



FY 2024 Budget Request

Support Funding for the Workforce Development College Navigator Program

Paving the way for students with disabilities to diminish the employment disparity. Please add \$400,000 for funding for the College Navigator Program in line item 4120-4000.

60% of students with disabilities drop out of college. Only 14% of people with disabilities without a college degree are employed. College Navigator keeps youth in college. **Of youth enrolled in our program, 90% stay in college. A college degree doubles rate of competitive employment, diminishing the 60% disparity between those with and without disabilities.**

Earning a college degree improves both employment prospects and earnings potential over a lifetime. College Navigator is designed to address the significant service gap students with disabilities encounter when transitioning from secondary to post-secondary environments which leads to a very high dropout rate. We assist students with disabilities to complete a postsecondary degree in order to enter competitive employment. There is a strong correlation between higher education and competitive employment for people with disabilities.

Easterseals College Navigator program provides individualized services to college students with disabilities based on their goals, strengths, and needs. Our Navigators assist students in identifying barriers, advocating for the student's needs, and accessing college services and resources to successfully reach graduation. All services are customized based on the individual needs of the student and tailored to their strengths to help them build lifelong skills. The impact of earning a college degree through increased job security, better employment options, and higher earning potential increases quality of life and financial freedom for individuals with disabilities.



My degree gave me a better understanding of how to adapt myself to the many changes that can happen in a work career. The College Navigator program added to the tools in my life toolbox that I need.

- **Bob Hoyt**, first College Navigator graduate.



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College Navigation improves workforce readiness by:

- Providing information to students and their families about what to expect as college students, including their rights and getting the appropriate accommodations that the student needs.
- Connecting students to on and off-campus resources and helping them develop their communication and self-advocacy skills.
- Helping students to develop time-management and planning skills that they will need to be successful in college and employment.
- Assisting students with email management and accessing online databases (Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, etc.).
- Teaching students new ways to be social: connecting with friends, writing emails/discussion boards, interacting with peers/professors virtually and in-person.
- Facilitating the students need to be more self-directed.

Partnering Community Colleges



**GREENFIELD
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**



**Mount Wachusett
Community College**

\$400,000 is needed to hire 4 new College Navigators to serve 120 college students across MA. \$3,300 per year per youth.
1/10th of average cost of one year of college in MA.
10% investment for 90% college retention rate!