

Vocational Rehabilitation & Schools: Collaboration for Improved Transition Outcomes

Transition planning and services are highly coordinated and collaborative efforts required by law, but can be difficult to put into place. School systems are often thought to provide all transition services, but they are not the only entity to do so. Transition is a shared responsibility between schools, service agencies, students, and families.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to provide transition planning and services for students with disabilities. Schools develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and provide services to help students gain skills needed for life after high school. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are a set of services required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies provide these services in schools, the community, and agency offices.

Students Served, Goals, and Services Provided by WIOA, IDEA, or Both

Question	WIOA (Pre-ETS)	IDEA (Transition Services)	Both
Who is served	Students 14 years old + with disabilities (IEP, 504, other)	Students with IEPs. Required to be included in IEP by 16 years old (earlier in some states)	High school students with disabilities
What is the goal	Provide earlier intervention for employment preparedness	Build a transition plan including education, employment, and independent living	Transition preparation
What's available	Counseling: job exploration and postsecondary education & training Training: self-advocacy and workplace readiness	Assessments, goal development, employment readiness activities, postsecondary education & training preparedness (if necessary)	Interagency collaboration for transition activities

School and VR Collaboration

Schools and VR agencies are required to collaborate to provide transition services. But this collaboration can be difficult due to changing regulations, staff turnover, and differing reporting goals. The first step to developing this transition collaboration is identifying partners for specific

geographic areas. The VR office in your area can identify the counselor who serves your local school divisions. The school division's transition team or administration can identify the best person for the team. Once you know who to partner with, develop a strong working relationship built on clear communication, a desire to partner, and defined roles.

Leveraging Transition Resources

Schools

- Student identification & outreach
- Assistance with documentation
- Student schedules - plan service provision
- Tracking graduation/program completion timelines
- Initial transition planning
- Meeting space, classrooms, transportation, etc.

Vocational Rehabilitation

- Financial resources
- Vendor partnerships for services
- Business connections
- Service continuum (bridge to adult services, if needed)
- Transition planning
- Additional training & program opportunities

By developing a working relationship and leveraging resources, schools and VR professionals can provide enhanced services. To make sure these services are put into place, clearly defining roles and responsibilities is key.

Approaches that Improve Collaboration

Transition teams have found that the following approaches improve collaboration:

- Developing a strong working relationship
- Setting up regular meetings to discuss referrals and student statuses
- Regularly discussing and refining the service delivery process
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Designating a system for the referral process (i.e. all referrals coming from one person, sending all information together, keeping information all in one place)
- Being creative about potential services and opportunities to partner

Conclusion

By developing strong working relationships, being open about goals, resources, and areas of need, and developing a standardized system that works for both parties, transition teams can provide effective and smooth transition services to more students with disabilities.