

North Dakota Transition Community of Practice Advisory Council

For years the ND Office of Special Education has sponsored a Statewide Advisory Council on Transition. This effort has been interagency and engages all the various groups that represent roles that are important to transition in ND.

For the last few years, ND has joined 12 other states to deepen the engagement of stakeholders and move beyond a Advisory Council to a *Community of Practice*.

What is the difference between an Advisory Council and a Community of Practice?

An Advisory Council has designated representative's from various groups and areas of the state. They meet together on a quarterly basis to share information and give their views on issues. A Community of Practice continues the Advisory Council as a state team and adds a new and ongoing connection to regional teams. Together the state team and the regional teams can cross agency boundaries to share promising practices, address emerging issues and work together on projects. In a Community of Practice, the work is ongoing. It is not a passive reporting, but rather an active engagement across all the groups that have a shared interest in transition for students with disabilities.

How does a Community of Practice do its work?

In ND, the Community extends the existing state advisory into the regions. That means that between the quarterly meetings, the state community members actively engage those in their respective regions whom are the implementers and intended beneficiaries of the transition initiatives. They are invited to get actively involved in sharing practices and working on issues with those in other agencies and in other parts of the state. Each Community member is encouraged to invite others into the work.

How do the Community members in the regions communicate with each other and with the state team?

The 13 states in the National Community of Practice share a website called www.sharedwork.org Each state has its own site and each region within the state can also have its own site. On the state site, the state team posts news, meetings, emerging opportunities, etc. They invite interested individuals in the region to join the work online. They host discussions and ask for perspectives of the field. They can create collections of great local documents and facilitate site to site sharing and coaching.

If the region chooses to host a site, the regional sites have all the capacity of the state site.

There are also special sites for groups to coalesce around an issue. These sites are called *Practice Groups*. A Practice Group site can be permanent or might be established for a certain amount of time to work on a particular issue. Practice groups can form from a state team discussion or from an idea that comes from the regions.

Note: To see how a state community and its Practice Groups might work, go to www.sharedwork.org Click on Transition Community and click on several states site. You will need to register to use the www.sharedwork.org site.

- Regional Communities of Practice

The State Transition Community of Practice Advisory Council identifies the development of REGIONAL INTERAGENCY TRANSITION COMMITTEES as a strategy to improve communication, knowledge and expertise among stakeholders in the transition process for youth with disabilities. An interagency transition team brings together a variety of stakeholders who are supporting youth with disabilities so they can have the best chance for success as adults. Each regional committee has at least one representative on the State Transition Community of Practice Advisory Council. This results in statewide knowledge and communication of practices that are working, unmet needs, etc. throughout North Dakota. The 8 regional committee divisions are based on the 8 Human Service Center regions throughout the state. AS OF JANUARY 18, 2007, NORTH DAKOTA HAS A REGIONAL TRANSITION COMMITTEE UP AND RUNNING IN ALL 8 REGIONS OF THE STATE!!! Two State Transition Community of Practice Members are presently serving as Facilitators upon request to provide technical assistance and other support for the regional Interagency Transition Community.

Regional Community GOALS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Transition Fairs, Changing policies, Training: (schools, conferences, parents, students, tv, & radio), Development of timeline for services, Development of transition folders for families, Off Campus school settings, Sharing information, Partnerships with: DPI, VR, DD, Higher Ed, Independent Living centers, Chamber of Commerce, etc., Developing services for students with disabilities ages 18-21, Develop programs to balance functional and academic needs. Credited work experience. Identify agency responsibilities, Consistency of services throughout the region, etc.

Resources developed by the Regional Communities as well as the Meeting minutes can be accessed at www.sharedwork.org, as well as under Publications and Materials on this transition website.