

The Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the state's lead agency serving individuals with disabilities. DRS works in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities.

DRS is committed to provide services that ensure youth with disabilities have the knowledge, skills, and experience they need to successfully transition into the world of work.

DHS/DRS' Transition Initiatives for Youth include:

- Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP)
- Interagency Collaboration
- Education Services offered through three schools
- Next Steps

## For more information

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Department of Human Services  
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# Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities



DRS collaborates with many partners throughout the state to offer a continuum of coordinated transition services designed to help youth with disabilities become productive, self-sufficient adults. Many of these services are provided in cooperation with local high schools.

### ■ ■ ■ ELIGIBILITY

Individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities, ages 14 1/2 through 22, may be eligible for Transition services.

### ■ ■ ■ STEP

STEP helps prepare students with disabilities for transition to employment and community participation during and after high school. Staff specialists provide a wide range of services to students with disabilities, including:

- Guidance and career counseling
- Information and referral
- Opportunities for career exploration
- Participation in paid work experiences
- Job training and placement
- Supported Employment Services
- Post-secondary education and training
- Independent living services

### ■ ■ ■ INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

DRS joins with partners at the state, regional, and local level to provide and coordinate services for youth with disabilities that help them transition into adult life.

#### State Level ■ ■ ■

The Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) was established in 1990 and is charged with data gathering and coordination; providing information and technical assistance; assisting in development of interagency transition agreements; conducting an annual statewide evaluation of student transition outcomes and needs; and providing in-service training to consumers.

#### Regional Level ■ ■ ■

DRS convenes Transition Consortia in each of five regions to address transition issues, provide networking opportunities, and facilitate information sharing. Each consortium is a collaborative effort involving DRS Vocational Rehabilitation staff, educators, post-secondary schools, community partners, state agencies, parents, and consumers.

#### Local Level ■ ■ ■

DRS is responsible for coordinating and sustaining local Transition Planning Committees (TPCs) in Illinois. These TPCs identify existing resources and unmet needs, facilitate an ongoing exchange of information, and develop local customer training programs.

DRS also funds collaborative employment services from adult Community Rehabilitation Programs and collaborates with Centers for Independent Living for the provision of legal rights consultation for individuals with disabilities and their families.

### ■ ■ ■ EDUCATION SERVICES

DRS operates three residential schools for children and youth with disabilities. All educational and social programs in these schools are designed to prepare students for successful living as independent, self-supporting citizens who are actively involved in their communities.

- The **Illinois School for the Deaf** (Jacksonville) provides comprehensive, accredited programming for children and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing, including a birth to three-year-old program; preschool; as well as elementary, junior high school and high school academic programs.
- The **Illinois School for the Visually Impaired** (Jacksonville) provides accredited educational and related services to children who are blind or visually impaired from birth to three years of age through preschool, elementary, and high school.
- The **Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education – Roosevelt** (Chicago) provides elementary, secondary, and transition programs for students with severe physical disabilities.

The **Next Steps** program provides training and support to parents and caregivers of children with disabilities, assisting them in planning, advocating, and identifying resources. Next Steps trainers, volunteer teams, and workshops model the philosophy of collaboration among parents, self-advocates, and professionals.