

# INvision

## Indiana Division of Disability & Rehabilitative Services Newsletter

### A message from the DDRS director

#### *Individuals with disabilities want jobs*



A job is a central part of a most people's good life. Work provides us with the opportunity to develop relationships, contribute to our community and earn income that allows us to live the life we choose. Too often, individuals with disabilities are overlooked as an integral part of our workforce. Therefore, they are not afforded the opportunity to explore personal interests and engage in meaningful work, due to misconceptions regarding capabilities and the potential impact on services and benefits received to support the individual's pursuit of their life goals.

In 2018, DDRS/BDDS began a listening tour as part of our efforts in redesigning home- and community-based waivers to better support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Over 68 sessions were held with individuals and family members. What we heard loudly and clearly is that individuals with disabilities want jobs! Jobs with competitive wages and benefits. Jobs of their choosing.

Over the past two years, DDRS/BDDS have been engaging with Self-Advocates of Indiana and the DDRS Advisory Council to explore strategies to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This effort has resulted in a DDRS System Transformation Plan that includes exploration and implementation of policies, procedures and services to better encourage and support individuals in their pursuit of a good job. In addition, our plan includes collaboration with advocacy networks and other agencies to inform and change the expectations surrounding employment options and outcomes for those we serve.

We are providing technical assistance and financial support to our provider network to develop their business model to better support competitive integrated employment and full participation in and access to community life. To inform our efforts at waiver redesign, we are also funding multiple innovation pilot projects with providers, advocacy groups and private business to explore creative solutions to supporting individuals with disabilities to achieve their vision of a successful life.

Our DDRS Advisory Council established a goal to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities by 15% by 2027. We know that people with disabilities want to work and we know that people with disabilities bring great talent and value to the workforce. We share with you Jackson's employment journey and we provide some information regarding tools and resources to support employment as part of this newsletter. To make competitive employment a reality for more people with disabilities, it will take all of us, working together, to reshape the expectations, the opportunities and the support for Hoosiers with disabilities. So let's get to work!

*Kelly Mitchell*

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#### STORIES IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- **Bureau bits:** Updates from your First Steps, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation teams.
- **Making the LifeCourse work for you:** Using the resources and tools available through the LifeCourse Nexus can help you develop a plan for obtaining and maintaining employment.
- **News you can use:** How will employment impact state and federal benefits? Plus, IN-APSE is a membership organization that promotes and expands quality, community employment outcomes of choice for all people with disabilities.
- **Featured story:** Meet Jackson, a VR success story who proves that with proper supports, employment can be possible.
- **Events you don't want to miss:** The quarterly Building Bridges events create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback.

## First Steps

The First Steps early intervention program is pleased to announce the hiring of a family engagement manager. The state First Steps team is committed to making sure the family voice is center to everything we do in our program. The role of the family in a child's life is an essential component to our First Steps mission, vision and values. The family engagement manager will work collaboratively to review our policies, procedures, trainings and events via the lens of a First Steps parent or caregiver. The position of a family engagement manager is brand-new to our state team. We look forward to seeing how this new role develops and look forward to sharing more information and events in the future.

Our state team is committed to listening intently to the opinions and recommendations from the families with whom we work and incorporating those into what we do to make our program better for the children and their

families. The state team is dedicated to making sure a parent(s) is present at all of our stakeholder workgroups and strategic planning sessions. The Governor appointed Interagency Coordinating Council is required to have several parents represented. If you are interested in learning more about the ICC, please visit the [ICC section](#) on the DDRS Commissions and Councils page.

The First Steps Local Planning and Coordinating Councils are also required to have parent representation on their advisory boards, which are located throughout the state in each of the nine First Steps regions. To find out more about the LPCCs, what they do and how to contact them, you may check out [their page](#) on the [First Steps website](#).

We have also added a family track at our [annual Indiana Early Intervention Conference](#). If you are interested in lending your voice to helping First Steps, please email [firststepsweb.fssa@fssa.in.gov](mailto:firststepsweb.fssa@fssa.in.gov).



## 2023 Indiana Early Intervention Conference

[Held in-person](#) June 8-9, 2023, in Bloomington. Indiana First Steps and Infancy Onward have partnered with the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University to bring together national and local experts to address research and best practices in Early Childhood Intervention. [Register now](#) to get the \$90 early bird rate (until Feb. 14, 2023).

## Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services

The Family and Social Services Administration recently announced plans for upcoming changes to the administrative authority of the Aged and Disabled Waiver and Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver.

Beginning in 2024, the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services will administer the Traumatic Brain Injury waiver and the Aged and Disabled waiver for individuals who

are aged 59 years old and younger. Individuals who are on the Aged and Disabled waiver and are 60 years of age and older will be transitioned to a new Managed Long Term Supports and Services waiver. The Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Aging are working very closely together to ensure that this transition that occurs with no disruption in services.

During 2023, there will be a number of opportunities for individuals and families to share their experiences, provide feedback and offer suggestions. Throughout the year, there will also be information and resources developed to help individuals and families know and understand what is happening, how it impacts them and what to expect.

## Vocational Rehabilitation

Indiana is a state that focuses on employment. DDRS has been working collaboratively with offering all individuals with a disability the opportunity for employment. BDDS and VR have been working collaboratively to identify ways to better support individuals meet their goals of employment. This close working relationship between the two departments enables DDRS to continue to seek creative ways to uphold the employment supports offered through all bureaus. This ensures the division can maximize resources and collectively leverage all employment resources and supports, not just those offered through DDRS.

Traditionally, programs and services for individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or developmental delays often focused on job readiness, spending months or even years preparing an individual for employment. Through

the service system evolution, one thing that has been proven consistently is that professional “experts” are poor predictors of who will and won’t succeed in employment. Instead of worrying about job readiness, the focus should be on job matching—finding a job environment and description that fits the current interests, support needs, personality and skills of the individual. VR and BDDS will be collaborating to address methods for utilizing customized employment strategies to move beyond the “readiness” model for individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or developmental delays.

DDRS is excited to be a part of a transformational change that aims to build local and state capacity to increase and expand competitive, integrated employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or developmental delays.

# Making the LifeCourse work for you

## *Employment is an important part of adult identity*

Employment is an important part of adult identity. Work is an opportunity to earn money, but also to build friendships, learn new things and achieve a sense of accomplishment, competence and pride! It gives people something to do with their time, adds structure to their day, builds social networks and helps attain a sense of purpose.

Having the right job can greatly increase satisfaction with and quality of life. Using the resources and tools available through the LifeCourse Nexus can help you develop a plan for obtaining and maintaining employment. When you visit the [LifeCourse Tools Library](#), you will find a host of resources—videos, guides and planning tools specifically designed around employment.

For instance, a great tool to help with thinking about the different supports that can help you reach your employment goals is the Integrated Supports Star. You can use the Integrated Supports Star to explore current supports, identify where there are gaps and think about what other supports may be available. Each one of the five points in the star will help work through a specific area of available supports. The five points of the star will help you navigate through your personal strengths and assets, relationships, eligibility specific supports, community-based supports and technology. Other tools available for exploring and planning for employment are the trajectories, where the tools will guide you to determine what kind of job you would like to have and the steps you need to take to get you there.

To help guide you through the planning and tracking piece of your success, navigate to the goal attainment worksheet for planning and tracking success. This can be found in the Person-Centered Foundational Tools section. This tool will help you define what your idea of success looks like. It will also help you plan our strategies to get you closer to your goal. You can review the barriers and celebrate the successes. At

the bottom of the worksheet, there is a space to review what strategies you are using and what supports are needed. There are also start and end dates listed to help you track your goals!

There are so many resources and options, you are sure to find one that works for you! If you need help using any of the tools available, please reach out to your VR counselor, BDDS district office or waiver case manager.



**Daily Life and Employment:** What a person does as part of everyday life – school, employment, volunteering, communication, routines and life skills.



**Community Living:** Where and how someone lives—housing and living options, community access, transportation, home adaptation and modification.



**Safety and Security:** Staying safe and secure—finances, emergencies, well-being, decision making supports, legal rights and issues.



**Healthy Living:** Managing and accessing health care and staying well—medical, mental health, behavior, developmental, wellness and nutrition.



**Social and Spirituality:** Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks and faith community.



**Advocacy and Engagement:** Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one's own life is lived.

For more information on the LifeCourse framework and principles, [visit: www.lifecoursetools.com](http://www.lifecoursetools.com).



## NEWS YOU CAN USE

# How will employment impact state and federal benefits?

## *A benefit information counselor can help*

Oftentimes when seeking employment options, individuals and families have questions about how the money earned may impact the benefits they receive through state and federal resources. For individuals utilizing VR services, a benefit information counselor may be an option. Indiana's Benefits Information Network provides counselors who work with individuals to talk through and develop a plan that provides information and resources

on how to maintain needed supports while successfully employed.

The network also has developed a number of fact sheets and resources that are helpful to learn more about what options exist. For more information, please visit "[Benefits Information for Adults and Transitioning Students](#)" at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community Center on Community Living and Careers website.

### Benefits information for adults and transitioning students

The federal government, the state of Indiana, and local agencies and service organizations support people with disabilities. If you're eligible, various types of benefits may help you:

- ▶ Pay a portion of your rent;
- ▶ Access health care;
- ▶ Provide you with direct support for getting dressed or eating;
- ▶ Pay for some of your tuition or books if you're in college;
- ▶ Complete tasks in your workplace;
- ▶ Or even save for a car or a down payment on a house or business.

**For general information:**

#### **Indiana Works**

*Indiana's Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program*

**Northern and Central Indiana:**

**1-855-641-8382** (toll free)

or

**Southern Indiana:**

**1-888-908-7992** (toll free)

**For the Benefits Information Network:**



<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cclc>

**812-855-6508**

# IN-APSE aids employment for people with disabilities

## *Their annual conference will be held March 8 and 9*

IN-APSE is the Indiana chapter of The Association of People Supporting Employment First. They are a membership organization that promotes and expands quality, community employment outcomes of choice for all people with disabilities. Members include businesses, policy makers, citizens with disabilities and their families, supported employment, and rehabilitation professionals and educators.

The IN-APSE conference will be held March 8 and 9 at Horizon Convention Center in Muncie. The theme for the 31st annual conference is "Catch the Employment Wave!" Visit the [IN-APSE website](#) for more information about this organization and the conference.



### Indiana chapter of The Association of People Supporting Employment First

IN-APSE provides advocacy and education to customers of supported employment. They address issues and barriers which impede the growth and implementation of integrated employment services. They seek to improve supported employment practice so that individuals and communities experience SE as a quality service with meaningful outcomes. IN-APSE promotes national, state and local policy development, which enhances the social and economic inclusion and empowerment of all persons experiencing severe disabilities. They also educate the public and the business community on the value of including persons experiencing severe disabilities as fully participating community members.

# Meet Jackson

*With proper supports, employment can be possible*

Jackson, 30, was introduced to Vocational Rehabilitation in high school when a VR counselor attended one of his case conference meetings. At the time, Jackson, who is diagnosed with autism, anxiety and developmental delays, was working two part-time jobs he obtained through his school's employment training program. Jackson's mother, Jan, was able to learn more about the value of VR through Partners in Policymaking, a program through the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. At the time, Jackson was experiencing some anxiety when it came to his ride schedule and he was also needing help remembering to clock in and clock out at work, so he and Jan made the decision to pursue VR services to help him explore ways to not only maintain, but also be successful, at his jobs.

With the help of VR, Jackson worked with an employment service provider and also underwent an assistive technology evaluation that resulted in VR purchasing a smart watch and accompanying app that he uses to keep track of his schedule. The watch

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also helps him remember to clock in and out, and it has also lessened his anxiety about his ride schedule. Now that Jackson's VR case is closed, he continues to be successful in his employment. He relies not only on his watch but also on his current support system,

which consists of his parents, employers, coworkers and his behaviorist, who is provided by BDDS waiver services.

Jackson has now been successfully employed at his two jobs for nine years! He is employed at his local library, where he shelves books and all other types of

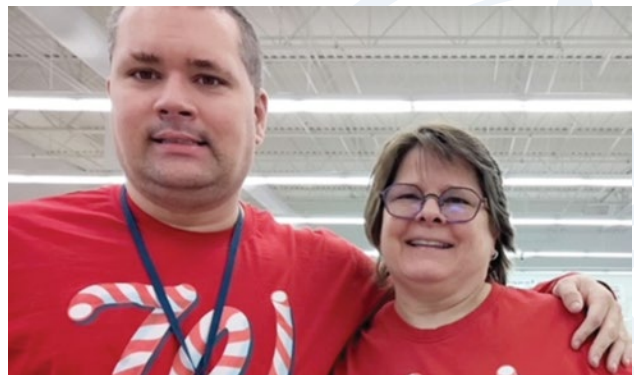
media, shelf reads and returns books back to their proper places. He loves fixing mistakes and the exactness of the job. At his second job, a local pharmacy, Jackson enjoys his responsibility of stocking shelves. At both jobs, he enjoys working with and talking to his coworkers about his daily activities and weekend adventures. Jan stated that the most challenging part of employment for Jackson is how much he loves his jobs and how he “never wants to miss one day.”

When it comes to future plans, Jackson would like to continue working both

jobs for the foreseeable future. His goal is to work both jobs, do what is asked of him, and continue taking pride in his accomplishments. When Jackson isn't working, he enjoys going to the movies, swimming and shopping. He is also a very involved athlete in the Special Olympics, where he competes in cycling, softball, bowling and basketball.

When it comes to advice to share with other people who have a disability who are looking for employment, Jan shared, “everyone should be given the chance at competitive integrated employment, because with proper supports it can be available. It might take working at a few jobs to see the one that is best for you. Don't give up.”

VR would like to thank Jackson and his mother, Jan, for sharing his story with us and would also like to thank everyone who has been a part of Jackson's employment journey.





## Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration  
Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services  
402 W. Washington St., W453/MS 26  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

You can sign up to receive this newsletter by [clicking here](#).

For updated meeting information, as well as agendas and past meeting minutes, visit [the DDRS Commissions & Councils page](#).

The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services is a program of the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration. If you have questions about DDRS programs and services, [visit us online](#).

Did you know that families can sign up to receive text messages and email updates from First Steps? Families will learn more about policy issues, how to become an effective advocate, how to be involved in your local planning and coordinating council, how to connect to events and groups, how to tell your family story and more. Go to [this site to sign up!](#)

## EVENTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

Following are the current commission, council and public meetings that you may be interested in learning more about and/or attending in the future. To find the most current information, including next meeting dates and locations, [please click here](#).



## Building Bridges

These meetings are an opportunity for families and self-advocates to meet and speak with the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services state staff. These sessions are an important part of the Bureau's efforts to create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback. These meetings are solely for families and individuals with disabilities to provide a forum for constructive and valuable conversations on successes or concerns, as well as suggestions or input regarding BDDS programs and services. For more information on upcoming meetings, please visit the [DDRS Announcements web page](#).

## INSILC public meeting

The Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council provides oversight of the Indiana State Plan for Independent Living and assists the Centers for Independent Living with the plan's implementation and coordination of services. For more information, visit [the Statewide Independent Living Council webpage](#).

## DDRS Advisory Council

The DDRS Advisory Council was established to assist the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services in ensuring that individuals with disabilities are as independent and self-sufficient as possible. The council meets at least six times a year and the meetings are open to the public. For more information, visit the [DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).

## ICC meetings

The Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities is the state's federally mandated early intervention council. The council is charged with advising and assisting DDRS in its responsibility to develop an early intervention system of the highest quality, balancing family-centered services with fiscal responsibility. The council is comprised of parents, state agency groups, early intervention service providers, legislators and others. The meetings are open to the public.

Members of the public are encouraged to attend. A link will be made public prior to each meeting. Should a member of the public need access to the meeting link, special accommodations or interpretative services, please contact Janet Ballard at [Jaeball@indiana.edu](mailto:Jaeball@indiana.edu) at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

## Commission on Rehabilitation Services

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services works with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Vocational Rehabilitation Services on matters such as the effectiveness and customer satisfaction with the services provided to individuals participating in the VR program. The commission is also involved in matters affecting VR policies and procedures, goals and priorities, and the state plan. For the calendar, please visit the [DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).