

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 and procedures between the DVR, and the Departments of Public Instruction (DPI) and Health Services (DHS). The agreement is designed 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. This interagency agreement has been revised from the July 2007 interagency agreement to now focus on both students with disabilities transitioning from high school as well as adults with disabilities, who have an expectation for integrated competitive employment. The three agencies also jointly developed a Transition Action Guide (TAG) which puts the agreement into practice. The agreement and the TAG have been modified to reflect best practices associated with increasing employment opportunities for people with cognitive and/or physical disabilities who also have challenges with mental health. The agreement and TAG are published on the DVR public website.

http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/dpi_interagency_agreement.pdf

http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/tag.pdf

On a statewide basis, DVR has designated high school transition staff to provide leadership, information and referral, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, adult service providers, and other service agencies. The designated DVR transition staff consists of a Statewide Coordinator and the Statewide Transition Action and Resource Team (START). START has DVR representative from each of the eleven Workforce Development Area's (WDAs) in the state. For their respective areas, the START members take lead responsibility for transition services delivered across their WDA. This lead responsibility includes coordination of activities and training of other DVR staff. DVR staff is also involved in various local transition councils and statewide transition initiatives.

To facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services in FFY15, DVR will:

- Continue to have counselors assigned to each school district and/or school building as identified by DPI. It is the role of the assigned liaison counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referral to the secondary education officials in their assigned schools and districts as well as to assure the provision of direct services to eligible youth.
- 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 and employment support providers.

- Promote the Transition Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) to compliment the Interagency Agreement. The TAG details and supports the interagency coordination processes and procedures to deploy the necessary supports and activities for DVR eligible youth to successfully transition from school to post-high school employment. The TAG includes policy information, definitions, timelines, and most importantly, effective practice examples.

DVR policy to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of DVR services

The DVR Policy Manual 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 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 Transition Action Guide (TAG), which is an integral 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 integrated work experiences leading to the development of an individualized plan for employment prior to matriculation. DVR assures that 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.

Information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency

Commitments will continue in FFY 15. DVR’s role in transition at both the 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 coordinated service plan in support of the student’s long-term employment and independent living. The agreement, along with the Transition Action Guide (TAG) developed by the three agencies which puts the agreement into practice, specifies outreach provisions, lead agency responsibilities, and how students with disabilities who are not in special education programs can access vocational rehabilitation services. The agreement describes the roles and responsibilities of DPI, DVR, and DHS with respect to transition services.

The updated agreement complies with the 2004 IDEA amendment changes and includes a new and important partner. DHS partnership in this agreement is especially timely given Wisconsin’s move to a statewide managed care system (i.e., Family Care) for the provision of long-term community living and employment supports.

This agreement between DPI, DVR and DHS has four overall priorities supporting integrated employment:

1. To comply with federal legal mandates under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA).
2. To provide practical guidance, technical assistance, and training to internal and external stakeholders and staff regarding employment-related services and supports.
3. To provide information on employment services to individuals with disabilities and their family members or guardians so they will be able to participate fully in employment.
4. To provide clarification of roles of stakeholders within each respective department regarding individuals with disabilities who have identified support needs associated with employment and independent living, so that individuals and their families may regard such efforts to be as seamless, non-duplicative, and as transparent as possible.

The Interagency Agreement and the TAG 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 attends Individual Education Plan (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.

As outlined in the TAG and the DVR Policy the development of the plan for employment for students who are eligible for plan development, is to occur prior to the student leaving school. 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 Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) 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. TIG provides technical assistance to school districts, Cooperative Educational School Districts (CESA) and county Transition Advisory Councils, including, information dissemination and participation in staff development activities. The Interagency Agreement also supports TIG. DVR START and TIG also collaborate to provide training regarding the Interagency Agreement.

DVR staff engages in student outreach by presenting at local conferences, schools, council meetings, and at various other organization meetings. The agreement calls for DPI, DVR, and DHS to share outcome data to determine the impact on 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 called Interagency Collaboration for Employment.

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC) has recommended that the respective state agencies supporting the Interagency Agreement provide ongoing training to staff and teachers. DVR agrees that on-going training is a vital component to the success of collaboration at the local level.

Financial responsibilities between DVR and the DPI

When there is overlap of educational goals and employment/rehabilitation goals and services, a cost sharing arrangement may be negotiated between DVR, the school district, and Long-Term Care and/or Mental Health programs. To know who will pay for a service, all parties must be involved in transition planning in order to make a determination about appropriate services.

The following are general guidelines to help understand how 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 a Long-Term Care and/or Mental Health program, the three agencies are responsible for negotiating a cost sharing arrangement to determine resources for each individual's situation. (Conflicts between agencies are to be resolved utilizing the process outlined in the DPI/DVR/DHS Interagency Agreement.)

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