7
Supported Employment Programs	\$90.0	\$62.1
State Match to Supports for Federal Vocational Rehabilitation programs, Incl Case Services	\$18,333.8	\$15,921.6
Educational & Training Facilities (ISD, ISVI, ICRE-W, ICRE-R)	\$38,581.5	\$32,847.9
Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD)	\$20,303.9	\$17,520.7
Personal Services	\$16,482.6	\$14,373.8
Student Member/Inmate Compensation	\$18.2	\$13.3
Social Security	\$1,277.1	\$798.0
Contractual Services	\$1,734.0	\$1,623.4
Travel	\$16.8	\$14.5
Commodities	\$372.0	\$294.4
Printing	\$9.9	\$9.9
Equipment	\$182.0	\$182.0
Telecommunications	\$108.8	\$108.7
Operation Of Auto Equipment	\$102.5	\$102.5
Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI)	\$10,772.0	\$9,679.4
Personal Services	\$9,022.6	\$8,207.9
Student Member/Inmate Compensation	\$14.6	\$11.6
Social Security	\$690.2	\$451.4
Contractual Services	\$694.0	\$694.0
Travel	\$11.3	\$4.6
Commodities	\$193.5	\$193.5
Printing	\$2.1	\$2.1
Equipment	\$35.8	\$27.8
Telecommunications	\$48.1	\$47.8
Operation Of Auto Equipment	\$59.8	\$38.8
Illinois School for Rehabilitation & Education - Wood (ICRE-W)	\$1,358.1	\$948.3
Personal Services	\$1,208.3	\$842.2
Social Security	\$92.4	\$62.2

Contractual Services	\$57.4	\$43.8
Illinois School for Rehabilitation & Education - Roosevelt (ICRE-R)	\$6,147.5	\$4,699.6
Personal Services	\$4,682.5	\$3,449.9
Student Member/Inmate Compensation	\$1.8	\$0.0
Social Security	\$358.2	\$231.0
Contractual Services	\$893.7	\$843.9
Travel	\$3.3	\$0.4
Commodities	\$53.1	\$36.9
Printing	\$3.1	\$3.1
Equipment	\$27.5	\$16.7
Telecommunications	\$108.8	\$108.8
Operation Of Auto Equipment	\$15.5	\$9.0
Independent Living & Related	\$6,505.0	\$6,164.6
Independent Living Centers	\$6,358.9	\$6,018.5
Independent Living Older Blind	\$146.1	\$146.1

Federal enacted allocations represent the authority to spend. Final federal spending represents the cash available. The authority is set higher than the actual federal cash to allow for changes in federal funding that may occur after the budget is enacted.

Division of Rehabilitation Services Support and Oversight

Client Assistance Program

The Illinois Client Assistance Program (CAP), established as part of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce and Innovation and Opportunity Act, is a federally funded program designed to help persons with disabilities in understanding and using rehabilitation services. The CAP program was redesignated to EFE effective June 30, 2022. EFE was founded in 1985 and serves as an independent not-for-profit corporation and the protection and advocacy (P&A) agency in Illinois.

EFE's mission is to protect the rights and interests of persons with all types of disabilities, including intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, mental illness, and physical disabilities.

FY23 Highlights

IDHS-DRS worked closely with EFE to assist in a smooth transition and orientation as EFE assumed the responsibilities for managing CAP. CAP provides IDHS-DRS customers with assistance in helping persons with disabilities understand and utilize rehabilitation services.

Summary of CAP Closures	Customers	% of Total
All issues resolved in Customer's favor	29	30%
Some Issues resolved in Customer's favor	23	24%
Customer unresponsive/ uncooperative	19	20%
Case lacks Merit for CAP intervention	8	8%
Other	8	8%
Withdraw complaint/no further intervention needed	6	6%
VR Decision Determined Appropriate	4	4%
TOTAL	97	100%

Vision for FY24

Continue to build Independent CAP

The CAP program was redesignated to Equip for Equality effective June 30, 2022. Much of our work in FY2024 will be to build the program by:

- Serving individual customers, with targeted outreach to underserved populations,
- Engaging in strategic planning,
- Continuing to build up our website, materials, and resources, and
- Continuing to collaborate with IDHS-DRS leadership to identify how CAP and IDHS-DRS can best serve customers.

Goals for Effectively Serving Individual VR Customers and CIL Consumers

- Serve 50+ individuals under the CAP program,
- Identify trends from our individual representation and bring them to the attention of IDHS-DRS leadership for discussion, and
- Continue efforts to identify and address barriers to services faced by underserved communities.

Creating Self-Advocacy Materials

- Create and publish additional act sheets on issues including VR services, effective self-advocacy, employment rights under the Title I of the ADA, and transition-related issues.

Outreach/training, including Priority Populations

- Expand outreach efforts to WIPAs and other benefits counselors who work with SII and SSDI,
- Continue trainings about topics including VR services, effective self-advocacy, employment rights under the Title I of the ADA, transition-related issues, and
- Target specific populations for outreach, including:
 - o Court-Involved Youth

- Individuals with IDD, including individuals living in Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILAs) or State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs)
- Individuals with mental health diagnosis

CAP Success Story

Daijah is a college sophomore who hopes to become a doctor. She has difficulty commuting to school due to a physical disability and needs to live in on-campus housing in order to access both class and medical care. Before starting her freshman year, Daijah applied to receive services from DRS to help her pay for college. Although DRS agreed to provide Daijah with tuition assistance, she was informed that she could not receive funding to help with her on-campus housing costs because her family home is in the same city as her college. Without assistance from DRS, Daijah was struggling to afford the on-campus housing that she needed in order to succeed in her classes.

Near the end of her freshman year, Daijah got in touch with CAP and explained that she had been told that she was not eligible to receive housing assistance from DRS. CAP informed her that because she has a disability-related need to live on campus, she could request an exception to DRS's general policy against providing funding for on-campus housing to students who live in the same city that they attend school in. In support of Daijah's exception request, CAP helped her obtain medical documentation of her need to live in on-campus housing and drafted a letter to DRS outlining the justification for the requested exception. Daijah's exception request was granted before the start of her second year of school, and she was approved to receive DRS assistance with her on-campus housing and food costs moving forward.

Disability Determination Services

The evaluation of claims for the federal disability program is administered through the Illinois Bureau of Disability Determination Services (BDDS), which determines the eligibility of Illinois citizens to receive benefits under the Social Security Administration's (SSA) disability programs. The BDDS' budget is 100% federally funded by the SSA. Employees at BDDS understand these benefits are crucial for citizens looking to build a secure foundation for their lives.

The mission of the Illinois Bureau of Disability Determination Services (BDDS) is to make accurate, timely disability decisions based on objective medical documentation, and as appropriate, consideration of vocational history, including age, education, and previous work experience.

Each claim received by the IL BDDS is subject to strict Social Security Administration (SSA) requirements for quality control, accuracy measures, confidentiality, and processing time parameters. The final decision on disability is made based on objective evidence by highly trained adjudicators in collaboration with a professional medical consultant.

The IL DDS strives daily to make both accurate and timely decisions for all IL citizens who apply. Each disability application received by the BDDS is thoroughly reviewed employing precise SSA requirements and the disability determination is made utilizing objective evidence coupled with information received from the applicants and those who know them.

FY23 Highlights

BDDS Ranked **second in the Chicago region** in the Federal Quality Assurance Accuracy Rate in FY 23. Quality is Social Security Administration's highest level of review and is as critical to the integrity of the claim.

National Rate	Regional Rate	Illinois Rate
94.4%	95%	96%

FFY 23 Goals and Outcomes:

GOAL: Recruitment and Retention activities to be able to assist more IL Citizens.

ONGOING: We have begun both this year. We, along with IDHS-DRS have recruited 94 new hires with 68 of these hires as trainees. Retention activities include bringing back the Annual Appreciation Reception, along with

awards, monthly communicative newsletters sharing highlights of the month from the Deputy Director, and Suggestion Box for suggestions or complaints.

GOAL: Continue with in-house training of new examiners and provide longer one-on-one mentorship until proficiency is gained. Adjudicating a disability case is challenging especially with the ever-changing environment and enhancements to the case processing system.

ONGOING: We have started a mentoring program and have allowed trainees to stay an extra three (3) months together in the training unit instead of placing them in an Adjudicative Section after 6-9 months. Mentors are then available to answer questions and provide one-on-one assistance.

GOAL: Further in-house training to maximize new releases to the new case processing system.

ONGOING: Several enhancements occurred this year to provide efficiencies with the case processing system. Training occurred as necessary. Staff have stated they are still challenged, although more enhancements are helping.

GOAL: Process enough of the case types from the SSA IL Field Offices

MET: IL DDS met all targeted goals for FFY 2023.

FY 2023	Goal	Actual Clearances
Initials	51,607	54,459
Reconsiderations	14,753	15,445
Continuing Disability Reviews	21,715	21,838
Other	7,754	8,169
Total:	95,829	99,911

Priorities for FFY24

Continuing Disability Reviews are promoted by SSA as their Integrity Goal for the FFY 2024. In FFY 2024, SSA has given IL DDS goals for the following types of cases:

Case Type	Service Goal FY 2024
Initials	50,253
Reconsiderations	15,574
Continuing Disability Reviews	23,039
Other Case Types	7,787

New Program Development for FFY 24:

DDS hopes to have a new Section designed to address various needs of the Bureau including, but not limited to:

- A unit of specialized staff who adjudicate special claim types and adjudicate abandoned backlogs.
- Two units designed to work with examiners who are struggling to meet goals providing intensive review of casework and providing intensive remedial training.
- Supervisor Training Team made up of three SPSA Section Chiefs from Adjudication Services Division, who will:
 - present supervisor workshops on topics related specifically to identifying trends in case adjudication and dashboard management,
 - how to identify and address inefficient case processing, and
 - host workshops geared toward the challenges of working with new trainees.
- Established a new staging dashboard on our case processing system to allow for more efficient re-assignment of claims to adjudicators one day a week.
- Established a new priority assignment dashboard to prioritize claim assignments.
- BDDS is engaged in modernization efforts with team members from DHS, SSA, DDS, DoIT, and SAP. Modernization will improve shift the processing of Medical Records and payments to the Consultative Exam System from a paper driven procedure to an electronic procedure through the Disability Case Processing.
- Process modernization will eliminate approximately 300,000 pieces of paper each year from being printed and stored and will streamline the payment process for employees and vendors.

DDS Success Story

A Claimant called requesting dire need consideration and expedited assignment as she was behind on her monthly bills and had food insecurities. While the request did not reach level for a dire need flag to be added, further investigation determined the claimant was receiving chronic dialysis. The case was expedited for development. The assigned adjudicator was able to expedite development and allow that claim after only five days of assignment.

Statewide Rehabilitation Council

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) advises the Secretary of the Department of Human Services and the Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services in matters concerning individuals with disabilities and the provision of rehabilitation services. The SRC provides true customer input into the current and future VR process.

SRC's specific federal mandates include:

- Reviewing, analyzing, and advising IDHS-DRS regarding its performance
- Advising and assisting in the development of the State Plan for VR services
- Reviewing and evaluating customer satisfaction
- Coordinating activities with other councils
- Identifying, jointly developing, and reviewing VR goals and priorities
- Jointly selecting Impartial Hearing Officers with IDHS-DRS

FY 23 Highlights

- Facilitated the federally mandated Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment,
- developed draft goals for the Vocational Rehabilitation of the WIOA Unified State Plan,
- filled critical board vacancies,
- resumed in-person council meetings, and
- provided Statewide presence by holding meetings in geographically diverse locations around the State.

Vision for 2024

- Finalize goals for the Vocational Rehabilitation of the WIOA Unified State Plan,
- collaborate with IDHS-DRS to develop objectives aligned with the State Plan goals and in advocacy of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results,
- update brochures and communication materials, and
- revise By-laws and Orientation and Policy Manuals to allow for hybrid attendance and revised quorum requirements.

Committees

Executive Committee consists of five (5) elected officers - Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Fiscal Officer, and Member-at-Large. The Committee is responsible for ensuring the Council acts in accordance with federal and state statutes; manages the affairs of the Council in the interim between meetings; reviews the appointment categories the Council will need to fill in conjunction with the Membership Recruitment Committee; maintains a list of potential candidates to fill vacancies; and submits selected candidates for the following year to the Governor's Office of Executive Appointments for consideration.

Operations Committee consists of all Standing Committee Chairs and is responsible for developing an overall management plan for the Council and the Annual Report. With the assistance of other Committees, the Operations Committee shall identify the Council's goals and priorities for the year and shall identify the appropriate level of resources needed to accomplish the Council's tasks. Operations, procedures and policies will be developed and maintained in The Council's Orientation Manual, to be reviewed annually. The Committee shall also be responsible for reviewing the bylaws and submitting revisions to the Council. The bylaws shall be reviewed annually, and the Committee may make revisions as provided in Article VIII.

Policy/Legislative Committee is responsible for monitoring legislation that will have an impact on individuals with disabilities and on the operations of the Division of Rehabilitation Services. This shall include matters that affect and concern the Division's budget period. The Committee will make recommendations to the full Council with regard to positions on legislation and on the Division's budget. The Committee is also responsible for reviewing proposed changes to administrative rules and preparing a response to such changes on behalf of the Council.

Membership

SRC members are appointed by the Governor with the majority having a disability. Membership includes representatives from:

- Disability and Advocacy Organizations
- Business, Industry, and Labor
- Community Rehabilitation Service Providers
- Client Assistance Program
- Secondary or Higher Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- Current or Former Customer of VR Services
- Parent Training Information Centers
- State Board of Education
- State Workforce Innovation Board
- Blind Services Planning Council
- Statewide Independent Living Council
- Director of IDHS-DRS

Current members are listed at: [State Rehabilitation Council Members](#)

To apply to become a Statewide Rehabilitation Councilmember, please visit the appointments [website](#).

Blind Services Planning Council

The Illinois Blind Services Planning Council (BSPC) reviews actions of the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Bureau of Customer and Community Blind Services (BCCBS). BCCBS facilitates communication and cooperation between agencies responsible for services to people who are blind and visually impaired. BSPC also identifies the needs and problems facing the blind community and makes recommendations to the Bureau Chief of BCCBS, Director of IDHS-DRS, Secretary of IDHS, and the Governor of Illinois.

FY 23 Highlights:

The Blind Services Planning Council

- participated in the hiring process of the IDHS-DRS Bureau Chief for Customer and Community Blind Services, Kim Borowicz,
- hosted quarterly meetings, where members reviewed reports from BCCBS as well as from representatives of various community providers and stakeholders who share information regarding services to the blind and visually impaired citizens of the State of Illinois.
- Agencies and stakeholders involved with BSPC are members of the American Council of the Blind, Illinois Council of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, Illinois Committee of Blind Vendors, Centers for Independent Living, Illinois State University, and BCCBS staff.

Vision for FY 24:

The Blind Services Planning Council will

- Partner with an advocacy group to improve library services for the blind and visually impaired. Library services directly impact the blind community, especially in providing Braille and audiobooks.
- Arrange five regional listening sessions with consumers who have a vision loss to hear what is needed in their community.
- Continue participating in other statewide councils such as the State Rehabilitation Council, to ensure the needs of the blind community are heard.

Membership

Eleven members are appointed by the Governor. BSPC currently has nine members. The Council elects a Chairperson and a Recording Secretary from its members. Membership terms are three years, and members may serve a maximum of two terms. At least six members must be blind.

Statewide Independent Living Council

OUR VISION

We see an Illinois where persons with disabilities are independent, in control of their lives, and free from barriers to full participation in society.

OUR MISSION

To provide leadership, research, planning, and education required to support independent living services in Illinois. We achieve our mission by: Identifying and reaching out to persons currently un-served and underserved by Centers for Independent Living; Increasing awareness of independent living services and the independent living philosophy; Helping existing CILs to better serve persons with disabilities; and promoting the development of new CILs.

SILC's activities include: Sponsoring public hearings, public meetings, policy summits, and other educational and outreach efforts; providing information to public officials, state agencies and local organizations and individuals; and conducting studies, training and research.

FY 23 Highlights

- On July 12th SILC hosted the Annual Transportation Meeting. HSTP Coordinators, representatives from IDOT, and DHS, along with CIL staff were in attendance.
- On August 2nd, SILC hosted a webinar with Dr. Jonna Cooley educating CIL staff on how to make our CILs more open and welcoming to the LGBTQI+ community.
- On September 21st we recorded our final video “The Basics of Riding the Bus; On Demand Service”. The video is posted on our website along with previous videos educating riders on how to use fixed route bus services, and how to access para transit services.
- On September 26th SILC hosted a Lunch and Learn Webinar “**People with Disabilities: Bringing Diverse Skills to the Workforce**”. Our featured panelists were Robin Jones from Great Lakes ADA, Stephanie Lipe from IDHS-DRS Workforce Development Unit, and an employer from both Collinsville and Highland.
- SILC along with Advocates for Access presented three trainings concerning emergency preparedness. Two trainings were held in October at Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) headquarters and one training with Chicago’s Red Cross volunteers concerning how CILs can partner with Emergency Management agencies before, during, and after emergencies.
- SILC captured data concerning the number of incoming requests for home modifications for each CIL. The data was instrumental for the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL) Advocacy team to advocate for 7 million dollars to go specifically to the CILs to fund home modifications.

Vision for 2024

- SILC will complete the next three-year State Plan for Independent Living.
- Continue our work on transportation issues across the state and host another annual transportation meeting to foster productive relationships between CIL staff and transportation providers.
- Partner with Great Lakes ADA and IDHS-DRS Workforce Development Unit to present the Webinar “**People with Disabilities: Bringing Diverse Skills to the Workforce**”, to potential employers.
- Develop trainings on subjects such as Deaf Culture, Emergency Preparedness, Voting Rights under the ADA, and Forming Effective Tenant Councils.
- Seek collaborative relationships with other groups and organizations to help bring positive change across both our state and the nation.

Success Story

SILC, along with INCIL and CIL staff have been involved with a newly Governor-appointed committee tasked with writing a detailed plan with IEMA, The Department of Public Health, and the Red Cross for people with access and functional needs. Through this work, we were made aware of a new job posting for both IEMA and the Department of Public Health for a dedicated staff person to oversee matters of access and functional needs. The job posting did not originally emphasize the need for the new hires to have lived experience with a disability or prior work expertise in this area. After our advocacy efforts, the preferred qualifications for the job posting were changed to include the new hires to either have lived experience or prior work expertise with disabilities. “Nothing about us without us.”

Membership

[SILC’S](#) board is made up of 18 volunteers appointed by the Governor. A majority of voting members must be persons with disabilities who do not work for state agencies or Centers for Independent Living. Members are from all regions of the state, represent a broad range of disabilities, and are knowledgeable about the Centers for Independent Living and independent living services. Voting members include persons with disabilities, parents, advocates, and representatives from private businesses, organizations serving persons with disabilities, and CILs. SILC has five (5) non-voting members who represent state agencies providing services to persons with disabilities.

[Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois | Since 1993 \(silcofillinois.org\)](https://silcofillinois.org)