

I AM READY FOR COLLEGE. ARE YOU READY FOR ME?

Investing in Inclusive Higher Education for Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Minnesota

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"Lifelong learning promotes academic success, professional and personal development for all citizens to live lives of dignity and purpose"

Issue Statement

Minnesota has made a nominal investment in the education of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) beyond high school. Young adults with IDD face many barriers to access and enrollment in Minnesota inclusive postsecondary education (PSE). Barriers include a lack of postsecondary education options, a limited capacity in Minnesota's three existing [Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary programs](#) (CTPs), and unclear available funding options. Young adults with IDD deserve the same opportunity to pursue postsecondary education in Minnesota as their peers, particularly in our public higher education institutions. The Minnesota State system must include adults with IDD in their [2020-2023 Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#).

Understanding the Problem

Every year in Minnesota, approximately 2,000 students with an [intellectual disability and developmental disability](#) (IDD), including Autism, graduate from high school. While many of their same-age peers are going off to college, young adults with IDD are being left behind.

The [Minnesota Office of Higher Education's](#) goal is that by 2025, 70% of adults age 25-44 will have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree. In Minnesota, more than [68% of employment opportunities](#) require some form of postsecondary education. We know that young adults with IDD have the "[lowest rates of education, work, and preparation for work after high school of all disability groups](#)". Many want the opportunity to continue their education but face almost insurmountable obstacles.



"I have applied to four universities. Three of the universities are out-of-state. College gives me a chance to continue my learning, make new friends and live on my own. I want to take the same classes as other college students. Today, my only choice is to go to college out-of-state." Jean Hauff, College student with an ID

Minnesota has [nearly 200](#) public and private postsecondary education institutions, but only 3 offer enrollment and have a CTP program for students with ID. These [3 options](#) have a combined enrollment capacity of only 90 students. Every year young adults with IDD go to neighboring states to attend universities with inclusive education programs. In 2019-2020 academic year, seven Minnesota students with IDD went outside of the state to attend college (Mary Hauff, MIHEC, personal communication). Some were seeking an inclusive option, while others were seeking any option because Minnesota has minimally invested in PSE for young adults with IDD.

Our system of public higher education is supported by the taxpayers of Minnesota. Among the [objectives](#) of Minnesota's higher education system is "to maintain access by providing an opportunity for all Minnesotans, regardless of personal circumstances, to participate in higher education". However, the Minnesota public higher education system, including the 30 colleges and seven universities that make up the [Minnesota State](#) system, fail to serve people with IDD.

The Benefits of Postsecondary Education

"The autonomy and the self-directedness that she [Claire] has now, she needed to be at college to acquire that." James and Susan, parents of Claire, a college student with ID.

No person who reaches the age of 18 is a finished product. It is during late adolescence and young adulthood (ages 18 to 25) when the brain fully develops. It is a period of [frequent change, questioning, and exploration](#) that covers many aspects of life: home, family, work, school, resources, and roles. Postsecondary education is not just about getting more knowledge and skills to get a good job. It provides a structure to support continued personal development, expands social networks, and increases access to future jobs and life opportunities. **WHY SHOULD THIS BE ANY DIFFERENT FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH IDD?**

Access to postsecondary education contributes to improved employment outcomes for young adults with IDD.

- In 2009, [Think College](#) published the results of an analysis of the national vocational rehabilitation database showing that "youth with ID who participated in postsecondary education were 26% more likely to leave vocational rehabilitation services with a paid job and earn a 73% higher weekly income".
- Updated data was published by [Think College](#) in 2018 finding similar results: "Youth with ID who received PSE services as part of their IEP (Individualized Education Plan) had higher employment rates and higher wages than youth with ID who did not receive PSE services".
- In 2017, [Think College](#) published the "one year after exit outcomes" of students who completed TPSID (explained on page 3), finding that nearly two-thirds of individuals who completed a TPSID program had a paid job one year after exit, compared to 17% of adults with developmental disabilities in the general population.



Policy Efforts to Increase Postsecondary Education

There are three federal laws that are paving the way for young adults with IDD to go to college.

- The [Higher Education Opportunity Act](#) of 2008 created opportunities for young adults with IDD to attend college, including funding the model demonstration project known as TPSID — [Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities](#). Five-year grants were awarded in 2010, 2015, and 2020 by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Post-Secondary Education. Since its inception in 2010, the TPSID program has supported the creation or expansion of [103 replicable model programs at 100 colleges and universities with ID in 31 states](#). There are currently 113 CTP programs across the country.
- The [Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA) of 2014 was enacted to strengthen the workforce development system throughout the United States. For people with IDD, WIOA means increased access to vocational rehabilitation programs and assistance in transitioning from high school to work or high school to college.
- The [IDEA Act](#) of 2004 provides funding for concurrent enrollment for students with IDD to continue receiving [special education services while taking college classes](#) until the age of 21.

Existing Options in Minnesota

So far, Minnesota has minimally invested in postsecondary education for young adults with IDD. The investment we have made has its drawbacks.

Currently, there are only three options in Minnesota for students with IDD: 1) [Bethel BUILD](#), 2) [Ridgewater College](#) and 3) [Central Lakes College](#). Each program has the [Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary \(CTP\) designation](#). While a commendable first step, this investment is not enough.

- There is only enough space for 90 students to receive PSE at any given time.
- Geographic access is limited to only 3 communities in Minnesota.
- Limited options restricts equitable access to financially affordable postsecondary education.
- Intersectionality of marginalized students who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (BIPOC) *and* IDD needs to be recognized. [26% of Minnesota's students with IDD ages 18 to 21 identify as BIPOC](#).
- These education options are not fully inclusive. Students with IDD spend 50-75% of their time only with other students with IDD.

Models to Guide Minnesota's Investment

Offering an Inclusive Initiative by Building on what we already have.

- [Millersville University](#) and [Temple University](#) in Pennsylvania offer inclusive college education experiences for students with ID. Outcome data showed students who graduated from Millersville were employed at a rate of 85% ([video 19:19](#)). Students who did not attend an *inclusive* postsecondary education option were employed at a rate of 17%.

College-based Transition Options for Dual Enrollment while Students are in High School.

- “The state-funded [Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative](#) (MAICEI) funds partnerships between local school districts and two- and four-year public colleges and universities in Massachusetts”. “Students participating in MAICEI are fully included in the campus community as they develop their capacities in career-planning and employment, self-advocacy, and other self-determined abilities that support their post-secondary interests and activities”. [Click here](#) to watch a video about MAICEI.

National and Statewide Technical Assistance Resources

- [Think College](#) “is the national initiative dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving research and practice in inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disability” at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.
- Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium (MIHEC) is Minnesota’s technical assistance resource for expanding inclusive education for young adults with IDD at the University of Minnesota — Twin Cities.



OPENING DOORS TO COLLEGE [<click here>](#)

This film highlights the Millersville and Temple programs. See what students, professors, and program directors say about the benefits everyone receives from inclusive college

Investment Statement

Minnesota has made a nominal investment in the education of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities beyond high school. Postsecondary education is the best pathway to getting a good job and living one’s best life. Young adults with IDD deserve the same opportunity to pursue postsecondary education in Minnesota as their peers, particularly in our public higher education institutions.

Recommendations to create a pathway to inclusive PSE for young adults with IDD:

- Minnesota’s Governor and State Legislators step-up and lead the way forward.
- Update the Minnesota State system [2020-2023 Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#) to include adults with intellectual disabilities.
- Initiate a collaboration between Minnesota State and MIHEC/Think College technical assistance using the [Think College Standards for Inclusive Higher Education](#) to plan and expand access at the 30 colleges and 7 universities. Start small but think big.
- Update and align institutional models of educational programming that embraces the [Think College Standards for Inclusive Higher Education and Accreditation](#).

References

Full text online sources were used to create this policy advocacy brief and are [linked](#) throughout the document. To access this and other policy advocacy briefs go to: <http://link.mnsu.edu/mswbriefts>