

## Sheltered Workshop Participation

A valuable tool in placing students into a vocational environment may be found in your local community. Sheltered workshops and school districts may work together in assisting student to transition into a vocation. Many school districts and workshops already participate together in a school-to-work program.

Workshops may be utilized for assessment, training and employment options. To participate in the program, students must be enrolled in a special education program and must be in the last semester of their formal education programs (some exceptions may apply).

### Assessment:

This phase may be used for students who are ready to be placed in a work setting. It should range from 60-120 hours. The district and the workshop should jointly develop the areas to assess. Assessment can be completed by district and/or workshop personnel. No DESE approval is needed. This is handled on a local level. Students are not paid during the assessment phase. Fees and payments, if any, should be agreed to by the district and the workshop. Results should be incorporated into the students IEP. The purpose of assessments includes:

- Job interest
- Strength and endurance
- Learning style and implications of job placement
- Challenging behavior
- Mobility
- Transportation needs
- Residential setting and it's implications
- Family/caregiver support
- Disincentives (SSI, Medicaid, etc.)
- Functional applications of academic skills (i.e., reading, handling money, telling time, etc.)
- Communication (verbal) skills
- Effects of medication on functioning
- Likely vocation and availability of jobs
- Ongoing support available

### Training:

This phase is used for students who require development of specific job skills in a work setting. A description of the training needed should be developed by district and workshop staff. A schedule should be developed for training (i.e. half days, two days a week, etc.). District staff must provide supervision consistent with the training plan. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Certification of the student/employee is required. Students are paid for the work done. The amount that schools receive in state aid for students exceeds the amount received by workshops. Districts should continue to receive state aid on the employee and pay the workshop \$13 per hour based on a six-hour day or a ratio thereof.

### Employment:

Students involved in this phase should be in the last semester or last year of their formal education. The IEP team recommends that the student has reached their maximum academic gain in a school setting and is ready to move to a vocational setting. VR Certification and approval from the Division of Special Education

Sheltered Workshop Section is required. Students are paid for the work performed. Employment is determined by both the needs of the student and the needs of the workshop. The amount that schools receive in state aid for students exceeds the amount received by workshops. Districts should continue to receive state aid on the employee and pay the workshop \$13 per hour based on a six-hour day or a ratio thereof. Sheltered workshops may claim state aid for these students/employees after graduation and during periods when school is not in session (i.e. summer vacation).

**Please note:**

Students who are released from school to work in a sheltered workshop will no longer need to be released and given credit through the COOP program. If the IEP team determines, as part of the student's transition plan, that a student should obtain work experience at a local sheltered workshop, the following process should be followed:

Student information can be provided to the workshop staff verifying proof of disability and they can obtain certification through the Extended Employment Certification Specialist assigned to that shop.

OR:

- Refer the student to Vocational Rehabilitation/Rehabilitation Services for the Blind for sheltered workshop certification.
- Provide VR/RSB with copies of medical records, the latest IEP and evaluation report (formerly known as a diagnostic summary), as well as any other information which may be used to document the student's disability.
- Include a statement in the student's IEP documenting that the student has been referred to VR/RSB for sheltered workshop certification, and that the student will be released from school for "x" number of hours per day/week to participate in work experience at "y" sheltered workshop.

It should be noted that credit for this work experience can no longer be awarded through the COOP program, but should be awarded in accordance with school district policy through the IEP process.

Vocational Rehabilitation/Rehabilitation Services for the Blind will no longer need to open a case or determine eligibility for students who are being referred for sheltered workshop placement, and therefore, these students will no longer be appropriate referrals for the COOP program. VR/RSB will however, continue to remain the certifying agency, and school districts may continue to refer students for certification purposes only. It should also be noted that if, at any time after the student has been placed in the sheltered workshop, if the student, parent/guardian, school official or VR/RSB representative makes a determination that supported or competitive employment may be a realistic vocational option to pursue, that individual should be referred back to VR/RSB for additional services.

If you have questions, please contact:

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