

COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

DVR has a tri-agency Interagency Agreement that defines necessary relationships, policies, procedures, between the DVR, the Department of Health Services (DHS) to create common understanding, and establish collaborative efforts regarding services that will ultimately improve employment outcomes for students with disabilities who may be eligible for DVR services. The agreement is published on the DVR public website. Attachment 4.8 (b) (1)-(4) in accordance with paragraph 4.8(c) describes the required education components of the transition agreement.

On a statewide basis DVR has designated high school transition staff to provide leadership, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, communities, and other agencies. The designated staff consists of a Statewide Coordinator and the Statewide Transition Action and Resource Team (START). START has DVR representation from each Workforce Development Area in the State. It is their respective role to take lead responsibility for transition across their WDA service delivery area. This lead responsibility includes coordination of activities and training of other VR staff. DVR staff are also involved in various local transition council and statewide transition initiatives.

To facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services in FFY10, DVR will:

- continue to have counselors assigned to each school district and/or school building in the State of Wisconsin. It is the role of the assigned liaison counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referral to the education officials in their assigned school districts or buildings as well as provide direct services to eligible youth or facilitate the appropriate assignment to another VR Counselor to provide these direct services.
- maintain the Interagency Agreement with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to include the Medicaid agency, the Department of Health Services (DHS). DVR utilizes this agreement as the official document to guide its coordination of transition activities for youth with disabilities as they move from school to post-high school vocational rehabilitation services with education officials and with long term care support providers.
- promote the Transition Action Guide (TAG) to compliment the Interagency Agreement. The TAG provides the process and procedures necessary for staff of the three agencies, DVR, DPI, and DHFS to work together on activities necessary for DVR eligible youth to successfully transition from school to post-high school employment. The TAG includes policy information, definitions, timelines, and most importantly, best practice examples.

The DVR Policy Manual includes language that specifically states *“Transition: For high school students who are eligible for development of a plan for employment, the plan for employment will be completed prior to them leaving high school”*.

It is understood by all DVR staff working with transition age youth that their responsibility is to coordinate with the school’s efforts to engage the youth in activities that will allow development of an individualized plan for employment before the youth leaves high school.

The DVR Transition Action Guide (TAG), which is considered part of the Interagency Agreement, calls for referral of youth no later than two years prior to exit from school. This allows time for the necessary career exploration, job shadows, and work experiences leading to the development of an individualized plan for employment. DVR makes sure the individualized plan for employment is also coordinated with the employment goal in the school’s individualized educational plan and, where appropriate, the individualized service plans of the long term care service providers.

As noted in the FFY ’09 commitments, DVR’s role in transition at both systemic and service delivery levels is identified in the Interagency Agreement with the state’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and Department of Health Services (DHS). The agreement facilitates the development of a student’s long-term employment and independent living, outreach provisions, lead agency responsibilities, and how students with disabilities who are not in special education programs can access vocational rehabilitation services. This agreement describes the roles and responsibilities of DPI, DVR, and DHS with respect to transitioning.

The agreement complies with the 2004 IDEA amendment changes as well as includes a new and important partner. DHS partnership in this agreement is especially timely given Wisconsin’s move to statewide Managed Care.

This Interagency Agreement has six overall goals:

1. to comply with federal legal mandates
2. to provide practical guidance to special and general education teachers, nurses, psychologists and guidance counselors on the topic of transition
3. to provide practical guidance to vocational rehabilitation counselors on the topic of transition
4. to provide practical guidance to counties, Care Management Organizations (CMOs) and Aging Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) regarding students with disabilities who are transitioning to the adult long term care system and the mental health/substance abuse system,
5. to provide information on the topic of transition to students and their parents so they can participate fully in transition

6. to provide clarification of roles and responsibilities of staff within school districts, DVR and for entities contracting with DHFS (counties and CMOs) regarding students with disabilities, including mental health and substance abuse issues, who have identified long term needs in employment and independent living.

The Interagency Agreement and the Transition Action Guide, developed to compliment the Interagency Agreement, describe the role of DVR including the responsibility to provide consultation and technical assistance, referred to as Employment Planning Consultation. The agreement addresses the need for DVR liaisons and staff to provide school districts that have transition students who have not yet applied for vocational rehabilitation services with assistance, strategies and creative ideas for identifying the students' post-school employment goals, needs for services, and concerns to be addressed in achieving those goals.

DVR staff attend IEP meetings, with consent from the student and family. DVR is also available to provide information and technical assistance on transition services to teachers, parents, and other organizations and councils.

The Interagency Agreement commits DVR to the development of the Plan for Employment prior to the eligible and interested student leaving school. Consistent with agency-wide policy and procedures, the plan for employment includes the development of intermediate goals and long-term objectives. DVR staff and educators are encouraged to coordinate the provision of services and transition activities for students who are eligible for both IEP and an IPE services to assist them in transitioning from school to work.

The DVR Statewide Transition Action and Resource Team (START), supported by the interagency agreement, have the role to improve consistency and engagement in the transition process. The DVR START team and DPI Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative (WSTI) also collaborate to improve consistency in the provision of service to youth with disabilities as they transition from school to post high school activities that include VR services. WSTI provides technical assistance to school districts and county Transition Advisory Councils, including, information dissemination and participation in staff development activities. The Interagency Agreement also supports WSTI. DVR START and DPI WSTI are also collaborating to provide training regarding the Interagency Agreement.

DVR staff have been involved in presenting at local conferences, schools, council meetings, and at various other organization meetings to provide this information to assist in the outreach for students. Part of the agreement also calls for DPI, DVR, and DHS to share outcome data to determine the impact on the outreach efforts.

DVR actively participates with the National and Wisconsin Community of Practice on Transition including collaborating with DPI on the establishment and facilitation of a practice group on employment.

Financial responsibilities between WDVR and the DPI

When there is overlap of educational and rehabilitation goals and services, a cost sharing arrangement may be negotiated between DVR, the school district, and the Managed Care Organization (MCO). To know who will pay for a service, the school district, the DVR counselor, and the MCO must be consulted.

The following are general guidelines outlined in the Technical Assistance Guide that supports the inter-agency MOU to help understand how financial responsibility decisions can be made under the DVR/DPI/DHS interagency agreement.

- Test 1 - Will the service help to achieve the educational goal of the IEP? If yes, the school is primarily responsible for the service.
- Test 2 - Will the service help to achieve the employment goal of the IPE? If yes, DVR is primarily responsible for the service.
- Test 3 - If the same service appears on both the IEP and IPE, the school and DVR are responsible for negotiating a cost sharing arrangement (conflicts between schools and DVR are to be resolved utilizing the process outlined in the DPI/DVR/DHS Interagency Agreement).
- Test 4 - if the student is over 18 and eligible for Medicaid long-term care services and supports, and chooses to enroll in the managed care program, the three agencies coordinate cost sharing for each individual's situation.

Staff of all three potential funding sources (i.e., DVR, DPI and MCO) are trained in the use of this decision making process.

Marquette University – Milwaukee

The DSU is working with Marquette University in Milwaukee to develop and implement an innovation and expansion program designed to identify the causes of the high dropout rate of minority students with disabilities in the Milwaukee Public School System. The program will then develop intervention strategies designed to reduce the dropout rate. It is expected that the program will be implemented later in FFY10.