DRS Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services
Vocational Rehabilitation Program
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The DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services provides transition services to about 11,000 students with disabilities each year.

This presentation will highlight the concept of pre-employment transition services and how work-based learning experiences provided in partnership with local schools contribute to the post high school success of many students.
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Presentation Overview Part 2

• The presenters will also describe the Fast Track Transition program which targets students as young as age 14.

• Information will also be provided on the contractual relationship between DRS and local schools.
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Who We Are

• The Division of Rehabilitation Services is part of the Illinois Department of Human Services

• We are the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency and are part of the state workforce system

• Our mission is to help people with disabilities become employed and to prepare students with disabilities for life after high school
Definitions

• Transition services are any combination of VR services that enables a youth with a disability to pursue post-secondary education or enter employment

• Pre-employment transition services (PTS) are provided to students with disabilities to improve their chances to enter employment or post-secondary education upon leaving school
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Distinctions

- Transition age youth means any person with a disability younger than age 25
- Student with a disability means a youth with a disability that is enrolled in school, at least 14 years of age and not older than 21
- So all students with disabilities are youth with disabilities, but not vice versa
Another Distinction

• A potentially eligible individual is a student with a disability that has not been found eligible for the VR program but can benefit from receiving pre-employment transition services

• All potentially eligible individuals are students with disabilities, but not vice versa

• The three categories of youth and students are shown in the next slide:
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Concentric Definitions

Youth with Disabilities

Students with Disabilities

Potentially Eligible Students
For the most part we will not be discussing the outer circle, i.e., youth with disabilities that are not students with a disability

Many youth with disabilities served by DRS are university or community college students

Others are pursuing employment with VR support

The primary focus will be on the two inner circles of the diagram
The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) established pre-employment transition services (PTS) as a key component of the VR program.

Each state is required to spend at least 15% of its VR grant on PTS.

PTS services may only be provided to students with disabilities.
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What is “Pre-Employment”?

- PTS are explicitly pre-employment in that the goal of PTS is not to help the student obtain a job.
- The goal of PTS is to prepare students for the future.
- For example, a work-based learning experience is designed to help the student learn work skills and gain work experience, not to result in the student obtaining a specific job.
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Five Required PTS Services

- Job exploration counseling
- Counseling on post-secondary education
- Workplace readiness training including independent living skills and social skills
- Instruction in self-advocacy including peer mentoring
- Work based learning experiences
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Job Exploration Counseling

- Providing information regarding in-demand industry sectors and occupations
- Labor market information and composition
- Identification of career pathways of interest to the students
- Administration of vocational interest inventories
- Training in the use of online resources for job exploration
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Counseling on Post-Secondary Education

• Course offerings and career options
• Types of academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace
• Postsecondary opportunities associated with career fields or pathways.
• Completing college applications and FAFSA
• Utilizing college disability support services
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Workplace Readiness Training

• Independent living, social skills, communication and interpersonal skills
• Financial literacy
• Orientation and mobility skills
• Job-seeking skills
• Understanding employer expectations for punctuality and performance
• Other “soft skills” related to employment
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Instruction in Self Advocacy

- Peer mentoring
- Learning about rights and responsibilities
- Training on how to request accommodations
- Identifying needed transition services and supports
- Presentations from adult role models
- Individual mentoring sessions
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Work Based Learning Experiences

- WBLE includes a wide variety of options for students with disabilities, such as:
  - School-based programs of job training
  - Informational interviews to research employers
  - Worksite tours to learn about necessary job skills
  - Job shadowing or mentoring opportunities in the community
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More Work Based Learning Experiences

• Paid and unpaid internships,
• Apprenticeships
• Short-term employment
• Fellowships
• On-the-job training in a community setting
• Any other activity where the student has a learning experience related to work
## DRS Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

### School versus Community PTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PTS Service</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Exploration Counseling</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Less Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling on Post-Secondary Education</td>
<td>Often</td>
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<td>Work-Based Learning Experiences</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The DRS Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) has provided work based learning experiences to students with disabilities for many years. STEP emphasizes paid employment in the community as the culmination of a range of work experiences and job readiness activities. STEP is not designed to result in a VR case closure and STEP employment is still “pre-employment” in the sense of WIOA.
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STEP Structure

• Based on a contractual agreement with each school
• STEP Program Manual describes in detail the role of the school and DRS
• Guidance and quality control provided by contract project officers (a.k.a. “transition advisors”)
• Ongoing contact between DRS VR counselors and school personnel
• VR counselors actively involved in transition planning for students
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STEP Financial Picture

- DRS has 147 STEP contracts with school districts and cooperatives as well as some private schools
- Total of 922 schools participating
- Total contract value is $10.7 million
- DRS also provides support for school staff in some areas at an additional $2.2 million
- Contracts range from very small rural school districts to Chicago Public Schools
• 127 out of 147 STEP contracts are third-party cooperative agreements (3rd Party Performance)
• These account for 97 percent of STEP spending
• 30 percent of contract amount is “non-performance” and is spent on pre-employment transition services other than paid community work experiences
• 70 percent of contract amount is tied to hours of work performed by students in “employer-paid community work experiences”
STEP Contract Outcomes

- STEP 3rd Party Performance contracts are based on a “STEP Outcome” or “contract outcome”, not to be confused with a VR employment outcome.
- To earn a contract outcome, a student must work at least 60 days and 240 hours during the school year in a job that meets the requirements of competitive integrated employment and where wages are paid by the employer (i.e., unsubsidized).
- Outcome payment is $3,936 in urban areas and $3,097 elsewhere.
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Hierarchy of WBLE in STEP

- On Campus Work
- Community Training (OJE/OJT)
- Employer Paid Work (Integrated Setting at Least Minimum Wage)
Post High School Outcomes for Transition Students in Illinois

STEP Statistics

- Students are referred by their high school
- Students are certified eligible and have an IPE
- Students move in and out of STEP during the year
- 6,352 students exited STEP in FY2019
- High point 11,126 in April
- Low point 9,426 in August
- End of school year count = 10,461
Typical student is 17 years old when starting STEP and stays in the program about 17 months

About 38 percent are female

About 44 percent are minority

About 56 percent live in the Chicago metro area

About 24 percent receive SSI or SSDI

About 42 percent are engaged in a work experience, and 52 percent of those are employer paid work
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Types of Work in STEP

Distribution of Work Types in STEP

- Employer Paid
- Community OJT
- On Campus
## Post High School Outcomes for Transition Students in Illinois

### STEP Example Arlington Heights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>STEP Students</th>
<th>Number Working</th>
<th>Percent Working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Many STEP students go on to college: 31 percent of current VR university cases and 48 percent of current VR community college cases were former STEP students

• Former STEP students accounted for 5,678 successful employment outcomes in fiscal years 2017-2019, or 37 percent of all successful VR outcomes

• Successful closures earned an average of $10,865 one year after leaving high school and $13,326 after two years, working about 24 hours per week
### Post High School Outcomes for Transition Students in Illinois

**STEP Example Arlington Heights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>STEP Graduates</th>
<th>Working at Graduation</th>
<th>VR Job Services</th>
<th>College Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP has been a successful work experience program for more than 40 years.

It is well integrated into many local school systems across the state.

While STEP benefits many students with disabilities, there is a need to expand PTS options and reach out to students not served by STEP.
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**Fast Track Transition**

- DRS developed the Fast Track Transition program in 2018 to provide another method of delivering pre-employment transition services to students.
- As the name indicates, the goal is to begin providing services to students more quickly with less time taken up with case documentation and eligibility procedures.
- Students served in Fast Track are classified as “potentially eligible individuals” under WIOA.
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Faster and Friendlier?

- Students in Fast Track are not certified as eligible for the VR program
- No formal service plan (IPE) is developed
- Traditional timelines (30, 60, 90 days) do not apply
- The idea is to verify the individual’s status as a student with a disability and provide PTS services as quickly as possible
- Parent approval is required for participation
Why Fast Track?

- The U.S. Dept. of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration requires states to serve potentially eligible individuals.
- DRS has adapted its existing service model to reach out to this population.
- Fast Track enables DRS to reach individuals aged 14 and 15 that typically are not included in high school STEP programs.
Please Remember

• Both STEP and Fast Track provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities
• While there are distinctions between the programs they are quite similar in terms of focus
• STEP and Fast Track differ in terms of the type of provider and the formality of the service structure
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Methods of Providing PTS

Pre-Employment Transition Services

- Schools and Co-ops
- STEP

- Community Agencies
- Fast Track
Features of STEP

• STEP is provided by schools and co-ops
• STEP students are eligible VR customers
• There is a formal service plan (IPE)
• STEP includes classroom training for PTS
• STEP emphasizes employment outside the school, particularly employer-paid competitive work
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STEP Details

STEP

VR Eligible

Formal Service Plan (IPE)

Community Work

Classroom Training
Features of Fast Track

- Fast Track is provided by community agencies, including centers for independent living
- Fast Track students are not VR eligible
- There is no formal service plan
- Fast Track has a stronger emphasis on classroom training
- Fast Track does not emphasize employment outside the school
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Fast Track Details

Fast Track

- Not VR Eligible
- Limited Work Options
- No Formal Service Plan
- Classroom Training
STEP and Fast Track Are Distinct Programs

- STEP and Fast Track are separate programs
- A student cannot be served in both
- A Fast Track student can become a STEP student, but not vice versa
- STEP students can receive VR services other than PTS services
- Fast Track students can receive only PTS services
- Fast Track is not a replacement for STEP
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Additional Fast Track Details

• Fast Track vendors can serve only potentially eligible individuals
• Fast Track vendors cannot serve students participating in STEP
• Fast Track vendors can provide only the PTS services identified in their contract
• Students participating in Fast Track services can choose to apply for VR services at any time
Final Notes on Fast Track

- Fast Track is a new program since 7/1/18
- Fast Track is a small program- on 7/1/19 there were a total of 647 students enrolled
- DRS believes that program is working effectively and ready to expand across the state
- The emphasis going forward will be on serving students aged 14 and 15 who will benefit from early participation in PTS
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Questions?