The purpose of our NewsBlast is to provide information to youth ages 14 1/2 through 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.

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Look for the next issue of the NewsBlast in June!

Check out our Blog for youth in transition, young adults with disabilities, and their parents!
https://selfadvocacyrocksfmptic.blogspot.com/2021/08/

www.fmptic.org info@fmptic.org 866-436-7842
www.facebook.com/FamilyMattersPTIC
https://selfadvocacyrocksfmptic.blogspot.com/

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I was first diagnosed with a sensory processing disorder and Autism in High School and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from my previous HS due to being bullied, which triggered depression. I have a dog, two sisters, and two brothers. I live with both my parents and have a robust support system. I enjoy doing community service, volunteering to work with my sister’s and mom’s sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc., fundraising for March of Dimes, and helping set up events. I am or have been involved in activities that include competitive swimming, CS, youth church choir, and Man Up.

“I just want to socialize, communicate with professors and others, have friends, attend a four-year college, and be accepted as a person, and graduate with a college degree.”

Keon Thomas
After moving to a new high school, I had fun and some challenges. However, with the support of the Vice Principal, Social Worker, and my Guidance Counselor I Graduated Cum Laude from HS. Ten colleges and universities with scholarship offers accepted me. However, there were only three that had an autism program. I chose a college out of state, the college I thought was the right college for the major I was looking for, criminal justice. However, after some struggles with my disability, I decided this college was not the right fit for me. I withdrew from the college and applied to our community college in January 2022.

I had always wanted to attend college from the experience I have of spending time on college campuses with my sister, Jesyka. This continues to encourage me to push forward for education as a veterinarian assistant, no matter how long it takes. I may have to attend a small college with a strong disability department. Finding the right support system in college will be the key to my success.
Service Provider of the Month

IDHS Transition/STEP

Division of Rehabilitation Services

Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities -
Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP)

Students learn to become productive, self-sufficient adults through a variety of STEP experiences. These experiences include:

Assist students in developing desirable work habits and realistic career goals;

Provide opportunities for students to explore careers; post-secondary education counseling

Encourage students to develop the social and personal skills needed to maintain successful employment.

Phone: 877-761-9780

Website: https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=35174

Brochure: https://www.dhs.state.il.us/OneNetLibrary/27897/documents/Brochures/4663.pdf
Transition Information to Know

There are exciting college opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities. PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment posted an article on their website titled, “Inclusive Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities.”

The article addresses:

- Why is inclusive postsecondary education important for students with intellectual disabilities?
- Possible post-secondary education options.
- College related resources.

**Inclusive Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities**

Transition Service Providers:

(Click on the logos to get 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 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.

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
Independent Service Coordination (ISC) /Pre-Admission Screening (PAS)

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.

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.
The Autism Program of Illinois

The Autism Program of Illinois serves and supports 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.
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!”

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.

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.

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

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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.

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 to students 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.

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