

# Disability and Inclusive Employment: Policies & Practices

Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council



# PRESENTERS



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# AGENDA



Introduce  
MDDC



Present  
disability  
employment  
policies &  
practices



Share Self-  
Advocate  
Stories



Group  
Activity:  
CIE in  
Action

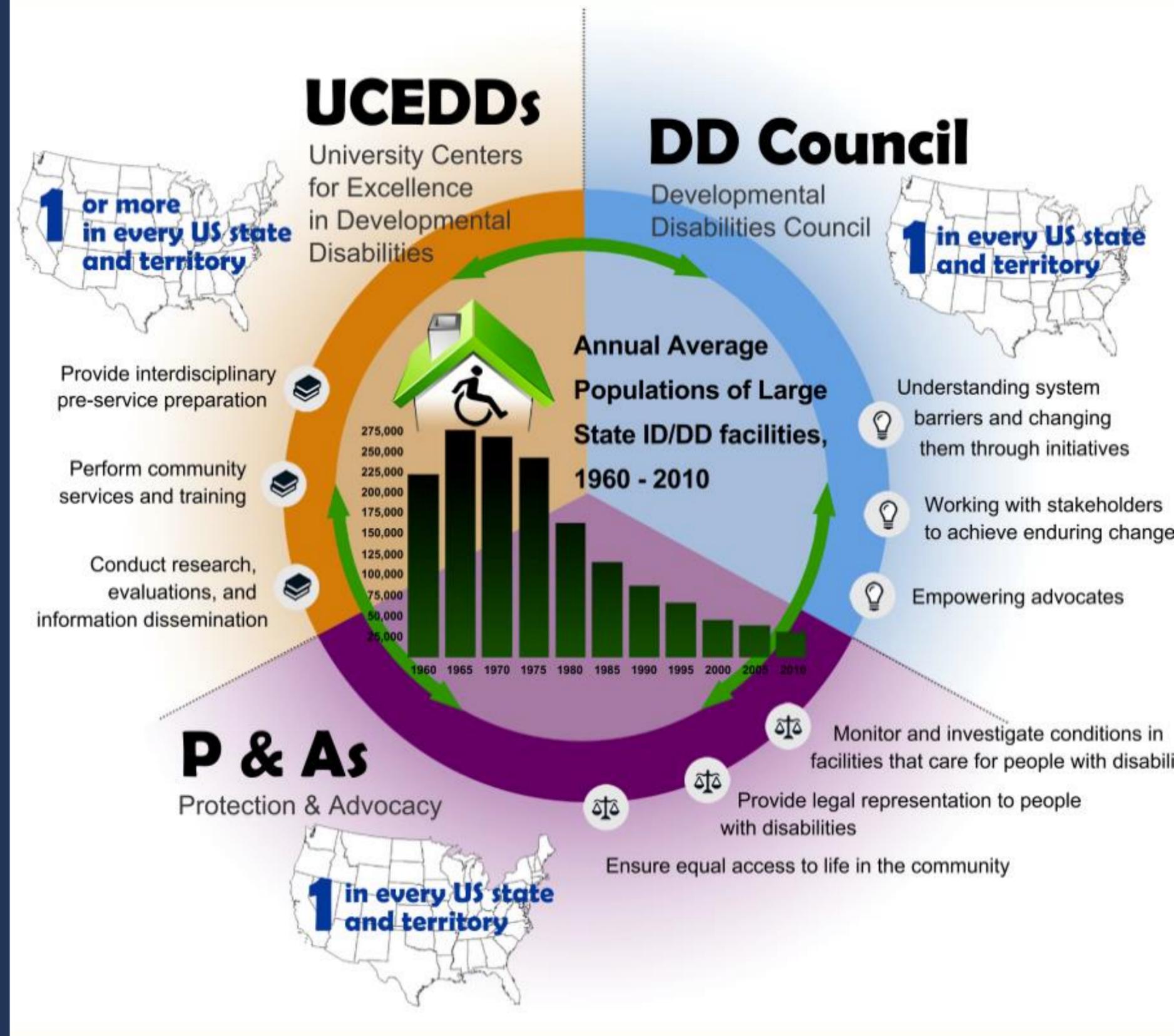


# MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL



# The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act)

- Establishment of state DD networks
- Federally funded DD programs in every state and territory - mandated with supporting people with DD and their families





# MDDDC Mission

*Our mission is to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families to lead successful lives in their communities by promoting self-sufficiency, community inclusion, and opportunity.*





# **Disability and Inclusive Employment: Policies & Practices**

# Unemployment is a big issue, and top priority, for people with IDD.

People with disabilities are **2x** as likely to be unemployed as people without disabilities

People with cognitive disabilities are the **LEAST** likely to be employed.



Only 1 out of 5 adults with IDD who receive services have paid jobs in the community.

# UNDER-employment is a big issue too.

Underemployment means you have a job, but it is not a good fit for you or your needs. Underemployment looks like:



You do not work as many hours a week as you want



You do not make a fair wage for your job



Your job is not a good fit for the skills you have.

# Barriers to Employment



## Low Expectations and Discrimination

Some employers, educators, and community members mistakenly believe people with IDD cannot work or would not be good employees.

This can make it hard for people with IDD to get jobs.



## Transportation Issues

A lack of affordable and accessible transportation can make it hard to people with IDD to get to jobs in the community.

This barrier is bigger in rural communities.



## Limited Support Services

Not everyone who is eligible for services and supports from the states receives them.

In some states, there are long waitlists for job training and support programs



## Benefits Cliff

Many people with IDD are eligible for benefits like SSI or SSDI.

When people earn more money, these benefits can be reduced or taken away. The increase in pay from jobs may not make up for the loss in benefits.

This is called a “benefit cliff.”

# Real Work for Real Pay

People with IDD **can** and **want** to do meaningful work for real pay. Not all jobs are the same.



# Types of Employment



## Segregated Employment:

Jobs where people with disabilities work separate from people without disabilities. This includes places like sheltered workshops, or businesses that only hire people with disabilities.



## Competitive Employment:

Jobs where people with disabilities make the same amount of money, or wages, as people without disabilities who do the same job.



## Integrated Employment:

Jobs where people with disabilities work in the same place and do the same jobs as workers without disabilities.

# Types of Employment



## Supported Employment:

A person gets support and services to do their job. This can include job coaches or workplace support plans.



## Customized Employment:

A type of **supported employment**, when a person's interests and skills are matched to an individualized, unique job.



## Self-Employment:

A type of **customized employment**, where people can create their own business to make money to support themselves



## Entrepreneurship:

A type of **self-employment**, where a person creates a business that they grow. When an entrepreneur's business grows, they can employ other people too.

# Competitive, Integrated Employment (CIE) is the goal!

CIE means people with disabilities are working in the community alongside people without disabilities, AND they get paid the same amount of money.



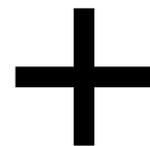
# Employment First Policy

“**Employment First**” is a policy idea that says the government should help people with disabilities work in their communities.

They should do this *before* suggesting other services, like day habilitation programs.

## Federal

In 2014, the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** set competitive, integrated employment as the preferred outcome for people with disabilities across the United States.



## State

Massachusetts passed a law in 2010, that says DDS’ goal outcome for people with IDD should be competitive, integrated employment. Massachusetts is an “Employment First” state!

# Massachusetts Data

**75%**

of people with IDD receiving services are NOT working paid jobs in the community.

**35%**

of these people WANT paid jobs in the community.

**21%**

of people had employment as a goal in their service plan.

Data come from the [2023-24](#) National Core Indicators-Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NCI-IDD) In-Person Survey (IPS), which is the largest source of survey data from people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the United States. Massachusetts randomly sampled 400 adults with IDD who receive state services.

# Employment Supports: Vocational Rehabilitation

- Every state has a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency that is required to help people with disabilities get jobs. They provide many different services like:



Job training  
and counseling



Job placement  
assistance



Pre-  
Employment  
Transition  
Services (Pre-  
ETS)



Assistive  
Technology  
supports



Support for  
Employers to  
Encourage  
Hiring

# Vocational Rehabilitation in MA

- MassAbility Career Services is Massachusetts' VR agency.
- VR agencies are supposed to serve people with all types of disabilities.
- People with IDD are much less likely to get support from VR than other people.
- Only **4.3%** of VR case closures were for people with ID, and **less than half** of these cases ended with employment.





# MDDC Resources: Employment Brief

- MDDC publishes information about different policy topics via



## MDDC Policy Spotlight: Employment May 2025

### Background

Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) want to work paid jobs in their communities, and they can. With the right supports, people with IDD can be successful in their careers and live meaningful lives as part of their community. However, people with IDD are much less likely to be employed than people without disabilities or people with different types of disabilities. Employment in the community helps people earn money, build confidence, and live more independently. When we support people with IDD in finding good jobs, everyone benefits – workers, employers, and communities.

### Disability and Employment

Adults with IDD are more likely to be unemployed than adults without disabilities or adults with different types of disabilities.<sup>1-4</sup>

- **"Unemployed"** means you want a job, but you do not have one.
  - People with disabilities are twice as likely to be unemployed as people without disabilities.<sup>5</sup>
  - People with cognitive disabilities, which can include IDD, are the least likely to be employed.
  - About 1 in 5 adults with IDD (17%) who receive services from the state had paid jobs in the community in 2023.<sup>4</sup>

Adults with IDD are also more likely to be underemployed.<sup>6,7</sup>

- **"Underemployed"** means you have a job, but it is not a good fit for you or your needs. For example:
  - You do not work as many hours a week as you want,
  - You do not make a fair wage for your job, and/or
  - Your job is not a good fit for the skills you have.

Unemployment and underemployment are big problems in IDD communities. People with IDD want to work, and they can work with the right supports.<sup>7</sup>



# **Self-Advocate Stories: CIE in Massachusetts**

# Matthew Bander



# About Me

- I am a self-advocate.
- I used to be a council member for MDDC.
- I am second Vice President for **MASS Advocates Standing Strong**. I'm the leader for the Metro region.
- I lived in a group home for 20 years. Now I live in my own place.
- I have worked for Star Market for 12 years.



Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong



# What I like about my job

“It’s very important to me to have a job. I’ve got to pay bills!”

“I meet a lot of nice people. My coworkers are nice, and I’ve made friends.”

“I bend over backwards for people that need help. This makes me a good fit for my job.”

“I have a good boss and manager. They understand my needs and help me if I need it.”

# Challenges



- It can be hard if a customer is rude.
- My job is also harder in some weather like rain or snow.
- People with disabilities should be treated with respect, the same way as everyone else.

# Supports that help me succeed

- It's important to have a positive attitude when you're looking for work
- I worked with JVS Boston— I had a job coach (Joanna) who helped me. We talk on the phone every month. She also checks in with my manager at Star Market to see how everything is going.
- Joanna has been my job coach for a few years.
- It's important for a job coach to always want to help people. I have called her for help when I need it.



SKILLS . JOBS . CAREERS

# The Power of Purpose: Craig Kinney's Employment Journey



# About Me

- I am a dedicated, part-time employee at Market Basket.
- I am a valued member of the Market Basket team.

***"Working gives Craig a sense of purpose and it is an important part of his pride and identity."***

– [MDDC Medicaid Matters Stories](#)



# More than a Paycheck



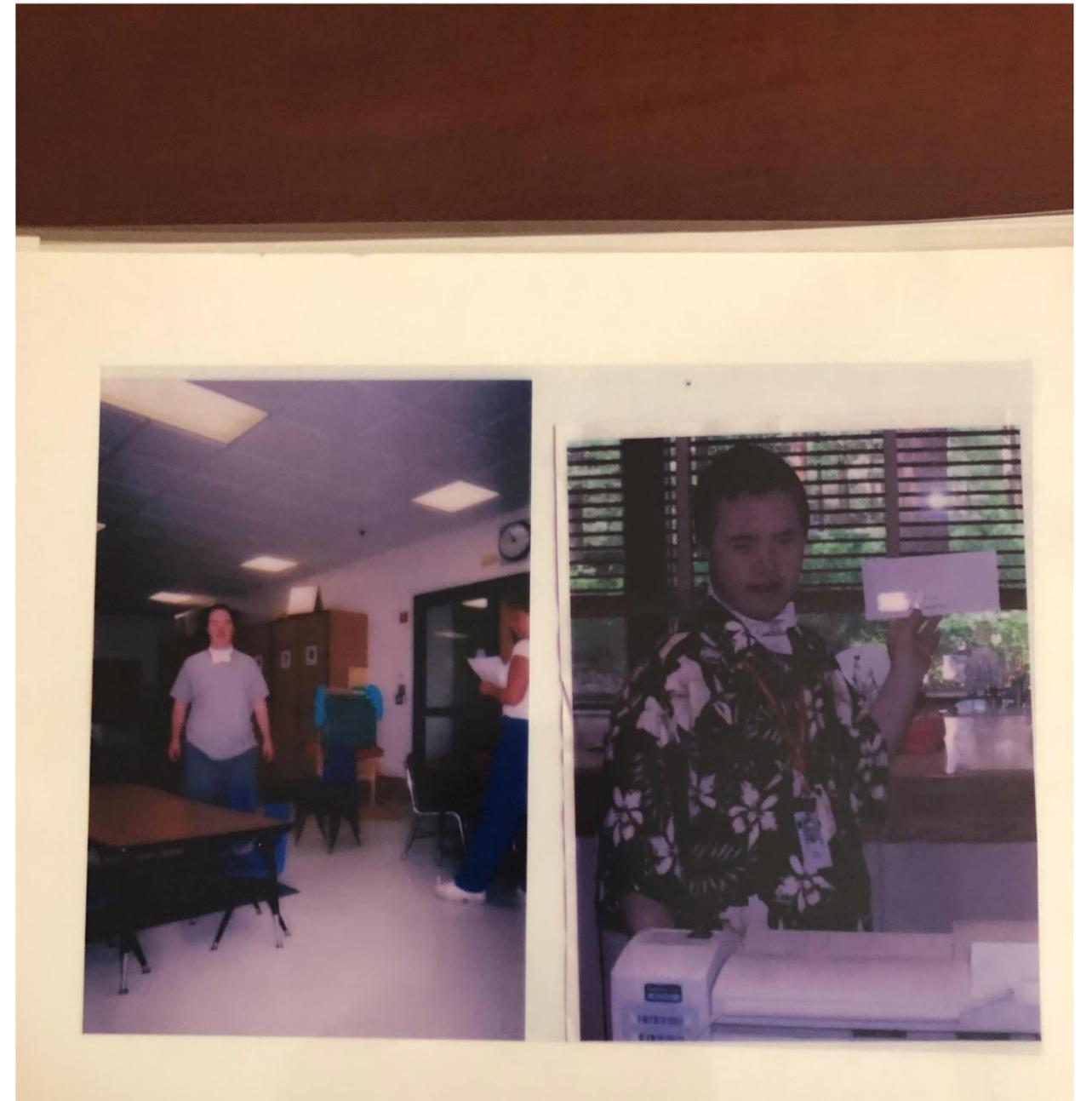
Employment is a key component of a fulfilling and independent life.

It offers:

- a structured routine
- social engagement with coworkers
- ability to participate in and contribute to their community
- Skill development
- Money!

# Good for People, Good for Business

- Hiring individuals with disabilities is a good business decision, not an act of charity.
- Inclusive workplaces often have higher employee morale and lower staff turnover.
- A diverse workforce reflects the community. This can enhance customer perception and loyalty.
- Employees with disabilities are often dedicated and dependable.





# CIE: a Win-Win

Meaningful work is a cornerstone for individuals with Down syndrome and intellectual disabilities to lead independent and rewarding lives.



Fostering inclusive workplaces enriches the lives of employees, strengthens businesses, and builds a more compassionate community.



Let's work together to ensure that everyone can experience the purpose and pride that comes from a job well done!

FAMILY, & THE COMMUNITY HOLIDAYS



**WORKING  
FOR  
PURPOSE  
AND  
MEANING  
THROUGH  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

# Chloe Bertrand



***THE SHED WITH  
SECURE SHREDS***

# Hear from Chloe:



# Employment Journey



Internships in High School



Finding a passion & business plan creation,



Competitive Integrative Employment at Whole Foods

# Supports for Success



- Transition Planning
- Customized Employment
- Family Support
- Community Relationships





*“Working provides a sense of purpose and is a critical part of living a meaningful life”*

Read more [here](#).



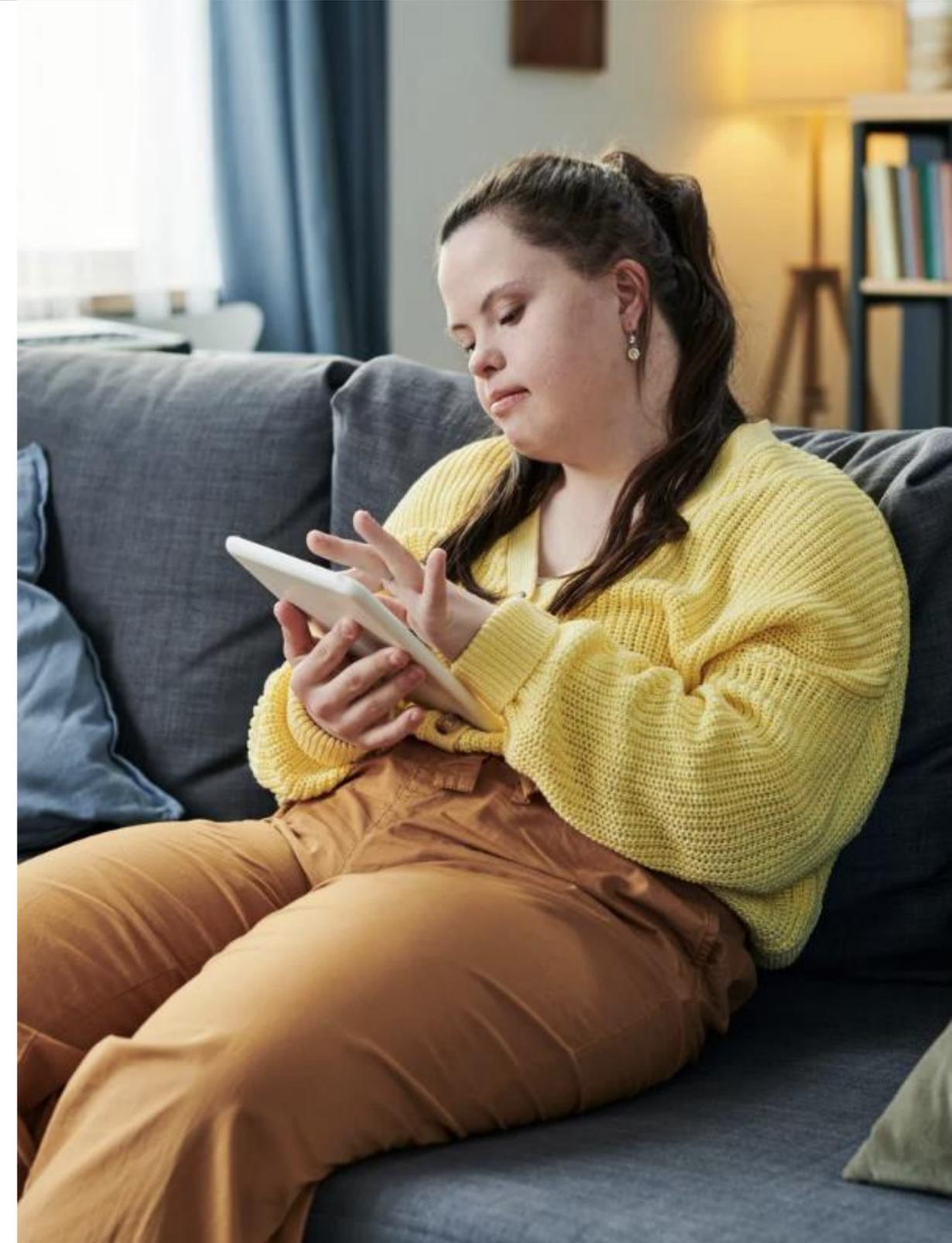


# **Group Activity: CIE in Action**

# Vignette 1

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- **Scenario:** Maria is a 27-year-old woman with Down syndrome. She is interested in office work because she enjoys organizing and using the computer. She has applied to several clerical jobs but keeps getting rejected with feedback that she “doesn’t have enough experience.” Maria’s service coordinator suggests a day habilitation program, but Maria says she really wants a job in the community where she can use her skills.
- **Goal:** What employment strategies could support Maria to achieve CIE?
- How might supported or customized employment approaches help?



# Vignette 2

- **Scenario:** Andre is a 32-year-old man with cerebral palsy who uses a power wheelchair. He recently started working a part-time job at a local history museum. The job is a good match, but Andre lives in Western Massachusetts where public transit is limited, and paratransit is unreliable. He has missed several shifts and is worried about losing his job.
- **Goal:** What supports or services could help Andre keep his job?
- How might policy or community solutions address transportation gaps?



# Vignette 3

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- **Scenario:** Jasmine is entering her last year of high-school. She has an intellectual disability, communicates using an iPad, and requires support for most of her daily activities. Her school team is recommending a day program after graduation. Jasmine, however, lights up when working in the school library where she helps organize books. She says she wants a job where she can keep helping others.
- **Goal:** How could Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) or customized employment approaches support Jasmine's goals?
- What role can her Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and family play in building a pathway to CIE?





# Feedback Request

**We are always looking to improve the information we share to support our community. Please fill out this short survey about our presentation to share your thoughts.**

# Keep in Touch!



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