

NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Section:	T
Title:	Transition Services
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Combined: Policy and Procedures

Transition services in the context of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) are those services provided to students with disabilities, as early as age 14, who are eligible for services under the Rehabilitation Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Rehabilitation Act defines transition services 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) (SE) (SES), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional Vocational Evaluation (VE).”

Transition services became a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) when it was revised in 1990. IDEA requires transition planning and services to be included in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) no later than age 16 (and, when appropriate, as early as 14) and to be reviewed on a yearly basis. IDEA **requires schools** to provide transition services for students with disabilities.

As a part of these services, an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) must be developed for each student. This is a written document that outlines what training and support a student will need to live, work, and participate in the community as an adult. This document may be written on a different form than the IEP, but is to be attached to and becomes a part of the IEP. The ITP is completed by the student’s transition team that may include: the student, parents, case manager, vision teacher, rehabilitation counselor, and other educators and consultants as needed. Vocational goals are to be included in the ITP written for students each year.

Title 34, of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 300.344 outlines who should participate in IEP meetings as follows:

“Sec. 300.344 IEP Team.

General. The public agency shall ensure that the IEP team for each child with a disability includes:

- a. The parents of the child;
- b. At least one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment);
- c. At least one special education teacher of the child, or if appropriate, at least one special education provider of the child;
- d. A representative of the public agency who:
 - (1.) Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities;
 - (2.) Is knowledgeable about the general curriculum; and

- (3.) Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency;
- e. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be a member of the team described in paragraphs (a)(2) through (6) of this section;
- f. At the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and
- g. If appropriate, the child.

Transition services participants.

- a. Under paragraph (1)(g) of this section, the public agency shall invite a student with a disability of any age to attend his or her IEP meeting if a purpose of the meeting will be the consideration of:
 - (1.) The student's transition services needs under Sec. 300.347(b)(1);
 - (2.) The needed transition services for the student under Sec. 300.347(b)(2); or
 - (3.) Both.
- b. If the student does not attend, the public agency shall take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.
- c. In implementing the requirements of Sec. 300.347(b) (2), the public agency also shall invite a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services.
 - (1.) If an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not do so, the public agency shall take other steps to obtain the participation of the other agency in the planning of any transition services.

Federal regulations further provide that the school system is required to invite each student to participate in his or her IEP meeting, if a purpose of the meeting is the consideration of transition services for the student. For all students who are 16 years of age or older, one of the purposes of the annual meeting will always be the planning of transition services, since transition services are a required component of the IEP for these students.

For a student younger than age 16, if transition services are initially discussed at a meeting that does not include the student, the public agency is responsible for ensuring that, before a decision about transition services for the student is made, a subsequent IEP meeting is conducted for that purpose, and the student is invited to the meeting.

Finally, federal regulations address agency responsibilities for transition services (34 CFR 300.347):

“If a participating agency fails to provide agreed-upon transition services contained in the IEP of a student with a disability, the public agency responsible for the student's education shall, as soon as possible, initiate a meeting for the purpose of identifying alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives and, if necessary, revising the student's IEP.”

Nothing in this part relieves any participating agency, including a State vocational rehabilitation agency, of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that the agency would otherwise provide to students with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria of that agency.”

Each student served in the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program, once eligibility has been determined and a reasonable vocational goal conceptualized, must have an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), like any other individual served. **The IPE must be developed and approved within 90 days after the student has been found eligible for DSB Vocational Rehabilitation services.** If the Agency is operating under an order of selection, the IPE should be developed and

approved before the eligible student able to be served under the order of selection leaves the school setting.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2014) also adds several required services to be provided to students with disabilities ages 14-21 years of age that may be clients or potential clients of the Agency. These students may be involved in secondary or post-secondary education or post-secondary training programs and they may or may not have completed a DSB Application for VR Services. Any PET service provided to students must be followed up by appropriate documentation of the services delivered and to whom to allow for appropriate tracking. The Pre-Employment Transition Services or PETS provided are very specific and constitute 15% of the Agency's federal funding. A wide variety of these PET services are designed to be an early start at job exploration for Students with Disabilities. These activities are not to be used as assessment services for the purpose of determining whether additional vocational rehabilitation services are needed, or if the individual will be successful in employment.

Examples of the five (5) "required" activities are provided without consideration of economic need and these PETS services may be provided in either a group or individualized setting include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1. General job exploration counseling may be provided in a classroom or community setting and include information regarding in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as non-traditional employment, labor market composition, administration of vocational interest inventories, and identification of career pathways of interest to the students. Job exploration counseling provided on an individual basis might be provided in school or the community and include discussion of the student's vocational interest inventory results, in-demand occupations, career pathways, and local labor market information that applies to those particular interests.**
- 2. Work-based learning experiences in a group setting may include coordinating a school-based program of job training and informational interviews to research employers, work-site tours to learn about necessary job skills, job shadowing, or mentoring opportunities in the community. Work-based learning experiences on an individual basis could include work experiences to explore the student's area of interest through paid and unpaid work experiences, internships, short-term employment, SAVVY-World of Work participation, or on-the-job trainings located in the community. These services are those that would be most beneficial to an individual in the early stages of employment exploration during the transition process from school to post-school activities, including employment. Should a student need more individualized services (e.g., job coaching, orientation and mobility training, travel expenses, uniforms or assistive technology), he or she would need to apply and be determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and develop and have an approved individualized plan for employment.**
- 3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education in a group**

setting may include providing information on course offerings, career options, the types of academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace, and postsecondary opportunities associated with career fields or pathways and/or participation in SAVVY-College Prep. This information may also be provided on an individual basis and may include advising students and parents or representatives on academic curricula, college application and admissions processes, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and resources that may be used to support individual student success in education and training, which could include disability support services.

4. **Workplace readiness training may include programming to develop social skills and independent living, such as communication and interpersonal skills, financial literacy, orientation and mobility skills, job- seeking skills, understanding employer expectations for punctuality and performance, as well as other “soft” skills necessary for employment. These services may include instruction, as well as opportunities to acquire and apply knowledge. These services may be provided in a generalized manner in a classroom setting such as during a PETS mini-center or SAVVY-YIT participation and/or be tailored to an individual’s needs in a training program provided in an educational or community setting.**
5. **Instruction in self-advocacy in a group setting may include generalized classroom lessons in which students learn about their rights, responsibilities, and how to request accommodations or services and supports needed during the transition from secondary to postsecondary education and employment. During these lessons, students may share their thoughts, concerns, and needs, in order to prepare them for peer mentoring opportunities with individuals working in their area(s) of interest. Further individual opportunities may be arranged for students to conduct informational interviews or mentor with educational staff such as principals, nurses, teachers, or office staff; or they may mentor with individuals employed by or volunteering for employers, boards, associations, or organizations in integrated community settings. Students may also participate in youth leadership activities offered in educational or community settings.**

Any student requiring extensive individualized supports to be involved in PETS services may be required to be a DSB VR client. Such cases will be staffed with a supervisor.

Programs

DSB-VR is the vehicle through which transition rehabilitation services are provided to eligible students who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina. In several locations, formal cooperative agreements exist with local school boards to provide these services through specialized Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Employment Specialists. In other areas, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who normally serve that particular geographic area address the needs of the school-aged population.

The goal of these third-party programs is to assist blind and visually impaired students through the provisions of a variety of VR services to enter competitive employment following completion of their

education. These programs emphasize special transition activities to facilitate movement from school into further training or employment.

Services

Each of the Transition Programs have a somewhat unique approach to providing services because of differences within school districts, resources available, and needs of the students. Although the approach may vary, the focus within these programs is consistent and that is to provide pre-employment transition services, VR services and related activities, and opportunities which promote the development of self-awareness as well as workplace and independent living competencies that are necessary for a visually impaired student to become a successfully employed adult.

These compensatory skills include: Braille reading and writing skills, efficient use of Low Vision aids, orientation and mobility skills, use of Adaptive Equipment/Devices, technology, job-seeking skills, social skills, and independent living skills. (On-Line DSB-2007 [Evaluation with Video Magnification \(CCTV\)](#) with [instructions](#))

Other areas where specific transition supports and services are provided include:

- Work experiences and refinement of work-related skills;
- Access to information from adults in chosen fields;
- Further focusing and refining of interests and experiences to career goals;
- Preparation for post-secondary education and training;
- Participation in meaningful, career-related post-secondary training;
- Networking for post-graduation support;
- Life and career planning; and
- Work, work, and work!

Student Mini-Centers

Student Mini-Centers, akin to Independent Living Rehabilitation Mini Centers, are held to assist students in developing their pre-employment transition skills and other skills as listed that are necessary to become a successfully employed adult. These services are provided in small groups, large groups, one-on-one or in a combination of methods. The more traditional student mini-center involves a variety of DSB specialists (VR, O&M, NEC, DB, ATC, CES, etc.) to make sure that every area is addressed with the students, involves some aspect of at least 4 out of 5 of the Pre-Employment Transition Services and includes independent living rehabilitation skills teaching and community involvement. A targeted student mini-center has more of a singular or dual focus involving at least one of the Pre-Employment Transition Services and allowing the students to focus on a particular area of need.

There may be students involved in the Student Mini-Center that are not PETS students, but are contributing as mentors or are learning alongside the PETS students. Any costs incurred for these students alone is monitored separately for accuracy of reporting. All Student Mini-Centers and the costs involved must be monitored and approved by the Area Supervisor prior to execution.

One Note of Caution: Senate Report No. 102-357 further clarifies the provision of transition services by State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies. The overall purpose of this provision is to ensure that all

students who require VR services receive those services in a timely manner. There should be no gap in services between the education system and VR system--these provisions with the VR federal regulations are not intended in any way to shift the responsibility of service delivery from education to rehabilitation during the transition years. School officials continue to be responsible for providing a free and appropriate education. The role of the VR system is primarily one of planning for the student's years after leaving school.

The local school system should provide to all students those services that are its legal and traditional responsibility without cost to the Agency. The cooperative Vocational Rehabilitation program should be utilized to provide services that represent new services or new patterns of services when compared to existing services available from the local school system. Transition services provided under VR plans must not be services normally provided by the local school entity and to which individuals who are disabled would be entitled if they were not applicants or individuals of the state agency.