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Noe Ortega
Commissioner
Chris Gabrieli
Board Chair

September 4, 2024

Dear Honorable Chairs of the Committees on Ways and Means and Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Higher Education:

We are pleased to share with you the final report of the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) Task Force.

As you may recall, the landmark 2022 MAICEI law directed us to establish and co-chair both a MAICEI Advisory Board and a separate MAICEI Task Force to develop recommendations and pilot mechanisms to help expand MAICEI programming to students aged 22 and over. See Section 165 of Chapter 126 of the Acts of 2022. Accordingly, we are pleased to submit this final report to you on behalf of the MAICEI Task Force, pursuant to Section 165(b) of Chapter 126 of the Acts of 2022.

The MAICEI Task Force was a temporary advisory body comprised of twenty-four (24) individuals representing public higher education institutions, adult service agencies, the Department of Higher Education, and various advocacy groups. Convened by the pre-existing MAICEI Advisory Board, the MAICEI Task Force met regularly to collaboratively evaluate needs relating to student housing, transportation, socialization, costs, and potential funding streams with partner agencies. The MAICEI Task Force was co-chaired by the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

This report contains the MAICEI Task Force's findings and recommendations, designed to help inform the promulgation of regulations essential for implementing the 2022 MAICEI Law. The report will also guide the establishment of policy expectations and procedures that will help public higher education institutions offer inclusive education programming safely and appropriately to eligible students while strengthening partnerships with other state agencies.

Questions about this report may be directed to Alex Demou, DHE Director of Constituent and Legislative Affairs at ademou@dhe.mass.edu and Christopher Klasin, DDS Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at Christopher.M.Klaskin@mass.gov.

Sincerely,

Noe Ortega
Commissioner, Higher Education

Sarah Peterson
Acting Commissioner, Dept. of Developmental Services



Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI)

Task Force on Higher Education for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities

Final Report

August 30, 2024

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

<p>Mary Price, co-chair Department of Higher Education</p>	<p>Victor Hernandez, co-chair Department of Developmental Services</p>	<p>Christopher Grimaldi Department of Higher Education</p>
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<p>Joan Phillips Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission</p>	<p>Kelli Collomb Malden Public Schools</p>	<p>Elaine Davey Lawrence Public Schools</p>
<p>Vincent Pedone State Universities Council of Presidents</p>	<p>Paul Correia Bristol Community College</p>	<p>Kathy Meagher Shore Collaborative</p>

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the ***Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) Task Force on Higher Education for Students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities, Severe Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Other Severe Developmental Disabilities***. The co-chairs of the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board, who also led the Task Force, are Mary Price, State Director of MAICEI, designee for the Commissioner for Higher Education, and Victor Hernandez, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, designee for the Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This report was developed in response to the legislation enacted in July 2022, which expanded the limited instances of inclusive postsecondary education opportunities for students whose special education entitlement under Chapter 71B has ended, so that they can pursue or continue inclusive higher education opportunities. M.G.L. c. 15A, Section 30A.¹

This report will provide an overview of available information and data supporting thirteen (13) recommendations made by the Task Force, which begin on page 53.

Summary

The 2022 legislation builds on the success of the MAICEI program. The new law requires all public institutes of higher education (IHEs) to establish policies that help create pathways for

¹ The legislation also expanded access for students 18-21 who have severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorders or other severe developmental disabilities and are receiving special education services. All those students across Massachusetts may also now have program options offered by any IHE. Prior to the legislation, the MAICEI program participation was limited to some school districts who had partnerships with some IHEs. See ch. 126 of the Acts of 2022. This report does not address or provide recommendations regarding that aspect of the legislation. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is developing guidance and information for school districts and families regarding this expanded access.

participation of individuals with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorder, and other severe developmental disabilities as non-matriculating students after their special education entitlement has ended. It also requires all Massachusetts public IHEs to prepare guidelines for selecting eligible students for higher education and identifying appropriate coursework.

The new law recognizes multiple pathways for a student to access the program. In addition to codifying the traditional pathway for MAICEI students ages 18 to 22 through Chapter 71B and the IEP process, under the new law, students with severe disabilities can also access higher education experiences. In addition to a private-pay funding option, such students may access the program through a referral, along with funding support, subject to appropriation, provided by one or more adult-servicing state agencies if such agencies are supporting the individual participating in the program in accordance with program guidelines and subject to appropriation. The agencies specifically named in the legislation are the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). DDS can provide support associated with supporting participation in public IHEs for individuals determined eligible for DDS services, subject to appropriation, provided that the individual supports and services are determined to be the appropriate type, frequency, and duration as identified in an assessment conducted by DDS and subject to the development of an annual individual support plan. MRC can also cover costs associated with supporting participation in public IHEs for individuals determined eligible for MRC services, subject to appropriation, provided that access to higher education assists in the attainment of an identified employment

goal as identified in the individual's plan for employment. Costs may be covered by other resources available to the student.

The **MAICEI Advisory Board** convened the **Task Force** in November 2022 to identify the needs of students with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorder, or other severe developmental disabilities aged 22 and over² in higher education and the mechanisms recommended for public IHEs and adult service agencies to support those students. The evaluation assessed (1) any additional needs relating to housing, employment, health care, mental health care, transportation, and social and leisure opportunities of participating individuals aged 22 and over ; (2) type, frequency, and duration of support that will be required to support public higher education opportunities for participating individuals aged 22 and over; (3) the associated costs; (4) the programs, services, and supports available through public IHEs, DDS, MRC, and other public agencies; (5) opportunities available to maximize federal financial participation through Medicaid and federal financial aid to include individuals with severe developmental disabilities aged 22 and over; and (6) proposals for any additional legislation and regulation that may be necessary to further define terms, facilitate, and advance the offering of inclusive opportunities at public IHEs.

The Task Force members met monthly over Zoom conferencing between November 15, 2022, and June 8, 2023, with the goal of evaluating the current resources and protocols in place to support students under the age of 22 with this information, make recommendations that would be necessary to expand support to eligible people aged 22 and over. In addition to these

² In Massachusetts, students with disabilities ages 3 through 21 are entitled to receive special education. See M.G.L. c. 71B, Sections 1-16. The focus of this Task Force and this report is on individuals who are over age 21 - i.e., age 22 and older.

monthly meetings, the Task Force held subgroup meetings between the co-chairs and adult service agency representatives to further clarify the resources adult agencies offer that would support access to inclusive postsecondary education activities.

The Task Force members are pleased to present this report, which includes recommendations to increase MAICEI programs across all public IHEs in Massachusetts and to support students with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorder, or other severe developmental disabilities aged 22 and over. This report does not focus or present any recommendations regarding the MAICEI program as it relates to students under the age of 22 who are receiving special education services.

Task Force Process

Creating Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, and Other Developmental Disabilities legislation, enacted in July 2022, tasked the MAICEI Advisory Board to convene a task force to evaluate, develop, and pilot mechanisms to support public IHEs offering opportunities to include individuals with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorder, or other severe developmental disabilities aged 22 and over. As previously mentioned, Victor Hernandez (DDS) and Mary Price (DHE) co-chaired the Task Force, which was composed of relevant Massachusetts leaders and collaborators. These leaders and collaborators represent MAICEI, DHE, DDS, Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), Federation for Children with Special Needs, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Council of Presidents of the Massachusetts State University System, a designee assigned by the University of Massachusetts (UMass) system, and a designee assigned by the director of the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges, Massachusetts Down

Syndrome Congress, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Autism Commission, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), Massachusetts Superintendents, and The Arc of Massachusetts.

The Task Force initiated their work by reviewing the MAICEI program's history and current implementation. They also reviewed the new legislation and its implications. This included a presentation on the regulatory process from the Assistant General Counsel of the DHE, Christopher Grimaldi. The aim was to ensure adherence to the law and understand the opportunities it offers for individuals with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorder, and other severe developmental disabilities to participate in inclusive higher education.

During the Task Force's first three months of work, its chairs facilitated presentations and follow-up discussions regarding the current state of MAICEI. Agendas for these meetings covered a range of topics that included:

- Adult disability agency representatives presenting information about current service options for adults with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorder, or other severe developmental disabilities;
- An overview by a current MAICEI coordinator about how a typical MAICEI partnership negotiates various funding pathways to support students from age 18 until the end of their special education entitlement;
- A review of potential funding options for students who have exited school, including Medicaid funding and federal financial aid funding;
- Follow-up discussions clarifying what MAICEI grant funds can and cannot be used for, and what adult service agencies currently do and do not fund;

- Discussions focused on the dissemination of MAICEI specific information on
 - how supports are provided for college participation; and
 - how funding is allocated depending on the level of understanding, need, and geographical location of each regional DDS office;
- Examples/case studies from DDS and MRC of recent funding directed to individuals with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism, and/or other severe developmental disabilities at two MAICEI campuses.

The Task Force's review of information and discussions provided the foundation for its study, which was guided by six (6) questions:

1. What is the current MAICEI model?
2. What supports are already in place for eligible students 18–21 years?
3. What resources are available to eligible individuals with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) whose special education entitlement has ended?
4. What potential gaps in information or resources in the current MAICEI model must be addressed to support eligible students whose special education entitlement has ended?
5. What research and examples exist that highlight how individuals with severe IDD whose special education entitlement have ended are supported to attend college?
6. What recommendations are proposed to assist MA IHEs to offer inclusive postsecondary education opportunities?

This report summarizes the findings from this study, including the existing MAICEI structures, partnerships, and resources in place to support eligible students 18–21 years old. This report also provides an overview of the national inclusive postsecondary education models

designed for students aged 22 and older whose special education entitlement has ended, and outlines recommendations to align Massachusetts inclusive postsecondary education with the Creating Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, and other Developmental Disabilities Act.

Task Force Findings

Current Inclusive Postsecondary Education Model (Age 18 until the 22nd birthday)

Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) offers grants to college-school partnerships to support eligible public high school students with intellectual disabilities and autism, ages 18–21, to increase their academic and career success by being included in a college or university community of learners. Fifteen (15) public colleges and universities in the Commonwealth have MAICEI programs and four (4) have planning grants. These programs enroll students with IDD or autism between the ages of 18 and 21. Since 2007, over 2,800 students have participated in inclusive higher education opportunities in Massachusetts. The students eligible for MAICEI typically do not pass or complete the statewide competency exam (MCAS or MCAS-Alt) and do not meet other local requirements for a high school diploma.

In 2017, the responsibility for administering the initiative was transferred to the DHE. Legislative budget language directs that:

“the Department of Higher Education shall develop guidelines to ensure that the grant program promotes civic engagement and mentoring of faculty in public institutions of higher education and supports college success, work success, participation in student life of the college community, and provision of a free appropriate public education in the least

restrictive environment; provided further, that the Department of Higher Education develops strategies and procedures to help sustain and replicate the existing inclusive concurrent enrollment programs initiated through the grant program, including:

- providing funds to retain employment specialists
- assisting students in meeting integrated competitive employment and other transition-related goals
- adopting procedures and funding mechanisms to ensure that new partnerships of public IHEs and school districts providing inclusive concurrent enrollment programs fully utilize the models and expertise developed in existing partnerships
- conducting evaluations and research to further identify student outcomes and best practices, and
- developing a mechanism to encourage existing and new partnerships to expand the capacity to respond to individual parents that request an opportunity for their children to participate in the inclusive concurrent enrollment initiative.”

Through its MAICEI State Coordinator, DHE:

- administers the development and awarding of three types of grants supporting program development, quality assurance and accountability, and sustainability;
- coordinates the state advisory committee;
- develops new partnerships;
- assists existing partnerships to create self-sustaining models;
- oversees the development of videos and informational materials;
- designs system-wide evaluation strategies; and

- designs professional development activities based on practitioner-based research as well as studies conducted through UMass Boston's ICI, an established national leader of *Think College*, a technical assistance center supporting 2- and 4-year colleges nationwide offering postsecondary learning opportunities for students with intellectual disability.

Expectations for students in MAICEI programs include:

- discerning their own preferences, interests, needs, and strengths through person-centered planning (PCP);
- increasing self-determination and independent living skills;
- becoming advocates for their own choices and decisions around academic, social, and work activities;
- acquiring career and life skills by taking inclusive college credit and non-credit bearing courses that relate to their career goals and other areas of interest; and
- accessing student support services, including counseling offices, disability resources, career services, and all other services provided by the college.

MAICEI Eligibility Criteria

Students who participate in college via MAICEI support are required to meet the criteria outlined in the legislation, such as having documented severe autism and/or severe intellectual/developmental disabilities.

- For students who are ages 18 or 19, participation shall be limited to students who have been unable to obtain a passing score on the statewide assessment tests utilized as a basis for competency determination.

- For students ages 20 or 21, participation shall be limited to students who have been unable to obtain a passing score on the statewide assessment tests utilized as a basis for competency determinations or who have been determined eligible for special education and have also been determined by the Individualized Education Program team to have severe functional delays impacting independent living, communication or behavioral skills resulting in skills that are significantly below chronological age. See M.G.L. c. 15A, §30A.
- Eligible students are not required to:
 - Take any college entrance aptitude tests
 - have a high school diploma or its equivalent
 - meet high school course requirements
 - meet minimum grade point average requirements
 - obtain a passing score on the statewide assessment tests utilized as a basis for competency determination

Students are also required to complete an application in which they must meet the criteria developed by programs. Examples of these current criteria from existing programs are as follows:

- Students aged 18-21 should be enrolled in secondary school, receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and receive support from their district
- Students aged 22 and over should be clients of adult service agencies
- Students should have an interest in continuing education in a college setting

- Students should be able to adhere to the student code of conduct
- Students should demonstrate communication skills adequate to interact with others on college campuses
- Students should demonstrate emotional stability and maturity
- In cases where students will be living in residence halls on campus, they need to be able to self-administer medications
- Students should express interest in living and working as independently as possible in the community after completing their inclusive higher education experience
- Students should be able to identify job-related interests and career goals

Existing Supports in Place to Support Eligible Students

The current MAICEI is structured around three (3) foundational practices. First, the model is built on collaboration between public IHEs and local school districts. These are referred to as *inclusive higher education partnerships*. The model is founded on a person-centered model, or student-driven services, meaning that students are invited from the start to communicate their goals, preferences, and interests. These expressed interests are used, in turn, to inform the students' course of study, campus engagement, and career development activities. The MAICEI model is funded by an annual grant that supports key staffing positions that are necessary to oversee the coordination of these partnerships. Some colleges and universities have a MAICEI model that is now self-sustaining, and no longer funded through the annual grants. K-12 systems can use their IDEA or other district funds to pay program fees. IHEs provide tuition waivers to cover tuition costs.

Inclusive Higher Education Partners

Ongoing collaboration is vital in the establishment of MAICEI partnerships between the IHEs, school partners, and students and families. Collaboration is also vital in successfully maintaining these partnerships as inclusive higher education pathways for students with IDD. Collaboration between state agencies, IHEs, local education agencies, and students/families enhances resource-sharing, avoids services duplication, strengthens practices, and improves outcomes for students. The following is a description of the overall function of partnership leadership teams that oversee the MAICEI partnerships and the primary partners' responsibilities.

Partnership Leadership Team

The partnership leadership team at each partnership oversees the development, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of the program to facilitate students' transitions from high school to adult life and to sustain the MAICEI implementation. The team is expected to convene at least twice during each academic semester.

Partnerships are expected to closely examine existing policies and practices in both school and IHE environments and adjust them to enhance their program design and partnership infrastructure to best support the target student population. Each partnership is also expected to develop a program design that guides the partners as they enroll students in credit and non-credit courses with their nondisabled peers and provides the necessary support to enable students with disabilities to meaningfully participate in all aspects of campus life. A clear communication protocol is an essential part of the program design and is vital to the success of the partnership. A strong communication protocol ensures that there is clear and consistent communication among partners, students, and family members. The partnership leadership team creates the inclusive postsecondary education program's

policies, practices, and procedures to facilitate ongoing inclusion of students. These procedures must include details on how the family/caregiver of a student who may be eligible for MAICEI should approach their school partners to request an opportunity to participate. Teams are also asked to expand the program both in the number of students served and in the number of districts engaged.

Institutions of Higher Education Partners

Participating colleges are expected to provide a college/university program coordinator to oversee MAICEI implementation on campus. The person in this role works to ensure that the college or university faculty has the necessary skills and support to accommodate the diverse needs of the students participating in the program. The coordinator acts as the college or university liaison to the participating high schools. In addition to this ongoing training, the coordinator continues to conduct community outreach to schools, families, and adult service agencies to broaden the collaboration that supports the program. The coordinator is responsible for convening partnership leadership team meetings, developing a course of study for individual students based on the PCP, and solving issues to meet the students' needs.

K-12 System Partners

School district collaboration with colleges and universities provides important opportunities to meet the mandates of special education law, requiring schools to plan for and provide transition activities that lead to measurable results. School district participation has increased significantly as the successes of MAICEI become more widely recognized; the program has seen growth from 29 active districts participating in FY10 to 146 active districts in FY24. While attesting to the increased appreciation for MAICEI across the state, this trend underlines

the importance of developing sustainable models that anticipate increased demand in the future.

Every participating school district is expected to identify a school district liaison for the partnership and staff who may serve as on-campus educational coaches. Some campuses with MAICEI programs have begun implementing other coaching models by hiring educational coaches throughout the campus. The educational coach works directly with students participating in this program and must be easily accessible and mobile. The coach serves as the on-campus support for students' academic and social success. The school district liaison serves as the primary contact for the students. The district liaison consults with the IHE program coordinator to identify courses with the student that align with the goals they identified in their IEP and PCP. The liaison also works with families of students participating in the grant program and is responsible for ensuring that information regarding the student's progress in MAICEI activities is included in annual individual education programs (IEPs). The liaison is responsible for attending partnership meetings convened by the program coordinator.

Person-Centered Planning (PCP) & Course Selection

The MAICEI model is grounded in a person-centered planning (PCP) approach. PCP is an ongoing problem-solving process used to help individuals with disabilities plan for their future. In PCP, groups of people focus on an individual and that person's vision of their future. This "person-centered" team meets to identify opportunities for the individual to develop personal relationships, participate in their community such as through employment or independent living, increase control over their own lives, and develop the skills and abilities needed to achieve these goals. Public institutions of higher education should establish course selection guidelines to

ensure that participating individuals select courses that are appropriate to their individual strengths, needs, preferences and interests. Individuals shall be eligible to:

- take a credit-bearing undergraduate academic course for credit if they have met the course prerequisites and requirements; or
- audit a credit-bearing undergraduate academic course, consistent with campus policies governing selection of students for audit participation, if they have not met the course prerequisites and requirements.

Institutions of higher education are not required to give course enrollment or audit preference in graduate programs, programs and courses with selective admission, or continuing education courses to individuals with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorders, or other severe developmental disabilities over other individuals seeking to enroll in or audit a course.

The current IHE/School District Partnership PCP Process involves the following steps:

- IHE and school staff collaborate to facilitate PCP;
- school/transition staff administer career interest surveys;
- students identify vision for work, training, and community living; and
- PCPs are used to identify potential courses and activities on campuses.

The current IHE/School District Partnership Course Selection Process involves the following steps:

- IHE staff work with the student and school/transition staff to identify courses that align with the student's goals;
- IHE and school/transition staff collaborate on a student schedule that includes course(s);

- IHE staff support the student to request accommodations that might be needed/meet with disability services staff; and
- School/transition staff or IHEs depending on model provide educational coach support.

Funding MAICEI Partnerships

MAICEI is funded each year through the state budget. The MAICEI office at the Department of Higher Education (DHE) releases a yearly Request for Proposals (RFP) for planning grants (6–9 months) and implementation grants (12 months) and oversees grant award adherence. The DHE offers grant funding to those campuses that have existing MAICEI programs and to those that submit an approved planning grant. The state MAICEI office is responsible for providing oversight and technical assistance to campuses currently enrolling students with intellectual disability and autism, specifically those receiving grant funding.

There are two (2) types of grants available to Massachusetts public IHEs to establish and enhance inclusive postsecondary education services:

1. **Planning Grants:** The MAICEI Planning grants aim to broaden the reach of the MAICEI network statewide, consistent with the law enacted in 2022, by allowing campuses to apply for planning grants to support both 18-21 dual-enrollment and students 22 years or older. These planning grants provide funds for the campus to hire a MAICEI coordinator who can forge new partnerships among high schools in public school districts, adult human service agencies, disability staff, and collaborating with public colleges or universities. These partnerships use funding to craft a comprehensive strategic action plan. This plan outlines how students with severe disabilities, ages 18–21, and those aged 22 and over years old will be supported in participating in inclusive

college courses and the life of the campus. Initial implementation of these plans typically occurs after the first or second semester of planning to establish robust programs.

2. **Implementation/Continuation Grants:** The MAICEI Implementation/Continuation grants assist IHEs and their partners in executing a program of inclusive postsecondary education services based on their strategic plans. A key focus of this grant is to foster the growth and sustainability of MAICEI partnerships. Each funded partnership is expected to continually evaluate policies, practices, and procedures to ensure a high-quality program design. The long-term goal is to develop programs capable of sustaining themselves without relying on state funds.

Campuses that submit grant planning/continuation and implementation proposals for MAICEI will receive funding to help support the following:

- planning grants that will allow campuses to hire a coordinator to begin the process of developing a program;
- program fees for course(s)/semester (IHEs are expected to waive tuition fees);
- books and materials, including lab fees associated with courses;
- peer mentor support;
- technology to ensure students have full access to curriculum (Chromebook, iPads, etc. may be purchased for students but must be maintained by the college/university);
- teleconference-style software subscriptions to assist campuses conducting services remotely;
- consultants (*e.g.*, employment specialists, youth leaders);

- stipends/salaries and fringe benefits for project personnel, including employment specialists;
- training supplies, including site costs;
- in-state travel costs;
- indirect costs for school districts at the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) rate; and
- indirect costs for the college or university at the approved ESE rate, not to exceed a maximum of 11%.

Based on a review of the current campus implementation grants, the average cost for the entire program implementation, serving many students, is \$139,408.

An example of a breakdown of these average costs from existing programs are as follows:

- Administrative: \$35,225 (.8 FTE)
 - Coordinator
- Instructional Staff: \$21,317
 - Employment Specialist and/or Educational Coaches
- Support Staff: \$14,984
 - Peer mentors
- Fringe Benefits: \$20,024
- Contractual Supports: \$18,083
- Supplies: \$5,582
- Travel: \$1,138
 - Coordinator to attend state, regional, and national conferences

- Coordinator to visit students in other educational or employment settings
- Other Costs: \$9,818
- Indirect Costs: \$11,295

Moving Toward Sustainability

State funds, appropriated by the Massachusetts legislature every year since 2007, have been available to the partnerships through non-competitive grants. The majority of the state funds (considered seed money) are used to support key personnel (Coordinator, Employment Specialist, Peer Mentors, etc.) at the college to organize and administer the MAICEI supports and activities. Funds can also be used to purchase books, materials and supplies for courses. To offset the dependence on state funds, the MAICEI partnerships all use a memorandum of agreement that includes a program fee. This program fee is drawn from school or district funds provided by the schools to support the program, and to gradually reduce the reliance on state funds. The partnership leadership team will develop a comprehensive plan that will work with the college or university to detail the policies, practices, and procedures related to the implementation, sustainability, and ongoing evaluation of the MAICEI program. Continuation funding for partnerships is contingent on demonstrated evidence of steady increases in student enrollment from semester-to-semester and year-to-year. Campuses should consider the enrollment numbers of all students. Each funded campus should document expansion in enrollments, integrating grant funds with in-kind contributions.

Campuses in their first several years of implementation funding provide preliminary evidence of how the partnership intends to organize a sustainable model. From the inception of MAICEI on the campus, all colleges and universities are expected to waive tuition for students attending the MAICEI

program. There may be some discussion of various cost-sharing models between school districts, families, adult service agencies, and colleges, or ideas for integrating programs and budgets with existing on-campus initiatives. Other demonstrations of institutional commitment to the initiative include preliminary conversations about assuming responsibility for staffing, engagement of development offices on campuses, and applications for other related funding.

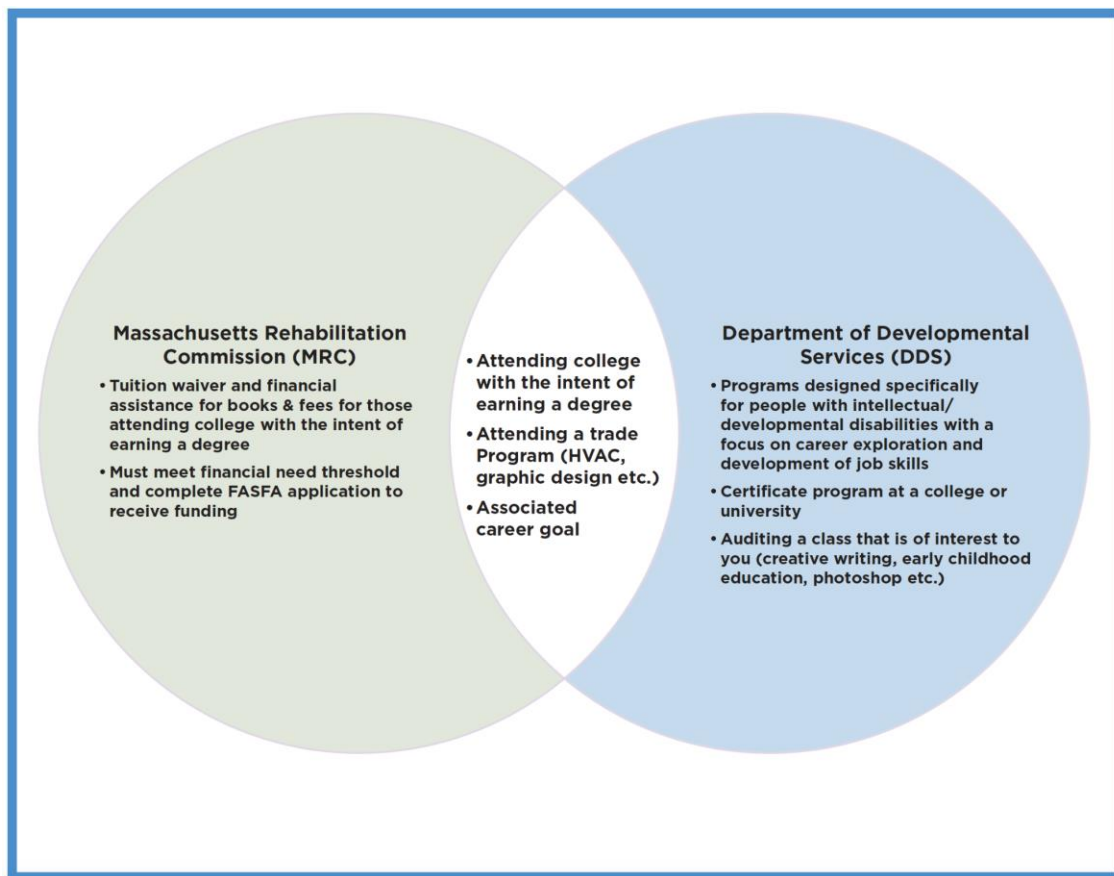
Available Resources for People with IDD who have Exited Special Education Services

Adult Services and Inclusive Higher Education

For individuals with severe IDD who have exited special education services, adult disability services and resources are available to those who meet the eligibility criteria. These services include support for college participation as it relates to their Individual Service Plan (ISP; Department of Developmental Disabilities) or Individual Plan for Employment (IPE; Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission). The Department of Developmental Services DDS currently provides financial support through the Participant Directed Program for supports designed for people with IDD with a focus on career exploration and development of job skills, certificate programs, and auditing a course of interest for the qualifying person (*e.g.*, creative writing, early childhood education, Photoshop). The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Committee (MRC) currently provides financial support in the form of a tuition waivers, fees, books/supplies, and reduced public transit fare for applicants who qualify and meet the financial need threshold in degree programs, trade programs (*e.g.*, HVAC, graphic design), certificate programs, or taking courses for credit when they are associated with career goals. Before being approved for funding, students must apply for federal student aid by submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

MRC and DDS can also provide braided funding for applicants who meet the eligibility criteria for both agencies and wish to take a combination of courses for credit and audit (see *Figure 2*). MRC could fund programs, fees, and books/supplies for those courses only. DDS, through the Participant Directed Program, could fund tuition and fees for the courses taken for audit, and fees related to support services being provided by the college, including supports to learn to navigate the campus, and supports related to coursework and work readiness, including a part-time internship on campus. When MRC provides funding for students pursuing degree programs, trade programs, certificate programs, or taking courses for credit when they are associated with career goals, DDS can provide partial funding for services not covered (e.g., supports to learn to navigate the campus, or supports related to coursework and work readiness, including a part-time internship on campus).

Figure 1. DDS and MRC Braided Funding



Each adult disability agency offers specific support and resources to individuals with IDD and autism, depending on their eligibility for adult services, their goals, and their choice of services. The two primary agencies serving this function are DDS and MRC.

Department of Developmental Services

DDS currently offers opportunities for post high school education and training through the Participant Directed Program and through the Autism College Navigation programs. DDS has hired a statewide coordinator for self-directed services, and they have hired support brokers for every area office. Areas of consideration regarding self-directed service models, the Participant-Directed Program and Agency With Choice programs include: (1) the responsibility individuals take on when directing their own services, (2) the reluctance of some individuals and

families to direct/coordinate their own services, and (3) DDS continues to increase accessibility to information regarding self-direction.

DDS Self-Directed Services

Self-directed service delivery models allow the participant and family the opportunity to create individualized support based on their vision and needs. The individual and family have authority and responsibility over a budget, and can decide who they would like to hire, when the supports will be provided, what the person will do, where the supports will be provided, and how services will be arranged. The services are flexible and can be customized to meet the changing needs of the person as they learn and grow. Each of the two options, Agency with Choice and the Participant Directed Program, require the person and family to have shared responsibility for the administration and management of the services they have created.

Agency with Choice. Agency with Choice (AWC) is a co-employment program model for individuals and families to have an increased level of flexibility through both the choice and design of supports/services they select. AWC allows individuals/families to customize their supports/services to meet their needs while sharing responsibility with a qualified and licensed provider agency, which is also referred to as a *co-employment model*. AWC providers support to individuals to experience and build capacity for self-directing and customizing their supports/services without having to be responsible for regulatory, accounting, legal, and technical duties associated with being an employer. AWC providers also assist the individual to maximize their community opportunities and connections. The AWC provider manages certain aspects of the budget to ensure compliance with applicable federal and state laws, DDS and other state agency regulations, and other DDS program guidelines. The individual/family selects

the support staff, sets work hours and tasks to be performed, provides daily supervision and management of employees, and determines when that support staff is no longer needed. The agency and individual/family share in training and evaluating employees.

Participant Directed Program. The Participant Directed Program offers the most flexibility to arrange and customize support based on the individual's needs and preferences. The person can hire their own support staff and make other decisions about how to use their DDS funded allocation. The individual budget enables a participant to direct and manage the delivery of services they choose to use. This gives the individual/family control over a specific amount of funds and the responsibility and freedom to purchase supports, goods, and services from a variety of sources. A fiscal intermediary serves as the agent for individuals/families and is responsible for all payments for support, services, and goods. The fiscal intermediary provides financial monitoring and reporting and ensures compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and DDS and other state agency regulations and requirements. A support broker (typically a DDS service coordinator) helps the person define their needs and goals, create and manage their individual budget within the allocated resources, and develop a network of services/supports.

Funding inclusive higher education currently may be considered when an individual is eligible for DDS services, has Participant-Directed Programming allocation, and has a clearly related goal in their ISP. The specific areas that DDS will fund are assessed in relation to the individual's assessed needs, their funding allocation, and other services/ supports. The allocation would require Area Office approval. An individual approved to receive DDS services could take advantage of a self-directed model to support them in their decision to attend college. Funding

may be used for specific services that lead to work-based learning opportunities, targeted skill development, and/or social and workplace skills. The funding currently cannot be used for meals, tuition, books, or residential housing. There must be a related goal identified in their ISP with clear expected outcomes upon completion of the program. Some staffing support can be available in certain circumstances. Each IHE has different costs, supports, and residential options that impact costs and what DDS can pay under self-direction.

Here are a few important points about Participant-Directed Programming allocation:

- Self-direction is funded by both waiver funds and state dollars.
 - Those who choose self-direction assume considerable responsibility for the services that they receive. Not all individuals served by DDS and/or their families want or can take on this responsibility.
- DDS continues to increase accessibility to self-direction information, especially among individuals in low-income communities and communities of color, revealing critical equity concerns.
- Individuals who are in other adult services, such as employment or community-based day support, may want to transition at least some of their services to self-direction.
- DDS funding related to attendance at an IHE is limited to four years total funding.
 - **DDS Funding**

In this initial implementation period since passage of the new law, DDS had supported a few individuals aged 22 and over in higher education with differing amounts of support.

DDS staff have indicated that they can support inclusive postsecondary education programs for individuals seeking enrollment in non-credit courses or certificate programs. In

these cases, the individual must reach out to their service coordinator or support broker to learn more about the Participant Directed Program (See Figure 2).

Autism College Navigation.

The DDS College Navigation Services address the service gap for people with an autism spectrum disorder who are currently eligible for DDS services. Even though they have expressed an interest in attending college and have the academic skills to succeed, these students may be challenged with a lack of executive functioning skills, social skills, and/or anxiety that prevents them from successfully navigating and engaging in the campus life experience. The program offers an individualized support service with a qualified college navigator. The college navigator will provide the service on-campus. The college navigator does not provide tutoring or attend the classes with the student, but they support the student to access academic success through self-advocacy and communication. The college navigator will work with the student to develop skills to help them successfully navigate their future college experience with no or minimal support.

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) provides various services and supports to people with disabilities to help them achieve their employment and independent living goals. While MRC does not typically offer direct payments to young adults, it does provide a range of programs and services that can assist them in achieving financial independence and vocational success. Here are some ways MRC may support young adults:

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services: The MRC offers VR services aimed at helping people with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. This can include

vocational evaluation, career counseling, job training, job placement assistance, college and industry-based courses and support services, such as transportation or assistive technology.

- **Transition Services:** The MRC provides transition services for young adults with disabilities as they move from school to post-school activities, including employment and independent living. These services may include transition planning, skills development, and assistance in accessing community resources.
- **Supported Employment:** The MRC supports people with significant disabilities in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment through supported employment programs. These programs provide job coaching, on-the-job supports, and other assistance tailored to the individual's needs.
- **Independent Living Services:** The MRC offers independent living services to help people with disabilities live more independently in their communities. This can include housing assistance, personal care attendant services, assistive technology, and other supports aimed at enhancing independence and quality of life.
- **Financial Planning and Benefits Counseling:** While not direct financial support, the MRC may provide information and assistance with financial planning, benefits counseling, and accessing disability-related benefits and entitlement programs that can provide financial support to people with disabilities.

MRC Support for Higher Education

An individual must have an open case for MRC to consider funding, including for attending higher education. Monies are allocated per year for an individual; the maximum

amount is \$7,500 for tuition and fees and \$2,500 for books, based on the availability of funds. Typically, MRC will provide a tuition waiver for college credit classes. If a student chooses to audit a course, the course must be clearly aligned with career goals to be funded as job training. Additionally, MRC can provide funding for books and fees.

Figure 2. MRC Funding Support for Higher Education

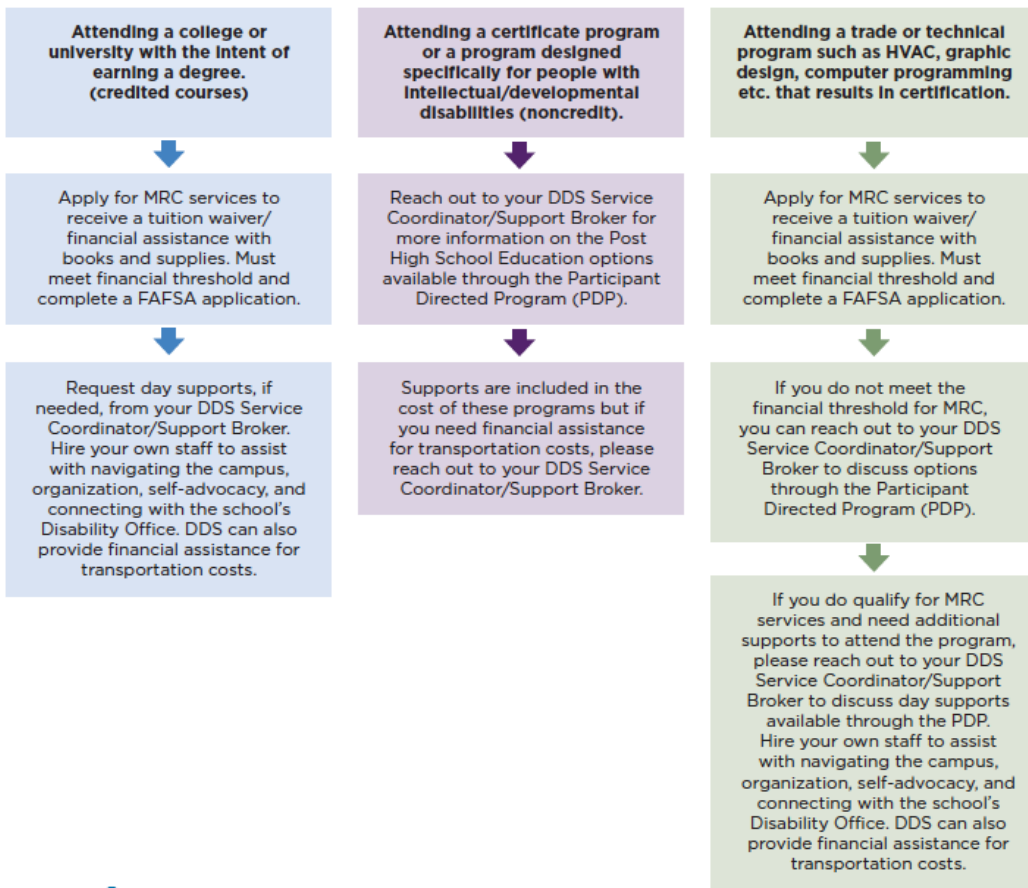
Figure 2 is the existing pathways to resources for inclusive higher education as developed by MRC and DDS. The Task Force suggests exploring whether DDS funding currently supporting autism college navigation could also be used for students over 21. and if so, then it would be beneficial to include it in the figure.



Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education

MAIPSE

Process for Accessing Post High School Education through Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)



Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB)

Similar to MRC, individuals must have an open VR case, and they must be attending college with an employment goal. MCB provides funding if a student has applied for financial aid (mandatory fees, not tuition/board) at a maximum of \$16,000/year. MCB will potentially fund

around \$1,300 for books/supplies/reader fees, assistive technology, and orientation & mobility training around campus.

Consideration of Needs

The areas of need considered by the Task Force included housing, employment, health care, mental health care, transportation, and social and leisure opportunities. The Task Force focused on assessing the availability of resources to address these needs through current MAICEI model practices and procedures, MRC services and assistance, and DDS services and assistance. Each section includes background information and research to support potential needs, options in Massachusetts, and recommendations based on identified gaps.

Employment Needs

Individuals with IDD require training and information on how to access support needed to find and keep jobs, like individuals without IDD. Transition planning should start early. Transition activities should foster individualized exploration of and experiences with community-based employment options that enable youth to make informed choices (AAIDD, 2017). Historically, individuals with intellectual disabilities have had poor if not the poorest paid employment outcomes of all disability groups despite considerable federal and state investment to develop interventions to increase their paid employment rate (Siperstein 2013; National Core Indicators 2010–21). However, the Think College National Coordinating Center for Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs, which has the only national database that collects information on students with intellectual disability who attend model demonstration college programs, is revealing some very significant improvement in employment outcomes.

More than 64% of adults with intellectual disabilities who attended college found paid employment compared to an employment rate of 18% for those who did not. Grigal, et al. 2024.

As of July 2024, DDS provided community-based day or employment services for 14,129 individuals. The overall number of individuals receiving an employment service at the time of the April 2023 employment snapshot was 6157, with 4187 working in an integrated job; 2392 individuals worked in individual supported jobs with 1930 worked in group employment.

https://statedata.thinkwork.org/massachusetts/snapshot_2023_D2b.pdf) It is significant to note that 56% of those who participated in a DDS funded employment service also participated in other day supports including community-based day supports (91%), day habilitation services (14.5%) and other services (8%). DDS employment outcomes are just now beginning to return to pre-COVID levels and have also been impacted significantly by the direct care workforce shortages. <https://statedata.thinkwork.org/massachusetts/> . The most recent vocational rehabilitation data available from 2021 indicates that just 4% of VR cases closed in were for people with intellectual disabilities, that actual successful closure rate for people with ID was significantly higher at 50%, compared with 29% for the general VR population.

<https://www.thinkwork.org/statedata/build-a-chart?report=comparison>). The data clear indicates the need to support new pathways for career exploration and development that will lead to improved employment outcomes for individuals with severe IDD.

The MAICEI model includes career development and paid employment support. Partners commit to providing students with opportunities to tap into both campus and community resources to include paid and unpaid internships, and if possible, paid employment experiences

in their services. College and school partners are expected to collaborate on these employment experiences. At the college, the MAICEI coordinator or employment specialist develops campus opportunities, whereas at the school, it is anticipated that transition staff develop community-based experiences. In both settings, students are provided support if needed until it can be faded. College participation addresses employment needs (*i.e.*, travel training, courses and activities aligned with career goals, independent living skills, self-determination skills, self-advocacy skills, etc.).

MAICEI Coordinator/Employment Specialist responsibilities from existing programs are as follows:

- work with students upon admission to determine their career goals;
- work with campus departments to seek out employment internship opportunities that best fit students' career goals;
- help students to work in various campus departments where they naturally learn employment skills; and
- identify courses and other campus activities that align with career goals.

School/Transition staff and/or adult human service agency staff (or providers) responsibilities from existing programs are as follows:

- seek community-based employment opportunities; and
- provide travel training and on-site support

Students generally enter into jobs/internships with support, and then support fades when students become comfortable with their job/internship duties and responsibilities. The goal is for students to function independently at work.

Employment Supports in Massachusetts through Adult Service Agencies

Department of Developmental Services (DDS). DDS provides several day and employment services. Community-based day supports offer opportunities for community engagement and exploration of interests. Community-Based Day Supports can provide a pathway to employment or serve as a supplemental service for people who may work part time and require additional support when they are not at work. Group supported employment offers integrated employment opportunities in small groups with supervision and with support from a community provider. Individual supported employment services offer career planning, job placement, and post-placement support to assist people in obtaining and maintaining employment. DDS contracts with providers to provide these services. An ISP guides their individual level of services. In 2010, DDS adopted an Employment First policy establishing that integrated, individual employment is the preferred service option and optimal outcome for working-age adults served by the Massachusetts DDS. The Department issued the *Blueprint for Success: Employing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in Massachusetts* in 2013 and *Blueprint for Success 2.0: Moving Forward Together* in 2023, highlighting DDS's commitment to employment and community engagement and laying out the timeline for eliminating subminimum wage in DDS funded services. DDS is part of the *Supporting Families Community of Practice* and is working to integrate the Charting the Life Course framework into its work with those who receive DDS services and their families and caregivers. Charting the Life Course, a model of person-centered planning, is a framework that was developed to help individuals and families of all abilities and at any age or stage of life 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. One focus is on building experiences that will help move them toward an inclusive, productive life in the future.

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). MRC partners with people with disabilities to expand their career and work life. Services provide the opportunity for people with disabilities to explore many industries and sectors to find what is best based on their interests, aptitudes, and skills. Career services include counseling and guidance, job-driven training and skills training, interest and aptitude testing, job placement assistance, diagnostic evaluations, college or vocational training, assistive technology, financial wellness, pre-employment transition services for youth, school-to-work, employer consultation, and an annual hiring event. An example of a recent MRC grant-funded initiative that MAICEI partners could explore outside of other DDS or MRC programs is *NextGen Careers*, an initiative that helps young adults with disabilities, ages 18–30, fast-track their career in the South District (Boston, Roxbury, Braintree), North District (Lawrence, Lowell), and West District (Springfield, Worcester). NextGen-supported students learn to advocate for themselves, gain self-confidence, and become self-sufficient on their career path. NextGen pairs individuals with a team of dedicated experts in counseling, benefits, and peer support whether they are interested in a certificate program, on-the-job training, apprenticeship, or an internship in Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. A Career counselor may provide employment services directly or, depending on the level of support required, MRC may refer job seekers to a community provider for assessment, career planning, job placement, and post-placement support. MRC contracts with providers for **Competitive** Integrated Employment Services, an outcome-based service. While

MRC generally provides time limited services, some funding is available for extended support for those who require longer term support to maintain employment.

Social Needs

Adults with IDD have the right to engage in leisure activities in a self-determined manner, just like adults without IDD. Participation in such leisure and social activities is instrumental to improving quality of life. Unfortunately, due to influencing factors, such as lack of support, inability to express interests, or lack of knowledge/awareness of social opportunities, people with IDD are at risk of decreased participation (Heister et al., 2023). Families/caregivers often coordinate social, and leisure activities support for individuals outside of the K–12 system. Peer interactions are extremely important for human development and also improve the engagement and outcomes for people with IDD. Interacting with peers in an authentically inclusive environment can increase quality of life and positive outcomes for people with IDD.

Social and leisure activities should be based on peoples' interests and goals and can be identified through person-centered planning. Frequently, people with IDD are isolated or participate in activities that do not reflect their needs and preferences because of lack of availability, inability to fully communicate interests, or lack of opportunities to determine their interests. Lack of accessibility is a common barrier to participation in preferred social and leisure activities. Individuals may express interest in engaging in various activities but require support to ensure they are able to participate (Hankle et al., 2021).

College campuses are an ideal setting to develop and expand social and leisure activity involvement. Student participation in college life is a key facet of inclusive higher education. On a college campus, there are various peer mentor support models available, and students are

encouraged to join clubs and participate in campus life. Participation in these experiences can foster friendships and enhance social-emotional well-being while also enhancing the development of self-advocacy, self-determination, and independent living skills.

Participation in these experiences fosters friendships, encourages the development of social and self-advocacy skills, and increases the visibility and awareness of inclusive practices on campus. Many of the MAICEI programs offer some type of peer mentoring to support students in campus activities. The model of the peer mentor programs varies across campuses—including volunteer-based campus clubs, internships, and/or paid mentors. Peer mentors receive training so that they are prepared to assist students in various aspects of college life. Given that MAICEI is a fully inclusive model, students have access to campus life activities and most organizations. Students who choose to participate in day campus activities may require support from a peer or an educational coach. Those who opt to participate in weeknight or weekend activities might not have their educational coach available. It is important for campuses to have peer support available to ensure students can fully engage in campus life.

Here are some examples of campus activities that MAICEI students have participated in:

- athletic events
- club membership (*e.g.*, anime, communications, dance, club sports, gaming, religious, service organizations, identity organizations)
- working out at the gym
- group exercise classes
- campus trips
- campus shows and productions

- family weekends
- homecoming activities

In a MAICEI IHE/school or adult human service agency partnership, partners assure that:

- students may join appropriate clubs, activities, social events, or other extracurriculars that the college offers;
- MAICEI peer mentors assist students in learning about social and leisure opportunities on the campus;
- MAICEI peer mentors attend such events with students if needed;
- IHE staff identify potential resources on campus; and
- school partners consult with students about transportation options.

Independent Living Needs

Travel Needs

An integral part of the MAICEI model is that participating students learn to use public transportation to travel to college and back. In the MAICEI model, school partners are expected to prepare students to use public transit options (*e.g.*, MBTA buses, subway, and commuter rail) or paratransit options. Some campuses offer free public transportation passes with the campus identification card. School districts help a small percentage of students get to college if public or paratransit options are not available due to their location until a public transportation option becomes available. The costs of transportation vary depending on the systems and providers within each district. Transportation provided by the districts can impact campus life participation if there are scheduling barriers, such as van availability due to K-12 daytime constraints or lack of public transportation,

In general, school partners assume responsibility for preparing students to use public transportation by:

- developing travel plans with students;
- assisting students to apply for paratransit transportation;
- providing travel training to students, including teaching students how to arrange their own paratransit rides, explore ride-sharing options, and understand public transportation routes and schedules; and
- training students to take responsibility for getting to and from campus to attend class, participate in social events, clubs, and other activities.

Accessing Paratransit Services. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services provide door-to-door, shared-ride public transportation for eligible individuals who cannot use the fixed-route public transportation systems such as bus, subway, or trolley. Eligibility procedures require people with a disability that prevents them from using the traditional public transit to complete an application from the regional offices' Mobility Centers or apply online. Once the person completes an application, they can schedule an interview. The interview and assessment process requires individuals to bring their application, healthcare provider's contact information, mobility devices, visual acuity statements (if visually impaired), diagnoses statements from mental healthcare providers if they have psychiatric conditions, and optionally, medications. During the interview, individuals are asked for information about the application. Following the application and interview, eligibility is determined within 21 days and is based on ability to use public transit safely and independently. Some individuals may be found eligible to also have a companion rider. This process can be overwhelming to people with IDD and their

families and/or caregivers and may require support and guidance to complete the necessary steps (MRC TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE: ADA Paratransit Service & the RIDE ADA Paratransit Service, n.d.).

Paratransit is available year-round to eligible riders with similar operating hours as the fixed-route transportation but is not available to people unless they live within $\frac{3}{4}$ miles of a public transportation route/stop. This geographical limitation negatively impacts many people with IDD in Massachusetts, which impacts participation in inclusive higher education. Another consideration is that paratransit provides pick-up and drop-off windows at allowable destinations. For people who require additional support from caregivers, it is important to consider if projected ride windows will need additional support to ensure they safely enter and exit the paratransit to their locations.

Travel Funding Options. DDS offers various transportation options to assist with the cost of commuting to college. This can include Uber/Lyft and recurring transit costs, such as a monthly MBTA pass and mileage reimbursement that will pay a per-mile rate. Students in MAICEI receive transportation training and may be transported to and from campus by, district-based transportation (*e.g.*, VanPool), ADA-approved public transportation that districts purchase ride tickets for, public transportation, such as MBTA or city buses and local education agencies. DDS and MRC transportation funding streams include:

1. Transportation Trip Rate, a per-trip reimbursement code that will pay drivers from point A to point B with a set rate. This is paid to an employee as a transportation recurring monthly payment, which is the automatic payment code to cover recurring transit costs, such as a monthly MBTA pass. This is an automatic payment only;

2. Transportation Mileage, a mileage reimbursement code that will pay drivers by a per-mile rate. This is paid to an independent contractor;
3. Transportation Unique, a code used for special transportation situations, such as an Uber ride, paratransit ride, or a single month MBTA pass. It is a reimbursement to the individual; and
4. Driving Support from MRC, a service for MRC consumers who are eligible for Career services.

Individuals may be referred for driving-related evaluations and resources. The available services depend on eligibility, funding, and/or financial need. MRC offers accessible vehicle inspection and modifications where specialists will provide advice and suggestions concerning vehicle inspections and modifications, and additionally offers driving evaluations and training.

Wellness Needs

Mental health impacts all areas of one's life. Twenty percent of adults in the US experience some type of mental illness (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention). This statistic includes people with an intellectual disability, although it has been estimated that the rate of mental health conditions for those with IDD is 2–3 times higher than for the general population (HOGG Foundation for Mental Health). People with IDD are at a higher risk of co-occurring mental health conditions, with prevalence rates for comorbidity of IDD and mental health conditions ranging from 13.9% to 75.2% (HOGG Foundation for Mental Health). Depression and anxiety are the more frequently identified mental health conditions, with an overrepresentation of schizophrenia in people with IDD.

In the MAICEI model, IHE and K–12 system/transition staff collaborate on ensuring that students have access to all health and wellness resources that are available to students on campus.

Type/Frequency/Duration of IHE Support for Individuals with IDD aged 22 and over

Students who are aged 22 and over attending college will require the same types of support (coaching, peer mentors, PCP) as the students who are currently attending MAICEI programs at colleges and universities. The type, frequency, and duration of support to ensure success of a person with severe IDD aged 22 and older should follow the framework of the MAICEI programs and be determined based on a PCP, ISP, specific needs of individuals, and additional considerations of partnering with adult services providers.

Students 18–21 years old attending MAICEI who are receiving special education services through their district have an individualized education program (IEP) developed by the district, while the 22 and over population has an Individual Service Plan (ISP) or an MRC employment plan (IPE) developed by the adult agency. Both documents are used to guide the coursework and needed support. MAICEI coordinators currently will develop a PCP based on the person with disability's preferences and goals, while considering their district- and agency-identified needs. MRC/DDS service and employment plans can be required by campuses. It is important to note that eligible individuals aged 22 and over will have varying levels of support available through adult service providers. MAICEI coordinators will need to clearly articulate a connection between the Person-Centered Plan, highlighting employment, course registration, and campus engagement.

The existing MAICEI model is successful in providing support to students with intellectual disability, autism, and developmental disabilities in a higher education setting and aligned with what Think College describes in other programs across the nation. We recommend the same range of support for participating students aged 22 and over, as described below. The MAICEI staff available to facilitate student's on-campus support needs to include a program coordinator, education coach, peer mentor, and employment specialist. The program coordinator provides oversight to support staff, faculty, course selection, etc., and meets for weekly check-ins with students.

- All MAICEI staff attend annual training sessions offered by DHE (via Institute for Community Inclusion) once per semester where they learn best practices to provide support to students.
- All MAICEI staff participate in training provided by ICI (contracted with the DHE) to recognize signs of the student's acquisition of self-determination skills as they become familiar with the campus. As skills develop, MAICEI staff recognize opportunities for fading support over time.
- The duration of support required, and the progression of self-determination skills vary from student to student, without a fixed timeline. Fading support is dependent on the individual needs of each student.

Academic Support

- Students meet with the MAICEI coordinator, and the adult human service agency/provider liaison to create their person-centered plan (PCP). This plan will outline

the student's college vision by establishing career goals, course options, social interests, and any other goals the student has in mind as they begin their college journey.

- An education coach provides support depending on the needs of the student.

Support practices can include tutoring, academic coaching, assistance connecting with the disability services office, and access to classroom accommodations.

Education coaches attend training sessions provided by DHE throughout the year where they learn how to fade supports as students develop executive functioning skills by engaging in coursework and navigating campus.

Social Support

- Peer mentors are undergraduate or graduate students who introduce MAICEI students to the social aspects of college life. Mentors provide introductions to campus locations, community activities, and peers, such as going to dining halls, theater events, sporting events, club meetings, and other social activities on campus.

Career Support

- Students can participate in various internships on and off campus. Students can choose internships based on their career goals. Students are not required to participate in the same internship while they are in college. They can change their internship if it is not what they expected.
- MAICEI-funded employment specialists will spend time with students discussing what career they see themselves in when they finish college. Then, they will research internship opportunities on campus and place students in jobs that best suit their career choices.

- Students may have access to campus-based career centers for employment support such as resume building or potential internships and job sites.

Support Frequency

Based on the review of the end of year reports from current MAICEI partnerships it was determined that various factors influence the frequency of support. These factors are the number and needs of students. Below is an example of average frequency of MAICEI support staff:

- Educational coaching (including academic and social skills support) (6–9 hours/week)
- Disability services (access is based on level of need)
- Academic advising and mentoring (1–2 hours/week)
- Peer mentoring (including social-emotional skills support) (4–6 hours/week)
- Job developer/Job coach (12 hours/week)
- Internship/job sites (4 hours/week)

Funding Inclusive Postsecondary Education for Individuals with IDD

A subgroup of the Task Force investigated both national and state practices that are in place to support people with IDD and/or autism who want to attend college. They investigated (1) research related to postsecondary education funding for college students with IDD and/or autism, and (2) state agency examples that support inclusive postsecondary education.

An important discussion for MAICEI partners and the Advisory Board is how students who have exited school will have the ability to pay for college, tuition, books, materials, etc. There will be some grant funds available in school districts for students aged 22 and over.

However, unlike their younger peers who are in school where students are supported by in-kind supports and program fees paid by the respective school district, students who have aged out of special education services rely on other sources (Grigal, et al., 2022; Weir, 2022). In a Think College national study of college program surveys, Grigal et al. (2022) found that private pay, scholarships, and Career services funds were the most reported sources of funding. Federal financial aid, aid from disability agency funds, grant funding, Medicaid waiver, and tuition waivers were also used for programs with Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary (CTP) program status.

The most frequently reported source of funding was private pay ($n = 187$ programs; 72.8%) followed by scholarships ($n = 140$; 54.5%) and Career services VR funds ($n = 133$; 51.6%). Other sources of funding included federal financial aid ($n = 91$; 35.4%), local school district funds ($n = 89$; 34.6%), adult IDD state/agency funds ($n = 82$; 31.9%), grant funding ($n = 77$; 30.0%), Medicaid waiver or day habilitation funds ($n = 53$; 20.6%), tuition waivers ($n = 45$; 17.5%), and other sources ($n = 27$; 10.5%). Eighty-six (86) programs (33.5%) listed at least one scholarship available to students with IDD.

National Funding Streams

Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary (CTP) Programs

The Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008 created a new kind of college program specifically for students with intellectual disability called Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs. The Act defined the requirements of CTP programs, defined “student with an intellectual disability” for the purposes of these programs, and opened access to federal student aid for students with intellectual disability attending an approved CTP

program, even if those students did not have a standard high school diploma or were not matriculating toward a degree.

Programs are eligible to apply for CTP status if they support students who have aged out of special education services. When a program has CTP status, eligible students who have an intellectual disability and who have financial need as determined by FASFA can use federal financial aid to help pay for their studies. In some states, students with intellectual disabilities can only access Career Services funds, Medicaid funds, or certain scholarships at approved CTP programs. By becoming an approved CTP program, campuses can open up additional funding sources to include federal student aid. In the US, in the 2019–2020 academic year, 114 approved CTP programs existed, and federal student aid was offered to 628 students with intellectual disability at 88 colleges and universities. One hundred and eighty-eight students (20%) were reported to have received federal financial aid in the form of a Pell Grant while attending a Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students Intellectual Disabilities with CTP status. Over 2.5 million dollars in aid was provided to students in the form of Pell grants, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, and Federal Work-Study. MAICEI programs have historically been ineligible to apply for CTP status since dual or concurrent enrollment programs only served students who still receive public school special education services which can be supported under IDEA.

Federal Financial Aid

Students enrolled in CTP programs who meet or are below the income threshold may be eligible for a Pell Grant, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, or Federal Work-Study

funds, but are not eligible for federal student loan programs. The current maximum Pell grant is \$6,495 per year.

Scholarships

There are disability specific scholarships available, such as scholarships for individuals with Down Syndrome or autism. Others are intended for people from a particular state or studying for a particular career. Scholarships will contribute to funding but typically do not fully fund opportunities.

Medicaid Funding

Congress authorized the waiver of certain Medicaid requirements to allow states to provide Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). These waiver programs are often called 1915(c) or HCBS waiver programs. Each state has considerable discretion in determining the waiver services to support postsecondary education. Other services that may be covered by Medicaid include peer mentor support, career services, tuition and fees, transportation, assistive technology, and housing and support.

Social Security

Attending college does not result in someone being ineligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). In fact, some students use their SSI and SSDI benefits to help pay for school-related expenses. A Social Security program, the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program allows SSI and SSDI beneficiaries to exclude income that is being used to assist the person in returning to work. An individual can set income aside for current or future expenses for training, equipment, services, or support, which can include college if courses are related to an employment goal.

IDEA and Special Education Funds

School districts partner with local IHEs to support students ages 18–21 on a college campus. They allocate some special education funds to pay program fees to offset other costs of college attendance for eligible students, including peer mentors and college supplies.

Family Funds and Student Contributions

ABLE accounts offer families a valuable tool for saving for college expenses without jeopardizing eligibility for crucial benefits. These tax-advantaged savings accounts are specifically designed to help people with disabilities and their families set aside funds for qualified disability-related expenses, including education costs. By contributing to an ABLE account, families can ensure that their loved ones have financial resources available to cover a wide range of future expenses incurred by their child with a disability, including tuition, books, supplies, and other educational necessities, all while safeguarding their eligibility for means-tested benefits, such as Medicaid and SSI.

In addition to ABLE accounts, families may explore other avenues for funding their child's college education. Prepaid Tuition accounts and 529 College Savings Plans are popular options that offer tax benefits and flexible investment options. Prepaid Tuition accounts allow families to lock in current tuition rates at eligible colleges and universities, providing peace of mind amidst rising tuition costs. Meanwhile, 529 College Savings Plans offer a diverse range of investment options, allowing contributions to grow tax-free and be withdrawn tax-free when used for qualified education expenses.

Moreover, students can contribute to their college funds themselves through various means. Income from part-time jobs, internships, or work-study programs can be allocated

toward educational expenses, helping students take ownership of their financial future.

Additionally, individuals receiving Social Security benefits (SSI or SSDI) may earmark a portion of their monthly payments for educational purposes without impacting their overall benefits eligibility.

By leveraging a combination of these funding sources—such as ABLE accounts, Prepaid Tuition accounts, 529 Plans, student income, and Social Security benefits—families can develop comprehensive financial strategies to support their child's educational aspirations while safeguarding their financial well-being. These resources empower people with disabilities to pursue higher education without fear of financial insecurity, paving the way for greater independence and success in the future.

Example from Oklahoma

Task Force members identified Oklahoma as a state where VR funds are being used to support college students with IDD enrolled in CTP programs. The state boasts four IHEs dedicated to supporting students with IDD. Among these, three programs—Northeastern State University's River Hawks Scholar Program, Oklahoma State University's Opportunity Orange Scholars, and the University of Oklahoma's Sooner Works—have all achieved CTP status. The fourth college, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma's Neill-Wint Center for Neurodiversity, although not designated as a CTP, offers a comprehensive four-year degree program tailored to support students with autism.

Like Massachusetts, Oklahoma has formed a capacity-building alliance to promote inclusive postsecondary education for students with disabilities. In addition to collaborating with similar partners as Massachusetts, such as inclusive postsecondary education program staff,

IHEs, local education agencies, policymakers, and state agencies, Oklahoma advocates have also engaged with their state's workforce innovation board and VR agency. These partnerships aim to identify shared goals and leverage resources effectively to support youth, emphasizing cooperation and resource coordination.

The regional VR office in Oklahoma has pioneered a pilot initiative to provide substantial support to the three CTP-designated programs. Under this initiative, the VR office allocates \$3,000 per student per semester to each program, in addition to covering expenses for students to participate in paid internship experiences for up to 15 hours per week. A key requirement for participation in this program is the student's eligibility for VR services.

This pilot initiative was informed during consultations between the regional VR office and experts from Think College, who provided valuable insights and encouragement. They referenced a Technical Assistance Circular (TAC) from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, titled "Maximizing Services and the Use of Funds to Support Quality Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities through the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs" (2023, July 11). This TAC encourages VR agencies to evaluate their current service delivery models and develop a strategic approach to make full use of available funds.

This innovative approach has since become a model for other states exploring ways to blend and braid funds from adult disability agencies, demonstrating the potential for collaborative efforts to enhance support services for people with disabilities pursuing higher education.

Study of Three States' Use of Waivers to Fund College Attendance

The ICI and Think College staff performed a study to identify the types of services and supports and their delivery models available for students with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism, or other severe developmental disabilities to attend college in Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts. This study included a search of promotional materials available from the IDD agency in each state, review of memos and reports available online, interviews with service providers, and analysis of materials disseminated at conferences.

Findings. Waiver funds are managed and disbursed by the state IDD agency in all three states.

Processes. Massachusetts and New York have similar structures and processes in place, with an option for the person with disability and/or their family to design their own customized supports, employ support workers, and manage funding with the support of a support coordinator or broker. A fiscal intermediary provides payroll services, monitoring, and reporting, based on each person's individual budget. The difference between Massachusetts and New York is that in Massachusetts, the service coordinator or broker is employed by the state agency, while in New York, the service coordinator or broker can be employed by the state agency or independent contractors. In Pennsylvania the support coordinator who manages services is employed by the state IDD agency.

In Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, if a person qualifies, they may be eligible for services/funding. In New York, the amount of funding is determined by the person's need, measured with an Approved Needs Assessment Tool (Coordinated Assessment System or DDP2 survey), which is updated every two years. It should be noted that Massachusetts is in the process of piloting a new assessment process, the SIS-A.

Funding Amount. The funding ceiling and approved expenses vary by state (see Table 1).

Braided Funding. In terms of funding collaboration between agencies, all three states have braided funding options. In all states, Medicaid is the payor of last resort, making collaboration across funding agencies essential. In New York the state IDD agency might collaborate with several agencies, including the state’s education agency, while in Massachusetts, DDS might pay for portions of services/supports not covered by the MRC for qualified persons, on a case-by-case basis.

Table 1: Three States’ Use of Medicaid Waivers to support IPSE

Item	PA	NY	MA
Waiver Funding Process Name	Waiver funding	Self-directed services	Participant-directed model
Amount Determination Process	If approved for services, waiver funds are available	Approved Needs Assessment Tool (Coordinated Assessment System or DDP2 survey), updated every two years	If approved for services, funds are available (state and waiver combined)

Amount	\$40,000 for 4-year tuition and fees (\$37,000 covered directly by waiver) \$5,000/semester for educational coach support	Determined based on Assessment Tool scores, up to \$32,000/year Other than personal service, up to \$3,000/year (cell phone, transportation, staff activity fees)	Individually assigned; up to \$25,000/year
Personnel Supports	Supports coordinator (agency staff)	Fiscal intermediary Support broker (independent contractor or agency staff)	Fiscal intermediary Support broker (agency staff)
Funder Model	Braided funding (DDS payer of last resort)	DDS and other funders such as Department of Education	Single agency, although braiding is possible with MRC*

*Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Recommendations

The Task Force recommendations are based on common themes that emerged from the Task Force meetings, research, and evaluation. Recommendations to help ensure a more consistent understanding regarding the options for inclusive postsecondary education in Massachusetts for adults with severe IDD and/or autism aged 22 or over and to help ensure provision of resources available to support access to higher education are prepared from the Task Force members in this report. We propose thirteen (13) overall recommendations:

1. Rename the initiative to Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education (MAIPSE), to clarify that inclusive higher education is now available to individuals aged 22 and older who have exited special education, as well as young adults aged 18-21 who concurrently receive school district special education services.
2. Standardize language referring to inclusive higher education practices, district and adult service partners involvement, and streamline financial processes (including charges and payments) across Massachusetts IHE systems.
3. Expand outreach and dissemination efforts to ensure accessibility to all partners.
4. Expand financial aid by supporting all colleges and universities to be designated as Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Education programs (CTPs) to make inclusive education affordable and to promote integration.
5. Implement a consistent data collection and reporting system to assess and ensure program effectiveness.
6. Clarify and expand DDS support of inclusive higher education opportunities.
7. Clarify and expand MRC support of inclusive higher education opportunities.

8. Address the variability in costs associated with supporting eligible individuals aged 22 and older in higher education settings.
9. Develop sustainability plans.
10. Enhance existing MAICEI partnerships to include community providers who are supporting students aged 22 and older.
11. Formalize a DHE/MAICEI, DDS, and MRC alliance to ensure understanding of all processes and procedures for each office and identify ways to strengthen the relationship and opportunities for inclusive postsecondary education.
12. The DHE, in consultation with DESE and other state agency partners, should develop policy guidelines establishing minimum expectations on a student-centered “participation plan” referral process as it relates to individuals aged 22 and over.
13. Continue to monitor implementation of the new law to determine whether, and if so, under what circumstances, it may be appropriate for public higher education institutions to specify an age range for student participation in their selection guidelines for individuals participating in residence life/ dormitory living.

Recommendation #1 Rename the initiative as Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education (MAIPSE)

Renaming the initiative to Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education (MAIPSE) will refer to the entire model of services that supports individuals with severe ID, severe ASD, and severe DD. The original title, the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative

(MAICEI) will continue to refer to the model that supports eligible students ages 18–21. This adjustment allows partners, including adult disability agencies, community rehabilitation providers, advocates, people with IDD, and their families, to differentiate between the established inclusive concurrent enrollment program (MAICEI) and newly available inclusive postsecondary education options tailored for all individuals aspiring to pursue college in their services.

Since the enactment of the new law in 2022, many people are confused about eligibility for adults aged 22 and over, largely due to the initiative's name and historical requirements. Originally, the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative targeted students ages 18–21 receiving special education services while simultaneously engaging in college. Recent legislative changes have broadened eligibility to include individuals whose entitlement to special education under Chapter 71B has ended, enhancing access to inclusive postsecondary education.

Recommendation #2. Develop and implement a communication strategy to clarify expanded eligibility for individuals aged 22 and over, along with information regarding adult service agency involvement and support.

To clarify expanded eligibility and minimize confusion, we recommend development and implementation of a strategy to disseminate clear information regarding state required partner roles and responsibilities, and potential funding streams for individuals aged 22 and over. Clearly described processes and pathways are essential to facilitate access to higher education for people aged 22 and over with severe intellectual disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorder, or other severe developmental disabilities across Massachusetts. This information will

be important for colleges and universities, adult human service agencies, adults with disabilities, and their families.

Recommendation #3. Expand outreach and dissemination efforts to ensure accessibility.

Despite its establishment in 2007, and its successful service to over 100 school districts and more than 2,500 students, MAICEI still faces a lack of awareness among some Massachusetts school districts, state agency employees, non-participating public colleges, and universities, individuals with disabilities, and families. This gap highlights the need for increased outreach efforts.

IHEs, whether they have existing programs or not, should prioritize the development of outreach and expansion plans. These plans aim to ensure that all eligible students with IDD in Massachusetts have access to the option of attending college. This includes proactive dissemination of information to adult service providers, local education agencies, and family advocacy and support networks.

By actively engaging these relevant entities through targeted outreach efforts, IHEs can raise awareness about the opportunities available through MAICEI and resources available to support individuals with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, they can address any misconceptions or barriers that may prevent students with IDD from considering college as a viable postsecondary option. Through collaborative efforts and effective communication, IHEs can work toward creating a more inclusive and accessible higher education landscape for people with disabilities across Massachusetts.

MAICEI in collaboration with partners from the ICI at UMass Boston, should develop a statewide dissemination plan. This plan should include the creation of a comprehensive MAICEI

toolkit, incorporating an awareness campaign about inclusive postsecondary education as well as the development and refinement of professional development and technical assistance training. The dissemination plan should be developed to effectively reach individuals with disabilities and their families who are of color, are multilingual, or are from immigrant communities. The toolkit will feature marketing materials, presentation materials, and checklists tailored for all partners. Additionally, we recommend providing specific training sessions to adult services staff on inclusive postsecondary education. Finally, we recommend establishing prioritized outreach plans for engaging various partners.

Recommendation #4. Expand financial aid by supporting all college and universities to be designated as s Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary (CTP) Program.

In consideration of the expanded age range that MAICEI partners may now serve, it is imperative that IHEs apply for and obtain approval as Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Education programs (CTPs). Approval as a CTP enables students with intellectual disability to access federal financial aid, including Pell grants, the Federal Work-Study Program, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants. By prioritizing the establishment and recognition of CTPs, MAICEI aims to ensure that students across the expanded age range have equitable access to financial resources that support their postsecondary education journeys. This strategic focus not only enhances the affordability of higher education for people with IDD but also promotes their full integration into the educational landscape, fostering inclusive environments conducive to their academic and personal growth.

Recommendation #5. Implement a consistent data collection and reporting system to assess and ensure program effectiveness.

It is imperative that all campuses that are providing support to students with intellectual disability, developmental disabilities, or autism actively participate in a statewide comprehensive data collection initiative. This data collection must be required to accurately assess the implementation and progress of inclusive postsecondary education programs across the state. Compliance with this requirement is mandated by the new legislation, underlining its significance in ensuring accountability, effectiveness, and equity in serving students with diverse needs.

By systematically collecting student and campus-specific data, including but not limited to student data regarding race, ethnicity, primary language, and type of disability, educational institutions can gain valuable insights into the efficacy of their support services and identify areas for improvement. This data-informed approach enables partners to make better decisions, allocate resources effectively, and tailor interventions to better meet the needs of students with disabilities. Moreover, a statewide data collection system fosters transparency and accountability, allowing educators, students, families, policymakers, and advocates to track the impact of inclusive education initiatives and advocate for continued support and investment in this critical area.

Overall, active participation in the statewide data collection effort is essential for fostering a culture of continuous improvement and ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, have equitable access to postsecondary education opportunities and the support they need to succeed.

Recommendation #6. Clarify and expand DDS support of inclusive higher education opportunities.

It is recommended that DDS clarify its service delivery method for the existing self-direction model and also expand to identify other waiver-funded and state-funded service options that can support participation in inclusive higher education. This includes but is not limited to modifications to existing services, such as broadening the existing college navigation services or modifying individual supported employment to address the employment related components of inclusive higher education; and also developing new service models that align with the supports required for participating students.

- i) DDS should expand and clarify the full range of waiver and state-funded services that can be used to support adults with severe intellectual disabilities in higher education in the state's renewal applications and/or in DDS guidance issued after Centers for Medicare and Medicaid approval. This includes (but is not limited to) individualized day supports, peer support, assistive technology, transportation, and supported employment (for employment on the college campus as part of inclusion in all aspects of campus life).
- ii) DDS should continue to make individuals, families, and providers aware that waiver services as well as self-directed services are available to support adults with severe ID to be integrated into campus life.
- iii) DDS should strengthen and expand the utilization of existing resources such as DDS's Participant Directed Services and College Navigation services across MAICEI partnerships. Additionally, there should be clarity on how and under what circumstances eligible students can access tuition and college support from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

- iv) DDS should develop clear guidance policy outlining how students and families interested in college can pursue funding for self-direction.

To fully participate in inclusive postsecondary education opportunities, participating individuals aged 22 and over will need the following:

- A DDS resource who can serve as a point person for the individual, assist the individual with making a connection to the college program coordinator, assist the individual with taking a tour of the college, assist the individual with completing the application, and assisting the individual with travel arrangements and travel training needs.
- An educational coach who will assist the student to adjust to college expectations. This may include learning how to navigate the campus, making appointments for accommodations or tutoring, reviewing class expectations, organizing a plan to complete assignments, creating and following a schedule, and using campus resources.

Recommendation #7. Clarify and expand MRC support of inclusive higher education opportunities.

- MRC should investigate how Vocational Rehabilitation agencies in other states are facilitating inclusive postsecondary education opportunities for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Think College, with its staff expertise in this domain, could be consulted to explore additional ways to allocate funds that would assist eligible individuals in incorporating college into their individual employment plans.
- Similar to DDS, MRC should take steps necessary to ensure that individuals, families, and providers are aware that vocational rehabilitation resources are available to support

adults with IDD to be fully integrated into all aspects of campus life and ensure clear and consistent availability of these resources.

- Policies should be devised to provide clarity on how and under what circumstances eligible students can access tuition and college support from MRC. Federal policies already exist for the VR program. Staff will be reminded that VR services are available for individuals determined eligible for services, including MAICEI participants.

DDS and MRC should ensure consistent communication of information to all service applicants statewide regarding pathways for students to participate in inclusive postsecondary education. Establishing common programmatic and student eligibility guidelines will promote equity in access for individuals and families. Additionally, DDS and MRC should establish an interagency coordination plan and train all case management personnel on the options and processes for individuals. (MRC is following the federal guidelines established for serving all individuals eligible for VR services and will work with DDS on a cross-agency staff communication strategy.)

Recommendation #8. Address the variability in costs associated with supporting eligible individuals aged 22 and over in higher education settings.

To address the variability in costs associated with supporting individuals with severe IDD age 22 and over in higher education settings, we propose the following measures:

- *Establishing Detailed Budgets:* IHEs should prioritize the development of detailed budgets that provide a comprehensive breakdown of costs and descriptions. These budgets should encompass both programmatic costs and student engagement expenses,

ensuring transparency and facilitating accurate budgeting by state agencies for potential students.

- *Transparent Funding Mechanisms:* There should be a transparent explanation of funding sources and mechanisms for services supporting participation in inclusive postsecondary education. Partners should explore alternative services and payment options to ensure access to necessary support services for effective engagement in postsecondary education.
- *Enactment of MAICEI Funding:* We recommend that the Massachusetts legislature continue to include MAICEI funding as a dedicated state line item. This funding should be allocated for program expansion, as well as support and technical assistance from the ICI/Think College. This assistance should target IHE staff and faculty, adult service providers staff, and LEA staff, and families, enhancing their capacity to effectively support individuals with severe IDD in postsecondary education.

Recommendation #9. Development of Sustainability Plans

The MAICEI office, under the auspices of the DHE, should provide campuses with a sustainability plan rubric to serve as a guiding tool for strategic planning. This plan should delineate strategies for the sustained support of students with IDD, fostering partnerships with LEAs and adult service agencies. These strategies may encompass goals related to institutionalizing key roles, such as coordinators, employment specialists, and education coaches. Campuses will be encouraged to exhibit creativity in this endeavor, potentially integrating positions with existing campus-based roles, all while remaining mindful of the

unique culture and needs of their institution. By implementing a sustainability plan rubric early in the process, campuses can proactively address the long-term viability of their inclusive postsecondary education programs, ensuring continued support and opportunities for students with disabilities well into the future.

Recommendation #10. Enhance the Partnership Leadership Teams to include community providers when they are supporting students in MAICEI activities.

An important mechanism for ongoing collaboration for MAICEI initiatives are Partner Leadership Team (PLT) meetings that occur 4-5 times a year. These meetings provide an opportunity for college and school partners to develop partnership goals, develop program policies and procedures, and to communicate any challenges regarding student participation. Therefore, it is recommended that community service providers, contracted by DDS or MRC to support students in inclusive higher education, encourage at least one representative to join the partnership's quarterly or semi-annual PLT meetings. By maintaining consistent membership in the Partnership Leadership Teams, these providers can ensure ongoing collaboration with campuses to effectively support people with IDD in accessing and thriving in inclusive postsecondary education environments.

Furthermore, IHEs offering inclusive higher education pathways are encouraged to broaden the scope of their memoranda of agreement (MOAs) to incorporate adult service providers. It is recommended that DHE works with adult service agencies to develop model MOAs. These MOAs serve as crucial documents outlining the roles, responsibilities, and financial arrangements among partners. By including adult service providers in these agreements,

partnerships can foster long-term program sustainability. Additionally, the current model often relies on in-kind services from educational institutions, such as educational coach support and travel training. It is essential for all partners to engage in discussions and exploration regarding the provision of these in-kind services, ensuring alignment with the needs and resources of each partner involved. Through transparent communication and collaboration, partnerships can strengthen their capacity to effectively support people with disabilities in their pursuit of inclusive postsecondary education opportunities.

Recommendation #11. Formalize a DHE/MAICEI, DDS, and MRC alliance to ensure understanding of all processes and procedures for each office and identify ways to strengthen the relationship and opportunities for inclusive postsecondary education.

With the legislation expanding the opportunities for students with severe intellectual and/or severe developmental disabilities and/or severe autism to participate in inclusive postsecondary education it will be critical for the MAICEI office, adult service providers, and community providers to formalize a statewide steering committee of representatives from DHE-/MAICEI, DDS, and MRC, and families be created and meet at least bimonthly. This steering committee will identify current policies and procedures that support individuals in inclusive higher education and create training materials for statewide providers.

Recommendation #12. The Department of Higher Education, in consultation with DESE and other state agency partners, should develop policy guidelines establishing minimum expectations on a student-centered “participation plan” referral process as it relates to individuals aged 22 and over.

The Commonwealth's landmark MAICEI legislation develops multiple pathways for students with severe disabilities aged 22 and over to access higher education experiences. Eligible students may access the program through a referral, along with funding support, provided by one or more adult-servicing state agencies if the individual has been determined eligible for services from the adult-servicing agencies and prioritized/ funded for participation in the program. The agencies specifically named in the legislation are the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission³ and the Department of Developmental Services⁴. As noted above, both of these adult-servicing agencies currently support their clients with other state resources through referral processes. For the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), funding for training and education is provided only when it is determined necessary to achieve an employment goal identified in an "Individualized Plan for Employment." For the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), funding for post-secondary education is currently accessed through Self Direction and focused pathway to employment. DDS funds non-credited courses, and any targeted skill development that could lead to employment and/or social and workplace skills. Goals are documented in the Individual Service Plan (ISP) and the requests are reviewed annually; funding cannot exceed four (4) years.

³ Section 31A((c)(ii) of Chapter 15A provides as follows: "Costs associated with supporting participation in public institutions of higher education under this section shall be...(ii) subject to the availability of federal funding and appropriation for individuals who are determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, provided however that access to higher education assists in the attainment of an identified employment goal, as determined by the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission, consistent with all applicable regulations and subject o the development on an individualized plan for employment.

⁴ Section 31A((c)(iii) of Chapter 15A provides as follows: "Costs associated with supporting participation in public institutions of higher education under this section shall be... (iii) subject to appropriation, for individuals 22 years of age or older who are determined eligible for services under chapter 19B; provided, however, that the individual supports and services are determined to be an appropriate support, of the type, frequency and duration identified in an assessment conducted by the department of developmental services, and subject to the development of an annual individual support plan.

Currently, students between the ages of 18 to 21 typically are recommended for participation in the MAICEI program through a referring school district and the IEP process, through which SPED directors take care to review the needs and goals of each student; assess whether experiences in a higher education setting would be appropriate for the student; and document the anticipated experiences, services, and accommodations that should be accessed in the public higher education setting and funded through the IEP process.

For MAICEI to be safely, transparently, and appropriately replicated for students aged 22 and over, our Task Force recognized the value in establishing guidelines for state agencies that serve students over the age of 22 (hereinafter “adult-serving agencies”) to similarly document the identified needs and goals for each student referred to the MAICEI program. This will help establish clear lines of communication and expectations, with the intention of helping to: support the student with the most appropriate higher education experiences (*e.g.*, a community college or university setting; residential (if allowable or applicable) or commuter experience); maximize the student’s living, learning, and socializing experiences best suited to their individual “strengths, needs, preferences, and interests⁵”; identify available agency funding supports; and work with the MAICEI coordinator and the individual to help safely and appropriately set the individual up for living, learning, and social success), consistent with the institution’s mission.

The legislature similarly recognized and endorsed the value in such individualized state agency participation plans, noting that institutions may limit the selection and participation to individuals receiving supports and services from the DDS, MRC, other state agencies, or the individual’s school district. M.G.L. c. 15A, § 31A(b). The legislature further noted that students

⁵ Quoted language is from M.G.L. c. 15A, section 31A(b).

referred and funded through MRC should have “individualized plans for employment,” and that students referred and funded through the DDS should likewise have “individual support plans.” M.G.L. c. 15A, § 31A(c)(ii) and (iii).

Accordingly, for the colleges and universities choosing to limit participation to individuals receiving supports and services from DDS or MRC, the Task Force sees value in establishing minimum guidelines to assist the state agencies serving individuals with IDD aged 22 and over in assessing and recommending to public higher education institutions applicants for the program, consistent with each agency’s respective regulatory framework, by developing the participation “plans” contemplated in the statute (hereinafter student-centered “participation plans”).

In developing the regulatory framework mandated in the legislation, the DHE should consider establishing minimum policy guidelines on what should be included in such student-centered “participation plans” to help advance the goals of the MAICEI program and help set selected students and their receiving institutions up for success. The guidelines should avoid creating an additional, new process. Rather, the guidelines should strive to build upon and, where appropriate, clarify and align the adult-servicing agencies’ existing processes for supporting clients with available state services while aligning those processes with the intended goals of the MAICEI program. At a minimum, the guidelines for individualized, student-centered “participation plans” should align with the fundamental guiding principles behind the established MAICEI program and should:

- Support a collaborative approach with the individual (and, if applicable, their parent or guardian) and the MAICEI program coordinator at the prospective receiving higher education institution to:

- determine the strengths, needs, preferences, goals, and interests of an individual (*e.g.*, independent living skills, self-determination and self-advocacy skills);
 - discuss and determine what and which higher education experiences would be appropriate for the student; and
 - help identify and support the individual with academic courses, programmatic offerings, services, supports, and other activities at a higher education institution that can best meet the needs of the individual (*e.g.*, geography; size, type, and mission of the institution).
- Identify goals and outcomes for the individual (*e.g.*, employment goals, independent living needs, learning and skill development).
 - Identify academic, social, and career support and resources needed for the individual to meet their goals and outcomes (*e.g.*, travel training, courses and activities aligned with career goals, coaching, peer mentors).
 - Identify the type, frequency, duration of anticipated higher educational experiences (*e.g.*, number of credit hours and/or semesters).
 - Identify available funding support including state (*e.g.*, MAICEI grant funding), federal, and private resources, making it clear that all such state and federal funding is subject to appropriation and the laws, regulations, and policies governing such funding.

These student-centered participation plans should be reviewed and updated periodically, preferably every one to two years consistent with current practice and regulatory requirements.

Incorporating the concept of a well-defined, student-centered “participation plan” will not only help identify the “right fit” for each student based on their individual strengths, needs,

preferences, goals and interests, but will also help ensure that students enjoy a safe, fruitful experience as on a state university or community college campus and will strengthen public higher education partnerships with adult servicing agencies.

Recommendation #13. Continue to monitor implementation of the new law to determine whether, and if so, under what circumstances, it may be appropriate for public higher education institutions to specify an age range for student participation in their selection guidelines for individuals participating in residence life/dormitory living.

A question was raised during Task Force discussions of whether public higher education institutions currently do or prospectively should include age ranges or caps in their selection criteria for student participation, namely within the context of student housing. At least one Task Force member assumed that age ranges were included in the enacted legislation; another suggested that this is a complex issue but could be addressed through the referral and matching process with clear guidelines and expectations; others suggested institutions' existing policies and procedures may address this; and others suggested the need for further data collection during the initial year(s) of pilot implementation and further research, including consult with partners at *Think College*.

Information readily available at the time of the issuance of this Report indicates that between 2015 and 2023, twenty-six (26) states (including MA) introduced legislation on inclusive postsecondary (IPSE) with eighteen (18) states legislatures passing and thirteen (13)⁶ states signing their respective proposed legislation. See [Legislative Policy on Inclusive Higher Education](#)

⁶ The thirteen states are: CO, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MA, MI, NC, ND, OK, TN, and TX). See [Legislative Policy on Inclusive Higher Education in U.S. States \(thinkcollege.net\)](#)

[in U.S. States \(thinkcollege.net\)](#) Several states are including age ranges or caps (e.g., for students between the ages of 16 to 26) in proposed⁷ or enacted⁸ legislation that expands IPSE experiences beyond high school concurrent enrollment. Others do not appear to be including such age ranges or caps.⁹

The Task Force recognizes that this is a complex question, and there may be no “one size fits all” approach given the unique segmental and institutional missions of the public higher education system, and the unique individualized needs, goals, and expectations of a student - including whether peer group socialization and support is an important part of the student’s individualized participation plan. On the one hand, in the Community College segment, enrolled students include adult learners, and the average age range for an enrolled community college student runs from 20 to 30. In the State University segment, the majority of enrolled undergraduate students are between the ages of 19 to 22, and the age range for undergraduates

⁷ See [Legislative Policy on Inclusive Higher Education in U.S. States \(thinkcollege.net\)](#) By way of example, Oregon’s IPSE legislative initiative (SB572) is very close to the funding model passed in MA, as the bill appropriates funds for coordination of the IPSE program to entities including the state’s higher education commission. The Oregon bill proposes limiting participation to students between the ages of 16 to 26. As of the date of the issuance of this report the Oregon legislation has not been enacted.

⁸ For example, the enacted model in Delaware provides grants and scholarships to students with intellectual disabilities seeking a degree or certification from a public higher education institution provided the scholarship recipients 1) must begin attending classes “no later than two years after finishing high school; 2) must be under the age of 25; and 3) must have been eligible for IDEA supports previously. HB326

⁹ As for notable peer states without a legislatively or regulatorily imposed age cap - the Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Act (HF 2073) offers technical assistance and grant program for assisting the creation or maintenance of IPSE programs throughout the state); Maryland’s “Hubbard Inclusive Higher Education Grant Program” (SB 872) awards competitive grants to institutions that create and implement inclusive pilot programs for students with IDD”; and North Carolina also stood out as having passed in 2023 laws that expand grant funding for IPSE programs at the state’s community colleges for “micro-credentials” as well as “Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Scholarship Program” funding at the community colleges and state universities. See [Legislative Policy on Inclusive Higher Education in U.S. States \(thinkcollege.net\)](#)

enrolled in a University of Massachusetts campus (excluding UMass medical and excluding UMass Boston, which is a commuter school) is between 19 to 21. The age range at UMass Boston is slightly higher, with the majority of undergraduate students between the ages of 19 and 23. Notably, these are average ranges and as such, all colleges and universities have matriculating students who are older learners.

The Task Force recommends that whether and how to address age range guidance for residence life/dormitory living in the regulatory or policy design of the MAICEI program warrants further research and exploration. In anticipation of a potentially significant influx of eligible students aged 22 and over into the MAICEI programs hosted at the Commonwealth's public higher education institutions, the Task Force recognizes that institutions may need flexibility, to explore whether age ranges or caps for residence life/dormitory living -- or the lack thereof-- are manageable or appropriate given the institution's mission, the community served (e.g., peer groups), and a referred student's anticipated needs, goals and expectations.

Meanwhile, the Task Force suggests that this issue regarding age ranges for residence life/dormitory living can be addressed appropriately through a carefully, *collaboratively* prepared, student-centered participation plan, pursuant to which the individualized needs, goals, and expectations of a MAICEI student are intentionally matched with the appropriate higher education campus setting and experiences. For example, if peer mentoring and support are an integral part of the student's participation plan, then the student should be matched with residence life/dormitory programs and experiences that allow for access to peer support. Data should be collected in the initial roll out of extending the MAICEI program residence life/dormitory living to students aged 22 and over. While individual institutions should not be prohibited from exploring

preferred or presumptive age ranges for residence life/ dormitory living, such policies must be in alignment with institutions' current practices and polices, and institutions should be required to report on referral, enrollment, and outcome data related to the age ranges of students referred for residence life/ dormitory living, those who participate in residence life/ dormitory living, and any applicable student outcome measures related to the individual's participation plan.

Conclusion and Acknowledgments

The Task Force wishes to express appreciation to and acknowledgement of the Healy-Driscoll Administration, the Massachusetts Legislature, and the partnering agencies, individuals, and advocates referenced within this report for their leadership and involvement in developing this report. While work remains to implement the 2022 MAICEI Law across the Commonwealth's public higher education institutions, the Task Force hopes that this report will help inform the development of implementation policies and regulations, and ultimately play a key role in safely and appropriately expanding access to post-secondary educational experiences for students with severe disabilities.

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