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Transition for Youth with Disabilities:

A Look at State Programs, Progress, and Promising Practices

THE CENTER FOR WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES'
TASK FORCE ON YOUTH IN TRANSITION

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Background

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), founded in 1930, is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization of state and local human service agencies and individuals who work in or are interested in public human service programs. APHSA's mission is to develop and promote policies and practices that improve the health and well-being of families, children, and adults. It also educates Congress, the media, and the general public on social policies and practices and help state and local public human service agencies achieve their desired outcomes in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, child care, child support, Medicaid, food stamps, child welfare, and other program areas and issues that affect families, the elderly, and people who are economically disadvantaged.

The Center for Workers with Disabilities, a special project of the National Association of State Medicaid Directors (NASMD), is a technical assistance center for states developing or enhancing employment supports for persons with disabilities. It also serves a resource for state officials on all disability policy. Currently, the center provides direct technical assistance to 31 states. The majority of these states are recipients of Medicaid Infrastructure Grant funds (MIG). These funds, administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), are available to states interested in developing or improving employment supports for working persons with disabilities.

The center provides a locus for information exchange, policy and program development, and

direct technical assistance to and among states as they exercise options to develop or enhance work incentives and seek to strengthen programs serving persons with disabilities. As part of its work, the center runs a number of task forces and discussion groups for states to discuss in depth and focus on specific issues that affect the employment of individuals with disabilities. Current center task forces and groups include Youth in Transition; Federal Partnerships; Comprehensive Employment Supports; Defining Disability and Determination; and Working with Employers.

The Youth in Transition Task Force seeks to improve visibility for issues surrounding the transition of youth with disabilities from schools into the workforce or higher education. The goal of the task force is to examine all aspects of the issue and try to establish and promote successful models of multi-component, inter-agency activities that lead to successful promotion of work incentive programs and employment opportunities among youth with disabilities. The task force meets for monthly calls to discuss various factors of youth in transition; compile surveys and reports on state activities and progress in the area; plan agendas, presentations, and outreach efforts for various meetings; serve as a forum for state-to-state communication and support; and write articles on youth in transition issues for various APHSA and CWD newsletters.

For more information, please visit the APHSA web site at <http://www.aphsa.org> and the CWD web site at <http://www.aphsa.org/disabilities>.

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Executive Summary

In the last few decades, the needs and welfare of youth with disabilities as a distinct population have increasingly become the focus of public policy, legislation, and programs. Significant progress has been made in the educational opportunities and the quality of educational services accessible and available to youth with disabilities. The number and quality of employment opportunities and work incentive programs for individuals with disabilities has increased and improved. Youth with disabilities, their families, and their communities are changing expectations regarding attainable goals and possibilities for adulthood. Policy and programs addressing the transition from secondary education to adulthood, however, are still being developed. This report looks at state programs to help youth with disabilities with the transition to adulthood.

The report provides an overview of the state programs and efforts addressing the needs of youth in transition with disabilities, as states reported in a survey on components and progress of state transition programs. Of the 25 states that responded to the survey, 19 reported having a cohesive, active task force or council on transition issues for youth with disabilities. In 14 states, the task force or work group efforts are spearheaded by the Department of Education or Special Education, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, or some combination of the two. The membership, structure, goals, accomplishments, activities, youth involvement, and funding sources of these task forces vary significantly among states. The most frequently cited activities of the youth task forces are information distribution, development of policy recommendations, and education regarding issues for youth in transition with disabilities. Advocacy and issues of parental and familial involvement in transition efforts were also reported. Other activities included resource mapping, increasing interagency and inter-organizational collaboration and communication, career and

employment programs, and planning transition conferences and events.

In addition to task forces or work groups, states engage in a number of other initiatives focusing on transition issues for youth with disabilities. Eighteen states provide benefits counseling on sections 1619 (a) and (b) of the Social Security Act, which allow for individuals with disabilities to receive SSI benefits and to continue receiving Medicaid coverage even if their earned income level reduced their SSI benefit to nothing. The 1619 (a) and (b) provisions are the basis of most work incentive programs. States may also provide counseling to SSDI beneficiaries who are eligible for Medicaid on ways they can retain their health care benefits through the Medicaid Buy-in program if they earn more than the amount of the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level allows.

Twenty-one states provide information and education on the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program. Twenty-four states reported that they provide training to transition educators and counselors. Twenty-three states reported that they sponsor or organize job fairs, internships, and provide shadowing programs or other opportunities. All 25 states reported providing daily living skills training and counseling in schools, and 24 states reported also providing these services in a setting outside schools. All 25 states also provide both evaluation services and employment skills training and counseling services in schools, with 23 states also providing both services outside schools. Twenty-four states offer in-school community integration services, and 23 offers services outside the schools. Twenty-three states offer both social skills training and counseling services and advocacy skills training (for youth and/or families) in schools, with 21 and 22 states providing these services in out-of-school settings, respectively. About three-quarters of states (19) also

provide diagnostic services in school (21 provide out-of-school diagnostic services). Twenty-two states provide equipment and supplies in schools, and 21 states provide them outside schools.

Interagency coordination and collaboration is a key element to transition programming. The survey found that significant variation exists in the level of coordination for transition efforts. Several states acknowledged that their coordination efforts are still underway and are currently being strengthened. Many indicated in their survey responses that improving the level and channels of communication between various parties involved in transition efforts was a major state goal. It is crucial for different programs and agencies to have a mechanism to communicate and coordinate so they can be aware of services being provided by other state agencies. This better enables them to provide the maximum level of service possible to populations in need.

The report compiles a list of promising state practices for transition programs that are in progress. This list includes a broad range of practices, from conferences and summits solely focused on successful transition planning for youth with disabilities, to successful coordination and collaboration models, innovative waiver and demonstration programs, and education and outreach materials.

States clearly indicated that youth in transition is an important population deserving of increased attention and resources. Twenty-two states indicated that further technical assistance would be useful in their transition efforts. More than half of states specifically named information sharing and interagency coordination as an area for future assistance. Fifteen states indicated that access to best practice information from other states would help their own efforts at addressing the needs of youth in transition. Over half of the number of states said they would like additional technical assistance on how to involve advocates and consumers in youth in transition programs. Twelve states responded that addi-

tional assistance would be useful on strategic planning for future transition efforts and progress. Nine states indicated they would like assistance on outreach. Other areas suggested for further technical assistance included how to better involve the One-Stop centers in transition services; sustainability; post-secondary school outcomes; implementing the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; funding; and other resources necessary in assisting youth.

The report also includes a discussion about the importance of transition programs and planning the context of current disability culture and policy. In disability policy there has been a shift toward consumer-directed information; encouraging independent and integrated lifestyles through home- and community-based care and services; and establishing comprehensive support networks. These principles are evident in many state transition efforts.

Comprehensive and effective transition services for youth with disabilities can play a crucial role in fostering the confidence and skill base that youth and young adults need to live a successful, independent, and productive life in adulthood. Instilling high expectations and goals for post-secondary education and employment is essential for youth reaching and undergoing the transition phase, and this message needs to be reinforced throughout young adulthood. Promoting self-sufficiency and goals of employment among youth with disabilities is important in instituting a culture change in disability employment. Programs that address such issues as independent living, financial self-sufficiency, and self-advocacy prepare youth with disabilities for an adulthood less dependent on the government and other public programs than those of past generations. Educating youth in transition about health care options, transportation services, job training, and living skills, provides them with a wide range of tools and knowledge about available resources for whatever supports they may need.

Transition for Youth with Disabilities:

A Look at State Programs, Progress, and Promising Practices

by Alexandra I. Suchman

Introduction

In the last few decades, the needs and welfare of youth with disabilities as a distinct population have increasingly become the focus of public policy, legislation, and programs. Significant progress has been made in the educational opportunities and the quality of educational services accessible and available to youth with disabilities. The number and quality of employment opportunities and work incentive programs for individuals with disabilities have increased and improved. Youth with disabilities, their families, and their communities are changing expectations regarding attainable goals and possibilities for adulthood. Policy and programs addressing the transition from secondary education to adulthood, however, are still being developed. This report looks at state programs to help youth with disabilities with the transition to adulthood.

The transition into adulthood, or more specifically from secondary school to the workforce or continuing education programs, is difficult for any young person. The transition involves shifting from a service delivery model set in the schools to one set in the “real world.” In the school setting, a variety of resources and programs to meet the comprehensive needs of students are available in a centralized location, from a centralized system. In the “real world” setting, services and programs are housed and provided in a more compartmentalized manner. On top of the issues associated with this shift in service delivery system, the transition into adulthood brings the additional elements of increased independence, and with that, new responsibilities for

youth to take care of themselves, support themselves, and live outside the immediate protection of a parent or guardian. This transition period brings big changes and big challenges to all youth.

Youth with disabilities face additional challenges during this transition period. They often need additional supports, assistance, and other services, beyond what is provided in the general curriculum, to successfully complete secondary school. Youth with disabilities are more likely to drop out of secondary school, and are less likely to continue with post-secondary education, than youth without disabilities.¹ Individuals with disabilities often need various support services and training to be able to live independently and seek and maintain employment. Such services and resources are not always easily accessible and available, and young persons with disabilities may not even know how to recognize their specific needs and learn about resource options.

Defining “youth with disabilities” is a challenge. While the term “youth” in the context of transition programs refers to the ages before, during, and after participation in the secondary education system, these phases do not have concrete correlations to particular ages. In addition, many youth with disabilities are not enrolled in school, thus the pre-, current, and post-secondary student status classifiers

¹ For more discussion on additional transition needs of youth with disabilities, see the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth’s publication, *Guideposts for Success*, available online at www.ncwd-youth.info.

are not relevant. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth uses the approximate age range of 14 to 25 when defining “youth,” but acknowledges that the ages could start as young as 12 and extend to 29.² The eligibility age for different services and programs for young people with disabilities varies from program to program. The age mandated by federal laws for coverage and eligibility for various services intended for youth is not consistent. In addition, the eligible ages for services from federal programs may change year to year. For example, the eligible age for youth services and programs under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) was between 14 and 21. The WIA reauthorization bill that passed the House in summer 2005 as the Job Training Improvement Act of 2005 changed the eligible age for youth programs and services from 16 to 24. The lack of a clear, consistent definition of what ages are included as “youth” adds a layer of complication to the discussion about what the needs are of youth in transition, and what approaches are effective in attempting to meet their needs.

The term disability is also difficult to define, and different definitions are used for different programs and purposes. The definition used in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is one of the most widely known and commonly used. According to the ADA, an individual with a disability is an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment.³ But even this definition does

not include a clear and universal consensus as to what constitutes a disability. The term can refer to mental or emotional difficulties, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, behavioral problems, and learning disabilities, and each of these can be present in varying degrees of severity.

Legislative Background

Many programs addressing the needs of youth in transition with disabilities are operated through state or local governments. While federal law and policy provide direction and funding for state policy and programs, program design and implementation are established at the state level. In order to fully understand and appreciate the diversity and scope of state programs, it is important to have a basic understanding of the federal legislation and policies that have initiated state activity on youth in transition.

Much of the federal, state, and local policies and actions in recent years can be traced back to the Americans with Disabilities Act, signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. The ADA outlawed discrimination of individuals with disabilities. It also set forth action to expand education, employment, living, housing, and recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities, moving toward a goal of complete community integration and inclusion for all.

Other major pieces of legislation have specifically addressed (and expanded) education and employment of individuals with disabilities, as well as the transition from school to post-secondary opportunities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (previously known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and renamed in 1990) was the foundational law that ensured students with disabilities the right to be included in the public education system, and started the systems change process to integrate students with disabilities into all levels of the educational process. The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA established post-secondary transition planning as a necessary component of the edu-

² From the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth web site definitions, available at http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/definitions.php#Youth.

³ Definition taken from the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission web site at <http://www.eeoc.gov/types/ada.html>.

cation for students with disabilities.⁴ The 2003 reauthorization of IDEA further enhanced the transition provision by emphasizing performance and results, functional and academic achievement, and emphasizes the student's strengths. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 also addresses the education of students with disabilities. NCLB ensured that the states and school districts are held accountable for the academic progress for all students, including students with disabilities. It also provided opportunities for improved resources for students with disabilities and their families and teachers.

Major federal legislation and policy that have affected employment opportunities (and the transition to employment) for individuals with disabilities include the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA), the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA), the Workforce Investment Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the New Freedom Initiative. The BBA and TWWIIA established programs allowing individuals with disabilities to seek and maintain employment without fear of losing Medicaid and other public benefits, thus reducing a major barrier to employment. TWWIIA also created the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) program for states to create Medicaid plans and other supports for the employment of individuals with disabilities.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) attempted to create a single system for employment and workforce services and programs for underprivileged populations, including individuals with disabilities. WIA contains several grant and funding opportunities geared specifically toward employment training and services for youth. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (and amended as part of WIA in 1998) addresses the vocational rehabilitation agencies and program, through which individuals with disabilities can receive a variety of employment support and training opportunities, including transition services for youth. The act specifies that states plan for and fund the transition programs included in the IDEA for individuals with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act also established Centers for Independent Living, to provide individuals with disabilities with more opportunities for integrated community living. Although the Rehabilitation Act is a federal initiative, the programs and services are offered through the state and local governments, and through community groups and organizations.

The New Freedom Initiative was introduced by President George W. Bush in 2001. The goal of the initiative is to remove barriers and ensure that individuals with disabilities have the opportunities and access to full inclusion in all aspects of community life. The initiative addresses education opportunities, employment, living, transportation, home ownership and asset development, and principles of accessibility and universal design.

In February 2006, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) was signed into law. The DRA includes provisions allowing states greater flexibility in health benefits packages for Medicaid beneficiary populations. Early indications are that some states are considering using this opportunity to create special packages for working individuals with disabilities. The DRA also includes the Family Opportunity Act (FOA), which creates a specific Medicaid Buy-In program for youth with disabilities and their families. These programs would streamline access to health care and other support services essential for individuals with disabilities.

⁴ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 defined transition services as a coordinated set of services that: is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; is based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and includes instruction, related services, 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.

Definition from the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition web site at <http://www.ncset.org/publications/related/ideatransition.asp>.

Several other pieces of legislation and initiatives have been introduced or passed that address various components of transition for youth with disabilities. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act contains provisions to help specific populations, including individuals with disabilities, receive better access to vocational and technical education services. The Federal Youth Coordination Act, passed in the House in late 2005, aims to improve and better coordinate services for underprivileged youth populations. And there are many others.

Although new federal initiatives have been introduced, and new provisions added to existing legislation, that have created many new programs and opportunities for youth in transition with disabilities, recent developments for transition programming have not all been positive. Currently, the version of the Workforce Investment Act being considered for reauthorization raises the eligible age for transition services from 14 to 16, despite indications that beginning services at a younger age can have better outcomes for individuals. The Bush Administration's budget proposal for fiscal year 2007 reduced, by nearly half, the budget for the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, which administers and oversees several transition grants and programs.

An unintended consequence of numerous programs and legislation addressing transition is that each new initiative is administered by a different agency or office, at the federal, state, and local levels. Planning and successful implementation of transition programs is a complicated process that involves numerous parties (see Figure 1). At all levels, government agencies involved in the transition process include, but are not limited to, education, vocational rehabilitation, labor, health and Medicaid, and public welfare. Public and private universities, community colleges, and other educational institutions may be involved. Private-sector employers and businesses are often integrally involved as well. In addition, advocates, families, and youth also play an influential role at all levels of the transition process.

About this Survey and Report

This report is based on a survey that was developed by the Youth in Transition Task Force of the Center for Workers with Disabilities at the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA). The survey asked states to describe various aspects of their transition efforts. The survey questions can be divided into five subject areas: (1) general profiles of youth in state transition programs; (2) services provided through state efforts; (3) coordination and partnerships within states on youth in transition efforts among various state agencies and other organizations; (4) evaluation, information development, and distribution of information for these programs; and (5) promising practices. The report provides an overview of the state programs and efforts addressing the needs of youth with disabilities based on their survey responses. Trends and commonalities across state programs are described. The report also highlights innovative and unique state programs and program characteristics. Appendix A contains a profile of each state that includes all the information provided in each state's response to the survey questions. Appendix B includes a copy of the original survey.

The task force used a two-tiered solicitation process to send out the survey. A brief description of the survey and the nature of the project was sent to contacts in offices on disability, Medicaid, education, and vocational rehabilitation in 50 states and the District of Columbia. Each contact was asked to name the individual(s) who would be most able to provide comprehensive information on transition programs in that state. Forty states (including D.C.) provided contact information for a central contact on transition programs. The survey was sent to these 40 individuals, along with the names and contact information for other individuals working on transition issues in the state, along with a letter encouraging a team approach to completing the survey. Of the 40 that were sent out, 25 state surveys were returned completed. It should be noted that the information in this report is solely based on responses provided to the survey, and reflects the

Figure 1: Influential Factors in Transition Planning



Figure 1: A number of factors play an integral part in shaping an individual’s transition plan and goals for post-secondary school. The diagram above illustrates some of the influential factors involved. The factors toward the top of the diagram are more personal factors with more impact at the individual level, the factors in the middle affect the program level, and those closer to the bottom affect transition planning at the policy level.

Source: American Public Human Services Association, Center for Workers with Disabilities Survey, November 2005.

knowledge base and experiences of the particular state agency or organization that completed the survey. The report only provides information on the 25 states that completed the survey.

The next section of the report presents the results of the survey questions. Most of the questions from the survey were in yes or no, multiple choice, and check-box response formats, in order to provide a

means to compare and contrast states on various aspects of their transition programming. For most questions, though, states were also given the option to provide additional information beyond that of the survey. This additional information provided a wealth of information on the states' unique program elements or operational characteristics, and gave insight into what programs or practices each state considers noteworthy. Some of these initiatives are mentioned along with comprehensive survey results as a way to emphasize the variety of programs and unique approaches that states are taking to address the needs of transitioning youth with disabilities.

General Profile of State Youth in Transition Programs

Of the 25 states that responded to the survey, 19 states reported having a cohesive, active task force or council on transition issues for youth with disabilities. Three states reported that they do not have a work group or task force focusing on youth in transition, and the remaining three states reported some other type of work group on transition. Two states reported having several interconnected transition teams, administered by different agencies and offices (including education, workforce development, vocational rehabilitation, and the departments of health and mental health), each focusing on different aspect of transition for youth with disabilities, rather than a single task encompassing several components.

In 14 states, task force or work group efforts are spearheaded by the Department of Education or Special Education, the Department/Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, or some combination of the two. In two states the task force is run by initiative from the governor's office. Other lead organizations or agencies for states' transition task forces include the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Casey Family Programs, the State Youth Council, and the Division of Business Partnerships.

Youth involvement and youth roles in the task forces also vary significantly. Six states reported that youth are not involved in task force or work group

activities. Four states are still developing and planning their task forces and recruiting youth participants, and the role youth will play in the groups has not yet been established. Three states have youth as active members in group discussions and activities, and in an additional three states, youth participants attend task force meetings. In two states, youth participants play an advisory role in task force activities. In one state, task force members are established in state law, which does not include youth with disabilities, but youth and their families can and do participate in sub-committee projects and activities.

Funding sources for the transition task force or work group vary throughout states. Of the states who responded to this survey question, four states (Arizona, North Dakota, Utah, and New York) reported using funds from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). New York also uses administrative and discretionary funding from the Rehabilitation Act. Vermont's task force is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment. Delaware, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin use funding from the state departments of Education or Public Instruction. California and Pennsylvania receive some funding from the state department or office of Vocational Rehabilitation. In addition, California receives some assistance from the National Association of Special Education Directors. Oregon responded that task force funding comes from the state general fund. Funding in Alaska and Tennessee comes from unspecified state and federal sources. Texas reports using private funds from the Casey Family Programs for its transition task force.

Funding for other state transition efforts (those efforts not directly related to the work group or task force) mostly comes from departments of Vocational Rehabilitation (23 states) and Education (22 states). In 19 states, federal funding is a contributor. Medicaid and state general funds provide some funding in 15 states. New York and Tennessee reported using Workforce Investment Act funding as well. Colorado receives some funding from the National Governors Association's Center for Best

Practices. Other funding sources states named include grants, the state Department of Social Services, local businesses, the Vocational and Technical Education Act, Workforce Commissions, the state division of Public Assistance, the U.S. Social Security Administration, and the state department of Employment Security.

State Transition Services

Task Force and Work Group Activities

The most frequently cited activities of the youth task forces are information distribution, development of policy recommendations, and education regarding issues for transitioning youth with disabilities. Advocacy and issues of parental and familial involvement in transition efforts were also reported. Other activities included resource mapping, increasing interagency and inter-organizational collaboration and communication, career and employment programs, and planning transition conferences and events. Vermont’s task force is involved in running the “Career Start” program through a federal grant from the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor.

Non-Task Force or Work Group Activities

In addition to task forces or work groups, states engage in a number of other initiatives focusing on transition issues for youth with disabilities. Eighteen states provide benefits counseling on sections 1619 (a) and (b) of the Social Security Act, which allow for individuals with disabilities to receive SSI benefits and to continue receiving Medicaid coverage even if their earned income level reduced their SSI benefit to nothing. The 1619 (a) and (b) provisions are the basis of most work incentive programs. The states may also provide counseling to SSDI beneficiaries who are eligible for Medicaid on ways they can retain their health care benefits through the Medicaid Buy-in program if they earn more than the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level.

Transition for Health Care Coverage

Of the responding states, 15 have Medicaid Buy-In Programs established. The Medicaid Buy-In is a

work incentive program for individuals with disabilities, allowing individuals who qualify for Medicaid and SSDI benefits because of their disability to purchase Medicaid coverage and therefore not risk losing their benefits if or when they earn more than the allowable substantial gainful activity⁵ (SGA) amount. This option greatly reduces the fear, and often the reality, of losing public benefits as an obstacle to seeking and maintaining employment. Fifteen states responded that they provided counseling and information to youth in transition and their families about their Medicaid Buy-In programs. Five of these states (California, Indiana, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania) have established a referral process for youth in transition to the Medicaid Buy-In.

Transition from School to Work

Twenty-one states provide information and education on the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS). PASS is a work incentive program under SSI that allows individuals with disabilities to set aside income and resources specifically designated for a work-oriented goal or project. Allowable goals or projects include continuing education or training, purchasing job-related equipment or supplies, transportation costs associated with employment, starting a business, etc. A plan must be pre-approved by the U.S. Social Security Administration and must demonstrate a connection between the goals and the potential for increased income as a result.

Twenty-four of the responding states reported that they provide training to transition educators and counselors. Twenty-three states reported that they sponsor or organize job fairs, internships, shad-

⁵ Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) is a term used in regard to eligibility for Social Security disability benefits, Medicaid, and other support services. As described on the Social Security Administration’s web site, “to be eligible for disability benefits, a person must be unable to engage in substantial gainful activity (SGA). A person who is earning more than a certain monthly amount (net of impairment-related work expenses) is ordinarily considered to be engaging in SGA. The amount of monthly earnings considered as SGA depends on the nature of a person’s disability.” The SGA level for 2006 is \$860 a month for non-blind individuals, and \$1450 a month for blind individuals.

owing programs, and other opportunities. Alaska, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania reported that state agencies actively participate in Disability Mentoring Day. The South Dakota Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) is organizing “Catch the Wave,” a one-day conference for high school students with disabilities to get information about post-secondary education opportunities, available accommodations and services, and advocacy and communication skills. Utah held an employment symposium for employers, individuals with disabilities, and agency personnel, in addition to a transition conference for students, families, employers, and agency personnel.

In July 2005, Pennsylvania held a Community on Transition Conference, *Strengthening Transition: Achieving Results*, bringing together youth, employers, and representatives from various agencies and organizations involved in transition activities. The goal of the conference was to empower youth and young adults with disabilities through information on services, resources, community integration, employment, post-secondary training and education, and overall healthy lifestyles. The conference featured a wide variety of session topics, presenters, discussion panels, vendors, and hands-on learning opportunities not only for youth and young adults, but also for their families and other stakeholders in the transition process.

In California, a program called the California Mentoring Initiative focuses on mentoring youth and young adults with disabilities (ages 16 to 26) who are current participants in state-run rehabilitation programs. The California Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, part of the state Department of Education, was awarded a five-year demonstration grant to conduct research and evaluation on the impact of mentoring services on employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. The goals are to improve enrollment and completion of post-secondary education, improve employment outcomes, and improve self-esteem of participating youth.

Twenty-two states have mandated individual planning processes for transitioning youth with dis-

abilities. In Oklahoma, some schools are trying a Self-Determination and Self-Directed Individualized Education Plan (IEP) curriculum.

Independent Living Services and Supports

The survey asked states about other services that states offer for transitioning youth with disabilities both in and out of school. All 25 states reported providing daily living skills training and counseling in schools, and 24 states also reported providing these services in a setting outside schools. All 25 states also provide both evaluation services and employment skills training and counseling services in schools, with 23 states also providing both services outside schools. Twenty-four states offer in-school community integration services, and 23 offer them out of schools. Twenty-three states offer both social skills training and counseling services and advocacy skills training (for youth and/or families) in schools, with 21 and 22 states providing these services in out-of-school settings, respectively. About three-quarters of states (19) also provide diagnostic services in school (21 provide out-of-school diagnostic services). Twenty-two states provide equipment and supplies in schools and 21 provide them outside schools. The only services reported to be available in more states in out-of-school settings were mental health services: twenty-four states offer mental health services outside schools, and 23 offer them in schools. Three noted that variation exists throughout a state in what services are provided based on personnel, accessibility, funding, and other factors.

Of the responding states, 14 have developed outreach materials specifically targeting youth in transition. The survey asked states if they have programs or materials addressing various issues of independence among youth with disabilities. Eight states have developed materials on financial literacy. Five states have programs or materials on Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). Ten states address the issue of asset development. Thirteen states provide youth in transition with information on transportation issues, including driver education, utilization and education of public transportation systems, and more. Seventeen states provide independent liv-

ing preparation and 18 provide self-advocacy training or tools. Fourteen states provide other youth self-sufficiency tools. The Pennsylvania transition conference included sessions in most of the above-mentioned areas, in addition to sessions on understanding various federal programs and laws, issues of permanency, diversity, community living, and business and employment.

Several states hold annual Youth Leadership Forum conferences. Youth Leadership Forums are run through the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Policy and provide an opportunity for youth with disabilities who are juniors and seniors in high school to serve as delegates from their communities and get together and build leadership and social skills. The students get together in their state's capital and go through an intensive four-day event filled with workshops, trainings, discussions, speakers, activities, and social events on a variety of topics.

State Coordination and Partnerships on Youth in Transition Efforts

Coordination is a crucial component of all state youth in transition efforts. This coordination involves communication and collaboration on a number of levels: between various state agencies (and offices), between state agencies and local and federal agencies, and between state agencies and non-governmental groups. All states acknowledge that parties involved and the level of coordination is not consistent throughout an entire state, and even within a state significant variation can and does occur.

As previously indicated, transition efforts for youth with disabilities often involve federal, state, and local departments, including Education or Public Instruction, Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, and Labor or Workforce. Other major players include educational institutions (such as local school systems, community colleges, and state university systems), parent groups, advocacy organizations, and non-profit groups. In 22 states employer groups are active in transition efforts in at least some parts of the state. Twenty states coordinate with

transportation authorities. In 19 states, the Business Leadership Network (BLN) is involved. Other parties involved in some states are local and state Workforce Investment Boards, transition coordinating councils, one-stop Job Link Centers through the U.S. Department of Labor and Workforce Investment Act youth councils, the Department of Mental Health, the Commission for the Blind, and various disability institutes and councils. Figure 2 illustrates the some of most commonly involved partners in state transition efforts.

The level of coordination between various parties and stakeholders also varies significantly. In Arizona, local schools partner with the Division of Developmental Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation to provide a seamless and comprehensive transition process. Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Oregon also have systems in place to coordinate between various agencies at the state and local levels. Tennessee reported a high level of coordination between state agencies and with outside parties and Independent Living Centers. In Delaware, statewide Transition Specialists work with the Department of Education and with staff, students, and families involved in Special Education for a smooth and successful transition to work or programs through Adult Services. Pennsylvania is currently in the second year of an ongoing integrated children's service planning process that encourages collaborative efforts between the departments of Mental Retardation, Mental Health, Children and Youth, and Adult Service agencies in developing an Individual Education Plan. Kentucky has taken a three-pronged approach to transition coordination through a state-level Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities, a Transition Core team, and Regional Interagency Transition Teams.

A few states reported that they have developed formal interagency and collaborative agreements to increase the scope and effectiveness of transition services they offer. For example, following the requirements of the 1998 Rehabilitation Act, the California Department of Education and the

Figure 2: Partners Involved in State Transition Efforts

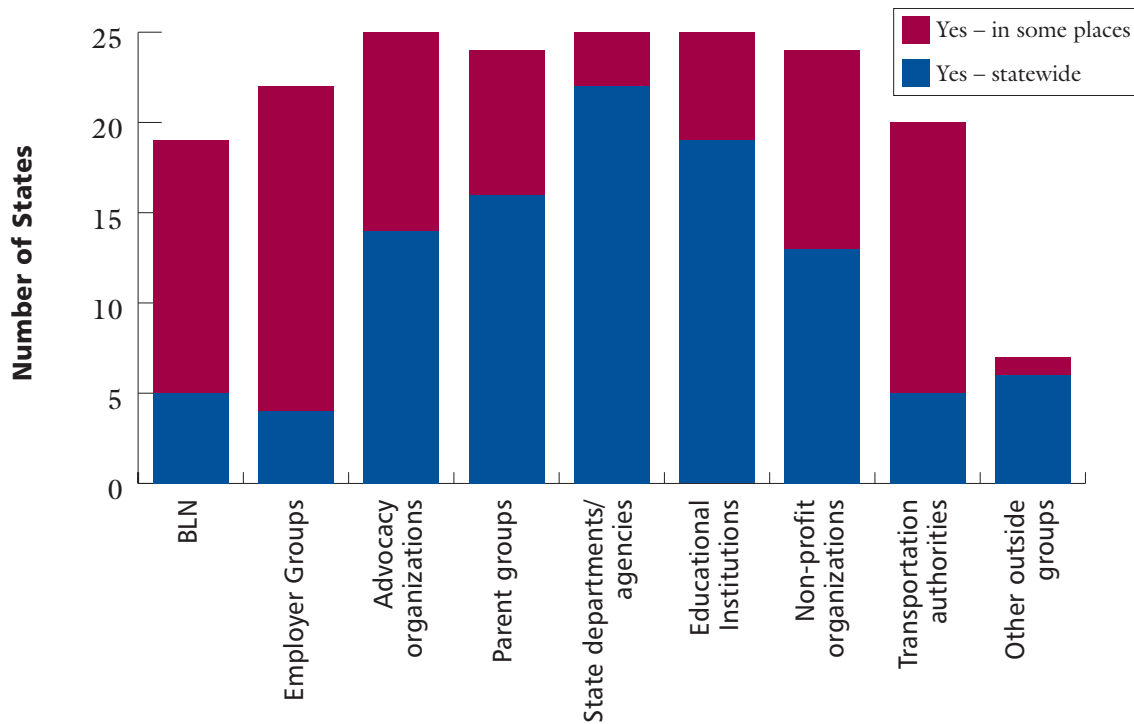


Figure 2: The chart illustrates the various groups involved in state’s coordinated transition efforts on both a full statewide basis and on a more limited level in the state.

Source: American Public Human Services Association, Center for Workers with Disabilities Survey, November 2005

Department of Rehabilitation entered into a State Interagency Cooperative Agreement for Transition Planning and Services for Secondary Students with Disabilities. The Department of Rehabilitation also entered an Interagency Agreement with California’s Chancellor’s office under the auspices of the Disabled Students Program and Services to coordinate services for community college students with disabilities. California State University entered a similar agree-

ment with the Department of Rehabilitation for coordination of services for its students. The California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators entered a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to establish guidelines for joint financial support for students at the Department of Rehabilitation in the state post-secondary education system. The Department of Mental Health has an MOU addressing adults and youth with mental health disabilities.

Colorado reported high levels of coordination between a number of parties, and provided detailed information about the state communication and collaboration structure. In Colorado, funds and resources from different state and local agencies and outside groups are blended and braided. Transition plans are developed, coordinated, and shared between the various stakeholders, and all parties work together on any transition grants awarded to a single entity. The state has two groups of representatives from different state agencies and community partners that focus on all disability issues (see Figure 3). One is the Executive Directors' Advisory Group that is comprised of state and agency directors who advise a state-cabinet level official on all disability-related issues, with an emphasis on youth. The other is a consortium called Project TRAIN (Training Resources and Incentives Network), comprised of representatives from state service delivery agencies, community-based groups, disability groups, and the Governor's Council. Project Train meets on an as-needed basis to discuss opportunities for the state to pursue on disability issues. These two groups work together on various grant opportunities and state programs addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. In Colorado, many of these pertain to youth. Both of these groups are involved in the project throughout its duration, from conception and grant application through implementation and follow-up, in some capacity, administrative, operation, or advisory. The state attributes their high level of success to such initiatives as the Social Security Administration Transition Demonstration Project, the State Alignment Grant for Improving Transition Outcomes through Use of Intermediaries, and the collection and dissemination by the State Youth Council of promising workforce practices related to youth, including youth with disabilities.

Several states acknowledged that their coordination efforts are still underway and are currently being strengthened. Indiana reported that Vocational Rehabilitation works closely with higher education institutions. However, the collaboration is not always consistent and more effort is needed. Montana's coordination efforts are still being

developed. Utah reported that although strong partnerships exist among state agencies at the administrative level, there is less coordination at the local levels among Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Service agencies, higher education institutions, the Department of Labor, and Independent Living Centers. Utah also acknowledged that the level or coordination varies by individual agency. Texas is working to improve what is admittedly limited coordination at the agency level, although the IEPs developed for youth in transition by Special Education programs identify all the different agencies and programs that should be involved in an individual's transition process. In Illinois, coordination varied between communities. Alaska noted that coordination levels are higher in urban areas of the state compared to more remote and rural locations.

A few states indicated in their survey responses that improving the level and channels of communication between various parties involved in transition efforts was a major state goal. Some states noted areas where improvements can be made, and where more work is needed. In a few cases, inconsistencies in a state's responses, or differences between the state's response and information from other sources, indicated the potential need for improved coordination. For example, in the survey, a majority of states indicated that they provided counseling and information to youth in transition and their families about Medicaid Buy-In programs; however, not all of those states currently have operating Medicaid Buy-In programs. In a few other instances the response indicated uncertainty as to whether the state had a Medicaid Buy-In program.⁶

These examples illustrate that programs targeting the same or similar populations may not effectively communicate with one another, and are often

⁶ In these instances, the survey was completed by the education or vocational rehabilitation agency or department, and not by the health agency. Another example includes states reported having a Medicaid Buy-In program when, in fact, the state does not (in some cases, the state is in the process of developing or implementing a Buy-In, but in other cases, the state has no Buy-In at all).

Figure 3: Colorado’s Youth in Transition Projects and Advisory Groups

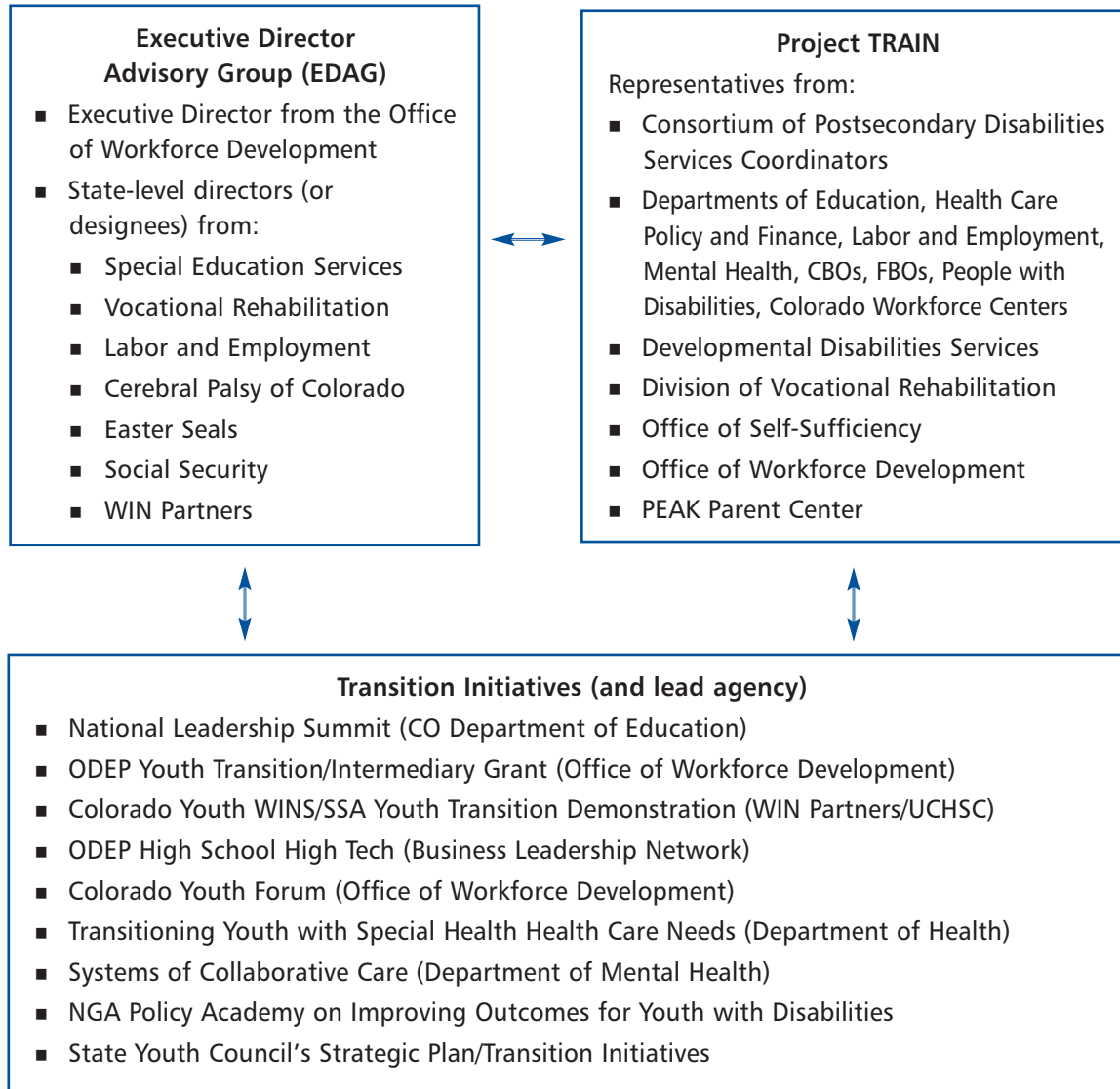


Figure 3: In Colorado, EDAG and Project TRAIN, each with representatives from a wide range of agencies and organizations, share information on youth in transition opportunities and projects. EDAG functions both as an advisory body on workforce issues and as a collaborative entity on broader transitional issues. This diagram illustrates the composition and flow of communication between the two groups and lists several of the initiatives in which these groups are actively involved.

Source: American Public Human Services Association, Center for Workers with Disabilities, with information from Susan Schierkolk, Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, November 2005

unaware of the scope and content of -services being provided. It is crucial for different programs and agencies to have a mechanism to communicate and coordinate with each other to become aware of the services being provided by other agencies within the state in order to provide the maximum level of services possible to populations in need.

Evaluation Information, Development and Distribution of Information

Almost half of the responding states have conducted evaluations or written reports on the effectiveness of youth in transition programs in their state. Fourteen states conducted research to assess whether the outcome goals for the transition efforts were being met. Twelve states have conducted other types of studies on transition. Many states conducted research on post-secondary school status and service utilization among youth with disabilities. Fourteen states collected employment information; 13 collected information on post-secondary education; nine states collected information about independent living skills and use of living services; nine states looked at the use of public benefit and public support services; eight states looked at quality of life post-transitions; and eight states looked at family involvement in the transition process. Other related factors states looked at for evaluative and research purposes were medical information and Individual Education Plan activities. For example, Wisconsin looked at participation in high-school activities and existing barriers to participation in different activities, and suggestions for ways to improve outcomes for high school students with disabilities. Students were contacted one, three, and five years after completing high school for follow-up interviews. Illinois looked at graduation and drop-out rates among students with disabilities.

In seven states, the data were collected by a university partner involved in transition programs. In an additional seven states the information was collected by the state education agency. In five states, the department of vocational rehabilitation collected the data. In one state it was collected by the health or Medicaid agency.

Kentucky noted that the state is still in the early stages of information sharing and interagency collaboration. The long-term goals for state transition efforts include data collection and analysis in the next few years.

Promising Practices

A number of nationally organized and multi-state programs have received high praise from the states as successful transition programs. States mentioned Youth Leadership Forums as one of the most promising practices, including Louisiana and South Dakota. Alaska and North Dakota named Transition Camp as a successful and promising program. Pennsylvania responded that the State Leadership Team and participation in national community efforts on transition have been beneficial.

The survey asked states to identify what they consider promising practices in their state transition efforts. Their responses are included below, along with other programs or initiatives mentioned in the state survey responses that seemed unique, interesting, or effective.

Alaska

Alaska's promising practices include Intermediaries, Customized Employment, and the Alaska Transition Camp. The Intermediaries are pilot projects creating a sustainable infrastructure that embraces the "dual customer" approach and that serves both youth with disabilities (those in and out of school) and employers. The main goal of the Intermediaries is to increase the number of youth with disabilities making successful transition to employment and post-secondary education while providing job placement services for employers.

Customized Employment is a program of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation that targets specific people with disabilities (e.g., individuals with disabilities receiving SSI or SSDI, or youth in transition from secondary school). The program uses a wrap-around approach; partners inside and outside One-Stop centers form "service coordination teams" to support each client.

Alaska runs a Transition Camp program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education State Improvement Grant and through fees paid by individual school districts. School district teams attend the camps, which are paid for with their own money. Teams consist of one special education teacher, one paraprofessional, three special education students, and one general education student. The camps have been very successful in teaching youth in transition basic skills and the knowledge needed to make the transition into adulthood in their communities by using a Person Centered Plan, which is developed during the week-long session. Staff members attending the camp receive training on IDEA transition requirements and have the opportunity to meet and work with other agency staff and with community groups involved in transition planning.

Arizona

The Arizona Transition Outcomes Projects (TOPS) aims to meet the transition services requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and improve post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities. It has so far been very successful in changing the system for transition services. The program is implemented in schools, starting with a baseline Individual Education Plan for students ages 14 and older. This baseline should highlight specific areas where transition services are most needed. A group of workers from various state, local, and regional organizations and agencies meet to develop a strategy for addressing these problem areas and set goals for the student. School district staff is then tasked with implementing the plan. A review is conducted after about a year, and throughout the year technical assistance is provided to the district staff about every six to eight weeks. The success of the project has been much attributed to the teachers involved. The TOPS initiative has also been implemented in other states.

California

California implemented the Transition Partnership Programs in 1987 by the state Education and Rehabilitation departments. Transition Partnership

Programs offer opportunities for local education agencies to partner with the Department of Rehabilitation to better coordinate services for youth in transition with disabilities. Through the local school systems, vocational rehabilitation services are provided to students for up to one year after they finish high school by vocational rehabilitation counselors. Students participating in the program receive services to help them find and maintain employment opportunities through community-based instruction, on-the-job training, job placement services, and individual follow-up services. Eighty-five Transition Partnership Programs are currently operating throughout the state.

California also implemented the WorkAbility I, II, III, and IV programs, which provide a variety of employment services and supports to youth and young adults with disabilities at various stages of the transition process. Figure 4 illustrates the specific scope of each WorkAbility program.

The Bridges to Youth Self Sufficiency Project (Bridges) in California is a five-year demonstration project through the Department of Rehabilitation and the Social Security Administration that aims to build on the Transition Partnership Project and the WorkAbility I project. The Bridges Project primarily focuses on benefits and service coordination for youth in transition with disabilities, although other services include benefits training and education, targeted outreach, early intervention, and local partnering. All efforts of this project aim to increase self-sufficiency among youth with disabilities, encourage employment, and decrease dependency on public benefit programs, thus decreasing the likelihood of unemployment and poverty and greatly improving quality of life.

Another promising practice is the collaboration model developed by California described earlier in the report.

Delaware

Delaware recently introduced a pilot project, Early Start to Supported Employment for Youth in Transition, with the Departments of Education, Division of Developmental and Disability Services,

Figure 4: California’s WorkAbility Programs

WorkAbility I	WorkAbility II	WorkAbility III	WorkAbility IV
Student aged 14–22 enrolled in Special Education	Young adult (graduates of Special Education)	Students of California’s Community College System who receive state VR services	Students of California’s State University System who receive state VR services
Operated through partnership between Departments of Education and Rehabilitation	Local offices of the Department of Rehabilitation with Adult Schools and regional occupational programs and centers	Collaboration between the California Department of Rehabilitation and the California Community College System	Collaboration between the California Department of Rehabilitation and California State Universities
Provides comprehensive pre-employment services, job placement, and follow-up for students until they leave high school	Provides job training and placement services from Adult Schools and regional occupational programs and centers	Helps students transition to employment from post-secondary education systems	Helps students transition to employment from post-secondary education systems

Source: American Public Human Services Association, Center for Workers with Disabilities Survey, November 2005

Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Service Providers. The project aims to ensure that students have jobs immediately after graduating high school so there is no gap period of unemployment. Students must be in good academic standing and are tracked by the Department of Education. The Department of Education, with the Division of Developmental and Disability Services and with funding through Vocational Rehabilitation, submits paperwork and puts up the costs of job assessments, placements, skills training, career development, and follow-up for the

participating students. Following the first 90 days of steady employment, the initial case is closed and the individual enters into a long-term, follow-up period during which he or she can receive on-the-job coaching and problem solving assistance.

Illinois

In Illinois, a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services has provided funding to the Illinois State Board of Education for a project

designed to provide training and technical assistance to students, families, educators and community providers regarding transition requirements, person centered planning, promotion of self determination, and writing transition-driven Individual Education Plans. The project is called the Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living, or TOTAL. TOTAL was originally funded for three years, and was extended for an additional year. The grant funding is used for training, materials, travel, etc., and the state provides funding for staff salaries. Four core practices are the focus of the TOTAL project:

- 1) *Understanding and Meeting State and Federal Transition Mandates;*
- 2) *Person-Centered Transition Planning;*
- 3) *Promoting Student Self-Determination;* and
- 4) *Transition as the Centerpiece of the Individualized Education Plan.*

These four practices were disseminated through three channels: 20 transition teams from local education agencies throughout the state, received extensive training to offer transition services by means of the four principles; 150 regional education staff members were trained as trainers; and a variety of multimedia materials were developed for individuals who did not participate as members of regional teams of trainers to access the materials.

Indiana

Indiana reported two notable practices. One is the Indiana State Improvement Grant (IN-SIG), part of the U.S. Department of Education school improvement initiative and funded through IDEA Part D funds. IN-SIG is a comprehensive program to improve services and outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. Transition services, including systems for professional development, technical assistance, and dissemination of knowledge about best practices, are a part of the program, which also includes early intervention and education services.

Indiana also provides the local school systems with an updated and revised collection of transition-related articles twice a year to ensure they have access to current information. The collection is entitled *Independence*, and is sent to special education offices

all over the state to include in their own newsletter and distribution lists. The content of these articles covers a range of topics, such as information on how to access vocational rehabilitation services, graduation requirements, how to get a driver's license, and other issues of adulthood and independence.

Iowa

Iowa has a Social Security Administration "cash and counseling" Youth Transition Demonstration Project called Smart Start. An 1115 waiver has been requested through the state's Medicaid agency. Smart Start advances integration of funding and program resources already allocated for youth with disabilities by creating procedures for participating youth the option to "cash out" benefits from Medicaid and blend them with other public funds such as WIA One-Stops and Education. Public monies for the purchase of supportive services, which now flows through many layers and entities, can then be "banked" by youth and their families for the direct purchase of support services. Through this "cash and counseling" program, participants use the tools of self-determination to direct the publicly funded investment in their life. Personal agents or brokers trained by the program can be hired to help negotiate the purchase of services and to advise and support the youth. Young people and their families are provided with financial literacy training using a curriculum created through a partnership between the Employment Policy Group, the school systems, and credit unions.

Smart Start contains a systems-change component to integrate resources and "blend" funding streams between federal, state, and local supportive service initiatives. Major components of the project include improving school performance and graduation rates; expanding opportunities for post-secondary education; obtaining employment or other income generation; and promoting asset accumulation for future financial security. Partnerships have been created with mainstream financial institutions, local schools, post-secondary educational institutions, and employers.

Kentucky

Regional Interagency Transition Teams were established in January 2005, when a statewide "transition

forum” was held in Louisville for members to meet each other and begin a statewide discussion of regional transition needs. In March 2005 a second statewide meeting was held so the teams could begin work on their regional vision, mission, and action plan. Following the March meeting, the teams began meeting on their own in their respective regions. The teams are aligned with the 11 state Special Education Cooperatives.

Kentucky also noted its participation in the National Center for Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) national transition summits in 2003 and 2005 as a promising practice. Through knowledge gained there, the transition team developed an action plan for improving transition results for Kentucky’s youth. To put the planning into action, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities, with the Department of Exceptional Children Services’ leadership, created the Transition Core Team subcommittee of the Council.

Louisiana

In several Louisiana parishes, cooperative agreements between agencies allow graduating seniors to attend high school and college or vocational/technical programs simultaneously.

New York

New York has seven regional Transition Coordination Sites that help communities implement transition planning and services to aid students in a successful transition to post-secondary educational opportunities, community living, adult services and employment. The state also runs Special Education Resource and Training Centers, which provide districts with information on coaching and technical assistance tailored to that district’s individual needs. There are 42 Special Education Resource and Training Centers offices located throughout the state.

North Dakota

North Dakota runs a Transition Camp program for students with developmental disabilities, the majority of whom are mentally retarded. The camps began as a pilot program through the Department of Public

Instruction, but are currently operated through local school systems. Individuals attending the camp receive a variety of learning activities also related to transition in addition to a full camp experience with fun activities, cabin living in the woods, etc. Funding comes from a combination of private funds, donations, and scholarships. North Dakota also has an Interagency Transition Institute every other year. This is a three-day conference organized by the State Transition Coordinator and is attended by special education teachers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, and parents. The Institute is also funded through the Department of Public Instruction.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma has a three-year grant from the University of Oklahoma for a Self-Determination and Self-Directed Individual Education Plan (IEP) curriculum. The goal is to allow students to develop their own IEP and plan toward their particular goals and interests. This teaches self-determination and self-advocacy, and allows the students to better understand and participate in the process.

Oregon

Oregon began the Youth Transition Program in 1990 as a coordinated effort between the Oregon Department of Education, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, local school districts, and the University of Oregon to improve employment outcomes for transitioning youth with disabilities. The program is offered through local school districts with the aid of transition specialists funded through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and matching dollars from the local school district. Through the Youth Transition Program, high-school students with disabilities are offered services such as individualized planning, job training, career instruction, and counseling. The program develops a coordinated post-secondary plan based on the student’s interests, skills, and goals. The services continue for up to one year after high-school graduation to increase the likelihood that individuals will remain employed, continue with post-secondary education, or with a training program setting. To date, over 15,000 youth have participated in the

program; evaluations have shown that participants in the Youth Transition Program have the highest rates of finding and maintaining employment among participants in all Vocational Rehabilitation programs. The Youth Transition Program participants also demonstrate higher employment rates than youth with disabilities who did not participate in the program: 90 percent of Youth Transition Program students leave the program with a high-school diploma, as compared to 47 percent of non-participating students with disabilities, according to a national study by the Stanford Research Institute. Likewise, 71 percent of Youth Transition Program participants are employed two years after leaving high school, compared to a 46 percent national average for youth with disabilities. The Youth Transition Program has demonstrated success in both urban and rural areas of the state.

South Carolina

South Carolina is in the process of developing a comprehensive initiative to improve graduation rates for students with disabilities through self-determination and student involvement. School districts have conducted training on incorporating these principles into transition efforts using evidence-based practices.

South Dakota

A South Dakota project, Youth Leadership Forum Catch the Wave, is a one-day seminar for transitioning students who are pursuing further education through colleges, universities, or trade schools. Students are taught about what to expect and how to be aware of their rights. The seminar is funded by the Departments of Education and Human Services.

Texas

A Texas program, Circles of Support, is based on the family group decision making process, for older youth in transition to adulthood. In this program, youth who choose to participate identify the key people in their lives who serve as their support system, called Permanent Planning Team (PPT). A meeting (or series of meetings) is arranged between the PPT and the youth to develop a transition plan, with a goal to eliminate any gaps in the plan. The

Department of Family and Protective Services pays for the PPT and regional funding is used for staff positions. The Circles of Support program is also used for foster youth in transition, as it helps the youth identify adults who can serve as a support system, even in the absence of family members. Texas also cites the state's public-private partnership among state agencies and Casey Family Programs as a successful model.

Utah

Utah named participation in the National Center for Secondary Education and Transition's National Leadership Summit with representatives from vocational rehabilitation, the Parent Center, WorkBased Learning, and Special Education as a promising practice. Representatives from a variety of stakeholders served on state-level committees that address post-secondary education, employment, supported employment, benefits planning, increasing the rigor of high-school programs, and transition planning for youth who receive mental health and foster care services. The committees identified the top priorities for transition efforts—youth leadership, parental involvement, and youth with disabilities in foster care.

Vermont

The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has a program for transition counselors called Jump on Board for Success (JOBS), spearheaded by the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, in partnership with the Department of Developmental and Mental Health Services, the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, and the Department of Corrections. The JOBS program provides supported employment and intensive case management services to youth with serious emotional and behavioral disabilities who are estranged from their communities and considered at risk.

Challenges and Future Needs for State Transition Programs

States clearly indicated that youth in transition is an important population deserving of increased attention and resources. Twenty-two states indicated that

further technical assistance would be useful in their transition efforts. More than half of states specifically named information sharing and interagency coordination as an area for future assistance. Fifteen states thought access to best practice information from other states would help their own efforts at addressing the needs of youth in transition. Over half of states said they would like additional technical assistance on how to involve advocates and consumers in youth in transition programs. Twelve states responded that additional assistance would be useful on strategic planning for future transition efforts and progress. Nine states indicated they would like assistance on outreach. Other areas suggested for further technical assistance included how to better involve the One-Stop centers in transition services; sustainability; post-secondary school outcomes; implementing the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; funding; and other resources necessary in assisting youth.

One interesting comment from a state mentioned that while transition efforts are well underway in that state, the survey sent out for this report served as a self-assessment tool and pointed out issue areas that the state had not previously thought to include in their transition work.

States face many challenges in establishing coordinated transition efforts. Illinois reported that while a solid infrastructure for providing transition services is in place in that state, the demand for such services exceeds its capacity. The situation is likely to be similar in other states. A representative from the Arizona Transitional Leadership Team, the state's transition task force, acknowledged that, ever since its creation about one and half years before, the group has not yet achieved what it hoped. After facing multiple bumps in the road, the group needs to rethink its mission and strategies.

Discussion

The current social and economic environment for individuals with disabilities is undergoing fundamental changes. What was previously a system of primarily institutionalized health care, economic dependence on government support programs, and a

lifestyle of dependence on others is shifting toward one of greater independence, community involvement, increased health care options, and more individual control. Now more than ever, individuals with disabilities have access to government and community support programs to help them with the process of finding employment (or for some, returning to work after a period of unemployment) and taking more responsibility for the support services they receive. The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, the New Freedom Initiative, and the Money Follows the Person initiative are all examples of programs that illustrate this shift. However the major challenges now are highlighting the benefits of this shift, promoting the steps needed to implement it, and changing the cultural norm toward one that sees work and full community integration as the more desirable, common, and even expected, lifestyle option.

Research has shown that employed individuals with disabilities have a significant and important impact on the national workforce. The Center for Workforce Preparations, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, has an initiative solely focused on promoting hiring more workers with disabilities and creating a more accessible, integrated, and diverse workforce. According to Center for Workforce Preparations research, employers report that workers with disabilities are a highly motivated, skilled, creative, reliable, and largely untapped resource in the labor force. The Center for Workforce Preparations has released numerous publications describing the benefits of hiring workers with disabilities, and the positive impact these workers have on their places of employment. Employing individuals with disabilities is mutually beneficial for the individual, the employer, and the overall workforce.

Despite the research, long-standing and widely held myths, biases, and assumptions about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities have created barriers to seeking and maintaining employment. Employers and institutions for continuing education and training often do not provide or understand necessary accommodations to expand inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Public buildings, trans-

portation systems, and events are not always accessible for the disability population. Widespread stigma and ignorance exists in society regarding mental illness, which is one of the most prevalent sources of disability. In addition, until recently, general societal expectations for individuals with disabilities were not on par with those for individuals without disabilities. Children and youth with disabilities most often were not expected or encouraged to continue education following secondary school (and sometimes not even expected to complete secondary school).

New programs, technological breakthroughs, and a changing workforce and economy have created opportunities for individuals with disabilities to move beyond these barriers. Research on accommodation and accessibility has opened up public venues, jobs, and learning opportunities. New technological developments have increased the communication, mobility, and activity capabilities for individuals with disabilities. Public support and benefits programs and work incentive programs are encouraging individuals with disabilities to join (or rejoin) the workforce and pursue new opportunities. Such programs also educate employers, educators, lawmakers, and the general public about how to extend inclusion and accommodation for individuals with disabilities. Youth with disabilities now have more opportunities than ever to overcome the barriers of past generations and break through the stigmas and stereotypes.

One key avenue for promoting the options of employment and independence is by presenting the benefits of such choices to young persons with disabilities and their families, while youth are still in school. Educating individuals at a young age on topics such as employment options; work incentive and benefit programs; higher education and job skill training opportunities; and independent living options can be a crucial factor in increasing independence and self-sustainability. In turn, it will also decrease the prevalence of the mindset that accepts limited opportunity, dependency on public support, and segregated living. This opportunity to target youth in transition from the education system provides a unique opportunity to encourage young

people with disabilities to strive for as independent and integrated a lifestyle as possible, given their degree of disability, with employment a crucial component for success.

As this report has outlined, transition programs can play a major role in preparing youth with disabilities for employment and an independent, integrated adulthood, but developing and implementing effective programs can be difficult. Addressing the needs of youth in transition requires a comprehensive approach spanning across program areas and policy levels. Sufficient education and training, understanding health and social benefits programs, exposure to employment opportunities, access to mentors and role models, and sources of high expectation and motivation are just some of the many elements necessary to ensure productive and fulfilling opportunities for youth with disabilities once they leave high school. In order for these young adults to successfully make the transition into adulthood, whether by entering the workforce, attending college, or enrolling in vocational training programs, a variety of elements must come together in creating a goal-oriented, comprehensive plan for entering early stages of adulthood. What this translates to in reality is a complex network of local, state, and federal programs and requirements, and a system of comparably oriented but often uncoordinated transition plans by various departments, agencies, and other organizations.

One highly complicating factor is that transition efforts involve coordination between many different parties. State and local agencies including, but not limited to, education, vocational rehabilitation, labor, health and Medicaid, and public welfare are all involved. Public and private universities and other education institutions may be involved. Private-sector employers and businesses are often also brought to the table. In addition, advocates, families, and youth play influential roles at all levels of the transition process. Each of these stakeholder groups has its own set of goals and expectations regarding transition for youth, on both the individual level and for statewide (or nationwide) action or programs. The funding sources for each party vary, and different funding

streams come with their own set of desired goals and outcomes. State and local departments and agencies may have bureaucratic structures that are dramatically different even within the same state. And, to further complicate the issue, each state's transition efforts must meet federal reporting requirements under such programs as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Workforce Investment Act, the Rehabilitation Act, No Child Left Behind, and others.

Conclusion

Comprehensive and effective transition services for youth with disabilities can play a crucial role in fostering the confidence and skill base that youth and young adults need to live a successful, independent, and productive life in adulthood. Instilling high expectations and goals for post-secondary education and employment are essential for youth reaching and undergoing the transition phase, and this message needs to be reinforced throughout young adulthood.

Promoting self-sufficiency and employment goals among youth with disabilities are important to institute a change in culture for disability employment. In disability policy, and also in health care policy, there has been a shift toward consumer-directedness, independent and integrated lifestyles through home- and community-based care and services, and through comprehensive support networks. These principles are evident in many state transition efforts. Several states involve youth and young adults in planning and implementing their transition programs and in developing policies. Also in many states, students are involved in developing their Individual Education Plans, and can design a transition plan according to their skill sets, abilities, and interests. Programs that address issues of independent living, financial self-sufficiency, self-advocacy, and the like prepare youth with disabilities for an adulthood less dependent on the government and other public programs than those of past generations. Educating transitioning youth on health care options, transportation services, job training, living skills, and more provides them with a wide range

tools and knowledge about available resources for whatever supports may be necessary. This knowledge, combined with steady and continuous employment, can lead to a decreased dependence on public support and welfare programs.

Many state transition programs are relatively new—most have been in effect for fewer than five years. Thus, it is still too early to know what approaches are effective in leading to real change in the lifestyle of individuals with disabilities. Future evaluations and studies will provide more information. It will be interesting to see the outcomes in the states that currently have comprehensive transition planning efforts and high levels of coordination. Will high levels of coordination correlate with higher numbers of individuals with disabilities living more self-sufficient and independent lifestyles? Effective transition planning has the potential to be one of the most influential tools in implementing the aforementioned culture and systems change in the disability realm by giving youth and young adults the tools and support to learn about independent living, employment, financial security, self-advocacy, and more.

If this is to be the case, it is important to realize that in effective transition planning, the creation of a plan, and even successful plan implementation, is not the ultimate goal. Improved outcomes for youth in transition five, ten, or twenty years in the future is the ultimate goal: this would include steady employment, sufficient benefits, independent living with access to community and home supports and services as needed, and social and community integration. This would also likely mean decreased dependence on public support such as Social Security benefits and nursing home or institutional living arrangements.

The state responses to the survey indicated that youth in transition is an important topic for states, and one that is gaining more attention and attracting more resources every year. While much work still needs to be done, it is encouraging to see the innovation and initiative at the state and local levels to address such a widespread and complex issue. The area of services and programs for youth in transition provides a concrete, measurable, and mean-

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ingful vehicle for real culture and systems change with the potential for a positive impact on millions of individuals, the workforce, and communities nationwide.

Successful transition planning can play a central role in promoting the aforementioned disability culture change toward independence at the individual

level. Much of the rest of the shift must come from public policy and legislative changes at the state and federal levels. But promoting independence and achievement among youth and young adults with disabilities will allow this generation to grow up to become future advocates, teachers, counselors, and policymakers.

APPENDIX 1:

State Profiles

Alaska

Agency Completing Survey: Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to work after completing secondary education, Alaska provides benefits counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions, counseling and information on the Medicaid Buy-In program, information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), internships and shadowing opportunities. Counseling is also provided on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefit options. The state trains transition educators and counselors and mandates individual planning. State and nonprofit partners also organize a Disability Mentoring Day, youth job fairs, and other school-to-work activities.

The state offers many services through both in- and out-of-school programs, including diagnostic and evaluation services, mental health services, daily living skills training and counseling and providing equipment and supplies. Once youth are out of school, Alaska offers employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, training on advocacy skills, and community integration services.

The breakdown of services at the Governor’s Council is slightly different. They report that services offered through in- and out-of-school programs include employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, community integration services, and daily living skills training and counseling. Additional out-of-school services include diagnosis, evaluation, mental health, training on advocacy skills, and providing equipment and supplies.

The state has outreach material targeted toward youth in transition. There are also programs specifically designed to address the issues of independence, including asset development tools, transportation utilization tools, independent living preparation, and self-advocacy skills. Alaska also provides a “Set for Life” handbook and a Self-Determination Tool Kit. School systems do not regularly report to adult service providers with information about youth who are approaching transition.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes

Task Force Characteristics: A task force headed by the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) and the Division of Business Partnerships has been active for one to two years. Participants include the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, the Office of Children’s Services, the Division of Juvenile Justice, the Division of Behavioral Health, the Alaska Department of Labor, the Division of Business Partnerships, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Education, the University of Alaska Anchorage, the Center for Human Development University of Alaska Southeast, the College Connection, the Alaska Job Center Network, the Division of Employment Securities, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic Education providers, Independent Living Centers, disability advocacy groups, service providers, school personnel (administrators and teachers), youth, and parents. The task force focuses on developing policy recommendations, advocating support, distributing information and maintaining the Sustainability for Intermediaries Resource Mapping web site. Youth have an advisory role on the task force.

Funding Sources: The task force receives state and federal funding. Transition efforts are funded through The Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Education and Early Development, state general funds, and federal funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Alaska is moving from a fragmented and uncoordinated system to one that is more coordinated and collaborative. Although coordination efforts with various agencies and groups differ throughout the state, intermediaries and the customized employment program are working to improve local coordination among state agencies, the Business Leadership Network, businesses and employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, educational institutions, transportation authorities, community providers, and youth. Statewide, there are efforts to coordinate plans and initiatives for better connectivity and collaboration. Relationships are being formed and strengthened with employers, businesses and industry, labor organizations, post-secondary institutions, and small business development entities, which will result in increased access to a wider variety of career options for youth with disabilities.

Evaluation and Research: Alaska has conducted much research on the barriers and incentives to employment for people with disabilities by gathering information from youth with disabilities, adults with disabilities, and employers, among others. This information has been used to tailor outreach tools and help collaboration efforts.

Promising Practices: Alaska's promising practices include Intermediaries, Customized Employment, and the Alaska Transition Camp. The Intermediaries are pilot projects that are to create a sustainable infrastructure that embraces the "dual customer" approach and serves both youth with disabilities (those in and out of school) and employers. The main goal of the intermediaries is to increase the number of youth with disabilities who are able to

make successful transitions to employment and post-secondary education while providing job placement services for employers.

Customized Employment is a Division of Vocational Rehabilitation program that targets specific people with disabilities (e.g., people with disabilities receiving SSI or SSDI, or youth making the transition from secondary school). The program uses a wrap-around approach; partners inside and outside one-stops form "service coordination teams" to support each client.

Alaska runs a Transition Camp program, funded by the Department of Education State Improvement Grant, and through fees paid by individual school districts. School district teams attend the camps using their own money. Teams consist of one special education teacher, one paraprofessional, three special education students, and one general education student. The camps have been very successful teaching youth in transition the basic skills and knowledge needed for making the transition to adulthood in their communities. They use a Person-Centered Plan, developed during the week-long session. Staff members attending the camp receive training on IDEA transition requirements and have the opportunity to meet and work with staff from other agencies and community groups involved in transition planning.

Arizona

Agency Completing Survey: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to work following the completion of their secondary education, Arizona trains transition educators and counselors and mandates individual planning. In addition, the state organizes and sponsors job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities. Arizona works with youth to encourage and develop self-determination and self-advocacy partnered with career and technical education.

Services, including diagnosis, evaluation, employment skills training and counseling, social skills, advocacy, mental health services, community inte-

gration services, daily living skills training, and providing equipment and supplies are offered both in and out of school.

The state provides outreach materials specifically adapted for youth in transition. Arizona also has a broad range of outreach materials that cover issues of independence, including financial literacy materials, asset development tools, transportation utilization tools, independent living preparation, self-advocacy skills, and youth self-sufficiency tools.

The state has a Medicaid Buy-In program.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes

Task Force Characteristics: Since June 2004, the Arizona Transitional Leadership Team (ATLT), headed by the Department of Education, has focused on developing policy recommendations, advocacy, education, parental and family involvement and distributing information. ATLT participants are a diverse group, including multiple state agencies, one federal agency, community-based organizations, parents, consumers, public education agencies, and employees. Youth are encouraged to participate in meetings and discussions.

Funding Sources: Part B Set-aside funding is used for the Task Force. Transition efforts are funded by the vocational rehabilitation agency, Medicaid, federal funds, and the Department of Education.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Comprehensive statewide coordination in Arizona includes Business Leadership Networks, advocacy organizations, parent groups, state departments or agencies, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. In some places, employer groups and transportation authorities also coordinate to improve youth in transition efforts. Schools work with vocational rehabilitation agencies and the Division of Developmental Disabilities to provide a seamless transition from school to work and adult life.

The state school systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies.

Promising Practices: In Arizona, the Transition Outcomes Projects (TOPS) aims to meet the transition service requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and to improve post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities. So far, TOPS has been very successful in changing the system for transition services. The program is implemented in schools and starts by forming a baseline individualized education plan (IEP) for students ages 14 and up. This baseline should highlight specific areas where transition services are most needed. A group of workers from various state, local, and regional organizations and agencies meets to develop a strategy for addressing problem areas and set goals for the student. School district staff is then tasked with implementing the plan. A review is conducted after about a year, and during the year technical assistance is provided to the district staff approximately every six to eight weeks. The success of the project has been much attributed to the teachers involved. The TOPS initiative has also been implemented in other states.

Arizona also has a program entitled Merging Two Worlds, or M2W, for incarcerated students. This program provides an umbrella framework for preparing youth for reintroduction to the community and teaches life skills, career development, and social skills. The curriculum instructs individuals to create their own transition plans and goals based on their needs and goals.

California

Agency Completing Survey: California Department of Rehabilitation

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to work after completing secondary education, the state provides benefits counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions, counseling and information about the Medicaid Buy-In program, information on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), and is also involved in organizing job fairs and shadowing and internship opportunities. The state also trains transition educators and counselors. Individual planning is mandatory.

Services, including diagnosis, evaluation, job skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, training in advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and provision of equipment and supplies are offered through in- and out-of-school programs. Other services are offered, including work experience, on-the-job training, placement services, and supported employment.

The state does not have any outreach materials specifically targeted for youth in transition. There are programs that address issues of independence, including financial literacy, asset development, transportation utilization, independent living, self-advocacy, and youth self-sufficiency.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes

Task Force Characteristics: The California transition task force has been operating for almost two years and is headed by the state Departments of Education and Vocational Rehabilitation. Participants in the group include the Department of Rehabilitation, the Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health, the Workforce Investment Board, local education agencies, the chancellor's office at community colleges, the independent living council, families, and students. The task force focuses on developing policy recommendations, advocacy, education, parental and family involvement, and information distribution. Youth are actively involved in these discussions and activities.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded through a combination of department funds and nominal funding from the National Association of Special Education Directors. California transition efforts are funded through the vocational rehabilitation agency, Medicaid, state general funds, federal funds, and the Department of Education.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Although coordination efforts with various agencies and groups differ throughout the state, there are efforts to coordinate with the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, and transportation authorities.

Statewide, there are coordination efforts among various state agencies, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations.

Following the requirements of the 1998 Rehabilitation Act, the Department of Education and the Department of Rehabilitation entered into a State Interagency Cooperative Agreement for Transition Planning and Services for Secondary Students with Disabilities. The Department of Rehabilitation also entered an Interagency Agreement with California's chancellor's office under the auspices of the Disabled Students Program and Services to coordinate services for community college students with disabilities. California State University entered a similar agreement with the Department of Rehabilitation to coordinate services for its students. The California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators issued a memorandum of understanding to establish guidelines for joint financial support for Department of Rehabilitation students in the state post-secondary education system. The Department of Mental Health has a memorandum of understanding addressing adults and youth with mental health disabilities.

The state school systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies, including referrals to the state's Medicaid Buy-In program.

Evaluation and Research: California has conducted evaluations and research of its transition efforts to assess effectiveness of programs within the state. Data were collected on employment information, post-secondary education, quality of life, use of public benefits and support services, and family involvement. Contractors conducted the research and the reports are currently being vetted.

Promising Practices: California reports a number of promising practices, including the WorkAbility programs, Transition Partnership Programs, the Bridges to Youth Self-Sufficiency Project, and the California Mentoring Initiative.

The Special Education Division of the California Department of Education funds and administers the WorkAbility I program. There are over 300 WorkAbility I program sites (all local education

agencies) spanning all of the state's 58 counties. The program, which is available to students enrolled in Special Education, provides comprehensive pre-employment training, employment placement, and follow-up for students making the transition from school to work; independent living, and post-secondary training and education. Direct services are available until a student leaves high school. Students served by WorkAbility I programs tend to be better prepared for the transition to post-secondary training, education, and career vocational placement. WorkAbility II provides job training and placement services for young adult clients (Special Education graduates) from the Adult Schools and Regional Occupational Programs and Centers, which operate in partnership with the local office of the Department of Rehabilitation. Currently, 15 WorkAbility II programs are operating.

WorkAbility III and IV involve collaboration among the California Department of Rehabilitation, the California Community College System, and the California State Universities. The programs help students make the transition to employment from post-secondary education systems. Participants are individuals who receive state vocational rehabilitation services and are students in the state's community colleges or universities. There are 29 WorkAbility III programs and 11 WorkAbility IV programs throughout California.

The state Departments of Rehabilitation and Education collaborated to form the Transition Partnership Project. The project promotes transition efforts by developing partnerships among local education agencies and the Department of Rehabilitation. Statewide, there are 85 programs administered through cooperative agreements with local school districts, Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) and County Offices of Education. Under these agreements, the Department of Rehabilitation and local education agencies provide a number of services, including vocational rehabilitation, work-site training, job placement, and follow-up services to exiting students.

The Department of Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the Junior Foundation for the Blind, cre-

ated an intensive summer training program targeting blind or visually impaired youth. During the program, students aged 15 to 19 receive vocational advice, learn independent living skills, and receive training in orientation and mobility and assistive technology. The program includes a customized job shadowing experience that corresponds with each participant's strength and interests.

The California Mentoring Initiative aims to increase the outcomes for students enrolled in an academic program. Efforts are focused on individuals with disabilities aged 16 to 26 years, who are applicants to or clients of the California Department of Rehabilitation. The initiative tries to improve enrollment and completion of post-secondary education, improve employment outcomes, and improve the self-esteem of participants. The program is funded by a five-year grant from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the U.S. Department of Education. Two public agencies or Chief Business Officials will receive funding for the marketing, recruitment, and screening of mentors, mentor/mentee matching, and subsequent supervision of the mentor/mentee relationship. The pilot program will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of mentors who undergo skills training versus mentors who are only given basic introductory mentor information. San Diego State University will be conducting the research for this demonstration.

The state Department of Rehabilitation administers the Bridges to Youth Self-Sufficiency Project (Bridges). The Bridges Project, funded as a five-year grant from the Social Security Administration, has been implemented in five demonstration sites and builds upon the Workability I and Transition Partnership Project infrastructure of employment services. Services include benefits coordination, intensive service coordination, benefits training and education, outreach to specialized populations, early intervention, local partnering, youth incentives, local and state oversight bodies, and a data-driven research study. Program outcomes will be assessed under a number of categories, including employment, education, level of independence, service participation, and quality of life.

Colorado

Agency Completing Survey: Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

State Transition Efforts: The state reports extensive efforts to encourage youth with disabilities to work after completing secondary school. Agencies become involved in the youth's transition plans early in the process. Matching funds are provided to assist youth in a successful transition from school to work. Other efforts involve educating and cross-training agency providers, creating agency and school partnerships to keep youth connected with school, and providing leadership development activities for youth.

Additional approaches that encourage completing secondary education include providing benefits counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions, providing information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), training transition educators and counselors, organizing or sponsoring job fairs, providing internships and shadowing opportunities, and mandating individual planning.

In school, Colorado offers evaluation, employment and skills training, social skills training, advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, and daily living skills counseling. Diagnostic services are offered out of school. Further services are offered based on individual need.

The state has outreach materials targeted toward youth in transition. Programs are in place that specifically address independence issues such as Individual Development Accounts, asset development, independent living, self-advocacy, and youth self-sufficiency. School systems routinely provide adult service agencies with information about youth with disabilities who are in or approaching transition.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes. Colorado has several transition initiatives and related task force/interagency teams.

Task Force Characteristics: Colorado's transition initiatives have been in force for 15 years. The Colorado State Youth Council, a subcommittee of the Colorado Workforce Development Council, will serve as one umbrella agency and clearinghouse for all state youth initiatives and activities, including its multiple transition initiatives (see coordination section below). Multiple agencies run the transition initiatives, including the Department of Education, Office of Workforce Development, vocational rehabilitation, Health Department, and mental health agencies. These agencies are linked by cross-representation and coordination among teams. The task force primarily focuses on developing policy recommendations, involving educational entities, parents, or family, and distributing information. Youth serve on the State Youth Council as voting members. Additionally, youth participate in and act as advisors for the various initiatives.

Funding Sources: Transition efforts are funded by vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, Department of Education, the Office of Workforce Development, Department of Labor, and federal and state funds, including those from the Social Security Administration, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Office of Disability Employment Policy, the Office of Employment and Training Administration, the U.S. Office of Health and Human Services, and the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups:

While efforts may vary across the state, overall, the state reports a high collaboration with the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, state departments and agencies, education institutions, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities.

Colorado jointly develops and shares state transition plans. Two groups made up of representatives from different state agencies and community partners focus on all disability issues. One is the Executive Directors Advisory Group (EDAG) that is made up of state and agency directors who advise the executive

director of the Office of Workforce Development on all disability-related issues, with a big emphasis on youth. As it evolved from solely a subcommittee of Project TRAIN, this group of core partners expanded beyond workforce-related advisory duties to collaborate on broader transition matters and initiatives. The other is a consortium called Project TRAIN (Training Resources and Incentives Network), comprised of representatives from state service delivery agencies, community-based groups, disability groups, and the Governor’s Council. Project Train meets on an as-needed basis to discuss opportunities for the state to pursue on disability issues. These two groups work together on various grant opportunities and state programs addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities, which in Colorado often pertain to youth. Both of these groups are fully involved in the project in an administrative, operational, or advisory capacity, from concept and grant application through implementation and follow-up. Examples of initiatives undertaken by these groups include, the SSA Transition Demonstration Project, the State Alignment Grant for Improving Transition Outcomes through Use of Intermediaries, and the collection and dissemination by the State Youth Council of promising workforce practices related to youth, including youth with disabilities.

The state school systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies.

Evaluation and Research: Through WIN Partners/UCHSC, secondary and post-secondary education Agencies, health/Medicaid agencies and vocational rehabilitation, Colorado has prepared evaluation reports on state transition programs. Among the data collected were information on employment, post-secondary education, family involvement, and Medicaid and health information.

Promising Practices: The many collaborations in Colorado, including those by Project TRAIN and EDAG, have demonstrated the effectiveness of highly coordinated efforts. The state has been selected to participate in the National Governors Association’s Center for Best Practices Policy Academy to continue its work on streamlining communication and collaboration.

Delaware

Agency Completing Survey: Delaware Health and Human Services, Division of Development Disabilities

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

State Transition Efforts: Delaware uses a number of approaches to encourage youth with disabilities to complete secondary education. The approaches include benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions; counseling for students and families on the Medicaid Buy-In program; information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS); training transition educators and counselors; organizing job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities; mandated individual planning; and access to vocational rehabilitation even if youth are not in school.

A number of state transition services are offered for youth with disabilities both in- and out- of school. The services include diagnosis, evaluation, employment skills counseling, advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, and daily living skills training. In addition, social skills training and counseling and access to equipment and supplies are offered for youth in school.

The state does not have any outreach materials specifically geared toward youth in transition. Delaware provides transportation utilization tools designed to encourage independence.

Delaware has a Medicaid Buy-In Program.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The Department of Education is the lead agency for the task force that has been active for five years. Multiple agencies participate on the task force, including the Department of Education, Division of Developmental Disability Services, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Service Providers. The task force focuses on developing policy recommendations and educational materials, and on distributing information.

Funding Sources: Funding for the task force comes from Department of Education. Transition efforts

are funded by the Department of Education and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: The state reports coordination efforts with the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, state agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities. Transition specialists from the Division of Developmental Disability Services work in conjunction with the Department of Education to help students and their families ensure a successful transition to work and adult services. The school systems also provide adult service agencies with information about youth with disabilities who are in or approaching the transition from secondary education to adult service agencies.

Promising Practices: Delaware is currently working on a Pilot Project (Early Start to Supported Employment for Youth in Transition) with the Department of Education, the Division of Developmental and Disability Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and adult service providers. The project aims to ensure that students have jobs immediately after graduating high school to avoid a period of unemployment. Students must be in good academic standing and are tracked by the Department of Education. The Department of Education, with the Division of Developmental Disability Services, and with funding through vocational rehabilitation, submits paperwork and puts up the costs for job assessments, placements, skills training, career development, and follow-up for the participating students. Following the first 90 days of steady employment, the initial case is closed and the individual enters into a long-term follow-up period during which he or she can receive on-the-job coaching and assistance in problem solving. The funding for this long-term assistance is provided by the Division of Developmental Disability Services.

This program, in its first year of operation, currently has 16 students enrolled. It is too early to determine whether this project is successful.

Illinois

Agency Completing Survey: Illinois Board of Education

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to complete secondary education, the state monitors local education agencies via the Illinois State Board of Education's general supervision protocols to ensure proper development and implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and provision of procedural safeguards. It offers benefits counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions, provides counseling and information about the Medicaid Buy-In program and information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS). Illinois also trains transition educators and counselors as well as the parents or guardians of transition age youth regarding transition best practices; sponsors statewide conferences and workshops; and provides technical assistance to local education agencies and Transition Planning Committees to help them provide job fairs, internships, and job shadowing opportunities.

Individualized education program development and implementation services offered through in-school and out-of-school programs include evaluation, diagnosis, academic coursework, employment skills counseling, social skills training, advocacy skills training, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training, and equipment and supplies.

Under a federally funded project, Illinois created outreach materials specifically geared to informing youth in transition, their families, and their educators about the transition process and student and family rights while receiving secondary special education services. Financial literacy materials that address the issue of independence are also available along with outreach information regarding the transition of health care from pediatric to adult health care providers. The Interagency Council developed outreach materials geared specifically for youth who want to attend a two- or four-year college or university, and for their families and educators.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Illinois has an Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC).

Task Force Characteristics: The Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) was established in 1990 by the Interagency Coordinating Council Act (20 ILCS 3970) to facilitate collaboration among state agencies and improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. The council is charged with gathering and coordinating data on services for transition-age youth with disabilities in transition from school to employment, post-secondary education and training, and community living; providing information, consultation, and technical assistance to state and local stakeholders; assisting state and local stakeholders in establishing interagency transition agreements; conducting an annual statewide evaluation of student transition outcomes and needs; and providing in-service training to consumers in developing and improving awareness of transition services.

The Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services are the mandated co-chairs. Other mandated participants include the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Department of Child and Family Services, the Department of Corrections, the University of Illinois at Chicago Division of Specialized Care for Children (Maternal and Child Health Title V agency), the Department of Employment Security, the Board of Higher Education, the Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Economic and Community Opportunity, and the Community College Board.

Funding Sources: Youth in transition efforts receive funding from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, from Medicaid and are assisted with federal funds, state general funds, and local tax dollars.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Transition Planning Committees were established under Illinois law in 1989 to support ongoing efforts to enhance services to students with disabilities. Transition Planning Committees are community-based entities whose memberships are comprised

of local parents, students, educators, rehabilitation providers, and other adult and community providers. The Committees are mandated to identify existing transition services in the community, develop transition interagency agreements, report annually to the ICC regarding transition service needs and gaps, and make recommendations for meeting the identified needs and gaps. The level of coordination varies from community to community. Statewide, efforts are made to coordinate with advocacy organizations, parent groups, state departments/agencies and educational institutions. At the local and community levels, efforts are coordinated with the state Business Leadership Network, employer groups, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities. The state reports ongoing efforts to foster outreach efforts with community-level agencies and local education agencies.

Evaluation and Research: Illinois has collected transition-related data annually for over a decade. The collected information includes the types of services students are receiving while in school and their anticipated service needs.

Promising Practices: A grant from the U.S. Department of Education has provided funding over the last three years for a project designed to provide training and technical assistance to students, families, educators, and community providers regarding transition requirements, person-centered planning, promotion of self-determination, and writing transition-driven Individual Education Plans. The project, Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living (TOTAL), was originally funded for three years, was granted funds for an extra year, and is currently in its fourth year. The grant funding is used for training, materials, and travel, and the state provides funding for staff salaries. Four core practices are the focus of TOTAL: (1) Understanding and Meeting State and Federal Transition Mandates; (2) Person-Centered Transition Planning; (3) Promoting Student Self-Determination; and (4) Transition as the Centerpiece of the Individualized Education Plan. These four practices were disseminated through

three channels. Twenty transition teams from local state education agencies received extensive training to offer transition services by means of the four principles, 150 regional education staff members were trained as trainers, and a variety of multimedia materials were developed for individuals who did not participate as members of regional trainer teams to gain access to the materials.

Indiana

Agency Completing Survey: Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to complete secondary education, the state provides benefits counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions; counseling and information about the Medicaid Buy-In program; information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS); trains transition educators and counselors; organizes and sponsors job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities; and mandates individual planning. Various organizations sponsor and participate in job fairs. The state vocational rehabilitation agency takes an active role in setting up internships and shadowing opportunities. The Indiana State Improvement Grant provides some funding for various transition activities and is taking the lead on a project to produce an employability portfolio/certification for students that provides a summary of competencies that would lead to successful employment as an adult.

Services, including evaluation, diagnosis, employment skills training/counseling, social skills training/counseling, advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training, and equipment and supplies are offered through both in- and out-of-school programs. Whether the services are provided depends upon the school system. Vocational rehabilitation provides some of the above services if the school does not provide them; services do not usually occur until the last semester of school (sooner if needed). According to the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

Policy and Procedure Manual, “Once the student has applied, placement and related services may be authorized, as appropriate, at any time following completion of the student's next-to-last year of school (e.g., following completion of the junior year), or earlier, if identified in the student's Individual Education Plan as appropriate to meet the student's individualized vocational needs.”

State school systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies, including referrals to the state's Medicaid Buy-In program.

Indiana has outreach materials specifically geared toward youth in transition. In addition, the state has a number of outreach materials addressing the issues of independence, such as financial literacy materials, asset development tools, transportation utilization tools, independent living preparation, and self-advocacy skills. Many of the services are provided directly by vocational rehabilitation counselors or community rehabilitation programs. Youth with any questions or concerns about benefits are referred to the Indiana Works program for a complete benefits analysis.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The task force, which has been active for about four years, is headed by the Indiana Department of Education. Participants on the task force include the Department of Education, the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University, the Department of Workforce Development, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction, the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, and the Indiana State Improvement Grant. The task force focuses on developing policy recommendations, providing advocacy and education, and distributing information.

Funding Sources: Transition efforts receive funding from the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Medicaid, the Department of Education, and state general funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups:

While coordination efforts with agencies and groups differ throughout the state, efforts are made to work with Business Leadership Networks, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities. Efforts are made to coordinate statewide with advocacy organizations, parent groups, state departments, and agencies and educational institutions. The state reports that the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency does some work with higher education institutions and adult service agencies.

Evaluation and Research: Indiana has conducted evaluations and research of their transition efforts to assess effectiveness of programs within the state. Data were collected on employment information, post-secondary education, services that promote independent living skills, and use of public benefits and support services. Data collection was done by University partners, the Department of Education, and a graduate follow-along study.

Promising Practices: The Indiana State Improvement Grant (IN-SIG) is managed by the Department of Education school improvement initiative and funded through IDEA Part D funds. IN-SIG is a comprehensive program to improve services and outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. Transition services, including systems for professional development, technical assistance, and dissemination of knowledge about best practices, are a part of the program, which also includes early intervention and education services.

Indiana also provides local school systems with an updated and revised collection of transition-related articles twice a year to ensure their access to current information. The collection is entitled *Independence*, and is sent to special education offices all over the state to include in their own newsletter and distribution lists. The content of these articles covers a range of topics, such as how to gain access to vocational rehabilitation services, graduation requirements, how to get a driver’s license, and other issues of adulthood and independence.

Iowa

Agency Completing Survey: Iowa Department of Education

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to complete secondary education, Iowa provides benefits counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions; counseling and information to on the Medicaid Buy-In program; information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS); and organizes and sponsors job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities for students and their families. In addition, Iowa trains transition educators and counselors. Individual planning is mandatory.

Iowa provides transition services for youth, regardless of whether they are in school. These services include evaluation, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training, and counseling. Schools provide equipment and supplies.

Iowa also has a Social Security Administration–funded Youth Demonstration Project,, Smart Start, for students with disabilities between ages 14 and 23. This program is designed to help these youths become economically self-sufficient as they make the transition from school to work or to higher education. The Smart Start project is administered by the Employment Policy Group at the University of Iowa Health Care Center for Disabilities and Development. See below for more details.

Task Force or Similar Effort: No

Funding Sources: Funding for youth in transition efforts comes from Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Medicaid, the Iowa Department of Education and includes some federal and state general funding.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups:

Statewide, there is coordination among Business Leadership Networks, employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, state agencies, educa-

tional institutions, and nonprofit organizations. Transportation authorities coordinate with youth-in-transition efforts in some parts of the state.

The state school systems provide information on youth making the transition from secondary school to adult service agencies.

The SSA-funded Youth Demonstration contains a systems improvement component that includes integrating resources and blending and braiding funding streams among federal, state, and local groups and initiatives. The income generation and financial security component involves partnering with mainstream financial institutions, and the component on improving school performance and career exploration creates partnerships among local schools, universities and colleges, and employers.

Evaluation and Research: Along with the Education agency, university partners and Vocation Rehabilitation Services have researched and prepared studies on the effectiveness of its programs. Data were collected on employment information, post-secondary education, independent living skills/living services, quality of life, and use of public benefits/support services.

Promising Practices: Smart Start, the SSA-funded youth demonstration project, contains a systems change component to integrate resources and “blend” funding streams among federal, state, and local supportive service initiatives. Major components of the project include improving school performance and graduation rates, expanding opportunities for post-secondary education, employment or other income generation, and promoting asset accumulation for future financial security. Partnerships have been created with mainstream financial institutions, local schools, post-secondary educational institutions, and employers.

Smart Start, with Iowa’s 1115 waiver, gives the state the option to “cash out” benefits from Medicaid and blends them with other public funds. Public monies for purchasing supportive services that now flow through many layers and entities can

then be “banked” by youth and their families for direct purchase of support services. Through this “cash and counseling” program, participants use the tools of self-determination to direct the publicly funded investment in their lives. Personal agents or brokers trained by the program can be hired to help negotiate the purchase of services, and advise and support these youths. Young people and their families are provided with financial literacy training using a curriculum created through a partnership among the Employment Policy Group, the school systems, and credit unions.

Smart Start integrates transition services and planning within the framework of the young person’s IEP and gives the young person and their family ‘consumer’ control over the services purchased and received. The project utilizes incentives for asset building, employment, and post-secondary education. It also includes the ability to track the funds used and a research and evaluation component to measure best practices and outcomes.

Kansas

Agency Completing Survey: Kansas Department of Education

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to work after completing secondary school, Kansas profits counseling and information to students and families on the Medicaid Buy-In program and provides information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS). The state trains transition educators and counselors and mandates individual planning.

Kansas offers numerous transition services, including evaluation, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and equipment and supplies. In addition to the above-mentioned activities, out-of-school youth are offered diagnostic services and advocacy skills training.

Task Force or Similar Effort: No.

Funding Sources: Transition efforts are funded through the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, the Department of Education and receive federal and state general funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Statewide, efforts are made to coordinate with advocacy organizations, parent groups, state agencies, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. In some places throughout the state, efforts are made to coordinate with employer groups.

Kentucky

Agency Completing Survey: Upper Cumberland (Kentucky) Special Education Cooperative

State Transition Efforts: To encourage completion of secondary education, Kentucky provides information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) and organizes and sponsors job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities for students. Kentucky also trains transition educators and counselors and mandates individual planning.

Kentucky provides a variety of services for youth in and out of school. Youth are offered diagnosis and evaluation services, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, and daily living skills training and counseling. In addition, the state offers advocacy skills training, mental health services, community integration services, and equipment and supplies.

The state does not have any outreach materials specifically targeted toward youth in transition, but there are programs that address issues of independence, including independent living preparation and self-advocacy skills.

Task Force or Similar Effort: The Kentucky Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities is comprised of representatives from twenty different state agencies, including the Department of Exceptional Children Services, the Kentucky Special Education Cooperative Network,

the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Career and Technical Education, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services, the Kentucky Deafblind Project, and the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs. The council, created in 1989, is supported by an interagency agreement, voluntarily entered by all twenty member agencies in order to collaborate in the design, delivery, and improvement of statewide transition services for young adults.

A subcommittee of the council, the Transition Core Team (TCT), is comprised of core council agencies and a parent of a youth with a disability. The TCT met frequently during 2003 through 2005 in order to lay the groundwork for the establishment of Regional Interagency Transition Teams.

Funding Sources: Transition efforts receive funds from Medicaid, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Kentucky Department for Workforce Investment, and the state Department of Education. They also receive federal funds, and state general funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Coordination efforts in Kentucky occur through the state-level Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities and a Transition Core Team that works directly with Regional Interagency Transition Teams.

Although coordination with various agencies differs throughout the state, there are efforts to coordinate with the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organization, nonprofit organizations and transportation authorities. Statewide, there is coordination among various state agencies and educational institutions. The state school systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies.

Promising Practices: Regional Interagency Transition Teams were established in January 2005, when a statewide "transition forum" was held in Louisville in January 2005 for members to meet

each other and begin a statewide discussion of regional transition needs. In March 2005 a second statewide meeting was held in order to allow the teams to begin work on their regional vision, mission, and action plan. Following the March meeting, the teams began meeting in their respective regions. The teams are aligned with the eleven state Special Education Cooperatives.

Another promising practice in Kentucky was participation in the National Center for Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) national transition summits in 2003 and 2005. Through the knowledge gained there, the transition team developed an action plan for improving transition results for Kentucky's youth. To put the planning into action, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities, with Department of Exceptional Children Services leadership, created the Transition Core Team subcommittee of the council.

Louisiana

Agency Completing Survey: Louisiana Rehabilitation Services

State Transition Efforts: Louisiana has a number of measures in effect to encourage youth in transition to work following completion of secondary school, including benefits counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions, counseling and information to students and families on the Medicaid Buy-In program, information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) and organizing job fairs, internship, and shadowing opportunities. The state provides training for transition educators and counselors and mandates individual planning.

Louisiana offers multiple services both in- and out- of school. These services include diagnosis, evaluation, employment skills training and counseling, training in advocacy skills, mental health services, daily living skills training and counseling, and providing equipment and supplies.

The state does not have outreach materials geared toward youth in transition; however pro-

grams are in place to address independence issues such as independent living preparation and self-advocacy skills.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Not yet. Louisiana is currently awaiting the governor's signature to officially create a Statewide Interagency Core Transition Team for youth with disabilities. The group has already met informally.

Funding Sources: Transition efforts are funded by the state Department of Education, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, and by federal and state general funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups:

Louisiana has cooperative agreements with agencies, both at the state and local levels, although agency involvement varies from parish to parish. Statewide, agencies coordinate with Business Leadership Networks, parent groups, educational institutions and nonprofit organizations. Some areas coordinate with transportation authorities and advocacy organizations.

The state school systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies.

Promising Practices: The state has cooperative agreements with adult agencies in several parishes that allow students who are graduating to attend school their senior year and attend college or vocational tech programs at the same time. In addition, the Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum was a positive experience for students who participated in the summer program.

Montana

Agency Completing Survey: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services

State Transition Efforts: State efforts to encourage youth in transition to work after completing secondary school include counseling and information to students and families on the Medicaid Buy-In

program, information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) and organizing job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities. The state also trains transition educators and counselors.

Services offered through both in- and out-of-school programs include diagnosis, evaluation, employment skill training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, training to develop advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and providing equipment and supplies.

The state has outreach materials designed for youth in transition. There are programs that specifically address issues of independence, including financial literacy materials, asset development tools, transportation utilization tools, independent living preparation, self-advocacy skills, and youth self-sufficiency tools.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes

Task Force Characteristics: The task force, led by the Governor’s office, has been active for less than one year. Various agency representatives participate in the task force, which focuses on education, distributing information and communications, and collaboration. Youth are actively involved in group discussions and task force activities.

Funding Sources: Transition efforts are funded by Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, the Department of Education, and by federal and state general funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Montana reports statewide coordination efforts with advocacy organizations, parent groups, state agencies, and educational institutions. Nonprofit organizations coordinate with agencies in some places throughout the state.

School systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies.

Promising Practices: Montana has established coordination among public school systems and Vocational Rehabilitation.

New York

Agency Completing Survey: New York State Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities

State Transition Efforts: State efforts to encourage work for youth in transition after completing secondary school include counseling on 1619(a) and (b) provisions; counseling and information to students and families on the Medicaid Buy-In program; information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS); and organizing job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities. The state also trains transition educators and counselors and mandates individual planning.

Other activities to encourage work include integration of special education and vocational rehabilitation policies and practices through interagency agreements and joint policy development; collaboration with the Career and Technical Education component of the state’s general education system, including the Career Plan initiative; and collaboration with the Department of Labor on access to such youth employment services as the on-line Career Zone vocational exploration and career planning tool.

Services offered through both in- and out-of-school programs include evaluation, employment skill training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, training to develop advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and providing equipment and supplies. New York also offers exploratory experiences and preparation for postsecondary education participation.

The state has outreach materials targeted for youth in transition and programs that specifically address issues of independence.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes. Stakeholder involvement in transition planning is embedded in multiple state and regional advisory councils and other ongoing activities.

Task Force Characteristics: Transition efforts, which have been in effect for five years, are led by

the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities. Participants include schools, families, constituency organizations and advocates, state and local agencies, community rehabilitation providers, post-secondary educational institutions, and independent living and employment organizations. Major activities, which vary by stakeholder group, include developing policy recommendations, providing advocacy and education, distributing information, and encouraging parental and family involvement. Youth involvement also varies by stakeholder group.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded by Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, the Department of Education, the Workforce Investment Act, the Vocational and Technical Education Act (VATEA), and by federal and state general funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: New York reports statewide coordination efforts with employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, state agencies, transportation authorities, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Successful transition is a component of the agency's strategic plan that includes goals for special education and vocational rehabilitation. Therefore, coordination efforts are embedded in ongoing collaborations with all of the above-listed entities.

School systems provide information on youth in transition from secondary school to adult service agencies, including referrals to the state's Medicaid Buy-In program.

Evaluation and Research: New York has conducted research and prepared reports that assess youth in transition efforts. The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities collected data on employment information, post-secondary education, independent living skills and living services, quality of life, use of public benefits and support services, family involvement, and medical information.

Promising Practices: New York has seven regional Transition Coordination Sites that assist communi-

ties in implementing transition planning and services to help students successfully make the transition to post-secondary educational opportunities, community living, adult services, and employment.

The state also runs Special Education Resource and Training Centers that provide districts with information on coaching and technical assistance tailored to its individual needs. There are forty-two Special Education Resource and Training Centers offices located throughout the state.

North Carolina

Agency Completing Survey: North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

State Transition Efforts: North Carolina provides a variety of services for youth in transition to encourage work after completing secondary school, including giving benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions; providing counseling and information on the Medicaid Buy-In program and Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program; training transition educators and counselors; mandating individual planning; and by organizing and sponsoring job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities. The state also participated in Disability Mentoring Day. The Department of Public Instruction has a state-sanctioned high school diploma pathway with an occupational course of study.

In-school and out-of-school transition services offered in North Carolina include diagnosis, evaluation, employment skills training and counseling, advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and access to equipment and supplies.

The state does have some outreach materials that specifically target youth in transition, and offers some programs that address the issue self-advocacy.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The transition task force in North Carolina is headed by the Department of Health and Human Services. Other participants include the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division of Mental Health, the Depart-

ment of Social Services, the Division of Public Health, the Division of Medical Assistance, and the Division of Early Childhood Services. Youth are not involved in the task force, which has been active for between one and two years, and is primarily involved in distributing information. The time frame of action for the group is more than three years.

Funding Sources: Funding for transition efforts in North Carolina is provided by Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, the Department of Education, and the Department of Social Services.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Transition efforts in North Carolina involve coordinating state agencies and departments, the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, transportation authorities, and one-stop Job Link centers (through the Department of Labor–Workforce Investment Act youth programs).

State school systems routinely provide adult service agencies with information about youth in transition who may need services.

North Dakota

Agency Completing Survey: North Dakota Department of Instruction

State Transition Efforts: North Dakota provides services to youth in transition that include benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions, information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), training for transition educators and counselors; and mandated individual planning. The state also organizes job fairs, internship, shadowing, and other opportunities to encourage work after secondary school.

The state provides in- and out-of-school services for youth in transition, including diagnostic and evaluation services, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and

access to equipment and supplies.

North Dakota has transition programs that specifically address issues of independence, including transportation utilization, independent living preparation, self-advocacy, and youth self-sufficiency. State school systems provide adult service agencies with information about youth in transition who may be in need of services.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The North Dakota Department of Education is the lead agency for the youth in transition task force—the Transition Steering Council. Stakeholders from various groups, including state agencies, parent groups, vocational rehabilitation and developmental disabilities programs, higher education, independent living centers, job services, juvenile correction centers, parents, career and vocational education programs, teachers, and special education directors. The group is currently looking for youth to sit on the task force. The North Dakota Transition Steering Council has been active for more than five years, and the time frame for its future action is one to two years. The council works to develop policy recommendations and plays an advisory role to the North Dakota Transition Coordinator.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded through IDEA-B funds. Other transition programs are funded through vocational rehabilitation, federal funds, and the Department of Instruction.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Statewide, youth in transition programs in North Dakota involve coordination among state departments and agencies, parent and advocacy groups, and educational institutions. In some parts of the state, employer groups, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities are also involved. The state reports a high level of coordination among different groups.

Evaluation and Research: North Dakota conducted research to assess whether the outcome goals for transition efforts were being met. Information was

collected regarding employment, post-secondary education, and independent living skills and living services for youth in transition. The data were collected by a university partner.

Promising Practices: North Dakota runs a Transition Camp program for students with developmental disabilities, the majority of whom are mentally retarded. The camps began as a pilot program through the Department of Public Instruction, but are now operated through local school systems. Individuals attending the camp receive a variety of learning activities related to transition as well as a camp experience complete with fun activities, cabin living in the woods, etc. Funding comes from a combination of private funds, donations, and scholarships.

North Dakota also has an Interagency Transition Institute every other year, a three-day conference organized by the State Transition Coordinator and attended by special education teachers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, and parents. The institute is also funded through the Department of Public Instruction.

Oklahoma

Agency Completing Survey: Oklahoma Department of Education

State Transition Efforts: To encourage employment after completing secondary education, Oklahoma provides youth in transition with information and counseling on the Medicaid Buy-In program, employment opportunities through job fairs, internships, shadowing, etc., mandated individual planning, and implementation of a Self-Determination and Self-Directed Individual Education Plan (IEP) curriculum in some schools. Some schools also have a full-time transition specialist. The Oklahoma State Department of Education will soon begin distributing a youth planning workbook developed by a national organization. The state also provides training for transition educators and counselors.

Several other services are offered both in- and out-of school, although not consistently throughout the state. These services include diagnosis and evaluation, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, advocacy skills for youth and families, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and access to equipment and supplies.

The school systems in Oklahoma regularly provide adult service agencies with information on youth with disabilities in transition from secondary education.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The Oklahoma youth in transition task force is headed by the state Department of Education. Participants in the group are the Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Governor's Disability Council, parents, teachers, transition specialists, representatives from higher education, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Education Career Tech, and the High School/High Tech program. The group has been active for one to two years and has a working time frame of over five years. Major activities of the task force include advocacy, education, parental and family involvement, information distribution, and a statewide conference on transition. The task force is in the process of adding youths as participants in the group.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded through Department of Education dollars. Funding for other transition programs comes from the Department of Education, vocational rehabilitation, the Department of Human Services, and other agencies involved.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: The Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Department of Rehabilitative Services are both heavily involved in transition efforts, and coordinate with outside groups, including the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy

organizations, parent groups, education institutions, and other state agencies. The coordination levels and participants vary in different parts of the state.

Evaluation and Research: Oklahoma has not yet conducted any research or evaluation of its transition programs or their effectiveness, although post-school outcome data will be collected yearly beginning in 2007.

Promising Practices: Oklahoma has a three-year grant from the University of Oklahoma for a Self-Determination and Self-Directed IEP curriculum. The goal is to allow students to guide the development of their IEP and plan toward their particular goals and interests. This teaches self-determination and self-advocacy, and allows the students a greater understanding and participating in the process. When administered correctly, this program is very successful. All parties involved need to take into consideration the extent to which individual students can actively participate in the process based on their abilities.

Oklahoma is considering implementing the Transition Taxonomy developed by Paula Kohler. Regional teams will participate in a yearly transition institute as well as cadre meetings throughout the year.

Oregon

Agency Completing Survey: Oregon Department of Human Services, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

State Transition Efforts: In order to encourage work for youth with disabilities after completing a secondary education, Oregon provides the following services for youth in transition: benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions; counseling and information on the Medicaid Buy-In program; information and education on the Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program; training for transition educators and counselors; organization of job fairs, internships, shadowing opportunities; and mandated individual planning. A collaborative effort

exists between the Department of Education and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. An appointed liaison to the Oregon Department of Education from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services provides the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services with representation on the State Advisory Council for Special Education and the Oregon Workforce Investment Board Youth Council.

A variety of in-school transition services are provided in Oregon—evaluation, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, self-advocacy skills training, community integration services, and daily living skills training.

Out-of-school services provided include all of the above plus diagnostic services, mental health services, and assistance in gaining access to necessary equipment and supplies.

Oregon has programs that specifically address some of the issues of independence, including developing materials on financial literacy, Individual Development Accounts, asset development tools, transportation utilization, independent living preparation, self-advocacy skills, and youth self-sufficiency tools.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The state Department of Education heads the Oregon youth in transition task force. Participants include representatives from the Department of Education, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Oregon Parent Training and Information Center (ORPTI), the Office of Seniors and People with Disabilities, the University of Oregon's Office of Special Education, Portland State University, parents of youth with disabilities, high school teachers, and the Department of Mental Health. The group has been active for between one and two years, and their time frame for action is less than one year. Youth do not participate in the task force. The major activity of the task force is to develop policy recommendations.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded by state general funds. Other transition efforts in the state are funded by federal dollars.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups:

Oregon reports significant levels of coordination among various state and community agencies and groups on transition issues. Collaborators on transition initiatives include educational institutions and state agencies statewide. In some areas of the state, the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organization, parent groups, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities are also collaborators. The Oregon Disabilities Council, the State Independent Living Council, the Oregon Health Sciences University, the Child Development and Rehabilitation Center, the Youth Leadership Forum, One-Stop Centers, Education Service Districts, the Independent Living Program for Children in Foster Care, Disability Service Coordinators, the Commission for the Blind, and all the task force participants mentioned above are also involved in collaboration efforts.

Oregon school systems provide adult service agencies and organization with information, on a regular basis, on transitioning youth, including referrals to the Medicaid Buy-In program.

Evaluation and Research: The University of Oregon has conducted evaluation studies on the effectiveness of state transition programs. They have conducted research regarding whether the outcome goals for youth efforts are being met. The state has collected data on employment information, post-secondary education, independent living skills and services, quality of life, use of public benefit and support programs, and rates of engagement for post-secondary employment and training among youth in transition. Data were collected by university partners, the Department of Education, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Promising Practices: Oregon began the Youth Transition Program in 1990 as a coordination effort among the Oregon Department of Education, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, local school districts, and the University of Oregon to improve employment outcomes for youth with disabilities who are in transition from school to work. The pro-

gram is offered through local school districts via transition specialists funded through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and with matching dollars from the local school district. Through the Youth Transition Program, high school students with disabilities are offered services such as individualized planning, job training, career instruction, and counseling. The program develops a coordinated post-secondary plan based on the student's interests, skills, and goals. The services continue for up to one year post-graduation from high school to increase the likelihood that individuals will remain in the employment, post-secondary education, or training program setting that they began. To date, over 15,000 youth have participated in the program, and evaluations have shown that participants in the Youth Transition Program have the highest rates of finding and maintaining employment among participants in all vocational rehabilitation programs. The Youth Transition Program participants also demonstrate higher employment rates than do youth with disabilities who did not participate in the program—90 percent of Youth Transition Program students leave the program with a high school diploma, as compared to 47 percent of non-participating students with disabilities, according to a national study by the Stanford Research Institute. Similarly, 71 percent of Youth Transition Program participants are employed two years after leaving high school, compared to a 46 percent national average for youth with disabilities. The Youth Transition Program has demonstrated success in both urban and rural areas of the state.

Pennsylvania

Agency Completing Survey: Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation, Community on Transition

State Transition Efforts: To encourage work for youth with disabilities after they complete secondary education, Pennsylvania provides benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions, counseling and information on the Medicaid Buy-In program and Plans

for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), trains transition educators and counselors, organizes job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities, and mandates individual planning. The state works to encourage these efforts at the local level, and participates in national transition events and mentoring days.

Pennsylvania offers in- and out-of-school services for youth in transition, including diagnostic and evaluation services, employment skills and social skills training and counseling, advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training, and access to equipment and supplies.

The state has developed outreach materials specifically targeted to youth in transition, and programs that addresses independence issues, such as financial literacy, asset development, transportation utilization, independent living preparation, self-advocacy, and youth self-sufficiency. In July 2005, the state held a conference on transition, bringing together youth, employers, and representatives from various agencies and organizations involved in these transition efforts.

The school systems in Pennsylvania provide adult service agencies with information about youth in transition from school to work, and there is a referral process for the state's Medicaid Buy-In program.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The transition group in Pennsylvania is headed by the Department of Education, and includes participants from the Departments of Education, Labor and Industry, Health, and Public Welfare. Participants include youth and their family members, local service agencies, and other representatives when necessary. The task force has been active for between three and four years. Major activities are developing policy recommendations, advocacy, education, parental and familial involvement, information distribution, and support for local transition coordinating councils. The focus is on post-school outcomes for high-risk youth, and encourages the participation of youth and young adults. The group also participates in some national transition community events.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded primarily by the Department of Education. When possible, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation pays for some projects. Funding for other transition efforts comes from vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, state general funds, federal funds, the Department of Education, and other grants. Local transition coordinating councils in that state are involved in a variety of projects and activities, joining efforts at the state and national levels.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Statewide, coordination on transition efforts in Pennsylvania involves state departments and agencies, parent groups, educational institutions, and local transition coordinating councils. In some parts of the state, the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organizations, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities are involved as well. The state is currently in the second year of a planning process to integrate children's services by increasing joint planning efforts among the mental health, mental retardation, and children and youth agencies. Adult service agencies are brought in during the Individual Education Plan process.

Evaluation and Research: Pennsylvania has conducted research and evaluation reports on the effectiveness of transition programs and whether the outcomes of the programs are being met. Data collected in the state include information on employment, post-secondary education, independent living skills and services, quality of life, use of public benefits and support programs, family involvement, and medical background. The data collection is not yet complete, and data are being collected by agencies involved in the State Leadership team.

Promising Practices: In July 2005, the state held the Pennsylvania Community on Transition Conference, Strengthening Transition: Achieving Results, bringing together youth, employers, and representatives from various agencies and organizations involved in transition. The goal of the conference was to empower youth and young adults with disabilities

by providing information on services, resources, community integration, employment, post-secondary training and education, and overall healthy lifestyles. The conference featured a wide variety of session topics, presenters, discussion panels, vendors, and hands-on learning opportunities. The content was geared not only to youth and young adults, but also to their families and other stakeholders in the transition process, including transition counselors and educators, vocational rehabilitation professionals, Social Security Administration workers, workforce investment staff, employers, higher education representatives, and high school educators.

South Carolina

Agency Completing Survey: University of South Carolina Center for Disability Resources

State Transition Efforts: South Carolina offers a range of in- and out-of-school services for youth in transition, which includes diagnostic services; evaluation; employment skills training and counseling; social skills training and counseling; advocacy skills training; community integration services; daily living skills training and counseling; and access to assistive technology, equipment, and supplies. Mental health services are offered outside of the school setting.

South Carolina has programs that address certain issues of independence for youth in transition, including transportation utilization tools, independent living preparation, self-advocacy skills, and self-sufficiency tools geared for youth.

State school systems do not provide adult service agencies with information about youth in transition who might need services. South Carolina does have a Medicaid Buy-In program, but the state does not have a referral process for youth in transition.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The South Carolina youth in transition task force is not headed by a single agency or organization. Group participants come from the Department of Education, the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, the University of

South Carolina Center for Disability Resources, the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the Developmental Disabilities Council in the Office of the Governor, ProParent of South Carolina, Family Connection of South Carolina, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the South Carolina Department of Corrections, and the South Carolina Assistive Technology Project. The group has been active less than one year. Major activities of the South Carolina task force consist of development of policy recommendations, advocacy, education, parental and family involvement, distribution of information, and building interagency collaboration and communication at the state level. The time frame for action of these items is two to three years. The role of youth on the task force is still being developed; they are in the process of recruiting an active student member.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Efforts for youth in transition in South Carolina involve coordination among state departments and agencies, advocacy organizations, and educational institutions. Coordination varies at the local level.

Evaluation and Research: South Carolina has prepared research and evaluations on the effectiveness of state transition programs, which include conducting studies and collecting data on post-secondary education, use of public benefits and support programs, and family involvement during transition. University partners collected the data.

Promising Practices: South Carolina is in the process of developing a comprehensive initiative to improve graduation rates for students with disabilities through self-determination and student involvement. Training has been conducted in school districts on incorporating these principles into transition efforts using evidence-based practices.

In May 2000, South Carolina held a Higher Education Academy through the State Transition Systems Change Grant Project, SIGHT. Twenty-five higher-education educators attended to learn about transition regulations, requirements, best practices, and trends.

South Dakota

Agency Completing Survey: South Dakota Transition Services Liaison Project

State Transition Efforts: To encourage work after secondary school, South Dakota provides youth in transition with benefits counseling services on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions, counseling and information on the Medicaid Buy-In program and Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), training for transition educators and counselors, and mandated individual planning. The state also organizes or sponsors such activities as job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities. South Carolina also administers services through the Youth Leadership Forum Catch the Wave Project Skills program.

Services provided in and outside of school for youth in transition include diagnosis, evaluation, mental health services, community integration services, and daily living skills training and counseling. Additional in-school services include social skills training, advocacy skills, and access to equipment and supplies.

South Dakota has developed outreach materials specifically targeted to youth in transition. The state also has programs addressing specific issues associated with independence, including transportation utilization skills, independent living preparation, self-advocacy skills, and youth self-sufficiency tools.

South Dakota has a Medicaid Buy-In program, and transition programs provide program referral. The school systems do not provide other adult service agencies with information about youth in transition who might need additional services.

Funding Sources: Transition efforts in South Dakota are funded through vocational rehabilitation, the Department of Education, and local businesses.

Task Force or Similar Effort: No.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Coordination among outside groups varies statewide. Depending on the location, transition programs may include some or all of the following partners—advo-

cacy organizations, parent groups, state departments and agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities. The level of coordination is reportedly high, with the exception of Department of Labor activities.

Evaluation and Research: South Dakota has prepared research and evaluation reporting on the effectiveness of youth in transition programs, and whether outcome goals for transition efforts are being met. Information has been collected on a variety of factors, including employment information, post-secondary education, independent living skills and living services, quality of life, and family involvement for youth in transition.

Promising Practices: South Dakota offers the Youth Leadership Forum Catch the Wave project—a one-day seminar for transition students who are pursuing further education in colleges, universities, or trade schools. Students are taught about what to expect and how to be aware of their rights. The seminar is funded by the Departments of Education and Human Services.

Tennessee

Agency Completing Survey: Tennessee Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services

State Transition Efforts: To encourage work after completing secondary school, Tennessee provides youth in transition with benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions, information and counseling on the Medicaid Buy-In program and Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), and mandated individual planning. The state also trains transition educators and counselors and organizes or sponsors job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities.

In- and out-of-school services offered to youth with disabilities in transition include diagnosis and evaluation services, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, advocacy skills training, mental health skills training, community integration services, daily living skills

training, and access to equipment and supplies. Tennessee also offers information and training for parents of youth with disabilities.

Tennessee has developed outreach materials specifically targeted to youth in transition. State also provides programs addressing issues of independence, including financial literacy, individual development accounts, asset development, transportation utilization, independent living preparation, self-advocacy, and youth self-sufficiency.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The Department of Education is the lead agency for the Tennessee transition task force. The group has been active less than one year, with a time frame for action of more than three years. It is comprised of representatives from the Department of Education and Special Education, the Department of Labor and Workforce, Tennessee Protection and Advocacy, and the On TRAC Project. The task force works to develop policy recommendations and to advocate, educate, involve parents and families, and distribute information. Youth with disabilities are involved in planning for the group.

Funding Sources: Funding for transition programs in Tennessee comes from vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, state general funds, federal funds, the Department of Education, and the Workforce Investment Act.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Transition efforts for youth with disabilities in Tennessee involve statewide coordination among the Business Leadership Network, advocacy organizations, parent groups, state departments and agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities. In some places, employer groups and Independent Living Centers are also involved. The state reports a high level of coordination among groups, particularly among members of the transition task force team.

School systems in Tennessee do not provide adult service agencies with information about youth in transition who might need services.

Evaluation and Research: Tennessee has prepared evaluation reports on the effectiveness of youth in transition programs in the state and assessments of whether the outcome goals for transition efforts are being met.

Texas

Agency Completing Survey: Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

State Transition Efforts: To encourage completion of secondary education for youth with disabilities, Texas programs provide information about Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS); train transition educators and counselors; organize job fairs, internships, shadowing, and other employment-related opportunities; and mandate programs for individual planning and Circles of Support. Texas also provides transitional Medicaid to former foster youth up to the age of 21, has extended foster care to youth up to age 22 in order to obtain a high school diploma or equivalency, and has a college tuition waiver for former foster youth.

In-school transition services provided to youth with disabilities include diagnostic and evaluation services, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, advocacy skill training, mental health services, community integration services, and daily living skills training and counseling. Out-of-school transition services include social skills training and counseling, advocacy skills training, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and help in gaining access to equipment and supplies.

Texas also has a Discharge Planning Conference for children aging out of foster care.

Texas has programs that specifically address issues of independence for youth in transition. The state has developed financial literacy materials, individual development account materials, asset development tools, transportation utilization tools, independent living preparation, self-advocacy skills, and youth self-sufficiency tools. Outreach materials specifically targeting youth in transition have also been developed.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The Texas Transitioning Youth Services Initiative Work Group participants include foster care youth, foster care alumni, Department of Family and Protective Services staff, and Casey Family Programs staff, with youth serving as active contributors. The work group has been active between one and two years and its activities include implementing relevant legislation, developing policy recommendations, promoting advocacy and education, distributing information, and improving programs and systems. The time frame of action for the group is two to three years.

Funding Sources: Funding for transition efforts in Texas comes from Casey Family Programs, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, state general funds, federal funds, the Department of Education, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups:

Transition efforts in Texas involve coordination with outside groups. In some places, coordination efforts are in place with state agencies and the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy groups, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. Statewide coordination exists between state agencies, including the Health and Human Services Commission, the Health and Human Services Commission’s Children’s Policy Council, the Texas Center for Disability Studies, Advocacy Inc., Education Services Centers and the Texas Education Agency, the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, and vocational rehabilitation.

The state reports that the level of coordination among different agencies and organizations throughout the state is limited, and dependant upon the individuals involved in a particular case. For youth in special education programs, the Individual Education Plan identifies specific agencies that should be involved and what services should be provided.

The school systems in Texas provide adult service agencies with information about youth with disabilities in transition from school who may need services.

Evaluation and Research: To date, Texas has not prepared and research or evaluation studies on the effectiveness of their transition programs. Casey Family Programs did a study on cohorts of Central Texas foster youth. In June 2005, an independent consultant completed a review of the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Services in Texas. The purpose of this review was to collect valuable information about PAL practices in Texas and to identify best and promising practices. The final report of recommendations was released to Child Protective Services executives and is currently under review.

Promising Practices: A Texas program called Circles of Support, directs youth to identify the key people in their lives who serve as their support system, and a meeting is arranged among all these individuals and the youth to develop a transition plan.

Utah

Agency Completing Survey: Utah Office of Education

State Transition Efforts: To encourage work, following secondary education, for youth with disabilities, Utah provides services that include benefit counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions, information on the Medicaid Buy-In program, information and education on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), training for transition educators and counselors, and organizes such activities as job fairs, internships, and shadowing opportunities. Utah also organizes an employment symposium for employers and people with disabilities, and an agency personnel conference for students, families, employers, state agencies, and service providers.

Utah offers in- and out-of-school services for youth in transition, including evaluation services, employment skill training and counseling, social skills training and counseling, advocacy skills training, community integration services, daily living skills training, and access to equipment and supplies. In addition, diagnostic services and mental health services are available out of school.

According to the survey, the state does not have a referral process for youth in transition to the Medicaid Buy-In program, and does not provide adult service agencies with information about youth in transition.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The Utah transition task force is headed by the state Department of Education. It has been active for less than one year and is involved in educating and distributing information related to youth in transition. Task force participants are the Department of Education, Child and Family Services, the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Services for People with Disabilities, the State Office of Rehabilitation; Special Education, Youth in Custody, Work-Based Learning, the Utah Parent Center, and the Department of Workforce Services. Youth do not play a role in the task force.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act discretionary dollars. Other transition efforts are funded through vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, state general funds, and federal funds.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Statewide, transition efforts in Utah involve collaborating with state agencies and departments, advocacy groups, and parent groups. In some parts of the state, other parties are involved, such as the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and transportation authorities. The level of coordination varies by areas and individuals. The greatest levels of coordination exist among agencies at the state administrative level, and, to a slightly lesser degree, at the local level among education, vocational rehabilitation, and adult service agencies. Less coordination exists among the aforementioned parties and the Department of Labor and higher education institutions. Very little coordination exists with independent living programs.

Evaluation and Research: Utah has conducted research and evaluations on the effectiveness of state

transition programs, as well as to assess whether outcome goals for transition efforts are being met. Data have been collected on employment information, post-secondary education, independent living skills and services, and quality of life among transition-age youth. The information was collected by university partners and the state Department of Education.

Promising Practices: Utah participated in a National Leadership Summit with representatives from vocational rehabilitation, the Parent Center, WorkBased Learning, and Special Education.

Representatives from a variety of stakeholders served on state-level committees that addressed post-secondary education, employment, supported employment, benefits planning, increasing the rigor of high-school programs, and transition planning for youth who receive mental health and foster care services. The committees identified the top priorities for transition efforts—youth leadership, parental involvement, and youth with disabilities in foster care.

Vermont

Agency Completing Survey: State of Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

State Transition Efforts: In order to encourage work for youth with disabilities after they complete secondary education, Vermont provides the following services: benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions; counseling and information on the Medicaid Buy-In program; information and education on the Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program; training for transition educators and counselors; organization of job fairs, internships, shadowing opportunities; and mandated individual planning.

The Vermont school systems offer several services for youth in transition. Among these are diagnostic and evaluation services, employment skills training and counseling, social skills training, advocacy skills education, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and access to equipment and supplies. All these services are also offered by programs outside the school system.

Vermont has developed outreach materials specifically targeted to youth in transition. State programs address certain issues of independence, including independent living preparation and self-advocacy tools.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The Vermont youth in transition task force is headed by the vocational rehabilitation agency. The task force has been active for less than two years, and participants include staff from the departments and offices of Education, Special Education, Labor, Human Resource Investment Council, higher education institutions, the Vermont Parent Information Center, the Disability Law Project, and Developmental Services; youth do not participate. The task force is involved in developing policy recommendations, distributing information, and implementing a “Career Start” Grant project. The group’s time frame for action is somewhat long term—more than three years.

Funding Sources: The task force is funded through the federal Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy. Other transition efforts are funded through vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, federal funds, and the Department of Education.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Coordination efforts with outside groups on transition programs vary throughout the state. In some places state agencies collaborate with the Business Leadership Network, employer groups, advocacy organizations, parent groups, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations.

Vermont’s “Career Start” program is working to increase the levels and effectiveness of collaboration among various state agencies and groups.

Evaluation and Research: Vermont has conducted research to assess whether outcomes goals for transition efforts are being met. Employment data and information regarding the use of public benefits and support services has been collected by the vocational rehabilitation agency.

Promising Practices: Vermont has a program for transition counselors, Jump on Board for Success (JOBS), which is spearheaded by the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in partnership with the Department of Developmental and Mental Health Services, the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, and the Department of Corrections. The JOBS program provides supported employment and intensive case management services for youth with serious emotional behavioral disabilities who are estranged from their communities and considered at risk.

Vermont also reported other programs in local school systems and areas. However, the state reports a lack of a comprehensive statewide system.

Wisconsin

Agency Completing Survey: Wisconsin Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Post High School Outcomes Project

State Transition Efforts: To encourage youth with disabilities to complete their secondary education, Wisconsin provides benefits counseling, counseling and information about the Medicaid Buy-In program and Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) plans, and is involved in such activities as organizing job fairs, and shadowing and internship opportunities. The state also trains transition educators and counselors, and mandates individual planning. Wisconsin also provides multiple training opportunities on a variety of topics for students, parents, teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and all involved parties in the transition process.

In- and out-of-school services provided to youth with disabilities who are in transition are diagnostic and evaluation services, employment skills training and counseling, advocacy skills, mental health services, community integration services, daily living skills training and counseling, and access to equipment and supplies. Social skills training and counseling services are available outside of school.

Wisconsin has prepared outreach materials specifically targeted to youth in transition. State transition programs address certain issues of independence, including independent living preparation, self-advocacy skills, and youth self-sufficiency.

Task Force or Similar Effort: Yes.

Task Force Characteristics: The Wisconsin transition task force is led by the Department of Education and includes participants from the Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training, and Support (Wisconsin FACETS), the Department of Health and Family Services, and the Division of Juvenile Corrections. Youth sit in on the meetings and participate in discussions. The group has been active for between three and four years, with a time frame for action of one to two years. Major task force activities consist of developing policy recommendations, advocacy, education, parental/familial involvement, and information distribution.

Funding Sources: Funding for the task force comes from federal funds, and the Wisconsin Departments of Education and Vocational Rehabilitation.

Coordination Among Agencies and Groups: Transition efforts for youth with disabilities in Wisconsin involve coordination among state departments and agencies, educational institutions, non-

profit organizations, and parent groups statewide. In some parts of the state, employer groups and transportation authorities are also involved.

The state reports high levels of coordination among the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, adult service agencies, high education institutions, independent living centers, and parents. Coordination with the Department of Labor is reportedly minimal, and efforts to coordinate with the juvenile corrections system are just beginning.

Evaluation and Research: Wisconsin has prepared reports and studies on the effectiveness of transition programs in the state and on whether the outcomes goals for these efforts are being met. Data have been collected on employment information, post-secondary education, independent living skills, quality of life, use of public benefits and support programs, family involvement, participation in high school activities, and Individual Education Plan activities. The state has also asked youth in transition for suggestions on what high schools could do to improve outcomes and what barriers they faced. Students were contacted for follow-up interviews one, three, and five years after completing high school.

The information was collected by the Cooperative Educational Services Agency through a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

APPENDIX 2:

Center for Workers with Disabilities Youth in Transition Survey

Center for Workers with Disabilities Youth in Transition Survey

This is a survey on state initiatives addressing the issues surrounding youth with disabilities in transition from the education system into adulthood, post-secondary education, and the workforce.

Two key elements of any support program for individuals with disabilities are the definitions of “disability” and the specified age range or definition of terms such as “youth” or “adult” used for program and service eligibility. The following questions examine the definitions used for different programs and service eligibility in your state. When possible, please include or attach specific language used in your state.

State and Agency: _____

Individual coordinating completion of survey:

NAME

TITLE

AGENCY

PHONE

E-MAIL

Names/titles/agencies of other individuals involved in survey completion:

- 1) a) Does your state have a Youth in Transition Task Force, or similar effort?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't Know

TRANSITION FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

b) If yes: Is there a lead agency or organization for the task force and transition efforts?

- Dept. of Education?
- Vocational Rehabilitation?
- Employers?
- Other: *(please specify)* _____

What is the current funding for the task force?

Who are the participants?

How long has the task force been active?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 or more years

What are the major activities of the task force?

- Develop policy recommendations
- Advocacy
- Education
- Parental/family involvement
- Distributing information
- Other: _____

What is the timeframe of action for the task force?

- 1-year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- More than 3 years

What role, if any, do youth play on the task force?

- No role
- Sit in on meeting/discussion
- Actively involved in group discussions/ activities
- Advisory role
- Other: _____

2) What is the funding source (or what are the funding sources) for youth in transition efforts in your state? *(please select any/all that apply)*

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Medicaid
- State general funds
- Federal funds
- Department of Education
- Other: _____

3) Which of the following activities does your state do to encourage work following completion of secondary school?

Does your state:

- a) Provide benefits counseling on 1619 (a) and (b) provisions? Yes No Don't Know
- b) Provide counseling and information to students and families on the Medicaid Buy-In program (if applicable)? Yes No Don't Know
- c) Provide information and education on Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)? Yes No Don't Know
- d) Train transition educators/counselors? Yes No Don't Know
- e) Organize/sponsor job fairs, internships, shadowing opportunities, etc.? Yes No Don't Know
(if yes, please provide details below)
- f) State mandated individual planning? Yes No Don't Know
- Other services: _____

4) a) What in-school and out-of-school transition services are offered for youth with disabilities in your state?

Service:

Diagnosis

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
- Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Evaluation

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
- Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Employment skills training/counseling

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
- Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

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Social skills training/counseling

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
 Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Advocacy skills (for child or family)

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
 Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Mental health services

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
 Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Community integration services

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
 Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Daily living skills training/ counseling

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
 Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Equipment and Supplies

- Offered in-school Yes No Don't Know
 Offered out-of-school Yes No Don't Know

Other: _____

5) Do the youth-in transition efforts in your state include coordination with outside groups such as:

a) Business Leadership Networks (BLN)?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

b) Employer groups?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

c) Advocacy organizations?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

d) Parent groups?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

e) State departments/agencies?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

f) Educational institutions?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

g) Non-profit organizations?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

h) Transportation authorities?

- Yes--statewide Yes--in some places No--Don't Know

Other outside groups: *(please specify)* _____

6) What is the level of coordination between your youth-in-transition plan and the transition planning efforts throughout your state, including

- Higher Education Institutions
- Department of Labor
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Adult Service Agencies that serve people with disabilities
- Independent Living Transition Plan
- Other: *(please specify)* _____

7) a) Have you prepared any evaluation reports or studies on the effectiveness of youth in transition programs in your state? Yes No Don't Know

b) Have you conducted any research to assess whether the outcome goals for youth-in-transition efforts are being met? Yes No Don't Know

c) Have you prepared any other types of studies on youth issues? Yes No Don't Know

d) If yes, what types of data did you collect?

- Employment information
- Post-secondary education
- Independent living skills/living situation
- Quality of life
- Use of public benefits/support services
- Family involvement
- Medical information
- Other: _____

e) Who collected the data?

- University partner
- Education Agency
- Health/Medicaid Agency
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Other: _____

(Please send links to or attach any relevant reports or studies, or provide sample data from your projects)

8) Do you have any outreach materials specifically geared toward youth in transition? *(Please send us any outreach materials that you may have used)* Yes No Don't Know

TRANSITION FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

- 9) Do you have any programs specifically designed to address the issues of independence, such as:
- a) Financial literacy materials? Yes No Don't Know
 - b) IDA materials? Yes No Don't Know
 - c) Asset development tools? Yes No Don't Know
 - d) Transportation utilization tools (i.e., driver's education, public transportation education, etc.)? Yes No Don't Know
 - e) Independent living preparation? Yes No Don't Know
 - f) Self-advocacy skills? Yes No Don't Know
 - g) Youth self-sufficiency tools Yes No Don't Know
 - h) Other: (please specify) _____

- 10) Do the school systems in your state routinely provide the adult service agencies with information about youth with disabilities who are in or approaching transition from secondary school into adult service agencies and may need services? Yes No Don't Know
- 11) a) Does your state have a Medicaid Buy-In program? Yes No Don't Know
b) If yes, does your state have a referral process for the Medicaid Buy-In for youth in transition? Yes No Don't Know
- 12) What promising practices in the area of youth in transition has your state developed and used?
(Please share any unique programs, ideas, practices, collaborative efforts, etc.)
- 13) What types of technical assistance would be useful in further development of any of these areas or initiatives?
 Involving advocates and consumers in youth-in-transition programs
 Interagency coordination
 Strategic planning
 Outreach
 Other: _____

- 14) Is there anything else about transition efforts for youth in transition from your state that you would like to include for this survey?

Please also include any relevant legislation from your state affecting this population of youth and if it is pending or has passed.

Resources

State Programs

Alaska Youth Transition and Mentoring Grant

<http://www.lss.state.ak.us/gcdse/projects/youthtransition.htm>

Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/ceg.htm>

Alaska Transition Camps

<http://www.serrc.org/academy/>

Arizona Transition Outcomes Projects

<http://www.ade.state.az.us/ESS/TransitionServices/TransitioninAZ/>

Arkansas Transition Web Page

<http://www.acc.k12.ar.us/transition/>

California Bridges to Youth Self-Sufficiency Program

<http://www.allenshea.com/bridges.html>

California Mentoring Initiative

<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/pcfb/prp/mentoring/ca-mentoring.html>

California WorkAbility I Program

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/wrkabltI.asp>

Colorado Project TRAIN

<http://www.cowinpartners.org/>

Colorado National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

<http://www.ncset.org>

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

<http://hctransitions.ichp.ufl.edu/ddcouncil/>

Florida Transition Center

www.thetransitioncenter.org

Idaho Secondary Education and Transition

<http://www.sde.state.id.us/SpecialEd/content/st.asp>

Indiana State Improvement Grant

<http://www.in-sig.org/>

Indiana Transition from School to Work Life

<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cclc/transition1.htm>

New Mexico Transition Program

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/transition/index.htm>

New York Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities and Special Education—Transition

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/transition/>

North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind—Services for Teens

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dsb/teens.htm>

North Dakota Transition Web Page

<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/transitn/>

Oregon Youth in Transition Program

<http://www.lane.k12.or.us/career/ytp.html>

**The Oregon Parent Training and
Information Center**

<http://www.orpti.org/>

**Pennsylvania Training and Technical
Assistance Network**

<http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/>

Rhode Island Secondary Transition Services

http://www.ridoe.net/special_needs/transition.htm

South Dakota Transition Services Liaison Project

<http://www.tslp.org/>

Texas Transition Web Page

<http://www.transitionintexas.org/>

Utah National Leadership Summit

<http://www.ncset.org>

Vermont Career Start Program

<http://www.dad.state.vt.us/dvr/CareerStart/>

Vermont Jump on Board for Success Program

*[http://www.vocrehabvermont.org/html/
jobsprogram.cfm](http://www.vocrehabvermont.org/html/jobsprogram.cfm)*

**Washington Center for Change in
Transition Services**

<http://www.seattleu.edu/ccts/>

Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative

<http://www.wsti.org/wsti.cfm>

Federal Programs

**U.S. Department of Labor Youth Leadership
Forum for Students with Disabilities**

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/ylf.htm>

SSA List of Project Descriptions

<http://policy.ssa.gov/POMS.NSF/lrx/0460060003>

Other Resources

**The National Collaborative on Workforce and
Disability for Youth**

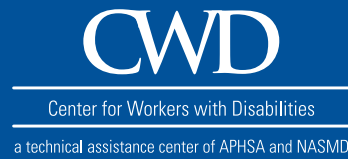
<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

**The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Center for
Workforce Preparation**

<http://www.uschamber.com/cwp/default.htm>

**The National Center on Secondary Education
and Transition**

<http://www.ncset.org>



Center for Workers with Disabilities

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