

**Connecticut Department of Developmental Services
Employment & Day Services Division**

**DDS
Employment Newsletter**

January 2023



Happy New Year!

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year! As we begin the new year, it is important to celebrate the many accomplishments of the Division and the individuals we support. The Employment & Day Services (EDS) team extends their thanks and appreciation to all stakeholders in the EDS community.

EDS 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 intellectual disability and other developmental disabilities (IDD) across Connecticut, learn more below:

Fourth Tuesday Forums on Innovative Options

Each month a different topic is discussed by DDS staff from the content area. These meetings will be informational listening sessions to allow stakeholders to learn more about different DDS services.

Meetings take place on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm and are held on Microsoft Teams. Meetings links and past meeting recordings are posted [here](#).



January 24, 2023 Self-Directed Services
February 28, 2023 Residential Transformation/Housing/ARPA
March 28, 2023 Employment Transformation/ARPA
April 25, 2023 Technology for Optimal Independence
May 23, 2023 Individual and Family Supports/Respite
June 28, 2023 Children's Services & Transition Age Youth

Customized Employment (CE) Services

Customized Employment (CE) is an alternative method of finding **competitive integrated employment** that focuses on the strengths, skills and abilities of individuals with significant disabilities and the unmet needs of employers. It is a **highly structured, person-centered process, carried out over time in three separate phases**. It serves as a separate service model with more intensive creative and specifically modified supports to help the individual achieve their self-directed employment option. The service is job seeker driven.

CT CE Certification Course

The application is still open for the final session (D) of the CT Customized Employment Certification Course. The course consists of one (1) module per month for four (4) months for a total of 20 trainees. The course consists of asynchronous (do it on your own time) work as well as synchronous meeting sessions (scheduled live meetings) via Zoom. To qualify for CE certification, **trainees must attend all synchronous live sessions and complete/pass all assignments**.

Session D:
Feb 27, 2023- June 30, 2023
Module 1: 2/27/23-3/24/23
Module 2: 3/27/23-4/28/23
Module 3: 5/1/23-5/26/23
Module 4: 5/31/23-6/30/23

LIVE SESSIONS Thursdays at 9:00 am on:
3/16; 4/6; 4/27; 5/25; 6/15; 6/29
[Session D Application Link](#)

CT CE Technical Assistance Community of Practice

The ADS-DDS Customized Employment Team is excited to announce the 2023 Customized Employment Technical Assistance Community of Practice. All provider agencies are welcome to join: those curious about CE, those currently in a CE Certification Course, and those currently providing CE Services.

The first meeting was on Monday, January 9th, 2023 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The first half of the meeting is an informational presentation and the second half is time for questions, answers, and discussion. More information and the RSVP link can be found in the attached one-pager found [here](#).

Quarter 1 – RSVP

January 9th, 2023 | 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Customized Employment in CT

Quarter 2 – [RSVP](#)

April 17th, 2023 | 9:00AM to 12:00PM
Job Discovery

Quarter 3 – [RSVP](#)

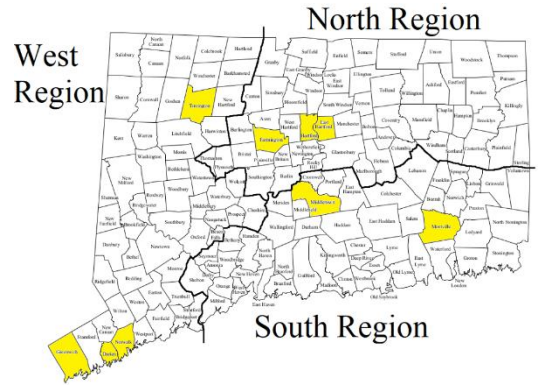
August 14th, 2023 | 9:00AM to 12:00PM
Job Development, Negotiation & Placement

Quarter 4 – [RSVP](#)

November 13th, 2023 | 9:00AM to 12:00PM
Post-Employment Supports

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH (PS) 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. There are **10** Project SEARCH programs across Connecticut. Learn more about Project SEARCH [here](#). View the CT Project SEARCH Contact List [here](#).



UConn Today Article:

A recent article in UConn Today profiles the current class of UConn Health Project SEARCH Interns. The program is a partnership between UConn Health and The Arc of the Farmington Valley (FAVARH) and was the first Project SEARCH program in Connecticut when it launched in 2015. Read the full UConn Today article [here](#).

Project Search Information Sessions:

Middlesex Hospital & MARC Community Resources

MARC Community Resources will be holding a Project SEARCH Panel Discussion February 23, 2023 at 5:00 pm. Current Project SEARCH interns graduating from the Middlesex Hospital Program in 2023 will serve as panelists and discuss the benefits of and their experiences in Project SEARCH. An informational forum will also be held on March 23, 2023 @ 5:00 pm. Industrial Rd. Middletown, CT.

To register, contact Dimitar Tashkovski Dimitar.Tashkovski@marc-cr.org or 860-342-0000 x514 | 25

Norwalk Hospital, Norwalk Community College, Ability Beyond, & Norwalk Public Schools

Norwalk Public Schools and Ability Beyond will be holding a Project SEARCH transition program Informational Night on Tuesday, January 24th, 2023 from 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm. The information session will be for Ability Beyond's current Project SEARCH sites: Norwalk Hospital and Norwalk Community College. The information night will be in person at the NPS Family Center (2nd Floor) 1 Park St. Norwalk, CT 06851.

For more information, contact: Jessica Ireland at irelandj@norwalkps.org or Kaitlyn Appley at kaitlyn.appley@abilitybeyond.org

Danbury Hospital & Ability Beyond

Ability Beyond will be holding an Information Night for the Danbury Hospital Project SEARCH program on January 31st from 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm. The information night will be held in person at the Ability Beyond Connecticut Office at 4 Berkshire Boulevard in Bethel, CT.

To register with Kaitlyn Appley at Kaitlyn.appley@abilitybeyond.org

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital & The Arc of Litchfield County (LARC)

January 25, 2023 at 2:00 pm

February 15, 2023 at 5:00 pm

March 7, 2023 at 2:00 pm

April 5, 2023 at 5:00 pm

**Individual meetings available*

For more information and meeting link, please contact Kathy Riberdy at kriberdy@litchfieldarc.org



2023-2024
Project SEARCH
Informational Sessions:
January 25, 2023 2pm
February 15, 2023 5pm
March 7, 2023 2pm
April 5, 2023 5pm
*Individual meetings available

For more information and meeting link, please contact:

Kathy Riberdy
Project SEARCH
Special Educator/Coordinator
(860) 452-3364 Ext. 349
kriberdy@litchfieldarc.org
www.litchfieldarc.org

Project SEARCH is an exciting opportunity offered by LARC.

The Project SEARCH Program is a unique, business-led, nine-month internship program for individuals with disabilities.

Interns at the program will complete three rotations at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Torrington, CT, with the main goal of gaining the necessary skills to obtain competitive employment.

The Project SEARCH II model involves an extensive period of on-site and career exploration, long-term job coaching and continuous feedback from teacher, skills coach, and mentor.

Who is eligible to participate?

- Young adults with disabilities aged 18-35
- Reside in Middlesex County
- In the process of completing or have already completed a high school education
- Receiving DDS funding for employment services and/or have ICP
- Strongly desire to work and demonstrate potential for competitive employment

LARC is accepting applications until May 1, 2023

LARC will be holding four information sessions about their Project SEARCH program at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital throughout the beginning of 2023.

UConn Health & The Arc of Farmington Valley, Inc. (FAVARH)

January 24, 2023 at 1:00 pm

February 2, 2023 at 2:00 pm

February 8, 2023 at 12:00 pm

February 14, 2023 at 3:00 pm

The Arc of Farmington Valley, Inc. (FAVARH) will be holding four information sessions about their Project SEARCH program at UConn Health throughout the beginning of 2023. RSVP To: ProjectSearch@favarh.org for link to Zoom Session.

An Opportunity to Change Outcomes

Families can learn how young adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities can become involved in this nationally recognized internship program. Hear what it's like to offer, find out what we've reported or shared online. Come meet and mingle with the Project SEARCH staff and experience the impact this program has on the lives of our participants.

Project SEARCH leads to:

- A 4-12 week on-site (Danbury) or remote (CT, VT, NH) competitive internship experience with a mentor and job coach
- A unique school-to-work transition program for young adults with disabilities

Project SEARCH is a unique school-to-work transition program for young adults with disabilities

DDSS: Jan 24, 2023 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM
RSVP By: January 23rd
RSVP To: ProjectSearch@favarh.org

www.arc.org
www.projectsearch.org
www.favarh.org

SELN Connecticut State Profile

The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) released it's 2020-2022 Accomplishments Report on Initiatives and Activities to Improve Integrated Employment Outcomes available [here](#). The report is a collection of diverse examples illustrating state systems improvements. In addition, each SELN member state completed a state profile on their 2020-2022 accomplishments and system improvement activities, available [here](#).

Included in the SELN 2022 Accomplishments Report is Connecticut's State Profile, available [here](#). The CT Profile reviews the success of the Employment Services Strategic Planning Committee (more information on next page) and the interagency launch of Customized Employment (CE) Services in the state.

2020-2022 SELN ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES (DDS)



Connecticut has focused on system improvements and developing capacity to offer creative opportunities toward competitive integrated employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Connecticut.

Employment Services Strategic Planning

The Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) collaborated with stakeholders to address the SELN Finding and Observation Report (February 2022). The Employment Services Strategic Planning Committee worked throughout the year to gather information and make further recommendations to strengthen employment services. The Committee is organizing effective, progressive, and efficient ways to address priority items in the SELN report through:

- Seven sub-committees to reflect the high performing states model, each assigned to a different section of the report. The Employment Services Strategic Planning Committee delivered its first round of recommendations to increase competitive integrated employment opportunities in the first quarter of 2022.
- Offering the SELN Supporting a Vision for Employment Learning Course to all agency employment staff, case management, and transition advisors. The agency purchased extra slots for the sessions and is committed to the ongoing training and education of staff on person-centered, self-determined employment outcomes.
- Engaging with stakeholders to create a revised definition of competitive integrated employment

Customized Employment

Connecticut was an innovator in Customized Employment (CE) services launching one of the first online CE certification courses. Three state agencies, the Departments of Education, Developmental Services, and Aging & Disability Services collaborated with the Regional Educational Service Center Alliance to create the training curriculum launched October 2021. The first set of learners graduated in December 2021; the second training session began on January 31, 2022, and learners graduated in May 2022. At the time the course launched, fewer than five provider staff members in Connecticut had active CE certifications. As of July 2022, there are 57 registered certified CE staff members in Connecticut. The state continues to offer the course to build capacity for CE services offering four additional sessions between September 2022 and July 2023.

Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
State Snapshot

1,096 individuals are competitively employed with natural supports



5,314 individuals are competitively employed with individual supported employment (ISE) services

Data Source: CT DDS data, January 2022

CONNECTICUT
Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

Commissioner: Jordan Schiff
SELN Contact: Eliza Valdes
Email: eliza.valdes@ct.gov

State Employment Leadership Network

UConn | B | ICI | NASDDDS

The SELN is a joint program of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UConn Boston and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.

www.seln.org

Employment Services Strategic Planning Committees

In February 2021, the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) published their Finding & Observations Report on the State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services Employment Services. The report commends strengths, reviews areas of improvement, and makes recommendations for action.

As a result of SELN recommendations, DDS created various stakeholder subcommittees to develop recommendations to improve outcomes for individuals with intellectual disability seeking to obtain and maintain employment. We are now starting to put these recommendations into action. Below are some of the exciting changes that were accepted and implemented in 2022.

2022 Accomplishments:

One-Time (1X) Employment Incentives:

- There is now one rate for the DDS one-time Employment Incentives at an increased rate \$68.76 per hour
 - Group Day Service Options: \$81.25 per hour. This replaces Level of Need (LON) dependent funding with uniform rate for individuals in a group day service. The higher rate ensures group ratios are maintained while individuals are pulled out trying to gain competitive integrated employment.
- There is now an additional 1X Benchmark Payment available at 12-Months of employment
- Deliverables for benchmarks no longer require all paystubs. Instead only year to date (and end of year if calendar year is crossed).

Individual Supported Employment (ISE):

- The cap on ISE hours is being removed. An individual will be able to utilize their Day services funding for ISE or a combination of ISE and other Day services – up to their LON amount.
- Whenever possible, one-time ISE authorizations will utilize “Add Hours” to minimize the additional administrative burden and **allow WebResDay billing** in lieu of submitting “actuals”.

Training & Outreach:

- DDS purchased additional slots for the SELN eLearning Course “Supporting a Vision for Employment” to ensure DDS staff across multiple areas could take the course.
- Updates and additions to the Employment & Day Services Division Webpage, included creating a centralized, easily accessible source for DDS employment and day services definitions for use by all stakeholders (individuals, families, DDS, and qualified provider staff) to create clarity.
 - Webpage Link [here](#). Employment & Day Services Pathways Document [here](#).

Transportation Sub-Committee

- Created in November 2022, this subcommittee brings together representatives from all stakeholder groups to discuss the transportation problems facing individuals working with the State Adult Service Agencies.

Self-Advocacy

Virtual Winter Healthy Relationship Series 2023

The virtual DDS Healthy Relationship Series promotes healthy relationships for all individuals. DDS Self Advocate Coordinators in conjunction with Educators from Planned Parenthood of Southern New England are offering this course to individuals receiving DDS Services. Topics include: different types of relationships, how to make friends, how to stay safe online, and healthy vs. unhealthy behaviors. The group will also discuss different types of communication, how to resolve arguments, consent and boundaries, and how to tell when someone gives consent or not. The group will also discuss how and why relationships end and how to deal with some of those feelings. The curriculum that has been written By, For, and With Self-Advocates.

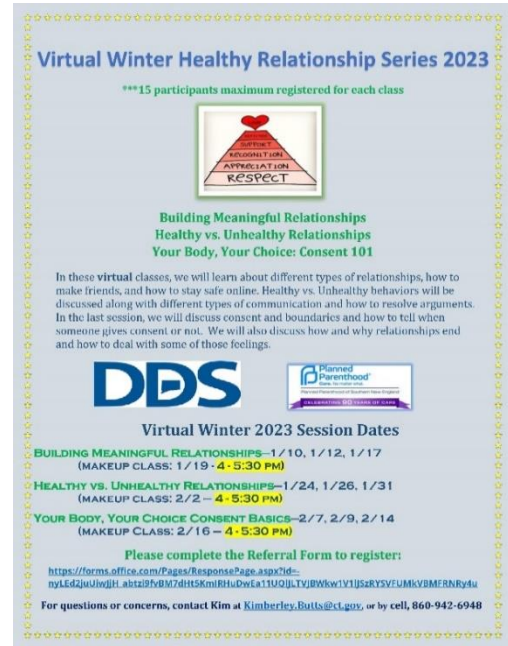
Virtual Winter 2023 Session Dates

Building Meaningful Relationships – 1/10, 1/12, 1/17 – 4:00-5:30 pm

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships – 1/24, 1/26, 1/31 – 4:00-5:30 pm


Your Body, Your Choice, Consent Basics – 2/7, 2/9, 2/14 – 4:00-5:30 pm

Please complete the Referral Form to [here](#) to register.





Virtual Winter Healthy Relationship Series 2023

***15 participants maximum registered for each class



Building Meaningful Relationships
Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships
Your Body, Your Choice: Consent 101

In these virtual classes, we will learn about different types of relationships, how to make friends, and how to stay safe online. Healthy vs. Unhealthy behaviors will be discussed along with different types of communication and how to resolve arguments. In the last session, we will discuss consent and boundaries and how to tell when someone gives consent or not. We will also discuss how and why relationships end and how to deal with some of those feelings.



Virtual Winter 2023 Session Dates

BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS—1/10, 1/12, 1/17
(MAKEUP CLASS: 1/19 - 4-5:30 PM)

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS—1/24, 1/26, 1/31
(MAKEUP CLASS: 2/2 - 4-5:30 PM)

YOUR BODY, YOUR CHOICE CONSENT BASICS—2/7, 2/9, 2/14
(MAKEUP CLASS: 2/16 - 4-5:30 PM)

Please complete the Referral Form to register:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-nyL42juIwqjH-abtzi9f9M7dH15KmlRHuDwEa1UQJLTVjRWkxw1Y1J5sRYSvEUmkvBMERNRydu>

For questions or concerns, contact Kim at Kimberley.Butts@t-gov, or by cell, 860-942-6948

Canteen Cuties



Carol Grabbe is a DDS Self-Advocate Coordinator in the South Region. In the Fall of 2022, Carol interviewed Heather Bouffard and Kimberly Ciarciello, two women who started their own food truck, Canteen Cuties. Heather and Kimberly met when they were living in the same group home and decided they wanted to start their own business for financial independence. Canteen Cuties opened in October 2021 out of Meriden, CT and quickly became popular in Meriden and beyond! Learn more about this success story in Carol's article "Canteen Cuties: Success Story -Seeds of Change – Thriving with their own business" available [here](#). To contact Canteen Cuties or to place an order, email canteencuties@gmail.com.

January 2023 Recreation Calendar



Each month DDS Self Advocate Coordinators (SACs) hold virtual recreation events for adults (age 20+) receiving DDS services. The SACs offer a wide variety of virtual events ranging from music nights, trivia, bingo, and much more! Contact Corinne Jackson at Corinne.Jackson@ct.gov if you have any questions.

Assistive Technology Grants

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is currently accepting proposals from stakeholders interested in receiving grants to fund Assistive Technology (AT) with the procurement and utilization of Assistive Technology (AT), hardware, software, equipment, and internet connectivity to enhance access to virtual supports and services, including the development of remote supports. It may also include training, assessments, environmental modifications/adaptations designed to increase accessibility, safety, and independence. The intent of the grant is to support and advance the creative use of Assistive Technology to enhance independence and virtual interpersonal and community participation for individuals with intellectual disability.

- [Notice of Opportunity AT-Enabling Techn-Remote Supports-Qualified Providers-CCH CLA CRS HIS](#)
- [Notice of Opportunity-Assistive Tech-Enabling Technology-Remote Supports INDIVIDUALS-FAMILIES-IHS](#)
- [Assistive Technology Latest News](#)

Disability Updates, News & Stories

National Organization on Disability Employment Tracker

The [NOD Employment Tracker](#) Scorecard ranks organizations in six key disability and veterans' inclusion focus areas: Strategy, Talent Outcome Metrics, Climate & Culture, Talent Sourcing, People Practices, Workplace Tools & Accessibility. The free, confidential assessment provides a benchmark performance in disability and veterans' inclusion and allows organizations to qualify for awards and recognition for their disability inclusion efforts. The Tracker Scorecard allows organizations to see where they place among more than 200 other corporations. The scorecard can be used to develop plans and priorities for improving employment practice and policy.

Nielsen To Track Disability Representation On TV

The Nielsen Company is a leader in audience measurement, data and analytics. The organization is widely recognized for collecting audience data with its Nielsen ratings, which measure the audiences for television, radio, and newspapers in media markets. Nielsen recently announced that one of their subsidiaries, Gracenote, will start tracking disability representation on television. As part of Gracenote's Inclusion Analytics, the company partnered with [RespectAbility](#) and will track disability representation across six categories: neurodivergence, intellectual/developmental, visual, hearing, physical and mental health. More information available [here](#).

Apple Showcase: Accessibility for Users with Disabilities

In Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3rd, Apple released a new ad that showcases the accessibility features of various products. The ad stars many individuals with disabilities and is a great example of disability inclusion and representation in the media. One of these stars is [Connecticut native](#) Missy Pallotta, a cheerleader from Lyman Hall High School in Wallingford! To view the inspirational commercial, click the video above or [here](#).



Statewide Suspension of Bus Fares Extended

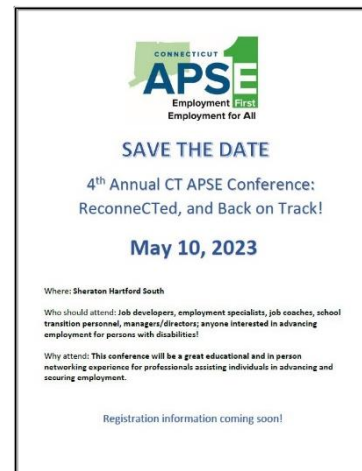
The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) announced that all public transit buses will be fare-free across Connecticut through March 31, 2023. A previous policy signed by Governor Lamont made buses fare free from April 1, 2022 through June 30, 2022, but that was extended to December 1st. The legislature held a special session on November 28, 2022 which passed a bill to continue the fare free program, this bill was signed by the Governor on November 29th, 2022. Free services include all CTtransit local buses statewide, CTtransit Express and CTfastrak services. ADA Paratransit is also fare free statewide through March 31, 2023.

4th Annual CT APSE Conference

ReconneCTed, and Back on Track!

Save the Date! The 4th Annual CT Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference is May 10th, 2023 at the Sheraton Hartford South.

This in-person conference will be a great educational and networking experience for professionals assisting individuals in advancing and securing employment including: Job developers, employment specialists, job coaches, school transition personnel, managers/directors; anyone interested in advancing employment for persons with disabilities! Registration information coming soon.



Links & Resources

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

WEBINARS:

Organization-Wide Accessibility: Everyone Plays a Part

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) is hosting a webinar on accessibility in the workplace on Wednesday, February 15, 2023 from 2:00 pm - 03:00 pm. In this webinar, panelists will offer effective strategies employers can use to develop and sustain a fully accessible workplace. [RSVP here.](#)



A Roadmap to Inclusive Career Pathways: Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) through Cross-System Partnerships



People with disabilities benefit greatly from partnerships that pave the way to both careers and inclusion. If you are interested in finding resources to create inclusive career pathways and hearing how the District of Columbia has successfully broadened its reach into underserved communities, you won't want to miss this webinar. In addition to sharing valuable resources on an interactive online [Roadmap to Inclusive Career Pathways](#), panelists will share their strategies, experiences, and resources to support inclusive career pathways, create partnerships across government agencies and with underserved communities, and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) to enable people with disabilities to succeed in the workforce.

[Registration Link](#)

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