



Employment & Economic Opportunities for People with
Disabilities Taskforce (EEOPD)

Dignity in Pay Workgroup

Subgroup Descriptions

2024 - 2025



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Introduction

The Employment and Economic Opportunities for People with Disabilities (EEOPD) Dignity in Pay (DIP) Workgroup is committed to advancing Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) for individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) across Illinois. Central to this mission is the establishment of Subgroups, each tasked with addressing specific areas crucial to the State's transformation away from 14(c) Subminimum Wage (SMW) Programs. These Subgroups contribute to the mandated annual reporting outlined in House Bill (HB) 793—The Dignity in Pay Act—and inform key recommendations to the EEOPD Taskforce, the Governor's Office, and the State legislature.

Each Subgroup will establish measurable benchmarks, track progress over the 5-year plan, and generate data, updates, and recommendations for annual reports. By combining data with the lived experiences of individuals with DD, they will drive equitable Statewide changes, address system gaps, and support the State's commitment to CIE, ultimately guiding legislative and executive decision-making. See the below Subgroup priority areas:

**a. Specialized Focus
for Complex Systems**

**b. Tracking Progress
& Accountability**

**c. Informed &
Actionable
Recommendations**

**d. Ensuring a
Comprehensive &
Equitable Statewide
Strategy**

**e. Feeding into
Legislative and
Executive Decision-
Making**

Equity in Focus: Driving Inclusive Change

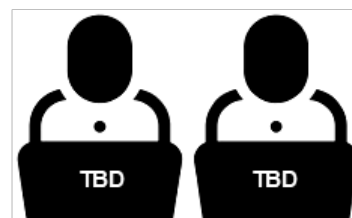
Equity is at the heart of the EEOPD Dignity in Pay (DIP) Workgroup's efforts to transform employment opportunities for people with DD. Ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background, race, ethnicity, geographic location, or socioeconomic status, have access to CIE is critical to creating a fair and inclusive workforce across Illinois. This focus on equity is essential to dismantling the systemic barriers that have disproportionately affected individuals with disabilities, particularly those from marginalized communities.

As the State transforms away from 14(c) SMW, equity must guide every aspect of this transformation. By embedding equity into the Subgroups' work, we can ensure that data collection, policy recommendations, and measurable benchmarks reflect the diverse needs of all individuals with DD. This approach will also help ensure that resources, opportunities, and support systems are allocated fairly, with a particular focus on addressing disparities in employment outcomes.

The Subgroups will actively engage with partners and other parties involved from underrepresented communities to incorporate their voices into the decision-making process, ensuring that policies are shaped by the lived experiences of those most affected. This will be done through culturally responsive practices, targeted outreach, and collaboration with community-based organizations that serve diverse populations. Through these efforts, the Workgroup and Subgroups can support equitable statewide changes, helping to close employment gaps and ensure that every individual with DD has the opportunity to achieve meaningful and competitive work.

The Subgroups are as follows:

1. **Systems Transformation Subgroup:** Dedicated to identifying and recommending Statewide system changes to better align policies, resources, and services.
2. **Resources Subgroup:** Dedicated to identifying the short-term and long-term resources needed to support individuals moving away from 14(c) programming.
3. **Equity and Evaluation Subgroup:** Dedicated to ensuring that the transition from subminimum wage employment is equitable and data driven.



Co-Chairs

Systems Transformation Subgroup

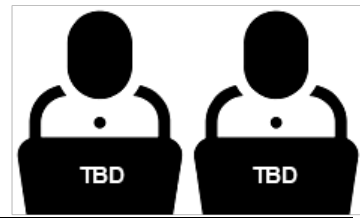
This Subgroup is focused on identifying, tracking, and recommending statewide system changes to guide the multi-year plan toward the elimination of Section 14(c) certificates in Illinois. It will establish benchmarks and desired outcomes for each year of the 5-year plan, ensuring that these goals are both measurable and equitable. The Subgroup is committed to addressing disparities by prioritizing the needs of individuals from marginalized communities and ensuring that all system changes promote fair and inclusive opportunities for CIE. Equity will be a key consideration in every recommendation, ensuring that resources, policies, and support are accessible to all individuals with developmental disabilities, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Key areas for review and recommendations include, but are not limited to:

1. **Implementation of the HFS/DDD Amendment:** Increase rates for Supported Employment (SE) & Small Group Supports waivers.
2. **Creation and Enhancement of Meaningful Day Options:** Assess current Day Programming available. As needed, develop recommendations for enhanced meaningful day programs, ensuring a diverse range of options, for individuals who choose not to pursue CIE. This involves creating opportunities that foster personal growth, community engagement, and skill development outside traditional employment settings. Options could include, but are not limited to:

- a. **Community-Based Activities:** Design programs that integrate individuals into community activities, including volunteer opportunities, recreational programs, and social clubs that align with their interests and abilities.
 - b. **Educational and Skill-Building Opportunities:** Provide access to lifelong learning programs, workshops, and classes that focus on personal development, hobbies, and practical skills, enhancing quality of life and autonomy.
 - c. **Customized / Individualized Support Services:** Develop personalized support services tailored to individual preferences and needs, such as day habilitation programs, therapeutic activities, and peer support groups.
 - d. **Collaboration with Community Organizations and Involved Parties:** Partner with local nonprofits, educational institutions, and businesses to create inclusive and meaningful day options that leverage community resources and networks.
 - e. **Regular Assessment and Feedback:** Implement systems to regularly assess the effectiveness and satisfaction of day programs, incorporating feedback from participants and their families to continuously refine and improve offerings.
3. **Streamlining Processes:** Simplify language, criteria, and documentation across systems and agencies to reduce duplication and make processes more person-centered.
 4. **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Pathways to CIE:** Assess current pathways within DRS for achieving CIE. This includes Pre-Transition Services (PTS), Fast Track programs, adult vocational services, Career Counseling, and the Community College Initiative. Examine the accessibility, effectiveness, and utilization of these services to identify gaps and underutilized resources. Develop actionable recommendations with measurable benchmarks to ensure the overall efficacy and inclusivity of DRS pathways to CIE.
 5. **Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) Pathways to CIE:** Assess current pathways within DDD for transitioning to CIE. This includes assessing the current array of services available, how they are accessed, and their utilization rates. Identify any underutilized resources and assess the overall effectiveness of service delivery. This evaluation should focus on understanding strengths and gaps in the system, determining if 14(c) certificate holders are leveraging available services, and pinpointing barriers to access. The goal is to create recommendations with measurable benchmarks to ensure overall efficacy and to streamline DDD pathways to CIE.
 6. **Alternative Pathways to CIE:** Explore and recommend alternative pathways to CIE using State and Federal resources, including but not limited to:
 - a. **Behavioral Health Clinic Medicaid Funding:** Leverage a Behavioral Health Clinic model to access Medicaid funding for individuals with dual DD and mental health diagnoses to support employment services tailored to their needs.
 - b. **Federal Programs and Incentives:** Utilize federal programs such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) that provide financial incentives to employers who hire individuals with disabilities, encouraging broader employment opportunities.

- c. **Social Security Administration (SSA) Ticket to Work Program (TWP):** Offer support through the TWP, which provides job training, placement services, and vocational rehabilitation to individuals receiving Social Security benefits.
 - d. **Employment Networks (EN):** An EN is an entity that enters into an agreement with the SSA to either provide or coordinate the delivery of services to SSA disability beneficiaries. The EN can be an individual, a partnership / alliance (public or private) or a consortium of organizations collaborating to combine resources to serve eligible individuals. ENs participating in the TWP must adhere to certain [rules and regulations](#).
 - e. **Workforce Development Boards:** Engage with local Workforce Development Boards that provide job training, career counseling, and employment services through collaborations with community organizations and businesses, enhancing job readiness and placement.
 - f. **Partnerships with Educational Institutions:** Foster partnerships between State agencies, K-12 schools, and colleges with inclusive post-secondary programs and Certified Transition Programs, creating clear pathways from education to competitive employment.
 - g. **Dual Enrollment, Career & Technical Education, Internships, and Apprenticeships:** Explore opportunities through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and other entities for dual enrollment, internships, and apprenticeships that provide practical experience and job placement support.
 - h. **Industry Specific Training and Education Programs:** Utilize community colleges, vocational schools, and technical training programs that offer certifications, skill development, and job placement assistance tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities.
 - i. **Self-Employment Opportunities:** Provide resources and support for individuals interested in self-employment, including business planning, mentorship, and financial assistance to encourage entrepreneurship as a viable pathway to CIE.
 - j. **Microenterprise Opportunities:** Microenterprise offers a meaningful alternative for individuals transitioning out of 14(c) SMW, enabling them to pursue entrepreneurship as a form of CIE. It provides individuals with control over their work and income, directly addressing the limitations of traditional employment models under 14(c).
 - k. **Additional Resources Exploration:** Investigate further opportunities within DCEO or other relevant agencies to uncover additional resources and support mechanisms for achieving CIE.
7. **Ongoing Collaboration:** Maintain regular communication with relevant individuals and organizations to gather input and ensure that recommendations address real-world challenges and opportunities.



Co-Chairs

Resources Subgroup

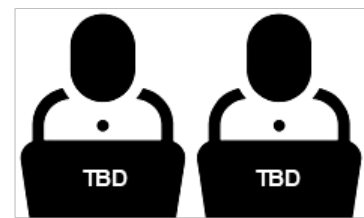
This Subgroup is focused on identifying and recommending both short- and long-term resources necessary to ensure individuals successfully transition from 14(c) programming into CIE. A key focus will be ensuring that resources are distributed equitably, with particular attention to addressing the unique needs of individuals from marginalized communities, including those who face additional barriers due to race, ethnicity, geography, or socioeconomic status. The Subgroup will prioritize solutions that promote fair access to opportunities and support systems, ensuring that every individual with developmental disabilities can successfully transition into CIE.

This Subgroup will establish clear benchmarks and outcomes for each year of multi-year plan. Resources available include, but are not limited to:

1. **Transportation:** Assess current Transportation access. Prioritize reducing transportation barriers and increasing access to reliable transit across Illinois. The group will identify "transportation deserts" where individuals face limited options and collaborate with State agencies, public and private partners to develop community-specific solutions that enhance access to CIE opportunities.
2. **Assistive Technology (AT):** Address the gap in access to assistive technology for individuals transitioning from K12 education to adult services. This includes mapping out available AT resources, promoting education on AT use, and advocating for expanded access so that no one's employment opportunities are limited due to lack of technological support.
3. **Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA):** Develop clear, streamlined processes for individuals in CIE to understand the impact of employment on their benefits. This includes ensuring that benefits counseling and financial planning services are widely accessible so individuals can make informed decisions about work.
4. **Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities (HBWD):** Increase awareness of Medicaid healthcare benefits. HBWD not only encourages enrollees to work, but to increase the number of hours they are currently working. Just as the name says, the program provides health benefits for workers with disabilities. If you are an individual with a disability, between the ages of 16 and 64 and working, you may qualify for HBWD. Workers with countable income of up to \$4,393 per month for a single person and \$5,962 per month for a couple may qualify for the program. Unlike other Medicaid programs, HBWD allows enrollees to have up to \$25,000 in assets. Depending on their income, enrollees pay a monthly premium based on their income range to receive comprehensive healthcare coverage.
5. **Illinois Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE):** Increase awareness of how ABLE Accounts support asset building. IL ABLE accounts make it possible for people with disabilities and their families to save and invest their money for expenses related to living with a disability. Eligible Individuals can save up to \$100,000 without risking Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.
6. **Training and Technical Assistance (TA):** Provide ongoing training and TA to providers, self-advocates, families, K12 schools, transition programs, and colleges with inclusive

programs. This will ensure that best practices are consistently implemented, creating a unified approach to supporting individuals in CIE.


7. **Business and Employer Supports:** Develop strategies to engage and support employers in hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. This includes creating employer training programs, accessible hiring practices, and partnerships that promote inclusive work environments. Coordination with business leaders and workgroups will ensure alignment with industry needs.
8. **Federal and State Resources:** Identify and advocate for additional federal and State-level resources, including:
 - a. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) resources for skill-building, vocational training, and job placement.
 - b. Federal transportation grants to expand transit options in underserved areas.
 - c. Tax incentives such as the [Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\)](#) to encourage employers to hire individuals with disabilities.
9. **Transition Fund Grants:** Per HB 793, DHS will establish a 14(c) transition program to award transition grants to eligible community agencies with active or pending Section 14(c) certificates to aid in the transition away from SMW for workers with disabilities.
 - a. The goal of the transition grants is to develop new opportunities and programs that support meaningful days, choice, and community integration. Eligibility for transition grant funds will be contingent upon community agencies submitting transition plans.
 - b. DHS will provide example plans that community agencies may adapt. By January 1, 2025, the transition grant funds shall be awarded in compliance with Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA). Resource Subgroup member involvement in the execution of transition grant funds is contingent upon GATA requirements.



Equity and Evaluation Subgroup

Co-Chairs

This Subgroup is dedicated to ensuring an equitable approach to the plan to transition from utilization of 14(c) certificates, as well as requesting of and analyzing of data as needed to inform the multi-year plan toward elimination of Section 14(c) certificates. This Subgroup will create benchmarks and desired outcomes for each year of the 5-year plan.

 **Equity:** When transforming Illinois to eliminate subminimum wage employment, "equity" means ensuring that all individuals with DD, regardless of race, gender, geographic region, or other demographic factors, have fair and equal access to opportunities for CIE. Equity

in this context involves addressing disparities that may exist in resources, supports, and opportunities across various populations, and working to ensure that marginalized communities are not left behind as the State transitions away from 14(c) certificates. The process must include regular data collection and analysis to monitor disparities and ensure that the multi-year plan addresses the needs of all people with DD, fostering an inclusive and just transformation across Illinois. In regard to the State's system transformation to phase out of 14(c) SMW, equity is inclusive of, but not limited to:

1. **Racial Equity:** Equity across races requires that individuals with DD from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, who may have faced systemic barriers in employment opportunities, receive targeted supports. This includes ensuring that they have equal access to services like vocational training, education programs, and job placement assistance, and addressing any implicit biases that may exist in employment processes. Specific outreach and tailored services should be provided to these communities to bridge gaps in access and participation. View [Racial Inequality in the Labor Market and Employment Opportunities](#).
2. **Gender Equity:** Gender equity means recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by people of different genders, particularly women and non-binary individuals with disabilities, who may face additional barriers in accessing meaningful employment. This requires creating pathways that consider the needs of women in caregiving roles, addressing gender-based pay disparities, and ensuring that employment opportunities are inclusive and equitable for all gender identities.
3. **Geographic Equity:** Geographic equity focuses on ensuring that individuals with disabilities in rural, suburban, and urban areas across Illinois have equal access to employment opportunities and the necessary supports. Rural areas, in particular, may face challenges such as limited transportation options, fewer service providers, and a lack of local employment opportunities. Equity in geographic regions requires targeted investments and creative solutions to provide individuals with access to training, jobs, and resources regardless of where they live.
4. **Ability Equity:** Ability equity ensures that we are starting from the premise that all people with disabilities who want to work in CIE can, it is just a question of supports and aligning with the right career path. The DIP workgroup is committed to ensuring that all plans we develop are inclusive and equitable, specifically addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities and actively avoiding ableism. Our approach includes integrating accessibility considerations from the outset by consulting with disability experts and individuals with lived experience. We will employ inclusive language, design with universal accessibility in mind, and rigorously evaluate our plans through an equity lens to identify and mitigate potential biases. Continuous feedback from diverse Workgroup members will guide our efforts to refine and enhance our strategies, ensuring that our plans promote equality and avoid discrimination. By embedding these practices into our planning process, we aim to create solutions that are fair, accessible, and respectful of all individuals' rights and needs.

Ableism is a form of discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities. It involves societal attitudes, practices, and structures that devalue, marginalize, or exclude people based on their physical, mental, or sensory impairments. Ableism can manifest in various ways, including but not limited to:

- a. **Social Exclusion:** Ignoring or isolating individuals with disabilities from mainstream activities or opportunities.

- b. **Accessibility Barriers:** Designing environments, services, or products without considering the needs of those with disabilities, thereby limiting their participation.
- c. **Stereotyping:** Holding and perpetuating negative stereotypes or misconceptions about the abilities or potential of people with disabilities.
- d. **Discriminatory Policies:** Implementing policies or practices that unfairly disadvantage individuals with disabilities or fail to provide necessary accommodations.

Addressing ableism involves recognizing and challenging these biases, advocating for inclusive practices, and creating environments that respect and accommodate the diverse needs of all individuals.

- 5. **Language & Communication Equity:** Language equity refers to ensuring that individuals, regardless of their primary language or communication method, have equal access to information, services, and opportunities. It involves recognizing and addressing the language barriers that people may face in accessing resources, participating in decision-making processes, or receiving education and employment services. Language equity promotes the use of multiple languages, plain language, and accessible formats to meet the diverse linguistic needs of a population, including those who speak non-dominant languages, have limited English proficiency, or use alternative communication methods, such as sign language or assistive technology. By embracing language equity, organizations and systems can ensure that everyone, regardless of language ability or background, can fully engage and benefit from opportunities. This practice helps reduce disparities, promotes inclusivity, and supports the fair and effective distribution of resources.

Equity Analysis Criteria: Equity evaluation criteria will help identify disparities, allowing for targeted interventions and adjustments to prevent inequities from widening during the State's transformation to phase out 14(c) SMW. This ensures that the enhancements benefit everyone, especially those in marginalized or underserved communities. Technical assistance and guidance on the creation of analysis criteria will be provided by the Governor's Office of Equity.



Evaluation: This Subgroup will also be responsible for the completion of a comprehensive evaluation of the multi-year plan to phase out 14(c) SMW and transition to CIE. This evaluation plan will be systematic, data-driven, and incorporate partner feedback to ensure the effectiveness, accountability, and equity of the transformation away from 14(c) SMW.

14(c) Certificate Holder Transition Plan Evaluation Overview: Per HB 793—The Dignity in Pay Act, eligibility for Section 14(c) transition program grants shall be contingent upon community agencies submitting a transition plan. The Department shall provide example plans that community agencies may adapt.

Note: To ensure a thorough and effective evaluation of the State's transformation away from 14(c) subminimum wage (SMW), it is recommended that Transition Plan forms and processes require 14(c) certificate holders to report on specific evaluation and data criteria as outlined in the legislation. By generating critical data through reporting requirements, the Equity and Evaluation Subgroups will be better equipped to monitor progress and guide the State's transition

away from subminimum wage (SMW). This data-driven approach will also facilitate evidence-based recommendations for continuous improvements in the State's broader disability employment policies.

Short term data needs include, but are not limited to:

1. Total number of people working in SMW jobs in Illinois, by the following demographic information:
 - Region
 - Age
 - Race
 - Gender
 - Guardianship status
 - Length of employment at the 14(c)
 - Average number of hours worked weekly
 - Where does the worker live? SODC, home, CILA, other
 - Other employment (does the individual have another job in the community now or formerly), if known
2. Total number of 14(c) certificate holders and what DRS and DDD funding they receive.
3. Companies that contract with 14(c) organizations for business, including amount of contract and length of contract.

Long-term data needs include, but are not limited to:

1. Data collection and reporting requirements for tracking the following outcomes for the individual employees with disabilities who are transitioned out of SMW employment:
 - Wages earned
 - Hours worked each month
 - Type of job
 - Length of employment
 - Services utilized to obtain CIE
2. Total number of entities utilizing Section 14(c) certificates.
3. Total number of persons with disabilities who are paid SMW and the total number of persons with disabilities who are paid at least the applicable minimum wages.
4. Total number of persons with disabilities working in facility-based employment paid at or above minimum wage.
5. Total available approximate number of people with disabilities paid SMW who want to transition to competitive integrated employment with supports.
6. Total available approximate number of people with disabilities who do not wish to pursue competitive integrated employment and who would benefit from alternative meaningful day opportunities.

7. Total number of existing State employment programs designed to support workers with disabilities.
8. An evaluation of capacity limits in providers' contracts with the Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services and Division of Developmental Disabilities.
9. The personal choice of persons with disabilities regarding employment goals and planning in person-centered planning processes.
10. The use of existing and emerging technologies that could assist persons with disabilities in achieving employment goals.
11. The impact of access to reliable transportation on achieving employment goals and ongoing employment.
12. The activities of youth with disabilities within one year of exiting high school.
13. The count of schools holding Student Transition Employment Program and Pre-Employment Transition Services contracts with the Division of Rehabilitation Services that includes the count of students with ongoing cases who transition to adult services.
14. The number of students 14 1/2 through 22 years of age with individualized education plans indicating a need for home and community-based adult services.
15. Information regarding employment supports and benefits to individuals with disabilities, consumers of public services, employers, service providers, and State and local agency staff. Information shall include the Ticket to Work program, Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Programs, Illinois ABLE, and Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities.
16. The education and training needs of staff working in community-based provider agencies toward advancing competitive, integrated work options for persons with disabilities, in areas including, but not limited to:
 - employment options;
 - non-employment options;
 - home and community-based services and supports;
 - self-advocacy;
 - benefits planning;
 - asset building;
 - assistive technology;
 - certification programs; and
 - mental health services and supports.
17. The rates and reimbursements that support various employment programs for persons with disabilities, including competitive, integrated employment, customized employment, and supported employment.

18. The availability and need for adequate benefits planning services for workers with disabilities.
19. The availability and need for meaningful day services for individuals with disabilities who prefer not to work.
20. Enhanced service and support needs of aging adults with developmental disabilities who have been engaged in SMW work, including, but not limited to, activities of daily living, behavioral supports, and medical supports, including administration of medications while participating in employment supports and community day services through the Department of Human Services.

Roles & Responsibilities

1. **ICDD Team Roles & Responsibilities:** The ICDD team will serve by leading this process and ensure completion of legislative requirements through meeting facilitation, project management, and final compilation of DIP Workgroup recommendations.
2. **Subgroup Co-Chair Roles & Responsibilities:** As the Subgroup chair, you will be the primary representative of the Subgroup, ensuring its voice and needs are effectively communicated to the larger committee. Your responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Maintaining open and proactive communication with all Subgroup members, managing administrative tasks efficiently, and hosting productive meetings that adhere to the ICDD project management guidelines.
 - b. Fostering a collaborative environment by encouraging balanced participation and creating space for every member's input, all while keeping an equity lens at the forefront of discussions.
 - c. Acting as a supportive teammate, prioritizing the best interests of the work ahead and bringing any critical issues to the attention of the DIP Workgroup co-chairs.
 - d. Review and contribute to annual reporting, demonstrating professional courtesy and discretion in all interactions.

Your leadership will be pivotal in ensuring the Subgroup's efforts align with the overarching goals and maintain a high standard of excellence.

3. **Subgroup Member Roles & Responsibilities:** As a member of the DIP Workgroup, you will play a crucial role in advancing our objectives through dedicated teamwork and focused expertise. Your primary responsibilities include:
 - a. **Research and Analysis:** Conduct in-depth research on assigned topics and provide comprehensive analyses to inform Subgroup discussions and decisions.

- b. **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Work closely with other subcommittee members to develop solutions and recommendations that align with the goals of the larger committee.
- c. **Meeting Participation:** Attend all scheduled subcommittee meetings, actively contribute to discussions using your lived experience, and ensure that your input is well-prepared and constructive.
- d. **Documentation:** Prepare and review reports, meeting minutes, and other relevant documents to ensure accurate and timely communication of progress and findings to the larger committee.
- e. **Partner Engagement:** Engage with relevant partners and other parties involved to gather input, address concerns, and ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in the subcommittee's work.
- f. **Action Item Execution:** Take ownership of specific tasks or action items assigned during meetings and report on their progress, ensuring deadlines are met and quality standards are upheld.
- g. **Feedback and Improvement:** Provide constructive feedback on subcommittee processes and suggest improvements to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.