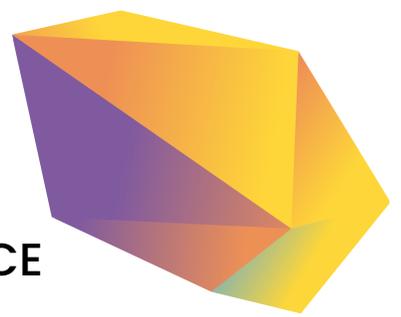


24th Annual QIDP Leadership Conference

JANUARY 27, 2026 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



**9:00 - 10:05 am The ICTW: An Overview of Services and the School-to-Work Transition Guide
presented by Jim Mayer**

In this session, Jim Mayer of the ICTW (Illinois Center for Transition and Work) will provide an overview of the various services and efforts of the ICTW, in its mission of improving employment outcomes for transition-aged youth who have extensive support needs. The ICTW, funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, and housed at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, has been in existence for 5 years. Mayer will discuss the wide array of services and resources offered by the ICTW, including regional and statewide training events, technical assistance to Illinois schools, and numerous website-based resources. Mayer will particularly focus on one of the resources highlighted on the ICTW website, the School-to-Work Transition Guide. This Guide provides clear, up-to-date information about the process of supporting Illinois students with disabilities in their transition from school to work. Created by the Illinois Transition Study Group, a collaborative effort of representatives from the Illinois Center for Transition and Work, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services, and numerous Illinois school districts. Target audience for the Guide include students, parents/guardians, teachers, school administrators, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and other school-based and adult-services providers.

**10:05 - 11:05 am Improving CIE Outcomes Across Illinois: The Role of SWTCIE and the Illinois Institute for Rehabilitation and Employment Research
Presented by Sharon Bergfeld, Kim Knauf, and Kyle Menke**

This presentation provides an overview of the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE Illinois) project and other initiatives within the Institute for Rehabilitation and Employment Research (IIRER) that strive to advance Community Integrated Employment for people with disabilities across the state. Participants will learn how the SWTCIE model supports individuals with disabilities in achieving competitive, community-based jobs, and how the IIRER serves as a statewide hub for training, resources, and research.

11:05 - 11:15 am Break

**11:15 am - 12:15 pm Presentation Title to be Announced
Presented by Amie Burke**

12:15 - 12:45 pm Lunch Break

**12:45 - 1:45 pm Illinois Assistive Technology Program
Presented by Lynette Strode**

This presentation will provide an overview of the numerous assistive technology programs and services available for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Lynette will share a few devices to think outside of Durable Medical Equipment (DME) when it comes to Assistive Technology (AT) devices.

**1:45 - 3:00 pm Practical, Safe Ways QIDPs and DSPs Can Use AI to Reduce Overwhelm and Strengthen Person-Centered Supports
Presented by Dr. Jean Hess**

Direct support professionals and QIDPs are carrying more than ever: documentation, communication, crisis response, person-centered planning, and constant staffing pressures. Many are hearing about AI but aren't sure what it means for their daily work, or how to use it safely with the people they support.

This session focuses on practical, low-risk ways QIDPs and DSPs can use AI—within clear agency guardrails—to reduce overwhelm and strengthen person-centered supports. We will explore everyday tasks where AI can help: drafting progress notes from bullet points, organizing information for team meetings, brainstorming person-centered goals, translating complex letters into plain language, or creating visual schedules and social stories. Throughout, we will emphasize privacy, consent, and trauma-informed practice so that technology never replaces relationships or voice.

Using real-world examples, participants will see how AI can shorten paperwork time while still honoring accuracy and dignity. Small-group reflection will invite DSPs and QIDPs to map one or two “pain points” in their workday and identify where AI, used responsibly and with supervision, might lessen the load.

3:00 - 3:15 pm Break

**3:15 - 4:00 pm The Q is the Glue: Your Vital Role in the Lives of the Individuals You Support
Presented by Ruth Aguilar and Annie Bruno**

During this session, Annie and Ruth will share their expertise as previous QIDPs in both ISC agencies and provider agencies. Attendees will learn the importance of being an effective communicator, problem-solver, and team builder, while centering their work in uplifting the individuals they support.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Ruth Aguilar

Ruth Aguilar, QIDP, has over fifteen years of combined experience advocating for people with disabilities. She holds a B.S Psychology from the Illinois Institute of Technology and Professional Graduate Studies in Non-Profit from Harvard University. Ruth's professional experience stems from working previously in an ISC Agency and then as a Self-Directed Assistant serving the community with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Moreover, with her personal expertise as a mother of a teen girl with Rett Syndrome and Seizure Disorder, Ruth brings a wealth of knowledge to the families by assisting them in how to obtain services and understanding their options by being assertive, yet professional.

Sharon Bergfeld

Sharon Bergfeld serves as a community research specialist for the SWTCIE Illinois project and the Illinois Institute for Rehabilitation and Employment Research at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is a retired special education teacher, having began her teaching career with the Kendall County Special Education Cooperative in Yorkville, IL, and later joined School District 308 in Oswego, IL. She also served as a DRS STEP program coordinator for the district. As a certified transition specialist, she worked to support students and their families as they engaged in the transition planning process and prepared for adult life. Most recently, she was a member of the Illinois Transition Study Group tasked with developing the School-to-Work Transition Guide, a statewide transition guide designed to assist students, parents, educators, administrators and service providers navigate the transition planning process. This guide was rolled out at the Illinois Statewide Transition Conference in November 2023.

Annie Bruno

Annie Bruno, LCSW, QIDP, is the Family Advocate for Central & Southern Illinois. She holds a Master's Degree from the University of Illinois in Social Work and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, as well as a Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional. Annie has over fifteen years of experience working with individuals with disabilities and their families. She has spent time as a Service Facilitator in the Home Based program and as an Independent Service Coordinator at an ISC agency. Annie has a background in consulting and is passionate about assisting families with navigating complex service systems and connecting to available resources.

Amie Burke

Amie Burke, BCBA, received her Master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis and Therapy from Southern Illinois University. Amie is currently serving as the Clinical Director and oversees the Rockford, Springfield and Chicago offices. Amie has been with ICPN for over 8 years and has been in the field of ID/DD for 30 year. Her experience is with all levels of disabilities across the lifespan. Amie provides training on evidence-based practices such as Dealing with Challenging Behaviors, Data Collection, Management & Leadership, Caring for the Caregiver, and Empowering DSP's. Outside of work she likes to sew, walk her dogs and spend time with her husband and daughter.

Dr. Jean Hess

Dr. Jean Hess is an educator, AI strategist, and disability advocate whose work sits at the intersection of technology, ethics, and human-centered support. A career-long special educator and thought leader, she has spent decades designing inclusive systems, supporting families through complex transitions, and strengthening outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Today she helps disability organizations adopt artificial intelligence responsibly; protecting privacy, dignity, and choice while reducing workforce overwhelm and improving quality-of-life supports. She also brings lived experience as a parent navigating adult services on behalf of her son, grounding innovation in empathy, authenticity, and respect.

Jim Knauf

Jim Knauf serves as project manager for the SWTCIE Illinois Project at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He joined the U. of I. in February 2023 after a 37-year career with the Illinois Department of Human Services, the last 14 working in administration with the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Jim served as assistant bureau chief, training unit manager and policy advisor within the state's lead agency in placing individuals with disabilities into employment. In these capacities, he has worked closely with community rehabilitation facilities, centers for independent living and the State Rehabilitation Council, and provides the project with a solid background in state government.

Jim Mayer

Jim Mayer, M.S., CRC/retired, has been a Training Specialist for the Illinois Center for Transition and Work through the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) since August, 2022. Prior to serving at the ICTW, for 21 years Mayer served as a Transition Specialist, coordinating transition and work experiences (via the Secondary Transition Experience Program – STEP) for transition-aged students with a range of disabilities in Champaign County (Illinois). Mayer's earlier work experience includes 13 years as a coordinator of supported employment services for adults with developmental and/or psychiatric disabilities in Piatt County, Illinois. Over the years, Mayer has presented at a number of local, state, regional and national conferences and workshops, on a variety of topics related to transition and employment for individuals with disabilities. From 2001 through 2008, Mayer served as a training consultant and collaborator with the University of Illinois, Region V, CRP-RCEP (Community Rehabilitation Providers - Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program) a project coordinated by Prof. John Trach, Dept. of Special Education, UIUC.

Kyle Menke

Kyle Menke serves as a community research specialist for the SWTCIE Illinois project and the Illinois Institute for Rehabilitation and Employment Research (IIRER) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He brings to the team over 12 years of experience working with children and adults with diverse needs in school, home, and community settings. Most recently, Kyle served as a transition specialist for Chicago Public Schools, focusing on connecting students from across the city to essential vocational rehabilitation services through the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). Prior to that, Kyle served the students of Chicago as a community integration specialist. Through this role he provided city-wide travel instruction readiness instruction to students with disabilities, resulting in their safe and independent travel throughout the community on public transportation.

Lynette Strode

Lynette Strode has been with IATP for 22 years and oversees the Demonstration Center, Device Loan Program, and Special Projects for IATP. She enjoys her job as it is very rewarding to help someone find a device that can enrich their lives. Lynette has lived all over the world as both her father and husband were career military. She has two children and two dogs, is an avid reader, and enjoys traveling.

COST & REGISTRATION

Virtual Conference
January 27, 2026
9:00 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Registration Fees for Participants are:

The Arc of Illinois Members:

Professional.....\$110.00
Self-Advocate/Family Member.....\$55.00

Non Members of The Arc of Illinois:

Professional.....\$170.00
Self-Advocate/Family Member.....\$85.00

Groups of more than 7 from one agency are entitled to a 10% discount. Please complete the attached registration form, fax it to 815-464-5292, then mail the hard copy along with your check to:

The Arc of Illinois
7550 183rd Street
Tinley Park, IL 60477
815-464-1832

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS:

CEUs

CEUs will be offered for this training. Licensed Social Workers, Licensed Nursing Home Administrators and QIDP's signing in and out on the day of the event are entitled to six (6) credits.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

Participants canceling their registration 72 hours in advance will be entitled to a credit or refund, less a \$25.00 administrative cost. No refund or credit will be given for cancellation less than 72 hours before the seminar.

REGISTRATION FORM

QIDP Leadership Conference
January 27, 2026

One form per person, please print legibly.

Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

ACCOUNT PAYABLE: _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT:

____ Fax form and mail check to The Arc of Illinois
(815-464-5292)

____ Check enclosed payable to The Arc of Illinois

____ P.O. or State Voucher #

____ Charge to my Credit Card

Name as it appears on credit card:

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____ **CVV Code:** _____

Billing Zip Code: _____

Card holder's signature:
