Pre-Employment Transition Services

Phase I

Division of Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Rehabilitation

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Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act

Overview

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program was established in 1920 by the Smith-Fess Act. During that time, it was recognized that soldiers returning from World War I needed assistance returning to work due to acquired disabilities. Ninety-six years later, the VR Program continues to assist individuals to go to work or to return to work after injury. The Rehab Act in 1943 allowed for people with various types of disabilities to receive VR services and fill positions in the workplace left by men who were serving in World War II. This was the beginning of changing society's stereotypes regarding the contributions of people with disabilities in the workplace.

New legislation called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), was signed into law on July 22, 2014. The final rules regarding implementation of WIOA will be published in summer of 2016. WIOA will replace the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 and is intended to modernize the nation’s workforce system. There are six core programs impacted by WIOA. Pre-Employment Transition Services is provided through state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies which are addressed in Title IV of WIOA and Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.1

WIOA provides funding streams for Pre-Employment Transition Services for youth with disabilities to “support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, entry into post-secondary education, and career readiness for participants.”2


75% of TN Parents say they consider some type of post-secondary education to be important for son or daughter with disabilities for life after graduation.
WIOA utilizes a career pathway approach that engages state service delivery systems in collaboration and is intentional in meeting the needs of individuals and the workforce.

This legislation provides an enhanced and concentrated effort on behalf of Vocational Rehabilitation services to prepare youth ages 14-22 with disabilities for employment. This effort is called Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). PETS offers increased opportunities for youth to take their interests and abilities and turn them into a plan for succeeding in life.
Pre-Employment Transition Services

Three Phase Approach

When implementing new service delivery within a large system such as a state agency, there is much to consider as the impact on the individuals to be served is significant. “Effective service delivery is a result of careful planning and intention on the part of program developers.” Vocational Rehabilitation leadership is utilizing a logic model to develop the three phase approach being taken to implement Pre-Employment Transition Services. The intent of this approach is to drive innovation, ensure high service quality, improve governance and transparency, reduce unintended consequences, and achieve specific measurable objectives that ultimately result in successful employment outcomes for Tennessee’s youth with disabilities. These phases are delineated below.

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Pre-Employment Transition Services includes the following:

- **Job Exploration:**
  Exploring the world of work and career choices.

- **Work Based Learning:**
  Engaging in paid or non-paid work experiences which may be in-school and/or after-school.

- **Work Place Readiness:**
  Exploring options for students seeking careers that require post-secondary education.

- **Self Advocacy:**
  Helping the student learn more about themselves, the disability, and how to interact in the world.

- **Post-Secondary Counseling & Enrollment Assistance:**
  Preparing the student for the workplace.

“When people with disabilities are connected to work experiences in their communities, achieving goals such as finding a good place to live, having friends and using their talents all become much more likely.”

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Pre-Employment Transition Service Descriptions & Resources:

“Students perform better when they understand the relevance of a course to their future, when they can see others, like themselves, having success and when they have interest in the task or topic being shared about.”

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Exploration Counseling could incorporate any of these:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completing vocational assessments</td>
<td>Completing academic assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing interest and abilities inventories</td>
<td>Completing values assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing aptitude assessments</td>
<td>Completing learning styles inventories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing career choice websites</td>
<td>Introduction to the American Job Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing job shadowing</td>
<td>High School career and technical courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving job site mentoring</td>
<td>Participation in job clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving vocational counseling and guidance</td>
<td>Learn about skills &amp; qualities needed to be successful in various careers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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It is important to note that inventory and/or assessment results should not be used to dissuade a career path. Individual choices and preferences should always be taken into consideration.

Resources:


b. My Next Move is a career exploration tool designed for use by students to learn about careers and match their interests to career options.

c. O*Net Career Exploration Tools

d. Jist Career Solutions provides a list of books for purchase on this topic

e. RIASEC Inventory via Jist Career Solutions

f. CareerOne Stop, sponsored by US Department of Labor provides career profiles, assessments, etc.

g. Choices Planner Work Values Sorter, Bridges Transitions, Inc. is an assessment of values a person holds regarding the workplace that helps identify appropriate careers to explore.

h. Individualized Learning Plans, How to Guide, Career Exploration- includes lesson plans and other activities that can be used or adapted for use.

“Obtaining work experiences during high school are among the most prominent and well documented predictors of favorable post school employment outcomes.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work-Based Learning Experiences could incorporate any of these:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating in school based work opportunities</td>
<td>Participating in nonpaid volunteer experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in on-the-job training experiences</td>
<td>Participating in Project SEARCH®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in paid &amp; non paid apprenticeships</td>
<td>Receiving pre-employment coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in paid &amp; non paid internships</td>
<td>Attending Summer Employment Empowerment Kickoff (SEEK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in paid summer work experiences</td>
<td>Participating in job sampling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Successful work based learning programs and activities require a collaborative effort with significant planning and development in order to achieve successful experiences for the student and the employer. The Center on Education and Work at University of Wisconsin-Madison provides a [Critical Issue: Developing Work Based](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/)

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Learning Opportunities to help identify ways to overcome challenges in work based learning development.

Resources:

a. TN Department of Education, Work-Based Learning website
b. New York City DOE Work Based Learning Coordinators Online Community
c. New York State Work Based Learning Manual
d. State of Georgia Work Based Learning Manual
e. Washington State Work Based Learning website
f. California: Work-based Learning Toolkit
g. California: Quick Work-based Learning Guide for Employers
h. California: Quick Work-based Learning Guide for Associations
j. High School/High Tech (HS/HT) Program Manual The HS-HT program manual includes a chapter on work-based learning with examples, sample forms and resources.
k. New Ways to Work Tools and guides for various audiences; includes a training curriculum for staff on work-based learning and a quick guide on safety and child labor laws.
Employers are seeking candidates who contribute to the organization. Workplace readiness ensures students are prepared to secure and maintain employment by providing opportunities to learn about positive work behaviors and skills. Preparation is vital for success for all potential employees, but especially for those with disabilities.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace Readiness Training could incorporate any of these:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending Vocational Rehabilitation informational meetings</td>
<td>Developing customer service skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team Meeting to explain Vocational Rehabilitation services</td>
<td>Developing life skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing employability skills (soft skills)</td>
<td>Developing independent living skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending benefits to work training</td>
<td>Attending asset development training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing social and communication skills</td>
<td>Developing decision making skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing time management skills</td>
<td>Developing problem solving skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assumptions that youth with disabilities are only able to perform in certain types of environments should not be made. Rather, services should be delivered to help prepare youth to contribute to the fullest of their potential and ability.

Resources:

a) TennesseeWorks Is there an App for That? A list of apps that can be used to help develop work place readiness
b) **Employment Skills, Work Related Behaviors**, lesson plans and resources National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center
c) **Skills to Pay the Bills**, a soft skills resource US Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
d) **Individualized Learning Plans**, How to Guide Career & Work-Readiness Skills
e) **Life Skills Portfolio** Utah Education Network
f) **Improving College & Career Readiness for Students with Disabilities**, American Institutes for Research
g) **Essential Skills to Getting a Job**, US Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
h) **Encouraging Future Innovation**: Youth Entrepreneurship Education, US Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
i) **Career Focused Mentoring for Youth**: The What, Why & How, US Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
j) **Healthy Transitions**: A Pathway to Employment for Youth with Chronic Health Conditions and other Disabilities, US Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
“Students who have self-determination skills have a stronger chance of being successful in making the transition to adulthood, including employment and independence.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Advocacy could incorporate any of these:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending a training, conference, meeting or presentation on self-determination</td>
<td>Participating in a peer mentoring opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a training, conference, meeting or presentation on self-awareness</td>
<td>Participating in assistive technology instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a training, conference, meeting or presentation on disability self-awareness</td>
<td>Attending a conference, meeting or presentation on understanding accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making about self-disclosure</td>
<td>Attending a training, conference, meeting or presentation on life skills training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a training, conference, meeting or presentation on self-advocacy</td>
<td>Attending a training, conference, meeting or presentation on disability disclosure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources:

a) Self Determination: Supporting Successful Transition, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
b) Self-Advocacy, The Arc Tennessee
c) Youth Readiness Days, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities
d) Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP), Transition Guide: Self Advocacy
e) Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP), Transition Guide: Self Directed IEP
f) Youth Development and Leadership: Opportunities to Develop Connecting Competencies, National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability
g) Youth In Action! Becoming a Stronger Self-Advocate, National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability
h) Disability Knowledge and Identity Self-Assessment, National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth
i) Disability Rights Tennessee
j) National Disability Rights Network, Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities
“Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.”

John F. Kennedy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities could incorporate any of these:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending campus tours &amp; meetings with post-secondary program personnel regarding enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with disability services staff at post-secondary institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving counseling and guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with entrance requirements and testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of FAFSA application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals who successfully complete education beyond high school, such as a post-secondary program have increased opportunities for employment and have higher earning potential. This applies to individuals with and without disabilities.

Resources:

a) Secondary Transition Handbook, Moving from School to Adult Life, The Arc Tennessee
b) National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
c) Think College!
d) Tennessee Alliance for Postsecondary Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities
e) Best Colleges.com College Resources for Students with Disabilities
f) Disability.gov's Guide to Student Financial Aid
g) TennesseeWorks.org, resources for individuals, parents, & educators
h) Tennessee Promise TN senior high school students may apply for this scholarship
i) Tennessee Community Colleges
j) Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Phase 1: Pilot Project

Planning

An initial review of various states models for Pre-Employment Transition service delivery was conducted shortly after the initial signing of WIOA by Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation leadership. Conversations and correspondence occurred on the national level and in detail with Oregon, Utah, Missouri and Montana throughout the planning and implementation process. Meetings were conducted with Department of Human Services Executive Leadership, Division of Rehabilitation Services Leadership and the Transition Committee to develop a multi-phase approach to implementation of Pre-Employment Transition Services. Collaborative meetings were held with the Division of Special Populations and Student Support Leadership from TN Department of Education. These strategic planning meetings planted the seeds that will evolve into the TN Pre-Employment Transition Service Delivery Model. A thorough review of available research, policy briefs, emerging, best and evidence based practices were reviewed in order to ensure the approach to Pre-Employment Transition Services ensured high quality service provision that will produce employment outcomes for Tennessee’s youth. A collaborative decision was made by that Jackson Madison County School District as an optimal location for an initial pilot project site.

Site Selection

Madison County is the home of Jackson, known as the Hub City. Interstate I-40 runs through Madison County, which is located between Memphis, in the south west region and Nashville located in the middle region of the state of Tennessee. Jackson is home to several higher education institutions; among those is EDGE, Union University's post-secondary program which has the first residential option for students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in the state. West Tennessee HealthCare has partnered with the school system for the most recent Project Search sites in the state which began in the 2015-2015 school year. The school system has a renewed Transition to
Work contract and the boots on the ground leadership is a strong collaborative that brings leadership, expertise and energy to this initiative.

**Workforce & Labor Statistics**

Per data released by the TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development Madison County has a 6.7% unemployment rate. The state’s unemployment rate spans a range from 12.9% at the highest to 4.6% at the lowest. Madison County experiences a marginally higher unemployment rate than the state average.

As of September 2015 there were 2,068 advertised job openings in Madison County. This places Madison County in the top ten counties with the highest number of available job openings in the state. Entry level jobs make up 37.65% of the Madison County job openings and 37.25% require only one to two years experience. Tennessee's number of unemployed individuals per job or position ranges from .38 to 16.36. Madison county remains at the lower end of this range, making for a better climate than in other areas of the state where competition for the same job opening may be significantly higher. Local healthcare organizations such as Regional Hospital of Jackson, West TN Healthcare, Community Health

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12 Tennessee Department of Workforce and Labor Development, (2015). Retrieved from https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/lmi/area/areasummary.aspx?enc=SgfjA5gOXyl88h1RJlb2s3M5zB3qEt0joBU8uMXPN5rVzaix6LAOXgmjVG7k6

Systems, as well as UPS, Lowe's and Pizza Hut were named as local businesses currently seeking to hire new employees in the area.  

**Transition Age Youth**

According to the [Annual Indicator Summaries](https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/lmi/area/areacompare.aspx?session=areadetail&geo=470400013&comparegeo=4704000113) released by the TN Department of Education, the following information was reviewed and considered for determining the pilot project location.

- Madison County School District's Indicator 13 is rated at 100% for 2013-14.  
  *Indicator 13 is the percent of students with disabilities age 16 and older with an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) that includes annual goals and transition services to enable students to meet post-secondary goals. This number is reported annually.*

- Madison County School District's Indicator 14a is rated at 33% for 2010-11 compared to the statewide average of 16.8%. The statewide target in 2013-14 was 23.5%.  
  *Indicator 14a is the percent of students with disabilities enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school. This number is reported every four years, reflecting only the number of students the school was able to obtain this information from.*

- Madison County School District's Indicator 14b is 60% for 2010-11, compared to the statewide average of 51.4%. The statewide target in 2013-14 was 58.5%.  
  *Indicator 14b is the percent of students with disabilities enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school. This number is reported every four years, reflecting only the number of students the school was able obtain this information from.*

- Madison County School District's Indicator 14c was 73.3% in 2010-11, compared to the statewide average of 63.4%. The statewide target for 2013-14 is 68%.

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Indicator 14c is the percent of students with disabilities enrolled in higher education or other post-secondary training; or are competitively employed within one year of leaving high school. This number is reported every four years, reflecting only the number of students the school was able to obtain this information from.

**State & Local Education Demographics**

Below is a grid representing demographic information provided by the TN Department of Education on Tennessee as a whole in comparison to Jackson Madison County School District.¹⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statewide</th>
<th>Madison County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Body</strong></td>
<td>993,841</td>
<td>3,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economically Disadvantaged</strong></td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students with disabilities</strong></td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>141,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>2,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduation Rate</strong></td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Jackson Madison County School System (JMCSS) has recently launched the Vision 2020 initiative that will drive the strategic plan developed by the school board. The plan outlines goals to ensure success for the future of the youngest citizens of Jackson and Madison County. The JMCSS School Board is committed to creating a collaborative environment that engages relevant stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, students, families and

community. The Division of Rehabilitation Services looks forward to working closely with JMCSS in Phase I of Pre-Employment Transition Services and the development of a model that will be replicated throughout the state.
## Pre-Employment Transition Services Policy

### Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Policy

### Administrative Policies and Procedures: 17.05

**Scope of Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Pre-Employment Transition Services for Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>1. Pre-Employment Transition services means a coordinated, results-oriented set of services and activities between VR and local education agencies for students with disabilities, designed to promote movement from school to post-school activities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. A student with a disability is an individual with a disability in secondary education who is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. No younger than 16 years of age but may be younger if elected under the state's IDEA transition services;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. No older than 21 years of age but may be older if elected under the state's IDEA transition services; or</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Under section 504.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities designed to assist with achieving competitive integrated employment may include but are not limited to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. job exploration counseling;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Services and activities may be provided by a school under a contract</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
with a local education agency or by other means determined and arranged by VR.

5. Pre-Employment Transition services may be provided to students with disabilities who are eligible or who may potentially be eligible for VR services.

6. The provision of transition services is not based on the financial need. See Policy 17.04 Individualized Plan for Employment for more information.
Pre-Employment Transition Services Fiscal Overview

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act outlines in Title IV that fifteen percent of the state agency annual budget must be spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services. This large portion of the state agency budget will be committed to transitioning youth, specifically students with disabilities as defined in Tennessee, those between ages fourteen to twenty two or upon exit from high school. Data collection will occur similarly to how this information is currently tracked by data entry on behalf of VR staff and submission by CRPs as permitted by their Letters of Agreement.

Letters of Agreement

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is responsible to the extent possible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals with disabilities in Tennessee. Some of these services, because of their unique nature and/or lack of state facilities, are best provided by Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP). Community Rehabilitation Providers are agencies who employ qualified staff to provide employment focused services to individuals with disabilities. CRPs will assist in providing Pre-Employment Transition Services as deemed appropriate.

The Letter of Agreement (LOA) is a mutual agreement between the CRP and VR. This binding document describes the functions and responsibilities of the VR and the CRP in a joint effort of service delivery. VR reimburses the CRP for quality services that were authorized and provided in a timely and appropriate manner as outlined in the Letter of Agreement. The CRP shall not collect any amount in the form of fees or reimbursements from the recipients of any service provided pursuant to this LOA. The CRP agrees to abide by the processes, fee structure and quality standards defined throughout their Letter of Agreement. The CRP also agrees to assist VR in meeting the standards and indicators identified within their Letter of Agreement.

The activities conducted and records maintained by the CRP are subject to periodic monitoring and evaluation by the staff of the State of Tennessee. The CRP is required to permit duly authorized the Department of Human Services, state and federal auditors full access to and the right to examine any and all records and documents generated during the period the LOA.
Any negative findings are to be resolved by the CRP within specified timelines. Failure to do so would result in sanctions up to and including cancellation of the Letter of Agreement.

Additional information regarding LOA’s is available [here](#).
A Panorama of Tennessee’s Employment Efforts for Persons with Disabilities

“Being employed is part of being an adult, being responsible, and being a contributing participant in the American way of life.” With great pleasure, Tennessee’s Vocational Rehabilitation Services rolls out its three phase plan for Pre-Employment Transition Services, a bundle of services designed to increase employment opportunities for youth with disabilities, ages fourteen to twenty two. The overarching goal for Tennessee’s Pre-Employment Transition Services is to ensure that as youth exit the school system they have identified post school placement, whether that be through pursuit of additional educational opportunities or having secured integrated competitive employment. Pre-Employment Transition Services provides essential career focused services that drive youth towards successful adult employment outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies and partners. This national effort contributes to laying the critical foundation for the futures of our youth, to ensure a high quality of life is had that involves employment, independence, and contribution to their community.

Opportunities within Tennessee to Leverage

- The University of Tennessee, Center for Business & Economic Research department received funding through the Race to the Top program enabling the development of the Tennessee Longitudinal Data System. A public portal will allow access to interactive dashboards providing linked data domains (K12, Post-Secondary, Staff, Workforce), comparisons and trend analysis. This information will be useful in identifying pockets of


83% of TN Parents say they consider some type of community employment to be important for son or daughter with disabilities for life after graduation.
success that will enable the emergence of best practices and promote employment specific to the needs of Tennesseans.

- The TennesseeWorks Partnership is a statewide consortium developed in 2012 through a systems and policy change grant awarded to Vanderbilt Kennedy Center by the U.S. Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The partnership provides opportunities for stakeholders from various backgrounds and areas of expertise to come to the table to pursue the goal of increasing employment for Tennesseans with disabilities.

- In June 2013, Governor Haslam signed Executive Order No. 28 committing his administration's support of the Tennessee Employment First Initiative. This directs state agencies to collaborate in meaningful ways that will increase opportunities for integrated and competitive employment for Tennesseans with disabilities.

- In 2013, A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities, Blueprint for Governors was released as the Chair's Initiative of the National Governors Association. This document provides five areas in which governments (both state and local) can take action to promote people with disabilities in the workforce. One of the actions suggested is to “prepare youth with disabilities for careers that use their full potential, providing employers with a pipeline of skilled workers.”

- In 2013 Governor Haslam spearheaded Drive to 55. Drive to 55’s mission is to get 55% of Tennesseans equipped with a college degree or certificate by the year 2025. Initiatives include Tennessee Promise, offering two years of tuition-free community of technical college to Tennessee high school graduates. Tennessee Reconnect, helps adults complete a postsecondary degree or credential. Tennessee Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP) helps ensure our postsecondary institutions are producing the skills and credentials that Tennessee employers actually need.

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Governor Haslam signed the STEP UP legislation into law in June of 2014 so that students with disabilities attending eligible Tennessee post-secondary programs have access to lottery scholarships just like their typical peers.

In early fall of 2014, the Employment First Task Force submitted their first report to Governor Haslam. The annual report provides an overview of the past year’s accomplishments and recommendations for the upcoming year in regards to increasing competitive and integrated employment for Tennesseans with disabilities.

One of the recommendations that Pre-Employment Transition Services aligns with and will be working towards is to ensure that every student with a disability leaves high school with a smooth transition that would include the choice of (but not be limited to) “post-secondary education, a job training program, or paid integrated employment to the same extent as students without disabilities.”

On October 6, 2015, the Employment First Taskforce submitted their second annual report to Governor Haslam.

In 2014 a Task Force lead by the TN Department of Education developed the Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) that is used in order to achieve an Occupational Diploma. The Occupational Diploma provides an alternative to the standard high school diploma, and is focused on ensuring the student is equipped with the skills and experience needed to enter the work force.

In 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by six Tennessee state government departments. “The purpose of the MOU is to facilitate the coordination of

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transition services from school to post-secondary education or training which is targeted towards integrated employment.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21} (2015). Memorandum of Understanding Among the Tennessee Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Tennessee Department of Education/Division of Special Populations, Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Regarding Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities. Retrieved from https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/didd/attachments/Tennessee_Youth_MOU_signed.pdf
Pre-Employment Transition Service Terminology

- **Asset Development:**
  Assets are investments that appreciate over time. Examples are cash savings, investments, and retirement accounts, as well as material possessions such as a house, automobile, or small business. To be economically secure, families need both income and assets. Regular income helps families pay for daily living expenses. Assets help family's whether financial hardships and prepare for the future by saving for retirement or investing in their children's education. Asset-development policies promote financial opportunity for all members of society and allow people to earn good incomes, save money, buy a home, start a business, and live securely in retirement.\(^\text{22}\)

- **Benefits Planning**
  Benefits' planning is a person-centered analysis of the effect that work and other life situation changes have on public and private programs, including income support programs. Benefits planning helps people with disabilities steer through the maze of public and private benefits programs while minimizing disincentives and barriers that exist for them to prepare for, obtain, advance in, retain, leave, and regain employment.\(^\text{22}\)

- **Community Rehabilitation Provider:**
  In the vocational rehabilitation system, a "community rehabilitation provider" is an agency that provides directly, or facilitates the provision of, vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities to enable them to maximize opportunities for employment. Some of the services provided by a community rehabilitation provider may include, but are not limited to: 1) Medical, psychiatric, psychological, social, and vocational services that are provided under one management; 2) Recreational therapy, physical and occupational therapy, speech, language, and hearing therapy; 3) Psychiatric, psychological, and social

\(^{22}\) National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, Terms in Definitions. (n.d.) Retrieved from [http://www.ncwd-youth.info/definitions](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/definitions)
services including positive behavior management; 4) Disability evaluations and orientation and mobility services; and 5) Job development, placement, and retention services. A community rehabilitation provider often has in-depth knowledge about disability supports, services and providers in their communities.22

- **Competitive Integrated Employment:**
  Part or full time work at minimum wage or higher with wages and benefits similar to those without disabilities performing the same work and fully integrated with co-workers without disabilities.22

- **Job Exploration:**
  Job exploration is the process of finding a rewarding career path, as well as specific jobs within a particular career path.22

- **Post-Secondary:**
  Term used to describe settings that follow high school (such as trade school, college, or employment).22

- **Self-Advocacy:**
  Self-advocacy is the act of understanding one's disability, being aware of the strengths and weaknesses resulting from the limitations imposed by the disability, and being able to articulate reasonable need for accommodation.23 The attitudes and abilities required to act

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as the primary causal agent in one's life and make choices and decisions regarding one's actions free from undue external influence or interference. The ability of an individual to set goals that are important to him or her and having the skills to achieve these goals.

- **Self-Determination**
  Self-determination is the right and ability of all persons to direct their own lives, as well as the responsibility to accept the consequences of their own choices. Some of the skills that make someone self-determined or a successful self-advocate are the following: knowledge of one's strengths and limitations; belief in one's ability to achieve goals; ability to start and complete tasks; ability to assertively assert one's wants, needs, and concerns; and the ability to make decisions and see other options. Self-advocacy is the act of understanding one's disability, being aware of the strengths and weaknesses resulting from the limitations imposed by the disability, and being able to articulate reasonable need for accommodation.

- **Soft Skills**
  The skills, traits, work habits, and attitudes that workers across all occupations must have in order to obtain, maintain, and progress in employment. These include being dependable, responsible, punctual, adaptable, honest, honorable, well-mannered, positive toward work, and appropriately dressed/groomed. Soft skills also refer to such attributes as ability to get along with others, work in teams, attend to tasks, work independently, and provide excellent customer service, both within the company and externally.

- **Supported Employment**
  Supported employment means competitive employment in an integrated setting, or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals with the most significant disabilities are provided ongoing support services through an external source such as a community rehabilitation provider or a State Vocational Rehabilitation agency. Supported employment provides assistance such as job coaches, transportation, assistive technology, specialized job training, and individually tailored support.

- **Transition**
The period of time when adolescents are moving into adulthood and is often concerned with planning for postsecondary education or careers. In the workforce environment it encompasses ages 14 to 25.22

- **Work Based Learning:**
  
  A supervised program sponsored by an education or training organization that links knowledge gained at the work site with a planned program of study. Experiences range in intensity, structure, and scope and include activities as diverse as site visits, job shadowing, paid and unpaid internships, structured on-the-job training, and the more formal work status as apprentice or employee.22

- **Work Place Readiness:**
  
  This is the ability to make the educational and vocational decisions and perform the kinds of educational and vocational tasks that are expected by schools and the workplace. Work-readiness skills include soft skills, computer literacy, and job seeking skills.22
Pre-Employment Transition Services Dissemination Plan

Objective

The objective of the Dissemination Plan is to identify and organize the activities to be performed in order to increase the knowledge of Pre-Employment Transition Services and broaden the reach to youth with disabilities across the state.

Work Groups:

Various work groups have collaborated to develop the three phase plan for implementing Pre-Employment Transition Services. The below list identifies those who were involved in this process.

- TN Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Committee
- TN Department of Education
- TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- WIOA Focus Groups
- TN Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Leadership

Obtaining Stakeholder Feedback:

Stakeholder feedback will be sought throughout the Pre-Employment Transition Services development process. The feedback is used to make pertinent decisions on scope of services and implementation processes. Many thanks to the list of groups below who have assisted in this process and continue to provide valuable feedback.

- TN Parent Coalition
- TennesseeWorks
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- State agencies

Products:

Products will be used to increase awareness and understanding of Pre-Employment Transition Services. Below is a list of a few products that will be offered initially; additional items may be identified as the program is developed and through recommendations by stakeholder groups.
- Fact Sheets
- Companion Guide
- Services Manual
- Replication Guide
- Articles
- Presentations

**Effective Mechanisms for Dissemination Materials:**

Dissemination will occur through various paths, listed below, that will lead to the stakeholders that are impacted by these services.

- Classroom Chronicles
- Transition Matters
- TennesseeWorks
- Kidcentral.tn
- [Tennessee state government website](#)
- State Employees may access information via the intranet
- Information sharing opportunities with VR staff statewide via in person meetings, conference calls & webinars

**Promotion & Access:**

This list includes opportunities in which products and speaking engagements regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services will be shared with the individuals, families, educators, field professionals, the general public and others.

- Workshops
- Conferences
- Meetings held across the state
- Tennessee state government website
- Partner websites and social media
Pre-Employment Transition Services Contacts

General Contact Information

TN Department of Human Services

Division of Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Rehabilitation
Citizens Plaza State Office Building, 12th floor
400 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-1403

Telephone: (615) 313-4891
TTY: (615) 313-5695  TTY (Long Distance): 1-800-270-1349
FAX: (615) 741-6508

See more at: http://tn.gov/humanservices/topic/vocationalrehabilitation#sthash.33t5xgbj.dpuf

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