



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES**

August 31, 2020

Dear Vocational Rehabilitation and Special Education Partners:

June 2, 2020, marked the 100th anniversary (VR100) of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) kicked it off with a showcase of how the VR program has helped change the lives of students and adults with disabilities. To continue the VR100 celebration, OSERS is highlighting partnerships where coordination and collaboration are crucial for individuals with disabilities, particularly students and youth with disabilities, to achieve high quality employment outcomes.

During the month of August, we have focused on the partnerships between State VR agencies, local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools, particularly on the provision of quality pre-employment transition and transition services for students with disabilities. Delivery of these services, through the collaboration of State VR agencies, LEAs and schools, provides students with disabilities access to the opportunities needed for postsecondary education, training, and/or employment success.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Rehabilitation Act), make clear that transition services require a coordinated set of activities within an outcome-oriented process that relies upon active student involvement, family engagement, and cooperative implementation of transition activities, as well as coordination and collaboration between the VR agency, the State educational agency (SEA), the LEA, and the school. In addition to the IDEA's and the Rehabilitation Act's requirements for the provision of coordinated transition services to students and youth with disabilities, the Rehabilitation Act also requires State VR agencies to collaborate with LEAs to provide, or arrange for the provision of, pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. The partnership between the VR agency, LEA, and SEA is most important during the planning process for each student but should also include outreach efforts and the coordinated provision of services to students and youth with disabilities.

We want to emphasize that coordination and collaboration between VR agencies and schools is to the benefit of every student with a disability. An active partnership among SEAs, LEAs, schools, and VR agencies is beneficial for every student with a disability as well as their families. VR agencies and schools should be coordinating outreach efforts and the provision of services for all students with disabilities, as early as possible during the transition planning process, including those students receiving pre-employment transition services under the VR program, special education and related services under IDEA, and accommodations through

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparedness for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

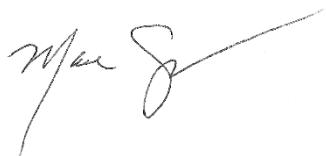
Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Successful collaborations are the result of positive relationships built through activities such as timely referrals, participation in transition and pre-employment transition services planning, IEP meetings, back-to-school nights, and information sessions. The [Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities](#), recently released by OSERS, can provide a better understanding of how these partnerships can facilitate improved outcomes for students and youth with disabilities.

Recognizing that COVID-19 has resulted in students accessing educational services differently than in the past, whether it be virtually, in-person, or a hybrid approach, the importance of the provision of transition and pre-employment transition services has not changed. OSERS encourages SEAs, LEAs, schools, and VR agencies to use the flexibility afforded under the IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act to engage in innovative strategies, involving students and youth with disabilities and their families in the transition and pre-employment transition processes as early as possible.

This is a partnership built on the common goals and values of the IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act to enable students and youth with disabilities to seamlessly access services and supports to achieve their career goals. In so doing, SEAs, LEAs, schools, and VR agencies perform an important and invaluable role. They help ensure that students with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities and those potentially eligible for VR services, are presented with meaningful opportunities to prepare for the transition from school to a VR program in order to further maximize independence in their communities, self-sufficiency, and prepare for competitive integrated employment.

Thank you for your support and continued partnership in this work.

Sincerely,



Mark Schultz
Commissioner,
Rehabilitation Services Administration.
Delegated the authority to perform
the functions and duties of the
Assistant Secretary for Special Education
and Rehabilitative Services.



Laurie VanderPloeg
Director,
Office of Special Education Programs