The purpose of our NewsBlast is to provide information to youth ages 14½ 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 March!

Check out our Blog for youth in transition, young adults with disabilities, and their parents!

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

This “news blast” highlights a youth story, a service provider, 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.
Zoie is a high school graduate. She began as a teen volunteer at her local library during high school. Once she graduated she continued as an adult volunteer. Zoie’s work as a volunteer recently led to her becoming a paid team member. Zoie loves her job and looks forward to each work day. Zoie loves being involved in her community and has formed valuable relationships with her coworkers. When she isn’t at work she can usually be found reading. Her love of books makes the library a perfect fit for her.

“Zoie’s positive attitude and willingness to help make her stand out from the rest. She is a great learner, and she always has a smile on her face. If she has a question, she is not afraid to ask for help. She is very reliable and always arrives at the library at the scheduled time. She is also easygoing and will help us with any projects that she can. Zoie works hard to accomplish the tasks that we give her. She usually helps prepare craft materials for our younger patrons to take home. Sometimes she surprises us by working through projects very quickly. Zoie is a joy to work with because of her amazingly positive attitude and resiliency.”

Lisa, coworker

“Zoie continues to be our go to gal for all story time set up. She is careful and diligent in all that she does and always brings her happy, positive attitude with her. “

Vicki, coworker
LIFE Center for Independent Living advances equality and integration of all persons with disabilities. To achieve this mission, we:

- Promote local, state, and national advocacy
- Educate persons with disabilities about their rights and responsibilities
- Provide support services
- Raise community awareness about disability issues in DeWitt, Ford, Livingston, and McLean Counties.

Fast Track Transition

LIFE CIL is offering in-person or online classes providing Pre-Employment Transition services to transition-age students with disabilities through a contract with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

Youth must be aged 14-22, NOT be in a STEP Program at the same time, have a verified disability, and provide a parent signature and Social Security Number.

Instruction is offered in 5 core areas:

- Self-Advocacy
- Job Exploration Counseling
- Post-Secondary Education Counseling
- Workplace Readiness Skills Training
- Work-Based Learning Experiences

Lessons will include such things as: decision making, communication styles, job satisfaction, job applications, being a good employee, the cost of living on your own, and career exploration.

Find the Center for Independent Living for your county at: Illinois Network of CILs  [https://www.incil.org/](https://www.incil.org/)
Transition Information to Know

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services published a transition guide in 2017 and revised in August 2020 related to ensuring that all students and youth with disabilities are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for the workforce. The guide addresses:

⇒ Transition planning: opportunities and programs
⇒ Transition services and requirements as authorized by IDEA and Rehabilitation Act
⇒ Education and employment options after leaving high school
⇒ Supporting decisions made by students and youth with disabilities

**A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities**

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.
Illinois Department of Employment Services

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.

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.
RAISE is a project of SPAN, the Parent Training and Information Center of New Jersey. It is funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration and assists youth and young adults with disabilities and their families. RAISE helps families: better understand vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs; communicate more effectively with transition and rehabilitation personnel; understand the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act related to employment, supported employment, and independent living; and develop an individualized plan for employment.

An online resource for learning about self-advocacy, viewing stories from self-advocates, and finding self-advocacy groups.

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) is a national self-advocacy organization. They are a national board of regional representatives and members from every state in the US. SABE’s mission is to ensure that people with disabilities are treated as equals and that they are given the same decisions, choices, rights, responsibilities, and chances to speak up to empower themselves; opportunities to make new friends, and to learn from their mistakes.

The Alliance is a statewide network of self advocates advocacy groups and allies in Illinois. They work together to make life better in communities and services better for people with disabilities in Illinois. They want advocates and allies from around the state to speak together with one loud voice. They say “we can do more when we all work together!”
A resource for information on each state’s law related to Supported Decision Making as an alternative to adult guardianship. In Illinois, the Supported Decision-Making Agreement Act authorized the creation of supported decision making agreements and allows a supporter to assist a principal in accessing, collecting, or obtaining information that is relevant to a decision authorized under the supported decision making agreement. It provides that all adults are presumed to be capable of managing their affairs and to have capacity unless otherwise determined by a court.

On the Students and Young Adults tab of the PACER website, there is information to help youth develop self-advocacy skills and gain a better understanding of how to more effectively participate to increase success in the classroom, at home, and in the community. By understanding a disability and its impact on everyday life, youth have a better chance of improving their life and accessing the systems of care that serves them.

NTACT provides assistance and information to all stakeholders who can help students and youth with disabilities experience increased enrollment in postsecondary education, graduation, credential attainment, competitive integrated employment and community engagement.

Since the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014, policies and practices impacting transition from school to work have evolved and affected the services provided to students with significant disabilities and traditionally underserved populations. To address these changes, the Illinois Center for Transition and Work provides support to special educators, related services personnel, and administrators by providing state-wide training and technical assistance focused on preparing students with significant disabilities for the transition from high school to employment with the goal of improving employment outcomes. They also provide resources that benefit youth and parents.
Equip for Equality’s Transition Project provides free legal services that includes legal advice on transition services, attendance at IEP meetings, assistance with negotiation or mediation, assistance to prevent premature graduation, and special education trainings. This project will help with developing a transition plan for students with disabilities ages 14 1/2 to 22 and getting the school to conduct age-appropriate transition assessments.

Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them you will reach your destiny.

Carl Schutz
Union Army general and American statesman

FMPTIC provides individual support 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 or nationally to add to this list.

info@fmptic.org