



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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How the Department of Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Supports Students with Disabilities Prepare for Life After High School

By Wendy Overturf

The [Department of Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(DVR\)](#) is a state agency that can help students with disabilities prepare for, find, and keep employment. DVR provides a range of career, training, and support services to help individuals achieve independence through meaningful work.

The main purpose of DVR is to support people with disabilities get a job and keep a job. DVR also works with high schools to help students with disabilities transition from school to fulfilling employment. DVR tailors its support to meet each student's individual goals and needs. Some of the ways DVR can help include:

- Career exploration – discovering interests, strengths, and potential career paths
- Work experience – participating in internships, summer jobs, or job shadows
- Job skills training – learning how to apply, interview, and succeed at work
- Postsecondary support – assisting with college or technical school planning (Postsecondary supports must be related to an individual's work goal.)
- Job placement and coaching – helping students find and adjust to a job that fits them
- Assistive technology – providing tools or equipment to help students perform their best

DVR Application and Referral

The DVR referral form can be found [here](#). In short, to qualify for DVR services, a person must:

1. Have a disability that makes it hard to get or keep a job, and
2. Be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services to reach employment goals.

More detailed information about the referral process and eligibility can be found in the [DVR Program Guide](#)

- High school students should apply to DVR at least two years before exiting high school.
- Students as young as 14 may access DVR services if they want to work and have barriers that might prevent them from working.
- For applicants under age 18, or those over age 18 who are not their own guardian, the individual's legal guardian must sign all documents.

When a student is eligible for DVR services, their DVR counselor works closely with the school's IEP team to plan for life after high school. The DVR counselor will develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE is developed in coordination with the IEP so both plans support the same career goals. This teamwork helps students move smoothly from school-based services to adult employment supports. This helps ensure everyone is working together to help the student achieve success after graduation.

If you have any questions about DVR be sure to contact your [school's DVR liaison](#).

Additional Resources:

[Transition Action Guide](#) - The Transition Action Guide (TAG) was created to provide a resource to educate all partners on their roles and responsibilities in the transition process.

[How DVR and Schools Work Together for Youth](#)- This is a webinar presented by DVR and hosted by WI FACETS.

HOME LEARNING



A great New Year's Resolution!

Have your child read (or read with your child) 20 minutes a day. This will help develop your child's love of reading, but it also has academic benefits.

- Vocabulary Growth: Kids who read daily are exposed to thousands of new words every year, strengthening language and communication skills.
- Better Comprehension: Regular reading builds strong comprehension and critical thinking skills, which directly support school success.
- Improved Writing: Reading helps children naturally absorb grammar, sentence structure, and style.



Martin Luther King Jr. Day - 1/19/26

Martin Luther King Jr. Day falls on the third Monday of January each year. It's a day to remember and honor the great civil rights leader. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about the man and why the day is celebrated. As a follow-up, talk with your kids about the dreams that you have for the future and ask your children about their own dreams.

Activity: Cut out cloud shapes and have your child write their dreams onto the clouds. You can help little ones with this step. You can then have them glue the cloud shapes on a piece of paper or use magnets to put them up on your refrigerator.



Winter - Indoor Activities

Take a Virtual Adventure Together

Virtual tours for kids are a great alternative that can provide indoor, accessible entertainment and [remote learning](#) to keep kids calm and entertained during winter.

Discover art, history, and science by visiting museums, galleries, zoos, aquariums, Cultural heritage and historical sites all online.

Read a [Snowy Day](#) with your child. Ask your child what they would do on their own snowy day?

A Scavenger Hunt at home: Hide items around the house and give clues, engaging family members and promoting teamwork.

Grouping and Counting Objects



Teaching your child to group and count objects is a foundational math skill that builds number sense, one-to-one correspondence, and early multiplication concepts.

Start with Counting Individually

- Use everyday items: buttons, blocks, coins, or snacks.

- Lay out 10–20 items and ask the child to count each out loud.
- Reinforce one-to-one correspondence: "Touch and count" one object at a time.

Introduce the Concept of Grouping

- Explain: "Let's make counting faster by putting them into groups!"
- Start with small, even groups (e.g., groups of 2 or 5).
- Example: "Let's put 10 beans into groups of 2. How many groups will we have?"

Reinforce with Skip Counting

- Teach skip counting by the group size.
- **Chants & Songs:** Use skip counting songs (e.g., "Count by 2s, count by 5s!").

Also check out this [short video](#) on counting and grouping.

WI FACETS EVENTS

[Think Big! Building Meaningful Lives Across the Lifespan](#)

(Spanish Translation Available)

Date: January 5, 2026

Presenter: Sean Roy, Chief Innovation and Training Officer for TransCen Inc.

[Child Find: Through the Lens of Child Find](#)

Date: January 7, 2026

Presenter: Cathy Daentl, Early Childhood Professional

[A Future that Includes Employment: Setting a Vision for Job Success](#)

(Spanish Translation Available)

Date: January 12, 2026

Presenter: Sean Roy, Chief Innovation and Training Officer for TransCen Inc.

[Introduction to the Children's Long-Term Support Program](#)

Date: January 14, 2026

Presenter: Danielle Tolzmann, Family Voices of WisconsinV

[Más allá del berrinche: ¿Por qué se comporta así mi hijo/a](#)

Date: January 15, 2026

Presentadora: Elizabeth Morales, Licensed Behavior Analyst

[Adapted Physical Education: What is it and Why is it Important?](#)

Date: January 21, 2026

Presenter: Dr. Brock McMullen, UW-La Crosse

[Los primeros pasos en grupos de toma de decisiones: Cómo involucrarse y marcar la diferencia](#)

[\(Parte 1\)](#)

Date: January 22, 2026

Presenter: Alejandra Loeza, WI FACETS

[Building Language and Literacy Through Everyday Routines](#)

Date: January 28, 2026

Presenter: Nicole Aldworth, Early Learning Consultant

[¿Tu hijo ya tiene IEP? Aprende sobre reevaluaciones y evaluaciones educativas independientes](#)

[IEP 4 \(Pregrabado\)](#)

Date: January 29, 2026

Presenter: Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

UPCOMING STATE EVENTS

[Training for Home Language Interpreters: Supporting Families through the Special Education Process](#)

For those seeking training for home language interpreters for families at IEP meetings, DPI has partnered with WI FACETS, LEAs, and other organizations to develop a one-day training for home language interpreters who interpret for families at IEP meetings. Language interpretation training is a requirement to meet the provisions outlined in DPI's [Providing Language Assistance to Parents guidance document](#). The training provides increased awareness of state and federal regulations related to the educational rights of students who receive special education through an IEP and who may also be English Learners. The training also provides increased knowledge and resources related to legal responsibilities and ethical considerations for translation and interpretation of special education terms and concepts.

Each training date covers the same content areas detailed in the description above. It is not necessary to register for more than one date. For virtual trainings, due to the high-level of interaction among participants, registration is limited to the first 30 registrants. There is no fee for virtual trainings, but you must register.

Virtual trainings:

February 6, 2026 (8am-2pm) – [Registration Information](#)

February 20, 2026 (8am-2pm) – [Registration Information](#)

In-person trainings:

March 12, 2026 – [CESA 6](#) – [Registration Information](#) – Use CODE “**SpecialEvent**” at checkout

March 13, 2026 – [CESA 1](#) - [Registration Information](#)

[24th Annual WI Transition Conference](#)

Dates: February 12-13, 2026

Location: Kalahari Resort, WI Dells, WI

The conference will have two knowledgeable and humorous keynote speaker presentations. Spend all Thursday morning with the extremely informative and funny, Pam Schuller and all Friday morning with the hilarious "Shut Up Sisters", Patricia Terrasi and Gina Gallagher. These keynote speakers bring a wealth of knowledge, from different perspectives, regarding the challenges faced in the world of special education. In addition, there are over 20 breakout sessions to choose from, relevant exhibitors, and networking time.

2026 Promoting Early Childhood Conference (PEC)-Save the Dates

Dates: March 4-6, 2026

PEC is an early childhood collaborative event sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in partnership with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP). Location and details for attending and/or presenting at this early childhood collaborative event are not yet determined.

[2026 Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin and the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin Annual Conference](#)

Dates: April 23-25, 2026

Location: Kalahari Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI

The purpose of the annual conference is to provide a wide range of information to those within the autism community. The goal is to provide relevant information for attendees at all levels, including those who are new to autism and those who have years of experience.

[Circles of Life Conference-Save the Dates](#)

Dates: May 14-15, 2026

Location: Holiday Inn Stevens Point Convention Center, Stevens Point, WI

Circles of Life is Wisconsin's annual conference for families who have children with disabilities and the professionals who support them.

[2026 WI FACETS Endless Possibilities Conference - Save the Date!](#)

Date: August 7, 2026

Location: Waukesha County Technical College ([AJN Center](#)), Pewaukee, WI

The annual Endless Possibilities conference invites families and professionals who support students with disabilities to learn and grow together. We encourage open dialogue between families and professionals to discuss positive solutions for all our students with special needs in Wisconsin. Please join us!

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC)

Mission & Vision

Please consider applying to serve on the [Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council](#):

- The WRC provides opportunities for people with disabilities, their families, disability advocates, employers, service providers and other stakeholders to provide input to the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).
- The council works on behalf of Wisconsin residents with disabilities to review, analyze, and advise DVR about innovative ways to provide quality services to individuals with disabilities that will maximize their employment, increase their economic independence, and offer them an opportunity for full inclusion in their communities.
- The council strives to create an environment that encourages the creative exchange of ideas that will enhance DVR's program.
- Being a council member provides opportunities for leadership, mentorship, and training.

The council wishes to recruit individuals who have a desire to provide input to DVR in ways that improve employment outcomes and the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities. The WRC encourages attendance at public quarterly meetings. It's a great way to learn more about the work of the council before applying to join. Meetings are typically held in February, May, August, and November. WRC meetings are publicly noticed at:

<https://publicmeetings.wi.gov>. Type WRC in the search box to find information about upcoming meetings.

New seats become available as council members' three-year terms expire.

Currently there are two open seats on the council:

- Advocacy representative
- Council on Workforce Investment representative

Those wishing to be considered for a position on the council must send an application, including an updated resume and cover letter to kaylyn.olson@dwd.wisconsin.gov. Members of the council are appointed by the governor. The council may forward recommendations to the governor after soliciting recommendations from organizations representing the broad range of individuals with disabilities. In selecting members, the governor shall consider, to the greatest extent practicable, representation of minority populations on the council.

If you have questions regarding your application to the WRC, please email or call Kay Olson at: kaylyn.olson@dwd.wisconsin.gov 608-707-6847.

ONLINE RESOURCES: Transition



Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)

This website has many links to articles and information on transition that are specifically designed for both parents and students.

Transition IEP Checklist

This resource, developed by WI FACETS, was written to provide a short overview of how to prepare to discuss transition at the IEP meeting.

[Transition Improvement Grant \(TIG\)](#)

The Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) is designed to strengthen and accelerate the transition process in Wisconsin schools to increase high school graduation rates, decrease dropout rates, improve the quality of postsecondary transition plans (PTP), and develop strong career, college, and community readiness among students with disabilities.

[How to Use the WiTransition App & Your Postsecondary Transition Plan \(PTP\)](#)

This resource helps guide parents and students in using the WiTransition App to prepare for an IEP meeting that includes a Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP). A PTP is required in Wisconsin for all students with IEPs if the student will be turning 14 during the duration of the IEP. The PTP is then included in the IEP and may be updated in subsequent years.

[Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities from WI Department of Public Instruction](#)

The Wisconsin DPI website has a variety of resources related to transition, including information about outside agencies.

[Case Examples of a Transition IEP](#) In this document, you will find a variety of high school student case scenarios. Each example describes a student with different strengths, abilities, needs, and desires. All students are required to have a transition component in their IEP that includes postsecondary, annual, and measurable goals. Check out each sample for ideas on how to write education, employment, and independent living goals and learn how to formulate the transition services, activities, and courses each student needs to achieve their goals and desires after high school.

[College, Career, and Community Readiness for Students with IEPs](#)

This website has resources to support students at all ages and developmental levels to be independent and college, career, and community ready.

[Before Age 18](#)

This website is great for teens or for families who support teens with disabilities. Turning 18 is a significant event and taking some actions now can help prepare students for the future.

[Department of Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(DVR\)](#)

One of the functions of DVR is to help with transition. DVR works with high school students with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to postsecondary education and employment. DVR partners with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) to work with the student and community resources to provide a smooth transition from school to the world of work and community services. Their website has many links to related resources.

[Opening Doors to Self-Determination Skills](#)

Setting and achieving goals helps students grow. Knowing their strengths and addressing their challenges is important as students prepare for life after high school. Students also must consider what kind of work they would like to do, what they need to do to pursue this work, what living arrangements do they envision, and what education, training, and services will be available to them along the way. Students can work with counselors, parents, and teachers as they work with this resource.

[Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, the purpose of this guide is to provide high school educators with answers to questions students with disabilities and their families may have as they get ready to move to the postsecondary education environment.

[National Parent Center on Transition and Employment](#)

This site is filled with information related to transition planning and work-based learning for students with disabilities.

[Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education & Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities](#)

This guide is published by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). OSERS developed this transition guide to advance their efforts in ensuring that all students and youth with disabilities are equipped with the skills and knowledge to be engaged in the 21st Century workforce.

[Self Determination Youtube Channel](#)

This site has videos of self-advocates from Wisconsin discussing a variety of topics related to transition and self-determination.

[Family Voices of Wisconsin Transition Resources](#)

The mission of Family Voices of Wisconsin is to advance comprehensive healthcare and community support based on family-professional partnerships and family-centered principles that assure the health and well-being of children and youth with special healthcare needs or disabilities and their families.

[RAISE](#)

RAISE partners with the [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#) to provide information on a variety of transition-related topics. Parent centers, families, and youth can search the resource database, courtesy of the CPIR.

[Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities \(BPDD\)](#)

The Board's mission is to help people with developmental disabilities become independent, productive, and included in all facets of community life.

[Helping Students with Disabilities Plan for Post-High School Settings](#)

This website is mainly for professionals to gain knowledge on how they can help students plan for post-high school settings.

[Transition Action Guide](#)

The Transition Action Guide (TAG) was created to provide a resource to educate all partners (includes parents) on their roles and responsibilities in the transition process. Each partner uses this guide as the source for best practices and technical assistance to support the transition for youth with disabilities from school to adulthood.

RESEARCH

Impact of High School Transition and Accommodation Experience on Student Involvement in College

Scruggs, S., Dong, S., Ducatt, S., Mitchell, J., & Davis, W. (2021). Impact of high school transition and accommodation experience on student involvement in college. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 34(2), 179-190.

[Read Full Article](#)

This study examines how preparing for the transition from high school affects college involvement and integration among first-year students with disabilities. Researchers surveyed 158 freshmen with disabilities at a southeastern U.S. university. They found that students who received better transition preparation in high school were more engaged and socially and academically integrated in college. The study emphasizes the importance of strong transition support services to help students with disabilities move smoothly from high school to college.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Newsletter Topics

February: Intellectual Disabilities

March: Early Childhood

April: Autism Spectrum Disorders

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources you may use the [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

This monthly update is provided by Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please email [WI FACETS](#).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: www.servingongroups.org/newsletter



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