



Think Ability Wisconsin

May 22, 2024



What is it?

An opportunity. A job. A career. It all starts with “yes.”

For the self-advocate searching day and night for a job that gives them the means to live but also the **fulfillment to thrive**. For the family that’s been there since the beginning, worrying about their loved one’s future. For the employers having a difficult time finding committed employees.

For all of them, **it all starts with a yes**—make the decision to hire a person with disabilities and give them the opportunity to shape **our** future.



Start with *“yes.”*

A Movement. A Collaborative. A Campaign.

Funded by the Department of Workforce Development and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Think Ability Wisconsin (TAW) is a major statewide initiative and extensive partnership network designed to improve transition and employment outcomes for people with disabilities in our state while simultaneously solving Wisconsin's hiring and retention challenges. It is powered by the Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin.

- DSAW, Government Agencies, Employers, Educators, Disability and Community Providers, Self Advocates, Families, and the General Public

Bridging silos and breaking down barriers for people with disabilities while solving Wisconsin's hiring and retention challenges through a multi-pronged approach.

TAW and **why it matters.**

*Think
Ability*
WI

- 2M people never returned to the workforce post covid
- If every unemployed person got a job, we would still be 2.5M workers short of the need right now
- 2.4 open positions for every one job seeker in WI
- 600,000 open positions in manufacturing and hospitality in WI alone, increasing 5% on average - significant majority only require HS education
- We are in a hiring and labor shortage crisis, job retention crisis, and we have real wage inflation concerns.
- Only 23% of people with disabilities are employed
- That equates to hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites who are ready, willing and able to work!
- They just need Wisconsin's employers to believe in them and give them the training and opportunity to succeed.





It's not just the "right" thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

Research has proven that hiring people with disabilities equals:

- Increased profit margins
- Improved bottom lines
- Higher productivity
- Higher retention rates
- Higher efficiency and quality ratings
- Tax incentives
- Expanded consumer markets
- Reduced turnover rates
- Increased employee motivation and morale
- The ability to meet federal contractor requirements
- Competitive advantages through untapped talent
- Greater diversity

Start with *"yes."*

TAW main components.

- A unified statewide collaborative (a Transition Oriented System of Care) that includes WI's government agencies, employers, educators, advocates, disability and community providers all Thinking Ability and starting with Yes!
- Serving all people with disabilities in WI, their families, WI's employers, educators, providers, and the public.
- TAW-Center online (No Wrong Door, Wraparound, One-Stop Shop) to get resources and support in real-time to self-advocates and families, employers, educators, providers, and the general public.
 - Navigators ➡ Providers, DHS, DVR, SSI, ADRC, Family Care, IRIS, Housing, CRCs, Public Benefits, SD v. Guardianship, and more!
 - Best-in-Class Resources for Employers, Educators, Providers, and the general public



Start with *yes.*

TAW main components.

- Mass public service campaigns and coalition building designed to raise expectations and change societal behaviors.
- Wide-scale employer outreach, education, training and engagement.
- Employer-embedded training programs that lead to employment, advanced education, or certification upon completion - esp in manufacturing, hospitality, technology and other accessible industries. Partnering with the Wisconsin Community Tech College system.
- TAW relationship with DSAW: vision, project lead, fiscal agent, convening agency.
 - DSAW also funded to increase its workforce development and wraparound support services.



Start with *“yes.”*



**Think Ability Wisconsin
Center Online**

TAWC: Who We Serve

Self Advocates and Families: Navigating, planning and connecting self advocates and families with resources to create fulfilling and meaningful lives, with a special focus on life transitions and employment. The TAWC website features transition specific training, articles, and resources for youth and families.

Employers: Helping employers hire people with disabilities. The TAWC website and statewide Navigators guide employers to resources, training, and direct support. The TAWC website features employer specific training, articles and resources, as well as job boards to connect employers and their future employees.

Educators: TAWC provides transition specific training, articles, and resources for educators, youth, and families to help students prepare for life after high school. This includes transition, employment, post-secondary education and community-based programs and services.

Service Providers: Assisting “those who serve” with the latest and greatest information and best-practices around transition, person-centered planning, competitive integrated employment, how to think possible by thinking ABILITY, and more.

TAW Online Resource Center

- TAW is a multi-pronged approach to connect, families, employers, service providers, and educators with valuable resources and tools to improve transition and employment outcomes for people with disabilities while solving hiring, retention and labor shortage challenges for employers.
- Hours: 8:00 am- 5 pm Monday through Friday
- Comprehensive website full of information, articles, and resources: www.thinkabilitywi.org.
- Navigators are available by phone at 888-695-2030, or by email at info@thinkabilitywi.org.
- Chat, Messenger and other social integration coming soon.



TAWC: Navigators

- Information and Referral Services
 - Transition and Employment SME's
 - Walk alongside MS to HS to adult-life transitions
 - Children LTC/Adult LTC
 - Family Care
 - IRIS
 - CLTS
 - PTP Support
 - DVR
 - Housing
 - So much more!
 - Aging parent transitions
 - I&R services for Employers, Educators, Providers and the general public as well
 - Short-term and long-term support and follow-up services
 - Helping connect employers to their future employees
- Partner with all providers and agencies across WI in coordinated entry, No Wrong Door: ADRCs, Well Badger, CRCs/ Wisconsin Wayfinder, providers, systems, Impact 211, Crisis hotlines, etc to help callers access programs and resources in all 72 Wisconsin counties and 11 tribal agencies (collaborate not duplicate).
- Warm handoffs:
 - Make the call directly with the TAW caller
 - Call on behalf of
 - Connect
 - Assist
 - Follow-up
- Transition and futures planning, employment navigation & support, benefits & housing counseling services

TAWC Website: Key Features

Website Key Features:


- Resource Toolkits
- Articles
- Blog
- Gold Star Resources
- Virtual Training Opportunities - *coming soon!*
 - *Think Transition, Think Employment, Think Housing, Think Benefits, etc.*
 - Short videos
 - YouTube Channel
 - Webinars, Seminars, Cohort Opps, Conferences, Summits
 - Sharing Successes
- Job Boards - *coming soon!*
- Peer Support/Social Integration - *coming soon!*
- Campaign Materials/Swag
- Join the Movement! Sign up as partners!


Think Ability Wisconsin Resources

Connect with a navigator - Help is just a phone call away! Think Ability Navigators can help you access 7,000 services, programs, and resources in all 72 Wisconsin counties and 11 tribal agencies through our partner Well Badger Resource Center! Navigators are available Monday - Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST.


The Think Ability Wisconsin Tool Kit Download this easy-to-follow guide that includes great information to help you get started.

Toolkit - Coming Soon!

 **Articles and Blogs** - Think Ability Wisconsin is constantly building new resources to help our members and the community! You'll find tips, interesting stories, and news that matters. See the Top Articles and Blog links on this page. Or click on "More Articles" to see the complete list.



Top Articles


Blog 

[What Is Think Ability Wisconsin?](#)


[Think Ability Wisconsin: On the Road in Fall 2023!](#)

[Why Disability Inclusion is Good for Companies](#)

[How Can My Company Begin Creating an Inclusive ...](#)

Disability Service Providers 

Articles

Educators 


[Get Started - Navigating Transition from School...](#)

Let's take a look: <https://www.thinkabilitywi.org/s/families-and-self-advocates>



How You Can Help

- Spread the word about Think Ability Wisconsin to your colleagues. Share with them our website and call center number. Our Toolkits are a great resource found on our website.
- As families, educators, and self-advocates ask about resources for transition, employment, post-secondary education, and benefits, provide them our website and phone number. We are a “one-stop shop” to help.
- Join the movement to stay up to date with information, resources, and updates and to be featured on our partners page!
- Hire people with disabilities at your sites!!

A man with a prosthetic left leg is working in a wood shop. He is wearing a plaid shirt and grey overalls with orange accents. He is leaning over a large stack of light-colored wooden planks, carefully inspecting them. The background shows more stacks of wood and a fire extinguisher on the wall.

Any questions?

Love to have YOU **join** the movement!

www.thinkabilitywi.org

info@thinkabilitywi.org

Start with *“yes.”*

Think
Ability
WI

Questions?