

Meeting the Needs of Transition-Age Youth Under the Rehabilitation Act: Issues Facing and Resources for State VR Agencies and Community Rehabilitation Programs

Robert “Bobby” Silverstein
Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville, P.C.

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Introduction

The Webinar will cover two topics.

First, the WEBINAR identifies **issues facing State VR agencies and community rehabilitation programs (CRPs)** regarding the provision of services to transition-age youth under the Rehabilitation Act.

Introduction

Second, the Webinar provides a **summary of 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.

Introduction

More specifically, the WEBINAR:

- 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;

Introduction

- 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

- National Longitudinal Transition Study 2
- Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities Paper

Background and Policy Context

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

Over the years, Congress has included provisions in the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act designed to expand and improve services and supports for transition-age youth with disabilities in order to enhance their employment outcomes.

Current Law

Transition and Rehabilitation Act

- Purpose
- Definitions
- State Plans
- IPE and VR Services

Current Law

Transition and IDEA

- Purpose
- Definitions
- IEP
- Failure to meet transition objectives

Policy Options Under Consideration

A 2007 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.

Policy Options Under Consideration

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]

Policy Options Under Consideration

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]

Policy Options Under Consideration

Congress and many in the disability community are focusing on policy options for addressing these concerns.

Policy Options Under Consideration

Senate (2005) Proposed Amendments to Rehabilitation Act

- Findings
- Definitions
- State Plan
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Standards and Indicators
- Reservation for Expanded Transition Services

Policy Options Under Consideration

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.

Policy Options Under Consideration

CCD Recommendations

CCD has indentified the following principles and approaches as a guide to the improvement of public policy addressing the needs of transition-age youth with disabilities:

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

Policy Options Under Consideration

CCD Recommendations

2. 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,
 - Supports that help youth gain access to chosen-post-school options, and
 - Family involvement and supports.

Policy Options Under Consideration

CCD Recommendations

3. 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.

Policy Options Under Consideration

CCD Recommendations

4. 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.

Policy Options Under Consideration

CCD Recommendations

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

National Reports and Studies

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

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 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.

National Reports and Studies

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.
- 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.

National Reports and Studies

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

National Reports and Studies

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

National Reports and Studies

- 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]
- 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]

National Reports and Studies

An Assessment of Transition Policies and Practices in State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies Submitted by The Study Group (JUNE 2007)

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

- Local interagency agreements identify the specific roles to be played by the VR agency and LEA personnel.

National Reports and Studies

- 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.

National Reports and Studies

- VR agency personnel actively participate in the transition planning meetings of eligible transition-aged youths.
- 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.

National Reports and Studies

- 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

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

National Resources and Technical Assistance Materials

The National Consortium for Health Systems Development

A key feature of the website is the [Resource Exchange](#) which offers the latest information, events, reports and resources on disability and employment, especially tailored for Medicaid Infrastructure Grantees.

National Resources and Technical Assistance Materials

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.

National Resources and Technical Assistance Materials

National Collaboration on Workforce and Disability for Youth

The Collaborative has developed Guideposts for Success www.ncwdyouth.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 Resources and Technical Assistance Materials

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)

NSTTAC is a national Technical Assistance and Dissemination center.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) 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.

Examples of VR Transition- Related Practices used in States in the Southeast Region

- Alabama
- Florida
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Tennessee

Examples of VR Transition-Related Practices used in States Outside the Southeast Region

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

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. Below are links for the agencies' websites.

Examples of VR Transition-Related Practices used in States Outside the Southeast Region

- 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 \(LEAP\)](#)

Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Research Assistance to States

The Center for Workers with Disabilities identified (2006) promising practices in the following states:

- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Delaware
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- New York
- North Dakota
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont

Special Programs & Demonstrations Implemented by State VR Agencies

High School/ High Tech Programs

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.

Special Programs & Demonstrations Implemented by State VR Agencies

High School/ High Tech Programs

Southeast Region

- Georgia
- South Carolina
- Florida

Special Programs & Demonstrations Implemented by State VR Agencies

High School/ High Tech Programs Additional States

- Colorado
- Delaware
- Maryland
- Michigan
- Ohio
- Oklahoma

Special Programs & Demonstrations Implemented by State VR Agencies

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.

Special Programs & Demonstrations Implemented by State VR Agencies

SSA- Funded Youth Transition Demonstration Projects

Two of these projects were awarded to State VR agencies—**California** and **Mississippi**.

Comments & Questions

Contact Information

Robert “Bobby” Silverstein

Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville, P.C.

Email: Bobby.Silverstein@ppsv.com

THANK YOU!

TACE Center: Region IV

Toll-free: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty]

Fax: (404) 541-9002

Web: TACEsoutheast.org

My TACE Portal: TACEsoutheast.org/myportal

Email: tacesoutheast@law.syr.edu

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