

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Intra-agency Agreement
between
Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services (Vocational Rehabilitation)
and
Office of Special Education
and
Office of College and Career Readiness

The federal Rehabilitation Act requires the state vocational rehabilitation agency, as part of the agency's state plan, to coordinate with the state education agency in providing transition services and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Office of Special Education, share responsibility in preparing youth with disabilities for successful employment upon graduating or exiting high school. The purpose of this agreement is to facilitate the coordination of transition planning and services from school to post-secondary education and/or employment for youth with disabilities who are still enrolled in high school and are, or may be, eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation services.

I. Outreach (Referral and Identification)

Any youth with a disability may be referred to VR. This includes, but is not limited to:

- youth with a 504 plan
- youth with a physical or mental impairment
- youth receiving services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

A referral to VR may be initiated by school district personnel (teacher, work experience coordinator, high school guidance counselor, special education director, 504 coordinator, nurse, etc.) youth self-referral, family members, or other educational or community resource agency/organizations.

Outreach by the VR counselor (VRC) may include, but is not limited to:

- VR informational materials
- Community /agency resource sharing
- One-on-one consultation
- Group presentations regarding general VR eligibility and services to youth/families
- VR presentations at career/college and transition fairs, college financial aid meetings, and/or school in-service/professional development meetings
- Participation in IEP/504 meetings, with parent/guardian consent
- Scheduled on-site school visits with identified school personnel

There is no specific time frame or age when youth may be referred or have their case opened with VR. Referral should be based upon the youth's individual employment related needs, and is typically made when the local education agency (LEA) begins to focus on post-secondary education/training activities and planning for employment.

A referral does not automatically result in eligibility for VR services, unless the individual is already receiving social security benefits based on their disability. Youth with disabilities are not entitled to vocational rehabilitation services; they must be determined eligible for services. To be eligible for VR services, a person must have a physical or mental impairment that creates a substantial impediment to employment and requires VR services to prepare for, enter into, engage in or retain gainful employment. Copies of school records such as IEP/504 documentation, educational placement, high school transcript, diagnostic summary/vocational evaluations, the most current IQ/achievement test scores, and/or other school/medical records may be requested from the LEA to help determine VR eligibility or for vocational planning purposes.

Youth who are blind or have progressive visual impairments should be referred to Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB).

II. Transition Planning

The LEA is primarily responsible for providing transition-related services while youth are still enrolled in the secondary school setting. However, under the Rehabilitation Act, VR also shares responsibility in transition planning for VR eligible youth with disabilities.

Transition planning includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Counsel youth with disabilities, along with their families, to think about goals for life after high school, and develop a personal plan of study/plan for employment to get there.
- Design the high school experience to ensure that youth with disabilities gain the skills and competencies needed to achieve their desired post-secondary goals and career pathway.
- Identify and link youth with disabilities and their families to any needed post-secondary services, supports or programs before they exit the school system.

For VR eligible youth with disabilities who are also receiving special education services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA):

- The LEA will need to inform the Educational Decision maker of VR participation, and obtain consent from the Educational Decision maker prior to inviting VR to the IEP meeting (specific notification procedure may vary for each school).
- The VRC will make every attempt to participate in the IEP meeting. VR involvement in IEP development and completion will be determined by the youth's employment related needs, not age or grade level.
- The youth's Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) developed in partnership with VR, should be coordinated with their IEP goals/objectives, personal plan of study, and transition-related services. IEP teams and VR counselors should work together, along with the youth and their parents/guardian, to determine when employment preparation should begin and the exact nature of the scope of services should be provided.

III. Consultation and Technical Assistance

To assist in transition planning, VR will provide consultation and technical assistance to state and local education staff. Consultation and technical assistance will be provided by VR personnel, and includes the sharing of general information regarding VR eligibility and services.

Consultation and technical assistance may be in the form on presentations at state or local conferences, transition/career fairs, in-service and departmental staff meetings, college financial aid nights, IEP/504 meetings, and/or other school-related informational events and functions.

IV. Roles, Responsibilities, and Financial Obligations

Special Education:

The Office of Special Education shall monitor school districts in their responsibility to provide transition services under the IDEA to youth with disabilities while they are still enrolled in the secondary school setting. Transition services may include, but not be limited to; school and community-based work experiences, vocational/career technical training, career exploration, preparation for post-school activities, specialized transportation, and assistive technology services. These services will be provided through the individual's annual IEP.

It is the school district's responsibility to allocate the resources to implement the services agreed upon in the IEP. School districts will also include other agencies that may assist in providing or paying for transition services to IEP planning sessions. If an outside agency fails to provide agreed upon services in the IEP, it is the school district's responsibility to reconvene the IEP team to determine how these services might now be provided. The school district is not responsible for providing and paying for those services that another agency agreed upon, but failed to provide.

In collaboration with the IEP team, the special education teacher's role in transition includes providing specific information regarding the individual's strengths, past achievements, and current progress in school. The teacher is also responsible for discussing and identifying courses which address their selected program of study and work experiences that might be beneficial given the individual's interests and identifying any strategies or accommodations/modifications to access the general curriculum. It is the special education teacher's role to link youth with disabilities and their families to appropriate post-secondary services, supports, adult service agencies or programs prior to the student's graduation or exit from school.

College and Career Readiness:

The Office of College and Career Readiness shall monitor school districts to ensure youth with disabilities still enrolled in the secondary school setting, who are interested in pursuing a training program offered through a local career/vocational technical school, have access to that opportunity, if appropriate. Through the school's comprehensive guidance and counseling program's individual student planning process, all students, including students with disabilities develop personal plans of study that should be

reviewed and monitored at least annually and revised as necessary. For students with disabilities the plan should be reviewed in collaboration with the student, family, and either the IEP or 504 team.

The individual planning process should include career exploration and the understanding of all post secondary pathways, including; the military, technical schools, apprenticeships, community colleges, and four year colleges. Missouri Connections is a free education and career planning tool that can assist with this process.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):

VR's role in the transition process is generally one of planning and preparing for when the youth graduates/exits secondary school. VR is responsible for providing transition services when they are beyond the scope of special education and/or the LEA, and necessary in order for the youth to participate in the VR program or reach a successful post-secondary employment outcome. A VR counselor (VRC) is assigned to every LEA in Missouri to provide outreach and VR services to eligible youth.

The VRC's role in transition planning is to assist eligible youth with disabilities:

- assist in developing a career goal
- develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before they leave high school
- become successfully employed

VR will communicate and collaborate with the LEA to ensure a smooth transition for eligible youth with disabilities as they move from secondary to post-secondary employment, education/training, and independent living. Once the individual has graduated or exited the secondary school setting, VR will continue to provide required services identified in the IPE to assist the individual in achieving an employment outcome.

Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE):

VR works in partnership with the state and local education agencies to prepare youth with disabilities for successful competitive employment through the coordination of work-based learning experiences (WBLE), as determined appropriate based on their individualized strengths, needs, and interests.

WBLE are typically developed, coordinated, and supervised in accordance with policies/guidelines set forth by designated school staff at the LEA, and include, but are not limited to job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and paid employment. The VRC and high school counselor may also be involved in the design/coordination of the WBLE if it is a part of the youth's VR IPE, meets their individual goals/objectives in the IEP or 504 plan, is in accordance with college and career readiness standards, is a part of their personal plan of study, and/or helps meet their high school graduation requirements.

WBLE provide youth with disabilities opportunities to:

- be exposed to a variety of workplace and career skills that are common to all jobs
- learn job skills that apply/relate back to the common core state standards
- learn specific trade and technical skills

The following two DESE approved VR WBLE programs are available in various LEAs throughout Missouri:

- **Employer Based Transition Training Programs [Includes Project Search Programs]** – These are one-year school to work training programs for youth with intellectual disabilities, who are in their final year of high school, and whose goal is competitive employment. These programs typically take place in a healthcare, government or business setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process as well as the acquisition of employability and marketable job skills. Youth participate in one to three training rotations at a host business over a one year period to explore a variety of career paths, and receive customized job search assistance.
- Youth selected for these programs are typically 18-21 years old, in their last year of high school eligibility, may qualify for services through DMH-DD, and must be eligible for vocational rehabilitation. Youth in this program work with a team that includes at minimum, their family, a special education teacher/certified instructor, a VR counselor, and an employment specialist from a local community rehabilitation provider (CRP).
- VR may assist with some costs for VR eligible youth to participate in these programs. When VR funding is necessary for the youth to participate in an employer based transition training program, a local memorandum of understanding/agreement (MOU/MOA) outlining each partner's roles/responsibilities, and individual program objectives is required. The MOU/MOA must be signed/approved by a designee from each required partner, and reviewed on an annual basis.
- **The Cooperative Work Experience Program (COOP)** – This is a program for youth with disabilities who are receiving services through an IEP, have been determined eligible for VR, have demonstrated the skills and abilities to be able to work independently, and whose IEPs reflect the need for work experience in a competitive setting. The IEP and the IPE must set forth specific measurable objectives to be achieved by the youth in this program, and describe a coordinated plan for evaluating their performance. The COOP program is a partnership with local businesses to provide VR eligible youth learning opportunities and hands-on experience as they transition into the work force. This program links high school common core state standards with the youth's career interests, and local labor market needs.
- This COOP work experience must be provided under the supervision of a certified special education teacher who has been designated and approved as the work experience coordinator (WEC).

- Youth may be approved to participate in the COOP program through one of the following options:
 - released from school at least one hour per day (part of their course schedule) to work in a competitive employment setting, where job skills learned will be related to the common core state standards; and they will receive high school credit for the number of hours they work, as identified through the goals and objectives listed in their IEP and IPE [please note youth must be enrolled in high school and “related vocational and academic instruction in the classroom” to be awarded COOP credit], **OR**
 - learn and apply job skills in a competitive employment setting before school, after school, or during the summer months, as identified through the goals and objectives listed in their IEP and IPE
- Youth participating in the COOP program must be earning at least minimum wage in an integrated, competitive employment setting, in accordance with Department of Labor (DOL) Guidelines and Fair Labor Standards Act; unless all parties are in agreement that the work experience meets the guidelines for an unpaid internship (Fact Sheet #71 <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf>).

Other Outside Agencies:

Other agencies, e.g. Centers for Independent Living, Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities, and Community Rehabilitation Programs, may also be invited to participate in transition planning to discuss supports and services they may be able to provide. Consent from the Educational Decision maker must be obtained for each individual agency for each IEP meeting. These agencies will identify and provide information regarding the specific services, application processes, and eligibility criteria.

Financial Responsibilities:

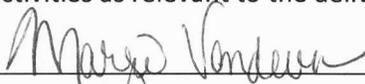
VR and the LEA share responsibilities for the provision of transition services. The LEA is primarily responsible for providing and paying for those services related to transition planning for educational purposes. VR is primarily responsible for the cost of transition planning for employment purposes. A referral to VR should be made when the LEA begins to focus on post-secondary education/training activities and transition planning for employment.

The VRC will determine VR eligibility and provide services when the youth expresses an interest in employment, and requires VR services to assist them in reaching an employment goal. It is important to note, however, that services are individualized, based upon the needs and employment goal of each VR eligible youth. Therefore, some services may only be provided after the individual leaves the secondary school setting and/or during their final year of school. In addition, most services are provided at no cost

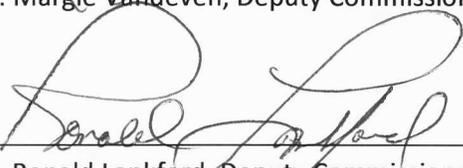
to the youth/family; however, payment for some VR services may be based on individual and family income/resources and the ability to pay for costs associated with a specific service. VR may also be required to conduct a search for other comparable services prior to service provision.

V. Signatures

All parties of this agreement will collaborate and keep each other informed on state and federal activities as relevant to the delivery of transition services.



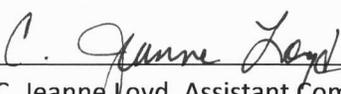
Dr. Margie Vandeven, Deputy Commissioner, Learning Services 12-11-13
Date



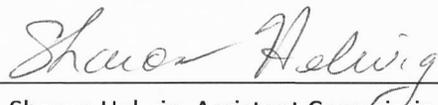
Dr. Ronald Lankford, Deputy Commissioner, Financial and Administrative Services 10-31-13
Date



Dr. Stephen Barr, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Special Education 10-31-13
Date



Dr. C. Jeanne Loyd, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services 10-31-13
Date



Dr. Sharon Helwig, Assistant Commissioner, Office of College and Career Readiness 12-11-13
Date