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| StateSeal.JPG | **RFS-24-77904**  **Pre-Employment Transition Services Required Activities**  **Attachment E** | |
| **Respondent:** | | The Arc of Northeast Indiana d.b.a. Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana |
| **Instructions:**  Request for Service RFS-24-77904 is a solicitation by the State of Indiana in which organizations are invited to compete for contract amongst other respondents in a formal evaluation process. Please be aware that the evaluation of your organization’s proposal will be completed by a team of State of Indiana employees and your organization’s score will be reflective of that evaluation. The evaluation of a proposal can only be based upon the information provided by the Respondent in its proposal submission. Therefore, a competitive proposal will thoroughly answer the questions listed. The Respondent is expected to provide the complete details of its proposed operations, processes, and staffing for the scope of work detailed in the RFS document and supplemental attachments.  Please review the requirements in the RFS carefully. Please describe your relevant experience and explain how you propose to perform the work. For all areas in which subcontractors will be performing a portion of the work, clearly describe their roles and responsibilities, related qualifications, and experience, and how you will maintain oversight of the subcontractors’ activities.  Please use the yellow shaded fields to indicate your answers to the following questions. The yellow fields will automatically expand to accommodate content. Every attempt should be made to preserve the original format of this form. **A completed Technical Proposal is a requirement for proposal submission. Failure to complete and submit this form may impact your proposal’s responsiveness.** Diagrams, certificates, graphics, and other exhibits should be referenced within the relevant answer field and included as legible attachments. | | |

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| **1** | **Proposed Solution and Features**  Provide an overview of how the proposed strategies meet the requirements for Pre-ETS as outlined in the scope of work. Describe in detail the specific strategies for developing and carrying out each of the five Pre-ETS activities described in Section III. Summary Scope of Work, to students with disabilities, as aligned with WIOA required activities, for both individuals and/or in group settings. As applicable, describe how the proposed strategies enhance or expand upon existing strategies that have been successful in the provision of services that align with Pre-ETS to students with disabilities or other student populations. Identify the specific counties and schools respondent intends to serve.  Additionally, please provide a detailed description of your work approach, including the following:   * + How would you organize this project in order to be able to manage the workload?   + Provide a high-level project plan, based on the information provided in this RFI.   + Provide preferred list of counties and school systems you intend to serve. As described in Section III. Summary Scope of Work, respondents may also opt to provide a secondary list of alternate counties and schools you would consider serving.   + Describe how you would evaluate the effectiveness of services provided.   + Provide a brief description or sample of the curriculum you propose to utilize for each of the required activities, as well as incorporation of best practices or resources into service delivery, such as the Lifecourse framework. |
| OVERVIEW  Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana requests funds to implement a two-year Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) project **from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2026**. The purpose is to improve outcomes for transition-age students with disabilities as they move from school to postsecondary education or employment. To implement this project, Easterseals Arc will expand its existing Pre-ETS program launched in 2016 to serve more schools and students and engage additional collaborative community partners while incorporating best practices and the LifeCourse framework.  To be eligible for participation, students will be 14-22 years old and will meet one of the following criteria:   * Be eligible for and receive special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. * Be an individual with a disability for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. * Be eligible for or potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services.   Proposed project goals and outcomes include:   * Easterseals Arc will serve 1200 unduplicated students with disabilities in individual and group settings over a 2-year funding period. * Students will identify and develop personal transition goals. * Through accredited community partnerships, participants will explore various career options and educational opportunities, such as certification programs, apprenticeships, and trade or technical programs. * Participants will increase employability by developing their hard, soft, and foundational skills. * Easterseals Arc will work with schools to recruit and serve eligible students. * Easterseals Arc will work with Career and Technical Education (CTE) and alternative learning programs to expand the project scope and reach more students. * Easterseals Arc will collaborate with partners to create community-based job training, employment, and educational opportunities for students. * Easterseals Arc will incorporate best practices and the LifeCourse framework and develop innovative strategies to improve student outcomes.   HOW PROPOSED STRATEGIES BUILD UPON EXISTING STRATEGIES  Multiple community sites offered students opportunities to gain work experience in community settings. Ivy Tech Community College provided post-secondary education counseling and educational certification opportunities, while WorkOne (Northeast Indiana Works) helped to enhance workplace readiness.  The proposed project aims to build on the success of these initiatives to benefit more students and schools, engage new community partners, and incorporate new service delivery models (such as Learning Labs) that are tailored to achieve outcomes within the Life Course framework.  PREFERRED LIST OF COUNTIES  This project will target the Indiana counties of Allen, Whitley, Lagrange, Adams, Wells, Kosciusko, Marshall, Pulaski, Fulton, Miami, Cass, White, Carroll, and Elkhart*.*  Easterseals Arc plans to continue its project by working directly with several schools in Allen and Whitley counties, including Fort Wayne Community Schools, Northwest Allen County Schools, Southwest Allen County Schools, Anthis Career Center, Bishop Dwenger, Bishop Luers, Whitko Community Schools, Smith Green Community Schools, and Whitley County Consolidated Schools. In addition, the agency aims to expand Pre-ETS services to all Allen County school districts, including East Allen County Schools, and to serve several other school districts in Adams and Wells counties, including Adams Central Community Schools, North Adams Community Schools, South Adams Community Schools, Southern Wells Community Schools, Norwell Community Schools, and Bluffton-Harrison MSD.  Easterseals Arc has provided oversight of the current implementation of Pre-ETS at Warsaw Community Schools, Plymouth Community Schools, Bremen Public Schools, Argos Community Schools, Culver Community Schools, Triton Community Schools, and Delphi Community Schools to Cardinal Services since 2021. In collaboration with Easterseals Arc, Cardinal will continue its current implementation at the above schools.  Easterseals Arc is requesting to expand current programming to additionally serve the following school districts and counties through Cardinal Services.   * Concord Community Schools – Elkhart County * Culver Community Schools Corporation – Marshall County * Delphi Community School Corporation – Carroll County * Eastern Pulaski Community School Corporation – Pulaski County * Elkhart Community Schools – Elkhart County * Frontier School Corporation – White County * Goshen Community Schools – Elkhart County * Knox Community School Corporation – Starke County * Logansport Community School Corporation – Cass County * Middlebury Community Schools – Elkhart County * North Judson-San Pierre School Corporation * North White School Corporation – White County * Oregon-Davis School Corporation – Starke County * Pioneer Regional School Corporation, Pioneer Regional School Corp – Cass County * Plymouth Community School Corporation – Marshall County * Rochester Community School Corporation – Fulton County * Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation – Kosciusko County * Tri-County School Corporation – White County * Triton School Corporation – Marshall County * Wa-Nee Community School System – Elkhart County * Warsaw Community Schools - Kosciusko County * Wawasee Community School Corporation - Kosciusko County * West Central School Corporation – Pulaski County   Through collaboration with Arc Opportunities of LaGrange, Easterseals Arc will continue implementing its current program to serve the following school districts: Lakeland School Corporation, Westview Schools, and Prairie Heights Community School Corporation.  SECONDARY LIST OF COUNTIES  Secondary counties include Dekalb, Huntington, Noble, Miami, Steuben, and Wabash.  Easterseals Arc is willing to provide Pre-ETS services to any school in outlying counties that is not being served or is being under-served by any provider.  PROJECT PLAN  Easterseals Arc aims to help teens and young adults develop their interests and abilities into a plan for success. To achieve this, the organization will implement specific Pre-ETS activities such as job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, post-secondary education counseling, workplace readiness, and self-advocacy. Additionally, parents and guardians will have access to educational opportunities as part of the program.  The program will offer both in-school and community-based opportunities in collaboration with schools and community partners. The implementation will include one-on-one interactions with students and group learning experiences offered throughout the academic year and summer. The service delivery model of Easterseals Arc will be customized to meet the developmental, educational, and social needs of students, as well as the scheduling and logistical needs of collaborating partners.  Easterseals Arc will work with primary collaborators such as WorkOne (Northeast Indiana Works), Ivy Tech Community College, Purdue University Fort Wayne, Baker Youth Club, Trine University, Junior Achievement, and The Boys & Girls Clubs to deliver services. The organization also will subcontract with Cardinal Services, Arc Opportunities of LaGrange County, YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne, and TeenWorks to expand service areas and provide additional opportunities for students. Additionally, various other community employers and service organizations will provide students with volunteer opportunities, work experience, job training opportunities, and paid employment opportunities.  *Job exploration counseling*  Job exploration counseling is an important way for students to discover their interests, explore different career options, learn about the skills needed for different jobs, and understand the current job market. Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana has planned several individual and group activities to carry out job exploration counseling. These activities will include using evidence-based curricula like Pathways to Success, Pre-ETS curriculum by Attainment, Education Associates, and virtual reality opportunities through Transfr VR. The plan also involves arranging tours with local employers; taking career-related field trips; attending career fairs; inviting guest speakers to meet with students; discussing the current labor market, qualifications, and pay; completing self-assessment surveys; and using web-based career exploration tools such as O\*NET and JA Here to Career. Additionally, the plan includes neighborhood mapping activities to connect students to employers in their communities; navigation of online job sites/search engines; providing and learning vocational information through recreation and play (e.g. role-play, trivia games, job simulation); collaborating with local community learning centers that prepare for economic success; and discussing career-related vocabulary and definitions, among other activities.  *Work-based Learning Experiences*  Easterseals Arc will collaborate with a number of community organizations to integrate real-world job experiences or professional environments into the curriculum to expand work-based learning experiences for students served. Easterseals Arc will seek out, train, and assist community partners to provide students with various options for job training and paid employment that suit the students’ abilities and interests. Pre-ETS coordinators and job coaches at Easterseals Arc will facilitate the development of natural supports in the workplace and act as liaisons for employees, employers, families, and students.    During the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years, Easterseals Arc partnered with local employers and community organizations to provide students with paid and non-paid community-based work experiences and internships, as well as volunteer and job shadowing opportunities. Over 50 partner organizations have been involved in providing work-based learning activities to students served, including the AWS Foundation, Peg Perego, Parkview Hospital, Trine University, Image of Hope Ranch, Cameron Hospital, Indiana Special Olympics, and Fort Wayne International Airport, among others.    Easterseals Arc also will collaborate with community employers, use developed learning labs, and run clubs to impart both industry-specific job skills and the fundamental knowledge and abilities required for success for students interested in careers in the automotive, construction, health care, hospitality, manufacturing, or robotics industries. In addition to hands-on work experience, students also will have the opportunity to earn industry-specific educational certificates.  *Workplace Readiness*  Pre-ETS participants will be engaged with curriculums designed to teach social skills, independent living skills, and other hard and soft skills. Selected curriculums will include the *LifeCourse Framework*, *Pathways to Success, Education Associates, Skills to Pay the Bills, Attainment Pre-Employment Transition Solutions, Community Based Functional Skills Assessment for Transition-Aged Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Standard-Based Life Skills Curriculum.* Easterseals Arc will work with local educational institutions to develop specialized curriculums as needed.  Ivy Tech Community College, Indiana Tech, Trine University, Grace College, Purdue University Fort Wayne, and WorkOne will assist with resume writing, mock interviews, and job search skills/strategies. Prior to the completion of the program, each student will complete a portfolio that will document work readiness and other accomplishments to potential employers. Each portfolio will contain a resume, cover letter, list of skills, community resources/employers, employment goals, work experience, educational certifications/achievements, and letters of recommendation.  Easterseals Arc will work with WorkOne to host a job fair, which will present local businesses to persons with I/DD who are seeking employment. Easterseals Arc also will work with Indiana Tech to host a reverse job fair, which will provide persons with I/DD who are seeking employment opportunities to present their skills and experience to local businesses.  Ivy Tech Community College will be a resource for Pre-ETS students in Safe Food Handling, Certified Nurse Aide prep classes (to prepare for the CNA exam), Certified Logistics Associate in Manufacturing (CLA), and hospitality certifications.  Easterseals Arc has partnered with Purdue University Fort Wayne to provide students with the opportunity to foster independence by participating in focused activities that will assist with the transition from school to adulthood. Students reside on campus for a duration of 7 weeks during the summer to simulate real life experiences. Instruction and activities during the program will include:   * Independent life skills * Social skills * Financial literacy – Partnership with Junior Achievement * Personal and community safety – Partnership with Public Safety Academy * Self-advocacy & local resources * Recreation & transportation * Work readiness skills   The collaborative efforts of McMillen Health Center and Bowen Center have resulted in the development of a program aimed at educating students on specific social and independent living skills. The program, titled Dream Teens, is designed to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate various scenarios and promote a healthy transition into adulthood and the workforce. Through Dream Teens, students are exposed to a range of practical skills, including communication, decision-making, and problem-solving. The overarching goal of the program is to empower students to take control of their lives and make informed choices that lead to positive outcomes. This partnership between McMillen Health Center and Bowen Center serves as a testament to their commitment to enhancing the well-being of students and promoting their personal development.  *Instruction in Self-Advocacy:*  To support self-advocacy, Easterseals Arc will use the curriculum *Becoming Your Own Expert! Self-Advocacy Curriculum for Individuals with Learning Disabilities* (focuses on self-advocacy for individuals 14-22 years of age). All Pre-ETS participants will be educated about issues of disclosure and IEPs. The agency also will provide opportunities for peer mentoring by encouraging Pre-ETS participants to attend in-house and local peer support and advocacy groups, such as the Johnny Appleseed Aktion Club, a chapter of the Self-Advocates of Indiana (SAI).  To equip students with self-advocacy skills, Easterseals Arc will use a combination of curriculums previously mentioned to provide a foundation of knowledge in self-advocacy. Students also will research their rights, ADA employment accommodations, and information pertaining to their local Social Security office, BMV, and courthouse. Students also are also encouraged to participate in their IEP meetings. Students also will discuss the importance of mental health. Through the Transition Aged Youth Grant (TAY Grant), students developed a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP Plan). Students went through a 6-week curriculum that was developed in part with Ivy Tech Community College. The purpose of the grant was to provide training to staff, caregivers, families, and participants on ways to identify and address mental health issues as well as resources on how mental health impacts daily living, employment, and life in general. Students covered topics such as anxiety, anger management, and building healthy relationships.  *Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Postsecondary Education*  The Pre-ETS staff will help to facilitate a seamless transition from high school to postsecondary education by using tailored student methods. Additionally, students will receive support in comprehending the relationships between their knowledge and skill development and potential career paths and postsecondary educational options.  Pre-ETS staff will work with nearby colleges to arrange campus tours and counseling for post-secondary education. Representatives from these colleges will meet with participants to go over requirements for admission and graduation, potential fields of study, disability services, testing, applications, financial aid, and other information essential to post-secondary education. Easterseals Arc also will provide information regarding post-secondary educational options for higher education institutions to interested students and their parents or guardians.  *Parent and Guardian Education*  Easterseals Arc has a family support specialist who works one-on-one with students and their families to provide the support needed during the student's enrollment in Pre-ETS. Serving as a point of contact for the family with the school and any resource or serving agency, the family support specialist offers the tools and resources necessary to help the student succeed in life beyond high school. The family support specialist will create a transition plan for each student to outline student goals and support needed to achieve the goals listed.  (Examples of support: Helping apply for waiver and VR services, attending IEP meetings, connecting with community resources, etc.)  Examples of growth and increased family engagement with this approach include:   * Increased parent meetings to create student engagement in school break programs where we are now experiencing waitlists, which we have never had before. * Increase in students entering post-secondary education * Increased student supports (behavioral consultants, skills coaches, recreational activities, etc.) with information provided by a family support specialist and assistance with getting these supports set up. * Increase in parents contacting Easterseals directly on behalf of students not enrolled in Pre-ETS to get enrolled in Pre-ETS * Increase in students entering other programming/services offered by Easterseals Arc (respite, PAC, day services, behavior consulting, recreational activities, summer programming, etc.)   Parent and guardian meetings will be held each school semester at partner schools. These information sessions will provide parents and guardians with the information and support needed to navigate the disability system and to encourage and support their youth’s emerging independence. This will include information regarding disability benefits, Medicaid Waiver supports, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services (BDDS) services, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), etc. Parent and guardian education will include the LifeCourse framework, which recognizes that life does not unfold in disconnected stages, but as an integrated continuum with each stage influencing the next.  LIFECOURSE  Easterseals Arc is committed to incorporating the LifeCourse framework and principles in all aspects of the project. This framework includes concepts of life stages, life domains, family systems, cycles/trajectories, and life outcomes. Students, parents, guardians, and community partners will be encouraged to use the integrated support tools to create experiences that help direct life trajectories toward desired outcomes, such as self-determination, community living, and self-sufficiency. When applied to project planning and implementation, this focus on trajectory will emphasize outcomes instead of services.  At Easterseals Arc, the LifeCourse framework and principles are implemented across all services and programs to ensure that person-centered supports are provided to all participants.  WORKLOAD  The workload of the project will be divided among the project team members. Allison Haywood, the regional employment director, will supervise the project. Lucas Crager, the Pre-ETS director, will be the administrator. The implementation of the project will be the responsibility of Pre-ETS supervisors, Pre-ETS coordinators, and job coaches, who will coordinate day-to-day activities and support. Each team member will be responsible for carrying out their clearly defined tasks as outlined in their respective job descriptions. Thomas Summerville, Easterseals Arc's president of operations, will provide organizational leadership and engage the Board of Directors in governance, strategic planning, performance measures, and resource development.  During the project, Easterseals Arc's marketing department will develop and execute a communications strategy that will showcase success stories and provide information to different constituent groups and the community. The Pre-ETS program will be featured on Easterseals Arc's website and in the agency's newsletter. Success stories will be shared on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other social media platforms. News releases will be sent to local media outlets, and feature coverage will be solicited from newspapers, TV, and radio.  Easterseals Arc will expand its social media presence and marketing strategies to distribute the information in a variety of ways. Easterseals has conducted parent meetings, both virtually and in person, to discuss the program. However, transportation and work schedules have been barriers to getting parents to attend in person. Therefore, they are exploring various ways to distribute this information, such as Facebook Live Q and A sessions.  EVALUATION  Easterseals Arc receives a significant amount of government funding annually, which has led the agency to develop a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for evaluation. These policies, procedures, and systems will be used to monitor this project closely. The management team will evaluate department goals monthly using the agency's Balanced Scorecard performance management system. Easterseals Arc also will follow specific reporting requirements unique to this RFS.  Assessments will be conducted at the beginning and end of a student's participation in the program. The Pre-ETS coordinators also will carry out annual assessments to measure each student's progress and identify areas that require one-on-one instruction. These assessments will include discussions with the students on their current employment interests, future employment and life goals, and the skills needed to achieve those goals.  The pre-/post-tests and annual assessments will measure the following data:   * Understanding of each of the 5 required Pre-ETS core service areas * Growth and progress of students' knowledge of the 5 core services   At the end of each academic year, the Pre-ETS program will measure the following quantitative data:   * The number of students served in the school systems and in the summer program * The number of students placed in community-based job training opportunities, including volunteering, internship, and job shadowing opportunities * The percentage of students who improve their soft, hard, and foundational skills * The percentage of students who successfully complete the program * The number of students who gain community-based employment * The number of new and continuing community partnerships * The number of informational meetings held at schools for caregivers and families   Additional qualitative data will be gathered through observations carried out by Pre-ETS staff and by families and caregivers. | |
| **2** | **Staffing**  Describe how you would staff this project to ensure capacity to carry out the scope of work. Identify key staff and their roles and responsibilities, including roles and responsibilities of any sub-contractors. Provide resumes for key staff. Ensure that the staffing plan is consistent with cost proposal. Describe if staff will be dedicated personnel for the project or if they will be a shared resource.  Additionally, list each collaborative partner, including local public agencies, Work One centers, VR employment service providers, local educational agencies (i.e., schools), post-secondary educational institutions, Independent Living centers, community programs, employers, or other entities. Describe collaborative partners’ roles and how each will be engaged in the project to better coordinate service delivery, reduce duplication of effort, leverage promising and innovative practices, and serve the greatest number of students possible. |
| **Donna Elbrecht, Chief Executive Officer**  **Thomas Summerville, President of Operations**  **Allison Haywood, Regional Director of Employment Services**  In 2014, Easterseals Arc employed Allison as a Direct Support Professional. She has served as a director of employment services since 2021. From 2014 until 2021, she also worked as an employment specialist and caseworker under contracts with Anthem Medicaid, The Department of Children's Services, and SCAN. After Easterseals Arc’s alignment with Cardinal Services, Allison was appointed as the regional director of employment services for Easterseals Northern Indiana. Allison graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Human Services in 2019.  **Lucas Crager, Pre-Employment Transition Services Director**  In 2017, Lucas began working as a Pre-ETS job coach with Easterseals Arc. He advanced to the position of Pre-ETS coordinator in less than a year, and by 2020, he was serving as Pre-ETS supervisor. Lucas currently serves as Easterseals Arc and Cardinal Services' director of Pre-Employment Transition services, providing Pre-ETS program administration. Lucas has improved the Pre-ETS program over the past six years to enable better results for the students served by forming enduring partnerships with families, employers, schools, community partners, and internal support departments.  **Suzanne Vertigan – Interim Easterseals Arc Pre-ETS Supervisor/Family Support Specialist**  Suzanne began working as an employment specialist for Easterseals Arc in 2018. In 2020, Suzanne stepped into the role of workforce development supervisor, creating pathways and employment opportunities for all Easterseals consumers. Suzanne transitioned into the Pre-ETS supervisor and family support specialist role in the summer of 2022. Suzanne came to Easterseals Arc with 25+ years of experience in providing case management and support to individuals with diverse backgrounds and needs. Her areas of knowledge include homelessness, domestic violence, sexual assault, intellectual disabilities, alternative educational settings, and parents involved with DCS services. Suzanne holds an associate degree from the University of Maine and a bachelor’s degree from the State University of New York. Suzanne shows great strength in supporting others in achieving their best life possible and advocating for those whose voices are often not heard.  **Timothy Tew, Cardinal Pre-ETS Supervisor**  In 2021, Timothy Tew began working as a Pre-ETS coordinator with Cardinal Services. He stepped into the role of Pre-ETS supervisor in the fall of 2023. Before employment at Cardinal Services, Tim worked at New Motion, where he repaired durable medical equipment for individuals with disabilities throughout Northern Indiana. Tim has been instrumental in the expansion of Pre-ETS services implemented by Cardinal Services by expanding the number of students and schools served, as well as the number of days Pre-ETS staff are sought in the schools.  **SUB-CONTRACTORS**   * In 2021, Easterseals Arc and Cardinal Services formed a strategic alignment to support individuals across Northern Indiana. Cardinal’s role as a subcontractor is to implement Pre-ETS services in the following counties: Kosciusko, Marshall, Starke, Pulaski, Fulton, Cass, White, Carroll, and Elkhart counties. * Through our partnership with Arc Opportunities of LaGrange County, we will provide Pre-ETS programming in Lagrange County. Arc Opportunities of Lagrange County has established a reputation within the community that will play a vital role in ensuring increased collaboration with community partners. * Through our partnership with The YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne, they will provide after-school Pre-ETS programming targeting students who are on a diploma track. This gives additional students access to the program and provides additional opportunities outside of a typical school day. Jorgensen Family YMCA has been a sub-contractor for a little over a year and has been a huge success for the Pre-ETS program. The intention of this partnership will be to expand the after-school Pre-ETS program to additional YMCAs throughout the region to continue to provide opportunities for students after school hours. * TeenWorks will provide paid summer internships for Pre-ETS students and expand to serve students throughout the school year both during and after school hours. * WorkOne shares office space in both Adams County and Steuben County with Easterseals RISE. Ivy Tech Community College provides certifications, job fairs, and work portfolio education/resources, along with other information listed in the proposal. Purdue University Fort Wayne offers the Easterseals Transitions Academy. Grace College provides the same services as Ivy Tech. Trine University has manufacturing labs and also offers esports. * Cardinal Services provides office space for Vocational Rehabilitation Area 5. * See additional collaborative partners on spreadsheet below.       Easterseals Arc provides an extensive range of work-based learning experiences, summer internships, and volunteer sites for students from 64 schools across northern Indiana. With nearly 100 collaborative partners, the list encompasses diverse organizations, including animal shelters, hospitals, restaurants, and community centers. Easterseals Arc consistently expands its offerings to students, enabling them to gain practical experience and develop essential skills.  The comprehensive list of opportunities at Easterseals Arc is a testament to the organization's commitment to providing students with diverse and meaningful experiences. Through its work-based learning programs, Easterseals Arc prepares students for the workforce, equipping them with the skills and knowledge essential for success. | |
| **3** | **Relevant Experience**  Describe relevant experience and qualifications in implementation for a project of this size and scope, including credentials and demonstrated experience in the development and/or provision of employment supports to students with disabilities or any similar services with the target population. Please also include background and expertise of staff that would play a substantial role in the delivery of services. |
| Easterseals Arc started a Transitions program focused on independent living skills, work-based learning and community employment in 2012. Easterseals Arc collaborates with consumers, caregivers, collaborative partners, and stakeholders to enhance consumer employability and create meaningful community job training opportunities that match consumers' unique skills and interests with employer needs. Pre-ETS services include job exploration, work-based learning, workplace readiness, self-advocacy, post-secondary education counseling, and caregiver education. Foundational, life, and employment skills have been taught through hands-on community experiences, classes, and community educational programs.Easterseals Arc continues to see increases in the number of people with disabilities wanting employment services, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and opportunities for community integration. Transition-age consumers, ages 14-22, are one of Easterseals Arc's largest growing constituent groups.  In March 2012, Easterseals Arc received a federal earmark of $100,000 from the Department of Labor to provide meaningful job training opportunities, soft skills, and support to people with I/DD ages 14 to 21. During the 2013-2014 academic year, Easterseals Arc's Transitions program began serving ten special needs students from Woodland High School and New Haven High School, both in the East Allen County School district (EACS). EACS contracted Easterseals Arc to provide these students with transition services, including functional life skills, job coaching, and community access. The students came to Easterseals Arc two days a week to receive these specialized services.  Also, during FY2013 and FY2014, Easterseals Arc expanded the work that began in 2012 to include working-age adults with I/DD.Easterseals Arc started working with Northeast Indiana Works (WorkOne Northeast) to better understand the hiring needs, certifications, and expectations of local employers. Easterseals Arc was also able to help Northeast Indiana Works (WorkOne) better communicate the abilities and assets of people with disabilities to local employers.  In 2014, Multimatic and Trelleborg, two local manufacturing companies, began providing integrated on-site paid work experiences for Easterseals Arc consumers. Consumers traveled to these work sites three or four times a week for five hours of paid work a day. Easterseals Arc consumers also benefited from employment training opportunities at many other community-based locations.  As Easterseals Arc has worked to increase community-based job training and employment opportunities, it also has continued working to increase consumers' foundational skills. Since 2011, Easterseals Arc has contracted Ivy Tech Community College to provide weekly on-site reading classes to consumers during the fall and spring semesters. The agency also uses on-site resources to teach computer literacy, financial literacy, and other life skills.  During 2015, Easterseals Arc worked with Northeast Indiana Works and other community partners to launch a Job Education & Training (JET) pilot project that included a High School Equivalency (HSE) Certificate through the Fort Wayne Literacy Alliance and a Certified Logistics Associate (CLA) manufacturing credential through Ivy Tech Community College. Easterseals Arc used the lessons learned through the JET program to pilot an Employment Readiness Academy (ERA) working in partnership with Lutheran Hospital and Ivy Tech Community College. This internship/mentorship program provided adult consumers with 18 weeks of on-site work experience at community job sites. Classroom time was used to teach complex skills and soft skills needed for success, such as the curriculum *Skills to Pay the Bills*. Educational certifications such as *Safe Food Handling Certification*and *Certified Logistics Associate (C.L.A.)* are provided by Ivy Tech Community College.    To provide these services, Easterseals Arc customized a delivery model to meet the specific needs of each participating school. Most students met Monday-Friday, four hours a day, to engage in core grant activities, starting with job exploration. Youth participated in an Employment Readiness Academy (ERA), spending 10 hours a week completing 18-week rotations working paid internships at community job sites. Participants also attended classes designed to teach hard and soft skills needed for success using curriculums such as *Skills to Pay the Bills* and *Becoming Your Own Expert! Self-Advocacy Curriculum for Individuals with Learning Disabilities*. Collaborations with Ivy Tech Community College and other higher education institutions provided participants and caregivers with post-secondary educational counseling.  Since 2017, the agency has provided Dream Teens for teens with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Dream Teens is held during the summer, winter, and spring breaks. The program typically runs 8:30 a.m. -4 p.m. during the fall break. The program includes a range of recreational and educational activities designed to teach life skills, increase independence, and prepare for employment. This program has expanded during the summer to include Angola, Decatur, Fort Wayne, Garrett, and Columbia City locations.  During the summer break, the agency also has provided two additional program options for students. Since the summer of 2021, students have had the option to apply for our Future Leaders Internships. Students submit an application, are interviewed, and review job skills before they are accepted into the program. Additionally, we have developed the Easterseals Transition Academy (ETA) program. This program allows students to work on their independent living skills. Students stay on the Purdue Fort Wayne campus for seven weeks in the summer. Students have a part time job to pay for their own groceries and recreational activities. Each week has a theme week that pertains to skills needed to live independently. For example, one week would be transportation, where we would discuss different modes of transportation and learn about the city’s bus system. Another example is safety week. In that week, we discuss internet safety, self-defense class, etc.  During the recently completed FY2018, Easterseals Arc's Pre-ETS program achieved the following:   * Provided employment-focused transition services to 259 high school students with disabilities at Wayne High School, South Side High School, Columbia City High School, Homestead High School, and Carroll High School. Transition-aged youth also were served through Easterseals Arc's 2018 summer Dream Teens program. * Participants created portfolios that included a resume, skills obtained throughout the program, certifications obtained by Ivy Tech or other credible entities, and progress alerts. * Information sessions provided 75 caregivers with information about how they can support their child and how work will impact disability benefits. * Easterseals Arc worked with collaborative partners to create systematic change in how transition-age youth with disabilities are integrated into the community.     In January 2019, the Division of Mental Health and Addiction of the Family and Social Services Administration awarded Easterseals Arc a 2-year grant to provide mental health education to transition-aged youth with a dual diagnosis of I/DD and mental illness.  In 2022, Easterseals Arc revitalized the Neurodiversity Workforce Training Initiative (NWTI) and taught local employers to create accommodating work environments and practices. The project helped people with neurodevelopmental disorders obtain and maintain meaningful employment and taught businesses how to attract, hire, retain, advance, and support a neurodivergent workforce.  The following goals and outcomes were achieved:   * 413 participants were served, including 265 transition-aged youth and 148 working-age adults. * Of 40 targeted graduating students, 100% increased job readiness, employability, and life skills as measured by observations and pre/post testing. * By December 2023, 29 adult participants will have maintained employment for 90 days. * 100% of businesses served an increased number of neurodivergent employees. * 95% of 37 businesses served modified the workplace environment/culture to accommodate neurodivergent employees   Easterseals Arc's chief government relations and strategic initiatives officer chaired and led the Workforce Competency and Competitiveness Committee of the Northeast Indiana Regional Opportunity Council (R.O.C.) comprised of local foundations, non-profit leaders, and business leaders working to make northeast Indiana a Disability First region.  In 2023 and continuing in 2024, Easterseals Arc and the Don Wood Foundation collaborated to provide services for transition-aged youth with I/DD (9th-12th grade) in Whitley, Steuben, DeKalb, and Kosciusko counties. The aim was to equip these students with the necessary skills, certifications, and hands-on experience to fill job openings in the manufacturing industry. Easterseals Arc worked with local schools and manufacturers to develop customized Dream Teen camps based on their Pre-ETS manufacturing curriculum to achieve this. Each participant was paid a weekly stipend.  During 2024, Easterseals Arc will create new virtual opportunities for job training, skill building, and exploration using Transfr VR, an economic development platform that provides immersive simulated job-training modules in a variety of fields. Digital coaches provide personal instruction, allowing consumers to move at their own pace as they build skills and knowledge and learn to perform essential tasks.    During the most recently completed academic year (2022-2023)   * Provided services to 705 students (Easterseals Arc & Cardinal) enrolled through 42 different schools, plus homeschooled students through in-school supports, subcontracts, collaborating partners, and school break programs.     The project achieved the following outcomes:   * 100% of youth served created a plan for employment or post-secondary education * 100% explored jobs and gained job skills. A total of 61 students participated in community-based job training opportunities, including meaningful volunteer opportunities, internships, and job shadowing opportunities. 15 students created resumes/portfolios. 1 student gained paid employment. * 23% participated in post-secondary education counseling. A total of 62 students attended summer college camp. * 95% increased soft skills, hard skills, and foundational skills related to employment.     Easterseals Arc is now seeing increases in homeschooled students interested in Pre-ETS, new intakes with mental health issues, and younger individuals needing support/services. In response, Easterseals Arc continues to develop service delivery models, build collaborative partnerships, and empower staff with tools, resources, and paradigms.  More than 50% of people served by Easterseals Arc receive employment services. People with the most significant disabilities and transition-aged youth are the fastest-growing segment of Easterseals Arc's client population. Easterseals Arc continues to see increases in these target groups wanting opportunities for community employment and job training, as indicated by Individual Service Plans and quarterly meetings with consumers and their interdisciplinary teams. Easterseals Arc continues to develop innovative service delivery models and build community partnerships to address these trends.  Since its founding in 2016, Easterseals Arc's Pre-ETS program has been spearheaded by Thomas Summerville. Summerville has served as a Board Member of the Indiana Association of People Supporting Employment (INAPSE) for the last three years. He also serves the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (INARF) as Employment and Meaningful Day Co-Chair, providing guidance to the state of Indiana regarding employment and day services for the new Medicaid Waiver redesign and as INARF's Employment Supports Co-Chair, providing guidance, best practices and public policy information to employment providers throughout the state of Indiana. | |
| **4** | **Training**  Describe how staff training will be conducted and what process will be followed. Share sample training documentation that will be utilized and describe additional training content that would be developed (e.g., system manual, user manual etc.). |
| The process of preparing the staff for their roles in the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program requires a comprehensive two-week training program. The first week of the training will primarily focus on agency-required training and job shadowing within the Pre-ETS program. The second week of the program will commence with Pre-ETS program-specific training.  During the second week of training, the staff will undergo an extensive review of key elements, including the history and purpose of Pre-ETS. It also will include a review of the programs offered by the employment services department, as well as the knowledge of other community programs. In addition, the staff will gain an in-depth understanding of the intake process of new Pre-ETS students. This will require their familiarity with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), identification of the key parts of an IEP, and understanding the rubric assessment and how to administer it.  The review of billing processes will also be covered in this training week. Staff will become familiar with the five core services using WINTAC resources, extensive practice writing case notes, and navigation of the Pre-ETS portal. Moreover, the staff will gain a solid understanding of the stipend process, which involves knowledge of the Student Earned Income Exclusion and Trial Work Periods, as well as understanding required internal documents.  Furthermore, the training will include comprehensive guidance on how to close a student, including the required documentation needed to satisfy state requirements. The staff also will be trained on how to navigate purchased curriculum, understand school goals and desired outcomes, and participate in job shadowing at various schools. This will provide them with a clear understanding of how to implement the five core service areas into programming, as well as the requirements of the position.  The training program will be continuously updated and revised to match program requirements. It will include the necessary resources required to equip the staff with the tools to be successful in supporting students and schools.  Our agency offers additional training to staff outside the agency to promote program sustainability and develop skills. Additionally, we provide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training to staff. | |
| **5** | **Documentation/Billing**  Describe procedures related to how data and required documentation listed in attachment E would be collected and entered into BRS’ Pre-ETS web portal (see **Attachment F, Overview of Web Portal**). Outline the process that will be used to meet the states expectations for timely and accurate billing, and ensuring that expenses claimed align with service delivery data entered into the Pre-ETS web portal. |
| All documentation and billing pertaining to student services will be entered into the Pre-ETS web portal within eight hours of the provision of the service by the responsible staff. The supervisor shall review the notes of the staff on the following day to ensure compliance with state regulations and accuracy. Any required corrections shall be completed by the staff before noon on the following day. The Pre-ETS director shall conduct an internal audit of 10% of the documentation throughout the month to ensure compliance.  The Pre-ETS director maintains an efficient tracking system to ensure that the billing of staff aligns accurately with the documentation entered by all Pre-ETS staff via the Pre-ETS web portal. Each month, the generated invoice shall be scrutinized by the Pre-ETS director to ensure that it matches all the internal tracking and data before submitting it for final billing. The invoice is then submitted to FSSA no later than the 5th of the following month. | |