

# INvision

## Indiana Division of Disability & Rehabilitative Services Newsletter

### A message from the DDRS director

*Everyone's journey is unique*



If there is one constant in life, it is change. As we think about our lives, we recognize that we are in constant transition. That is why we at DDRS have adopted the principles of LifeCourse as foundational to our array of supports and services. This approach views an individual's life as a journey with many different phases and transitions (Stewart et al., 2009).

Each of us relies on supports at different stages and transition in our life. Some important transition points for individuals we support through DDRS include exiting from birth to three services, starting school, going to middle and high school, graduation, getting a job, college, job changes and advancement, moving, getting married, and retirement. Throughout our lives we face questions and search for answers that will help us on our journey to a full and meaningful life. This is true for everyone. Support can come from family, friends, neighbors, our community and paid services. At each stage of life, wants and needs are unique and everyone's journey is different.

Our focus is to assist you in recognizing and building upon your strengths and abilities while also identifying resources to support the specific stage in your life. It is important to prepare and plan for transitions. When our children are young, we envision their future with meaningful relationships, a rewarding job and a network of friends. We begin to prepare for these life transitions through various experiences and opportunities. We know that experiences and opportunities during childhood impact how children will live their adult life. Families are encouraged to think about what questions to ask, options to consider and things to talk about with your child and support network. As your child grows, they are encouraged to explore and express their dreams for their future.

There are many things to think about in preparation for the transition from school to adult life. The choices and decisions made during middle and high school will help shape your future and the life you envision living as an adult. Transition is a time to think about what adult life will be. As you begin your adult life, there will continue to be opportunities, experiences and choices that shape and support your vision of your best life. Every transition is part of the journey, and we at DDRS are here to support you in navigating your options.

*Kelly Mitchell*

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### STORIES IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- **Bureau bits:** Updates from your First Steps, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation teams.
- **Making the LifeCourse work for you:** This time in your life is filled with change, growth, excitement and even confusion or fear. There are often decisions to be made and lots of different choices to review. How do you prepare? Use the LifeCourse Tools to navigate transitions.
- **News you can use:** Resources to assist with life transitions and participation opportunities for youth with disabilities.
- **Featured story:** Meet Cordale, a 21-year-old man aging out of the DCS system who has a lot to be proud of.
- **Events you don't want to miss:** The quarterly Building Bridges events create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback.

### First Steps

A child may be referred to First Steps at any time from birth until the day before they turn three years old. The early intervention clock starts ticking when our system point of entry offices receives a referral to our program. We all know the early years go very fast and from the very beginning of a child's time in First Steps, our personnel are thinking and planning for their exit from the program. We begin discussing transition and exit from the very first Individual Family Service Plan meeting.

As the child approaches their third birthday, conversations about exit from early intervention become more in-depth. It is important to make sure we have the right procedures in place for a smooth transition from early intervention for each individual child and family. First Steps is committed to making sure families have the information they need to make the best decisions they can for their child.

Transition and exit from First Steps can be at any time. Sometimes a child exits from First Steps before they turn three because they have met their milestones. Other times a child is exiting or transitioning from First Steps at age three. This may seem overwhelming and scary, but our providers and service coordinators are available to help guide families through the process.

The First Steps state office works very closely with the Indiana Department of Education's Preschool Special Education program, or Part B 619 services, to ensure streamlined communications and processes are in place. Between nine months and at least 90 days before a child's third birthday, the First Steps service coordinator will invite the local special education services Part B 619 representative or preschool coordinator to the child's transition planning meeting. This gives the local school district the opportunity to make sure families know about the services they can provide for their child, should they qualify, when

he or she ages out of First Steps.

There will be some key differences between First Steps and preschool programs that are important for families to be aware of. For example, the eligibility criteria for preschool services will be a change from the eligibility criteria used to determine First Steps services. Preschool special education services are based on an evaluation completed by a multidisciplinary team and eligibility is determined by a case conference committee of which parents are equal members. If a child is transitioning directly from First Steps to preschool special education, then the evaluation, initial case conference meeting to determine eligibility and services are all to begin on or before the child's third birthday.

If a family does not choose to transition directly from First Steps to preschool special education services, then the evaluation, initial case conference meeting to determine eligibility and services are held to a 50-day timeline. This is different from First Steps, because the Part B 619 preschool timeline is based on instructional days, or days the school district is in session. This can make the timeline feel much longer than regular calendar days.

If the child is eligible for Part B 619 services, they may choose to include the First Steps service coordinator in the school conference to discuss developmental preschool services and options they may have.

The role of the First Steps service coordinator is to connect the family with any resources needed to make the transition as easy and as uncomplicated as possible for families, whether it be to the local school district or other community program such as Head Start, preschool or childcare. Your First Steps service coordinator is here to help you through the transition process. Do not hesitate to reach out for guidance and support.

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## Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services

Any transition, planned or unplanned, can be a challenging and scary time for all of us. Individuals who utilize Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services supports is no different. Today, we'll share how BDDS can support an individual with the transition process from adulthood to aging; specifically, how supports can help with retirement goals and end-of-life planning.

For most people, retirement is something to look forward to. When a person with a disability in BDDS services is aging, they should be receiving support from their providers and case managers to think through what they want for their next stage in life, and learning about how BDDS services can support them in that vision and connect them to community resources that may be of interest.

As a family member, guardian or individual in services, you can expect that the provider and case manager would be using person-centered tools to ensure that the individual is in control of what they want for their present and anything else that they may want to accomplish for their future. Conversations should be guided toward what the individual wants for their life including topics such as retirement planning, how they would spend their

days in retirement, and even end-of-life planning. A great tool to help guide this conversation could be the LifeCourse framework trajectory.

Everyone has the right to be cared for and respected as they age. It is important that you feel supported by your team and that they are focusing on what you want and how they can best support you and connect you through the transition to aging. If you are planning for your transition to aging or are a person who cares for someone who is, the Focus on Aging Quick Guide in the [Life Experiences series](#) may help you and your team think about and plan for this stage of life.

Transitioning from high school to adulthood can be scary and overwhelming, even for those who do not have a disability. A great tool to use to help plan for the future is the LifeCourse Framework. This framework was created to help individuals and families of all abilities and all ages develop a vision for a good life, think about what they need to know and do, identify how to find or develop supports, and discover what it takes to live the lives they want to live. There is even a "[Let's Plan for the Future](#)" workbook to help with planning. One of the domains the LifeCourse Framework focuses on is employment and daily living,

## Vocational Rehabilitation

When thinking about employment, we tend to think about adults only. But what about teens with disabilities who will be transitioning to adulthood and will eventually enter the workforce? Vocational Rehabilitation helps eligible individuals with disabilities achieve their employment goals. Participation is voluntary and at no cost to the participant.

VR has set aside funds to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. The goal of Pre-ETS is to assist with transitioning from high school to postsecondary education or employment by giving students the skills and abilities to find employment in the future.

### Pre-ETS requires five activities, including:

1. **Job exploration counseling**—examples include:
  - » Discussion of vocational interests
  - » Review of local labor market and in-demand industries and occupations
  - » Non-traditional employment options
  - » Identification of career pathways of interest to the students
2. **Work-based learning experiences**—examples include:
  - » Apprenticeships (not including registered and pre-apprenticeships) and job shadowing
  - » Paid and non-paid internships and/or work experiences
  - » Informational interviews
  - » Volunteering
3. **Counseling on postsecondary opportunities**—examples include:
  - » Gaining awareness of career pathways
  - » Promoting participation in postsecondary education
  - » Attending college fairs and tours
4. **Workplace readiness training**—examples include:
  - » Receive training on communication, problem solving, and other specific social and interpersonal skills
  - » Receive training on independent living skills
5. **Instruction in self-advocacy**—examples include:
  - » Training on self-awareness and disclosure of disability
  - » Training on knowing individual rights and responsibilities



These activities are directly provided by contracted providers across the state and may also be provided by VR counselors in the local VR offices.

**Who is eligible for Pre-ETS services?** Any student between the ages of 14 and 22 who attends high school, college, university, trade school or other recognized education program and has a documented disability. Examples of documentation can include an IEP, 504 Plan, doctor's note and SSI/SSDI verification.

**What happens when the student reaches 23 years of age?** Students with a disability are allowed to receive Pre-ETS through their 22nd year. On the day they turn 23, Pre-ETS must end. A portfolio is required to be developed for each student exiting Pre-ETS, which should include a list of community resources and potential employers. If a student is not already working with VR, Pre-ETS providers are encouraged to make that connection for them.

**How are students referred to Pre-ETS?** Students are usually referred to Pre-ETS by their school. If they aren't automatically referred by their school, they can ask the school to refer them. They can also contact the [Pre-ETS provider in their area](#) directly, or they can contact their [local VR office](#).

When transitioning from high school to adulthood, there are tools and services that can help. For more information, visit the [IN.gov Pre-ETS webpage](#) or email questions to [fssa.pre-ets@fssa.in.gov](mailto:fssa.pre-ets@fssa.in.gov).

# Making the LifeCourse work for you

## Use the LifeCourse Tools to navigate transitions

We often speak about transitions in life. But what is a transition? Simply put, it means you are moving from one stage of life to another. This time in your life is filled with change, growth, excitement and even confusion or fear. There are often decisions to be made and lots of different choices to review. How do you prepare? Using the LifeCourse Tools is a great place to start.

The LifeCourse Portfolio is an example of how you can use the LifeCourse Tools as you navigate this transitional period in your life. This portfolio combines multiple tools into an easy-to-see snapshot.

Let's start with the Integrated Support Star. Everyone needs supports in order to lead their good lives. This star will help you think about what supports you already have in your life as you move into a new stage. You and your family will be able to look at your personal strengths and assets and what relationship-based supports you already have. You can look at eligibility-specific supports as well as supports based in the community and also brainstorm to see what types of support you already receive from the technology you use. This tool can help you determine where you may need a little extra support based on your current needs as well as any areas where there may be gaps in support.

Next, let's move on to the One-Page Profile. This is where you will list what people like and admire about you. What are you good at? There is a section to list what is important to you. The last section is a place where you can list how you want others to support you. You know what works best for you so it's important for your voice to be heard. Remember, The LifeCourse Framework is all about you and what you want to see in your good life.

The portfolio also includes the Life Trajectory worksheet. This worksheet is a great visual aid to see how past life experiences can help shape your future. It's important to remember what has happened in the past and how it affected your life. Did this experience lead you towards your good life or did it move you in a different direction? The main goal of the trajectory is to support positive life outcomes while preventing negative life events.

While you work on your trajectory, make sure you are envisioning your good life. What does it look like? What do you see?

It's important for you to have a vision of your good life and the

outcomes you would like to achieve. By having a vision for your future, you are helping to ensure your trajectory is leading towards your good life. Knowing who makes up your support system and what areas need a little development is powerful information. Not enough or too much support could potentially move your trajectory away from the outcomes you desire.

These supports are an important factor in achieving your goals as everyone needs support occasionally. Remember, your voice is important to ensure you can live your good life.



**Daily Life and Employment:** What a person does as part of everyday life – school, employment, volunteering, communication, routines and life skills.



**Community Living:** Where and how someone lives—housing and living options, community access, transportation, home adaptation and modification.



**Safety and Security:** Staying safe and secure—finances, emergencies, well-being, decision making supports, legal rights and issues.



**Healthy Living:** Managing and accessing health care and staying well—medical, mental health, behavior, developmental, wellness and nutrition.

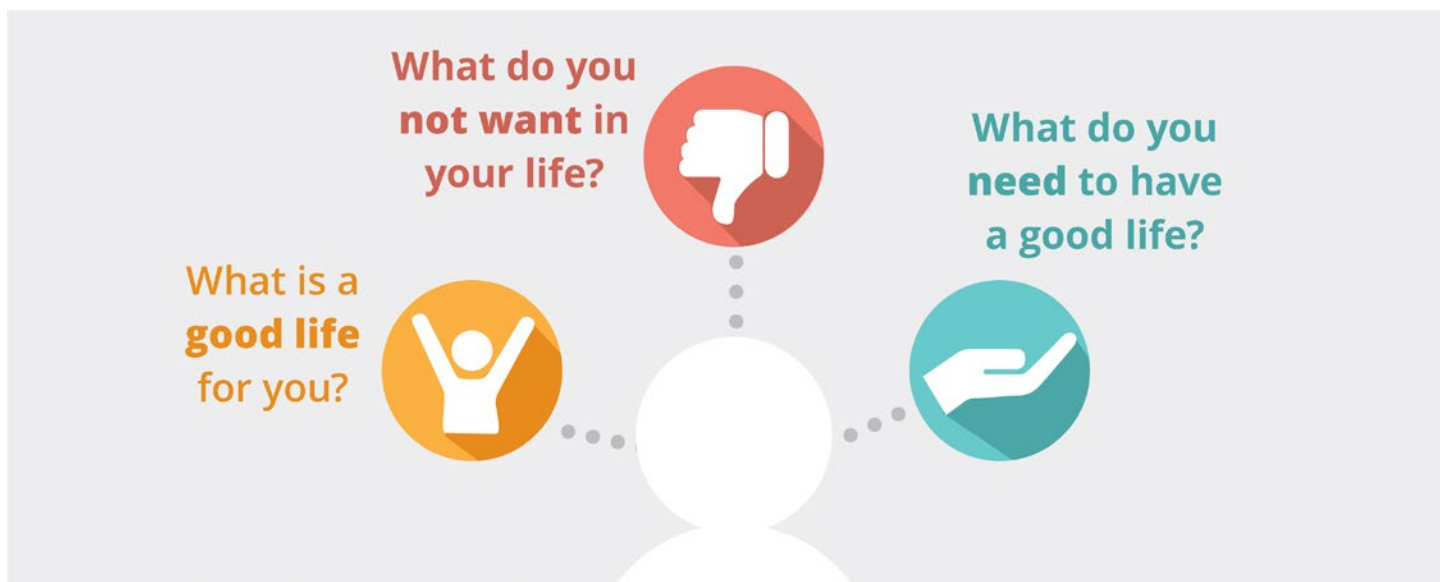


**Social and Spirituality:** Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks and faith community.



**Advocacy and Engagement:** Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one's own life is lived.

For more information on the LifeCourse framework and principles, visit: [www.lifecoursetools.com](http://www.lifecoursetools.com).



# With a little help from a friend

## *Resources to assist with life transitions*

If there is one constant in life, it is change. We all change as we get older and go through different seasons in life. But that change, and the transitions it brings, can be stressful.

Life transitions are challenging because they focus us to let go of the familiar and face the future with a feeling of vulnerability. During these transitions, we all can use a little help from a friend.

If you are a parent of a youth who is transitioning from First Steps to school or from school to adulthood, then [InSource](#) may be a good resource for you. InSource provides parents and families in the state of Indiana the information and training necessary to

help assure effective educational programs and appropriate services for individuals with disabilities.

If you are looking for resources to assist in independent living skills training or facilitate transition from nursing homes and other institutions to the community, then the [Centers for Independent Living](#) may be a great place to contact.

If you are aging or caring for someone who is, then the [Aging and Disability Resource Centers](#) may have resources just for you. The IN-connect Alliance can provide information and service options to older adults and people with disabilities of any age and their caregivers.

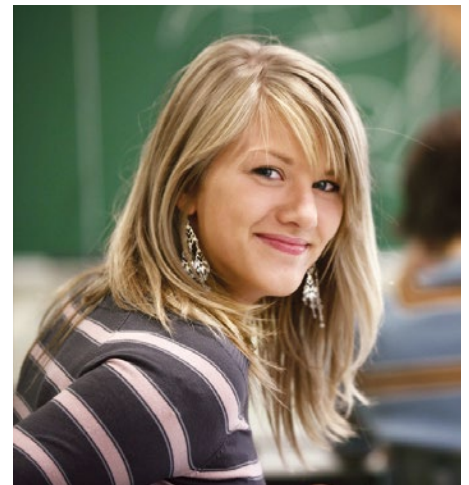
# Participation opportunity for youth with disabilities

## *Parent/family stakeholder group is expanding*

The Indiana Department of Education is looking to establish a stakeholder feedback group consisting of transition age youth with IEPs, ages 14–22, that would be willing to participate in discussions around Indiana’s State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report. We are hoping to increase the amount of youth involvement regarding the decisions being made for youth in our state. The focus of this group would be to discuss graduation (of youths with IEPs), drop-out (of youths with IEPs), secondary transition and goals (of youths 14+), and post-school outcomes (of youths with IEPs that are no longer in school).

We are also looking to further expand our parent/family stakeholder group. Discussions for the parent/family stakeholder group would be regarding the same topics as the student group, as well as statewide assessments, school discipline, representation across different disability categories, parent involvement, school environment, preschool outcomes, dispute resolution, child find/initial evaluations and transition from First Steps to school-age programming.

For more information, contact [OSEMonitoring@doe.in.gov](mailto:OSEMonitoring@doe.in.gov).



## FEATURED STORY

# Meet Cordale

*With people supporting you, “You can be a success.”*

Cordale is a young man who has a lot to be proud of. In August, Cordale turned 21 years old. For many young adults, this milestone birthday brings another transition of life that celebrates the full entry into “adulthood.” For Cordale, this milestone meant he would be aging out of the DCS system that he has relied on since he was 8 years old.

In that time, Cordale has been in numerous different placements and schools. He has been in and out of foster homes and residential facilities. He had very little consistency throughout his life and unfortunately permanency was not an option for Cordale. Through the ongoing partnership of BDDS and DCS, services and supports were put into place that allowed for Cordale to transition to a CIH waiver home where he will continue to receive home- and community-based services.

Cordale has also worked with the BDDS FSW waiver and has been able to receive a lot of support through his team. Cordale has been in his current foster home for the past three years and throughout this time has been able to work with a case manager who ensured he was successful. Cordale has worked with a participant assistance and care provider to assist with independent living skills and coping techniques to make sure Cordale stayed in the community and in his foster home. In addition, Cordale has had the opportunity to attend a day program where he has met friends and support staff who encouraged him and made him feel important.

Many people would hear Cordale’s story and think, “What a hard life!” However, Cordale does not feel that way. Cordale feels he has been blessed with a great team that communicates and works together to make sure he is successful. As Cordale has gotten older, he began to look for opportunities and

rely on his team to help navigate and teach him how to advocate for himself.

In the last few years, DCS and BDDS have worked with him in goal-setting and have prepared him for independent living. He has been working with BDDS in a day program and he has worked with vocational rehabilitation to gain employment. His entire team



has supported him every step of the way and encouraged him to continue to flourish.

Today, Cordale is employed at a local grocery store and really enjoys working, has completed some college courses, and is living on his own utilizing the CIH waiver for supports. He is hard-working, strong and an amazing

advocate for himself. It was not easy, but he made it happen with persistence, dedication, humor and a desire to grow.

Cordale is a success. His team is incredibly proud of him and all his accomplishments. They cannot wait to see what great things the future holds for this young man.

Cordale likes to read and watch all kind of sports. He also loves to play any kind of sport. When asked how he felt about turning 21, Cordale shared that he is nervous, but also excited about transitioning to adult services and living on his own. He said that he trusts his team with his life, and he knows they are going to set him up for success as long as he does his part.

Cordale wanted everyone to know that he would not be where he is today if it was not for the support of his team. He wanted to include his loving foster parents, who took a chance on him, his DCS family case manager, who has been there for him through it all, and his BDDS case manager, who is supporting him through the adult transition and helped him find a place to go.

Cordale stated he is a hard worker and believes that this has also helped him get to where he is. Cordale is excited that his story is being picked for the *INvision* newsletter and wanted everyone to know that just because life may not be perfect, with people supporting

you, “You can be a success.”

BDDS would like to thank Cordale for sharing his story with us. BDDS would also like to thank his team for all the support and encouragement throughout the years. What an amazing gift to be a part of his success story!



## Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration  
Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services  
402 W. Washington St., W453/MS 26  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

You can sign up to receive this newsletter by [clicking here](#).

For updated meeting information, as well as agendas and past meeting minutes, visit [the DDRS Commissions & Councils page](#).

The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services is a program of the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration. If you have questions about DDRS programs and services, [visit us online](#).

Did you know that families can sign up to receive text messages and email updates from First Steps? Families will learn more about policy issues, how to become an effective advocate, how to be involved in your local planning and coordinating council, how to connect to events and groups, how to tell your family story and more. Go to [this site to sign up!](#)

## EVENTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

Following are the current commission, council and public meetings that you may be interested in learning more about and/or attending in the future. To find the most current information, including next meeting dates and locations, [please click here](#).



## Building Bridges

These meetings are an opportunity for families and self-advocates to meet and speak with the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services state staff. These sessions are an important part of the Bureau's efforts to create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback. These meetings are solely for families and individuals with disabilities to provide a forum for constructive and valuable conversations on successes or concerns, as well as suggestions or input regarding BDDS programs and services. Keep an eye out for notice of the next scheduled meeting!

## INSILC public meeting

The Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council provides oversight of the Indiana State Plan for Independent Living and assists the Centers for Independent Living with the plan's implementation and coordination of services. For more information, visit [the Statewide Independent Living Council webpage](#).

## DDRS Advisory Council

The DDRS Advisory Council was established to assist the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services in ensuring that individuals with disabilities are as independent and self-sufficient as possible. The council meets monthly, and meetings are open to the public. For more information, visit the [DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).

## ICC meetings

The Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities is the state's federally mandated early intervention council. The council is charged with advising and assisting DDRS in its responsibility to develop an early intervention system of the highest quality, balancing family-centered services with fiscal responsibility. The council is comprised of parents, state agency groups, early intervention service providers, legislators and others. The meetings are open to the public.

Until further notice, all future ICC meetings will be held virtually over Zoom. Members of the public are encouraged to attend. A link will be made public prior to each meeting. Should a member of the public need access to the meeting link, special accommodations or interpretative services, please contact Janet Ballard at [Jaeball@indiana.edu](mailto:Jaeball@indiana.edu) at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

## Commission on Rehabilitation Services

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services works with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Vocational Rehabilitation Services on matters such as the effectiveness and customer satisfaction with the services provided to individuals participating in the VR program. The commission is also involved in matters affecting VR policies and procedures, goals and priorities, and the state plan. For more information, visit the [DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).