

NIA Newsletter

Providing Unmistakeable Value

Dear NIA Members and Partners,

It has been an honor to serve each of your districts this year! I speak on behalf of the entire NIA team when I tell you we feel amazingly fortunate to be invited to work alongside your teams. Our goal each year is to earn your invitation to serve again by providing excellent service that enhances the work you are already doing on behalf of children and families. Thank you for having us!

This year when you received your FY22 Agreement from the NIA, you may have noticed that we added language describing our commitment to ensuring NIA teammates are vetted according to the requirements set forth in the Illinois School Code. We also want to provide a clear process that lets you know exactly who NIA sends to your district. To be clear, we have always adhered to these processes that are designed to protect our students and staff. We hope adding the below language to our agreement will provide further assurance to your HR Departments that NIA teammates are properly vetted before being allowed to work in your districts. We respect our partners' individual processes and we understand that your district may prefer to independently verify the background history of our teammates. At the same time, we hope these assurances are helpful to your HR departments as they work to ensure the safety and security of your districts. The new language is included below:

- *NIA personnel accessing the grounds of the NIA Partner District through the authority of this Agreement with direct, daily contact with students shall not perform work within District buildings unless a criminal history records check has been conducted by NIA, at its expense, and the individual found to have not violated any of the drug or criminal offenses referenced in the criminal history records check provisions in the School Code, 105 ILCS 5/10-21.9 (the Act).*
- *NIA personnel accessing the grounds of the NIA Partner District through the authority of this Agreement with direct, daily contact with students shall not perform work within District buildings and shall not be permitted to be present on District grounds unless a Statewide Sex Offender Database check and a Statewide Child Murder and Violent Offender Against Youth Database check has been conducted by NIA regarding all such persons in accordance with and subject to the provisions of the Act.*
- *NIA personnel accessing the grounds of the NIA Partner District through the authority of this Agreement with direct, daily contact with students who are found to have had convictions of the enumerated criminal or drug offenses listed in the Act or who appear in the noted databases shall not be permitted at any time to be present on school grounds.*

Important Dates

November 30, 2021

Written notification of significant reduction to the FY23 service request (>1.0FTE) due to NIA.

February 15, 2022

NIA provides the results of annual needs assessment to all partners.

March 30, 2022

Final requests for FY23 services due to NIA.

NIA | THE NORTHWESTERN
ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION

OUR CORE VALUES

We promote a culture of excellence through:

INTEGRITY

We act in a truthful, ethical, and professional manner to build strong partnerships.

COLLABORATION

We cultivate mutual respect and trust through honest interactions that honor the uniqueness and dignity of all.



INNOVATION

We maximize student success through creativity, specialized services, and expertise.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We accept ownership of performance and commitments through transparent communication and fiscally responsible decision-making.

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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION

- NIA submission of a list of personnel assigned to the NIA Partner District shall be certification of their qualifications per the terms of this Background Check addendum.

In accordance with the 4th statement, we look forward to sending you updated staffing lists next year, prior to the start of school! As always, please feel encouraged to reach out if you have any questions, concerns or ideas we can use to improve our service to you!

Thanks again for your partnership!

Have a great summer!

Jon Malone

DID YOU KNOW?

NIA uses certified administrators to provide evaluation feedback to the teammates working in our districts.

As you are keenly aware, providing meaningful feedback is an investment of time, effort and money. We understand that our competitors often strip this component from their service delivery model and we respect that this model is a viable option for all of us in certain situations. We also deeply respect the value of education and we understand that our teammates provide better service to you when they receive ongoing feedback and job-embedded support from someone who understands their job and is capable of providing technical support in the field.

NIA rates are cheaper for FY22 than they were for FY21!

That's right! In January, the NIA Executive Board voted to roll back rates by 1.5% across the board. We also did our best to eliminate the Assessment Fee by moving the rate per ADA to \$0.00, which will effectively eliminate the process of collecting fees one year and giving back free services the next. Our bookkeepers may breathe a sigh of relief! In the big scheme of things, we know these accomplishments don't make or break much for your organizations. On the other hand, we know that the little things add up and we want to do our best to always be part of your solutions.

TECHNOLOGY = EFFICIENCY

Cybersecurity at NIA

With many school districts being impacted by ransomware attacks, cybersecurity remains a central consideration and we work to continuously improve our internal process and customer service. To enhance the security of our systems, NIA has recently implemented multi-factor authentication for our email and network systems. We are also in the process of developing a technology security training plan for our teammates so that they are better able to identify and respond to cybersecurity issues.

Enhanced Accessibility and Operations with Mobile Devices

Starting next August, our teammates will use mobile phones issued and monitored by the NIA to stay in closer contact with our partners and their stakeholders. Not only will mobile technology make us more accessible, we will be using our phones to improve the efficiency of other processes, like record keeping and progress monitoring. The mobile devices also have hotspot capabilities that will help reduce downtime related to lack of internet access. NIA will provide partners with phone contact information for all NIA teammates providing services to the district at the beginning of each year.

Innovating to Improve Timeliness and Value

It takes a significant amount of time and resources to organize and store all of the work we do for partners on an annual basis. At the start of the 21-21 school year, NIA teammates will use an improved process for capturing and storing our work product so that the information can be more easily found and used more efficiently. We took a close look at our old process and developed a more modern technology-based solution that reduces double entry, driving time, filing time, and eliminates additional steps that are no longer needed.

The former system takes nearly 60 minutes of processing time per student. The future process will take about 5 minutes! Our estimated time saved is around 3000 hours a year. In the future we plan to expand our use of electronic workflows to enhance key processes and we look forward to sharing those upgrades when they are complete.



Survey Says...

At NIA we believe what gets measured, matters! Our current survey data is below. The survey questions and results are based on a 5 point scale.

Our Employee Engagement Survey (EE Survey) measures the engagement level of all our employees. The Member District Satisfaction Survey (MDSS Survey) measures how our district partners are feeling about NIA's services and procedures. It is considered our customer satisfaction survey. **Our Customer Satisfaction increased from 4.67 to 4.74.** We believe this increase was largely due to the mutual communication efforts and partnership during COVID planning. Thank you for your feedback and continued support!

**APRIL 2021
EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT
Overall Mean
4.67**

**MARCH 2021
CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION
Overall Mean
4.74**



NIA REGIONAL CLINICS

NIA provides a variety of clinics within our communities and districts to support our students' low incidence needs. Despite COVID, in school year 2020-2021, NIA provided clinics, at no-charge to families, to support hearing, vision, orthopedic and durable medical equipment needs. These clinics are available to all students within our 10 county region.

Vision Clinics: The NIA Vision Department has run 5 **Difficult to Test Vision Clinics** this year and *seen about 40 students*. These clinics are provided on-site by an optometrist who is skilled in serving some of our most complex students. Safety protocols are in place to keep everyone safe. If you are interested or would like some more information, please contact Jean Deptolla at jdeptolla@thenia.org. Our Vision department worked with Spectrios Institute for Low Vision to schedule **Low Vision Clinics** for students with Visual Disabilities and were *able to see 24 students this year*. We are pleased that we can continue to offer this service.

Audiology / Hearing Clinics: Our **Hearing and Audiology Departments** are fully staffed and currently serving students in districts face-to-face and remote capacities. **FM/HAT** technology is constantly changing. We continue provide equipment that delivers the best quality to our students as their own personal hearing devices change. **NEWS FLASH:** *Our NIA Audiology Clinic in Aurora will be moving to a new location this summer. More information to come.* **NIA Audiologists and Hearing Itinerant services** remain robust due to a great deal of flexibility and detailed communication with students and their families.

Durable Medial Equipment Clinic: DME Clinic has continued during the 2021 school year despite the challenges of COVID. Our DME partner has been making home visits and our therapists consult with them during the visit through video conferencing. *Despite the many challenges, we saw 94 students in clinics.*

Orthopedic Clinic: NIA was able to resume orthopedic clinics beginning in October and have one more planned for early summer. *During this time, we were able to serve 35 students in 2 locations.* We hope to increase our capacity next school year with the changes in COVID precautions.

IMPORTANT DEAF & HARD OF HEARING (D/HH) PROGRAM UPDATES

- We are very pleased to share that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program will remain in D300 next year. We will be relocating to DeLacey Family Education Center, Westfield Community School, Hampshire Middle School and Hampshire High School. Julie Lenz will be collaborating with D300 building teams to ensure a smooth transition for all our students.
- The DHH Program has been in person since January 19th and had an increase in in-person students at the start of the 4th quarter. Also, in keeping with our goal to return students to their home districts, this spring we worked with some of our districts to reintegrate into their home learning environments. These students achieved this goal by reaching differentiated milestones that are individualized for each student

DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: FAMILY SIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

The NIA hosts annual Family Sign Language Classes in the fall and spring in our Rockford and St. Charles offices. This year we ran a total of 8 classes virtually with a total of 116 participants.

Sign language classes are taught by certified interpreters or Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teachers. CPDUs are available for educators. These classes run for 10 weeks.

For more information or to register, please visit our Workshop page on our website:
<https://www.thenia.org/workshops-continuing-education/>