



WIOA Title IV

Vocational Rehabilitation & Workforce Development

Collaboration for Success

presented by
Biswa Phuyal



OBJECTIVE

- **DRS mission and its services**
- **Agency Services**
- **Disability Employment**
- **WIOA Collaboration**
- **Apprenticeships and Title IV**
- **Looking ahead**
- **Resources and Contact**



Illinois Department of Human Services

- The Department of Human Services (DHS) is one of the largest state agencies in Illinois, with more than 13,000 employees.
- Illinois created IDHS in 1997, to provide our state's residents with streamlined access to integrated services, especially those who are striving to move from welfare to work and economic independence, and others who face multiple challenges to self-sufficiency.
- Five Division (1/3 people in Illinois receive some sort of assistance from DHS)



Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)

Mission

Partner with people with disabilities and their families to make informed choices so to achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living.



**DIVISION OF
REHABILITATION
SERVICES**



What we do – Vocational Rehabilitation

- Provide employment services and counseling to people with disabilities and provide services to enable them to go to work.
- Assist customers to achieve their education goals at a university/community college/training or certificate program.
- Ensure that candidates are job ready by partnering with community agencies to provide support and services for DRS customers.
- **Provide technical assistance and other services to employers and any stakeholders regarding disability employment.**



Defining Disability

- A disability can be physical or mental; a person has a disability if the condition substantially limits at least one major activity; such as walking, hearing, seeing, working or learning.*
- In the most recent census, 1/4 in Americans reported living with a disability, and that number is similar in Illinois.



In Illinois

- **Current VR customers**
 - Varies but not enough~ 31k (1/2026)
 - Cases closed after successful outcomes from 3-9 months
- **Who is eligible?**
 - Have a disability (permanent or temporary)
 - Authorized to work in the United States
 - 14. 5 years of age
 - SSI/SSDI

Presumption of DRS Job Seekers

MYTH

Only a person who uses a wheelchair, or persons with significant intellectual disabilities.



Reality

Many Disabilities are also invisible

Arthritis	Low Vision
Burn Injury	Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Cancer	Mental Health Diagnosis
Diabetes	Respiratory or Pulmonary Dysfunction
Specific Learning Disabilities	Speech Impediment
Amputation	Among others.....



Disabilities in the Workplace

People with Disabilities

- Largest minority group in the country (1/4 people reported having a disability)
- Largest untapped talent pool of qualified workers
- Can succeed in employment with the right opportunities and the right support
- Bring unique skills and talents to the workplace: creative problem solving, innovation, resilience, loyalty and productivity.
- Help organizations build a strong and diverse pipeline of skilled workers, which is critical for companies to grow their business and compete in the global economy.
- Improve an employer's bottom line by reducing recruiting and training costs and increasing retention rates





Disability Employment – Why is it important?

- Unemployment rate*
 - People with a disability is 8.2%
 - People without disability is 4.4%
- Legal
 - American with Disability Act (ADA)
 - Recent Legislation
- Focus on the ability

Why are we here?



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UNIT

- Public facing to engage with employers and other stakeholders
- Utilizing the dual customer approach
- Mediating services between employment opportunities and job seekers.
- Working relationships with the business community to continually generate solutions for area business needs
- CIE and disability hiring
- Services and Benefits
- **WIOA Collaborations**

Employers -->←DRS Workforce Development-->←Job Seekers

Services for Employers

- Employment
 - Recruitment, Retention and Employment Advisory Services
- Accommodations
 - Worksite assessments and accommodations
- Staff training and compliance
 - Disability Awareness, ADA/Employment Laws and EEO
- Dollars
 - WOTC and OJT
- And many more.....





Benefits of Disability Employment

- Innovation and productivity
- Culture and Morale
- Customer Satisfaction
- Reduce public spending
- DisabilityIN Study – [Disability Equality Index](#)

**Help
is here**

WIOA Partner Collaborations

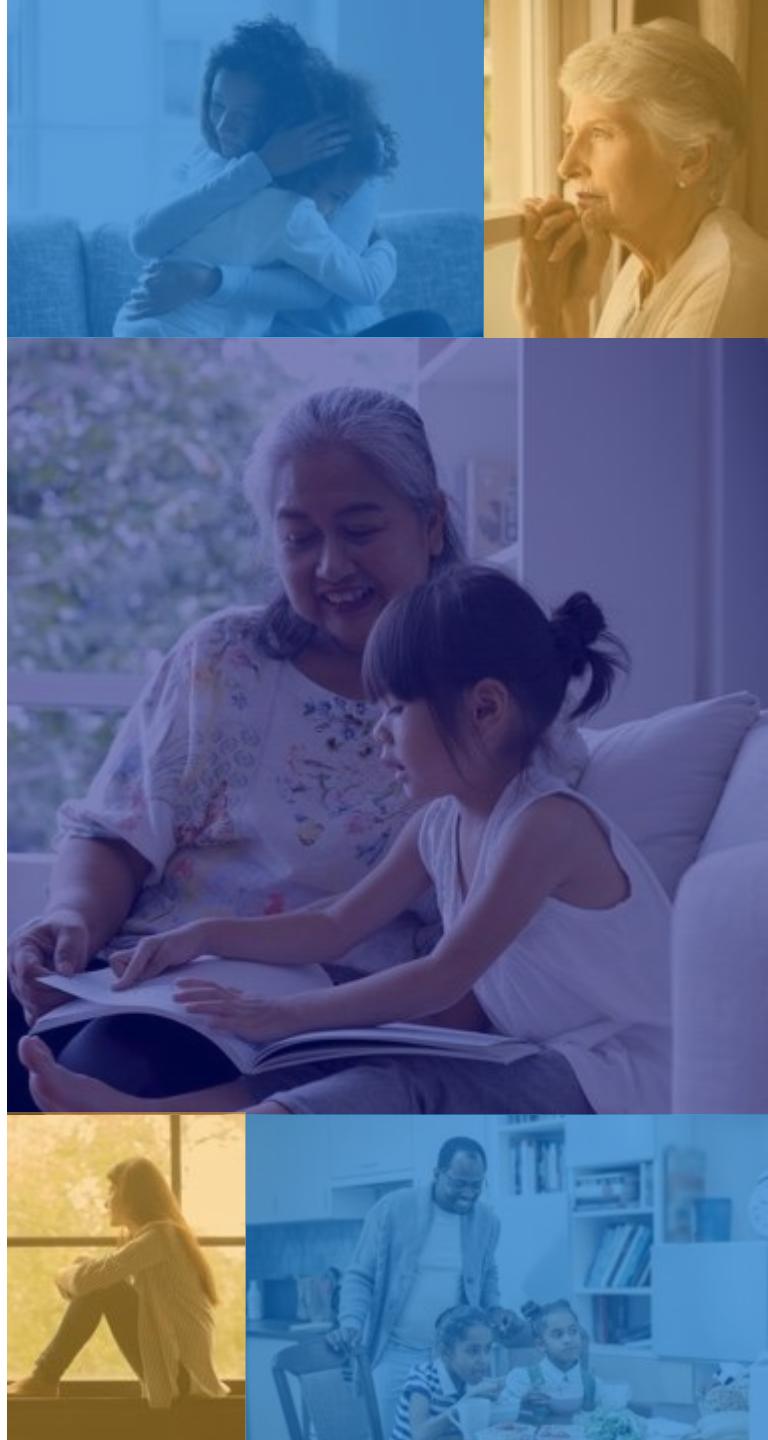
- Uniformity and access to specialized services.
- New talent pool/in-demand jobs.
- Equity and Inclusion strategies



Apprenticeships

The value of this important workforce opportunities for job seekers with disabilities

- There has not been much significant traction in this
- **Expanding** of apprenticeships to broader industries has been crucial for VR agencies and job seekers with disabilities
- Access to pipeline of talent but also based on study, talent with higher retention
- Universal design
- Support to business by VR agencies and community partners



Current Focus and Looking Ahead

CURRENT

- Investment in bringing more awareness to not only job seekers but staff also our VR teams.
- One pager developed to raise awareness
- Collaboration in Apprenticeship and WBL under IWIB
- Apprenticeship Fair since 2023 with IDES
- Success in Madison County
- Targeting industries that isn't conventional like Manufacturing



LOOKING AHEAD

- Pre-apprenticeships by intervening early on
- Replicate success in other parts of state
- Sharing apprenticeship option to employer/partners
- More collaboration with Community/Local colleges and technical school
- Dignity in Pay – can have significant impact if all align

Resources

DRS – Website

www.drs.illinois.gov/success

Job Accommodation Network (JAN):

<https://askjan.org/>

Great Lakes ADA:

<https://adagreatlakes.org/>

Tapability

<https://tapability.org/>

EARN Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion

<https://askearn.org>



Contact

Biswa Phuyal

Manager – Business and Workforce Development

Biswa.phuyal2@illinois.gov

