

**MEETING THE NEEDS OF TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH UNDER
THE REHABILITATION ACT:
ISSUES FACING AND RESOURCES FOR STATE VR
AGENCIES AND COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS**

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Written Materials Accompanying the Southeast TACE Center Region IV Webinar

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INTRODUCTION

The written materials accompanying the Webinar PowerPoint cover two topics. First, the paper identifies issues facing State VR agencies and community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) regarding the provision of services under the Rehabilitation Act to transition-age youth. Second, the paper provides a summary of and links to resources that will help VR agencies and CRPs address the needs of transition-age youth through the development and implementation of promising policies, practices, and procedures. Examples of promising practices used by VR agencies in the Southeast region and in other areas of the country are identified.

More specifically, the paper:

- Provides background information, including the policy context relating to transition-age youth;
- Describes the current policy framework regarding transition under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act;
- Highlights policy options under consideration for addressing the needs of transition-age youth under the Rehabilitation Act;
- Describes key findings in major national reports and studies regarding transition policies and practices by State VR agencies;
- Summarizes and provides links to major national technical assistance materials;
- Identifies examples of exemplary practices used by VR agencies in the Southeast Region and other areas of the country; and
- Describes special programs and demonstration projects implemented by VR agencies and others, including high school/high tech and SSA-funded youth transition demonstration projects.

BACKGROUND AND POLICY CONTEXT

Recent reports demonstrate that youth with disabilities are not using and benefiting from many of the services and supports that can facilitate transition for high school to work and higher education. For example, based on the results of the National Transition Longitudinal Study-2 (www.nlts2.org/), among the 11,000 special education students who were surveyed:

- 56% received no career counseling;
- 51% received no career assessment;
- 64% received no job readiness training;
- 86% received no job skills training; and
- 64% received no job search instruction.

NLTS-2 also found that close to 30% of special education students drop out of school prior to finishing high school and only 32% of youth with disabilities go on to any postsecondary education after leaving high school.

The Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), a national umbrella organization of over 10 organizations, found that:

- Young adults with disabilities are three times more likely to live in poverty as adults than their nondisabled peers;
- The rate of youth with disabilities entering the juvenile justice system is four times higher than for nondisabled youth;
- More than 250,000 youth with disabilities transitioning to adult services sit on waiting lists for services across multiple systems; and
- Statistics show that almost all youth with disabilities receiving benefits will spend a lifetime receiving government support and not at work.

Young people with disabilities face many barriers to employment, including:

- Specific nature of disability and health conditions;
- Poor access to employment-related services and supports;
- Lack of access to work experiences;
- Lack of linkages, collaboration/coordination among various systems (child and adult);

- Inadequate access to necessary social and health services;
- Financial disincentives to work (SSA disability programs);
- Lack of knowledge (benefits counseling, adult systems); and
- Lack of independent living skills.

CURRENT LAW AND POLICY OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Over the years, Congress has included provisions designed to expand and improve services and supports for transition-age youth with disabilities in order to enhance their employment outcomes. Below is a brief description of the key transition-related provisions in the Rehabilitation Act, as amended and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended.

Transition and Rehabilitation Act

Purpose. “The purpose of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes assisting states in operating vocational rehabilitation programs designed to assess, plan, develop and provide vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities...so that such individuals may prepare for and engage in gainful employment.” [Section 100]

Definitions. The term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. [Section 7]

State Plans. The State plan shall contain plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the VR agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in the schools to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, including information on a formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency that, at a minimum provides for:

- Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;

- Transition planning by personnel of the VR agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their IEP under IDEA;
- Each agency's roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities and provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services. [Section 101]

IPE and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The term “vocational rehabilitation services for individuals” includes transition services for students with disabilities that facilitate the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the IPE. [Section 103 (a)] The term “vocational rehabilitation services for groups of individuals” includes consultative and technical assistance services to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including employment. [Section 103 (b)]

Transition and IDEA

Purpose. The purpose of IDEA includes ensuring that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. [Section 601]

Definitions. The term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that (A) is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (B) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and (C) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. [Section 602]

IEP. Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16, and updated annually thereafter—appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills; and the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. [Section 614]

Failure to Meet Transition Objectives. If a participating agency, other than the local educational agency, fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP, the

local educational agency shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the child set out in the IEP. [Section 614]

POLICY OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION

An assessment of transition policies and practices in State VR agencies provide substantial documentation of the difficulties many students with disabilities still experience upon leaving school. The assessment reported that policy studies of transition-age youth with disabilities “uniformly report high unemployment and underemployment, economic instability, dependence, and social isolation, as well as low levels of participation in postsecondary education and vocational training programs.” **[An Assessment of Transition Policies and Practices in State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies** (Final Report Submitted by The Study Group, June 2007) at page 2]

The Study Group also found that “though there is evidence that some state VR programs have developed comprehensive services and strong collaborative relationships with special education programs at the state and local levels to address the needs of transitioning students, anecdotal information indicates there is a tremendous variation in both transition practices and the resources committed to such practices among state VR agencies.” **[An Assessment of Transition Policies and Practices in State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies** (Final Report Submitted by The Study Group, June 2007) at page 2]

Congress and many in the disability community are focusing on policy options for addressing these concerns. Below is a description of congressional proposals and recommendations under consideration by a coalition of disability groups and others.

Senate (2005) Proposed Amendments to Rehabilitation Act

Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act Amendments of 2005 (S.1021) includes amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and may be cited to as the “Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 2005.” This section of the paper includes summaries of selected amendments to Title I (vocational rehabilitation services) related to transition.

Findings. S. 1021 adds the following new finding to Section 2(a) of the Rehabilitation Act related to transition: “a high proportion of youth who are individuals with disabilities is leaving special education without being employed or being enrolled in continuing education and there is a substantial need to support those youth as the youth transition from school to postsecondary life.”

Definitions. The bill includes a definition for the term “student with a disability” to mean an individual with a disability who attends an elementary school or secondary school and who—is not younger than 16 and not older than 22; has been determined to be eligible [for vocational rehabilitation services]; and is eligible for, and is receiving special education under part B of IDEA or is an individual with a disability for purposes of

Section 504. The Senate report (pages 50-51) explains that “While the definition of student with a disability refers to youth ages 16 to 22, the committee does not intend that this definition create a mandate for State vocational rehabilitation agencies to serve students as young as 16 years of age or prevent such agencies from serving students who are younger than age 16 if the State vocational rehabilitation agency has the fiscal and personnel resources to do so.”

S. 1021 also amends Section 7 of the Rehabilitation Act to include a definition for the term “transition services expansion year” to mean the first fiscal year for which the amount appropriated [for Title I of the Rehabilitation Act] exceeds the amount appropriated for fiscal year 2006 by not less than \$100,000,000 and for each fiscal year subsequent to that first fiscal year.

State Plan. S. 1021 amends Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act pertaining to the State plan in several respects. The amendments include, among other things:

With respect interagency cooperation with other agencies, include:

- Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and the State educational agency that will facilitate the development and completion of the individualized education programs and, as appropriate, the development and completion of the individualized plan for employment, in order to achieve post-school employment outcomes of students with disabilities.

With respect to annual State goals and reports of progress, the bill adds the following to the provision relating to the comprehensive, statewide assessment describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of... “for purposes of addressing needs in a transition services expansion year, students with disabilities, including their need for transition services.” In addition, the annual state goals and reports of progress must include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition services, and coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA, and an assessment as to whether the transition services meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. With respect to strategies the State will use to address the needs identified in the assessment, for use in a transition services expansion year, the methods to be used to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from the receipt of educational services in school to postsecondary life, including the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, postsecondary education or employment.

With respect to transition planning, the Senate report (page 50) explains that “the committee intends to coordinate the activities and objectives of the Rehabilitation Act with IDEA. To this end, Section 412 requires transition planning for each student in order to align the IPE with the individualized education plan (IEP) to ensure that the IPE integrates planning, information, and assessments from the IEP process for students

age 16 and older.” The Senate report (page 50) also explains that the committee recognizes that State VR agencies currently have an affirmative obligation to provide transition services to students with disabilities as they prepare to leave secondary education and move on to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. To improve and expand the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to students with disabilities, the committee makes several improvements to the Rehabilitation Act.” These improvements are described below.

For a transition services expansion year, provide an assurance that the state:

Has developed and must implement strategies to address the needs identified in the assessment and achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis;

Shall not use more than 5 percent of funds reserved under Section 110A to pay for administrative costs;

Shall use the remaining funds to carry out programs or activities designed to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities through partnerships that:

Facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school, to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the Rehabilitation Act, including services specified in interagency agreements,

Improve the achievement of post-school goals of students with disabilities through the provision of transition services, including through participation in IEP meetings,

Provide vocational guidance, career exploration services, and job search skills and strategies and technical assistance to students with disabilities,

Support the provision of training and technical assistance to local educational agency personnel responsible for the planning and provision of services to students with disabilities, and

Support outreach activities to students with disabilities who are eligible for, and need, services under the Rehabilitation Act.

In each transition services expansion year, ensure that funds are awarded only to partnerships that must include local vocational rehabilitation services providers and local educational agencies and may include other agencies.

With respect to the obligation to provide or pay for transition services, nothing in the Rehabilitation Act shall be construed to reduce the obligation of a local educational agency or any other agency to provide or pay for any transition services that are also

considered special education or related services and that are necessary for ensuring a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities within the State involved.

The Senate report (page 51) also explains that “the committee intends that at no time should State vocational rehabilitation agencies’ involvement with an individual student supplant the services being provided under IDEA. The committee intends that representatives of special education and State vocational rehabilitation agencies work together in close partnership to identify the appropriate role that State vocational rehabilitation agencies should play in providing services while a student is still receiving special education services.”

Vocational Rehabilitation Services. S. 1021 amends Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act pertaining to scope of VR services for **individuals** by adding transition services for students with disabilities that facilitate the transition from school to postsecondary life (including employment through the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment (IPE), including in a transition services expansion year, services described above). The bill also includes “mentoring services”.

With respect to the scope of vocational rehabilitation services for **groups of individuals**, S. 1021 includes the following additions: consultation and technical assistance services to assist state and local educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including employment. In a transition services expansion year, specified training and technical assistance and services for groups of individuals with disabilities, including services in specified categories.

Standards and Indicators. S. 1021 amends Section 106(a) of the Rehabilitation Act by adding the following specifications: the standards and indicators shall include outcome and related measures of program performance that include measures of the program’s performance with respect to transition from school to postsecondary life, including employment, and achievement of the postsecondary vocational goals of students with disabilities served under the Rehabilitation program. The Bill also provides that the Commissioner must take specific actions when a State has not improved its performance to acceptable levels, including directing the state to make further revisions to the plan to improve performance and directing the state to allocate a higher proportion of the State’s resources for services to individuals with disabilities.

Reservation for Expanded Transition Services. S. 1021 adds a new section 110A to the Rehabilitation Act specifying that from the State’s allotment under Section 110 in a transition services expansion year, each State must reserve an amount calculated by the Commissioner to carrying out expanded transition services programs and activities. The Commissioner shall calculate the amount to be reserved by each State by multiplying \$50,000,000 by the percentage determined by dividing the amount allotted to that State under Section 110 for the prior fiscal year by the total amount allotted to all States under Section 110 for that prior fiscal year.

GAO Studies. S. 1021 directs the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on the interaction of programs carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program, including the impact on the interaction of beneficiaries, community rehabilitation programs, and State vocational rehabilitation agencies. In addition, the Comptroller General of the United States is directed to conduct a study on the relationship between the State allotment formula under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ability of States to provide vocational rehabilitation services in accordance with the States' plans.

Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living. S. 1021 would amend Title VII in several respects. First, the State plan must describe how the State will be providing independent living services that promote full access to community life for individuals with significant disabilities. The services must include, as appropriate, facilitating transitions of youth who are individuals with significant disabilities and have completed IEPs to postsecondary life, including employment and facilitating transition of individuals with significant disabilities from nursing homes and other institutions, including institutions serving individuals with cognitive disabilities, to community-based residences; assisting individuals with significant disabilities at risk of entering institutions to remain in the community; and promoting home ownership among individuals with significant disabilities.

CCD Recommendations

CCD concludes that youth with disabilities face the reality of unnecessary high unemployment and underemployment and other realities such as poverty and involvement in the juvenile justice system in spite of years of advancing public policy such as the ADA, IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act. However, these and other education and employment-related statutes are not sufficiently aligned to solve this crisis. CCD has identified the following principles and approaches as a guide to the improvement of public policy addressing the needs of transition-age youth with disabilities:

Transition-related policy changes should be driven by an underlying belief in high expectations and self-determination.

Transition planning and services should be evidence-based, and must include

School-based preparatory experiences,

Career preparation and work-based learning experiences,

Youth development and leadership, connecting activities (such as services, activities, and supports that help youth gain access to chosen-post-school options), and

Family involvement and supports.

Programs and agencies should expose participants to

Disability history and culture,

Mentors and role models with and without disabilities,

Disability public policy, and

Self-advocacy and self-determination skills,

Programs and agencies should inform young people with disabilities and their families how to access programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options, including:

Programs and eligibility requirements,

Benefits planning,

Accessible transportation and housing,

Mental and physical health services,

Personal assistance services and supports,

Independent living centers, and

Assistive technology.

Businesses and employers need to be engaged as partners in the transition process.

More specific CCD recommendations include the following:

Require and fund interagency collaboration for programs affecting young people with disabilities.

Provide collaborative training and support for school and adult service personnel.

Develop a system of braided funding to assist schools and adult service agencies in providing the needed services for successful transition.

Offer easily-understood information about best practices in school-to-work transition.

Ensure that all components of the education system (including community colleges) are prepared to serve young people with disabilities.

NATIONAL REPORTS AND STUDIES

Below are summaries of two national studies assessing transition policies and practices in state VR agencies.

The Rehabilitation Act: Outcomes for Transition-Age Youth (National Council on Disability, October 2008)

[The Vocational Rehabilitation Act: Transition Outcomes and Effects](#)

(<http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2008/doc/RehabilitationTransitions.doc>)

File Format: Microsoft Word - [View as HTML](#)

This report is a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Rehabilitation Act on the employment and postsecondary education outcomes of eligible transition-age youth. The study examines the extent to which the State VR agency programs promote:

The delivery of effective transition services to adolescents and young adults with disabilities;

The long-term results of VR's investment in postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities; and

The effectiveness of collaborative efforts among vocational rehabilitation, secondary, and postsecondary education, and other service systems in the planning and delivery of transition services.

Below are key findings from the report:

Students with disabilities often lack work-related experiences that are essential to an effective transition to adult living. Providing community-based work experiences for students while in high school enables students to explore different work environments to determine possible career goals. Work-related community experiences are often excluded as part of students' transition planning due to the lack of understanding on how to create these experiences and the increased focus on core academic areas that limit these experiences as part of the students' high school experience. [page 45]

Transition planning is a collaborative effort involving students, family members, special education personnel, VR and community service providers. There is a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities that each member brings to the process. [page 45]

There is often a lack of information sharing among IEP members, in particular between school and adult agency personnel. [page 46]

State and local interagency agreements often overestimated the capacity of the VR agency to fully implement all of the procedures, processes, and services identified

within these agreements and that state and local interagency agreements were often not specific enough concerning the roles and responsibilities of each agency. [page 49]

The order of selection provisions make it highly unlikely that some groups of transition-age youth will actually receive services, other than information and referral services. [page 50]

Transition services are not viewed as a priority by many state and local VR agencies. The exception appears to be with the VR agencies that have dedicated VR counselors who serve the transition population as all or a set percentage of their consumer caseload. [page 51]

VR transition coordinators expressed great concern because of the impossibility of meeting the demand for involvement in the transition IEP by VR counselors. [page 58]

In very few states or localities there are specified transition VR counselors at the local level who are assigned to local school districts. [page 59]

For the other states, VR services are only provided to transition-age youth upon request of the parent or when initiated by the school. [page 59]

The need for consistency within and across states of how VR services are made available to transition-age youth was a shared theme among key VR stakeholders. [page 60]

The number of transition-age youth served by VR has increased steadily over the past five years, although available data are insufficient to develop precise estimates. [page 60]

Obtaining higher levels of education have clear positive impacts on employment rates for individuals with disabilities, although at lower rates than for nondisabled individuals. [page 61]

There is a lack of information about the transition process and the role of VR in this process that is made available to students with disabilities. [page 81]

Although efforts are being made at the state and local level to collaborate with local school districts, a disconnect remains between the educational system and VR. [page 81]

There continue to be differences in expectations among key stakeholder groups regarding the services and level of involvement that VR can currently provide to transition-age youth. Education personnel want more communication with VR counselors, a consistent referral process, and more work-based learning opportunities provided through VR for their students. [page 81-82]

Lack of personnel, service unit credit policies, and dedicated transition units in local rehabilitation agencies limit the impact and effectiveness of VR collaboration with other agencies involved in service delivery. [page 83]

In analyzing the efficacy of promising practices identified by RSA, it is important to note that RSA has not conducted rigorous impact analyses on the success and efficacy of these programs. RSA does not recommend these programs as highly effective overall, but indicates that the identified programs may represent states that are proactively working to develop innovative practices. [page 80]

AN ASSESSMENT OF TRANSITION POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES,

Submitted by the Study Group (JUNE 2007)

HIGHLIGHTS OF ASSESSMENT (RSA INFORMATION MEMORANDUM RSA-IM-09-05 (MAY 19, 2009)

www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/im/2009/im-09-05.doc

LINK TO ASSESSMENT

www.vrtransitionstudy.org

The following is a summary of the most effective transition policies and practices identified in the Assessment:

- Local interagency agreements are established with individual school districts within the state.
- Local VR agencies work with local educational agencies (LEAs) to identify barriers within each organization that may impede the local delivery of transition services.
- Local interagency agreements identify the specific roles to be played by the VR agency and LEA personnel.
- The VR agency and LEAs work together to develop procedures for outreach to and identification of transition-aged youths who are of school age but not currently under an individualized education program (IEP)—those who have a 504 plan, who receive no special education services, or who have dropped out of school.
- Local school personnel have available printed materials (such as brochures or guidebooks), produced by the VR agency, that detail referral and application information.
- School records and assessment information are used by the VR agency in making eligibility determinations.
- VR agency personnel actively participate in the transition planning meetings of eligible transition-aged youths.
- VR agency personnel provide follow-up to students after high school completion to assist eligible transition-aged youths in connecting with postsecondary education, employment, and independent living opportunities.

- VR agency personnel work collaboratively with LEAs to identify opportunities for transition-aged youths in work-based training situations, through vocational courses or community-based work experiences.
- An IEP/transition plan and individualized plan for employment (IPE) are coordinated for an eligible transition-aged youth before the student completes high school.
- VR agency personnel provide career counseling and guidance services to eligible transition-aged youths who are still attending high school.
- VR agency personnel actively build rapport and personally encourage eligible transition-aged youths in their efforts at school and in work experience activities.
- The state or local VR agency and LEAs share the cost of transition services, such as assessment, community-based work experiences, and job coaching, for eligible transition-aged youths while they are still in school.
- The state has a mechanism for tracking the funds expended on transition-aged youths.
- Third-party agreements are used by the VR agency and LEAs to support the planning and delivery of transition services to transition-aged youths.

NATIONAL RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MATERIALS, INCLUDING LINKS TO WEBSITES

Below are descriptions of and links to national resources and technical assistance materials that may be of use to State VR agencies and CRPs.

The National Consortium for Health Systems Development (NCHSD)

The National Consortium for Health Systems Development (NCHSD) is a technical assistance partnership providing flexible, state-tailored technical assistance for Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) projects across the country. These CMS-funded state projects are developing comprehensive health and workforce service systems for people with disabilities who want to work. Serving people with disabilities, providers, state agencies, research institutes, advocates and businesses, NCHSD is a project of [Health & Disability Advocates \(HDA\)](http://www.hdadvocates.org/). The website www.nchsd.org is a comprehensive disability and employment technical assistance site. A key feature of the website is the [Resource Exchange](http://www.nchsd.org/resource/index.asp) which offers the latest information, events, reports and resources on disability and employment, especially tailored for Medicaid Infrastructure Grantees. For example, the following “hot topics” include information on youth transition:

Links

- [Department of Education Free Youth Transition Publications](http://edpubs.ed.gov/)
(http://edpubs.ed.gov/)
This US Department of Education website offers free publications for students with disabilities, parents and teachers.
- [Going To Work: A Guide to Social Security Benefits and Employment for Young People with Disabilities](http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=211)
(http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=211)
This resource guide for youth covers Social Security benefits, the impact of earnings on benefits, the age 18 re-determination, Ticket to Work, and other work incentives such as Impairment-Related Work Expenses, Plans for Achieving Self-Support.
- [Higher Education Accommodations: Students with Psychiatric Impairments](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/HiEdStudentsPsych.html)
(http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/HiEdStudentsPsych.html)
This is the latest in the Job Accommodation Network's Accommodation and Compliance Series to help employers determine effective accommodations and comply with the ADA.
- [National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Needs](http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/)
(http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/)
Provides support to physicians, families, and other medical and non-medical providers who care for children with special needs. Family Voices has recently been awarded a three-year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the area of Intervention Research Grants to Promote the Health of People with Disabilities.
- [National Center on Secondary Education and Transition \(NCSET\)](http://www.ncset.org/)
(http://www.ncset.org/)
NCSET coordinates national resources, offers technical assistance, and disseminates information related to secondary education and transition for youth with disabilities. NCSET is headquartered at the Institute on Community Integration in the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development.
- [National Center on Youth Transition \(NCYT\)](http://ncyt.fmhi.usf.edu/index.cfm)
(http://ncyt.fmhi.usf.edu/index.cfm)
Website of the NCYT, the only technical assistance center that is exclusively focused on improving practices, systems, and outcomes for transition-age youth and young adults with emotional and/or behavioral difficulties.
- [National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth \(NCWD/Youth\)](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/)
(http://www.ncwd-youth.info/)
A content-rich website that provides resources needed to effectively serve youth with disabilities as they transition into the workforce. NCWD/Youth is a useful source for information about employment and youth with disabilities. The partners — experts in

disability, education, employment, and workforce development — strive to ensure clients will be provided with the highest quality, most relevant information available.

- [National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities](http://www.nichcy.org/)
(<http://www.nichcy.org/>)
This website provides information on disabilities and disability-related issues to families, educators and other professionals focusing on children and youth (birth to age 22).
- [ODEP - Mentoring Youth Fact Sheet](http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/cultivate.htm)
(<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/cultivate.htm>)
This site has tips and resources for businesses on mentoring youth with disabilities as a strategy to cultivate quality employees.
- [The Work Site](#)
The Work Site is SSA's website on youth with disabilities and transition services.
- [Transition Coalition](http://www.ssa.gov/work/)
(<http://www.ssa.gov/work/>)
This website offers information and linkages to professionals, family members, individuals with disabilities and others interested and involved in the transition from school to adult life. The mission of the Transition Coalition is to maximize professional development in secondary school reform and transition at the national, state, and local levels.
- [Transitioning Youth with Mental Health Needs to Meaningful Employment and Independent Living](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/reports/mental_health_case_study_report.pdf)
(http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/reports/mental_health_case_study_report.pdf)
This is a report on a study funded by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) to identify successful strategies for assisting youth with mental health needs as they transition to postsecondary education, employment, and independent lives.

The Center for Workers with Disabilities

The Center for Workers with Disabilities is a technical assistance center operated by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) for states enhancing or developing employment supports programs for working persons with disabilities. The Center's website is <http://cwd.aphsa.org>. Most of the 30 plus states supported by the Center are supporting employment supports development with Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funds. The Center operates several task forces, including:

- Asset development,
- Working with business, and

- Comprehensive employment.

Comprehensive Employment

Below are links and resources providing more information on Transition:

[Transition](http://cwd.aphsa.org/statetostate/compemp.asp#trans) (<http://cwd.aphsa.org/statetostate/compemp.asp#trans>)

[National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities](http://www.nichcy.org/)
(<http://www.nichcy.org/>)

[U.S. Department of Labor Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities](http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/ylf.htm)
(<http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/ylf.htm>)

[SSA List of Project Description](http://policy.ssa.gov/POMS.NSF/Inx/0460060003)
(<http://policy.ssa.gov/POMS.NSF/Inx/0460060003>)

[The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/)
(<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>)

[The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Center for Workforce Preparation](http://www.uschamber.com/icw/)
(<http://www.uschamber.com/icw/>)

[The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition](http://www.ncset.org/)
(<http://www.ncset.org/>)

MEDICAID INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT RESEARCH ASSISTANCE TO STATES
www.migrats.org/topics.aspx?ID=6

Non-State MIG Reports

- **Coordination of Postsecondary Transition Services for Students with Disabilities**
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=37614536&site=ehost-live>
- **Disability and Employment: An IssueLab CloseUp**
http://www.issuelab.org/closeup/Feb_2009
- **Providing supports to youth with disabilities transitioning to adulthood: Case descriptions from the Youth Transition Demonstration**
<http://iospress.metapress.com/content/a117525648026m78/?p=d975c3d380af4634b55f29716c14d4b6&pi=5>
- **School-to-Work Program Participation and the Post-High School Employment of Young Adults with Disabilities.**

<http://iospress.metapress.com/content/p1w5n64231776046/?p=f13fee397ed44bbb88b769c2b1093d99&pi=9>

- **Self-Employment Q and A: Information on Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities**
<http://www.start-up-usa.biz/resources/content.cfm?id=704>
- **The Social Security Administration's youth transition demonstration projects**
<http://iospress.metapress.com/content/8157x7j16528w931/?p=b3f66200bdc9458091f4cc6d8f9a6523&pi=4>
- **Youth Transition Demonstration**
<http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/youth.htm>

Data Sources

University of Minnesota: Research and Training Center on Community Living
<http://rtc.umn.edu/main/>

Associations & Organizations

University of Hawaii: Center on Disability Studies
<http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/main/activities/research/>

University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana: Disability Research Institute
<http://dri.uiuc.edu>

University of Minnesota: Research and Training Center on Community Living
<http://rtc.umn.edu/main/>

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth
[National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth \(NCWD/Youth\)](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/)
(<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>)

The Collaborative has developed Guideposts for Success www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_publications/guideposts/ which establishes a set of guiding principles and identifies the content of a comprehensive transition program that include the array of services, supports, and activities needed by all youth to succeed in transiting from high school to adult life.

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)

NSTTAC is a national Technical Assistance and Dissemination center funded from January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2010 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs ([OSEP](http://www.osep.ed.gov/)) (Award #H326J050004).

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) is directed and staffed by the Special Education Program at the [University of North Carolina at Charlotte](#), in partnership with the Special Education Programs at [Western Michigan University](#) and [Appalachian State University](#). In order to ensure full implementation of IDEA and help youth with disabilities and their families achieve desired post-school outcomes, NSTTAC will help states build capacity to support and improve transition planning, services, and outcomes for youth with disabilities and disseminate information and provide technical assistance on scientifically-based research practices with an emphasis on building and sustaining state-level infrastructures of support and district-level demonstrations of effective transition methods for youth with disabilities. The NSTTAC will provide efficient and effective large-scale implementation and sustainability of research-based secondary transition.

Expert Panels on Identifying Research Based Transition Practices, Enhancing States' Capacity, and Dissemination and Outreach include both consumers (i.e., parents, students, teachers, administrators) and content experts. We expect to build effective, efficient, and sustainable research-based interventions and models that improve outcomes of youth with disabilities by:

Assisting State Education Agencies in collecting data on federally mandated State Performance Plans' Indicator 13 and using these data to improve transition services.

Identifying research-based practices in transition. These knowledge generation activities will include, at a minimum: (a) an analysis of IDEA Part B State Annual Performance Reports; (b) identifying and synthesizing effective and promising practices from the WWC, as well as other OSEP-funded centers; (c) consulting with other relevant federal and state agencies; and (d) conducting literature reviews, as needed.

Assistance and dissemination. The plan will identify each activity necessary to advance implementation of transition-related actions in states and demonstrate the strategic relationship of these actions to improved outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Implementing a strategic plan for technical assistance that enhances state capacity to support and improve transition planning, services, and outcomes using a capacity building institute model which is a proven process for linking research-based practices to state and local implementation, an accessible website and other activities. Capacity building will be planned in collaboration with other OSEP funded technical assistance centers, regional resource centers for special education, state directors of special education, and regional parent training and information centers.

Developing and disseminating an array of products to State-specific audiences including students, families, teachers, rehabilitation counselors, administrators, policymakers, and researchers. Products and strategies will be developed and disseminated in collaboration with other technical assistance providers, organizations, and agencies.

Below are state contacts and state resources (Southeast region):

Alabama

State: Alabama Contact: Dan Roth

Email: droth@alsde.edu

Phone: 334/242-8100.

State Transition Conference Dates: 11/19/2008 - 11/21/2008

www.nsttac.org/transitionstates/Default.aspx?ST=AL

Georgia

Contact: B. Lu Nations-Miller

Email: bnations@doe.k12.ga.us

Phone: 404/657-9955.

State Transition Conference Dates: 10/21/2008 - 10/24/2008

www.nsttac.org/transitionstates/Default.aspx?ST=GA

Florida

Contact: Joyce Lubbers & Sheila Gritz

Email: joyce.lubbers@fldoe.org & sheila.gritz@fldoe.org.

Phone: 850/245-0478

www.nsttac.org/transitionstates/Default.aspx?ST=FL

Kentucky

Kentucky's Transition One Stop-This site offers access to a variety of resources ...

Kentucky Dropout Prevention Guide Professional Development Resources:

www.nsttac.org/transitionstates/Default.aspx?ST=KY

Mississippi

Contact: Margaret Robinson-Harris

Email: marobinson@mde.k12.ms.us.

Phone: 601/359-3498.

North Carolina

Contact: Freda Lee

Email: flee@dpi.state.nc.us

Phone: 919/807-3989.

State Transition Conference Dates: 4/24/2008 - 4/25/2008

www.nsttac.org/transitionstates/Default.aspx?ST=NC

South Carolina

This link is for the South Carolina Division on Career Development and Transition subdivision of SC Council for Exceptional Children. ...

www.nsttac.org/transitionstates/Default.aspx?ST=SC

Tennessee

Tennessee is establishing collaborative efforts between Tennessee Department of Education, Career and Technical Education, and the Tennessee Board of Regents and College.

www.nsttac.org/transitionstates/Default.aspx?ST=TN

NATIONAL CENTER ON SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRANSITION

The [National Center on Secondary Education and Transition](http://www.ncset.org/) (NCSET) (<http://www.ncset.org/>) coordinates national resources, offers technical assistance, and disseminates information related to secondary education and transition for youth with disabilities in order to create opportunities for youth to achieve successful futures. NCSET is headquartered at the [Institute on Community Integration](http://ici.umn.edu/) (<http://ici.umn.edu/>) in the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development.

Questions, comments, or suggestions, can be submitted to:

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

Institute on Community Integration

University of Minnesota

6 Pattee Hall

150 Pillsbury Drive SE

Minneapolis MN 55455

612-624-2097 (phone)

612-624-9344 (fax)

EXAMPLES OF TRANSITION-RELATED PRACTICES USED IN STATES IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION

Below are examples of transition-related practices used by State VR agencies in the Southeast Region.

ALABAMA

Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) places substantial emphasis on transition from school to work. Transition teams assist junior and senior high school students with disabilities in preparing for employment and community living. VRS counselors work with students, parents, special education teachers, coordinators, and other school personnel throughout the state to provide assistance to students in developing career goals and obtaining on-the-job training opportunities. Each year, VRS assists 17,330 adolescents and students with disabilities. Every high school in Alabama has a VRS

counselor assigned to provide services to students with disabilities. VRS also funds and monitors a network of local community transition teams. These teams are designed to enhance communication among school personnel, vocational rehabilitation staff, community businesses and organizations to develop job training and placement opportunities for students with disabilities.

<http://www.rehab.state.al.us/Home/default.aspx?url=/Home/Services/VRS/Transition+Services/Main>

Services

[Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum](#)

[Assessment Programs](#)

[Autism Project](#)

[Learning Disabilities Projects](#)

[College Prep Programs](#)

[Employability Program](#)

[Lakeshore's College Preparation Program for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Consumers](#)

LIFE Project for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

[Prison Transition Initiative](#)

[School-based Jointly Funded Job Coaches](#)

[Teen Transition Clinics](#)

[Transition Conference](#)

Transition Weekend for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired and their Families

[Traumatic Brain Injury Transition](#)

[VRS Transition Counselors](#)

For more information about transition services, contact [Linda Hames](#) at 1-800-441-7607 or (TTY 800-499-1816).

RSA has identified as “promising practices” initiatives adopted by the Alabama Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, which are described below.

www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/rehab/promising-practices/transition-age/index.html

[RSA: Promising Practices for Basic VR Agencies Helping Transition Age Youth]

Career Preparation and Training Initiative (CPTI)

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), in partnership with local school systems, transportation agencies, local colleges and employers, conducts a two-week training session each summer focusing on seniors with disabilities planning to enter the workforce following high school. Some of these individuals will choose to enter technical training. These consumers with disabilities are introduced to the world of work through teambuilding activities, employment site tours, potential employer visits, two-year college tours, socialization activities, and discussion topics focusing on the soft skills associated with getting and keeping a job. This program is community and classroom based with an emphasis on developing these students into future workforce participants. This is the fourth summer the program has been held with a record-high 114 referrals processed. One key factor in CPTI's success is that each consumer's VR counselor is required to participate, along with the consumer, in all activities. ADRS plans to expand this service next summer to more students. This program is being piloted in the Birmingham and surrounding areas, with plans being made to replicate its success in other areas of the state.

College Preparation Programs

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) operates its College Preparation programs in seven areas of the state. Individuals with disabilities are referred by their VR Counselor based on many factors, one of which is a previous vocational evaluation indicating the potential for college success. The College Preparation programs are held on local two or four-year college campuses throughout the state. The collaborative effort involves partnerships with Disability Service Providers at the various post-secondary institutions, CRPs, and university professors, with a focus on assisting the student in developing skills to help them succeed in college. The curriculum includes study strategies, time management skills, use of accommodations, and education on issues related to college life, technology and the college classroom. Over 400 students attended the two-week summer programs across the state and successfully began college at the completion of this summer program.

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
Vocational Rehabilitation Services
2127 East South Boulevard
Montgomery, Alabama 36116-2455
Telephone: (334) 288-0220
<http://www.rehab.state.al.us/>

FLORIDA

www.rehabworks.org

General Information

DVR School to Work Transition involves a number of activities that help students enter training, continue education and/or work after leaving high school. The goal is to help students who want to work become better prepared for life beyond high school.

Transition Resources

School to Work Brochure

Provides information on how Vocational Rehabilitation and the school district can assist with transition from high school to training, education and/or work.

[School to Work Brochure \(English-PDF\)](#)

[School to Work Brochure \(Spanish-PDF\)](#)

[School to Work Brochure \(Creole-PDF\)](#)

School to Work Transition Checklist

A checklist that may help address your transition needs at each stage of the transition process.

[School to Work Transition Checklist \(English-PDF\)](#)

[School to Work Transition Checklist \(Spanish - PDF\)](#)

[School to Work Transition Checklist \(Creole - PDF\)](#)

[An Introduction to Exceptional Student Education](#) – For parents of Florida’s students with disabilities to guide them in obtaining needed assistance from school districts and state agencies in the provision of special programs for their children.

[Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Disabilities \(English - PDF\)](#) –

Designed to assist students, their parents, school districts and state agencies to address accommodations and modifications needed for the student to remove barriers to successful adult living and employment.

[Transition \(English -PDF\)](#) – The passage from youth to adulthood. A guide to the services and information that can make transition a success for young people with disabilities. Where, why, when and how to make the most of the years 14-22.

[Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities \(English - PDF\)](#) – Designed for parents of students with disabilities, it provides information on the types of diplomas available in Florida. This knowledge helps to ensure that the student is engaged in the educational activities needed to obtain the appropriate type of diploma which will support the student’s goals after high school.

[Things to Consider During Your Child’s High School Years \(English - PDF\)](#) – Things to consider vary from student to student. This is a list of several important issues for consideration.

[Helping Parents Prepare Students for Employment \(English-PDF\)](#) Preparing for employment is a lifelong activity. This is a list of some ways to better prepare high school students for the world of work.

Helpful Web Links:

www.facts23.facts.org

Florida's Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students. This advising web site helps students plan and track their education progress from middle school through college.

www.fyitransition.org

Florida Youth in Transition is a fully interactive web site designed to assist students with disabilities, their families and professionals plan for transition upon graduation from high school.

www.myfloridayouth.com

Transition site emphasizing youth resources available through federal and state agencies.

www.project10.info

The Transition Education Network (10) is a comprehensive site for transition resources and technical assistance launching by the start of the 2009-10 school year.

www.labormarketinfo.com/pubs

Brochures, posters and information sheets on skills, careers and wages useful in vocational exploration.

www.apd.myflorida.com/publications

Decision Making Options brochure and various other materials available to students with disabilities.

[Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology \(FAAST\)](#)

FAAST envisions a seamless supportive partnership between Florida business and government to provide assistive technology products and services which will enable persons with disabilities to participate in independent living, education, work and recreation from birth to death.

[Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services](#)

For additional information concerning children with disabilities and special health care needs call: 1-800-654-4440.

[Family Network on Disabilities of Florida](#)

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida is a statewide alliance of individuals with disabilities, special needs, or at-risk and their families. Our mission is to provide family-driven support, education, information, and advocacy.

[National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth \(NCWD/Youth\)](#)

Your source for information about employment and youth with disabilities. Our partners, experts in disability, education, employment, and workforce development, strive to ensure that you will be provided with the highest quality, most relevant information possible.

www.employflorida.com

Links all of Florida's workforce services, state and local, to each other.

Contact Information

Additional questions regarding School to Work Transition services provided through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation should be submitted to your [local DVR Office](#) or the DVR Transition Administrator, [Kirk Hall](#), or by phone (850) 245-3360.

GEORGIA

Georgia currently has 86 school systems participating in 70 collaborative agreements with VR. The school system pays for a portion of the cost of the overhead of a Counselor's position, and VR provides intensive services to the system and is able to pull down the Federal match. This year (2009-2010), we anticipated losing a few of these agreements due to the downturn in the economy; however, we actually had a net gain in the number of schools participating.

We continue to work on our transition website (www.gatransition.org), which is a partnership with the Georgia Department of Education. We also support 36 Interagency Transition Councils (ITC's), which allow local personnel from state and private entities to meet on a regular basis. The majority of the ITC's are both information and student based, and allow a leveraging of resources not previously available.

Other resources we use on a regular basis:

- Shared Work: a website dedicated to national communities of practice www.sharedwork.org
- For career information: <http://www.bls.gov/k12/> (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- Interesting site on educational and occupational advancement for youth: www.iff.org
- Forum for Youth Investment (Ready by 21) www.forumfyi.org
- Autism resource: www.autism.com
- Assorted resources available: <http://transitioncoalition.org>
- Quick tips on ADA: <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/index.htm>
- Information on accommodations: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwrld/>

- Inclusion resource: <http://communityinclusion.org/>
- Financial Literacy for teens: <http://kiplinger.com>
- Information on Specific Learning Disabilities: <http://www.ldag.org/>
- Articles to share: <http://www.disabilityisnatural.com>
- Excellent resource on post secondary opportunities: www.ncset.org

KENTUCKY

Regional Interagency Transition Teams were established in January 2005, when a statewide “transition forum” was held in Louisville for members to meet each other and begin a statewide discussion of regional transition needs. In March 2005 a second statewide meeting was held so the teams could begin work on their regional vision, mission, and action plan. Following the March meeting, the teams began meeting on their own in their respective regions. The teams are aligned with the 11 state Special Education Cooperatives. Kentucky also noted its participation in the National Center for Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) national transition summits in 2003 and 2005 as a promising practice. Through knowledge gained there, the transition team developed an action plan for improving transition results for Kentucky’s youth. To put the planning into action, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities, with the Department of Exceptional Children Services’ leadership, created the Transition Core Team subcommittee of the Council. [This summary was taken from a report prepared by the Center for Workers with Disabilities. [Transition for Youth with Disabilities: A Look at State Programs, Progress, and Promising Practices \(.doc\)](#)]

Transition from School to Work for Students with Disabilities

Every student participates in school activities with a goal of being prepared to function at some level of independence as a result of his/her school experience. Although this is no different for students with disabilities, differences do exist as far as what needs to occur before and after graduation if students are to move successfully from high school to post-school activities such as training, employment and independent living. For many students with disabilities the success of this transition from school to adult life depends on teamwork and collaboration between the schools and community resources. As one such resource, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) works closely with the KY Department of Education (KDE) to assist eligible students with disabilities to identify, plan for, and achieve their vocational goals.

Who should be referred to OVR for Transition services?

Referrals should be made on any student with a disability that might prevent them from training for, getting or keeping a job. Once the referral is made, a qualified rehabilitation counselor will determine if the student is eligible for services.

When should the referral be made?

Typically a referral is not made until the student is within two years of exiting high school. However, a student can be referred earlier if appropriate.

What services can a student expect to receive from OVR?

Prior to graduation, the eligible student can expect to receive a comprehensive assessment to determine vocational interests, capacities, and abilities, as well as guidance and counseling in determining an appropriate vocational goal and the services necessary to attain that goal.

All services that are planned for and provided are individualized, determined jointly by the counselor and the student, and directly related to a specific vocational goal.

After graduation, services vary depending upon the student's individual goals and needs; however, the focus remains on acquiring the skills necessary to get a job, job development, job placement, and follow-up.

What is available for students with significant disabilities who will not be going on to post-secondary training or the military?

The Community Based Work Transition Program (CBWTP) is a jointly funded program between OVR and a number of school districts in the state.

The student considered appropriate for this program will require the unique services of a job trainer in order to obtain and maintain employment.

The goal of this program is for each student to be placed in the most integrated setting prior to graduation, with necessary supports in place to maintain that employment.

If you wish to refer a student to OVR or would like more information about transition services available through OVR, contact your local OVR office or call the statewide toll free number at: 1-800-372-7172.

LINKS:

[Career Planning begins with Assessment: A Guide for Professionals Serving Youth with Educational and Career Developmental Challenges](#)

[Entering the World of Work: What Youth with Mental Health Needs Should Know about Accommodations](#)

[Access to Postsecondary Education](#)

[10 Things High School Students Need to Know about VR Services](#)

The Community Based Work Transition Program (CBWTP) is designed to provide a positive beginning in the world of work for special education students during their last two years of high school. It serves students having a range of disabilities who need

personalized support for exploring potential careers, pursuing challenging work experiences and maintaining employment within their communities. The CBWTP is a cooperative effort between participating local school districts, the [Kentucky Department of Education](#), the [Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation](#), the [Kentucky Office for the Blind](#), and the [Human Development Institute](#) at the [University of Kentucky](#).

Webster, Washington, and Jessamine Counties CBWTP Participants featured in the January 2009 OVR internal newsletter, [The OVR Review](#) .

Policies and procedures related to transition are on the website at <http://www.ovr.ky.gov/policiesregs/policiespromanual.htm>

Advising Youth with Disabilities on Disclosure
http://www.kypa.net/drupal/files/Access%20to%20Postsecondary%20Education%20Final%20Draft%20101706%20_2_.pdf

The Community Based Work Transition Program
<http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/cbwtp/>

MISSISSIPPI

You may access the section in the site related to transition services by going to www.mdrs.state.ms.us. On the left of the screen, click on Consumer Services, scroll down and click on 'The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)' link, then stroll down and click on 'Transition Services'.

Donny Frazier, Program Coordinator
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
Post Office Box 1698
Jackson, MS 39215
(601) 853-5389

Through the Transition Services Program, the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation

Services works with eligible secondary school students with disabilities to enable them to transition from school to subsequent work environments. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) works cooperatively with the Mississippi Department of Education and local school districts in planning and implementing a variety of programs designed to provide training and assistance for students with disabilities to support them in making the difficult transition from school to work.

The following transition services are available to eligible high school students with disabilities:

Career Exploration and Employability Skills Program

The VR Transition Counselor and the classroom teacher work together to implement a curriculum that students with disabilities may participate in. This program assists students with a range of services from interviewing skills to appropriate workplace dress attire. VR teaches this curriculum as agreed upon by school personnel and provide technical assistance, materials as needed, and progress in various areas of performance.

Job Readiness Training

This program is provided at a community rehabilitation program (CRP). The focus of this program is to provide students with disabilities an opportunity to do actual work in a structured environment. Students receive pay, training, vocational assessment and work evaluation.

Regular Vocational Technical Training

Some students with disabilities may choose to participate in the regular Vocational-Technical Programs (welding, auto body repair, etc.) through the school system. These students may also receive vocational assessment and evaluation through VR.

On the Job Training (OJT)

When students near the end of their last year in school they may opt to participate in on-the-job training. This program differs from Job Readiness Training in that the student enters into an employee/employer relationship and the employer provides the training needed for successful job performance. The employer and VR agree on a fee that VR will pay the employer for the training. The employer receives technical assistance from a VR counselor and the employee receives vocational assessment, vocational counseling and guidance. The decision as to the appropriate services for a student will be made through a decision made by the student, through informed choice, and in coordination with the VR counselor and the school system. Each transition case is individualized and the services will be coordinated as to what is appropriate in each case.

For more information, go to the contact information for a counselor in a particular area or call 1-800-443-1000.

NORTH CAROLINA

Cooperative Programs

The North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NCDVRS) has had a strong commitment to transition services since the early sixties. NCDVRS has cooperative programs (Memorandum of Agreements) with 92 of 114 public school systems throughout the state and with the NC School for the Deaf (West) and Eastern NCSD. The Local Education Agency (LEA) pays 21.3% which provides the state share for federal matching funds to cover the cost of staff and other administrative expenses and VR pays 78.7% in federal funds. VR pays all the case service costs for serving

students through cooperative programs. Approximately 37% of all persons served by the Division are less than 22 years of age. Public schools are one of the leading referral sources to the Division.

The local agreements and program descriptions with school systems list the responsibilities and services to be provided by each party to the agreement. These documents address both short and long-term transition issues of youth with disabilities exiting school systems and the party responsible for various services.

The Division encourages cooperative school counselors to participate in Individual Education Plan (IEP) transition planning meetings for youth with disabilities prior to their exit from school. The agency's goal is to make a determination regarding eligibility for disabled youth who are age 16 in cooperatively funded programs and for all students prior to their exiting school.

It is required that the Division send an annual report to school systems with which the Division has a third party cooperatively funded program. This report should not only include data about services and expenditures for students with disabilities provided by the Division, it should also address how VR staff have worked with school staff in transition planning for students with significant and most significant disabilities. It should also address how the Division is partnering with the school system in addressing the work experience requirements of the Occupational Course of Study.

Occupational Course of Study:

This one of four courses of study through which a person may earn a NC high school diploma. This curriculum is for persons with significant disabilities served under an IEP. The Division played a critical role in convincing the State Board of Education to approve this course of study.

VR enhanced and developed services to support the student's success in the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) education pathway to a NC high school diploma which allows an increased number of students to exit high school with work experiences, a competitive job and a NC diploma.

Work Experience/Work Simulation – In-School Work Adjustment Agreements:

The Division is working with schools to jointly develop programs, which will enhance vocational rehabilitation plan development for students with significant and most significant disabilities. Eligible clients of the Division or clients participating in a trial work experience can be considered for token or incentive payment programs if the students are enrolled in special short-term training programs performing work experience or work simulation activities either on campus or in the community. These services can be provided only through signed School Work Adjustment Agreements and must address a number of issues including:

Certain Department of Labor requirements,
Insurance or Medicaid coverage of the student,
Academic credit for student's participation in the program, and
Written evaluation from the school regarding the student's performance in the program
at the end of each grading period.

Community Based Assessment for Transition Services:

The Division has established a Statewide Budget Code 1299 that is to be used to purchase community based assessments for those individuals who are transitioning from secondary schools. The budget is designed to address unmet needs identified by VR Transition Counselors in the areas of assessment and career exploration necessary to provide transition services. It is expected that the new statewide budget will increase creative outreach and inclusion in situations where there has been a lack of resources. The budget was created to provide a flexible tool that may be utilized by counselors to serve students making the transition from school to work.

Supported Employment Services
Community Rehabilitation Programs
Assistive Technology for Students

VR Policy Appendix: (available upon request)

Learning Disability

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)

Borderline Intellectual Functioning

Interagency Collaboration Training Initiative

The VR state program specialist for transition services and the state program consultant for transition with DPI join to provide programmatic information, content transition training to VR counselors and school system transition staff to maintain and enhance the quality of transition services for successful post school outcomes for students with disabilities. In addition, information is provided on Social Security Work Incentives for youth with disabilities.

NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

2801 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-2801

For more information about Transition Services, contact Alma Taylor at 919-855-3500 or TDD 919-855-3579

<http://dvr.dhhs.state.nc.us>

School to Life Brochures: Publications; School to Life

SOUTH CAROLINA

The **South Carolina** Vocational Rehabilitation Department sees working with transition aged youth as a priority and as such has focused time and resources to improve these services. The State VR agency has an active Memoranda of Understanding with each of the state's 86 school districts. Every high school in the state has an assigned Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and/or a Transition Employment Coach whose responsibility is to identify and recruit transition-age youth for services. The State VR agency has consolidated its transition programs and has a dedicated team of individuals working on all aspects of transition services including a new position, the Transition Coordinator.

SCVRD has created a new program, the Transition Services Specialist (TSS) program which is a blending of two existing programs: the Transition Employability Specialist (TES) and High School High Tech. Like the TES, the new position is jointly funded by SCVRD and a local school district and assists in the identification, referral and service provision to students with disabilities. The referral focus has expanded beyond those students in TMD, EMD and self-contained classrooms to all students with disabilities. The HSHT activity manual is used and services focus on the Guideposts of Preparatory activities, Work-Based Activities, Connecting Activities, Youth Development and Leadership and Family Involvement. The TSS is an employee of the school district but works on behalf of SCVRD. It is anticipated that with the conversion of the Transition Employability (TES) sites, there will be nine active TSS sites in 2009.

SCVRD continues its implementation of the High School High Tech program (HS/HT), a program designed to promote technology-based careers and education for youth with disabilities. HS/HT is a nationally recognized program that has been supported by the US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.

In October of 2007, SCVRD was awarded one of six RSA Model Transition Demonstration grants to establish the Youth Employment Services (YES) program. This program, in its second year of implementation, created a new position, the Transition Assessment Specialist who is an employee of the SCVRD but who is housed exclusively with a local school. The program is in progress at two high schools and will begin in two additional high schools this fall. The program targets at least 50 students with disabilities in the school and provides a constellation of services similar to the TSS program but focuses on paid school and community based work experiences. For more information contact Anne Iriel (email: airiel@scvrd.state.sc.us or telephone (803) 896-6581).

TENNESSEE

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Transition School to Work (TSW) program focuses on the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible high school students with disabilities who are interested in employment after leaving high school. The goal is a smooth, seamless transition from high school to post-high school employment.

All VR eligible students receive counseling and guidance from a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Examples of other transition services that lead to employment might include vocational assessment, assistive technology evaluation, post-secondary training, and/or job placement. Post-secondary training might include on-the-job training, training at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (Smyrna, TN), or training at the vocational/technical or college/university levels.

High school teachers, guidance counselors, family members or students may request that a DRS counselor become involved early in the transition planning process but no later than 12 to 18 months prior to exiting school.

A VR counselor is assigned to each high school across the state. We created a “transition map” to ensure that all eligible students with disabilities will receive transition services as appropriate. The map is basically an Excel spreadsheet listing high schools by geographic regions and cross-referencing with the assigned counselor.

In some areas of the state, the VR agency has been able to provide more comprehensive transition services through a cooperative agreement with the Local Education Agency (LEA). The Division has contracted with 24 LEAs that are designed to provide enhanced and concentrated services to students transitioning from secondary education to post-secondary activities that lead to employment. The following is a list of general highlights of the cooperative agreements:

Each grant agreement includes a designated DRS counselor for the LEA (there is one exception that I will explain below.)

The LEA provides support staff that might include secretary, case manager assistant, or job coaches. These support positions are determined by system needs, i.e. one system uses a case manager assistant for job coach duties and secretarial support while another might have five job coaches and no assistant.

Funding is based on a 30/70 split, with the LEA responsible for 30 percent of the total grant budget.

While the DRS counselor is a state employee, all support staff are considered employees of the LEA; however, the salary and benefits of the counselor is figured in the total grant budget, so in essence the LEA pays 30 percent of the counselor salary/benefits.

The exception to the above is one LEA that chose not to include the counselor salary in the grant budget but only to share cost for job coaches. To fund support staff in this instance we use a 40/60 split (LEA at 40%). The counselor assigned to this school also serves an adult population and is not solely a secondary transition counselor.

Below is a copy of the scope of services for the Transition School to Work contracts with LEAs (with the one exception explained in the last bullet above).

GRANT CONTRACT
BETWEEN THE STATE OF TENNESSEE,
Department of Human Services
AND
«Entity_Name»

A. SCOPE OF SERVICES:

A.1. The Grantee shall provide all service and deliverables as required, described, and detailed by this Scope of Services and shall meet all service and delivery timelines specified in the Scope of Services section or elsewhere in this Grant Contract.

A.2. The Grantee shall provide appropriate staff, (Case Manager Assistant/Job Coach and Secretary) under the supervision of the local education agency's Special Education Director or Transition Coordinator to assist and support the operations of the State's Vocational Rehabilitation services.

A.3. The Grantee shall provide office space for Vocational Rehabilitation staff to provide vocational rehabilitation services.

A.4. The Grantee shall, upon request by the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), provide a corrective action plan to address any problems identified by DRS concerning the performance of staff outlined in Section A.-Scope of Services.

A.5. The State will provide Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor services to: complete and submit applications for individuals in the county local education agency so that they can be evaluated for eligibility for vocational rehabilitative services by the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) as well as providing general transition services to groups regarding career planning.

develop contacts with appropriate agencies and potential employers that may be utilized for vocational rehabilitation service referrals.

make referrals and arrange employment placements and vocational services for eligible individuals, as identified in their Individualized Plans for Employment.

Tennessee has a network of state-owned rehabilitation centers across the state that fill an important role in providing transition services to youth. The state has 17 community-based Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers (TRC) and one comprehensive TRC. The community-based TRCs provide day services to clients, many of whom are students transitioning to post-secondary employment: vocational evaluation; personal adjustment; job readiness; and, job placement.

Information about the TRC network may be found online at:

<http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/rehab/ctrc.html> &
<http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/rehab/trc.html>.

For more information about TSW, please contact:
Mary Jane Ware, DRS Program Coordinator for Transition Services
Citizens Plaza State Office Building, 14th Floor
400 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243
615-313-4981
Maryjane.ware@tn.gov

Tennessee has a training program for students living in or near the Nashville-Davidson County area. Project Opportunity was initially funded by DRS through an establishment grant and is based on the Project Search model at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Project Opportunity is now in its third year of operation at Vanderbilt University Medical Center Children's Hospital. The VR agency now provides one-half of the funding for the service grant and the remaining 50 percent is shared between the Tennessee Council for Developmental Disabilities and the Tennessee Department of Education.

There are eight student "interns" participating in Project Opportunity during each training cycle. Below is a brief description of the program. For a more detailed description of the training and employment process, go [here](#).

Project Opportunity General Information Sheet

Modeled after a similar, highly successful program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Project Opportunity provides educational, developmental, and employment opportunities within Vanderbilt University Medical Center to individuals with disabilities. The project consists of two distinct yet overlapping components: a job training program for high school students with developmental disabilities and job placement/follow-up for Project Opportunity graduates who qualify for open positions. The program has been well-received thanks to the Establishment Grant from Vocational Rehabilitation; and we are continuing thanks to collaboration among VR, Council on Development Disabilities and the State Department of Special Education.

Interested persons should contact a VR Counselor to discuss the following criteria:

- VR eligible, Priority Category 1 with an Individualized Plan for Employment
- 8-22 years old
- Desire to work in a competitive environment
- Be willing to access independent transportation options
- Have basic communication skills
- Have appropriate social, grooming and hygiene skills
- Have independent toileting and feeding skills
- Be able to pass a drug screen and felony check
- Have updated immunizations (per hospital policy)

The job training portion of Project Opportunity begins in July and ends in May; from 9am-1pm. Students are responsible for their own transportation, but bus transportation is available through the program. On-the-job training and support for these participants

is provided by an *Educational Coordinator and Job Coach*. The day begins with some didactic instruction on hospital policies, appropriate workplace behavior, hygiene, etc. But the majority of the day is spent on various rotations, such as processing surgical instruments in Sterile Processing, stocking supplies in the NICU, and assessing and supplying oxygen tanks to each floor. All of these rotations are designed specifically to train *transferable skills* that will be vital in competing for open positions at Vanderbilt.

After graduating from the job training portion of the program, Project Opportunity's educational and developmental scope expands to provide direct employment opportunities to select participants. A full-time position of *Employment Coordinator* exists to identify potential job openings and to provide support to graduates, along with the supervisors and co-workers in the hiring departments. ***Thus, positions are NOT created or guaranteed...but qualified graduates are placed into existing openings and must compete with other applicants. The goal of Project Opportunity is to fill a business need with qualified individuals with developmental disabilities.***

For more information, contact DRS at (615)313-4981;
<http://state.tn.us/humanserv/rehab/vrs.htm>, or Project Opportunity at (615) 343-7773
www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/projectopportunity

EXAMPLES OF VR TRANSITION-RELATED PRACTICES USED IN STATES OUTSIDE THE SOUTHEAST REGION

RSA: Promising Practices for Basic VR Agencies Helping Transition Age Youth

www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/rehab/promising-practices/transition-age/index.html

FY 2007

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitored 23 state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies in FY 2007 as authorized by Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. These agencies, their stakeholders, and RSA identified promising practices that provide useful samples of programs and services that promote youth with disabilities transitioning from school to employment. These promising practices are unique to the VR agencies providing the programs and contact information is provided for each practice. Summaries of the practices are below with links for the agencies' websites.

Alabama - [College Preparation Programs](#)

Alabama - [Career Preparation and Training Initiative \(CPTI\)](#)

Maryland - [Transitioning Youth](#)

Nebraska - [Transition Scholarships](#)

Pennsylvania - [Participation in the Pennsylvania Community on Transition.](#)

Rhode Island - [Shared Youth Vision Federal Collaborative Partnership](#)

Rhode Island - [Statewide Partnerships Leveraging Resources and Maximizing Access to Services for Transitioning Youths](#)

South Dakota - [Leveraging Resources and Maximizing Access to Services for Transition Youths Through Statewide Partnerships](#)

Vermont - [Jump on Board for Success \(JOBS\)](#)

Vermont - [Learn, Earn and Prosper \(LEAP\)](#)

MARYLAND

Transitioning Youth

The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) was commended for its outreach to youth with disabilities, funding of services for eligible youth while they are still in high school, and its positive relationships with partners in providing services and leveraging resources to serve transitioning students with disabilities. DORS has

executed interagency agreements with four local school districts in order to ensure that students have the necessary accommodations to transition from high school. These agreements establish that DORS will purchase assistive technology for eligible transitioning students with significant disabilities and that the school will train the student in the use of that technology.

Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services
2301 Argonne Drive
Baltimore, Maryland 21218-1696
Telephone: (410) 554-9385
<http://www.dors.state.md.us/dors>

NEBRASKA

Transition Scholarships

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (NVR) awards "scholarships" to transition-age youths who are eligible for VR services. These youths are given internships with an employer that can last up to 12 weeks. NVR pays up to half of the costs while the consumer is working as an intern. The employer teaches the young person the skills necessary to do the job and often provides the youth with a mentor.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
301 Centennial Mall South
PO Box 94987
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509
Telephone: 402-471-3667

PENNSYLVANIA

Participation in the Pennsylvania Community on Transition

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is an active participant in the Pennsylvania Community on Transition - State Leadership Team. The PA Community on Transition initiative is a result of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established by the 1998 Governor's Executive Order, "Interagency Committee to Coordinate Services Provided to Individuals with Disabilities." The State Leadership Team is comprised of representatives from the significant Commonwealth agencies providing services to individuals with disabilities and is dedicated to fulfilling the intent of the MOU to improve coordination of services to children across the Commonwealth. In 2006, a new MOU was signed to advance and reconfirm the original 1998 MOU. Through this MOU, representatives from four PA agencies (Department of Education; Department of Labor and Industry; Department of Public Welfare; and the Department of Health) committed to "work together in supporting youth and young adults with disabilities transitioning into adult life in the achievement of their desired post-school outcomes, with a focus on post-secondary education, training and lifelong learning; community participation; and healthy lifestyles... to work in equal partnership with youth and young adults with disabilities and their families and care givers in advancing this shared agenda."

The 2006 MOU strengthened the commitment of the original 1998 MOU that provided the springboard for the work of the PA Community on Transition. OVR, as a participant in the 2006 MOU, and member of the State Leadership Team, committed to the PA Community on Transition vision. In addition to serving on the State Leadership Team, OVR representatives have been instrumental in the creation of one of the four Outcome Practice Groups. The Employment Outcome Practice Group was established to increase the number of youth in Pennsylvania that obtains competitive employment, as a result of a systematic approach to career development activities.

As an active participant in the Pennsylvania Community on Transition, OVR has been a significant contributor to the development and implementation of over 40 transition programs in career exploration, job shadowing, and mentoring, as well as developing and conducting capacity building training programs such as "Building Partnerships to Improve Employment Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities." OVR is an active participant in the 70 Local Transition Coordinating Councils (LTCCs) across the state. The LTCCs are comprised of OVR staff, educators, parents, advocates, and community rehabilitation providers. The LTCCs provide training on transition services and employment. In addition, OVR is an active participant in the IDEA partnership, and disseminates materials, experiences, models, and resources through the Sharedwork.org web site funded by the U.S. Department of Education's\Office of Special Education Programs.

In FY 2006, 5,033 youths with disabilities were served by OVR, an increase from 4,926 served in FY 2005. In FY 2006, the cases of 2,992 youths with disabilities were successfully closed, an increase from 2,819 in FY 2005 (RSA).

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
1521 North 6th Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102
Telephone: 717-787-5244
<http://www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/cwp/view.asp?a=128&Q=168255>

RHODE ISLAND

Shared Youth Vision Federal Collaborative Partnership

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in Rhode Island is a partner in a US Department of Labor systems change grant entitled "Shared Youth Vision Federal Collaborative Partnership." This program combines the local services of the Social Security Administration, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Justice, the Department of Commerce, and the Division of Children, Youth and Families to serve disadvantaged youths that have been unsuccessful in school systems. The purpose of this systems change grant is to create state teams that will undertake strategic planning activities to develop a system that will improve services to youths by leveraging resources, aligning policy, and other activities. ORS anticipates serving 50 disadvantaged youths with disabilities in its initial year of the project.

Statewide Partnerships Leveraging Resources and Maximizing Access to Services for Transitioning Youths

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in Rhode Island (RI) initiated its first project to serve youths in RI in 1962 and ORS believes it has successfully created a culture that provides improved services to youths with disabilities. ORS has maximized the required MOU between the RI Department of Education (RIDE) and the DHS/ORS to clarify the role of each partner in fostering a seamless service delivery system intended to achieve successful employment outcomes. The MOU expands on the requirements in the Act and delineates the collaborative services intended to assist students, parents, school personnel, public agencies, and private service agencies responsible for the effective delivery of transition services. A Collaborative Services Chart, included in the MOU, defines the roles and responsibilities of the local education agencies, ORS, and community services agencies in the delivery of assessments, career development, community living, assistive technology, auxiliary aid, medical, transportation, and case management services.

Under the MOU, five RI Regional Transitional Centers provide direct technical support, training and information on transition services to school personnel in each region statewide. The centers assist students with their personal career goals through career counseling, vocational testing and community work experiences.

RI Transition Academies, in contrast to the Transition Centers, offers ORS eligible youths the opportunity to complete their high school education on a college campus and/or in various employment and community settings. The academies provide youths with classroom and community instruction in academics, independent living, community mobility, self-advocacy, and behavior skills required for seeking, obtaining and maintaining employment. The ORS VR counselors in each school district serve as the single point of contact with the primary responsibility of coordinating the community services between school staff, students, families, and the academies.

Students with disabilities also benefit from social security benefits counseling that occurs early in the rehabilitation process so the youths with disabilities and their families are educated in the impacts of work on benefits. The VR counselor also coordinates this partnership.

Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services
40 Fountain Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
Telephone: 401-421-7005
<http://www.ors.state.ri.us/>

SOUTH DAKOTA

Leveraging Resources and Maximizing Access to Services for Transition Youths Through Statewide Partnerships

Through a partnership between the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), and the state Department of Education, South Dakota (SD) established the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP), designed to expand employment opportunities for transition youths with disabilities. On behalf of the partnership, the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC), established as a service cooperative in state government, administers and coordinates TSLP services and programs described below.

Project Skills - This program provides paid work experiences for high school students with disabilities. DRS and SBVI provide funding for wages, Federal Insurance Contribution Act, worker's compensation, and other costs needed for employment, such as uniforms and other work-related supplies. The local school district provides job development, job coaching, and on-the-job monitoring.

Catch the Wave - This program provides post-secondary orientation. 'Catch the Wave' is a one-day conference designed for students with disabilities who may be considering post-secondary education. Students have an opportunity to learn about preparing for college, including securing necessary accommodations and developing self-advocacy and communication skills. The conference features opportunities to dialogue with other students with disabilities with post-secondary experiences.

Youth Leadership Forum - This program provides career and leadership training for high school juniors and seniors. Through a statewide competition, student delegates with leadership potential are chosen to participate in this annual five-day event conducted on the campus of the University of SD at Sioux Falls. During the forum they participate in activities designed to enhance leadership, citizenship, and social skills.

Transition Tacklebox - This program provides web-based resources for students with disabilities, their families, special education agencies, and VR counselors. The Tacklebox includes a variety of information resources designed to assist students with disabilities in making decisions about postsecondary training and community-based living.

The TSLP demonstrates how state departments and agencies can partner together to leverage resources for the benefit of transition youths with disabilities.

South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services and
Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired
3800 East Highway 34
Pierre, South Dakota 57501
Telephone: 605-773-3195
<http://dhs.sd.gov/>

<http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/>

<http://www.tslp.org/>

Toll-Free: 1-800-224-5336

VERMONT

Jump on Board for Success (JOBS)

The Jump On Board for Success (JOBS) program in Vermont is an innovative program that provides Supported Employment and intensive case management service for youth with significant emotional and or behavioral disabilities. The program uses work as a means to reach this challenging population. The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works in partnership with the Department of Corrections, Department of Health/Division of Mental Health, and the Department of Children and Families in eleven sites around the state. In FY 2006, JOBS programs served 243 youth, of whom 176 became employed. In addition, of the JOBS participants without a High School Diploma or GED, 35 percent were helped by the programs to achieve one of these educational goals. Finally, JOBS program staff assisted 58 percent of participants obtain stable housing.

Learn, Earn and Prosper (LEAP)

The Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) is in its first year of a three year grant from the Gibeny Foundation to develop partnerships with local non-profits, ReCycle North, Linking Learning to Life, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corp (VYCC) and the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) to provide community based training and paid work opportunities to transitioning student. The LEAP program engages blind and visually impaired youths in a program in which they learn skills that will help them become more independent, confident, and productive young adults. LEAP is an intensive, four-week program during which youth live with an adult VYCC Crew Leader, in an apartment-style suite. Throughout the experience, members will learn to use adaptive equipment to cook meals, shop for groceries, use public transportation, do laundry, and live as a community. Additionally, LEAP members gain employment skills by participating in one of five vocational training programs at ReCycle North. Through these programs, the participants will learn professional and interpersonal skills while helping ReCycle North accomplish its three-part mission of waste reduction, job skills training, and poverty relief. Following the four weeks of intensive training the students will receive follow up case management from DBVI or the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Also as part of the follow-up, Linking Learning to Life will match students with role models, who are professionals in a field in which the student has expressed interest. For a period of one year, the student and his or her mentor will participate in weekly e-mail exchanges to discuss designated topics. The dialogue is intended to provide an opportunity to develop interpersonal skills, the constructive use of technology, career exploration, the use of resources and information, setting goals and devising means to reaching goals.

Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
103 South Main Street
Osgood II Building
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-2303
Telephone: 1-866-879-6757
<http://vocrehab.vermont.gov/>

The Center for Workers with Disabilities

The Center for Workers with Disabilities is a technical assistance center operated by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) for states enhancing or developing employment supports programs for working persons with disabilities. This is the Center's website. Most of the 30-plus states supported by the Center are supporting employment supports development with Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funds.

[Transition for Youth with Disabilities: A Look at State Programs, Progress, and Promising Practices](http://cw.d.aphsa.org/publications/docs/Transition_for_Youth_with_Disabilities_FINAL.doc)

(http://cw.d.aphsa.org/publications/docs/Transition_for_Youth_with_Disabilities_FINAL.doc)

ALASKA

Alaska's promising practices include Intermediaries, Customized Employment, and the Alaska Transition Camp. The Intermediaries are pilot projects creating a sustainable infrastructure that embraces the "dual customer" approach and that serves both youth with disabilities (those in and out of school) and employers. The main goal of the Intermediaries is to increase the number of youth with disabilities making successful transition to employment and post-secondary education while providing job placement services for employers.

Customized Employment is a program of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation that targets specific people with disabilities (e.g., individuals with disabilities receiving SSI or SSDI, or youth in transition from secondary school). The program uses a wrap-around approach; partners inside and outside One-Stop centers form "service coordination teams" to support each client.

Alaska runs a Transition Camp program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education State Improvement Grant and through fees paid by individual school districts. School district teams attend the camps, which are paid for with their own money. Teams consist of one special education teacher, one paraprofessional, three special education students, and one regular education student. The camps have been very successful in teaching youth in transition basic skills and the knowledge needed to make the transition into adulthood in their communities by using a Person Centered Plan, which is developed during the weeklong session. Staff members attending the camp receive training on IDEA transition requirements and have the opportunity to meet and work with other agency staff and with community groups involved in transition planning.

ARIZONA

The Arizona Transition Outcomes Projects (TOPS) aims to meet IDEA's transition services requirements and improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. It has so far been very successful in changing the system for transition services. The program is implemented in schools, starting with a baseline Individual Education Plan for students ages 14 and older. This baseline should highlight specific areas where transition services are most needed. A group of workers from various state, local, and regional organizations and agencies meet to develop a strategy for addressing these problem areas and set goals for the student. School district staff is then tasked with implementing the plan. A review is conducted after about a year, and throughout the year technical assistance is provided to the district staff about every six to eight weeks. The success of the project has been much attributed to the teachers involved. The TOPS initiative has also been implemented in other states.

CALIFORNIA

California implemented the Transition Partnership Programs in 1987 by the state Education and Rehabilitation departments. Transition Partnership Programs offer opportunities for local education agencies to partner with the Department of Rehabilitation to better coordinate services for youth in transition with disabilities. Through the local school systems, VR services are provided to students for up to one year after they finish high school by vocational rehabilitation counselors. Students participating in the program receive services to help them find and maintain employment opportunities through community-based instruction, on-the-job training, job placement services, and individual follow-up services. Eighty-five Transition Partnership Programs are currently operating throughout the state.

California also implemented the WorkAbility I, II, III, and IV programs, which provide a variety of employment services and supports to youth and young adults with disabilities at various stages of the transition process. Figure 4 illustrates the specific scope of each WorkAbility program.

Figure 4: California's WorkAbility Programs

WorkAbility I	WorkAbility II	WorkAbility III	WorkAbility IV
Student aged 14–22 enrolled in Special Education	Young adult (graduates of Special Education)	Students of California's Community College System who receive state VR services	Students of California's State University System who receive state VR services
Operated through partnership between	Local offices of the Department of Rehabilitation with	Collaboration between the California	Collaboration between the California

Departments of Education and Rehabilitation	Adult Schools and regional occupational programs and centers	Department of Rehabilitation and the California Community College System	Department of Rehabilitation and the California State Universities
Provides comprehensive pre-employment services, job placement, and follow-up for students until they leave high school	Provides job training and placement services from the Adult Schools and regional occupational programs and centers	Helps students transition to employment from the post-secondary education systems	Helps students transition to employment from the post-secondary education systems

Source: American Public Human Services Association, Center for Workers with Disabilities Survey, November 2005.

The Bridges to Youth Self Sufficiency Project (Bridges) in California is a five-year demonstration project through the Department of Rehabilitation and the Social Security Administration that aims to build on the Transition Partnership Project and the WorkAbility I project. The Bridges Project primarily focuses on benefits and service coordination for youth in transition with disabilities, although other services include benefits training and education, targeted outreach, early intervention, and local partnering. All efforts of this project aim to increase self-sufficiency among youth with disabilities, encourage employment, and decrease dependency on public benefit programs, thus decreasing the likelihood of unemployment and poverty and greatly improving quality of life.

Another promising practice is the collaboration model developed by California described earlier in the report.

DELAWARE

Delaware recently introduced a pilot project, Early Start to Supported Employment for Youth in Transition, with the Departments of Education, Division of Developmental and Disability Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Service Providers. The project aims to ensure that students have jobs immediately after graduating high school so that there is no gap period of unemployment. Students must be in good academic standing and are tracked by the Department of Education. The Department of Education, with the Division of Developmental and Disability Services and with funding through Vocational Rehabilitation, submits paperwork and puts up the costs of job assessments, placements, skills training, career development, and follow-up for the participating students. Following the first 90 days of steady employment, the initial case is closed and the individual enters into a long-term, follow-up period during which he or she can receive on-the-job coaching and problem solving assistance.

ILLINOIS

In Illinois, a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services has provided funding to the Illinois State Board of Education for a project designed to provide training and technical assistance to students, families, educators and community providers regarding transition requirements, person-centered planning, promotion of self determination, and writing transition-driven Individual Education Plans. The project is called the Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living, or TOTAL. TOTAL was originally funded for three years, and was extended for an additional year. The grant funding is used for training, materials, travel, etc., and the state provides funding for staff salaries. Four core practices are the focus of the TOTAL project:

Understanding and Meeting State and Federal Transition Mandates;
Person-Centered Transition Planning;
Promoting Student Self-Determination; and
Transition as the Centerpiece of the Individualized Education Plan.

These four practices were disseminated through three channels: 20 transition teams from local education agencies throughout the state received extensive training to offer transition services by means of the four principles; 150 regional education staff members were trained as trainers; and a variety of multimedia materials were developed for individuals who did not participate as members of regional teams of trainers to access the materials.

INDIANA

Indiana reported two notable practices. One is the Indiana State Improvement Grant (IN-SIG), part of the U.S. Department of Education school improvement initiative and funded through IDEA Part D funds. IN-SIG is a comprehensive program to improve services and outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. Transition services, including systems for professional development, technical assistance, and dissemination of knowledge about best practices, are a part of the program, which also includes early intervention and education services.

Indiana also provides the local school systems with an updated and revised collection of transition-related articles twice a year to ensure they have access to current information. The collection is entitled *Independence*, and is sent to special education offices all over the state to include in their own newsletter and distribution lists. The content of these articles covers a range of topics, such as information on how to access vocational rehabilitation services, graduation requirements, how to get a driver's license, and other issues of adulthood and independence.

IOWA

Iowa has a Social Security Administration "cash and counseling" Youth Transition Demonstration Project called Smart Start. An 1115 waiver has been requested through

the state's Medicaid agency. Smart Start advances integration of funding and program resources already allocated for youth with disabilities by creating procedures for participating youth the option to “cash out” benefits from Medicaid and blend them with other public funds such as WIA One-Stops and Education. Public monies for the purchase of supportive services, which now flows through many layers and entities, can then be “banked” by youth and their families for the direct purchase of support services. Through this “cash and counseling” program, participants use the tools of self-determination to direct the publicly funded investment in their life. Personal agents or brokers trained by the program can be hired to help negotiate the purchase of services and to advise and support the youth. Young people and their families are provided with financial literacy training using a curriculum created through a partnership between the Employment Policy Group, the school systems, and credit unions.

Smart Start contains a systems-change component to integrate resources and “blend” funding streams between federal, state, and local supportive service initiatives. Major components of the project include improving school performance and graduation rates; expanding opportunities for post-secondary education; obtaining employment or other income generation; and promoting asset accumulation for future financial security. Partnerships have been created with mainstream financial institutions, local schools, post-secondary educational institutions, and employers.

KENTUCKY

Regional Interagency Transition Teams were established in January 2005, when a statewide “transition forum” was held in Louisville for members to meet each other and begin a statewide discussion of regional transition needs. In March 2005, a second statewide meeting was held so the teams could begin work on their regional vision, mission, and action plan. Following the March meeting, the teams began meeting on their own in their respective regions. The teams are aligned with the 11 state Special Education Cooperatives.

Kentucky also noted its participation in the National Center for Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) national transition summits in 2003 and 2005 as a promising practice. Through knowledge gained there, the transition team developed an action plan for improving transition results for Kentucky’s youth. To put the planning into action, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities, with the Department of Exceptional Children Services’ leadership, created the Transition Core Team subcommittee of the Council.

LOUISIANA

In several Louisiana parishes, cooperative agreements between agencies allow graduating seniors to attend high school and college or vocational/technical programs simultaneously.

NEW YORK

New York has seven regional Transition Coordination Sites that help communities implement transition planning and services to aid students in a successful transition to post-secondary educational opportunities, community living, adult services and employment. The state also runs Special Education Resource and Training Centers, which provide districts with information on coaching and technical assistance tailored to that district's individual needs. There are 42 Special Education Resource and Training Centers offices located throughout the state.

NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota runs a Transition Camp program for students with developmental disabilities. The camps began as a pilot program through the Department of Public Instruction, but are currently operated through local school systems. Individuals attending the camp receive a variety of learning activities also related to transition in addition to a full camp experience with fun activities, cabin living in the woods, etc. Funding comes from a combination of private funds, donations, and scholarships. North Dakota also has an Interagency Transition Institute every other year. This is a three-day conference organized by the State Transition Coordinator and is attended by special education teachers, VR specialists, and parents. The Institute is also funded through the Department of Public Instruction.

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma has a three-year grant from the University of Oklahoma for a Self-Determination and Self-Directed Individual Education Plan (IEP) curriculum. The goal is to allow students to develop their own IEP and plan toward their particular goals and interests. This teaches self-determination and self-advocacy, and allows the students to better understand and participate in the process.

OREGON

Oregon began the Youth Transition Program in 1990 as a coordinated effort between the Oregon Department of Education, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, local school districts, and the University of Oregon to improve employment outcomes for transitioning youth with disabilities. The program is offered through local school districts with the aid of transition specialists funded through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and matching dollars from the local school district. Through the Youth Transition Program, high-school students with disabilities are offered services such as individualized planning, job training, career instruction, and counseling. The program develops a coordinated post-secondary plan based on the student's interests, skills, and goals. The services continue for up to one year after high-school graduation to increase the likelihood that individuals will remain employed, continue with post-secondary education, or with a training program setting. To date, over 15,000 youth have participated in the program; evaluations have shown that participants in the Youth Transition Program have the highest rates of finding and maintaining employment

among participants in all VR programs. The Youth Transition Program participants also demonstrate higher employment rates than youth with disabilities who did not participate in the program: 90 percent of Youth Transition Program students leave the program with a high-school diploma, as compared to 47 percent of non-participating students with disabilities, according to a national study by the Stanford Research Institute. Likewise, 71 percent of Youth Transition Program participants are employed two years after leaving high school, compared to a 46 percent national average for youth with disabilities. The Youth Transition Program has demonstrated success in both urban and rural areas of the state.

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina is in the process of developing a comprehensive initiative to improve graduation rates for students with disabilities through self-determination and student involvement. School districts have conducted training on incorporating these principles into transition efforts using evidence-based practices.

SOUTH DAKOTA

A South Dakota project, Youth Leadership Forum's 'Catch the Wave', is a one-day seminar for transitioning students who are pursuing further education through colleges, universities, or trade schools. Students are taught about what to expect and how to be aware of their rights. The seminar is funded by the Departments of Education and Human Services.

TEXAS

A Texas program, Circles of Support, is based on the family group decision-making process, for older youth in transition to adulthood. In this program, youth who choose to participate identify the key people in their lives who serve as their support system, called Permanent Planning Team (PPT). A meeting (or series of meetings) is arranged between the PPT and the youth to develop a transition plan, with a goal to eliminate any gaps in the plan. The Department of Family and Protective Services pays for the PPT and regional funding is used for staff positions. The Circles of Support program is also used for foster youth in transition, as it helps the youth identify adults who can serve as a support system, even in the absence of family members. Texas also cites the state's public-private partnership among state agencies and Casey Family Programs as a successful model.

UTAH

Utah named participation in the National Center for Secondary Education and Transition's National Leadership Summit with representatives from vocational rehabilitation, the Parent Center, WorkBased Learning, and Special Education as a promising practice. Representatives from a variety of stakeholders served on state-level committees that address post-secondary education, employment, supported employment, benefits planning, increasing the rigor of high-school programs, and

transition planning for youth who receive mental health and foster care services. The committees identified the top priorities for transition efforts—youth leadership, parental involvement, and youth with disabilities in foster care.

VERMONT

The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has a program for transition counselors called Jump on Board for Success (JOBS), spearheaded by the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, in partnership with the Department of Developmental and Mental Health Services, the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, and the Department of Corrections. The JOBS program provides supported employment and intensive case management services to youth with serious emotional and behavioral disabilities who are estranged from their communities and considered at risk.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IMPLEMENTED BY STATE VR AGENCIES

HIGH SCHOOL/HIGH TECH PROGRAMS

www.dol.gov/odep/documents/transition_programs.htm

The high school/high tech program is a comprehensive transition program that uses a variety of activities and innovative approaches to expose transition-age youth with disabilities to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math and other technology-based professions. It also encourages such youth to pursue postsecondary education and training.

Technical assistance and support to HS/HT sites nationwide is provided by the ODEP-funded National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth). With the support of NCWD/Youth, ODEP has produced a new [HS/HT Program Manual](#), which will assist HS/HT sites in incorporating the transition design features into their programs. To learn more about starting a High School/High Tech program in your state, contact [NCWD/Youth](#).

Examples of high school/high tech programs are described below.

Of the nine states that have established a state infrastructure for HS/HT, the State VR agency houses the program in six states (Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio and South Carolina) and has been an active partner in two others (Florida and Oklahoma). Sections 103(a)(15) and 103(b)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, authorizes the VR agencies to engage in transition services for students with disabilities.

Georgia was one of the first states to receive a grant from ODEP to establish a state infrastructure for HS/HT. When this ODEP grant ended in 2004, HS/HT became a permanent program within the Georgia Department of Labor under the direction of the Division of Rehabilitation Services. HS/HT has continued to grow in Georgia and is now being implemented in 22 geographic locations throughout Georgia, serving approximately 425 students in 45 high schools and one community-based organization.

In Colorado, the Business Leadership Network (BLN) was the recipient of the ODEP-funded HS/HT grant. With the BLN connection, Colorado HS/HT was able to place a strong emphasis on work-based learning experiences, with monthly site visits to different high-tech industries and many opportunities for paid summer internships. During the third year of the grant, Colorado HS/HT had expanded to four district sites that were serving youth from 33 schools. When the ODEP funding was terminated two years early, the Colorado HS/HT program sought support from the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The HS/HT program's connection to the BLN has provided some minimal funding that has allowed the program to continue operation in

four localities and provided services to 116 youth with disabilities during the FY 2006-07 school year.

In Delaware, the ODEP-funded HS/HT grant was awarded to the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). When DVR received notice of the termination of the ODEP grant two years early, DVR began providing significant in-kind support to HS/HT to provide time to explore different options for sustaining the program beyond the ODEP grant. The HS/HT program applied to become a non-profit 501 C-3 organization, "Steps to Success." Although the application was approved and "Steps to Success" was established, the organization was not successful in securing outside funding in time to continue the HS/HT program beyond the no-cost extension period for the ODEP grant.

In Florida, The Able Trust, the Governor's Alliance for Employment of Citizens with Disabilities, was the recipient of the ODEP-funded HS/HT grant. Over time, the collaboration between HS/HT and the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has evolved into a strong partnership that is promoting the expansion of HS/HT throughout the state and to special populations such as incarcerated youth with disabilities. The Florida State Legislature has appropriated \$500,000 for DVR for three consecutive years to expand HS/HT to additional sites throughout the state. In addition, DVR provided one time funding for FY 2008 to assist in the support of 14 local HS/HT sites operating through six Independent Living Centers. Even though the ODEP grant was terminated two years early due to a cut in ODEP's federal appropriation, Florida HS/HT continues to expand with support from the State Legislature, DVR, and the Able Trust. Florida HS/HT is currently operating in 33 localities in 31 of 67 counties and enrolled 1,050 students this past school year. There is a waiting list of eight new counties who are interested in implementing HS/HT.

In Maryland, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) was the recipient of the ODEP-funded HS/HT grant. The Director of DORS has seen the value of the *Guideposts for Success* to the extent that DORS has incorporated many aspects of the *Guideposts* into the interagency agreement established between DORS and the State Department of Education and into local interagency agreements established between local school districts and district DORS offices. Aspects of the *Guideposts* have also been incorporated into the policies and procedures that DORS has established for its Transition Coordinators, and are being incorporated into some of the purchase of services agreements between DORS and private service providers. Maryland HS/HT is currently operating five local sites and serving approximately 70 students with disabilities.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) within the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth partnered with the Michigan Department of Education/Office of Special Education & Early Intervention Services to apply for the ODEP grant. MRS served as the recipient of the ODEP-funded HS/HT grant, which is referred to as MiConnections. From the onset of the grant, ODEP funding covered the costs of a full-time state coordinator, a clerical position and two part-time MiConnections' consultant positions to provide technical

assistance and support to developing HS/HT sites throughout the state. MRS housed the project and both MRS and MCB provided supplemental in-kind support, including program evaluation services. When the ODEP grant was terminated two years early, MRS and MCB provided funding to enable MiConnections to continue operations while the HS/HT state coordinator and the state partners explored options for sustaining the program in future years. Currently, MiConnections is operating six local HS/HT sites and approximately 300 students with disabilities have participated in the program to date.

In Ohio, the Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) was the recipient of the ODEP-funded HS/HT grant. HS/HT has been implemented for four years through the Governor's Council on People with Disabilities (GCPD) which is housed at RSC. When RSC received word that the 5-year ODEP grant for HS/HT would be terminated two years early, RSC agreed to increase its support for GCPD so that HS/HT could be continued for one more year, giving GCPD and RSC time to explore alternative sources of funding to sustain HS/HT beyond FY 2007. In October 2007, the HS/HT program in Ohio will be part of RSC's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired transition programs. The program will be operated through the Bureaus using case service funds. Currently, Ohio HS/HT is operating three local sites with a total of 37 students enrolled in the program at these sites. The Ohio HS/HT program also operates an HS/HT Electronic Club where students and local HS/HT coordinators meet via computer conferencing to speak with professionals in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine.

In Oklahoma, the recipient of the HS/HT grant from ODEP was the Bethany School District and the program is implemented through a non-profit organization called Tech-Now, Inc. The ODEP funds were used to continue operating the Oklahoma HS/HT program which was originally established under a five-year grant from the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council. As the value inherent in a collaborative partnership between Tech-Now and the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) became evident, Tech-Now was approved as a DRS vendor and a fee-for-services contract was signed whereby DRS pays Tech-Now a fee per session for each VR-eligible student who participates in HS/HT. Tech-Now has also been successful in getting funding from the National Science Foundation to establish the HS/HT program model within six middle schools in Oklahoma. Tech-Now is currently operating 34 local HS/HT sites which served 253 students during the 2006-07 school year. Over the last three years, Tech-Now has served a total of 720 students.

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) is the first VR agency to move forward and implement HS/HT on a statewide basis without receiving a grant from any source outside of the state. A source of funding, combined with SCVRD funds, for five HS/HT sites in South Carolina is a grant from the Department of Commerce which houses the WIA youth-related program. This grant funding ended June 30, 2007. All but one of the 10 local HS/HT sites in South Carolina are operated out of area SCVRD offices. The one exception is the site that is housed in a career technology school. SCVRD HS/HT has expanded quickly with the goal of having a

program and an HS/HT Employment Specialist housed in all 16 area SCVRD offices and/or sub-offices in the near future.

If you are interested in learning more about a particular HS/HT program or contacting a program directly, check out their web sites below.

Colorado HS/HT: <http://www.coloradohsht.com/>

Florida State HS/HT: <http://www.floridahsht.org/>

Georgia HS/HT: <http://www.vocrehabga.org/hsht/index.htm>

Maryland HS/HT: <http://www.marylandhsht.org/hsht>

Michigan - MiConnections: www.miconnections.org

Ohio HS/HT: <http://www.ohsht.org>

Oklahoma - Tech-Now, Inc.: www.tech-now.biz

South Carolina HS/HT: http://www.scvrd.net/i_hsht.html

SSA-FUNDED YOUTH TRANSITION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

In September 2003, the Social Security Administration (SSA) awarded cooperative agreements in six states—California, Colorado, Iowa, Maryland, Mississippi, and New York—to develop service delivery systems to help youth ages 14-25 who receive either SSI or SSDI benefits, or are at risk of becoming beneficiaries. According to SSA, the goal of this project is to study the impact of waivers to SSI program rules and enhanced coordination of services for youth on their ability to start work or to increase earnings and achieve self-sufficiency. These projects worked collaboratively with many partners, including educational institutions, labor, VR agencies, and other organizations, to build sustainable improvements in the delivery of transition services and supports for youth. These projects demonstrated how communities can integrate services and resources to support the successful transition of youth with disabilities from high school to post-secondary education or employment with a goal of maximizing economic self-sufficiency.

Two of these projects were awarded to State VR agencies—**California** and **Mississippi**. The *Bridges to Youth Self Sufficiency Project* (Bridges) is administered by the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) as a Research and Demonstration project. DOR was awarded a five-year demonstration project funded by a grant from the Social Security Administration. The Bridges Project has been implemented in five demonstration sites. The premise of the project is to build upon the existing DOR /education infrastructure of employment services. Benefits counseling and intensive service coordination are the primary services provided by this project. Other specific program components are benefits training and education, outreach to specialized populations, early intervention (as early as 14 years old), local partnering, youth incentives, local and state oversight bodies, and a data driven research study.

Each site serves a minimum of 50 SSI/SSDI eligible or at risk youth at any given time. Over the five-year period of the grant a minimum of 625 youth will be served. Of the 369 current participants (in and out of school), 181 are employed either full of

part time

Web site: www.allenshea.com/bridges.html; Contact: Loran Vetter

In 2003, SSA awarded to the **Mississippi** Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) one of the seven SSA funded Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD) Projects. MDRS' Mississippi Model Youth Transition Innovation (MYTI) Project was funded as a demonstration project, not a systems change project, although it has evolved in that direction. Key components of MYTI include serving youth between the ages of 10 and 25 with the most significant disabilities using a customized employment process, SSA waivers of federal regulations, and interagency collaboration. As a result of these partnerships with the Mississippi Department of Education, the Department of Labor's One-Stop Center, and MDRS' Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, these agencies are viewing services in a different light and thereby making changes that will ultimately improve employment outcomes for youth with disabilities.

The Mississippi Model Youth Transition Innovation Project addresses the following issues: (a) the need for development of a model transition process that will facilitate optimal passage from school to work; (b) the elimination of barriers when feasible to effect transition at the local, state, and federal levels through interagency collaboration and elimination of policies, procedures, regulations, and statutory requirements that impede progress; and, (c) the development of natural and new/innovative supports at all levels as needed.

The interventions of the MYTI Project focus on individual person-centered employment planning, including the use of individual student accounts to empower students and families. Student accounts emphasize the shared role of other government and personal resources to contribute to participant employment outcomes, including the development/encouragement of Incentive Saving Accounts or Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for asset building as funded through an Assets for Independence grant. Other interventions include benefits planning with students and families, discovery of critical employment related information on students, development of vocational profiles, student budgets, and employment plans. Many of these interventions are the foundation of Customized Employment, such as discovery and planning which direct customized work experiences, career paths for school curriculum, and jobs in the community. The customization of jobs may lead into self-employment for youth seeking those types of opportunities.

A Local Management Team representing all local parties addresses issues that impede the ability to accomplish project objectives and facilitates barrier removal or suitable support development as needed. A State Level Management Team with representatives from all required partners and many other agencies, including several consumer groups and advocacy agencies, further addresses identified barriers and sets policy.

Through the technical assistance provided to YTD projects, MYTI staff persons were afforded networking opportunities with other YTD states in the form of annual training

conferences and on site visits. After an onsite visit to California, partners in MYTI are considering changes such as off-campus educational services, new transition counselor's role, and increased jointly funded transition positions. Several products were developed for MYTI which the Department of Education is reviewing for possible inclusion in Special Education guidance of services.

At least for the school districts participating in MYTI, changes in the way transition services are provided to youth with disabilities will be implemented because of the impact of the MYTI project. One school participating in MYTI is a self-contained school program for students with significant developmental disabilities and other significant disabilities. Although expectations of employment for students in this school are low, employment was customized for three of their students who have now sustained employment for better than two years through the use of MYTI interventions. While both labor and time intensive, MYTI is making positive changes in the lives of MYTI participants and, hopefully, in the agencies involved in the project. A MYTI (*mighty*) bright future is in the making.

Recently, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. completed a study of the SSA Transition Demonstration, ***The Social Security Administration's Youth Transition Demonstration Projects: Profiles of the Random Assignment Projects*** (December 2008). www.mdrc.org/publications/510/overview.html and www.mdrc.org/publications/509/overview.html

The key components of the projects—the services and incentives—are described below:

Individualized work-based experiences provide opportunities for youth to learn the “soft skills” need to succeed in the workplace, as well as specific occupational skills. Examples include career exploration, job shadowing, volunteer work, internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment.

Youth empowerment and family supports enable youth to move from passive assent to active choice regarding education and other services, based on knowledge of the benefits and disadvantages of the options.

Services that facilitate linkages allow for a more effective, seamless transition for youth, e.g., coordinating services between school systems and vocational rehabilitation agencies.

SSA waivers allow youth to retain more earnings while keeping disability benefits in short term, and encourage them to explore whether they can achieve higher levels of economic success through employment rather than exclusive reliance on SSA disability programs.

Benefits counseling is designed to inform youth and their families about standard SSA work incentives.