



**Illinois**  
**Department of Commerce**  
& Economic Opportunity  
**OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING**  
JB Pritzker, Governor

## **CEJA RETURNING RESIDENTS POLICY: PARTICIPANT ENROLLMENT**

**POLICY NUMBER:** CEJA RR 01-PL-25      **VERSION NUMBER:** 1  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** DECEMBER 5, 2025      **LAST UPDATE:** N/A

### **I. ISSUANCES AFFECTED**

References:

Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program (Chapters 1, 5, and 6)

Rescissions:

None

### **II. POLICY**

Participant enrollment for the CEJA Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program shall be implemented per the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) and the guidance in the 2025 Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program Manual. This document represents guidance identified from the program manual chapters listed under I. References above.

#### **1. Recruitment**

- a. CEJA Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program grantees, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), are responsible for recruiting potential participants for the program.
- b. Recruitment for the Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program differs from the other programs in the CEJA workforce ecosystem because of the highly surveilled and tightly controlled nature of the setting.
- c. Grantees must work closely with IDOC personnel to conduct recruitment activities that promote program awareness, participant enrollment, and future success.
- d. **Recruitment** activities are focused on communicating with potential participants. These activities should concentrate on attracting interested and qualified individuals to apply for the program.
- e. Recruitment efforts should target individuals who are currently incarcerated in one of the participating IDOC correctional facilities, in coordination with the guidance outlined at each respective location:
  - 1) Kewanee Life Skills Entry Center
  - 2) Decatur Correctional Center
  - 3) Western Illinois Correctional Center
  - 4) Vienna Correctional Center

- f. Recruitment will consist of a 15-to-20-minute information session facilitated by CEJA grantees during the IDOC orientation, which occurs for all residents upon entry into the facility.
  - g. The informational dates, time, and session timeframes should be negotiated between the grantees and each respective correctional facility.
  - h. Interested individuals identified through outreach and recruitment must be entered into the CEJA Reporting System.
2. Eligibility Criteria
- a. Eligibility must follow the CEJA Returning Residents Clean Jobs Training Program. Attachment A is provided as a desk aid for eligibility determination.
  - b. Must be a returning resident in the **participating facilities**:
    - 1) Decatur Correctional Facility
    - 2) Vienna Correctional Facility
    - 3) Western Illinois Correctional Facility
    - 4) Kewanee Life Skills Re-entry Center.
  - c. Age 17 or older
  - d. Within 36 months of release
  - e. Who consent in writing to program participation
  - f. Who are willing to follow all program requirements
  - g. Who meet program and testing requirements
  - h. Who do not pose safety and security risk (administered by IDOC)
  - i. Who undergo and pass drug testing (administered by IDOC)
  - j. Who score at least a 6.0 on the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) (equivalent to a 6th grade proficiency or higher)
  - k. Who meet IDOC Predetermination criteria including, but may not be limited to;
    - 1) Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Score
    - 2) Security Risk Level
    - 3) Programming Discipline or Suspensions
    - 4) Out-date
  - l. Who meet the criteria based on the CEJA Application and Assessment Processes including;
    - 1) CEJA Prescreening Assessments
      - The prescreening assessment process is designed to enroll returning residents ready to begin a career in the clean energy industry upon release.
      - The prescreening assessment process requires standardized assessment tools facilitated through the CEJA Reporting System.
        - i. The pre-screen assessment is a set of questions determining basic eligibility for the Returning Resident Program. This tool is available in the CEJA Reporting System and the Partner Guide.
      - Given the technology restrictions in correctional facilities, assessments may not be completed in real-time in the CEJA Reporting System. Paper assessments must be

entered into the CEJA Reporting System as soon as possible (typically within 24 hours, but no more than five (5) days after completion).

- The Department will protect the confidentiality of personal information provided by Program participant assessments regarding their status as a formerly incarcerated person. However, the Department may publish aggregated data on the number of participants that were formerly incarcerated recipients as long as that publication protects the individuals' identities.

2) Program Application

- The application process is designed to enroll returning residents ready to begin a career in the clean energy industry upon release.
- The application process determines if an applicant meets eligibility requirements for enrollment.
- The program application is a standardized tool for gathering additional information and determining eligibility for a CEJA workforce program. It is available in the CEJA Reporting System and the Partner Guide.
- Given the technology restrictions in correctional facilities, application may not be completed in real-time in the CEJA Reporting System. Paper applications must be entered into the CEJA Reporting System as soon as possible (typically within 24 hours, but no more than five (5) days after completion).
- The Department will protect the confidentiality of personal information provided by Program participant applicants regarding an applicant's status as a formerly incarcerated person. However, the Department may publish aggregated data on the number of participants that were formerly incarcerated as long as that publication protects the individuals' identities.

3) Interview

4) Coaching Session

5) Career Assessment

- m. Within these criteria, participants will be prioritized by their Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR), also known as the out-date.

1) Depending on the MSR, residents may be added to the IDOC Facility Waitlist

*Note: Program staff will coordinate with IDOC regarding participant selection. IDOC will have sole discretion on the final individual's selected to participate in the CEJA Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program.*

3. Attachment B provides a glossary of terms for these groups.

- a. Persons residing in equity investment eligible communities;
- b. Low-income persons;
- c. Persons who identify as black, Indigenous, and people of color;
- d. Formerly incarcerated persons;
- e. Persons who are or were in the child welfare system;
- f. Displaced energy workers;
- g. Dependents of displaced energy workers;

- h. Women;
  - i. LGBTQ+, transgender, or gender nonconforming persons;
  - j. Persons with disabilities; and
  - k. Members of any of these groups who are also youth
- 4. Enrollment Commitment
  - a. Applicants and the authorized grantee staff must sign and return the relevant program Acceptance and Commitment Letter as part of enrollment and before beginning training.
  - b. Signed Commitment Agreements must be uploaded into the CEJA Reporting System.
  - c. CEJA staff must coordinate closely with the respective IDOC facility to ensure enrolled participants are informed of the class schedule.
  - d. Specific recruitment, and enrollment data MUST be entered into the CEJA Reporting System, even if the grantee has its own/separate data management system.
  - e. Grantees will not receive credit toward the enrollment metric for those individuals who withdraw or are designated no-shows after the start of the first service.

### **III. IMPLEMENTATION**

- 1. Review the CEJA Program Manual to familiarize yourself with the eligibility criteria. Attachment A provides specific eligibility guidelines, and Attachment B explains key terms related to equity focused populations.
- 2. Coordinate with the appropriate IDOC staff person for each respective facility to recruit and select individuals for program participation.
- 3. Ensure all information relevant to the IDOC predetermination process and CEJA application and assessment processes is gathered using standardized tools available in the CEJA Reporting System.
- 4. Ensure participants and authorized grantee staff sign and return the Acceptance and Commitment Letter before training begins. Upload all signed agreements into the CEJA Reporting System.
- 5. Before starting, partner with the appropriate IDOC staff person for each respective facility to inform participants about program orientation, class schedules, and other critical information.
- 6. Enter all recruitment and enrollment data promptly and accurately into the CEJA Reporting System. Grantees should align their internal data systems with the CEJA system for seamless tracking of enrollment metrics.
- 7. Regularly communicate with regional CEJA managers for any inquiries or assistance with the implementation.

### **IV. INQUIRIES**

Inquiries should be directed to Sarah Graham at [Sara.Graham@illinois.gov](mailto:Sara.Graham@illinois.gov) for the Vienna Correctional Facility or Kewanee Life Skills Re-entry Center and Connor Bertrand at [Conner.Bertrand@illinois.gov](mailto:Conner.Bertrand@illinois.gov) for the Decatur Correctional Facility and Western Illinois Correctional Facility.

**V. ATTACHMENTS**

- A - CEJA Returning Residents Program Eligibility Criteria
- B – Returning Residents Equity Focused Population Glossary

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julio Rodriguez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julio Rodriguez, Deputy Director  
Office of Employment and Training

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## CEJA Returning Residents Program Eligibility Criteria

Program	Geographic Eligibility	Other Eligibility	Age	Other Requirements
Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship	Anyone living in an EJ and/or R3 community	Formerly incarcerated people, Current or former foster care members	16 or above (or will be 16 by the time they complete the program)	Must either have a high school diploma or equivalent or be enrolled in a program where they are working towards one.
CEJA Workforce Hubs	Prioritize placement as follows, where the applicant pool allows: 1/3 people living in BOTH EJ and R3 community; 2/3 people living in EITHER EJ or R3 community	Preference and priority for people with barriers to employment, current or former members of the foster care system, displaced energy workers	18 or above (or will be 18 by the time they complete the program)	N/A
CEJA Contractor Incubator Program	Prioritize placement as follows, where the applicant pool allows: 1/3 business owners living in BOTH EJ and R3 community; 2/3 business owners living in EITHER EJ or R3 community	Preference for business owners who have barriers to employment, current or former members of the foster care system, displaced energy workers	18 or above (or will be 18 by the time they complete the program)	N/A
CEJA Returning Residents Program	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within 36 months of release</li> <li>• Who consent in writing to program participation</li> <li>• Who are willing to follow all program requirements</li> </ul>	Age 17 or older	Currently incarcerated in one of the following four IDOC correctional facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kewanee Life</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who meet program and testing requirements</li> <li>• Who do not pose safety and security risk and undergo and pass drug testing (administered by IDOC)</li> <li>• Who score at least a 6.0 on the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)</li> </ul>		<p>Skills Entry center</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decatur Correctional Center,</li> <li>• Western Illinois Correctional Center</li> <li>• Vienna Correctional Center</li> </ul>
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# Returning Residents Equity Focused Populations Glossary

## Background

In the **Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA)**, equity focused populations are central to ensuring that the clean energy transition is inclusive and helps correct longstanding inequalities in economic opportunities, environmental burdens, and energy access. These populations represent historically marginalized and underrepresented communities. The term "equity focused populations" encompasses a variety of demographic groups that may need specific attention to address their systemic barriers and targeted resources to achieve equitable outcomes.

Within CEJA, the Energy Transition Act, 20 ILCS 730/5-5, defines **"Equity focused populations"** as (i) low-income persons; (ii) persons residing in equity investment eligible communities; (iii) persons who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color; (iv) formerly convicted persons; (v) persons who are or were in the child welfare system; (vi) energy workers; (vii) dependents of displaced energy workers; (viii) women; (ix) LGBTQ+, transgender, or gender nonconforming persons; (x) persons with disabilities; and (xi) members of any of these groups who are also youth.

The Energy Transition Navigators will provide education, outreach, and recruitment services to eligible participants, including equity focused populations. Within these populations, they will prioritize individuals eligible for the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program or Illinois Climate Works Preapprenticeship Program and ensure they are aware of and engaged in the statewide and local workforce development systems.

In addition, the CEJA Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program helps the state achieve its clean energy goals equitably by delivering clean jobs training, using a standard clean jobs curriculum framework, for people in the custody of the Department of Corrections at participating facilities. The goal is to prepare returning residents for entry-level clean energy jobs upon release.

Utilize this glossary of terms for equity focused populations to ensure everyone understands critical concepts and terminology when serving these populations. This glossary includes statutory references to promote standardization of policies, programs, and communications.

Finally, understanding each population's unique challenges is crucial for developing effective strategies to create equitable opportunities and support systems. The glossary below also provides examples of the systemic barriers each of these populations faces.

## Glossary

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color" or "BIPOC"	
Definition	"Black, Indigenous, and people of color" or "BIPOC" means people who are members of the groups described in subparagraphs (a) through (e) of paragraph (A) of subsection (1) of Section 2 of the Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Act. [20 ILCS 730/5-5]



Black, Indigenous, and People of Color" or "BIPOC"	
	See descriptions in the box below.
Definition	<p><b>"Minority person"</b> shall mean a person who is a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States and who is any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) American Indian or Alaska Native (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America, including Central America, and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment).</li> <li>(b) Asian (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, but not limited to, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam).</li> <li>(c) Black or African American (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa).</li> <li>(d) Hispanic or Latino (a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race).</li> <li>(e) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. [30 ILCS 572/2(A)(1)]</li> </ul>
Statutory Reference	<p>Energy Transition Act [20 ILCS 730/5-5]          Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Act [30 ILCS 575/2(A)(1)]</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Systemic Racism:</b> Discriminatory practices and biases can manifest in hiring, promotions, and access to resources, including education and housing, contributing to economic disparities.</li> <li>○ <b>Cultural Barriers:</b> Lack of representation in leadership roles and decision-making processes can lead to policies that do not reflect the needs of BIPOC communities.</li> <li>○ <b>Health Disparities:</b> BIPOC populations often have limited access to quality healthcare and face higher rates of chronic illnesses, partly due to social determinants of health, such as income, education, and access to healthcare.</li> </ul>

Dependents of Displaced Energy Workers	
Definition	<p><b>"Dependent of a Displaced Energy Worker"</b> means a natural child, legally adopted child or stepchild of a displaced energy worker and who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is under age 19 or under age 24 if a full-time student, or any age if permanently and totally disabled;</li> <li>• Lives in the same household for more than have the year; and</li> <li>• Gets more than half of their financial support from the displaced energy worker.</li> </ul>
Definition	<p><b>"Displaced energy worker"</b> means an energy worker who has lost employment or is anticipated by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to lose employment within the next five years due to the reduced operation or closure of a fossil fuel power plant, nuclear power plant, or coal mine. [20 ILCS 735/10-10]</p>
Statutory Reference	<p>Energy Community Reinvestment Act [20 ILCS 735/10-10]</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Economic Instability:</b> When energy workers lose their jobs, their dependents may face immediate financial hardships, including the inability to pay for housing, food, and education.</li> <li>○ <b>Emotional Stress:</b> The uncertainty surrounding job displacement can cause significant emotional strain on families, affecting mental health and family dynamics.</li> </ul>

Dependents of Displaced Energy Workers	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Access to Resources:</b> Dependents may struggle to access necessary support services, retraining, or skill development, limiting their future employment opportunities.:</li> </ul>

Energy Workers	
Definition	<p><b>"Energy worker"</b> means a person who has been employed full-time for a period of one year or longer, and within the previous 5 years, at a fossil fuel power plant, a nuclear power plant, or a coal mine located within the State of Illinois, whether or not they are employed by the owner of the power plant or mine. Energy workers are considered to be full-time if they work at least 35 hours per week for 45 weeks a year or the 1,820 work-hour equivalent with vacations, paid holidays, and sick time, but not overtime, included in this computation. Classification of an individual as an energy worker continues for 5 years from the latest date of employment or the effective date of [the Energy Community Reinvestment Act, September 15, 2021], whichever is later. [20 ILCS 735/10-10]</p>
Statutory Reference	Energy Community Reinvestment Act [20 ILCS 735/10-10]
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Job Security:</b> The shift towards renewable energy can create uncertainty for traditional energy workers, leading to job displacement and the need for retraining.</li> <li>○ <b>Health Risks:</b> Energy workers may face hazardous working conditions, increasing their risk of injuries and long-term health issues.</li> <li>○ <b>Training Needs:</b> With technological advances, energy workers may require ongoing training to adapt to new systems and practices in the evolving energy sector.</li> </ul>

Equity Investment Eligible Communities Residents	
Definition	<p><b>"Equity investment eligible community" and "eligible community"</b> mean the geographic areas throughout Illinois which would most benefit from equitable investments by the State designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, the eligible community means the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Restore, Reinvest and Renew Areas (R3 Areas) as established pursuant to Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act, where residents have historically been excluded from economic opportunities, including opportunities in the energy sector; and</li> <li>(2) Environmental justice communities, as defined by the Illinois Power Agency pursuant to the Illinois Power Agency Act [20 ILCS 3855], but excluding racial and ethnic indicators, where residents have historically been subject to disproportionate burdens of pollution, including pollution from the energy sector. [20 ILCS 730/5-5]</li> </ol>
Definition	<p><b>"Equity investment eligible person" or "eligible person"</b> means the persons who would most benefit from equitable investments by the State designed to combat discrimination and foster sustainable economic growth. Specifically, eligible persons means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Persons whose primary residence is in an equity investment eligible community;</li> <li>(2) Persons who are graduates of or currently enrolled in the foster care system; or</li> <li>(3) Persons who were formerly incarcerated. [20 ILCS 730/5-5]</li> </ol>
Statutory Reference	Energy Transition Act [20 ILCS 730/5-5]

Equity Investment Eligible Communities Residents	
Other	See the Equity Investment Eligible Community Map ( <a href="#">CEJA Map</a> ), which defines the areas that satisfy the criteria above for both R3 Areas and environmental justice communities.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Investment Gaps:</b> Communities that qualify for equity investment often suffer from historical disinvestment, leading to inadequate public services, deteriorating infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities.</li> <li>○ <b>Limited Resources:</b> Residents may find accessing job training and educational programs challenging due to a lack of nearby institutions or funding for such initiatives.:</li> <li>○ <b>Social Stigmas:</b> Negative perceptions and stereotypes about these communities can hinder residents' opportunities, as employers and service providers may hold biases.</li> </ul>

Formerly Convicted Persons (Equity Focused for All Programs) +Formerly Incarcerated (Climate Works Preapprenticeship) + Prior Involvement with the Criminal Legal System (Clean Jobs Workforce Network)	
Definition	<b>"Formerly convicted"</b> means either a formerly incarcerated or justice-involved individual who was convicted of any criminal offense
Definition	<b>"Formerly incarcerated"</b> means any individual confined in a correctional institution and charged with or convicted of any criminal offense.
Definition	<b>"Returning Resident"</b> means any United States resident who is: (i) 17 years of age or older; (ii) in the physical custody of the Department of Corrections; and (iii) scheduled to be re-entering society within 36 months. Note: Within the Department of Corrections, these individuals are called "individuals in custody."
Definition	<b>"Justice-involved individuals"</b> means an individual—(a) who is or has been subject to any stage of the criminal justice process and for whom services under the CEJA programs may be beneficial or (b) who requires assistance in overcoming barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction.
Definition	<b>"Correctional institution"</b> means any—(a) prison; (b) jail; (c) reformatory; (d) work farm; (e) detention center; or (f) halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or any other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of justice-involved individuals.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Employment Barriers:</b> Many employers conduct background checks and may be reluctant to hire individuals with criminal records, limiting job opportunities and economic stability.</li> <li>○ <b>Housing Challenges:</b> Formerly convicted persons may be barred from public housing and face discrimination from private landlords, resulting in homelessness or unstable living conditions.</li> <li>○ <b>Social Isolation:</b> The stigma associated with a criminal record can lead to social isolation, making it difficult to build supportive networks.</li> </ul>

LGBTQIA+, Transgender, or Gender Nonconforming Persons	
Explanation	While Illinois statutes do not define the acronym LGBTQIA+ or the terms Transgender or Gender-Nonconforming, the Illinois Human Rights Act includes definitions for sexual orientation and includes terms such as " <b>gender identity</b> " and " <b>gender-related identity.</b> " However, the U.S. Department of Labor does provide a glossary of terms developed by the National LGBTQ Task Force. This glossary is incorporated into their policies on Gender Identity Rights and Responsibilities.

LGBTQIA+, Transgender, or Gender Nonconforming Persons	
	LGBTQIA+: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual or Ally, with the plus sign representing other sexual and gender identities. Transgender persons' identities differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender-nonconforming persons do not adhere to traditional gender expectations.
Definition	<b>"Sexual orientation"</b> means actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or gender-related identity, whether or not traditionally associated with the person's designated sex at birth. Sexual orientation does not include a physical or sexual attraction to a minor by an adult. See Illinois Human Rights Act, 775 ILCS 5-103(O-1).
Terms	<p>From the National LGBTQ Task Force:</p> <p><b>"Gender identity"</b>: A person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else such as agender, binary, gender fluid, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, or nonbinary. Since gender identity is internal, one's identity is not necessarily visible to others. All people have a gender identity.</p> <p><b>Gender nonconforming (GNC) or Genderqueer</b>: These are terms for people whose gender identity and/or expression differ from societal expectations related to gender.</p> <p><b>Transgender</b>: A broad term for people whose gender identity or expression is different from those typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. "Trans" is shorthand for "transgender." (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, for example: "transgender people," "people who are transgender," "a woman who is transgender," etc. However, "transgenders" or "transgendered" are incorrect and disrespectful.)</p>
References	<p>Illinois Human Rights Act [775 ILCS 5/1-103(O-1)]</p> <p>National LGBTQ Task Force, LGBTQ+ Glossary of Terms, available at <a href="https://www.thetaskforce.org/resources/lgbtq-glossary-of-terms/">https://www.thetaskforce.org/resources/lgbtq-glossary-of-terms/</a>.</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Discrimination</b>: Many LGBTQ+ individuals face workplace discrimination, which can lead to job loss or reduced job opportunities. Encounter bias in employment, healthcare, and housing.</li> <li>○ <b>Mental Health Challenges</b>: The stress of navigating societal stigma can lead to higher rates of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.</li> <li>○ <b>Access to Healthcare</b>: Finding knowledgeable and affirming healthcare providers can be difficult, leading to inadequate care and adverse health outcomes</li> </ul>

Low-Income Persons	
Definition	<b>"Low-income person"</b> means an individual whose income does not exceed 80% of the area median income, adjusted for family size based on the data published most recently by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
Statutory Reference	<p>Energy Community Reinvestment Act [20 ILCS 735/10-10]</p> <p>Energy Transition Act [20 ILCS 730/5-5]</p> <p>Energy Transition Navigators Rules (proposed) [14 Ill. Admin. Code 820.20]</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Economic Barriers</b>: Low-income individuals often struggle with minimum-wage jobs that do not provide a living wage, making it difficult to afford basic needs such as food and housing.</li> </ul>

Low-Income Persons	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Education:</b> Schools in low-income areas may lack resources, experienced teachers, and extracurricular opportunities, which can hinder academic achievement and future job prospects.</li> <li>○ <b>Healthcare:</b> Many low-income individuals lack health insurance and face difficulty in obtaining affordable healthcare and nutritious food, leading to untreated medical issues and increased emergency room visits.</li> <li>○ <b>Transportation:</b> Public transportation may be limited or unreliable, making it challenging to commute to jobs or access essential services like healthcare and education.</li> </ul>

Persons who are or were in the Child Welfare System	
Definition	Persons Currently in the Child Welfare System: "Youth in care" means any person under 21 years of age placed in the temporary custody or guardianship of the Department of Children and Family Services pursuant to the Juvenile Court Act of 1987. [20 ILCS 505/4d]
Definition	Persons who were in the Child Welfare System: "Former Youth in Care" means individuals formerly under DCFS care and are eligible for transitional support services such as health care and educational expenses.
Statutory Reference	Children and Family Services Act [20 ILCS 505/4d] Juvenile Court Act of 1987 [705 ILCS 405/2-3]
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Instability:</b> Frequent changes in living situations can disrupt education and emotional development, leading to emotional and psychological challenges.</li> <li>○ <b>Lack of Support:</b> Persons who were or are in the child welfare system can lack access to mentors or resources that could help guide them through education and career choices.</li> <li>○ <b>Transition Challenges:</b> Transitioning out of the child welfare system into independent living often lacks support, leaving young adults vulnerable to homelessness and unemployment.</li> </ul>

Persons with Disabilities	
Definition	<p>This shortened definition captures the essential elements of the definition of "disability" outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as amended [42 U.S.C. 12102].</p> <p>A disability is defined as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An impairment: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual.</li> <li>2. Record of an impairment: A history or record of such an impairment.</li> <li>3. Regarded as having an impairment: Being perceived by others as having such an impairment, whether or not it limits major life activities (excluding transitory and minor impairments lasting 6 months or less). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major Life Activities: Include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Everyday tasks: Caring for oneself and performing manual tasks.</li> <li>○ Sensory functions: Seeing, hearing, speaking.</li> <li>○ Physical actions: Eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending.</li> <li>○ Cognitive functions: Learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating.</li> <li>○ Working.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ol>

Persons with Disabilities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It also includes major bodily functions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Functions of the immune system, normal cell growth.</li> <li>Digestive, bowel, and bladder functions.</li> <li>Neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>4. Rules of Construction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The definition should be interpreted broadly to maximize coverage.</li> <li>An impairment substantially limits one major life activity and does not need to restrict others to be considered a disability.</li> <li>Episodic impairments or those in remission are considered disabilities if they are limiting when active.</li> <li>The determination is made without regard to mitigating measures (e.g., medication, assistive devices), except for ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses, which are considered.</li> </ul>
<b>Statutory Reference</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008 [42 U.S.C. 12102]
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Accessibility Barriers:</b> Physical and systemic barriers in public spaces and workplaces can limit societal participation and restrict access to opportunities.</li> <li><b>Employment Challenges:</b> Employers may be hesitant to hire individuals with disabilities due to misconceptions about their capabilities or the perceived costs of accommodations.</li> <li><b>Social Isolation:</b> Limited opportunities for social engagement can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.</li> </ul>

Woman	
<b>Definition</b>	<i>"Woman" shall mean a person whose assigned sex at birth is female.</i>
<b>Statutory Reference</b>	N/A
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Gender Discrimination:</b> Women often face pay disparities, promotions, and job opportunities, and many industries have a glass ceiling that limits advancement.</li> <li><b>Work-life balance:</b> Expecting to manage work and family responsibilities can lead to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. Balancing work responsibilities with caregiving roles can be challenging.</li> <li><b>Violence and Harassment:</b> Women are at a higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence, both in personal relationships and in the workplace, which can affect their mental health and job performance.</li> </ul>

Youth who are also Members of any of these Groups	
<b>Definition</b>	<i>"Youth" means individuals aged 16-24 who are also members of one of the other equity-focused populations.</i>
<b>Statutory Reference</b>	N/A
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Limited Opportunities:</b> Youth from marginalized backgrounds often face compounded barriers related to education, employment, and access to mentorship.</li> <li><b>Vulnerability to Exploitation:</b> These youth may be at higher risk for exploitation in the workforce or in vulnerable situations due to a lack of support and resources, particularly for marginalized youth.</li> </ul>

**Youth who are also Members of any of these Groups**

- **Mental Health:** The intersection of multiple marginalizations can contribute to heightened mental health challenges, requiring targeted support and intervention.