



Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

Education



Transition



Employment



A Guide to Transition Services: Helping Students with Disabilities Move from School to Work

800. 282. 4536
www.ood.ohio.gov

A Guide to Transition Services

Partnering with students with disabilities as they move from school to work

What is OOD?

The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency (OOD) is the state agency that partners with Ohioans with disabilities to achieve quality employment, independence and Social Security disability determination outcomes through its Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) and Division of Disability Determination. The agency is addressing the transition of students with disabilities in several ways:

- BVR and BSVI vocational rehabilitation counselors work with transition students.
- Two contract programs, Vocational Rehabilitation Public & Private Partnerships (VRP3), formerly known as Pathways, and the Bridges to Transition Program, work with transition youth.
- OOD collaborates with other state agencies and community partners to provide transition services.

Throughout this document, all agency programs that provide transition services will be referred to as vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

What are Transition Services?

Transition services are a coordinated set of outcome-oriented activities for a student that promotes the shift (or transition) from school to work or post-school activities.

The coordinated set of activities is based on a student's needs, preferences and abilities. They may include the following:

- Instruction and related services
- Community experiences
- Development of employment
- Post-school adult living objectives
- Daily living skills instruction
- Functional vocational evaluation

The outcome or goal that OOD transition students strive for is employment or post-school activities, which may include:

- Post-secondary education
- Vocational training
- Integrated and/or supported employment
- Continuing and adult education
- Adult services
- Independent living services
- Community participation
- Job placement
- Job coaching

OOD's Role and Responsibilities in Transition Services

OOD provides VR services to eligible students to assist young people in reaching the employment goals identified in their approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE drives the services that OOD provides to transition youth.

Similarly, public school districts develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for transition youth. The IPE and IEP should be coordinated in terms of goals, objectives and services.

Measurable post-secondary goals in a student's IEP, Section 5, are intended to provide a starting place for development of the IPE. In developing the IPE, the student and VR counselor must establish an appropriate work goal. (See the section on Individual Plan for Employment for more detail.)

When appropriate and feasible, a VR counselor will participate in a student's IEP or 504 planning meetings for transition services. The counselor may participate in the planning meetings as transition planning begins.

The VR counselor may also participate in transition related activities such as serving as a member of the regional transition council, participating in transition fairs and serving as a liaison between OOD and the local school district.

Referring Students to OOD

Any student with a disability may be referred for VR services. A referral may be initiated by the local school district, a family member, other educational or community resource or by the student. When a referral is made, the referral source may ask for information about the options available for transition students. Referred students may be participants in special education, vocational, career-technical or regular education programs. Homeschooled students and students in community school programs may also be referred for OOD transition services.

Some VR offices have counselors designated to work with transition students. A map of OOD offices is included in this document (See OOD Offices on page 13). Contact an area office to locate the OOD field office near you, or visit www.ood.ohio.gov.

When to Make a Referral to OOD

The time to refer a secondary student for VR services is when the school district has begun to identify transition or other post-secondary services on the IEP that target an employment outcome for a student with a disability.

VR services are provided to school age young people (14-22 years old, regardless of school enrollment) who have a disability that impacts work.

Information to Include When Making a Referral

OOD needs documentation of a student's disability to establish eligibility for VR services and develop the IPE. The school must obtain written parental consent before releasing a student's information to OOD. The following is a list of items that should be included with the referral, if available:

- Medical, psychological and any specialty evaluations such as vocational and mobility evaluations (Please provide evidence of the diagnosis and functional limitations.)

- Most recent IEP
 - Most recent Evaluation Team Report (ETR)
 - The Summary of Performance
 - Results of age-appropriate transition assessments
 - 504 Education Plan
 - Individualized Academic Career Plan
 - School transcripts
 - Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) results
 - Department of Developmental Disabilities children/adult eligibility determination instrument - either the Children's Ohio Eligibility Determination Instrument (COEDI) or, for adults, the Ohio Eligibility Determination Instrument (OEDI)
 - A copy of the SSI/SSDI award letter or verification status
 - Other assessments as deemed appropriate
- Other helpful things to do or remember when making a referral:
- Make the student's parents or legal guardian aware that you are referring their son or daughter to VR.
 - If the transition student is less than 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian must sign all necessary forms. If a student is over age 18 and wants parental involvement, the student must sign forms allowing the parent to obtain that information.

The Initial Interview

Following a referral, a VR counselor will contact the student and his or her family to schedule an initial interview. During the interview, they should be prepared, as much as possible, to discuss the student's disability and how it affects his or her ability to work. VR counselors are prepared to assist students who may not have had work experience or who may not have thought about how their disability affects work.

They also should be prepared to provide the following information to OOD during the meeting:

- A medical history related to the student's disability, including names and addresses of doctors and specialists, hospital admissions, names of medications and previous treatment experiences
- An educational history
- Student's current school schedule
- Expected graduation date
- Job history, including volunteer and unpaid work experience, if applicable

Determining Eligibility

VR services are based on eligibility and a student must be determined eligible by an OOD counselor. The counselor must determine (1) that the student has a disability and (2) that the disability creates a substantial impediment to his or her ability to prepare for, get or keep a job. The student must also demonstrate a need for VR services in order to pursue or retain employment.

Only an OOD counselor may determine whether a student is eligible for services. Counselors have training and experience interpreting disability documentation and making eligibility decisions. Existing records, staff observations and a student's self-evaluations will assist the counselor in making a determination.

Order of Selection

When a state VR program, such as OOD, does not have adequate resources to serve all eligible individuals in the state, the Code of Federal Regulations requires that an Order of Selection is implemented. The Order of Selection establishes parameters for selecting the order in which consumers are served and requires that consumers with the most significant disabilities are served first.

These regulations also indicate that the order in which consumers are served may not be based on duration of residency, type of disability, age, gender, race, color or national origin, source of referral, type of expected employment outcome, the need for specific services or the income level of the consumer or their family. Order of Selection must be implemented on a statewide basis. Ohio is currently operating under an Order of Selection. Counselors or vocational coordinators can explain what that may mean for specific cases.

Consumer Contribution

A student and his or her family are expected to pay for services to the extent possible. If a financial contribution is not made by the student or family, the counselor must provide an explanation in the student's case record; however, eligibility for services is not dependent on a consumer's ability or willingness to pay.

Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)

After eligibility is determined, the student will work with a counselor to define an employment goal and develop an IPE. The IPE is designed to match a student's unique vocational strengths, abilities and interests. The IPE and related IEP should be aligned to ensure a unified plan of employment and unified transition services.

College Attendance

For some transition age students, obtaining a college degree is a necessary step towards reaching the employment goal. OOD has a Post-secondary Training Rule that guides how it funds a transition student's post-secondary education and guides a student's choice of where to attend college. OOD's post-secondary program is a financial need-based program and each individual student receives an individualized level of funding. No student is guaranteed funding for post-secondary training by OOD.

There are four major criteria to OOD's post-secondary program:

- OOD is the "last payer" for post-secondary expenses. Students must apply any obtained federal and state grants, appropriate scholarships and their expected family contribution (EFC) to their college expenses before OOD determines its level of contribution.

- All OOD consumers requesting agency financial assistance for post-secondary training are required to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and provide the counselor a copy of the resulting student aid report (SAR), which will include the EFC.
- OOD will fund an eligible student at the least cost level. In a student's first two years of schooling, the least cost level is generally considered to be the cost at the local community college.
- OOD has a "time to degree" stipulation that requires consumers to complete one academic year of college classes within 18 calendar year months.

Becoming Independent on the Job

The goal of VR transition services is to help students obtain and keep competitive employment in an integrated setting. VR services are time limited; meaning there will be a time when a case must be closed; however, the aim of VR is to work with transition youth until they are successful. A student's case is generally considered successful when VR services on the IPE have contributed to the student's employment and the student has been working successfully for at least 90 days. The employment must be in an integrated setting and the student must be earning at least minimum wage. Transition students may be supported by VR services for longer than 90 days of successful employment if additional supportive services are needed.

What OOD Can Provide School Districts

If the local school district initiates the referral of the student, and if the student signs a release, OOD will provide a copy of the student's IPE, the plan's annual review and a copy of the IPE closure statement. These documents may be given to an office of regular education, an office of vocational or technical education or an office of special education.

How Can School Personnel Help?

Helping students prepare for competitive employment requires a systematic approach to career development. To prepare students for employment and OOD involvement, school personnel can do the following:

- Create work-based learning opportunities such as job shadowing, mentoring and work experiences with the student.
- Utilize assessments to effectively assist students prepare for employment.
- Make academics relevant to the world of work by noting employment applications for reading, writing, computing, thinking, etc.
- Invite OOD representatives to speak to staff, students and parents regarding OOD services.
- Discuss with students how they might benefit from OOD assistance.
- Discuss a student's strengths and needs with an OOD counselor.
- Help students understand their disability and how to request accommodations in higher education and employment settings.
- Align accommodations provided in school with those the student may realistically receive in post-secondary education and employment settings.

Transition Planning - A Guide for Parents

By the time your child enters high school, she/he should be planning ahead for his/her adult life. When students plan ahead, they are usually more successful in completing high school, finding employment or attending college. This section is about things you can do as a parent to help with your child's transition plan.

Why should we begin career planning in high school when there are so many other things to do to just make sure our son or daughter gets the high school services needed? Isn't this really the responsibility of someone else?

- Students need to make the right choices and plan accordingly so they are successful in making the transition to adulthood. If your child waits until her/his senior year in high school to begin career planning, it may be too late to arrange for all of the services that may be needed to help her/him reach the desired goal.
- After high school, transition youth will have to advocate for themselves in either the workforce or a postsecondary education setting. While you may still be an advocate for your child after high school, your son or daughter cannot solely rely on you to achieve her or his goals.
- There is no one adult agency that coordinates all services a person with a disability needs. Each agency has its own eligibility criteria, application procedures, and service delivery systems. It takes time to obtain and coordinate services between agencies. It is important to be knowledgeable of the eligibility requirements of different agencies, as although agencies work together in the provision of transition services, agencies are still separate organizations with their own eligibility requirements and timeframes for qualifying for services.

What can families do to assist their son or daughter in transition planning?

- Offer assistance to the IEP team. – You know best your youth's abilities and where she/he needs assistance. You see her/him at home, in a different environment from school. Help the IEP team by contributing information they may miss.
- Help your daughter or son identify her/his strengths and needs. – Sometimes transition youth may not be naturally adept at describing what they do well and in discussing where they need assistance. You may be able to help them discover how to identify what they do well and where they need some help. Remember to convey these discoveries to the IEP team so they may know what has been explored and discovered.
- Talk to your child about the future. – Sometimes children may not think about their future plans because no one has ever asked them about what they realistically want to do after high school. By talking to your transition youth about the future – career and their personal life – it helps them understand what is needed to reach their goals. Help your child explore and decide what she/he wants to do for work and what type of life she/he wants after high school.

- Help your child develop self-advocacy skills. – Once your child leaves high school, she/he will be expected to take charge of the planning. Whether your child goes to college or immediately starts working after high school, she/he will have to be able to communicate her/his needs and request reasonable accommodations. Continued parental involvement in these settings is important but should develop into more of a supportive role as your child becomes more independent. It is best to start helping your child develop self-advocacy skills while still in school. Parents should be supportive, but it is your child who will ultimately be making decisions about what career to pursue.
- Involve your transition youth with the same career exploration options as other students. – Encourage them to attend job fairs, college fairs, do informational interviewing, pursue internships and participate in job shadowing activities.
- Be flexible about the employment plan. – As your child goes through the transition process and participates in information gathering about careers and participates in various job experiences, there may be changes in plans as new options become available. Continue to be supportive and understand that career decision making is a long-term process.

Working with OOD

VR Counselors from the agency can assist a transition youth in a variety of ways. Below are some ways VR counselors may work with your student.

- Work with your child's special education staff by attending IEP meetings.
- Help your child plan for a career.
- Identify college and vocational training choices.
- Arrange for paid work experiences and on-the-job training.
- Work with employers or colleges to ensure reasonable accommodations, assistive technology and other supports are received.
- Assist your child in finding a job that matches your child's preferences, interests, skills and needs.

Transition Planning: A Guide for Students

What is transition?

Transition is a term that means the bridge between high school and what you will be doing in your adult life. Transition is the process by which you prepare for that adult life. It could include getting the skills needed to work at a job or prepare for a career or it could mean taking the necessary classes in high school that prepare you to go to college.

Why is it Important to Plan?

It is important to establish goals so the services you need to reach those goals can be identified. Sometimes it takes a lot of time to master the skills you need to be successful in independent living, employment and postsecondary education. Therefore, the earlier you start planning for what you want to do, it will be more likely that you will achieve your goals. You should start thinking about what types of jobs you might want or what type of career you might want, early in your high school years. If you think you want to go to college, you need to map a plan of what types of classes to take during each year in high school, early in your high school career. Do not just assume things will fall into place and that you will be successful. Success requires planning!

What is Your Role in the Transition Process?

Do not leave all of the planning up to your parents, teachers or other adults in your life. You need to be actively involved in the things that are part of getting you to your goals.

How can you do that while you are in high school?

- Take part in developing your IEP program.
- Clarify your goals. – Talk with others who know you. Where can they see you working, living? What do they think are your strengths, where do you need help? Think about doing things such as informational interviews to meet people who work at jobs that are similar to what you might want to do. While you are still in high school consider working in jobs that might be available at your school so you may get some work experience. If that is not possible, consider volunteer work as that can help you learn about skills needed for jobs.
- Develop your self-advocacy skills. – Be able to explain your disability to others. What is it? How does it affect you in school, on the job, at home? What are your strengths? Where do you need help? What accommodations do you need to be successful?

Get an Understanding of the World of Work

Many times students with disabilities try to enter the workforce without really understanding what employers expect of them. When this happens, students will sometimes have a bad experience and not be successful. Below are some things you can do as a current student, to prepare yourself for the world of work.

- Find out what employers are looking for. – This does not just mean specific job skills. It means things such as showing up on time, your appearance, taking initiative and being respectful to your boss.

- Do not forget to develop your “soft skills.” –This means things such as what are appropriate behaviors in the workplace. How much do you talk to fellow workers, what is appropriate to talk about, how do people dress, is it a formal or informal atmosphere?
- Contact your local vocational rehabilitation (VR) office.
- Participate in career exploration/career preparation classes.
- Practice the skills needed for your future work while you are in high school. Below are the major skills employers seek and how you might develop these skills while in high school.
 1. Communication Skills – Written and Verbal. Do you have opportunities to write papers and make presentations in your classes? Do not shy away from accepting those types of assignments. Employers hire people who are able to write well and who are able to verbally communicate with co-workers.
 2. Teamwork Skills – Are there opportunities for you to work on classroom projects with classmates? Sometimes students do not like group work but do not always choose to work on your own. Instead seek out assignments that require you to work as part of a team or become part of a school club and work as part of a group on a special project. By developing the ability to work as part of a team you will become attractive to employers.
 3. Organizational Skills – Do you have a system for keeping track of when assignments are due and when you have meetings and appointments? Start now in high school to develop a system of how you will keep track of these things. Always hand in assignments on time and develop a reputation of being an organized person. Employers look to hire persons who can show they can plan, organize and prioritize work.
 4. Computer Skills – Almost all jobs require some understanding of computer hardware and software, especially word processing, e-mail and spreadsheets. If you need assistive technology to accomplish computer tasks, become proficient in what types of assistive technology you need while you are still in high school.

Working with VR

After you have become eligible for VR transition services, there are some things you can initiate with your counselor to make sure you have a good transition experience.

- Make sure your VR counselor is invited to attend your IEP meetings.
- Work with your counselor in establishing goals and in finding out what types of jobs are the best fit for you. Talk with your VR counselor about what types of jobs are available in your local area. Your VR counselor has labor market information about jobs in general and about jobs in your area. This type of information can assist you in making a decision on what type of career to pursue.

- Establish an individual plan for employment (IPE) and coordinate it with your IEP and with any plans you may have with other agencies.
- Review your IPE annually.

Do you want to go to college?

- Discuss your plans for college with your VR counselor.
- Work with your high school guidance counselor.
- Take college prep classes, such as advanced levels of English, math and science. Take foreign language classes. Do not avoid college prep classes.
- Visit colleges and learn about different types of schools. Think about what kind of school would be the best fit for you.
- Visit or contact a college disabilities services office where you may want to attend.
- Plan ahead! Do not just think about college in your senior year of high school. If you seriously want to attend college, start your planning in your sophomore year of high school.

What Services Can I Receive from VR?

- Vocational guidance – from your VR Counselor which will help you decide what types of jobs make sense for you given your interests and abilities. If you are unsure of what you may want to do for work or are thinking of several options, your VR Counselor may arrange for vocational assessments that will reveal how your interests and skills may match with specific jobs. Your counselor may arrange for job tryouts so you can gain an understanding of what is done on a daily basis in a job in which you have interest. Also, your VR Counselor has labor market information that lets you learn things such as future growth opportunities and salaries for specific jobs.
- Transition services – that will help you make the adjustment from school to work.
- Establishing your IPE – which helps you map your way to achieving your vocational goal. The IPE includes the steps and services you will need to reach your goal, how long each step should take, costs of the services you will need, whose responsibility it is to pay for which services, and your responsibilities in reaching your goals.
- Career development skills – which may include skills training, resume preparation and interviewing skills.
- Post-employment services – which may be short-term services that will help you maintain employment.

General Tips for Transition Youth:

- Always ask questions! If you don't know the answer to something or do not understand something about your transition plan, ask the adults around you to explain things until you do understand. Do not just let others take all of the responsibility for your transition plan.

- Communicate regularly with your VR counselor. Your counselor is there to help you but she/he also needs your help in understanding what you want to do after high school. The more you communicate with your counselor, the more they will come to know and understand you.
- Learn and practice self-advocacy skills. When you start working or start college, you will be responsible for making sure your needs are met. The expectation will be that your parents no longer speak and do for you. Start practicing how you will handle things yourself while you are still in high school so that you will be ready to assume responsibilities when you graduate.
- Be organized. Establish a system for keeping track of appointments, assignments, contacts so that when you start working or going to college, you will know when meetings are held, when assignments are due, etc.
- Make sure all the members of your transition team are involved and communicating with each other. Usually you will have more than one person you work with when you are planning on moving from high school to adult life. Try to make sure your team members know each other and have each other's contact information.

OOD Offices



OOD has counselors located statewide. To have a counselor assigned to you, contact one of the offices listed below or visit OOD's Web site at www.ood.ohio.gov.

Cincinnati

513. 852. 3260 voice/TTY
513. 651. 3309 fax
800. 686. 3323 toll-free

Columbus

614. 466. 4575 voice
614. 466. 9846 TTY
800. 430. 6940 toll-free

Cleveland

216. 227. 3250 voice
216. 227. 3292 TTY
216. 227. 3293 fax
866. 325. 0026 toll-free

Toledo

419. 866. 5811 voice/TTY
419. 866. 6526 fax
800. 589. 5811 toll-free



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