



# Employment Newsletter



## Employment & Day Services Updates

*The Employment & Day Services (EDS) Division was created in 2018 to oversee DDS employment and day service options. EDS works with individuals, families, providers, community partners, and businesses to prepare individuals for competitive employment. The division currently offers a variety of day and employment services to individuals with disabilities in Connecticut receiving services through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).*

### Disability Pride Month: Celebrating 33 Years of the ADA!

July was Disability Pride Month and July 26<sup>th</sup> marked the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)! The ADA prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life: school, employment, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.



The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) created specific [tax credits](#) to help businesses comply with the ADA. Section 44 of the IRS Code allows a tax credit for small businesses and Section 190 of the IRS Code allows a tax deduction for all businesses. The tax credit can be used to offset the cost of undertaking barrier removal and alterations to improve accessibility; providing accessible formats such as Braille, large print and audio tape; making available a sign language interpreter or a reader for customers or employees, and for purchasing certain adaptive equipment. Learn more about the tax benefits of making a business accessible to workers and customers with disabilities [here](#).

The 2021 Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a Federal tax credit available to employers for hiring and employing individuals from certain [targeted groups](#) who have faced significant barriers to employment. Learn more about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit [here](#).

# Appendix K Approval

The Department is excited to announce that as of July 3, 2023, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) approved our revised ARPA Appendix K amendments including additional financial incentives connected to the Supporting Transformation to Empower People (STEP) initiative!

All provisions will be retroactive to February 2023 and will include all previously approved STEP plans and transitions. There are several incentivized provisions listed within the Appendix K revisions. Multiple provisions were recommendations made by the DDS SELN Employment Services Strategic Planning Committees. Some of the revised provisions related to Employment include:

An incentive payment for DDS qualified providers that meet the articulated criteria training expectations consistent with professional standards from accepted accreditation or certification entities such as the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) or other similarly recognized organizations. Does NOT need to be a component of an approved plan.

- a. Payment for completion will be a flat outcome payment of \$3,000 per employee trained, up to a total of \$30,000 per qualified provider agency once verification of completion is received by the department.
- b. Incentive also includes reimbursement for cost of such training, separate from the outcome payment

Review the [HCBS ARPA Training Related Incentives Memo](#) for more information.

Qualified providers that submit documentation for each job coach/developer that completes approved training expectations **after 2/1/2023** and **before 3/31/2025** and is verified by DDS are eligible while funds last.

Review the [ARPA Appendix K Approval Memo](#) for more information and the full list of approved amendments.

## Transportation Survey



Please complete this brief survey about transportation. The survey will be used to collect information on transportation for individuals supported by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Questions are written for individuals served by the agency. The survey is voluntary and confidential and can be completed by individuals or their family member/natural supports for the individual.

The survey was created by the DDS Transportation Workgroup. This workgroup was created by DDS in 2022 to begin collecting information about transportation barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in Connecticut. The workgroup is made up of members from various stakeholder groups including individuals, family members, advocacy organizations, transportation organizations and state staff.

[Click here](#)

[Click here](#)

# STEP Summer Virtual Office Hours

## STEP SUMMER VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Each DDS Region will be holding virtual office hours on Microsoft Teams this summer where you can ask any questions, share comments or have a general conversation about STEP.



Each Region will be holding Summer Virtual hours on STEP (Supporting Transformation to Empower People). If you have any questions, comments, ideas or just want to have a general conversation about STEP, this is an opportunity to talk directly to Region leadership about STEP.

[North Region](#) [towns in NR](#)

[South Region](#) [towns in SR](#)

[West Region](#) [towns in WR](#)

## Fall 2023 DDS Community Forums

Join Commissioner Jordan Scheff and Deputy Commissioner Elisa Velardo for the Commissioner's Annual Update community forums in October! The virtual forums will be recorded, and each will follow the same format and agenda. The forums will be hosted across two days at four different times to accommodate everyone's busy schedules.

Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup> 6:00 - 8:00 PM [Link](#) | Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup> 6:00 - 8:00 PM [Link](#)

Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup> 9:00 - 11:00 AM [Link](#) | Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> 9:00 - 11:00 AM [Link](#)

More information about the Fall 2023 DDS Community Forums including call-in options can be found [here](#).

## Connecticut Customized Employment Technical Assistance Community of Practice

The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the CT CE CoP will be held on Monday, August 14<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The focus of this CoP meeting will be the second phase of Customized Employment: Job Development, Negotiation, & Placement. The first half of the meeting will be information presented by the ADS-DDS CE Project team and the second half will be time for providers to discuss, ask, and answer questions.

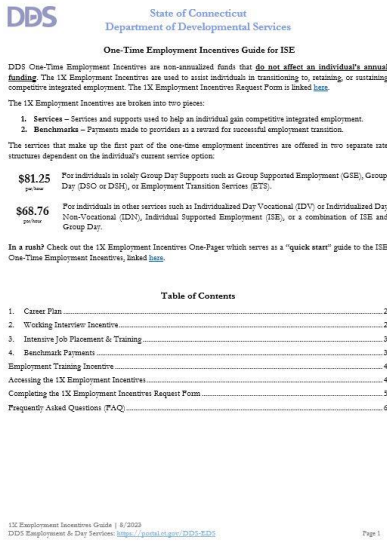
We will once again welcome staff from Job Path, a provider agency in New York with more than 10 years of experience in Customized Employment. All provider agencies are welcome to join: those curious about CE, those currently in a CE Certification Course, and those currently providing CE Services. More information can be found in the attached one-pager found [here](#) and on the DDS website [here](#).

Quarter 3 – [RSVP](#)  
August 14<sup>th</sup> from 9 – 12  
**TOPIC: Job Development,  
Negotiation, & Placement**

# CT CE Certification Course

The CT Customized Employment Project team is excited to announce that four more iterations of the CT CE Certification Course will be offered in the 23-24 state fiscal year. Course calendars and applications will be released shortly. Updates and information about CT CE Certification Course can be found [here](#).

## 1X Employment Incentives Guide



DDS [One-Time Employment Incentives](#) are non-annualized funds that do not affect an individual's annual funding. The 1X Employment Incentives are used to assist individuals in transitioning to, retaining, or sustaining competitive integrated employment. DDS released a new 1X Employment Incentives Guide that reviews the 1X process and includes Frequently Asked Questions. The guide is helpful for those who have never used the 1X incentives and want to start as well as those who are experts and have specific questions!


Learn more about DDS 1X Employment Incentives [here](#) and check out the 1X Incentives Guide [here](#).

## Project SEARCH

There are now **14** Project SEARCH programs across Connecticut! Project SEARCH is a nine-month internship training program, available to school transition age students and young adults eligible for DDS services, who need more intensive employment skills training. **Four new Project SEARCH locations** will be starting in the 23-24 school/program year! The four programs are highlighted in blue on the map and their contact information is listed below.


Learn more about Project SEARCH [here](#). View the Updated CT Project SEARCH Contact List [here](#).

**NEW** Host Site: Hospital of Central CT (New Britain)

Provider Agency: CCARC 


Contact: Jenny Bishop - [jbishop@ccarc.com](mailto:jbishop@ccarc.com)

**NEW** Host Site: Stamford Hospital

Provider Agency: Abilis 

Contact: Luis Velazquez – 203-531-1880 – [velazquez@abilis.us](mailto:velazquez@abilis.us)

**NEW** Host Site: Danbury Hospital

Provider Agency: Ability Beyond 

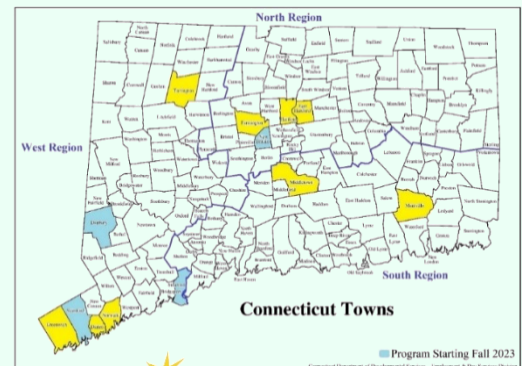
Contact: Kaitlyn Appleby – [Kaitlyn.Appley@abilitybeyond.org](mailto:Kaitlyn.Appley@abilitybeyond.org)

**NEW** Host Site: Stratford YMCA

Provider Agency: The Kennedy Collective 

Contact: Sara Schwartz [sara.schwartz@thekennedycollective.org](mailto:sara.schwartz@thekennedycollective.org)

### Connecticut Locations



Project | SEARCH

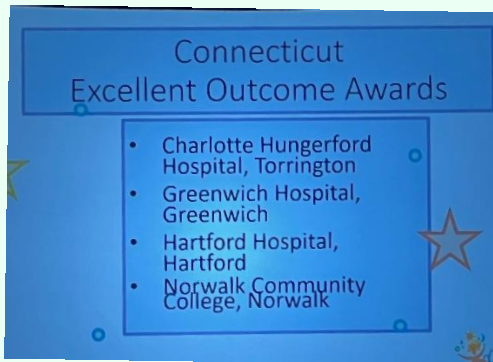


# 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Project SEARCH Conference



Staff from multiple CT Project SEARCH Programs and CT Project SEARCH Coordinator, Brian Gresko, attended the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Project SEARCH Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin July 10-14, 2023. The Conference brought together leaders from the more than 800 Project SEARCH Programs across the world! This year's conference broke attendance records, with 850 participants registered and more than 150 attendees presenting their knowledge and experience!

At the Conference, multiple CT Project SEARCH Programs were awarded and recognized by Project SEARCH co-founders Erin Reilly and Susie Rutkowski. FAVARH, LARC, Abilis, Ability Beyond & MARC of Manchester were recognized for Excellent Outcomes regarding intern employment success rates!



Nicholas Stewart  
(Abilis)

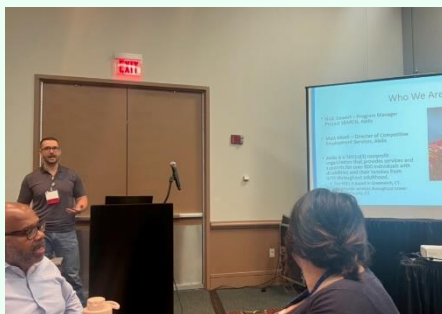


Kathy Riberdy  
(LARC)



Brian Gresko  
*On behalf of FAVARH*

Multiple CT Project SEARCH Programs also presented at the conference. Dimitar Tashkovski from MARC Community Resources presented his experience on the challenges and successes of a first-year Project SEARCH program. Matthew Micelli from Abilis also gave a presentation on the benefits of externships for Project SEARCH interns. Another member from the Abilis Project SEARCH team, Nicholas Stewart, presented on challenging behaviors and situations encountered by programs.



Matthew Micelli (Abilis) and Nicholas Stewart (Abilis) present Externships: The GOOD, the BAD, the LUCKY as well as Navigating challenging behaviors and situations encountered by Project SEARCH programs.



Dimitar Tashkovski (MARC Community Resources) presents Project SEARCH: Our First Year

## 2023 National APSE Conference: Creating Connections

Darrell Spears (EDS) attended the 2023 National Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference in Columbus, Ohio June 12-15 with multiple Connecticut APSE Members. More than 650 employment professionals and subject matter experts from across the nation attended the conference. This year's theme, Creating Connections, focused on the value of networking, teamwork, partnership and community. APSE has announced that next year's conference will be in Charlotte, North Carolina with the theme "Navigating Tomorrow Together".



*Kate Travis (Ability Beyond), Carrie O'Connell (Ability Beyond), Shaileen Brighton-Ortiz (Ability Beyond), Keith Jones (2023 APSE Keynote Speaker).*

## Connecticut Assistive Technology Innovation Conference



DDS is thrilled to announce the outstanding success of the Assistive Technology (AT) Innovation Conference held June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. The **sold-out event** aimed to enhance awareness, understanding, access, and acquisition of Assistive Technology devices and services in Connecticut.

The conference provided a platform for individuals and family members, DDS staff members, service providers, and technology experts to come together and explore the latest advancements in AT. With a wide range of sessions covering topics such as AT for Employment, Accessibility Features for Smartphones and Tablets, and Initiatives for Accessing AT, participants gained valuable insights and practical knowledge. CT's AT Innovation Conference was a successful collaboration between DDS, the [CT Developmental Disabilities Council](#), and the [CT Tech Act Project](#).

## CT Youth Leadership Forum Luncheon (YFL)



*Darrell Spears (EDS) and Adrianna Ramirez (CTFSN)*

The EDS unit attended the CT Youth Leadership Forum luncheon (YLF) for students with disabilities on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. The CT Youth Leadership Project (YLP) is an enthused, comprehensive organization that empowers youth. This project supports students with disabilities prepare for their future, identify and overcome barriers, and become leaders creating an example for others. The YLF project has students develop a Community Action Project that students must complete and continue after the forum. Upon completion of the project students gain eligibility to one of many scholarships CT YLP offers. More information about the program can be found [here](#).



# Self-Advocacy

## Employment Success Story: Josh Mears

Josh Mears lives in Wolcott, CT. He enjoys working as a Disc Jockey (DJ) and often works and supports local events. A good friend of Josh's was a DJ; this is what sparked his interest in learning this trade.

To get started Josh needed to save money for the equipment the profession requires. There was also a lot to learn. It took two years for Josh to grasp the ropes and purchase the equipment he needed. His first gig was a birthday party for a sixteen-year-old. As this is Josh's profession he charges for his services however, he will donate his time for special events. Josh doesn't typically travel far, he stated that "bad weather and hotel costs can really affect the success of a gig". His favorite venues are banquet halls and restaurants.



Josh mentioned that there are some challenges in being hired as a DJ, such as people getting rowdy and demanding. He recalls working at a wedding where a fight broke out and because of this experience, Josh steers away from taking on gigs at weddings. Other challenges include people not keeping their commitment to having him come. Josh now knows having a formal meeting with people first helps him to know they are serious and can commit.

When I asked Josh what the most popular songs are he said "YMCA, the Macarena, Chicken Dance, Cotton-Eyed Joe, Cupid Shuffle". As we wrapped up our interview, Josh's advice to others based on his own experience was "Don't give up, always look for new things to do, live your dreams, and always challenge yourself"!

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### Success Stories

It is important we support each other in our successes in life! The Self Advocate Coordinators are excited to share stories from individuals all over CT. Celebrating both Employment and Making Life Happen!



*Written by Carol Grabbe*

Carol Grabbe is a DDS Self-Advocate Coordinator and has written many success stories on the DDS website, read more [here](#).

Want to read more employment success stories? Check out the Success Stories section of the DDS Self-Advocates Corner [here](#)!

DDS Self-Advocate Coordinators interview individuals and write success stories to spotlight employment successes on a regular basis. Check back often to see more success stories!

# Self-Advocate Coordinators 22-23 FY End of Year Report

Review the Self Advocate Coordinator (SAC) FY22-23 End of Year Report [here!](#) The report reviews the accomplishments of the 10 DDS SACs and the outreach and impact they have made across Connecticut. Each of the Self-Advocates have a specific focus area ranging from employment, healthy living, assistive technology, housing, and more! The report also reviews the many goals the SACs have created for the 23-24 state fiscal year. To view the report with voice-overs completed by the SACs, click [here](#).



North Region Self-Advocate Coordinators			South Region Self-Advocate Coordinators			West Region Self-Advocate Coordinators		
 <b>Yana Razumnaya</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 155 Founders Plaza East Hartford, CT 06108 Tel: (860) 263-2524 Fax: (860) 263-2525	 <b>Kevin Arce</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 155 Founders Plaza East Hartford, CT 06108 Tel: (860) 263-2524 Fax: (860) 263-2525	 <b>Varian Salters</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 94 South Park Street Willingboro, CT 06026 Tel: (860) 456-4542 Fax: (860) 456-4378	 <b>Carol Grabbe</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 35 Thorpe Ave, 3RD Floor Wallingford, CT 06492 Tel: (203) 284-5118 Fax: (203) 284-0220	 <b>Paige Librandi</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 376 James Street New Haven, CT 06511 Tel: (203) 974-4232 Fax: (203) 974-4201	 <b>Kellie Hartigan</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 413 W. Thomas St., Suite 202 Norwalk, CT 06850 Tel: (860) 838-8512 Fax: (860) 838-8579	 <b>James Louchen</b> Self-Advocate Coordinator 195 Alford Park Road Torrington, CT 06790 Tel: (860) 496-3067 Fax: (860) 496-3001	 <b>Jossie Torres</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 55 West Main Street Waterbury, CT 06702 Tel: (203) 808-7431 Fax: (203) 808-7410	 <b>Natasha Cole</b> Self-Advocate 55 West Main Street Waterbury, CT 06702 Tel: (203) 805-7467 Fax: (203) 805-7410
			 <b>Jeremy Powell</b> Self Advocate Coordinator 55 West Main Street Waterbury, CT 06702 Tel: (203) 805-7464 Fax: (203) 805-7410					

## August Recreation Calendar

### AUGUST *Zoom* RECREATION 2023

**TUESDAYS 5:30-6:30PM**      **WEDNESDAY 5:30-6:30PM**      **THURSDAY 3-4PM**

1 <b>Supermoon</b> Tuesday	(free) Zoom account needed to participate <a href="https://tinyurl.com/62rn5ujn">https://tinyurl.com/62rn5ujn</a> Meeting ID: 222 399 8386 Passcode: 479813	3 <b>HEALTHY EATING &amp; MOVING WITH Natasha!</b>
8 <b>Paige's Trivia &amp; Video Dance Party?</b>	9 <b>THE GOOD LIFE Social group</b> <b>WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?</b> with Ali	10 no event
15 <b>Yana's CRITTER CORNER</b>	23 <b>Virtual Recreation for CT adults (20 + up) receiving DDS services</b> Contact Corinne Jackson with any questions <a href="mailto:corinne.jackson@ct.gov">corinne.jackson@ct.gov</a>	17 <b>JEOPARDY!</b> with your host, Carol TREBEK!!
22 <b>SING ALONG JUKEBOX with Ann Marie &amp; Jason!!</b>	24 no event	31 <b>BINGO!</b>
29 <b>WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE</b>		

Virtual Recreation for CT adults (20 + up) receiving DDS services

(free) Zoom account needed to participate

Contact Corinne Jackson with any questions  
[corinne.jackson@ct.gov](mailto:corinne.jackson@ct.gov)

<https://tinyurl.com/62rn5ujn>

Meeting ID: 222 399 8386

Passcode: 479813



# Links, News, & Resources

DDS does not endorse or recommend any product, process, or service listed below.

## No Wrong Door: Team CT Employment Services Informational Meeting

You're Invited!



TEAM CT

### Employment Services

Are you interested in learning about employment programs/resources, throughout CT, that assist with career pathways and building qualified candidates?

Please join us for a virtual overview of agencies/programs & get updates on...

Presented By:



The CT No Wrong Doors Committee's Employment Services team will be holding informational meetings about employment programs/resources throughout CT that assist with career pathways and building qualified candidates.

Meetings will be held online from 9:30 to 11:00 am on Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup>. Space is limited – please limit registrants to one to two per agency.

Registration is Required [RSVP here.](#)

## 2023 Connecticut Affordable Housing Conference



The 2023 Connecticut Affordable Housing Conference is BACK! This year's theme, "Housing is the Key to Thriving Communities," focuses on the impact #AffordableHousing has on everyone. The virtual conference will be held November 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for more info!

## NEAT: Assistive Technology (AT) Champions Program:

Are you looking to jump start or develop your assistive technology (AT) and augmentative alternative communication (AAC) knowledge and skills? Are you a teacher, related service professional, paraeducator, or administrator? The New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Center at Oak Hill is once again offering their AT Champions program! Thanks to sponsorship from the CT State Department of Education, the program is offered to participants at NO COST! Learn more about the program [here](#). Questions can be sent to NEAT's Director of Assistive Technology Services [Elena Hurlburt](#).



## 11th Annual Disability Resource Fair

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Disability Resource Fair will be held on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in recognition of Disability Employment Awareness Month! This year the event will be held at Oak Hill's NEAT Building (33 Coventry St. Hartford, CT) from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Please RSVP to Jill Larmett at [jlarmett@capitalworkforce.org](mailto:jlarmett@capitalworkforce.org) if you can attend.



**CEOs are**

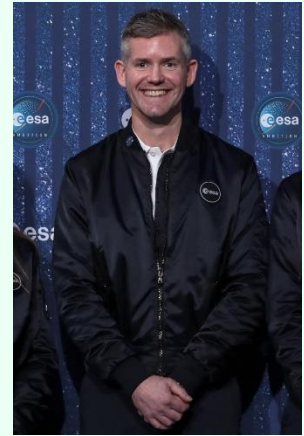


**176 CEOs  
and counting!**

CEOs are 'IN' for the Disability Equality Index (DEI)! By signing the 'CEO Letter on Disability Inclusion,' CEOs commit to benchmarking their disability inclusion journey with the Disability Equality Index. Multiple employers with a large presence in Connecticut have signed the Disability Equality Index including: Aramark, AT&T, Bank of America, Best Buy, Boeing, Chevron, Cox Communications, CVS Health, Deloitte, DICK'S Sporting Goods, Hilton, Kroger, Lowes, Starbucks, Synchrony, Target, TD Bank, T-Mobile, UPS, Verizon, Walmart, Wells Fargo and many more. Click [here](#) to see the complete list.

## **The World's First Astronaut with A Disability Is Here**

The European Space Agency (ESA) has announced that Former British Paralympian John McFall will be the first "parastronaut" in the history of space travel! His journey will be part of a feasibility project, looking for the most efficient ways for astronauts with disabilities to be included in space travel.



John McFall is from Frimley, Surrey, in England and is best known for his athletic career as a Paralympian. At 19, McFall was involved in a serious motorcycle crash that resulted in a right leg amputation above the knee. McFall was fitted for a prosthetic in 2003 and decided to continue his passion for running. He quickly became a professional athlete and was selected to represent Great Britain at the International Paralympic Committee European Championships in 2005. Over four years, McFall earned him five gold, three silver, and five bronze medals! McFall was inducted into the astronaut class of 2022 and is excited to be the first astronaut with a physical disability to go to space.

## **U.S. Department of Transportation Announces New Accessibility Rules for Airline Lavatories on the 33rd Anniversary of the ADA**

On the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) announced new rules to make airline lavatories more accessible. The new rule will require airlines to make lavatories on new single-aisle aircraft large enough to permit a passenger with a disability and attendant to approach, enter, and maneuver within as necessary to use the aircraft lavatory. The rule can be found [here](#).

**Know your  
rights**



## Google Displaying Accessibility Information More Prominently

Although somewhat subtle, Google is making a big impact displaying accessibility information. Google Maps has been updated to display a wheelchair icon at business entrances that are wheelchair accessible. This feature will now be the default on all Google maps, previously the feature had to be turned on in the settings. Since 2020, Google Maps has offered information about physical accessibility at various locations, with information now available for more than 40 million businesses around the world. Information is based on contributions from business owners and other Google users. Google is also testing Lookout, a new feature that uses artificial intelligence to provide image descriptions to help those with vision impairments. Google is working to expand their availability of Live Caption, which offers real-time captioning for any type of audio, among other accessibility improvements.

## NADTC Office Hours: Helping Transition-Age Youth Overcome Barriers Through Travel Training



The National Aging & Disability Transportation Center (NADTC)'s office hours will be an interactive discussion between attendees on travel training strategies for students with disabilities and how it helps to overcome transportation barriers when transitioning to adult life. Keith Fox, Transition Coordinator for Easterseals Crossroads Transition Services has been partnering with transit agencies and school systems for 19 years, offering travel training to students with disabilities and their caregivers to help them travel independently. The office hours will be August 23<sup>rd</sup> from 2:00-3:00 pm. For more information, click [here](#).

## WEBINAR: Evaluating Employment Outcomes in Diverse Communities: Lessons Learned from Community Collaborations for Employment (CCE) Grantees in Texas and Virginia

**Webinar Date:** August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 | **Time:** 4:00-5:00 PM



In 2021, the Administration for Community Living awarded the Community Collaborations for Employment (CCE) grant to seven grantees to help increase and enhance collaborations across systems to maximize a seamless experience for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) as they transition between school and work in the community.

The Virginia and Texas CCE grantees both target youth with ID/DD in racially minoritized communities and limited English-speaking households. Both grantees are conducting internal evaluations of their grants to track progress toward outcomes. Evaluation is an integral part of ensuring the efficacy of employment programs in the CCE grant. In this webinar, participants will hear from the Virginia and Texas CCE grantees on evaluation strategies they can apply to their own programs.

**RSVP [here](#).**



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### **Contact Employment & Day Services:**

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