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.

Look for the next issue of the NewsBlast in June!
Youth Story of the Month

Demion Dennis

Demion Dennis is a senior at Shelbyville High School. He enjoys and excels at school. He is on track to graduate from Shelbyville this May. Demion says he is most proud of the way he has learned to control his emotions and channel the energy in a different direction. “I have improved so much, I used to have bad days every day, but now I have learned to look on the bright side.”

He says, “One of my biggest accomplishments is that I now have a job. I work with janitorial services at the school. My job coach Aubrey from Community Support Systems really helps me. Once I graduate, she will help me find a full-time job, hopefully in cleaning, because I am good at that.

Demion says, “I am also great at shot put. I have won many medals; I was even considered to compete in the National Special Olympics this year. Practicing for my shot put throw, I have really learned how the muscles work in my body. I hope to one day either be a professional bodybuilder or personal trainer.

“I am nervous to walk across the graduation stage, but I know I will have my friends and family there to support me.”

“My biggest support is Mrs. Carswell (Demion’s High School transition teacher). She really helps me to understand things and helps me to advocate for myself. I’ll be sad to leave her this year, but I also know she will be proud of me.”

“Someday I’ll have my own house, but for right now I am going to live with my dad. The cost of living is too high right now and I want to save my money. I love to spend time with my family and friends. I can’t wait to graduate and make them proud.”
The Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission protects the rights and promotes the welfare of persons with disabilities. They provide legal representation, investigate rights violations, and provide state guardianship for persons with disabilities in Illinois.

**Supported Decision Making**

_GAC helped pass the law on supported decision-making, an alternative to guardianship for adults with intellectual or developmental decisions who need help in making decisions. Learn about this option at:_

[https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gac/Pages/Supported%20Decision%20Making.aspx](https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gac/Pages/Supported%20Decision%20Making.aspx)

**Special Education Initiative**

The Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission receives calls from individuals and parents throughout the state trying to find answers and assistance regarding Special Education. They have a Special Education Collaborative Team to support families with questions or concerns regarding special education services.

They offer trainings that provide the legal and statutory foundations that make up modern special education law, explain the process for seeking assessment and evaluations, go into detail about the contents and process for putting an IEP in place, explain processes of dispute resolution and how to be a good peer or family advocate.

For assistance with special education issues, contact:

Laura Hart  
309-671-3032  [laura.hart2@illinois.gov](mailto:laura.hart2@illinois.gov)  
Kelly Franklin  
309-671-3034  [kelly.franklin@illinois.gov](mailto:kelly.franklin@illinois.gov)
Transition Information to Know

Self Advocacy Rocks!

Bridget Brown likes to “dwell in the possibilities”. She helps others find their voices so they can share their hopes and dreams with others. Bridget travels the country as an inspirational speaker, sharing her incredible journey of inclusive education and living a full and exceptional life. Bridget writes a monthly Blog Post with tips and options for self-advocates.

https://selfadvocacyrocksfmptic.blogspot.com/2021/08/

Transition Service Providers:

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.

**Illinois Department of Human Services**

**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
The Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission protects the rights and promotes the welfare of persons with disabilities. They provide legal representation, investigate rights violations, and provide state guardianship for persons with disabilities in Illinois.

They help families navigate special education issues and provide information on guardianship and alternatives to guardianship including Supported Decision Making.