



TO: Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) and P-12 Education Committees

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SUBJECT: Transition Planning and Services for Students and Youth with Disabilities

DATE: November 9, 2017

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SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

To provide the Board of Regents with updated information on Department initiatives to improve transition planning and services and employment outcomes for students with disabilities.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Review of policy and joint program initiatives for students and youth with disabilities.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Board of Regents in a joint presentation to the ACCES and P-12 Education Committees at their November 2017 meeting.

Procedural History

In July 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law. Final regulations were issued in August 2016. Since 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and State laws and regulations have required school districts to provide transition planning and services to New York State's (NYS's) secondary students with disabilities who are between the ages of 15 and 21.

Background Information

The P-12 Office of Special Education and the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) Office each play a significant role for transition planning and services for students with disabilities. The ACCES and P-12 Education Committees have made several joint presentations to the Regents on the topic of transition planning and services since June 2011. This report provides updated information on new and current initiatives.

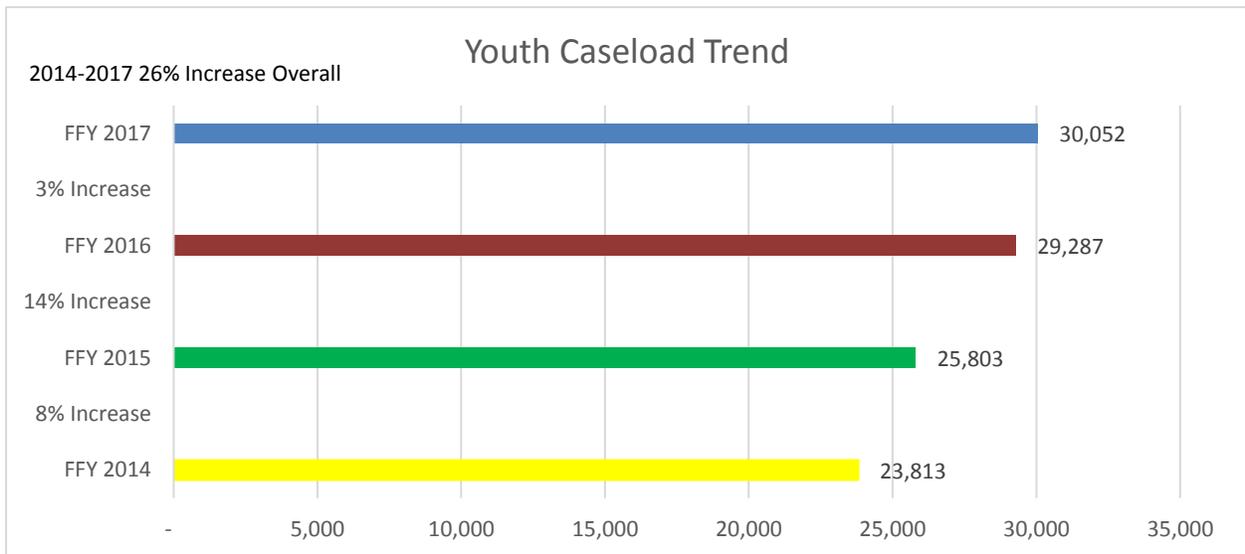
Transition planning and services, as required by the federal and NYS law and regulation, are designed to ensure students with disabilities are provided with the appropriate instruction, courses of study and transition activities to meet their post-secondary goals in the areas of education/training, employment, and where appropriate, independent living. The P-12 Office of Special Education has responsibility for providing policy, monitoring, and technical assistance to school districts on the IDEA transition requirements.

While IDEA places responsibility for transition planning and services on school districts, WIOA and its implementing regulations also include requirements to promote vocational rehabilitation and independent living services during a youth's transition planning years. ACCES-VR plays a critical role in transition coordination and planning. The WIOA legislation and regulations have expanded the scope of services that State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs provide to students and out of school youth with disabilities. In addition to secondary school, students with disabilities now includes students who participate in: home schooling, postsecondary school, or other recognized educational programs.

Increase of Youth in ACCES Services

The following data shows the significant increase in ACCES-VR's youth (age 14-24) caseload from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013-14 through FFY 2016-17. ACCES-VR's caseload consists of 58,662 individuals of which 55% are youth.

- FFY 2014: 23,813
- FFY 2015: 25,803
- FFY 2016: 29,287
- FFY 2017: 30,052



Many of these students are connecting with ACCES and other postsecondary programs as a result of the individual and joint initiatives implemented by P-12 Office of Special Education and ACCES-VR.

Workforce Innovation Opportunity ACT (WIOA)

A new service provision in WIOA requires ACCES to provide specific pre-employment services to in-school students with disabilities. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) include: job and career exploration counseling and activities; work-based learning experiences; counseling on postsecondary options; workplace readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy; and, may include peer mentoring. Pre-ETS are offered to students with disabilities who are potentially eligible for VR services and those who are determined eligible and receive the services as part of their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Students under the age of 22 who require vocational rehabilitation services outside the scope of Pre-ETS would need to submit an application and be determined eligible. The regulations also define youth as anyone age 14-24 who is not enrolled in an education program.

Pre-ETS services were added to the ACCES-VR procurement Request for Proposals (RFP) issued in August 2017.

To assist students and youth with disabilities with the transition to adulthood, the Office of Special Education and ACCES-VR are working on the following initiatives:

Monitoring of Appropriate Transition Planning

- WIOA requires ACCES-VR to develop a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with The Office of Special Education to facilitate and foster a common understanding of transition requirements and responsibilities, and to build partnership between ACCES-VR and OSE to better serve students with disabilities. Specific goals of the agreement include:

- To strengthen shared efforts to prepare students with disabilities for successful community work experiences, careers, and independent living;
- To outline a collaborative framework for coordinating state and local services and resources; and
- To provide guidance for coordinating plans, policies, and procedures developed to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities.
- Under IDEA, “transition services” means that students are provided with a coordinated set of activities that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate the student’s movement from school to post-school activities. In order for a student to receive these coordinated services, designed with a results-oriented process, the Committees on Special Education (CSE) must ensure that transition services needs and goals are explicitly addressed in the individualized education program (IEP) planning process.
- In accordance with IDEA, the Office of Special Education must annually report the percent of youth with IEPs aged 15 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student’s transition service needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the CSE meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student (if the student is age 18 or older).
- The federally required measure has been selected to focus attention on how a student’s education program can be planned to assist the student to make a successful transition to his or her post-secondary goals for living, further training, education and employment and to help reduce the number of students with disabilities that drop out of school. Effective transition planning requires that the CSE, including the student and student’s parents, select the instruction and the career and educational experiences to motivate the student to complete his or her education and prepare the student for transition from secondary education to postsecondary life.
- Each year the State reports this information based on data from a representative sample of school districts throughout the State. The Department collects these data through a self-review monitoring process. Data submitted for Federal Fiscal Year 2015 show that more than 76 percent of the IEPs reviewed were appropriately developed. Monitoring data is regionally disaggregated and used to inform the nature of the professional development needed in each region. This data as well as post-school outcome data also informs regional interagency discussions and planning. Each school district’s monitoring results are reviewed by the Regional Special Education – Technical Assistance Support Center (RSE-TASC) Transition Specialists for the purpose of ensuring that schools are provided professional development and technical assistance to improve transition planning. The Office of Special Education’s Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA) Unit ensures the correction of noncompliance for each

student and that changes are made to the district's policies, procedures and practices to ensure appropriate transition planning for all students within that district.

- This year, the Office of Special Education formed a secondary transition workgroup for the purposes of further analyzing our annual results for districts including transition components in the IEP. The workgroup is comprised of staff from the SEQA, Special Education Policy, Program Development and Support Services, and Due Process Units and our technical assistance and professional development providers. The results of the analysis will be used to inform future policy and technical assistance recommendations.

Regional Professional Development on Transition Planning and Services

- The Office of Special Education continues to fund a network of 25 Transition Specialists through the RSE-TASC to provide ongoing professional development and technical assistance to school personnel, families, and agency partners on a variety of transition-related topics, including but not limited to Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy, Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) learning standards, age appropriate transition assessments, and IEP development. Transition Specialists establish and manage interagency groups in each of their regions for the purposes of fostering communication between the schools and available State and community agencies or resources so that students, families, and schools will be able to avail themselves of their local resources. The groups are also designed to encourage appropriate and useful referrals, and to help State and local agencies understand the school community.
- The Office of Special Education also funds the Transition Services Professional Development Support Center (PDSC) through Cornell University. The Transition Services PDSC is designed to provide professional development and support to the RSE-TASC Transition Specialists, as well as support a TransitionSource website (www.TransitionSource.org). TransitionSource houses a number of tools and resources related to transition planning and services, including a resource map for NYS, designed to assist educators and families to find the community resources nearest to them, and an effective practices page, where videos and podcasts are being created based on current work in NYS schools. The site also houses a planning tool for districts looking to improve their transition practices, as well as curated resource links around a variety of topics (such as self-determination and family involvement). TransitionSource is open to anyone interested in learning more about transition planning and services. The website has undergone a significant overhaul in the last year, which was specifically intended to make the site more user-friendly. This includes updates making it accessible on mobile devices, and restructuring the resource map to include familiar features (such as street view) and detailed information about services offered by the agencies identified. Consistent with the recommendations of the Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities, ACCES-VR and the Office of Special Education are exploring options to make TransitionSource, which was originally designed for school personnel and technical assistance providers, to be more user friendly for students and parents.

- The regional Special Education Parent Centers work with parents and students to help them understand and participate in the transition planning process. Transition Specialists frequently partner with Special Education Parent Centers to further this goal.
- Through the PDSC, RSE-TASC, and Special Education Parent Centers, NYS has a comprehensive system of State and regionally-based professional development support to school districts needing to improve transition planning and transition-related instructional services and supports for students with disabilities. The impact of these supports is measured through a variety of mechanisms including the services of external evaluators contracted by the Department, quarterly status reports from the providers which include progress monitoring data, development and submission of Quality Improvement Process Plans for specific schools, surveys, and the use of nationally recognized tools and checklists.
- ACCES-VR awarded ten contracts statewide to provide consultation and technical assistance to local school districts on post-school options for students with disabilities. The Regional Vocational Rehabilitation Community Employment Specialists connect school district personnel and Committees on Special Education (CSE) to the knowledge, information, and procedures needed to identify post-school employment and training options for students with disabilities.

Youth Advisory Panel

- The Youth Advisory Panel¹ was established in 2014 to advise the Office of Special Education on proposed policies related to the education of students with disabilities. Currently, eleven students and young adults with a variety of disabilities make up this Panel. Panel members engage in facilitated discussions with Department staff on policy issues relating to the education of students with disabilities. In addition to commenting on and providing their recommendations regarding proposed policies, panel members share their concerns and recommendations for future policy consideration. Their participation serves to advise the Department from a first-hand perspective on ways to improve the quality of special education services and student outcomes. Participation on the panel also provides students with the opportunity to sharpen their self-advocacy and leadership skills and network with other youth. The agenda for the meetings is driven by the topics raised by the Panel Members and to date have focused on important factors that would impact transition such as transition planning and self-advocacy and self-determination.

Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) Grant

- ACCES-Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Office of Special Education are participants in the PROMISE Grant. This federally funded grant is sponsored jointly by the United States Department of Education, the Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S.

¹ For additional information about the [Youth Advisory Panel](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/youthpanel/home.html), visit <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/youthpanel/home.html>)

Department of Labor (DOL). NYS was awarded \$32,500,000 for a five-year period and is one of six grants awarded nationwide.

- Administered in NYS by the Office of Mental Health, with Cornell University's Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability as managing partner, the purpose of the PROMISE Grant is to improve the education and employment outcomes of youth recipients of supplemental security income (SSI), decreasing their long-term reliance on the program. Targeting three regions of the State (Western, Capital District and New York City), the focus of the PROMISE Grant is to:
 - develop strong and effective partnerships with agencies responsible for programs that play a key role in providing services to children ages 14-16 who receive SSI and their families;
 - provide a set of coordinated services and supports, and implement effective practices targeted to the needs of child SSI recipients and their families within local demonstration sites; and
 - identify effective interventions in transition based upon a rigorous study design and evaluation of the NYS PROMISE model.
- Participants include approximately 2000 youth with disabilities. The recruitment phase of the grant ended in March 2016. Of enrolled youth, 1000 youth have been randomly placed in a control group and continue receiving usual services and 1000 youth have been randomly selected to receive additional coordinated services and supports to develop strong and effective partnerships with agencies that provide key services to youth who receive SSI and their families and implement effective practices at local demonstration sites.

Program Development Grant to Prepare Students with Disabilities to Exit School with Work Readiness Skills (Career Development and Occupational Studies Grants)

- In 2015, the Office of Special Education awarded approximately \$30 million over a three-year period through a competitive grant program to school districts, boards of cooperative educational services programs (BOCES), special act school districts, and approved private schools to enhance their instructional programs to increase students with disabilities' access to and participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) coursework, instruction in CDOS learning standards, and work-based learning opportunities to fulfill requirements for the award of the NYS CDOS Commencement Credential. The Program Development Grant project is currently in its third and final year, with 38 grantees across the State. The Office of Special Education will review each final annual report and conduct site visits to identify effective models in the delivery of instructional and CTE practices leading to a CDOS Commencement Credential.

Strengthening Relationships with School Districts

- ACCES established a Transition and Youth Services (TAYS) Unit which include dedicated staff assigned to each of the 15 District Offices.
- The TAYS team is focused on coordination and consistent delivery of student transition and youth services. They lead collaborative efforts with school districts,

BOCES, one-stop career centers, community rehabilitation programs, colleges, businesses, and independent living centers.

ACCES-VR New Initiatives and Benchmarking Activities

There are several new initiatives that will enhance service delivery to youth and students with disabilities:

- **ACCES-VR IL/VR Peer Mentoring Initiative** – This is a pilot in the White Plains and Rochester District Offices where peer mentors from the local Independent Living Center are located within the district office to provide peer mentoring and advocacy services to ACCES-VR participants.
- **CUNY LEADS Plus** – An MOU with CUNY is being developed to provide supports to CUNY students on the Autism Spectrum and with other learning disabilities. The project will be implemented on a CUNY campus in each borough.
- **NYC Mayor’s Office for Persons with Disabilities** – This collaborative is designed to support ACCES-VR in creating new strategies for business engagement in New York City and will support new practices for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities in the greater NYC business community.
- **Career Exploration Initiative** – This 2018 procurement will result in 15 to 20 projects across the State to provide the WIOA required Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities who are potentially eligible for ACCES-VR services. Students with disabilities would not need an eligibility determination or completed application to receive Career Exploration services.

Related Regent’s Items

October 2015:

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/meetings/Oct%202015/1015p12accesd3.pdf>

March 2014:

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/314p12accesd1%5B3%5D.pdf>

September 2013:

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/913p12accesd1%5B1%5D.pdf>

December 2011:

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2011Meetings/December2011/1212p12accesd1.doc>

June 2011:

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2011Meetings/June2011/611p12accesd1.pdf>

Timetable for Implementation

With support of the Board of Regents, the Department will continue to implement the above actions.