



## The TPSID Initiative: Model Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities into Higher Education

The US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, oversees a comprehensive national funding initiative aimed at enhancing access to postsecondary education for students with intellectual disability. This initiative is referred to as the *Model Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities into Higher Education* and consists of three collaborative programs:

- Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities into Higher Education Program Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID)
- Coordinating Center for Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID:CC)
- Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities – National Technical Assistance and Dissemination (PPSID:NTAD) Center

The purpose of this important initiative is to support access to postsecondary education and paid employment for students with intellectual disability. The employment rates of students with intellectual disability who have completed a TPSID program are three times higher than the national average for adults with developmental disabilities. The TPSID initiative supports awareness and engagement; program development and implementation; state and regional infrastructure development and enhancement; evaluation and research; and the translation of research findings into effective practices (Grigal et al., 2025).

The TPSID initiative has resulted in:

- greater awareness of college options for students with intellectual disability
- increased college enrollment of students with intellectual disability
- development and expansion of quality college and university programs
- increased access to and use of federal student aid
- more students enrolling in inclusive courses, earning credits, and credentials
- higher employment rates for graduates

The **Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID) programs** are model demonstration projects authorized by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA). Grants are awarded to institutions of higher education or consortia of institutions of higher education to enable them to create or expand high quality, inclusive model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disability. This program has supported implementation of 139 programs at colleges and universities in 34 states since 2010. Students have held over 4,500 jobs while enrolled in college and over 2,500 students with intellectual disability have earned credentials through this program.



**The Coordinating Center for Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID:CC)** is the coordinating entity for institutions of higher education that have received TPSID grant funds to develop or enhance inclusive comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disability. Like the TPSID model demonstration grant program, the TPSID:CC is authorized by the HEOA of 2008. This center is operated by Think College and is known as the [Think College National Coordinating Center \(NCC\)](#). The NCC provides technical assistance and training to the TPSID grantees, collects extensive data from every TPSID program annually, and publishes reports and other publications on the impact of the TPSID grants. The NCC provides technical assistance to TPSID faculty and staff and to families, students, and other professionals. A focus of the work, as required by the funding, is the development and implementation of accreditation standards and an accrediting process for college and university programs for students with intellectual disability.



**The Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disability: National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center (PPSID:NTAD Center)** translates and disseminates research and best practices for all institutions of higher education, including those not participating in the TPSID program, to improve inclusive postsecondary education for students with intellectual disability. Think College operates this center, and it is known as the [Think College Inclusive Higher Education Network \(TCN\)](#). TCN focuses on building awareness and capacity for increased access to higher education and employment for students with intellectual disability. TCN translates research into practice by creating tools and instructional materials and implementing them via newly established state and regional alliances of practitioners. TCN extends public knowledge about higher education options through its national public awareness activities, building support for further program development and student enrollment.

Both centers provide training and professional development nationally through a variety of types of publications, online courses, webinars, conference presentations, and workshops. The NCC and TCN's resources and materials are used in every state in the country to support improved postsecondary education access and outcomes for students with intellectual disability.

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**The employment rates of students with intellectual disability who have completed a TPSID program are three times higher than the national average for adults with developmental disabilities (Grigal et al., 2025).**

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To learn more about these important initiatives, visit the [US Department of Education's webpage on Grants for Individuals with Disabilities](#).

## Reference:

Grigal, M., Papay, C., Bukaty, C., Choiseul-Praslin, B., Weir, C. & Lazo, R. (2025). Annual report of the cohort 3 TPSID model demonstration projects (Year 4, 2023-2024). University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

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