

Attachment 4.8(b)(2)

Coordination with Education Officials

The Transition Program provides services to students with disabilities attending high school. The goal is to help the students achieve a seamless change from high school into the world of work, community, vocational or post-secondary education and/or other planned outcomes. The Agency administers the Transition Program as specified in Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

In providing transition services the Agency maintains a formal Interagency Agreement with the Mississippi Department of Education. This Agreement addresses:

- a. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
- b. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
- c. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- d. procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

District level vocational rehabilitation offices and local education districts also work together in maintaining local agreements between each VR district office and the local school districts as to how to carry out transition services. There are more than 150 of these agreements with various high school districts resulting in over 240 high schools served. These agreements are shared with other state agencies, family members and consumer groups to ensure the seamless transition of services for students. These have no specified financial agreement other than the implied cost for serving students with disabilities.

Restructuring of the Transition Program has resulted in additional counselors handling transition-only cases. This allows for more individualized services to each student in school. Counselors work with the students, parents, school personnel and attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to help identify students that may be able to benefit from transition services. Prior to planning services, the counselor uses school documentation, health records and other pertinent information as deemed appropriate for determination of eligibility for the program. The transition counselor may then work with the student, family members and others as previously described to determine the needs of each student as he/she is preparing for life after high school. This may include coordinating with another program counselor, aside from the Transition Program, that is more appropriate during this transition. The Agency's policy is to provide for the development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before each student determined to be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services leaves the school setting.

The Transition Program plans an annual retreat for high school students with disabilities. AbilityWorks, Inc. sponsors this retreat which targets specific areas of post secondary educational training and exploring work opportunities after high school. The retreat features multiple events for the participants including team building activities, sessions on work preparedness and achieving personal goals.

The Agency continues its commitment to students with disabilities by working with various committees. The Transition Task Force meets to discuss what is needed in Transition Services with support from the Departments of Mental Health, Education and other agencies involved in providing transition services. The IEP Planning Committee works directly with the Department of Education to help ensure that high school students with disabilities are represented by the Agency as they transfer from an Individualized Education Program to an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Transition services include, but are not limited to, job search skills, work evaluation, development of an IPE, basic money management, social skills and job readiness training along with continuous counseling and guidance. These services are performed by the VR transition counselor, collaborations with other service providers or coordinated with the education teaching professional.

The transition counselor also works together with the classroom teacher in implementing a career exploration curriculum. The counselor is prepared to teach this curriculum in conjunction with providing the classroom teacher information, technical assistance and/or curriculum materials as needed. The counselor supervises the student in this program, documents a student's progress and shares information with the classroom teacher on a regular basis.

Outreach is provided in several different ways. VR Counselors work in conjunction with teachers in providing transition services to all students with disabilities. During this time, referrals are made by the schools and eligibility is determined for VR. There is cross-training between VR Counselors, teachers, and parents by a Transition Conference co-sponsored by MDRS and the State Department of Education. At the annual transition retreat information was provided to educate students on services available through VR and the community. The local transition agreements are reviewed annually by the VR counselor and the school district to determine if any changes need to be made.

MDRS continues to emphasize best practices in providing services to students in order to provide a seamless transition to subsequent work or other environments. This in part is achieved by continuous training of staff working with high school students with disabilities.

This attachment was developed after a review of the results of the Statewide Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs. Any pertinent findings from the Statewide Assessment were incorporated into this attachment. Additionally, members of the State Rehabilitation Council were involved in the development of this attachment.