

LET'S

GET TO

WORK

Launching youth with disabilities
into the workforce



What is "Let's Get to Work"?

Let's Get to Work is comprised of 4 main areas: 1) **Consortium** of 70 key stakeholders who identify policy issues and includes a youth track, 2) a **policy team** that takes the work of the Consortium and strategizes way to implement policy changes, 3) **9 school pilot sites** implementing evidence based practices and identifying barriers to employment, and 4) **coaches** who provide intense, on-site technical assistance to the school sites.

The number of pilot youth in paid employment tripled in less than one year's time!

Let's Get to Work partners with leadership at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Health Services, the Department of Public Instruction as well as our AIDD partners, Disability Rights Wisconsin and Waisman Center-University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities.

School Pilot Sites: Grafton, Holmen, Luxemburg-Casco/Algoma/Kewaunee, Manitowoc, New Auburn, Oconomowoc, Rhinelander, Stoughton, West Allis/West Milwaukee



Policies and practices that lead to better employment outcomes:

- Earlier connection to vocational rehabilitation
- Early work experiences while still in high school (paid and unpaid)
- Better transition training for teachers
- No entry for youth straight into segregated work settings
- Access to transportation to get to work
- Person centered planning to identify interests, strengths, skills
- Engage the broader community and decision makers in discussions of youth employment
- Access to general education core/academic classes and extra-curricular activities as they relate to the students' interests and career goals
- Connect students and their families to information on post-secondary and career options, work incentive benefits counseling, and community activities, starting no later than age 15.

For more information, please contact Beth Swedeon, Executive Director, WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities, 608/266-1166, beth.swedeon@wisconsin.gov, www.letsgettoworkwi.org

Selected Project Highlights

OSEP provided guidance around least restrictive environment as it applies to transition work placements for youth with disabilities. LGTW is disseminating a user-friendly document to schools and families and the National Disability Rights Network and the IDEA Partnership is disseminating the information nationally.

The Wisconsin Transition Initiative Grant (TIG) has restructured their funding to give equal attention to Indicators 13 and 14. The TIG will also provide technical assistance to struggling schools and parent training in each region of the state using a LGTW training on integrated employment.

A bill that would fully fund DVR and add 7 new staff positions was passed through the Senate and Assembly. This bill would add \$18 million in employment supports and remove hundreds of people from the waiting list. It is very likely this bill will pass given it is part of the Governor's Jobs Initiative.

Wisconsin was awarded a \$32 million PROMISE grant. LGTW will facilitate the steering committee meetings to help ensure interagency collaboration, coordinate family trainings and provide technical assistance on Community Conversations, which are all extensions of the project that can now be spread statewide.

LGTW provided recommendations to Senators Harkin and Baldwin on the WIA Reauthorization to allocate 15% of state VR funds to youth and to provide more specific definitions for terms like "integrated employment". Both recommendations were included in their draft.

WI Department of Health Services Secretary has publically made integrated employment of youth with disabilities a top issue and refers to all activities having anything to do with youth as "Let's Get to Work".

DVR made Youth On the Job Training available to all youth in the state after the start of LGTW. Modeled after a successful adult OJT, the youth OJT provides a wage subsidy of up to 100% for up to 500 hours while a youth learns the job. The expected outcome is the youth will be hired into that position permanently.



Selected School Outcomes

Businesses are more engaged * Students are more independent and confident * Many more youth are reporting their desire to go to work * Parents are more educated about integrated employment and the transition process
* School staff working better as a team on employment outcomes

Outcome Data

Baseline: 43% of student activities were restrictive and 48% were integrated.
Fall 2013: 17% of student activities were restrictive and 71% were integrated.

40% of students have paid community employment.

The Quality of Life of students with disabilities significantly increased in one year due to increases in work and community participation.