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The purpose of our NewsBlast is to provide information to youth ages 14 1/2 to 22, parents, and professionals who serve youth with disabilities in planning for, and achieving, a successful transition into high school, through high school, and into needed adult services.

This monthly “news blast” highlights a youth story of the month, a service provider of the month, a link to an article about transition or self-advocacy, and links to service organizations and agencies that provide services to youth with disabilities as they transition out of school services.

www.fmptic.org info@fmptic.org 866-436-7842
www.facebook.com/FamilyMattersPTIC

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Youth Story of the Month

Adam Gharst

Adam is a graduate of Effingham High School. During his high school years, he utilized assistance from a Personal Support Worker and gained work experience by helping at a school café. As he worked toward his transition goals, it was clear that “relationships” would be the most important factor in securing good outcomes. He enrolled in many workshops, trainings, and community groups. His participation in these activities and his presence in the community helped build his social skills and circles of support, leading to volunteer opportunities at his church and at Silk Purse Thrift Store. “His volunteering time helped him to build great vocational skills”, says mom, Kristin.

Those vocational skills and community relationships led to employment at the Hampton Inn. Adam refers to a task list and relies on a scheduled routine while he works. He is supported by his Personal Support Worker as needed—mainly to get accustomed to any changes in his job tasks. Patty Hooper of Community Support Systems helped him with chaining skills and he has recently used a job coach from CSS to begin additional employment at McDonalds.

Although Adam is limited in his communication skills, he doesn’t let it hold him back as he makes a place for himself in the workforce.

“Everything is about relationships.”
Service Provider of the Month

**Advocates for Access**

www.advocatesforaccess.com

Serving Fulton, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties

Empowering People With Disabilities To Live Independently In Our Community

Contact Advocates for Access:
309-682-3500
Bailey O’Connor
4450 N. Prospect Rd., Suite C8
Peoria Heights, IL 61616

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Featured services that facilitate the transition of youth with disabilities into higher education, the workforce, and the community:

* Educational advocacy for youth with Section 504 Plans and Individualized Education Programs

* Independent living skills training to prepare for post high school including using public transportation, money management, social skills, attendant management, nutrition, and self-advocacy

* Referral to other agencies which provide services to people with disabilities

Find the Center for Independent Living that serves your county at: www.incil.org
Transition Information to Know

Individuals who need help from the government to pay for needed Division of Developmental Disabilities Waiver services now, or in the future, should register for PUNS. PUNS is the name for the list of the people in Illinois with developmental disabilities who want or need services, but do not yet have funding. Some of the services funded by the Medicaid waiver programs that may be needed are: in-home supports, job coaches, Community Day Services, residential services, therapy services, and many others. Learn more about the PUNS list at: https://www.illinoislifespan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PUNS-The-Basics-with-Categories-April-7-2021-update.pdf

Transition Service Providers:

(Click on the logos to be taken to the websites)

Social Security Administration

SSA provides government benefits to eligible individuals including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Search the website for “disability benefits”. Search “ticket to work” to learn about working while receiving benefits.

Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living

CILs exist to help people with disabilities achieve maximum independence in work, school, housing and every other part of life. They offer peer support, information and referral, individual and systems advocacy, independent living skills training, and transition support to bridge high school to college and/or work.
IDES administers employment services in Illinois. Search “Employment First” on the website to learn how Illinois law promotes community-based, integrated employment as the first option for employment-related services for individuals with disabilities.

Community Residential Services Authority

CRSA provides technical assistance to families, service providers, educators and other professionals to help plan for and implement appropriate, effective services for children with severe emotional disturbances and behavior disorders in Illinois. This includes youth in high school.

Illinois Department of Human Services

Division of Rehabilitation Services – DRS

DRS assists people with disabilities in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities. They provide personal attendants through their Home Services Program.

Independent Service Coordination/Pre-Admission Screening

PAS agencies conduct and arrange for assessment of individuals with developmental disabilities who are in need of active treatment. ISCs assist in setting up services and registering individuals for the PUNS database of persons in need of services and funding.
The Autism Program of Illinois

The Autism Program of Illinois serves and support persons with autism spectrum disorder and their families through a coordinated network of providers, parents, and university programs. They provide evidence-based services for individuals including youth of transition age. They connect youth through programs such as virtual support groups and social skills groups.

UIC Specialized Care for Children

UIC-SCC partners with families and children and youth (to age 18) with special healthcare needs. Care coordinators work with families to put together a transition plan that identifies clear goals for adulthood and the strategies, services and resources necessary to achieve them.

Illinois Assistive Technology Project

IATP provides free information and assistance on assistive technology and other related disability topics. They can provide assistive technology evaluations and devices, including those to support community living, education, and employment. IATP provides WIPA (Work Incentives Planning and Assistance) services for 67 counties of Illinois. This program helps those receiving SSI/SSDI to make informed choices about employment.

Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center

FMPTIC provides individual support to youth with disabilities and their parents related to educational services and provides training on transition-related topics. Staff work with youth on self-advocacy skills and teach them about their special education rights and responsibilities.

Please let us know of other organizations that serve youth statewide to add to this list.

info@fmptic.org