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Contact: Jenny Price, Executive Director, jenny.price@wisconsin.gov, (608) 220-2924

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

(Madison) -- The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD), in partnership with InControl Wisconsin, congratulates Wisconsin Dells High School for receiving a Partners with Business Competitive Integrated Employment Outreach grant. These grants support efforts to raise awareness about competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). CIE means jobs in the community alongside people without disabilities for minimum wage or higher and with the same benefits and advancement opportunities as employees without disabilities.

Wisconsin Dells High School plans to use the grant to proactively make strong connections with organizations and businesses in the many communities it serves. While the area has a robust summer trade with lots of job opportunities, it is challenging to find year-round work for students with disabilities. Many students also live in rural areas with limited transportation to the city itself. This makes it imperative that the school staff find creative ways to develop a broad network across the five-county service area. Through the grant activities, the school staff will host a community conversation and other discussions to build relationships and to highlight the many contributions employees with disabilities bring to a workplace.

The "Partners with Business" initiative was signed into law in 2018 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. It also includes efforts to expand awareness about hiring people with IDD so that businesses and the broader community recognize the value and contribution employees with disabilities can bring to the workplace. Through awareness building efforts, more people with IDD will get jobs in their communities and businesses will be better able to meet their workforce needs.

"The Partners with Business approach reduces the need for outside job coaches and results in employees with disabilities being more integrated in their workplace. Workers supported through this initiative need fewer public supports to successfully do their jobs. It's an effective employment strategy that works for both people with disabilities and businesses in Wisconsin," said Jenny Price, Executive Director for the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities."

These 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.