



2/22/2024

RE: Proposed Vocational Rehabilitation Changes

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation program. INARF appreciates FSSA and DDRS for their continued partnership throughout this process and looks forward to strengthening that partnership in the future. INARF commends the State for the importance it places on obtaining public input from a wide range of stakeholders in developing the proposed waiver changes, and we are confident that the feedback received will be carefully considered in the final development of the applications prior to submission. Please know that INARF is dedicated to assisting the state in any way appropriate to improve systems and services for individuals with disabilities.

INARF is the principal statewide trade association representing agencies that serve Hoosiers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. INARF members often play a lifelong role in the lives of those they serve by providing a continuum of services that, in many instances, stretch from birth to death and across all facets of life in their chosen community. Further, INARF and its members are committed to ensuring Indiana's system of services and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities offers maximum options, access, and choice.

Transportation

In reviewing the WIOA State Plan, it is evident that transportation is still a barrier to obtaining employment for individuals with disabilities and their families. In multiple responses, transportation was identified as one of the top three barriers for individuals and their families as well as an employment barrier that exists for individuals with the most significant disabilities. This has led to providers filling those gaps and providing individuals with transportation to and from work due to inadequate bus systems, exorbitant rideshare prices, or simply not having access to sufficient familial and natural supports to provide that transportation. With the State's push for competitive integrated employment, it is imperative that Vocational Rehabilitation and DDRS identify and prioritize solutions to improve the current transportation crisis. INARF is happy to be a partner in any initiative regarding transportation.

Pre-ETS and Vocational Rehabilitation Communication

INARF appreciates that Vocational Rehabilitation has identified the need for increased participation of students and youth in the VR program. VR identified that only 9% of students receiving pre-ETS are applying for VR services as of the end of PY22. INARF has heard from providers that they want to follow up with pre-ETS cases they have referred to VR with little to no communication. Allowing for more open communication with providers that are familiar with the pre-ETS students would allow for a warm handoff to VR. INARF would be willing to help with any initiatives regarding pre-ETS communications.

INARF appreciates Vocational Rehabilitation's continued commitment to employment for all Hoosiers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As VR has several initiatives, INARF is looking forward to partnering with VR to provide accurate, helpful, and timely communication tools to providers to ensure consistent messaging regarding VR goals.

Thank you for your work and the opportunity to share this feedback with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn E. Stafford-Cunningham', written over a light gray rectangular background.

Kathryn E. Stafford-Cunningham
President/CEO
Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities