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JB Pritzker, Governor

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Dulce M. Quintero, Secretary Designate

100 South Grand Avenue, East • Springfield, Illinois 62762  
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DATE: May 2, 2024

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable John F. Curran, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Don Harmon, Senate President  
The Honorable Tony McCombie, House Minority Leader  
The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Speaker of the House

FROM: Dulce Quintero   
Secretary Designate  
Illinois Department of Human Services

SUBJECT: **Economic and Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Task Force Annual Report (May 1, 2022- April 30, 2023)**

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The Illinois Department of Human Services respectfully submits the Economic and Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Task Force Annual Report on behalf of the Illinois Department of Human Services- Division of Rehabilitation in order to fulfill the requirements set forth in Public Act 96-368.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Robyn L. Lewis, PhD., Division of Rehabilitation Services Policy Advisor at [robyn.lewis@illinois.gov](mailto:robyn.lewis@illinois.gov), 217-606-9070.

cc: The Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor  
John W. Hollman, Clerk of the House  
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Illinois Senate  
Legislative Research Unit  
State Government Report Center



# STATE OF ILLINOIS

## **Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (EEOPD) Taskforce Annual Report 2023**

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

# Table of Contents

I. EEOPD TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP ..... 2

II. BACKGROUND..... 3

III. WORKGROUP SUMMARIES ..... 4

    A. Workforce Development ..... 4

    B. Provider Workgroup..... 5

    D. Transition Workgroup ..... 9

    E. Legislative Workgroup..... 11

IV. KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND UPDATES ..... 12

V. RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 14

VI. NEXT STEPS ..... 14

Appendix A ..... 16

    Dignity in Pay Work Plan ..... 16

## **I. EEOPD TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP**

### **State Government Representatives:**

Ryan Croke, Illinois Governor's Office\*

Theresa Garate, Illinois Governor's Office

Bambi Bethel-Leitschuh, Juvenile Justice

Chris Bond, Central Management Services

Sherry Hinds (Casey Burke), IDHS-Division of Developmental Disabilities

Anna D'Ascenzo, Illinois Department of Employment Security

Natasha Allan (Melvin Harrison), Illinois Community College Board

Ahlam Jbara, IDHS-Division of Family and Community Services

Anita Ealy-Wiley (Siobhan Johnson), Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs

Lisa Jones, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

LaMetric Lane, Illinois State Board of Education

Lizette Tripur, (Maria Martinez-McKinley), IDHS-Division of Rehabilitation Services

Darius McKinney, IDHS-Division of Mental Health

Kimberly Mercer-Schleider, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

Kelly Cunningham (Gabriela Moroney), Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services

Rafael Rivera, IDHS-Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery

Arthur Sutton, Illinois State Board of Higher Education

### **Public Appointed Members:**

Maria Doughty, The Chicago Network\*

Kathy Carmody, Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities

Josh Evans, Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities

Phil Milsk, Attorney and Public Policy Advocate

Benro Ogunyipe, Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission

Barry Taylor, Equip for Equality

Mary Margaret Sharp-Pucci, Loyola University Chicago

Patty Walters, Developmental Services Center

Susy Woods, Illinois Assistive Technology Program

There are currently six (6) vacant seats for appointment for persons with disabilities, veterans with disabilities, Centers for Independent Living, disability services providers, organized labor, and higher education.

\*Co-chairs

## II. BACKGROUND

The Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (EEOPD) Taskforce was established in 2009 via Legislation (PA 96-368). Its purpose, to “analyze programs and policies of the state to determine what changes, modifications, and innovations may be necessary to remove barriers to competitive employment and economic opportunity for persons with disabilities. The Task Force makes recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor including regulatory changes to advance employment and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities in Illinois.” The State of Illinois legislature passed legislation in 2013 declaring Illinois an Employment First State with the objective to ensure people with disabilities are given the option to engage in integrated, competitive employment at or above minimum wage. An executive order signed in 2014 set forth a process for Illinois to achieve this goal.

The Task Force created five workgroups to support the Employment First initiative: Workforce Development, Provider, Employer, Transition, and Legislative Workgroups. In 2018, the Task Force created a [Recommendations Report](#), detailing implementation strategies for the state of Illinois in each of the five Workgroup focus areas (not originally including the Legislative Workgroup) which continues to guide the work and priorities of the Task Force.

Moreover, the Task Force encompasses sixteen designated State Agencies: Governor’s Office, Education (ISBE, CCO, IBHE), DCEO, Health and Human Services, Divisions of: Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health, DD Council, IDES, Veterans Affairs. In addition, fifteen public members (at least 5 who are disabled) have seats for appointment on the Task Force. This diverse stakeholder group is comprised of representatives from the following sectors:

- Statewide organizations who advocate for persons with physical, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities
- Entities with expertise in assistive technology devices and services for persons with disabilities
- Entities who provide employment and training services to persons with disabilities
- Advocates for veterans with disabilities
- Centers for independent living & disability services providers
- Organized labor
- Higher education
- Private sector business community
- Entities who provide employment and training services to persons with disabilities

### III. WORKGROUP SUMMARIES

#### A. Workforce Development

The Workforce Development Workgroup focuses on five strategic areas:

- 1) The State must align its mandated requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with Employment First principles. Alignment will result in opportunities for competitive and integrated employment for students with disabilities and people currently receiving sub-minimum wage.
- 2) The State must transform into a model employer for people with disabilities. The State becoming a model employer will require significant changes, including modifying the existing “Rutan” process to ensure people with significant disabilities can receive reasonable accommodations, including exemptions from the current testing and interview process for state employees.
- 3) The State must modify two of its programs – the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and the State-Use Program – to be consistent with Employment First. Modifications will require statutory and regulatory changes.
- 4) The State must ensure its website structure and content on [www.illinois.gov](http://www.illinois.gov) follows federal and state accessibility laws. Ensuring accessibility will require a centralized and coordinated audit of current content and policies and procedures for posting content moving forward.
- 5) The State must establish a training protocol on Employment First for new and existing employees. Using already existing materials and coordinating with ongoing training events will facilitate the process.

The Workforce Development Work Group identified the state agencies and departments who will be centrally involved in undertaking the steps outlined in our recommendations. Notably, Central Management Services (CMS) will play a key role given its responsibility for hiring policies, website management, and training. Additionally, CMS oversees the two major programs who must change to comply with Employment First – the BEP and the State Use Program. Other agencies who will play key roles will be the Illinois Department of Human Services-Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, especially with respect to their work on the implementation of WIOA, and the Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) regarding the accessibility of state websites and technology systems.

Chair: Barry Taylor, Equip for Equality

**Workforce Development Reporting Period Activities:**

- The workgroup’s priority area has been working with the State on technology and accessibility issues. There is a small group who holds quarterly group meetings with DoIT and other agency representatives. Some highlights include:
  - DoIT instituting a new Office of Information Accessibility,
  - Establishment of a Disability Access Coordinator Group with one coordinator in each state agency,
  - Monitoring progress on State website modernization including the migration of data from SharePoint to the new Automated Experience Manager (AEM) and DoIT monthly website accessibility reports,
  - Monitoring progress on the accessibility of the State’s SAP recruiting tool,
  - Ensuring improvements to the accessibility of Webex, including its new polling tool,
  - Reviewing improvements to the accessibility of the IDES application system, and
  - Successfully advocating for accessibility to become a requirement in the Governor’s Office process for reviewing technology projects and procurements.
- Ensuring accessibility and disability inclusion is included in the broader diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by the Chief Equity Officer in the Governor’s Office:
  - Worked with Governor’s office to ensure disability and accessibility were included in their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) priorities.
- Collaboration with the State’s Interagency Committee for Employees with Disabilities (I.C.E.D) to work on
  1. The percentage of State employees with disabilities,
  2. Increase the number of State employees with disabilities, and
  3. Disability Preference.
- Collaborate statewide efforts for expungement of criminal records, which is often a barrier to employment.
- Collaborate with other state disability-focused groups to be guest presenters for the taskforce meetings.

**B. Provider Workgroup**

The Provider Committee Workgroup was formed to identify key policies, practices and strategies must be addressed and embraced for all citizens of Illinois to achieve the goal of employment. The workgroup’s strategic focus areas include:

- 1) The need to align policies, practices, and funding mechanisms with the ideal all citizens are capable of competitive employment, and employment should be the first consideration for adults of working age.
- 2) The Workgroup recognizes the current service delivery system will require considerable redesign and made detailed recommendations for specific steps and strategies required for existing services to be re-aligned toward supporting the goal of community integrated employment.
- 3) The Workgroup identified systemic barriers currently impeding the pursuit of competitive integrated employment and crafted concrete steps for remedying these obstacles.

- 4) Finally, the Committee addressed the issue of adults who may not be employed on a full-time basis and who need supports to construct a meaningful and productive daytime routine. This parallel issue is an essential component of assuring the resources being expended on daytime supports are focused on preparing people to pursue and achieve competitive employment and supporting people to become full and productive members of their communities.

The Workgroup identified a multitude of state agencies and departments who will be centrally involved in undertaking the steps outlined in our recommendations. Divisions within the Department of Human Services, specifically the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Mental Health, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities are the most critical entities to pursuing and accomplishing the steps outlined in our recommendations, though other state departments are referenced as well. The Workgroup also recognizes the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities plays a critical role in supporting the evolution toward a more employment-focused system.

Co-Chairs: Kathy Carmody, The Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities  
Casey Burke, IDHS – Division of Developmental Disabilities



### **Provider Workgroup Reporting Period Activities:**

The Provider Committee held five (5) meetings to establish committee priorities and develop a format for organizing key recommendations for each priority area.

- A summary of Key Topics Identified by Committee Members is:
  - Referrals with the Division of Rehabilitation Offices
  - Accreditation Requirement
  - Sub-Minimum Wage Certificate
  - Options/Opportunities for People with Significant/Ongoing Support Needs (i.e., Expansion of IPS Model)
  - Asset Limits/Benefit Knowledge
  - Transition from School to Adult Services
  - Funding for Soft-Skills Training
  - Performance Based Contract Disincentives for Supporting People with Barriers
  - Formal Process for Securing DRS Contract
  
- Developed Format for Submitting Recommendations/Topics to the EEOPD Task Force
  - Recommendation
  - Lead State Agency/Division
  - Rationale: Challenges/Issues Resulting from Current Practice
  - Anticipated Positive Impact on Employment Outcomes
  - Regulatory Considerations
  - Policy Considerations
  - Fiscal Considerations
  
- The committee held extensive discussion regarding the 14c/Subminimum Wage Certificate topic and while not developing formal recommendations, did reach consensus on the following items:
  - There was consensus sub-minimum wage is likely not going to continue to be an option; however, there was significant concern about the impact on people whose skills may not make them marketable in the competitive employment environment.
  - Agreement the requirement for providers to maintain a subminimum wage certificate to bid on state use contracts needs to change. Discussion on what the threshold should be for state-use contracts.
  - Committee members expressed concern regarding unintended consequences and the need to ensure the interests of people who may not be able to be employed competitively are not left out of planning process.
  - DRS does not accept provider-led businesses as competitive employment outcomes unless specific competitive integrated employment standards are met.

### **C. Employer Workgroup**

The Employer Workgroup has developed the following recommendations for achieving Illinois' goal of Employment First:

- 1) Develop an awareness campaign to educate employers, both private and public, regarding the benefits, incentives and value proposition of hiring, training, retaining and advancement of persons with disabilities,
- 2) Create a shared service portal for employers and vocational providers (including but not limited to community rehabilitation programs),
- 3) Implement a functional system to connect employers with vocational providers, and
- 4) Develop and execute a meaningful and validated measurement process.

The Committee identified a multitude of state agencies and departments who will be centrally involved in undertaking the steps outlined in our recommendations, particularly: Governor's Office, Central Management Services, Department of Employment Security, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Department of Information Technology, Department of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services. Additionally, all the agencies identified or required to be involved in the Employment First Act, and any agency who does not rely solely on general revenue funds.

Co-Chairs: Maria Doughty, The Chicago Network  
Anna D'Ascenzo, Illinois Department of Employment Security

#### **Employer Subgroup Reporting Period Activities:**

The Employer Subgroup continues to work through and implement the suggestions from last reporting period: one of which is to engage private employers.

- Private Employment Subgroup met to review and discuss the goals and objectives for next annual reporting.
- Private Employment Subgroup reported at each EEOPD Task Force meeting with updates on implementation of objectives and goals from EEOPD Plan.
- Private Employment Subgroup met to discuss various ways of increasing the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities both with State and private employment in Illinois.
- Private Employment Subgroup continued to discuss ways to expand and collaborate with more private employers in the state of Illinois in order fulfill the mission of the subgroup.
- Meaningful access to ensure technology is accessible for state employees as well as individuals applying for state jobs.

#### **D. Transition Workgroup**

The Transition Workgroup was formed around five identified areas of focus:

- 1) The transition plans and services prepared for all students with disabilities in Illinois must provide consistent, high-quality, individualized services to prepare them for employment and other facets of adult life. This will be accomplished by ensuring high quality transition planning and service coordination personnel at the local and regional levels and using Transition Planning Committees (TPC) effectively.
- 2) The State must improve its collection, analysis, and reporting of post-transition outcome data for students. Originally, it was recommended the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) member agencies work collaboratively to design an effective tracking process and reporting system. However, The Interagency Coordinating Council Act was repealed by Public Act 100-0866 and the task to design a process for collecting, analyzing, coordinating, and sharing data regarding transitions was assigned to this Task Force.
- 3) The unique needs of at-risk students with disabilities, (e.g., those coming out of youth corrections systems and diversion programs, Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) custody, and students with significant mental health needs, social and emotional learning deficits, and behavioral issues) must be specifically targeted for appropriate and timely interventions and service coordination.
- 4) Students with significant disabilities who will likely qualify for Home & Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid waiver services should have person-centered planning (PCP) incorporated into the transition planning process. This will ensure the PCP process starts early in the transition process and continues as required under the HCBS waiver rules into adult services and employment.
- 5) Illinois must provide meaningful access to post-secondary education for students with disabilities. Meaningful access requires, among other things, effective communication with high schools, parents, and students to ensure full understanding of the eligibility and verification requirements for accommodations and modifications under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA, and information about services available at post-secondary institution.

Since the Interagency Coordinating Council was discontinued, Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) must be leaders in this endeavor and include the State agencies and departments from the ICC and whose participation is critical to this process. The workgroup also identified some key non-State participants such as local school districts, special education joint agreements, Transition Planning Committees, the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (due to the well-established and growing importance of AT in preparing students with disabilities for adult life, including post-secondary education, vocational training and employment), centers for independent living, adult service providers, and others.

Co-Chairs: LaMetric Lane, Illinois State Board of Education  
Mariel Hamer-Sinclair, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

### **Transition Workgroup Reporting Period Activities:**

In 2023, the Transition workgroup made significant strides in fortifying its foundation and expanding its reach:

- Secured additional representation from crucial entities such as the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program, Division of Child and Family Services, and the Illinois Center on Transition and Work at the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign. Each agency is now actively contributing to the workgroup's mission.
- Executed comprehensive strategic planning to delineate priority workstreams, identify key issues, and articulate specific requests for the larger taskforce. The findings from this strategic planning have been compiled into a report, which will be presented to the taskforce. Ongoing planning endeavors will continue to propel the workgroup and taskforce toward their overarching goals.
- The state agency subgroup, a successor to the Inner Agency Coordinating Council, engaged in bi-monthly meetings with a primary focus on data management, aligning with the 2018 Employment and Economic Opportunities for People with Disabilities (EEOPD) recommendations. These recommendations highlighted the necessity for a formalized database. Notably, the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services, and Juvenile Justice agencies actively presented their transition-related data during meetings in 2023. This commitment to addressing data concerns is set to persist throughout 2024, further enhancing the Transition workgroup's impact.

## **E. Legislative Workgroup**

The Legislative Workgroup does not formerly have its own strategic focus areas; however, the role is to monitor legislation relevant to the work of the Task Force and its workgroups and to keep members apprised of updates to proposed/pending legislation.

The Legislative Subcommittee is looking forward to continuing its work of considering legislation and policy, advising the Task Force on legislative and policy ideas, and reviewing relevant pending legislation for the Task Force. It also seeks to formally become a Work Group of the Task Force in 2024.

### **Legislative Workgroup Reporting Period Activities**

Legislative Subcommittee met several times to review proposed legislation which would change Section 45-35 of the Procurement Code section governing the State Use Program. Specifically, the legislation, initiated by the Arc of Illinois and New Star Services (now Sertoma Star Services), would align the Code with Executive Order 2021-26 by

- (1) requiring State Use Program employers to pay their employees at least the applicable Illinois or local minimum wage, and
- (2) eliminate the requirement for employers to obtain 14(c) certification from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Upon the recommendation of the Department of Human Services, the legislation also updates language in Section 45-35 as to who can be a vendor under the State Use program. The legislation passed as part of an omnibus procurement bill, HB 2878 and took effect on January 1, 2024.

Co-Chairs: Phil Milsk, Attorney and Public Policy Advocate  
Mariel Hamer-Sinclair, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

#### IV. KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND UPDATES

The full EEOPD Task Force met four times during this reporting period on 5/4/2022, 9/7/2022, 12/7/22, and 2/8/23 all meetings were conducted remotely using videoconferencing. Key accomplishments include:

- The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) – Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and Central Management Services (CMS) co-hosted a 2022 Virtual State of Illinois Career Fair for Persons with Disabilities on May 10, 2022, to promote job opportunities within the state government. In addition to the persons actively seeking employment, DRS outreached to the 40,000+ persons receiving waiver services through DRS and asked Centers for Independent Living and Task Force members to promote the event as broadly as possible. The event was a success and was well attended.
- The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) posted a funding opportunity for Competitive Integrated Employment Capacity Grants and applications were due in February 2022 for grants starting in May 2022. In partnership with DRS, the purpose is to build provider capacity in the Developmental Disabilities system who offer sheltered work or just day services and want to build their capacity in competitive integrated employment. 11 applicants were funded for a 2-year period to start up an employment program in their organizations with costs covered for staffing including dedicated employment staff to provide supported employment services, training from a nationally recognized organization, accreditation for organizations to become DRS-approved Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), and DRS will review those recipients who perform well to be considered for DRS contracts to continue their programming into the future. 9 of the 11 grantees are 14(c) certificate holders (providing sheltered employment opportunities) and this funding is intended to incentivize and help those providers to move away from sheltered workshops toward competitive integrated opportunities for the people they serve.
- In FY22, DRS realigned its organizational structure by redesignating the Illinois Client Assistance Program to Equip for Equality, to serve as an independent ombudsperson, and by creating new Bureaus focused on quality outreach and excellent customer service.
- In FY22 the DRS Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program assisted 4,713 people with disabilities in achieving a competitive employment outcome. This marked an increase of 20.5% from the previous fiscal year total of 3,911. These individuals earned on average \$21,476 at case closure, an increase of \$1,352 annually from the previous year. This added a total of \$6.4 million in additional income for Illinois households over the previous year.
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) - For the final year Title-IV agencies only have a negotiated target for Measurable Skills Gains Rate as part of the performance and accountability measures, we exceeded this target for the second year in a row. This negotiated goal was 50.0% for PY21/ SFY22 and the final confirmed rate found on DRS' submitted ETA- 9169 was 67.8%. This was the 6th highest in the nation and the highest rate of any state with at least 18,000 participants served and of these states, the second highest was achieved by Michigan at 56.8%. This high rate of success for our post-secondary participants is

a testament to the hard work and dedication of our customers, field staff, community partners, and the Illinois Workforce System as a whole.

- The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model is an evidence-based practice helping people with mental health conditions find and keep meaningful work. In Illinois, IPS is also a program sponsored by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Divisions of Mental Health and Rehabilitation Services. The Illinois IPS model has demonstrated a 63 percent successful Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Rate (the percentage of people stably employed in a job of their choosing after 90 days), which is above the national average. Illinois leads the nation in its provision of technical assistance through certified IPS fidelity trainers, which are geographically based throughout the state to ensure access to support for all IPS providers. In FY22, the program served a total of 3,180 persons, there were 1,284 new enrollees into the program, and consumers had 938 new job starts.
- The Division of Developmental Disabilities Supported Employment Program (DDD SEP) assists individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) approved for the Home and Community Based Support (HCBS) Waiver for Adults with Developmental Disabilities to engage in, and sustain, competitive integrated employment (CIE). In FY22, individuals were served through both individual and group/small group settings, both with and without a job coach, in the following numbers:
  - Individual with Job Coach, 436 persons served by 53 providers,
  - Individual without Job Coach, 281 persons served by 40 providers,
  - Group with Job Coach, 205 persons served by 21 providers,
  - Group without Job Coach, 66 persons served by 9 providers; and
  - Small Group (up to 1:3 ratio), 134 persons served by 16 providers.
- The Illinois Department of Human Services procured a new web tool, Illinois Disability Benefits 101 (IL DB101), went live on September 1, 2022, and is sponsored by the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services, Mental Health, and Developmental Disabilities. Illinois Disability Benefits 101 (IL DB101) is a free, user-friendly, Illinois-specific website with interactive support tools which are accessible on all devices and helps individuals work through the myths and confusion of Social Security benefits, healthcare, employment, and more. IL DB101, developed by the World Institute on Disability, is the one-stop for information, resources, and tools to motivate and support employment and community inclusion for individuals with disabilities, their families and circle of supports, and professionals. The tool can be accessed at <https://il.db101.org>.
- The IDHS-DRS From Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment for Illinoisans with Disabilities (SWTCIE Illinois) Model Demonstration Project (U.S. Department of Education Disability Innovation Fund, 84.421D) is a new initiative to address the need to expand opportunities for Illinoisans with disabilities to obtain high-quality competitive integrated employment (CIE) leading to economic security and assists and encourages employers in Illinois to fully include youth and adults with disabilities in their workforce. SWTCIE Illinois will increase opportunities for Illinois youth and adults with disabilities to transition from subminimum wage (SMW) employment to CIE and redirect youth and adults to CIE when they

are contemplating SMW employment for the first time. The competitive funding opportunity was posted on April 17, 2023, and the application deadline will be May 29, 2023. Approximately \$3M will be made available for a 4-year project period (July 1, 2023- June 30, 2027).

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with reporting requirements outlined in PA96-368, the EEOPD taskforce offers the following recommendations:

- Incorporate feedback from the Unified State Plan to align efforts with Employment First
- Create a working group to support efforts and actions required to pass and implement Dignity in Pay legislation designed to eliminate subminimum wage practices in Illinois.
- DRS accreditation requirement should be rescinded for “otherwise qualified organizations” defined as organizations who currently contract with DRS and/or otherwise surveyed by a DHS entity.
- DRS should establish a formal, written process for application to become a DRS vendor with established timeframes and a written response from DRS if application is denied.
- Committee recommends the state be required to develop strategies to minimize the impact/loss of employment for people with significant disabilities/support needs.
- Consider options for transforming Community Day Services (CDS) programs to incubator hubs for entrepreneurial/employment opportunities.
- Expand upon written policies and procedures available to community partners.

## VI. NEXT STEPS

Next Steps are measurable actions the EEOPD plans to take for the upcoming year. Next Steps are comprised of recommendations from the 2018 EEOPD Recommendations report, and the professional recommendations of task force workgroups with the goal of reforming existing employment systems for people with disabilities in the State of Illinois. Next Steps include:

- In collaboration, the Legislative Committee is accepting referrals from the task force as they will continue to work with the Governor’s Office and Legislators to remove barriers and support employment for people with disabilities.
- Provide input on the WIOA Unified State Plan by way of Workforce Partner groups (DCEO, DRS, ICCB, and IDES).



- The Transition Workgroup will address systemic barriers which hinder students with disabilities from achieving their post-secondary employment outcomes. Utilizing the 2018 EEOPD Taskforce Report, the group will evaluate the progress, or lack thereof, in implementing the Transition recommendations and activities outlined therein. Subsequently, additional recommendations, requests, and pertinent information will be presented to the taskforce, aiming to foster meaningful post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities.
- The State Agency Subgroup will deliver a comprehensive Status Report detailing current data on services provided for transition-age youth with disabilities transitioning from school to employment, post-secondary education and training, and community living. Recommendations, informed by best practices, will be crafted to propose piloting an integrated data system aimed at tracking students with disabilities across school systems, human services agencies, post-secondary education, training, and employment sectors, utilizing a representative sample of youth with disabilities statewide.
- The Provider Workgroup plans to schedule an open zoom forum will be available to community employment providers and interested parties to provide an update on committee activities and obtain input from attendees.
- Create a working group to support efforts and actions required to pass and implement Dignity in Pay legislation designed to eliminate subminimum wage practices in Illinois.
- The Employer Workgroup is currently in the process of identifying private employers who seek to join the task force or work collaboratively with private employers on inclusion and diversifying the private workplace.
- Collaborate with the Governor’s Office to ensure the EEOPD taskforce is fully staffed, especially with persons who have lived experience with disability and work.
- Work with the Governor’s Office to ensure the EEOPD taskforce has appropriate resources to move recommendations forward.
- Task Force Chairpersons and IDHS Administrators will meet with the Governor’s office to discuss a timetable for annual reporting.

## **Appendix A**

### **Dignity in Pay Work Plan**

In the next reporting year, the EEOPD Task Force will create a working group to support efforts and actions required to pass and implement Dignity in Pay legislation designed to eliminate subminimum wage practices in Illinois. The working group will focus on the following key areas: develop a plan of action to implement legislation, develop a data collection plan, and develop recommendations to support sustainability.

#### **Plan of Action**

The Plan of Action will cover multiple years and consist of recommended actions, anticipated outcomes, benchmarks, and funding recommendations. The working group will consider issues affecting the individual and their support system, the 14c certificate holder, and the broader employment landscape, to include employer impacts. Focal points of the plan will include measurable goals and objectives for the State to ensure:

- Competitive and integrated employment is the first option when servicing persons with disabilities of working age as set forth in the Illinois Employment First Act,
- Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to pursue employment paid at amount equal to or higher than minimum wage,
- Service enhancements, rate adjustments, investments, and policy changes necessary to address systemic barriers,
- Collaborative partnerships between State agencies and key stakeholder organizations,
- Elimination of Section 14(c) certificates, and
- Funding is available to support the legislation (i.e., Transition Grant Fund).

#### **Data Collection**

Data collection plan will allow the Task Force to monitor the measured progress toward the implementation of Dignity in Pay. Focal points of the plan will include:

- Identification of necessary data points to measure progress,
- Identification of State agencies required to collect necessary data points,
- Data sharing methodologies, and
- Evaluation plan.

#### **Sustainability**

The Task Force will consider barriers facing individuals with disabilities in the workforce, while also supporting social and economic justice and protecting civil rights. The work group will consider issues surrounding long-term systemic changes necessary to ensure personal growth and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities in Illinois.