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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.

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Youth Story of the Month

Logan Shields

Logan Shields is a freshman at Centralia High School. He plans to someday draw as a concept artist for Marvel Studios. After high school he wants to go to college to pursue a degree in art. He plans to apply for the Disney College Program, a program where participants live, work and go to school on Disney property for a semester. After college he hopes to intern for Marvel, eventually working his way toward his dream job.

Going into his freshman year Logan was required to take a math lab that would have removed the possibility for him to have an elective so he opted to take the lab over the summer. That gave him the opportunity to take art as an elective in the fall. Logan plans to continue to align his high school electives with art and technology to gain skills and experience that will benefit him in his future college and career goals.

The transition from a small K-8 school to a large high school was difficult for Logan, as a change in environment can be. This prompted us to make the decision to medicate two of Logan's conditions, ADHD-I and anxiety. Unfortunately trialing medication has led to many side effects for Logan but keeping his focus on his goals has helped him to get through this challenging time. At high school Logan has joined Art Club and Traveler's Club. He has signed up for the first trip that Traveler's Club has planned this summer- to England and Ireland! Logan is working hard to keep his GPA up and is beyond excited at what this experience will mean for him. Logan wants other kids like him to know that your struggles don't define you and you can keep reaching for your biggest dreams!
Community Support Systems offers services throughout the lifespan of individuals with disabilities. Those include employment and residential supports for adults.

Community Systems offers job coaching services funded through the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Through the Milestone contract, individuals can explore community employment options, prepare for interviews, and receive support as they apply for positions they are interested in. A job coach will support individuals as they receive job orientation and training. They will help the individual find natural supports in the workplace and then check in at least weekly with the individual, their family, and the employer to make sure there are no problems or concerns. This contract ends 90 days after employment begins. CSS also offers job coaching support through a Supported Employment Contract. This is a long-term contract that also includes assessment, planning, job placement, and competitive employment but the job coach is involved for a longer period at the work site.

The Supported Employment Program and the I-CILA-Community Integrated Living Arrangement merged on January 1, 2022 and is now known as the Community Integration Department at CSS. The I-CILA program is for individuals who live independently or with their family. Assistance is provided for medical appointments, medications, meal planning and prep, grocery shopping, cleaning, laundry, budgeting, and paying bills. There are planned opportunities for social interaction among program participants.

Individuals will have one person as both their job coach and their in-home support person if they are participating in both types of programming.

Locate an agency in your area that provides these services by contacting your independent service coordination agency. https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12&officetype=&county=
Transition Information to Know

Check out this resource guide that is compliments of the East Central Illinois Transition Planning Committee by visiting:

https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/icdd/documents/flash%20cards.pdf

This resource guide is great for parents and transition age students.

This guide provides a wealth of resources related to:

- How to find your way through the developmental disability system in Illinois.
- Who is available to guide you through the process.
- How to get started.
- How to know if you are eligible for specific services.
- If your child/family will have to wait for services.
- What to do while waiting for services.
- Understanding funding.
- Figuring out what will help when services are available.
- Who will provided needed services.
- How to know if things are going the way they should.
- Transition timelines.

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.

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