



WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities Announces Partners with Business Awards

(Madison) -- The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) has announced seven awards statewide to school districts and services providers designed so they can help local businesses hire and support workers with significant disabilities.

The "Partners with Business" initiative was signed into law this spring and is based on a successful, cost-effective strategy from BPDD's Let's Get to Work youth employment project that shows businesses how co-workers can provide supports to employees with disabilities on the job.

The grantees are:

- Opportunity Development Centers Inc (WI Rapids)
- VIP Services Inc (Elkhorn)
- Green Valley Enterprises (Beaver Dam)
- School District of Altoona
- Green Bay Area Public Schools
- Inclusa Inc (based in Stevens Point)
- EasterSeals of Southeast WI (based in Waukesha)

Partners with Business supports workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be successful on the job by using a combination of natural and formal supports, both of which are provided by the employer. Using the Partners with Business approach, a school or vocational service agency works with an employer to provide initial job training for a worker with disabilities and develops on-the-job supports through co-workers. Once co-worker supports have been developed and job training is complete, the employer may receive funds from the long-term care system (i.e. Family Care, IRIS, Partnership) or other sources to designate co-worker(s), instead of agency-provided job coaches, to provide necessary ongoing supports.

"The Partners with Business approach has shown success reducing the need for outside job coaches and has demonstrated increased numbers of hours worked per week by employees," said Beth Swedeen, BPDD Executive Director. "Overall, workers supported through Partners with Business have needed fewer public supports to get and keep their jobs. It's a win-win employment strategy for people with disabilities in Wisconsin."

These mini-grants are part of the 2017 Wisconsin Act 323, passed on April 16, 2018. To view the statutory language, visit: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/acts/323>.

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