



Think Higher. Think College.

College to Careers: VR Can Make it Happen

Students with intellectual disability are reaching their career goals nationwide by enrolling in higher education. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies play a pivotal role in providing counseling and resources that enable students with intellectual disability to pursue inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) as a pathway to competitive integrated employment.

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION?

Inclusive postsecondary education is higher education specifically designed to meet the needs and goals of students with intellectual disability. Students with intellectual disability enrolled in dedicated programs take college courses and engage in career exploration and development opportunities. These programs focus on employment experiences and outcomes and opportunities to foster and support student independence. While enrolled in college, students earn one or more credentials. Like VR, one goal of college programs for students with intellectual disability is to support engagement in competitive integrated employment. To achieve this goal, programs provide employment supports to help students:

- access and sustain work-based learning, paid employment, and internship opportunities
- develop and use vital job-related resources (e.g., resumes, cover letters, letters of recommendation, and professional online networking accounts)
- practice career development skills, like mock interviews and professional networking
- grow independence through hands-on, goal-driven, and inclusive learning experiences

As a state agency, VR is perfectly situated to collaborate with programs at colleges and universities across their state, expanding high-quality educational and employment opportunities for students with intellectual disability.

How does VR Partner with Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability?

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) VR provides counseling on educational and training options that include IPSE and use Pre-ETS funding (i.e., Work-Based Learning and Counseling on Postsecondary Education) for students to attend programs.	Participation in a Student's Journey VR counselors engage with students in person-centered planning (PCP) and other program meetings, ensuring a collaborative and inclusive approach.
Financial Assistance VR agencies can provide eligible students with support for tuition, program fees, and other expenses (e.g., books, supplies, meals, transportation).	Connection to Job Coaches and Other Services VR agencies may contribute staff or funding to support students through job coaches, assistive technology, or benefits planning.
Career Counseling and Guidance VR counselors are uniquely equipped to provide career counseling services before and during a student's higher education journey.	Cross-Training for Collaboration VR counselors can train program staff on their processes, services, and requirements, strengthening partnerships and enhancing staff's ability to raise awareness among students and families.

DID YOU KNOW?

Strategic partnerships between VR agencies and inclusive postsecondary education programs are a proven pathway to positive employment outcomes for students with intellectual disability. Research has demonstrated these collaborations are instrumental in fostering inclusive education and propelling students toward successful careers.



Students with intellectual disability who attend college are more likely to be employed and to earn more than people with intellectual disability who do not attend college^{1,2}.



97%
of students at TPSID programs* participated in at least one employment or career development activity in 2022 - 2023³.



74%
of respondents to an outcome survey had a paid job one year after completing a TPSID program³.

*Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID) are model demonstration projects funded by the US Dept. of Education.

- ¹ Miller, S.C., Sax, C. L., & Tucker, M.S. (2019). Examining associations between postsecondary education, earnings, and provision of college and university training related to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities served by Vocational Rehabilitation. *Journal of Rehabilitation* 85, 22-34.
- ² Sannicandro, T., Parish, S., Fournier, S., Mitra, M., & Paiewonsky, M. (2018). Employment, income, and SSI effects of postsecondary education for people with intellectual disability. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 123(5), 412-497.
- ³ Grigal, M., Hart, D., Papay, C., Bukaty, C., Choiseul-Praslin, B., & Pound, S. (2024). Annual Report of the Cohort 3 TPSID Model Demonstration Projects (Year 3, 2022-2023). Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

Resources

- Learn more about Inclusive Postsecondary Education at www.thinkhighered.net
- Find out what's happening in your state at tcollege.me/WHIYS
- Join your state's regional and state alliance at tcollege.me/regional_alliances

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