

Introducing (the new) Client Assistance Program (& other EFE services)

Sponsored by INCIL/SILC

April 2023



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Equip For Equality

- ▶ Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system for the State of Illinois
- ▶ **Mission:** Advance the human & civil rights of people with disabilities in Illinois
- ▶ **Free legal assistance** for people with disabilities about issues related to their disability
- ▶ **Legal teams:** Civil Rights, Special Education, Abuse Investigations

Voice: 800.537.2632 TTY: 800.610.2779
www.equipforequality.org



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Client Assistance Program (CAP)



- ▶ **CAP:** Established by the Rehabilitation Act
- ▶ **What CAP does, generally:**
 - ▶ Helps people who apply for or receive services under the Rehabilitation Act, including vocational rehabilitation and independent living services
 - ▶ Advises and informs people about their rights under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- ▶ Across the country, most CAPs are housed outside of state government; many within the state P&A
- ▶ As of **July 1, 2022**, CAP was redesignated from within DRS to **Equip for Equality (EFE)**

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CAP Advocacy Team (as of April 2023)



Sarah Huttenlocher

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Megan Sorey

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Rachel Weisberg

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Emily Wilson

- ▶ CAP Advocate, Staff Attorney
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- ▶ *Focus on youth and transition*

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Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)



- ▶ The **Division of Rehabilitative Services** is an adult service agency housed within the Illinois Department of Human Services
- ▶ DRS provides both home services support and vocational rehabilitation (VR) support
 - ▶ Voc Rehab = Employment support services
 - ▶ **CAP covers only VR issues (not home services)**
- ▶ **Goal of VR program** = Help people with disabilities “prepare for, secure, retain, **advance** in or regain employment” [34 CFR § 361.42\(A\)\(1\)\(III\)](#)

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Overview of VR Process: Referral



- ▶ Find the local office [online](#) based on county and zip code
- ▶ Call your office or fill out [online referral form](#).
- ▶ Typical wait time is 2 weeks for initial contact from DRS to discuss application after submitting referral
- ▶ DRS must complete (or make reasonable attempts to complete) the initial interview within **30 days** from referral date

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Overview of VR Process: Application / Eligibility



To qualify for DRS services an individual must:



*This includes high school and transition students who need assistance in preparing to enter the workforce or are looking for part time work experiences.

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Overview of VR Process: Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)



- ▶ IPE is document that outlines individual's employment goal and services DRS will provide
- ▶ Includes
 - Employment outcome/goal
 - Services needed to meet the goal
 - Signed by both VR counselor AND individual
- ▶ If individual does not know what type of job they want, DRS can do an assessment to determine their strengths, resources, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests

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Examples of VR Services

- Job training and job coaching
- Assistance finding a job
- Paying for supplies needed for employment, i.e. uniform, tools, licensure fees, etc.
- Paying for college or another training program
- Providing Assistive Technology
- Paying for Vocational Evaluations
- Providing Independent Living support (transportation and housing)
- Catch all: “Other goods and services determined necessary for the individual with a disability to achieve an employment outcome.” [34 CFR § 361.48 \(b\)\(21\)](#).



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Helping DRS Applicants & Customers (1)

CAP Role: Provide information, advice and advocacy for people applying for or receiving VR services

Examples of client cases:

- ▶ Person wants to work and is looking for services to help
- ▶ Person can't figure out how to open a referral for DRS services
- ▶ Person created a referral but no one from DRS has followed up



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Helping DRS Applicants & Customers (2)



More examples of client cases:

- ▶ Person is found ineligible for DRS services
- ▶ Person disagrees with goals in IPE
- ▶ Person and DRS do not agree on what is needed for someone to meet their employment goals
- ▶ DRS counselor does not communicate effectively with customer
- ▶ DRS closes a person's file

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Helping DRS Applicants & Customers (3)



CAP - Beyond Disagreements

- ▶ There does not need to be a "conflict" for CAP to get involved
- ▶ We can also help someone understand their rights to DRS services or tips for self-advocacy

Please reach out and/or refer consumers to CAP!

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Examples of Recent CAP Cases

- ▶ Young man with ADHD has the goal of studying physical education.
- ▶ When graduating from high school, he submitted a referral to DRS in April. He didn't get a response.
- ▶ He submitted another referral in August and started school. His VR counselor told him that DRS would pay for his tuition.
- ▶ In Spring, he was told DRS would not pay because he did not have an IPE complete in time.
- ▶ He lost at a hearing and then contacted CAP/EFE
- ▶ CAP advocated for him and DRS has agreed to pay for this semester of classes



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Examples of Recent CAP Cases (2)

- ▶ Client called CAP after receiving a letter stating that her file was being closed due to no contact
- ▶ We worked with DRS to re-establish communication and make sure that her case would stay open



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Examples of Recent CAP Cases (3)

- ▶ Client is a wheelchair user who asked DRS to fund a new wheelchair. DRS needed more information about how the new wheelchair would help advance the client's employment goals.
- ▶ CAP was able to assist the client in communicating with DRS about this and providing DRS with documentation to support her request.
- ▶ DRS ultimately agreed to provide client with the new wheelchair.



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Examples of Recent CAP Cases (4)

- ▶ Client requested DRS funding for job retention services for his own trucking business
- ▶ Confusion about whether the criteria had been met for job retention services
- ▶ CAP helped client by speaking with DRS to clarify details about his business operations and provided documentation to DRS in support of his request.
- ▶ Based on this additional information, DRS counselor submitted revised request for job retention services which is currently pending.



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Systemic Initiatives

CAP Role: Identify and advocate to overcome systemic barriers to competitive, integrated employment

How we plan to do this:

- ▶ Participate on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
- ▶ Regular meetings with DRS leadership
- ▶ Learn from experiences representing individual VR customers
- ▶ Learn from experiences representing applicants and employees with disabilities across Illinois
- ▶ **Listen to you!** Please share your observations



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Areas of EFE's Systemic Focus

Improve access to DRS services for:

- ▶ Court involved youth
- ▶ Individuals transitioning out of prison/jail
- ▶ Individuals with IDD (several new DRS initiatives and collaborations with DDD to improve services)
 - ▶ Note: Great collaboration with EFE's IMU team

Addressing barriers:

- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Subminimum wage work



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Share your expertise



Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YB88YN9>

- ▶ What are the barriers you see preventing people with disabilities from working?
- ▶ What do you want CAP to know about DRS/VR?
- ▶ Do you have suggestions for CAP about how we approach cases?

- ▶ We'd like to keep an open line of communication.
- ▶ You can contact us through this survey or by contacting CAP or a CAP advocate directly

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Title I of the ADA



CAP Role: Provide information and advice under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act

How we can help:

- ▶ Answer your and your consumer's questions about disability disclosure, reasonable accommodations, challenge discrimination
- ▶ Help you and your consumer write a request for an accommodation
- ▶ Help you and your consumer brainstorm solutions if you encounter a difficult employer

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Examples of Recent CAP Cases

- ▶ With DRS help, client got job at a large employer
- ▶ Client started to experience harassment and was being pushed into doing only one particular task that he did not like
- ▶ CAP coached client about strategies for addressing this advocating for himself in the workplace
- ▶ Through his and his family's advocacy, client is back to thriving doing wide variety of tasks



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Transition Services

CAP Role: Provide information and advice to assist DRS customers and potential applicants in accessing VR services while in school

How we can help:

- ▶ Help youth and their families get connected with Pre-ETS or DRS services in their community
- ▶ Answer your and your consumer's questions about special education transition services
- ▶ Help you and your consumer advocate for appropriate transition services in school that allow your client to access VR services



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Pre-Employment Transition Services

- ▶ Job exploration counseling
- ▶ Work-based learning experiences in integrated settings, both in and out of school
- ▶ Counseling on post-secondary opportunities
- ▶ Workplace readiness training
- ▶ Self-advocacy skills



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Examples of Recent CAP Cases

- ▶ Student with autism originally connected with EFE through special education concerns.
- ▶ Student's initial goal was to attend community college. EFE connected him to DRS, but the family did not know what to do when the student's goal changed.
- ▶ EFE assisted the family in contacting the student's counselor and changing the IPE and services based on the student's new goal.



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Helping Applicants & Consumers of CIL Services



Yes! In addition to VR, we help people re: CIL services.

CAP Role: Provide information and advice to assist applicants and consumers of independent living services seeking help from the CIL

What to expect:

- ▶ If you get a call from CAP, it does NOT mean you did anything wrong!
- ▶ We may ask for records or for a call or meeting with you and/or you and the consumer
- ▶ Our goal will be to help facilitate communication, resolve misunderstandings, reach resolutions

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Self-Advocacy Resources



Fact sheets, sample letters and worksheets (Coming soon!)

- ▶ Topics: Understanding the VR process, self-advocacy tips, Title I (disclosure, accommodations, filing charges), Transition
- ▶ Plan: Available in English, Spanish & ASL (other languages to come)
- ▶ www.equipforequality.org/cap

Let us know: Are there other fact sheets that you would like to see?

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Trainings

- ▶ Upcoming (register on our website!)
- ▶ Archived (posted on www.equipforequality.org/cap)
 - ▶ ADA & Best Practices When Applying for Jobs as a Person with a Disability – Feb 10 from 12-1
 - ▶ Self-Advocacy Strategies – March 16 from 12-1
 - ▶ Changing Workplace Rules to Do Your Job Well – Reasonable Accommodations
 - ▶ Understanding Your Right to DRS Services During High School – Transition Services

Let us know: Are there other fact sheets that you would like to see?



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How to reach CAP

CAP at Equip for Equality

- ▶ www.equipforequality.org/cap
- ▶ **1-855-ILCAP-25 (855-452-2725)**
- ▶ cap@equipforequality.org



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What to Expect When Calling CAP (1)



- ▶ Similar to other EFE services
- ▶ Callers leave a voicemail with name and contact information (either phone or email)
- ▶ We do our best to call back as soon as possible
- ▶ An EFE/CAP staff member will follow-up to conduct an initial intake call
- ▶ Intake call
 - ▶ Ask background demographic questions (ex: address, date of birth)
 - ▶ Ask about situation – why led caller to reach out
 - ▶ Ask about goals – what is caller trying to accomplish

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What to Expect When Calling CAP (2)



- ▶ In limited situations, might answer questions on-the-spot; when then follow-up with advice in writing
- ▶ More often, CAP advocate will bring issues to CAP legal team for discussion – and then follow-up with caller
- ▶ **CAP directive:** Lowest level of intervention needed

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Other EFE Services



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Highlight: Two New(ish) Programs



Legal Assistance Removing Re-Entry Barriers

- ▶ With funding from Access 2 Justice, we are helping people with disabilities overcome barriers to re-entry from jail or prison
- ▶ Ruben Bautista, ruben@equipforequality.org

Training on Cannabis Legalization and Expungement

- ▶ Provide free training seminars on the new Illinois cannabis legalization law and how to expunge cannabis criminal records
- ▶ Funding from the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation
- ▶ Barry Taylor, barryt@equipforequality.org

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Employment Rights Helpline

- ▶ For job seekers and employees with disabilities
- ▶ Helpline staff can:
 - ▶ **Discuss** employee rights under the ADA
 - ▶ **Answer** employment rights questions
 - ▶ Assist with **reasonable accommodations**
 - ▶ Help callers understand their **options**
 - ▶ Share **fact sheets, sample letters** and **forms**
 - ▶ Give **referrals** and other assistance as needed

Voice: 844.744.4879 TTY:800.610.2779
www.equipforequality.org/employment
employment@equipforequality.org



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Special Education Clinic

To help students with disabilities secure a free appropriate public education. Anyone with a special education concern or question can call our statewide helpline for assistance.

The Clinic Provides:

- ▶ Self-Advocacy Assistance
- ▶ Sample Letters and Forms
- ▶ Trainings to Interested Groups
- ▶ Legal Advocacy, in Select Cases

866-543-7046
<https://www.equipforequality.org/issues/special-education/specialed@equipforequality.org>



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How to reach CAP

CAP at Equip for Equality

- ▶ www.equipforequality.org/cap
- ▶ 1-855-ILCAP-25 (855-452-2725)
- ▶ cap@equipforequality.org



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Questions?



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