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**Illinois Institute for Rehabilitation  
and Employment Research**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# Agenda

- SWTCIE Grant
- Subminimum Wage Overview
- Dignity in Pay
- SWTCIE IL Project Overview
  - Participating Agencies
  - Goals/Objectives
  - Participants
  - How it's going
- Engaging Youth
- AID Program Introduction
- Our Process
- Personal Experience
  - Anetrice Lockett
- Personal Experience
  - Tarah Slater
- Q&A

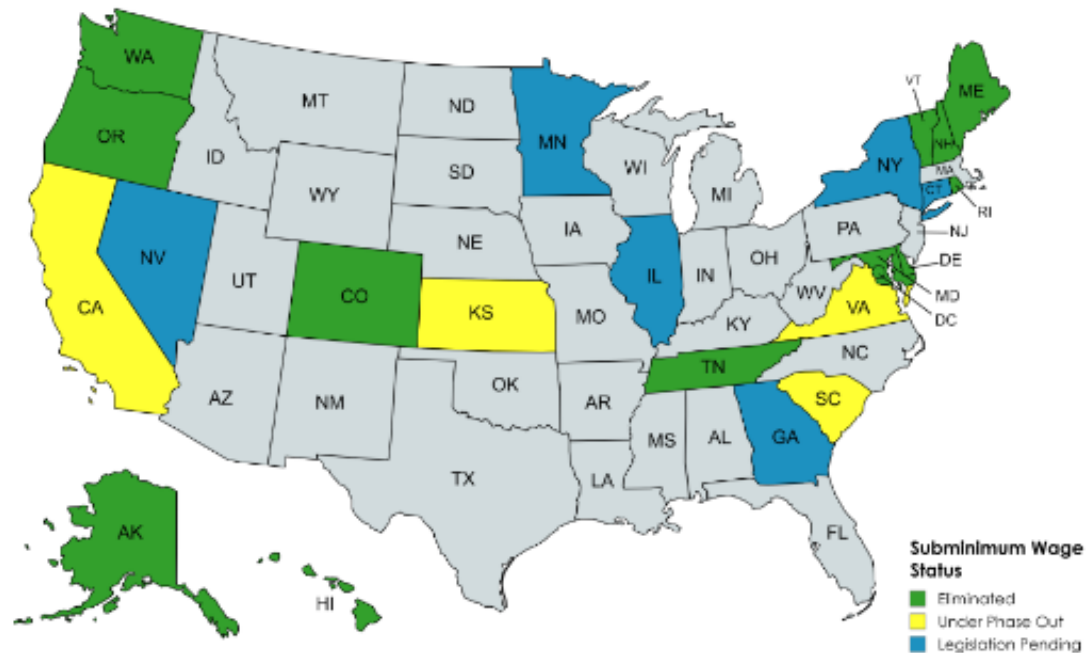


## Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) Innovative Model Demonstration Project

- Funded by U.S. Department of Education- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
- The purpose is to **support innovative activities aimed at increasing CIE** for youth and other individuals with disabilities seeking or engaged in SMW employment.
- Illinois DRS was one of 13 states chosen for this award and received \$14,193,946.00 for the period of 10/1/22 – 9/30/27, the second highest dollar amount.



# Subminimum Wage Nationwide



- Eliminated**
1. Alaska
  2. Colorado
  3. Delaware
  4. District of Columbia
  5. Hawaii
  6. Maine
  7. Maryland
  8. New Hampshire
  9. Oregon
  10. Rhode Island
  11. Tennessee
  12. Vermont
  13. Washington

- Under Phase Out**
1. California
  2. Kansas
  3. South Carolina
  4. Virginia

- Legislation Pending**
1. Connecticut
  2. Georgia
  3. Illinois
  4. Minnesota
  5. Nevada
  6. New York

18 States have eliminated, phased out, or modified the authority to pay SMW

# Subminimum Wage Reach

## 2023

- Nationally, **954** 14c certificate holders
- approximately **120,000** were reported employed under 14(c) certificates, earning **less than \$3.50/hr.**
- In Illinois, **72** applications for 14(c) certificates
  - 7.5% of the Nation's certificates
- **4,090** employed under Active 14c Certificates earning SMW

## 2024

- Nationally, **810** 14c certificate holders
- approximately **39,369** were reported employed under 14(c) certificates, earning **less than \$3.50/hr.**
- In Illinois, **65** applications for 14(c) certificates
  - 8% of the Nation's certificates
- **3,600** employed under Active 14c Certificates earning SMW



# Dignity In Pay.

[HB0793ham004](#)

- **Passed House** with 79 votes **May 2024**,
- Will be presented to Senate in Veto session this fall.
- **Eliminates** on July 1, 2029 the use of active or pending 14(c) certificates
- **Prohibits** paying **subminimum wages** to employees with a disability.
- **WILL NOT** close day programs or sheltered work, but does mandate at least minimum wage payment for work
- Addresses **fair pay** as both a civil rights and economic issue
- Prioritizes **Person-Centered planning**
- Increases **personal needs allowances**



## What DIP means for SWTCIE IL

- Our agencies will be considered “in transition” and will be tracked by the GO
- Our work will be used as a model for other agencies
- Task force members: EEOPD, ICDD, and an academic partner with subject matter experts
- Example Transition Plans (by January 1, 2025)
- Multi-year task force plan
- Data collection



## SWTCIE Illinois Grant

### Purpose:

- increase the opportunity for adults, students, and youth with disabilities who are currently earning or contemplating subminimum wage work to obtain competitive integrated employment (CIE).
- Assist 14c certificate holders in business model transformation

### Partners:

**Project Implementation and Evaluation:** University of Illinois- Urbana-Champaign

**Training and Technical Assistance:** Virginia Commonwealth University

**14c Certificate Holders:** The Workshop, Kreider Services, AID, CTF Illinois, Human Support Services, Centerstone





## Target Population

SWTCIE Participants are youth (up to age 24) or adults who are:

- currently employed at subminimum wage, **or**
- currently not working and have previously been employed at subminimum wage, **or**
- has not historically held competitive integrated employment, or whose competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability, **or**
- contemplating subminimum wage work, **and**
- eligible for IDHS-DRS vocational rehabilitation ([Section 553.20 Basis for Eligibility](#)), **and**
- meets the criteria for Most Significant or Very Significant Disability ([Section 553.140 Criteria for Most Significant Disability, Very Significant Disability...](#))



## Contemplating Subminimum Wage

Contemplating subminimum wage employment" means that the SWTCIE project participant has in mind, as a probable though not certain intention, to enter subminimum wage employment. (Section 437(d)(1) of GEPA.) [U.S. Department of Education Notice Inviting Applications: SWTCIE](#)

Evidence could include, but is not limited to:

- a **parent or guardian expressing** the desire for the individual to participate in subminimum wage work or attend a 14(c) facility to engage in work activities,
- evidence obtained from a school **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** such as a need for extended or long-term support in employment or daily living, indication of transition services which include customized or supported employment, need for supported living arrangements (typically found on the Transition Services pages), and/or
- current or previous **participation in special education** programs that offer a **high level of individualization and support.**



## Division of Rehabilitation Services: The First Stop

- Individuals with disabilities who need assistance in obtaining **Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)**, including those who are in the Adults with Developmental Disabilities HCBS Waiver, should be referred to the Division of Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation (DRS VR) Program.
- Individuals with disabilities are [presumed to be able to benefit from VR services](#), regardless of the severity or type of their disabilities, but must still participate in the eligibility determination process.
- [How DRS VR determines eligibility and rehabilitation needs](#)



## Competitive Integrated Employment (short answer)

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Rehabilitation Act both define CIE in a consistent way:

- Work can be part-time or full-time and can include self-employment
- Wages and access to benefits must be fair and competitive
- Work settings must be integrated
- Opportunities for advancement must be equitable



## **VR Policy allows engagement prior to HS exit (89 ILCS 590.760 )**

**Transition**-means a coordinated set of activities for students or youth with disabilities, and outreach to and engagement of parents or, as appropriate, the representative of students or youth with disabilities.

**Students can be served by both the school and a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) during their final year per counselor's approval.**

- Special procedures must be followed for students under a STEP contract
- Students can be referred for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services through IDHS-DRS prior to being referred to a CRP per DRS counselor approval.

**An IPE is required prior to CRP services being initiated.**

[IDHS: Transition Services Program Manual - FY24 \(state.il.us\)](https://state.il.us)



## Support students in their last year of high school

- Students meeting the criteria for CE or SEP, are eligible to participate in services up to job development, during their last year of school. This includes the provision and payment for the below Phases.
  - CE- Phases 1 (Discovery) and 2 (Assessment and Plan)
  - SEP- Phase 1 (Assessment and Plan)



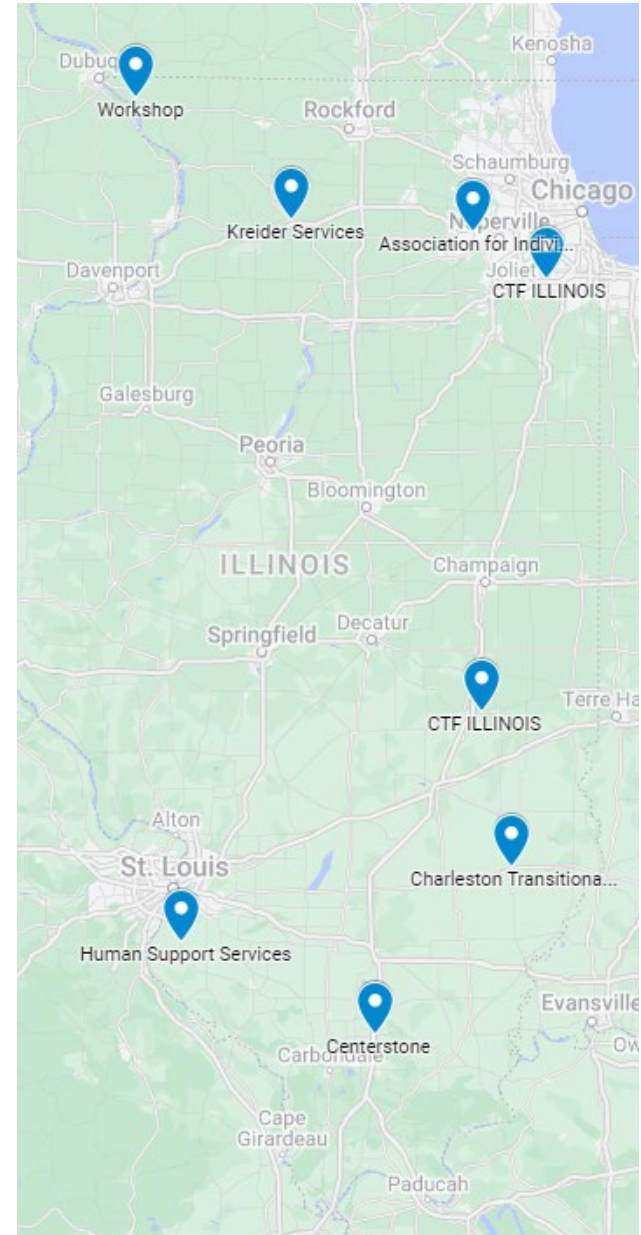
## Students moving from STEP to Adult Services

- If the customer was working at the time of exit from school but not yet linked with a CRP, they will begin at Phase 3 for SEP.
- If the customer was not working and did not participate in CE/SEP services in their last year of school, they will begin at Phase 1.
- Customers who will participate in Milestone services, billing for the 15-day Milestone must occur at least 15 days after school exit.



## SWTCIE IL Agencies

- **Association for Individual Development**
  - Aurora, IL
- **CTF Illinois**
  - Orland Park, IL
  - (Charleston and Olney—not SWTCIE sites)
- **Kreider Services**
  - Dixon, IL
- **The Workshop**
  - Galena, IL
- **Human Support Services**
  - Waterloo, IL
- **Centerstone of Illinois**
  - West Frankfort, IL





## Foundational Team

### Agency:

- Two, 100% dedicated, Employment Specialists
- Administrative/Supervisory Staff

### DRS

- VR Counselors (Youth, Adult, RCD/BBS)
- Business Employment Consultant
- Benefits Planner (DRS and WIPA affiliates)
- Supervisors and ABC's
- Project/Grant Manager

### UIUC

- Community Research Specialists
- Project Manager
- Project evaluation team and Communications team

### VCU

- Two Consultants to provide Training and Technical Assistance per agency



## SWTCIE IL Current Activities

- Pilot year and customer selection and engagement began 10/2023.
- Goal is 48 engaged by Sept. 30
- Monthly Community of Practice
- Regular team meetings
- Identifying and problem solving inter- and intra- agency systems issues
- 14 c Business model transformation- increasing DRS VR contracts



# SWTCIE IL

## By the Numbers

as of 6/4/2024

Agency	Total Engaged Participants	DRS Customers	Competitive Job Placements
AID	11	11	2
Centerstone	6	3	3
CTF	8	8	2
HSS	7	0	1
Kreider Services	7	3	1
The Workshop	17	11	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>



### ACRE Certification Training

- 12-week, [ACRE Approved Supported Employment Online Course](#)
- Focuses on Customized Employment
- 6 units, each spanning two weeks
- Participants can earn 40 CRCs or four CEUs and receive a Basic ACRE certification upon course completion.
- Training will be extended to high school teachers and staff in the Fall 2024.
- **There is no cost for this training**
- **You do not have to be part of the SWTCIE project to participate**



## SWTCIE IL

- Is a BIG deal
- has National attention—currently one of the top three rated projects (out of 13)
- VCU partnership is HUGE; leading experts in Supported Employment practices
- Our DRS team is skilled, dynamic, comprehensive, and enthusiastic
- “Level-Up” CRP Agencies, DRS services, and connections to high schools

▪ Agents of System Change

▪ Supports the DRS Director’s goals of Dignified Employment for all



# Success

“The Community Research Specialist, VCU Consultants, & Project Manager from SWTCIE Illinois-UI have been an invaluable support to the agency SWTCIE teams!!! We wouldn't have any successes without their assistance.”

**“January trip to VCU was a great learning experience!!! Seeing their employment specialists in action and their success stories helped our team gain confidence.”**

“My biggest success story so far would have to be getting a job seeker a job right in his community, literally right next door to where he lives at the Rec Center! Seeing him so happy with working and accomplishing something on his own is just so amazing and heart filling! Other successes include making business relationships throughout the community”

“Eight (8) clients identified as SWTCIE eligible, 7 referrals received, 6 Discoveries completed, & 1 client working and several others interviewing”

“Four (4) employees have taken & passed ACRE training...at least 1 more taking the next available training”



# Barriers

“One Employment Specialist has stepped down due to the amount of work compared to the amount of pay. This could possibly be an ongoing issue due to the amount of work that Employment Specialists are expected to do.”

“Almost had 2 customer’s families pull out of SWTCIE project due to issues with assigned DRS VR Counselors. Agency requested different DRS VR Counselors but were told that wasn’t an option. The agency already has two other VR Counselor liaisons assigned to their other DRS employment service contracts; but have two different VR Counselors for SWTCIE. This would support the consistency in application of VR rules, timeliness of referral processing, and allow for a more cooperative working relationship between the two teams. “

“Working with individuals who really wanted certain jobs, but those were deemed seasonal and not allowed. So, that has made us think outside the box, (still working on that) looking for other jobs that could be of interest and work well for certain individuals”

“One barrier that I have come across was when business outreaching, the manager shuts me down right away or says it is not a good time to talk. I took that as them saying no, but I learned to ask "when would be a good time to come back?" or something along those lines, instead of just thanking them for their time and walking out”



# Training and Technical

“We receive technical support and share ideas during our SWTCIE Community of Practice meetings which are held monthly. These events are great for learning new techniques and working through any struggles the ES team may be having”

“We were recently informed of planned ES Roundtable events to be held in Champaign. This is a good idea, but the ESs do have concerns on how they will be able to make it to so many meetings once they have more customers working and requiring employment support services”

“The ACRE training really helped me to know how to go out to businesses, get tours, assessments and even if no job comes from it, I have the contact and relationship with them. Also, It has helped me when learning to get to know the people I am working with. I have some basic knowledge of benefits if they were to ask as well. I reference the training often and thought it was great training”

“I feel like ACRE training was helpful in the aspect of getting me prepared for what I was going to be experiencing while on the job, the training taught me ways to communicate with possible employers and how to do a discovery with the individuals”





# Visit our website

[SWTCIE Illinois – From subminimum wage to competitive integrated employment for Illinois with disabilities](#)

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**SWTCIE Illinois**

*From Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment for Illinoisans with Disabilities: An Innovative & Collaborative Project Partnership*

### Upcoming Events

- *Wed, May 1, 2:00 pm*  
[SWTCIE Illinois Community of Practice](#)
- *Wed, Jun 5, 2:00 pm*  
[SWTCIE Illinois Community of Practice](#)
- *Wed, Jul 3, 2:00 pm*  
[SWTCIE Illinois Community of Practice](#)



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## Resources

- [Bottom Dollars Film](#)
- [Actions - H.R.2373 - 117th Congress \(2021-2022\): Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)
- Moroto, M., & Pettinicchio, D. (2022). Worth Less? Exploring the Effect of Subminimum Wage on Poverty Among U.S. Hourly Workers. *Sociologic Perspectives*. Volume 1(21).





**SWTCIE Illinois**

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# AID

Association for  
Individual Development

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COMMUNITY \* ADVOCACY \* RESOURCES \* ENGAGEMENT \* SUPPORT

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[AIDCARES.ORG](https://aidcares.org)

# Our Mission

To empower people with physical, developmental, intellectual and mental health challenges to enjoy lives of dignity and purpose



# EMPLOYMENT FIRST

## Approach to Employment

**8  
Principles  
of IPS**

- Competitive Employment is the Goal
- Zero Exclusion
- Job Seeker Preferences Honored
- Integration of Vocational and Mental Health Treatment services
- Benefits Counseling
- Rapid Job Search
- Employment Specialists Build Relationships with Community Employers
- Job Retention Supports are Time Unlimited

**FY23: 56 Clients placed in Community Integrated Employment!**



# Supported Employment

- Assists individuals with the most extensive support needs to achieve competitive integrated employment
- Consists of four phases
  - Getting to know the job seeker
  - Job Development & Matching
  - Training & Support
  - Job retention services

# Customized Employment

- An individualized, flexible, and personalized process to develop employment opportunities that meet the needs of the individual and employer
- Essential elements include the following:
  - Negotiation of job duties
  - Individualization of job tasks for one person
  - Pay of at least minimum wage
  - Employment occurring in community-based or individually-owned businesses
  - Presumption that an individual's work will meaningfully contribute to the business



# Our Process

- Referrals:
  - 2 Options:
    - The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
      - Emphasis on transition aged youth
      - Offices we work with: Aurora, Elgin, Downers Grove, & Kankakee
    - Internal Referrals
      - Sheltered Workshop Clients
      - Interested in Community Employment

# Pre Employment

- Client Centered & Strength Based Approach
  - Employment Specialists (ES) complete Vocational Assessments & the Discovery Process
  - Potential job matches are based on clients interests
- ES's spend 65% of their week in the community Job Developing

# Job Development

- Networking with potential employers
  - Discuss Employers needs, interests, & potentially tour the location
  - Client matches may include
    - Working Interviews
    - Informational Interviewing
    - Job Trials
    - Job Analysis

# Employment

- ES's provide continual support to both the clients & employers
  - Job Shadowing
  - Complete Accommodations
  - Assist with setting up aids
  - Assisting with communication
- Follow up Supports provided until requested by either client or their guardian

# EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST EXPERIENCE ~ ANETRICE

- My Passion

- I'm driven to empower my clients to find fulfilling jobs that enhance their quality of life.
- Witnessing their success in their careers is my ultimate goal.



# Training Experience

## AID's Training

- Learned about AID's goals & beliefs
- Provided detailed training on what an ES is
- What the position does
- All potential services offered to the clients
- How to tailor my approach to find clients the right job matches

## SWTCIE's Training

- Currently completing ACRE Certification Training
- Big focus on building strong relationships with employers
- Gives practical skills to assist clients with finding meaningful employment
- Learning that assessment tools plays a big part



# Building Relationships

## With Clients

- Communicate through weekly meetings, in person, or via Zoom
- Get feedback from the clients natural supports to learn more about them
- Adapting to the client's preferences
- create a supportive and inclusive environment where the client feels comfortable

## With Employers

- I research the organization to understand its values and goals
- Contacted them in person or via phone, expressing genuine interest in what assistance their organization may need
- Determine how we may best assist them
- Maintain communication and demonstrate ongoing interest by following up

# EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST EXPERIENCE ~ TARAH

- My Passion
  - Since I have served with AID for 11 years I wanted to learn something new
  - Being an ES has allowed me to help clients in a completely new way than I was previously able to





# Training Experience

## AID's Training

- Shadow other experienced employment specialist
  - Gaining knowledge of the role and their expertise on different scenarios with clients when supporting them in job service need

## SWTCIE's Training

- Went to different training conventions to network with other agencies
- Completed the ACRE Certification Training

# Building Relationships

## With Clients

- Communicate through different forms of communication to effectively support clients
- Engage in one-on-one meetings to assess individual needs, skills, and career goals
- Stay in touch with the client, providing updates on job opportunities, scheduling interviews, and offering support

## With Employers

- Regular communication which is key to nurturing partnerships with businesses
- Following up on placements, addressing any concerns or challenges, and seeking feedback
- Being proactive with my approach to meeting the needs of the business while advocating for inclusion of our clients

# Job Placement

- On April 4th, I helped one of my clients secure a job at a school bus company of her choice
- Through collaborative job searching, we arranged an interview with Safeway bus company, leading to her successful hire
- I maintain regular contact, offering support as needed and ensuring her job satisfaction
- Client consistently expresses her joy in her role and in assisting students to and from school

Join the [SWTCIE IL mailing list](#)



# Questions?

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