



Available Resources Through Vocational Rehabilitation

Illinois Department of Human Services –
Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDHS-DRS)

Agenda

Vocational Rehabilitation offers a variety of services to individuals with a disability beginning at age 14. We will explore the different options available and how to access services.



How to Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- [DHS: Rehabilitation Services: Apply Online](#)
- [IDHS: Office Locator](#) – Search by Zip Code or County to find an office close.

Service *

☐ : I would like help getting or keeping a job

☐ : I would like help living independently at home

I have the *most* difficulty *

First Name *

Middle Name

Last Name *

Generation

Gender at Birth *

Date of Birth *

I have a legal guardian

Social Security Number

Zip Code *



Service Description Links

- [IDHS: Vocational Rehabilitation](#) – General information on the program and available services.
- [IDHS: Employment Services for Blind People or People with Low Vision](#)
- [IDHS: Employment Services for Deaf Persons or People who are Hard of Hearing](#)
- [IDHS: Employment Services for Hispanic, Latino, Latina, Latinx and/or Latine People with Disabilities](#)
- [IDHS: Home Services Program](#) – A program that allows individuals with disabilities to receive care in their home.



Who Can Participate in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)?

- A student with a disability in Illinois is defined as one who will be at least 14 and not older than 21 years of age or fall under Public Act 102-0172 which extends eligibility to the end of the regular school year for students whose 22nd birthday falls within a regular school term.
- The individual must be in a secondary education program and must be eligible for and receiving special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or is a student who is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Federal Register.
- There are different options for participation, based on the needs of the individual.



Five Required Pre-ETS

- **Job Exploration Counseling:** Discovering career interests and local labor market trends.
- **Work-Based Learning Experience:** Gaining hands-on experience through a variety of opportunities. Including internships, job shadowing, or employer-paid employment.
- **Workplace Readiness Training:** Building of soft skills and independent living skills related to employment.
- **Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities:** Exploring different types of training based on interests.
- **Instruction in Self-Advocacy:** Understanding rights, learning to communicate needs, and requesting accommodations.



Services Provided During Secondary Education

Pre-ETS are a set of specialized federally mandated services designed to help students with a disability successfully transition from high school to further education or employment. All contractual services are based upon these.

Pre-ETS increase opportunities for students with disabilities to increase and practice skills leading to meaningful competitive integrated employment. They also increase opportunities for further exploration of comprehensive transition programs, vocational and certificate training, and post-secondary education opportunities.

Services are focused on the Pre-ETS during high school. However, individualized services can also be provided.



Pre-ETS While in High School

- For areas without a contractual option, Pre-ETS are provided by the Local IDHS-DRS Office to students with a disability. Pre-ETS are provided as an early start to career exploration. Participation in Pre-ETS, leads to an increase of work skills, opportunities to participate in work-based learning experiences while in high school, and a knowledge and awareness of skills necessary for success after school exit.
- [IDHS: Office Locator](#) – Search by Zip Code or County to find an office close.



Contractual Options While in High School

- **Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Pre-Employment Career Training (PECT)**
– Available to students at Chicago Public Schools to participate in employer paid work-based learning experiences while in school. They are supported by a CRP.
- **Early Start** – Provides Pre-ETS to potentially eligible students with a disability. Eligibility is not determined and only the five Pre-ETS can be provided. If the student was in need of individualized services, they would need to move through the full eligibility process. Some examples of individualized services include, transportation or coaching to support the work-based learning experience, work clothes, or moving into adult services.
- **Pre-Employment Career Training (PECT) Program** – The PECT is a contract only available to local school districts/cooperatives/special education. Pre-ETS are provided as an early start to career exploration. Opportunities to increase work skills and work-based learning experiences while in high school are provided.



Contractual Options While in High School, continued

- **Project SEARCH**– A program available during their last year of school. It is a partnership between the school, a host business, and a CRP. This is a business led model classroom learning and a variety of internships occurring at the host business. Programming lasts the entire school year, and the end goal is obtaining competitive integrated employment.
- **Purchase of Service Youth:** A residential program for youth with a disability, ages 16-24, to participate in gaining independent living and employability skills.
- **Specialized PECT** – A program to provide the five Pre-ETS to students with a disability attending non-traditional schools.



Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Services Available During Last Year of High School

- Students may participate in adult service contracts in their last year of high school.
- This allows for an increase in skill development and career exploration to be better prepared for obtaining employment upon school exit.
- Participation with a CRP must be approved by the DRS counselor.





Education and Training Beyond High School

Customer Participation

- IDHS-DRS counselor will work with individuals interested in seeking further training.
- Approval for training must be obtained prior to funding agreement.
- Any funds available from a public source (Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), grants, awards, or scholarships) must be used before IDHS-DRS can contribute to training costs.
- IDHS-DRS will not pay for normal living expenses only the increased costs for attending a training program.
- There could be additional costs for housing and meals that will be further discussed on an individual basis.



Customer Responsibilities

- Customer must submit required documents for IDHS-DRS supports by the established deadline. Please work with your Local IDHS-DRS Office on those dates.
- These fall within the following timeframes:
 - Initially prior to funding approvals. Local IDHS-DRS Office will work with the customer on requirements.
 - Each semester of IDHS-DRS support information on grades and class schedule must be shared.
 - Annually financial aid information must be shared.
- Maintain a cumulative “C” (2.0) or above grade point average (GPA).



Training Timeframes

- IDHS-DRS will allow up to 3 years to complete an Associate's degree or become a Junior and no more than 3 additional years to complete a Bachelor's degree.
- There is no rule about courses that begin with a "0". However, IDHS-DRS counselor and customer must determine that the training program can be completed within the timeframe above.



College Transition Support Services (CTSS) Programs

- IDHS-DRS provides financial assistance to students seeking degrees or industry-recognized credentials required to achieve competitive integrated employment outcomes
- Many colleges and universities throughout the United States have programs which provide ongoing supports to students while these students are attending regular academic classes that lead to recognized degrees or credentials.
- 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.
- These are programs that IDHS-DRS can consider funding. Prior approval from IDHS-DRS is required. Funding is up to the max amount set by IDHS-DRS annually, after approval.



Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Program Support

- These programs support students with intellectual disabilities seeking to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction at an institute of higher education to prepare for gainful employment.
- IDHS-DRS can financially contribute CTP programs approved by the US Department of Education. Funding is up to the max amount set by IDHS-DRS annually, after approval.
- DRS approval must occur prior to any agreement for support. This process is completed with the Local IDHS-DRS Office. Approvals are on an individual basis.
- Student enrolled in the program meet satisfactory academic progress (SAP) as established by the institution.



Certificate Programs Support

- IDHS-DRS offers support to individuals with a disability to attend a certificate program.
- Certificate must lead to an industry recognized credential for IDHS-DRS supports.
- Programs must be approved by, or registered with, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Board of Higher Education pursuant, the Illinois Community College or registered with the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.



College and University Supports

- IDHS-DRS can financially contribute. There may be costs associated with failure or dropping of a course.
- Scholarships, awards, and other comparable benefits are still applicable for cases applied by the policy.
- The Local DRS Office will have more specific information on associated costs for the customer.
- Supports are only courses leading to a degree or certificate



Employment Assistance

- IDHS-DRS offers multiple types of supports in obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment.
- This includes supports from the IDHS-DRS counselor, IDHS-DRS Business Engagement Specialists, or Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) under contracts.
- Individualized services based upon the needs of the customer.
- Contractual services offer a wide variety of supports. Those include, assessment, job coaching, job development and placement, job retention, skills training, career development services, and customization of employment.



Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) is the Goal

- CIE is the goal for all customers. This is defined as:
 - Employment that is integrated within the community,
 - which pays at least minimum wage or a wage commensurate to the prevailing wage,
 - and offers fringe benefits.
- Individuals with disabilities encounter a variety of challenges and barriers to overcome in achieving CIE.
- For this reason, customers who need additional supports are often referred to a Provider for assistance with their vocational goals.
- Job placement and retention in a CIE setting, that meets the customers unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice, is the priority.



Understanding the “Why”

- During this process, the Provider employs a variety of techniques and services necessary to obtain and maintain CIE.
- Some of the services under these contracts can include customization both for the customer and for the employer.
- Job retention services after the customer has obtained employment is essential to ensure that the placement is a good fit and that the customer has the supports needed.
- The eight-week staffings provide a check-in for all aspects of the job search, placement, and retention, and any other supports that are needed to support the customer. All parties participate in sharing of information which allows for wraparound services and stabilization to occur.



Adult Contract Support Available

Below is a list of contract types available for job supports. Additional information and descriptions shared in the following slides.

- Customized Employment (CE)
- Supported Employment Program (SEP)
- Milestone
 - Option to offer the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model
- Intern Program
- Job Support Milestone
- Purchase of Service (POS) Adult



Customized Employment (CE) and Supported Employment Program (SEP)

- These contract types are often discussed together because of similarities between the contracts.
- Under both contracts, customers need long-term supports to obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment. Types of supports can include many things, including, but not exclusively, job coaching.
- Customers **MUST** be certified as Most Significant to participate
- Services are available to up to 24 months of support on the job, as needed. This timeframe only counts when the customer is working. Breaks in employment do not count. After the completion of the phases, the Continued Support Option (CSO) is available.
- A staffing to discuss progress and any needs is required every eight-weeks. It must include the customer, parent/guardian if needed, CRP, and DRS.



Customized Employment (CE)

- Individuals participating under this contract will have been determined Most Significant, be certified for SEP services and have a SEP Justification written by DRS. A Supported Employment IPE will be completed and sent to the Provider.
- CE is designed to meet the specific abilities of the customer, and the business needs of the employer. A relationship is established between the employer and the customer that is negotiated to meet the needs of both.
- Providers are encouraged to avoid job openings and the typical personnel process when approaching employers. Presentations on the customers strengths and abilities rather than seeking to fill an open position. Providers are expected to develop strategies for assisting employers to identify specific areas in which the business might benefit through a presentation to look at their business operations.



Customized Employment (CE), continued

- **Phase 1:** Consultation and Initiation- Contains pre-discovery activities, such as introducing the CE program, activities, roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes to the customer. **The Initial Discovery Plan** is required to bill.
- **Phase 2:** Discovery- Person-centered process planning used to determine the interests, skills, preferences, and ideal employment conditions that guide the job development. A plan for completing the discovery process will be completed. **A Discovery Profile** is required to bill.
- **Phase 3:** Customized Employment Planning- Using the information learned during the discovery process to develop a plan for CIE. An **Assessment and IPP (Individual Provider Plan)** will be required to bill. The requirements listed in the CRP manual for both will be the base of these documents.



Customized Employment (CE), continued

- **Phase 4:** Job Development and Negotiation- Working collaboratively with the customer and the Provider to negotiate a customized job. This will include terms of employment, conditions necessary for success, and the specific unmet needs of the employer that will be filled by the customers talents.
- **Phase 5:** Post-Employment Support and Monitoring- Supports to ensure that CE services have been provided and that there is success.
 - This Phase was broken into five additional **Phases 5.1- Phase 5.5** to align with the 8-week staffing. Phases are eligible for payment every eight weeks, with the required staffing and continued employment.



Supported Employment Program (SEP)

- This program assists individuals with most significant disabilities through on-going support in obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated community employment (CIE).
- Services are available to up to 24 months of support on the job, as needed. This timeframe only counts when the customer is working. Breaks in employment do not count.
- Individuals participating under this contract will have been determined Most Significant, be certified for SEP services and have a SEP Justification written by DRS. A Supported Employment IPE will be completed and sent to the Provider.
- There are eight Phases of services provided to support the customer's vocational goals.



Phases of SEP

- **Phase 1 (Assessment and Plan):** The Assessment helps determine what type of work and working environment the Individual Plan for Placement in which the Provider lists the services that will be provided to assist in achieving competitive integrated employment. Both are required to follow the CRP manual guidelines and must be submitted for billing this Phase.
- **Phase 2 (Job Development and Placement):** Customer must have obtained employment to be considered for payment on this Phase. After day one of employment, documentation of employment and a progress report detailing what services were provided to the customer must be submitted in order to bill.
- **Phase 3 (Hire in competitive job (5 days of employment):** After day 5 of employment, this may be billed.



Phases of SEP, continued

- **Phase 4 First staffing with continued employment (8 weeks after employment):** The staffing report at minimum must include the following information: Employer, hours worked, wage, progress on the job, and what supports were provided to the customer must be submitted to bill.
- **Phase 5 Second staffing with continued employment (8 weeks after 1st staffing):** The staffing report at minimum must include the following information: Employer, hours worked, wage, progress on the job, and what supports were provided to the customer must be submitted to bill.
- **Phase 6 Third staffing with continued employment (8 weeks after 2nd staffing):** The staffing report at minimum must include the following information: Employer, hours worked, wage, progress on the job, and what supports were provided to the customer must be submitted to bill.



Phases of SEP, continued

- **Phase 7 Fourth staffing with continued employment (8 weeks after 3rd staffing):** The staffing report at minimum must include the following information: Employer, hours worked, wage, progress on the job, and what supports were provided to the customer must be submitted to bill.
- **Phase 8 Fifth staffing with continued employment (8 weeks after 4th staffing):** The staffing report at minimum must include the following information: Employer, hours worked, wage, progress on the job, and what supports were provided to the customer must be submitted to bill.
- Is there a need for participation in the Continued Support Option?



Continued Support Option (CSO) for use with CE and SEP customers

- Customer's case must remain **OPEN**, with continued staffing and monitoring.
- Intended for those customers that need further support after the completion of all Phases under CE or SEP.
- Participation up to the remainder of the 24-month total of on-the-job support.
- The number of hours cannot be greater than the hours worked by the customer.
- Services are paid through the Local DRS Office



Milestone

- A contract focused on job placement supports through at least 90 days of competitive integrated stable employment.
- Customer can be certified in any category, Disability, Significant, Very Significant, or Most Significant.
- Supports are needed to obtain and achieve at least 90 days of stable employment
- If more support is needed, customer may move into supported employment if they are certified as Most Significant and this must be completed before or by 45 days on the job.
- Services are paid with an Assessment and Plan Milestone, and then at 15-,45-, and 90-days of stable competitive integrated employment.
- Under the Milestone contract, there is an option to participate in the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program. Providers must demonstrate participation in the Fidelity Review Process and show evidence of receiving a minimum score of 75.



Introduction to Individual Placement and Support (IPS)

- IPS is an evidence-based supported employment model developed for people with mental health diagnoses find competitive integrated employment.
- The model focuses on rapid job search and placement rather than lengthy pre-employment training with a strong emphasis on employment and clinical integration.
- It supports individuals in achieving meaningful, sustainable employment aligned with their preferences.
- IPS follows a research-based framework built on eight core principles.



Introduction to Individual Placement and Support (IPS), continued

- **Competitive Employment** - Jobs anyone can apply for, pay at least minimum wage/same pay as coworkers with similar duties, and have no artificial time limits.
- **Systematic Job Development** - Employment Specialists visit employers, who are selected based on the job seeker's preferences, to learn about their business needs and hiring preferences.
- **Rapid Job Search** - IPS programs use a rapid job search approach to help job seekers obtain jobs rather than assessments, training, & counseling. The first in-person contact with the employer occurs within 30 days of first contact.
- **Integrated Clinical Services** - IPS programs are integrated with mental health treatment teams.



Introduction to Individual Placement and Support (IPS), continued

- **Benefits Planning** - Employment Specialists refer people to obtain personalized, understandable, and accurate information about their Social Security, Medicaid, and other government benefits.
- **Zero Exclusion** - People are not excluded based on readiness, diagnoses, symptoms, substance use history, psychiatric hospitalizations, homelessness, level of disability, or legal system involvement.
- **Time-Unlimited Supports** - Job supports are individualized and continue for as long as each worker wants and needs the support. Employment Specialist have face to face contact at least monthly.
- **Worker Preferences** - IPS program services are based on each job seeker's preferences and choices rather than the employment specialist's and supervisor's judgments.



Introduction to Individual Placement and Support (IPS), continued

- IPS programs generally receive referrals from their clinical/mental health teams, DRS or other entities.
- IPS Employment Specialists meet with the person to assist them identify the type of work they want and quickly begin the job search, providing supports through assisting with applications, interviews, and on-the-job needs.
- VR Counselors partner together to align individualized supports.
- While IPS provides rapid placement, ongoing support, and integration with mental health services, VR offers funding, training, and employer network access.
- Joint IPS-VR collaboration leads to better job placements, retention, and long- term stability.



Introduction to Individual Placement and Support (IPS), continued

- Regular and consistent communication helps maintain goals and prevents duplication of services.
- Individuals who participate in IPS services are more than twice as likely to obtain competitive integrated employment compared to those receiving traditional vocational services.
- Large multi-state studies consistently show employment rates of 55–60% for IPS programs versus 20–25% in standard approaches, demonstrating significantly better job outcomes and long-term retention.



Intern Program

- One CRP has this contract type, Lester and Rosalie Anixter Center.
- This program offers adults internships in order to build their employability skills at two sites the CRP monitors.
- There are two tracks for this contract-
 - Track One- allows for participation in two ten week-long internships and then placement in competitive integrated employment.
 - Track Two- allows for participation in one ten week-long internship and then placement in competitive integrated employment.



Job Support Milestone

- One CRP holds this contract type, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (legal name), DBA Shirley Ryan Ability Lab.
- Designed for individuals who participated in RIC's services and are returning to their previous employment.
- Supports are provided to provide job stability and retention for 90 days.
- Payment occurs at 15-, 45-, and 90-day Milestones of stable competitive integrated employment.



Purchase of Service (POS) Adult

- One Provider holds this contract type, The Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University.
- Contract offers two different tracks for assessment and evaluation services.
 - Track One- Is for evaluative and training services. Customers participating in these services are not seeking job placement with a CRP.
 - Track Two- Services that compliment job placement services through The Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Services under this track are intended to promote obtaining and maintaining competitive, integrated employment.



Assistive Technology

- IDHS-DRS performs evaluations and provides recommendations and training to assist with assistive technology needs.
- Supports are individualized based on the needs of the customer for any work-related or training-related supports.
- There are many different types of assistive technology.



Some Examples of Assistive Technology

- Vision: Lighting, positioning glare modifications, mobility devices, laser canes, GPS, Enlarged displays, keyboards, magnifiers, CCTV's and Screen magnification. Speech-to-text software and screen readers.
- Hearing: TTY, Captioning, Amplification devices, visual indicators.
- Fine Motor: Alternative keyboards, mice, data entry devices, voice recognition software and environmental controls.
- Mobility: Ergonomic/adjustable chairs, desks, mobility devices.
- Organization: WYNN Software, Word Prediction software, Personal Organizer (PDA), Tape recorder.
- Communication: Eye Gaze Board, Polyana, Chat PC, Communication book.





Questions?

Jenni Grissom, Bureau of Engagement & Support Services,
Jennifer.Grissom@illinois.gov

Kristin Wagner, Manager Transition and Community Rehabilitation Services
(TCRS), Kristin.Wagner@illinois.gov