

## Abstract

For students with intellectual disability (ID), postsecondary education is associated with enhanced opportunities for full participation in the community, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency (Grigal, Hart & Weir, 2012; Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Park, 2003). However, too many students with ID are not participating in the same postsecondary opportunities as students without disabilities and subsequently are not enjoying the benefits in terms of self-determination, full participation, and independence. In Kentucky, one of the few states conducting a census follow up on students with ID one year after exiting high school, post school outcomes show that in 2017, 37.1% of students are subsequently engaged in competitive employment, just 6.3% enrolled in higher education, and a full 45.8% reported as not engaged in any post-school activities. This is further reflected by National Core Indicators data which show Kentuckians with ID experience a combination of both poor outcomes and diminished expectations across a variety of valued life outcomes.

To address these gaps, this project, **Strengthening the Higher Education Landscape for Students with Intellectual Disability in Kentucky**, will enable us to maximize exposure and participation of key leaders of systems who can *align policy and guidance to improve transition outcomes* and subsequently *increase participation in competitive integrated employment, valued community membership and independent living*. Harnessing the power of community conversations and bolstering state specific resources will *enhance knowledge of students, families and systems*. As a past TPSID grantee, Kentucky has a strong history of promoting inclusive higher education options that are both individualized and integrated in the college academic and extracurricular experiences. However, the end of federal funding left a void for centralized resources and promotion of inclusive higher education policy. In 2016, Kentucky was awarded a five-year project of national significance – KentuckyWorks. The over-arching goal of the project is to increase positive post-school outcomes (integrated employment; participation in post-secondary education; or both) for students with significant disabilities in our state by 20 percentage points over the duration of this grant. A Memorandum of Understanding to participate as a state consortium to improve transition outcomes has been signed by: Kentucky Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Office for the Blind, Office on Autism, Protection & Advocacy, Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities, Autism Training Center, Human Development Institute (UCEDD), State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children, Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, Educational Cooperatives. This team, in concert with families, youth with disabilities, and institutions of higher education will provide an ongoing sustainable framework for convening stakeholders via monthly Postsecondary work group meetings, through the hosting of a series of postsecondary community conversations, developing resources through the kentuckyworks.org website, and charting a path forward that will ultimately improve post-school outcomes for students with ID.