**Testimony to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

**Sally Flaschberger, Advocacy Specialist**

**Academic Career Plans**

**May 20, 2015**

My name is Sally Flaschberger and I am a special education advocate for Disability Rights Wisconsin. DRW appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the rules that are being established for Academic Career Plans. DRW thanks DPI for including us as a stakeholder for developing what Academic Career Planning will look like for all students but in particular for students with disabilities in our public schools across Wisconsin. We were glad to bring the voice of parents and students to the table and to be sure there are high expectations for students with disabilities in our state.

Over the last several years, our work has focused on improving transition outcomes for students with disabilities in Wisconsin. DRW has worked hard to educate students and families about post-secondary options to obtain employment and future education. Ensuring workforce and college readiness for Wisconsin students with disabilities is essential to Wisconsin’s economy and an important answer to emerging workforce needs in our communities. Youth with disabilities who leave school unprepared for adult life often spend a lifetime in poverty and reliant on public benefits.

Students with disabilities already receive required transition services under IDEA and DPI has created a system called the PTP- Post-Secondary Transition Plan to support the planning process for these post-secondary education and employment planning. With the addition of the ACP, we are confident that students will be allowed to participate in the robust planning process that all students will be expected to complete. Students with disabilities will have access to new levels of support and expertise to help move their plans after high school forward instead of just depending on the IEP team.

We believe that there are some changes that could be made to the rule to guarantee that students with disabilities have access to this same robust planning and these high expectations for all students. DRW would ask that the following changes be made to the rule at Section PI 26.03 (3) (a) (b) (c) (d) and addition of an (e).

1. Each pupil, including a child with a disability, shall receive individualized support, appropriate to the pupil’s needs, from school district staff to assist with completing and annually updating an academic career plan. For students with disabilities, this may include support from a parent to assist in developing the plan.

 (b) If a pupil is a child with a disability, the pupil’s academic and career plan must be made available to the pupil’s individual education program team. The pupil’s individualized education program team will utilize the pupil’s academic and career plan when developing the pupil’s transition services under s. 115.787 (2) (g), Stats.

 (c) Each pupil, including a child with a disability, shall have access to a career planning software tool that allows pupils to engage in career exploration and career planning and preparation. Students with a disability will be given access to such a tool with the use of accommodations and/or assistive technology to assist full participation in the process.

(d) Access to a formal process for connecting pupils, including a child with a disability, to teachers and other school staff for assistance with the development and implementation of each pupil’s academic and career plan

(e) Students with a disability under s 115.787 (2) (g) will have access to all services available for academic and career planning and be given necessary accommodations to allow full participation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be part of the ACP stakeholders group. We look forward to any questions you might have on the changes we recommend in the rule.