

TRANSITION

AUTHORITY:

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
Federal Regulations: 34 CFR, Part 361.48
IDEA: PL 101-476

*For the purpose of this manual, use of the terms **must** or **shall** reflect requirements of Federal law or regulation or state law or administrative regulation and must be adhered to strictly.*

Introduction

The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is committed to partnering with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) in providing transition services for youth with disabilities. The ultimate goal of Transition is a seamless transfer of services for students from school to post-school activities, with DVR's specific goal being the provision of services that lead to an appropriate and successful employment outcome for eligible students. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 define Transition as:

"...a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Transition services must promote or facilitate the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment."

The following pages define and clarify Transition and the role and responsibilities of DVR and KDE in providing transition services. Neither department can stand alone in this process, but rather must work cooperatively and collaboratively to identify the needed services and service providers to accomplish the stated goals.

Rationale For Transition Planning

All students participate in school services with an expectation of being prepared to function at some level of independence as a result of their school experience. Although this is no different for students with disabilities, differences do exist as far as what needs to occur before and after graduation if students with disabilities are to have the same degree of integration into adult life activities as their non-disabled peers.

Most persons without disabilities can take what was learned in school and use this information to attain desired employment, obtain an individual residence, and to access community resources. For many persons with disabilities, this transition into adulthood requires interagency planning. This helps ensure that services provided both prior to and after graduation are adequate and appropriate to facilitate successful community integration.

National data regarding transition outcomes for persons with disabilities indicates that human service programs have not adequately prepared persons with disabilities for moving from the educational system to adult environments in a manner that can maximize their potential.

Current data shows that approximately one-third of students with disabilities drop out prior to graduation. This often diminishes chances for fulfilling their potential as adults and demonstrates the need for the education system to provide curricula that fosters school retention.

There is little doubt that the seriousness of this matter is the reason that the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA: PL 101-476) addresses the need for transition planning. Since 1990, transition services have been a requirement of IDEA for students who are 16 years or older. In certain circumstances they may be younger than 14 if deemed appropriate by the Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) and Individual Education Program (IEP) Team. IDEA defines transition planning as:

“...a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that is designed within an outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to post school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. Transition services are based on the individual student needs, taking into account the students’ preference and interests. Transition services include: instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills, and functional vocational evaluation.”

The services are planned at the IEP meeting to which students must be invited. Now, under the latest reauthorization of the IDEA in 1997 (IDEA 97), this involvement has been expanded. In addition to transition services beginning at age 16, a statement of transition service needs is required at age 14. At this time, and updated annually, thereafter, the IEP Team looks at the child's courses of study (such as advanced placement courses or vocational education programs) and determines whether or not these courses of study are leading the student to where the student needs to be upon graduation. What other courses might be indicated, given the student's goals for life after secondary school? Beginning to plan at age 14, with an eye to necessary coursework, is expected to help the student plan and prepare educationally. Then, at age 16, or younger if appropriate, transition services are delivered in a wide range of areas. (OSEP IDEA '97 Training Package, Module 9, pp. 9 – 11 through 9 –13).

Transition planning presents no guarantee of individual success after leaving school. Attention is focused on the variables in school and adult life that are most likely to maximize post-school choices and options available to youth with disabilities as compared to their disabled peers. It is strongly recommended that transition planning reflect a high level of student and parent participation. Planning should not be limited by what communities or service systems currently offer, but rather it must be driven by what the individual and or his/her parents envision. It is better to shoot for the sky and only reach the horizon, than to never leave the restrictive confines of the "status quo" and predictive expectations.

Process For Transition Planning

The Local Education Agency (LEA) is responsible for initiating the transition planning process. Effective with the 2000 - 2001 school year, Kentucky no longer requires a separate transition planning form for students with disabilities. Requirements for transition planning are now documented within the Individual Education Program (IEP) and the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). The following steps outline this documentation process.

For student's ages 14 and older, documentation begins on the KDE recommended IEP form by addressing the following question: "How were the student's preferences and interests considered?" The purpose of this question is to assure that input has been obtained from the student and the student's parent or guardian regarding desired post-school outcomes.

Student transition needs are addressed in relation to the course of study. At this point, the state recommended IEP form directs the user to the IGP, where these needs are documented under Section "J", *Education Plan Inclusive of Academic Requirements (704 KAR 3:305) and Career Related Courses*. Courses listed here, are those determined by the Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) as important for the student in terms of needs related to identified desired post-school outcomes and, needs related to gaps in needed competencies that can be addressed through the Program of Studies. Both required and elective courses are included.

At age 14, (under the “Present Level of Performance” section on the IEP, “Transition Needs,” page 1 of the KDE recommended form) the transition need area being addressed for the typical student will be “instruction.” In developing the present level of performance statement in relation to “instruction,” it is sometimes helpful to think in terms of the following questions:

- How does the student’s disability impact acquiring the competencies needed in terms of the courses listed on the IGP?
- Has the student’s strengths been identified?
- What gaps or needs does the student have?

After the present level of performance statement is developed, documentation of the Annual Goals and Benchmarks/Short-Term Objectives must be made. These provide a way to measure student progress toward areas of identified need and, ultimately, toward achievement of student desired post-school outcome(s). This documentation is made on page 3 of the KDE recommended IEP form.

Beginning at age 16, or younger if appropriate, student desired post-school outcomes are formally documented on the IEP, a statement of interagency linkages and responsibilities is developed if appropriate, and transition services are delivered in a wider range of areas. This documentation, on the KDE recommended IEP form, is found in the following places:

At age 16, the student is two years closer to leaving the school setting and has been assisted to more clearly define desired post-school outcomes. Thus, student needs in relation to transition typically go beyond that of “instruction” only. The additional needs for related services, community experiences, employment, daily living skills, post school adult living, and functional vocational evaluation must also be considered at this time. After identification by the ARC, they are noted and present level of performance statements, annual goals, and short-term objectives are developed.

Together, the IGP and the IEP help students, parents, and teachers begin thinking about life after high school and coordinating the classes and experiences to help facilitate this transition.

For the great majority of persons with disabilities, transition from high school will mean living, working, and recreating in their community of choice. The path to attaining this transition for each individual requires an examination of the characteristics of services provided during school years. It also entails determining interagency linkages or human service support systems that need to be in place prior to and following graduation. As much as possible, transition planning should not be fully dependent on public resources. Planning should try to incorporate involvement from those persons in the community who have a vested interest in the individual’s quality of life based on friendship, not on a professional relationship i.e. neighbors, clergymen, etc.

Students with milder disabilities may experience successful transition with little need for continued support. For example, students moving on to higher education may need instruction in learning strategies or assistance in finding the college or university

setting that is most compatible with their career interests or that provides accommodations for their disability. For students with moderate disabilities, arrangements may only be needed for vocational assessment and training, development of social skills, or other career planning that affects programmatic concerns i.e. functional course provision, community-based instruction, etc.. Post-school supports may be geared more toward post-secondary vocational services.

For students with more significant disabilities, the extent and type of transition issues can be more diverse. More attention may need to be devoted to integration to allow for developing relationships with persons who are not disabled. Too often such interactions are limited to paid caregivers. The amount of community-based instruction and the number of independent living skills to be taught will vary over time. The intensity of interagency involvement may increase for students with significant disabilities. Non-school agencies may need to participate in transition planning and more details of future supports in such areas as residential needs, transportation, medical needs, social security, or community-based employment may have to be projected and planned.

Transition planning is not the last step in the transition process. It is the first step towards the anticipated successful transition to adulthood. Not an end in itself, transition planning should be viewed as the beginning of a lifelong journey rather than a destination.

Quality Indicators For Effective Transition Services

In addressing transition issues, there is the need to have outcomes by which each transition program component can be measured. The following Quality indicators are a set of best practices by which local transition services can be evaluated and improved. This set of indicators is adapted from a variety of sources, but most notably from the Quality Indicators developed by Dr. Paul Bates at the Illinois Transition Project at Southern Illinois University. These indicators are:

1. Active Parent/Student Involvement At All Points in the Transition Process

The student and his family are the most critical members of the Individual Transition Team. Planning for the transition of students without the direct involvement of both the student and his family severely limits the attainable outcomes.

2. Direct Involvement of All Relevant School Staff in the Transition Process

Members of the school staff may include special education and vocational education teachers, the transition specialist or community-based work transition trainer, local school administrators, the school counselor or in-school vocational rehabilitation counselor. In addition, the participation of related service personnel, i.e., speech therapist, mobility specialist, may be required depending upon the student's specific needs.

3. Direct Involvement of Adult and Community Services at Least Two Years Before School Completion

It is absolutely essential that representatives from appropriate adult services become involved in the student's transition plan for at least the student's final two years in school. This will help to ensure that there are no gaps in services and supports upon graduation and that the student achieves meaningful work and living outcomes in the community. Adult personnel should include a representative from The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, a community supportive employment specialist, and, as needed, representatives from community living services, post-secondary vocational education, and other specialized agencies such as the Department for the Blind.

4. Transition Goals Are A Part of the Student's IEP, Starting by Age 14

Transition goals are now required by the IDEA and represent the importance of both longitudinal planning and implementation of transition goals leading to successful community employment and living outcomes.

5. Vocational Curriculum that Includes Opportunity for Paid, Integrated Employment as Part of the Curriculum

Recent research has indicated that perhaps the strongest indicator of successful post-school employment for students with disabilities is paid employment in community settings before graduation. Planned opportunities for real job experience in preferred and valued work sites are a critical component of high-quality transition services.

6. Transition Planning for Post-Secondary Education Goals if this is an Applicable Outcome

If the student's Transition/IEP Team considers post-secondary education as the critical transition goal for a student, then that team has the responsibility to develop a transition plan that assures access to and the supports necessary for the student to succeed in that post-school training.

7. A Curriculum That Addresses Living Skills

Ultimately, successful participation as an adult in our society is dependent as much upon general community living competencies as it is upon specific vocational skills. Thus, high quality transition planning considers the community living competencies that students will need to achieve maximum independence and participation in the community.

8. A Curriculum That Addresses Leisure Activities And Social Skills

Again, research has indicated that job success is dependent as much upon social skills, personal relationships, and leisure skills as it is upon vocational competence. Addressing this curriculum area is thus essential if students with disabilities are to achieve and maintain meaningful adult outcomes.

9. Integrated Educational and Vocational Training Opportunities (Both at School and in the Community)

A critical predictor of successful post-secondary community employment and living is full participation in an integrated educational program that allows for extensive opportunities for integration both at school and in community training experiences. Planned systematic integration provides the experiences. Planned, systematic integration provides the student with disabilities the opportunity to form invaluable friendships with others, to meet valued role models, and have the opportunity to develop social skills required in post-school settings.

10. Direct Instruction in Natural, Vocational, and Community Environments

Classroom-based instruction is not sufficient for most students with disabilities to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to function in the “real world.” Indeed, the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 recognizes the essential need for all students to demonstrate the ability to solve real-life problems in meaningful ways. Community-referenced instruction, including direct instruction in actual community settings, is especially critical for students with moderate and severe disabilities, and should be carefully considered for all students with disabilities.

11. Transition Data Includes follow-ups of Graduates and Outcome Studies of Individual Programs

The only comprehensive way to evaluate the quality of educational services is to determine the outcomes attained by consumers. Yet very few educational systems obtain systematic information on their graduates’ outcomes in employment and community living. Such data is essential if we are to determine the true value of our transition programs and to comparatively evaluate specific approaches and strategies.

12. Collaborative Funding of Transition Programs Across State, Regional and Local Levels

Only by pooling resources in a coordinated system of service delivery can school, transition, and adult service programs maximize the use of those resources in attaining valued outcomes for students with disabilities. Collaborative funding reduces duplicate efforts and increases the numbers of students able to access transition services.

13. Local Transition Planning Teams Address Collaboration and Interagency Agreements

It is critical that school and adult service providers develop local interagency transition planning teams to address coordination of efforts and resultant interagency agreements needed to insure successful transitions for students with disabilities in their own community. Only by localizing transition planning can the specific needs of each community and its students be considered in the process.

14. Cooperative In-Service Training Efforts Exist Between School, Community and Adult Services

Successful transition efforts require that all participants in this process have a common understanding of program values, outcomes, activities, strategies, and procedures. The most effective means of assuring this common base is cooperative in-service training efforts for all key participants.

Community Transition Planning Teams

In order to facilitate interagency cooperation and planning at the district level, it is recommended there be a Community Transition Planning Team (CTPT). This group does not necessarily deal with individual issues, but, rather addresses barriers and strategies that provide the necessary administrative support for successful development of the individual transition planning at the local school level.

What is a Community Transition Planning Team?

A Community Transition Planning Team (CTPT) is an interagency group that shares the mission of assisting persons with disabilities to achieve and maintain a way of life that offers the same options available to persons who do not have disabilities.

At least four purposes can be accomplished by formation of a Community Transition Planning Team:

- 1) A forum is established for human service agencies to become aware of each other's services and to see how and what resources can be utilized to facilitate successful transition services.
- 2) An understanding is developed regarding the need for interagency collaboration to fulfill a mutual need for individuals with disabilities.
- 3) A top-down administrative sanction can be given to agency personnel participating at an individual level in the interagency planning process for developing and implementing an Individual Transition Plan.
- 4) A mechanism will exist for systemic problem solving when an issue or barrier to successful transition arises at the school or individual level that needs to be resolved by the key players who administer school and community services.

The decisions that are required for successful transition of students from school to post-school settings are not school district decisions. Planning at the school level for pending transition is not a matter of ending or completing one phase as much as it is the first step of a life long process that carries over into adulthood. This process means that the planning has to occur on a community level versus a school level.

In order for this planning to occur for many persons with disabilities, there is a need for a coordinated effort on the part of public and private entities to direct resources towards identifying and supporting individual preferences in areas of residential, vocational and community living. Transition planning at the individual student level will continue to be the function of the Admission and Release Committee (ARC) and district level Community Transition Planning Team. This team will lay the groundwork for individual planning by giving the administrative sanction and support that is a prerequisite to interagency cooperation and participation in the process at a local level.

Public agencies, such as the DVR, Social Services, Adult Services, and school services are separate service systems, although they often share the same ultimate goals for individuals with disabilities. Formation of a CTPT sets the stage for these agencies to align and identify mutual strategies that maximize efficiency and ability to meet the post-school needs of persons with disabilities. “Effective planning is the empowerment of communities by sharing visions and dreams for the future with the variety of individuals who will shape those visions and contribute to the realization of those dreams” (Illinois Transition Project, 1990). It is emphasized that human service agencies are not the only means by which persons with disabilities may be assisted, and whenever possible a role may exist to facilitate or at least not inhibit private individual or civic agency advocacy.

Many persons with disabilities already are experiencing success on the job, in neighborhood activities or in community social functions without the involvement of persons from the human service system. This success is usually a direct result of their becoming connected with someone who chooses to provide such natural supports as an outgrowth of a friendship or concern for the welfare of the individual. While structured community agency supports are often desirable and necessary, caution must be taken that public intervention not unintentionally convey a message to the community at large that only a “professional” can give needed support due to the presence of an individual’s disability.

Who are Possible Members of a Community Transition Planning Team?

In order for a collective approach to be taken to coordinated service delivery for persons with disabilities, all the key players must be involved. A core planning team may initially be formed which includes the persons whose services most often will be called upon, such as the district transition services coordinator, the special education coordinator, the vocational education coordinator, the vocational rehabilitation counselor, a social services representative, and staff from the local mental health/mental retardation services. Mental health/mental retardation services are usually located at the local Comprehensive Care Center. Participants identified as needing to be on the core team would be the facilitators of problem resolution presented by Admissions and Release Committees or other systemic issues at the district or community level.

A parent who has experience in maneuvering the maze of the service system should be identified to assist as well as a student who can articulate the perspective of those persons ultimately most affected. Other representatives may be utilized as needed or to meet less often as a larger planning group typically include the district instructional supervisor for regular education, and other district level administrators as deemed appropriate. Other community agency representatives to consider would include the Health Department, Post-Secondary Vocational Programs, Community or Adult Education, Adult Residential Services, Parents, Advocates, Chamber of Commerce, Community Recreation, Department for the Blind, Social Security Administration, the County Extension Agent, etc.

Participants identified as needing to be on the core team would be the facilitators for resolution of agency or individual problems that cannot be solved by interagency activities pursued by the Admissions and Release Committee. This action may entail things such as coordination of adult service resources to pick up a transportation plan previously supported by the school, facilitate determination of eligibility for services such as Vocational Rehabilitation, or assist with a person getting the support needed to join a regular YMCA program for recreation leisure.

What Are the Steps in Development and Operation of Community Transition Planning Teams?

The following four steps cover the formative stages of the Community Transition Planning Team through the ongoing meetings once the team is established.

Step 1: Organizing the Community Transition Planning Team (CTPT)

Careful consideration should be given to the identification and selection of the members of the community transition planning team. The team should be comprised of members who can and will make a substantial contribution to the interagency planning process. The extent to which improvements in transition services occur will be largely due to the interest, motivation, and skills of the committee members. Factors to consider when selecting committee members include: affiliations that represent the agencies and individuals that are viewed as appropriate adult service providers, competence of recognized and respected leaders in the community, commitment to improving the transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult life, availability and willingness to attend meetings and actively participate, and a broad base of experience and knowledge that can be used in transition service improvement activities.

Once potential committee members are identified, they should be contacted to discuss their interest in committee participation. Several agencies can share the responsibility of recruiting committee members. A telephone call or other direct contact personalizes the membership request and allows an opportunity to discuss the committee's purpose.

After commitment is secured, a letter should be sent that confirms potential membership as well as the date, time, place, and agenda of the initial meeting. It is also helpful to contact prospective members the day before the actual meeting to confirm their attendance and participation. A description of local secondary special education and transition services and other materials may be distributed prior to the first meeting. Eliminating lengthy explanations during the initial meeting will save time.

An organized meeting promotes effective interagency planning. The meeting should be formally structured, have a well-defined leadership role, and include a written agenda and plans for documenting meeting minutes.

Agendas should be prepared ahead of time and made available to team members before the meeting. The agenda should be well organized to maximize participant time through a clear path of actions for the meeting.

The person who has assumed the leadership role in organizing the team should facilitate the first meeting. It is imperative the leader be enthusiastic, confident, and optimistic about the outcome of the meeting and the work that can be accomplished by the group. Members should leave the meeting with the belief that time was well spent and they had opportunities to become actively involved participants.

The team must also determine the length and frequency of future meetings. Initially, teams may meet more frequently in order to finalize team membership and begin action planning. Subcommittees might also be formed early on to manage specific tasks and activities.

Initial team actions and decisions typically focus on selecting the team leader and other officers identified as needed. For the position of team leader or chairperson, the appointee should be an individual capable of directing the effective operation and management of interagency planning meetings. This person should exhibit good leadership qualities and have experience and background in planning. A co-chair might also be selected to assume the leadership role in the absence of the chairperson.

It is helpful for someone to keep written minutes of the first as well as future meetings that can be distributed to all members. These minutes serve as ongoing documentation of key actions and decisions by team members.

Participants should be requested ahead of time to come to the first meeting prepared to discuss their agency's role in the community. Items and issues each member may wish to present include: brochures, annual agency reports, services available to persons with disabilities, service eligibility requirements, agency mission statement, agency priorities for the current fiscal year, and recent activities that relate to transition.

Step 2: Formation of Interagency Agreements

Once the organizational steps have been completed, the process of formalizing the operation and functions of the Community Transition Planning Team (CTPT) begins. This entails at least four activities:

1. Development of a Statement of Purpose and Mission

If the CTPT is to work together in a cooperative manner towards accomplishing mutual goals, these overall goals need to be agreed upon and stated in terms of a rationale for meeting and commitment to serving individuals with disabilities. This statement could address as well a belief in empowerment of individuals and communities for inclusion of persons with disabilities in all facets of school and post-school activities.

2. Establishment of a Regular Meeting Schedule

The CTPT will have to hold meetings at a frequency that is sufficient to adequately deal with problems or report on activities. At least a quarterly schedule may be needed for the group at large with interim or special meetings being called for the Core Team. Attention will need to be devoted to responsibility for notices being sent out for each meeting, facilities to be used, etc. Each meeting should be chaired by a person who has the role of developing and following an agenda, expediting discussions, and group decision-making. This task could be rotated across each meeting or shared in some other equitable process.

3. Target Goals/Activities for the Year

After consensus is reached by the CPTP regarding its purpose and mission, discussions should center on what can be done during the coming year of operation to fulfill these goals. Some examples of activities to pursue might include attempts to increase community awareness about community transition services, (e.g., services available, eligibility criteria, contact persons, etc.). One strategy to fulfill this objective is development of a local resource directory. This directory would provide parents, students and professionals information on the array of services that exist and how to access them.

Another useful undertaking could be to conduct a needs assessment across the school and community, i.e., service gaps, long-term needs, etc. Some of the more pressing priorities for systematic change may be revealed by this activity. It also provides direct feedback from the implementers of transition services regarding barriers that impede smooth transition from school to post-school settings. This feedback could lead to formation of subcommittees that will deal with matters

specific to certain member agencies or client problems. Action plans may then be recommended to the Core Team to overcome or correct a particular situation.

4. **Secure Respective Agency Commitment to the Interagency Agreement**

When the various details as described above have been stated in a written Interagency Agreement, each agency representative should take the Agreement to the director or certifying authority of their agency for discussion and signature. This action might involve meeting with a local board to explain the nature of the agreement and the implications for agency involvement. Once the Agreement is signed, an annual revision or update may be needed along with a report to each agency on a quarterly or yearly basis.

Step 3: Evaluate Effectiveness of Student Outcomes

The effectiveness of the team's efforts in assisting students to achieve outcomes should be evaluated. The Kentucky Education Reform Act specifically states "students will make a successful transition to work, post-secondary education or the military." A mechanism should be established for determining the teams' effectiveness in assisting students to reach their outcomes and make a successful transition to post-secondary environments. How successful students are in meeting their outcomes related to transition will drive school and community programs and services in the future.

Step 4: Evaluate Effectiveness of Achieving Team Goals/Activities

The team should assess the effectiveness of its efforts. An evaluation indicates whether the activities employed were effective in bringing about positive change in the provision of transition services.

The evaluation of the post-school outcomes of students will reflect the level and type of impact the team's efforts have made. An evaluation of the team's performance should be conducted at least annually. Team discussion should be supplemented by more formal methods of assessment such as formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is ongoing and allows the service providers to monitor their activities as they proceed. Based on the information gathered, revisions or modifications can be made as needed. The projected timelines for accomplishing the goals and objectives outlined on the team's action plan can be used to measure ongoing progress.

Summative evaluation involves determining the effectiveness of the team's activities. This method of evaluation is essential if the team wants to measure and ultimately improve their quality of service. The team must consider and discuss issues such as appropriateness of goals, objectives,

and activities, amount of time and resources devoted to each activity, and quality of outcomes achieved through each activity and benefit to students and community. Analysis of the evaluation results will affect the future direction of the community team and should lead to improved programs and services.

Regional Transition Planning Team (RTPT)

Regional Transition Planning Teams (RTPT) reflects an interagency representation of adult service providers. They mirror their community counterparts who participate on the community transition planning team CTPT). The interagency driven process is needed at all levels to ensure the successful development of systematic, comprehensive, and longitudinal transition plans for youth with disabilities (Wehman, 1988).

Their role initially is to become familiar with the existing agencies and their services within their respective regions. The team's focus will be multifaceted. First, from a bottom-up perspective, these teams will create a means for resolution of problems. When the CTPT's identify systematic issues that cannot be addressed except at the next level of agency authority, the CTPT can direct their issue to the RTPT. This offers a mechanism for sanctioning the role and participation of local agency personnel versus involving state agency personnel who are more removed from the situations. Second, it will create awareness and understanding of interagency transition concepts and needs at the level where decisions are made regarding how funds and other resources are distributed. Involvement will enable the regional offices and their administering boards to obtain a full perspective of the momentum and direction in schools for preparing students for integrated, community life.

These regional agencies are the vehicles by which service delivery is provided to families and adults with disabilities. Involving regional level providers in the transition planning of youth while they are still in school facilitates a smoother transition to the community. Networking with the CTPT will promote improved services and the necessary support students with disabilities require in order to successfully transition from school to community living and employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation Roles and Responsibilities

The vocational rehabilitation counselor plays a key role in the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 dictate that there be coordination and collaboration between education officials and DVR "to facilitate...the transition of students

with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services..." [Rehabilitation Act Amendments 1998 (361.22 (a)(1))]. The intent of the law is for all students with disabilities; special education recipients as well as students served under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, to gain knowledge of and access to rehabilitation services that will allow them to plan for and attain their highest vocational potential. It is through DVR's efforts and expertise that the employment component of Transition can be thoroughly explored and appropriately addressed.

Outreach

To ensure that Vocational Rehabilitation is a visible partner in the Transition process the Rehab Act mandates that outreach services to students with disabilities be provided as early as possible in the planning process. The intent of this mandate is to empower the student through awareness and give him/her options for a seamless transition plan. Outreach services "...must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and the scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals." [Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998; 361.22 (a)(4)] The method by which outreach is accomplished varies greatly from one school district to another, however, each counselor is encouraged to collaborate with his/her Local Education Authority (LEA) and establish a plan for the provision of these services.

Suggested Practice in the Management of Transition Cases

Referral

The local DVR counselor, in conjunction with school staff should develop a referral process that best meets the needs of the involved parties. Regardless of what this process looks like, the school bears the initial responsibility for identifying students who may be appropriate for services from DVR. This should happen as soon as possible in the planning process. However, best practice dictates that counselors should not accept a case for service until the student is within two years of graduation. On rare occasion it may be necessary to accept a case earlier than what is being recommended, **but this is considered the exception.** The individual needs of the student, the significance of the disability and the potential complexity of the case should be guiding factors in determining how early a case should be accepted for services.

Prior to referral, the counselor's role is best defined as that of "consultant." The counselor's experience and expertise are critical in directing the planning process and establishing a career path for each student long before they exit the high school setting. As a consultant, the counselor may attend ARC meetings to provide information and technical assistance

to the school as instructional needs and related services are being planned. In the event that the counselor is unable to attend ARC meetings, he/she should find an alternate means to assist in and contribute to the transition planning. Communication between education staff and DVR is critical to the success of the transition plan, and should be accomplished in ways that meet the needs of all participants.

Eligibility

Students are determined to be eligible for DVR services based on the same criteria as all other consumers of this department. The counselor must first look at existing information, including that used by education officials, to assist in making an eligibility determination. In general, a school psychological will not include a medical or psychological diagnosis, as this is not a requirement for determining eligibility for Special Education services. Rather school officials make this determination based on limitations and educational needs. This mirrors the requirements of DVR in determining eligibility for rehabilitation services. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 make it clear that eligibility for services is based on functional limitations and not a diagnosis. In most instances, the school psychological adequately describes limitations and their impact on educational success and from this the counselor can infer vocational impact. In the event that the existing information is inadequate, then additional evaluations may be purchased.

Without a stated diagnosis, the counselor will need to rely on his/her knowledge and understanding of specific disabilities when determining the appropriate disability category, as required on the eligibility worksheet. It is important to note that the counselor is not making a diagnosis, but rather is categorizing the student for statistical purposes only. Once an eligibility decision has been made, the counselor may need to obtain additional information, including a specific diagnosis in order to plan appropriately for rehabilitation services.

IPE Development

Once a student has been determined eligible for services from DVR, then the counselor should begin the assessment process for the purpose of determining a vocational goal and plan development. For those students receiving Special Education services under an Individual Education Program (IEP), the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 mandate that an IPE must be developed and approved before the student exits high school. The IPE should be built upon the IEP and the two must be coordinated in terms of the goals, objectives and services identified in the IEP. Best practice dictates that every DVR case on a student should

include a copy of the IEP, along with progress notes showing evidence of this coordination. If either the IEP or IPE is amended before the student's graduation from high school, then the amended documents should be shared with all parties involved.

Service Delivery

Federal and state statutes and regulations require the LEA to be the lead agency in the provision of educational, vocational, and transition services through high school. However, this does not limit the responsibility of agencies, other than educational agencies, from providing or paying for some or all of the costs associated with the provision of a free appropriate public education. [IDEA, Section 1412(6)] The extent of DVR's financial responsibility for vocational rehabilitation services while a student is still enrolled in high school is determined on an individual basis. Using best practice, the DVR counselor should not consider providing services, other than assessment, and guidance and counseling until the student is in his/her final year of school. The CBWTP is an exception to these guidelines and is discussed later in this document, as well as in the CBWTP manual. DVR is not responsible for any vocational service identified on the student's IEP unless that service has been agreed to by the counselor and the student and/or his/her representative, incorporated into the IPE, and all appropriate signatures have been secured. Provided that a service identified on the IPE supports the services identified on the IEP, and it facilitates the achievement of an established vocational outcome, then the counselor can use his/her judgement to determine DVR's financial commitment. Comparable benefits must be considered, unless exempt in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998.

Services available to students may include any one or combination of the following:

- Assessment
- Assistive technology
- Counseling and guidance
- Interpreter services
- Job placement and job retention
- Maintenance
- Occupational licenses
- Personal assistance
- Physical and mental restoration
- Post-employment
- Referral services
- Rehabilitation engineering
- Self-employment

Services to family members (necessary to assist the student in achieving a vocational outcome)
Supported employment
Tools, equipment, and supplies
Training
Transition Services
Transportation

Assistive Technology

The LEA must ensure that assistive technology services or devices are made available to the student with a disability if they are required for the student to access a free and appropriate public education. [707 KAR 1:280 (4) or (5)] The determination of need is made on an individual basis through the IEP decision-making process. Equipment purchased by the LEA for a specific student can only be used by that student while in school. It then remains the property of the LEA after the student graduates. (34 CFR 361.46 or as required pursuant to Section 504) With this in mind, students with assistive technology needs as identified on the IEP, should be considered for a rehabilitation technology assessment from DVR to determine their need for equipment that supports their intermediate and long-term vocational goals. As a matter of best practice, this assessment should not occur prior to the student's final year in high school.

In rare cases, purchase of equipment from the LEA by DVR may be considered, but only after a rehabilitation technology assessment is completed. At that time appropriateness of the equipment with regard to vocational objectives will be determined, as well as the fair market value of the item. It is important to note that DVR is in no way obligated to purchase equipment from the school. Purchase of equipment from the LEA should only be considered when the purchase of new equipment is not in the best interest of the student and may cause a delay in services or create an undue or unnecessary hardship for the consumer.

The Community Based Work Transition Program

The Community Based Work Transition Program (CBWTP) is a collaborative effort between the DVR and KDE. The program is designed to facilitate the transition of students with significant disabilities from school to work without a gap in support and follow-up services. It is a fee-for-service reimbursement program that allows DVR to authorize and purchase job trainer services for eligible students from local school districts. The goal of the CBWTP is for all participating students to leave high school with paid competitive employment in the most integrated setting that is reflective of student capacities, abilities and interests.

The CBWTP is designed to serve students with significant disabilities, who, traditionally have not been served, or have been under-served by DVR. This population includes, but is not limited to, persons with moderate and severe mental retardation, persons with severe emotional disorders, persons with severe long-term mental illness, and persons with severe multiple disabilities. Students participating in this program must require specialized training, support, and follow-up that only the CBWTP can provide (i.e. systematic, individualized community based vocational evaluation, job placement, on-the-job training, and follow-up services.) The need for this service, rather than a particular diagnosis, forms the basis for participation in the CBWTP. The counselor must document the specific functional limitations that support the need for the CBWTP as opposed to other services from DVR such as CDPRC, vocational school, or college. If there is another program in the school that is more appropriate for the student or if the student plans to attend a post-secondary training program or the military, then the student CANNOT participate in the CBWTP. There are instances when this cannot be determined prior to beginning the evaluation phase of the CBWTP. In the event that the student is determined not to be appropriate for the CBWTP for any reason, then participation in the program should cease and alternate plans developed for the transition of the student.

In order to be considered for the CBWTP students must be within two years of exiting the school system. The ARC is responsible for determining if a student should be referred for services through the CBWTP. Each of these students will have an IEP, which will identify DVR as an interagency linkage and the CBWTP as a needed transition service. The expected outcome is for each student to be provided with coordinated services, which result in the student leaving school with gainful employment in an integrated community setting. The type and extent of work performed should be consistent with student's capacities, abilities and interests. A designated school representative (i.e., Special Education Coordinator, teacher, vocational coordinator, or employment specialist) refers students felt to be appropriate for the program to the DVR Counselor. Eligibility for services provided by DVR and the CBWTP are determined by the DVR Counselor, with input from school personnel and family.

Once it has been determined that the student is eligible for the CBWTP, the counselor will issue an authorization to the LEA, authorizing the school to provide services to the student. The total number of allowable billable hours is 280 hours, divided between evaluation and training. The hours allowed are for services provided by the job trainer to provide assessment, job development, job placement, training, and stabilization of the student on the job.

Ideally, each student will be able to participate in the CBWTP for the full two years. During the junior year, or its equivalent, a community based

vocational evaluation is done in an effort to assist the student in identifying strengths, interests, capacities, skills and abilities. It may or may not take a full school year for the evaluation phase to be completed. After a thorough assessment is done and a written evaluation report is submitted, the counselor should meet with all parties involved, including the student, teachers, job trainer and family members with the intent of establishing a vocational goal and identifying services required to attain that goal. After an IPE is written and agreed to by the student and his/her representative, the student should be placed in training status and job development services begun. Traditionally this does not occur until the student's final school year.

The intent of the program is for the student to be employed, with any necessary supports in place, before the student exits high school. However, not all students will be job placed by this time. The counselor is encouraged to refer the student for additional assistance to CRP's or other services available locally such as PACE. Still other students may require long-term support services through a Supported Employment provider. Any of these services, if necessary, are encouraged and acceptable. Ideally, the service provider will be identified early in the process, made aware of the pending referral and invited to participate in the Transition planning meetings.

The Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute (IHDI) provides technical assistance and training on this program. ***Detailed information regarding the Community Based Work Transition Program can be found in the CBWTP Manual available from IHDI or on their Web Site at www.ihdi@uky.edu.***

Case Closure

Transition cases are subject to the same criteria for closure as all other cases served by the department. A student's case cannot be considered for successful closure until the student has met his/her vocational objectives as outlined in the IPE and worked for a minimum of 90 days beyond the date that they exit high school. This helps to ensure that the student is able to work independently of the school setting and structure and has made an adequate adjustment to the employment setting.