

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Transition Services was revised and renewed July 1, 2011, and is in effect through June 30, 2015, or until such time as IDEA is reauthorized. Parties to the agreement are the Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education, Job Service North Dakota, the Department of Career and Technical Education, and the Department of Health's Children's Special Health Services Unit, Developmental Disabilities Division, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The MOU addresses many areas including: consultation and technical assistance, transition planning, and roles and responsibilities including financial responsibilities of the agencies and outreach.

DVR and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) are involved with a Community of Practice (CoP) for Transition. The mission of the group is to work towards building, supporting, and sustaining community partnerships and systems that promote and improve the scope, opportunity and quality of transition for youth with disabilities to adequately prepare for life and career beyond high school.

North Dakota's CoP focuses on working across groups and localities to share information, address issues, learn together, find shared goals, define shared work, and improve practice. The ND structure is modeled on the National Community of Practice, of which ND is a member. Representatives from DVR and DPI attend the National Community of Practice Conferences, bringing back transition information from other states, which is then presented as a team at the state level.

North Dakota's CoP has representation from most regions and continues to be very active, holding quarterly meetings. Four subcommittees address specific areas of need: **Youth Leadership, Healthy Transitions, Guardianship and Employment.** A DVR Administrator serves as the chair on the employment subcommittee. A couple of projects these committees are currently working on are listed below:

The subcommittee on Youth Leadership provides an annual leadership conference for youth with disabilities and their families. DVR representatives are working with the students at the conference on various businesses/careers that may be experiencing growth, interviewing skills, soft skills, etc.

The subcommittee on employment is working to create on-line job coaching modules for teachers, paraprofessionals in the school, new VR counselors, new provider staff, and others.

Since the actual service delivery takes place in the eight regions of the state, most regions have developed a regional transition Community of Practice committee. Each regional committee is to develop committee goals which are in various phases of implementation. The committees use a specific document for their planning process entitled: "*Essential Tools, Interagency Transition Team Development and Facilitation*" published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Training and the Office

of Special Education Programs (OSEP.) The use of this document is helping to better coordinate efforts. The state director for DPI's Special Education and the State Transition Coordinator for DVR visited the Fargo and Grand Forks CoP this year to provide technical assistance on how to continually improve their regional CoP.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation had committed approximately \$1.5 million per year statewide to fund transition activities which may be used on an individual basis. Activities may include work experiences and/or career exploration services, training and assistive technology. The local education units and other partners may provide additional funds and resources. In addition, DVR has also funded special transition projects for summer employment, a transition camp for students with disabilities, and transition fairs.

Transitioning students who are identified through the education unit's Section 504 coordinator are referred to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and contacts are made with the guidance counselors to assure those with special needs are aware of services through DVR. Referrals are also received from Independent Living Centers, Human Service Centers, and Community Rehabilitation providers working with transition age students.

In 2011, DVR launched the Teacher Internship Project. Due to Order of Selection and reorganization within the Division, this project was temporarily on hold but with plans to offer it again starting the summer of 2014. The DVR Teacher Internship Project is designed to provide teachers with an opportunity to work closely with their local DVR office and transition counselors. The project provides teachers with information regarding the VR program and process, adult agencies, employers' needs, labor market information, disability legislation, etc. The teachers participate in a three-week internship program, beginning with an in-depth orientation to the VR process. The teachers are administered a pre and post evaluation to gauge what they know prior to participating in the program and knowledge gained after the internship. During the pilot, the teachers' knowledge of the VR process, transition, and adult agencies went from 66% at the pre-test to 89% at the post test.

Overall, teachers have the opportunity to learn about DVR services and collaborative partner agencies that also assist clients to become successfully employed. We realize that for students to be successful during the transition process, we need to consider all avenues and services that might aid in reducing barriers to employment for students with disabilities, regardless if they are pursuing employment or post-secondary training.

Additional Collaborative Efforts:

DPI, the Developmental Disabilities Division (DD), and DVR partner to offer the Adult Education Transition Service (AETS) to eligible transition students. The program is designed to fill in the service gaps for students who have completed their high school requirements, have not yet exited high school, are ready for adult services, but are not old enough to qualify for adult funding through DD. The state director for the DPI

Special Education Division, the State Transition Coordinator for DVR, and a representative from DD presented AETS in several regions in 2013 and will present statewide to VR staff in August 2014.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Protection and Advocacy (P&A), North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD), the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), and DVR partnered as a consortium to create the Launch My Life portal. It is a resource where youth, parents, counselors, teachers, and others can explore information about transition. The website is a work in progress and will continue to be updated by the consortium. It may be accessed at: [www.launchmylifend.com](http://www.launchmylifend.com)

DVR is part of the advisory committee for the Adult Student Transition Education Program (A-STEP). The program gives students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to attend college. State DVR staff and counselors attended the A-STEP open house in the spring of 2014.

DVR coordinated with the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse to develop the administrative code and policies for the Transition to Independence Program (TIPS). A Strategic Plan was then completed and used to give direction to the project. DVR serves on the TIPS Advisory Committee.