Section III: Interagency Collaboration

At a Glance:

Developing effective cross-agency collaboration implementation of evidenced based practices requires building partnership at the state, local and student level. Section III provides information on effective practices within interagency collaboration. Resources are provided to assist in building cross-agency teams as well as provide strategies to enhance current collaborative efforts. These resources are designed to assist team in evaluation, planning, and implementation of transition services. Resources could be incorporated into professional development or cross-agency trainings to build capacity, common understanding, and knowledge of staff working with students.

Why is interagency Collaboration Important for improving post-school outcomes?

It has long been held that collaboration among professionals and service systems is an important component of effective initiatives and programs that support the transition of students with disabilities from school to work and adult life (Wehman, 2013). In fact, collaboration among professionals and programs is often necessary for students and students who are touched by many systems and professionals (Luecking & Luecking, 2015; Getzel, et al., 2015; Wehman, 2014). Research has found that when students with disabilities access collaborative services during high school, they are more likely to experience positive postschool outcomes (Noonan, Gaumer-Erickson, & Morningstar, 2013; Test, Mazzotti, et al., 2009).

Education and vocational rehabilitation each have separate, mandates to assist students and students to prepare for, obtain and keep employment. However, without clearly identified roles and coordination between the two agencies there are potential problems at both the individual students level where poor collaboration may increase the already complicated path to adult employment as well as at the partner level where resources might not be used in the most effective and efficient way.

Collaboration between schools, VR, and other partners is effective when there is a clear and compelling rationale for staff to work across agency lines. (Fabian, E and Luecking, R., 2015). Collaboration is structured around formalized relationships and processes that maximize the expertise and perspectives of students, parents, educators, VR counselors, and other partners involved in the transition process. The relationships and process should promote individualized student services, supports, and activities as well as define role and responsibilities of each partner in supporting those individualized student services. When collaboration is directly focused on outcomes for students and the systems that serve them – rather than merely referring them for a "hand off" to the next responsible party – higher school completion and employment rates are likely (Luecking & Luecking, 2015; Fabian & Luecking, 2014). Conversely, without a focus on work

and work experience, collaboration efforts falter (Getzel, et al., 2015).

Types of Collaborative Partnerships

There are several types of collaborative partnerships that can occur for the purposes of transition planning (Noonan, 2014); all transition partnerships, however fall under three main categories of teams.

1. Community-level teams connect schools, a district, or multiple districts with the community.

2. School-level teams support the transition planning efforts for all students in the school, and individual-level teams support the transition needs of individual students.

3. State level teams develop the interagency agreement defining how transition services will be jointly funded and delivered based on requirements outlined in the IDEA and the WIOA.

The Following table describes the state, local and student level teams, their purpose, typical participants and general activities they perform.

Team	Purpose	Participants	Activities
State Level	• To develop and coordinate state policies and resources across agencies focused on creating early and ongoing CIE experiences. • Provide resources and support for community level teams development and activities of EBPs of CIE • Identify and address statewide needs to improving CIE outcomes for students with disabilities.	• SEA-Special Education • Vocational Rehabilitation • Tribal VR • Career Technical Education • Workforce (DOL) • Parent Centers (PTI, PERC, others) • Developmental Disabilities Services • Mental Health Services • Advocacy Groups • Post Secondary Education/Training	• Put in place an interagency agreement that supports CIE and EBPs • Support a professional and parent training system to develop knowledge and skills of CIE • Provide resources and support for community and school interagency teams • Create opportunities to blend and braid resources to support early and ongoing CIE opportunities.
Community Level	• Collaboration among schools (elem, middle, high), VR and other local agencies, employers, parents	• School District Administration • Special Education administrators and teachers • School Counselors	• Coordinate and align local resources to provide integrated employment experiences • Identify and address

	• Focused on development and coordination of local policies and resources to create local early and ongoing CIE experiences. • Identify and address community needs in developing student skills and experiences that lead to CIE following HS graduation	• Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors • Career Technical Education • Employers • Workforce (DOL) • Parents • CRPs • Post-Secondary Education/Training • Mental Health • Others specific to the Community	community needs related to student's skill development and CIE after HS graduation • Understand local business needs and engage employers to provide work experiences and employment for young adults with disabilities • Provide opportunities for personnel and parents to learn about EBPs of transition and CIE for students with disabilities.
School Level	• Collaboration across school curriculum and programs to address skill/career development for students with disabilities • Collect and analyze student data to identify and address areas of need	• School Administration • Teachers (Special ed, Gen ed, CTE) • School Counselors • VR Counselors • Parents • Students • Others specific to the school	• Partner with VR Counselors and other community members in the provision of career development and community-based work experiences • Align curriculum and programs vertically across grade levels and content areas.

	• Create opportunities for family engagement and learning.		• Structured communication and intervention regarding student needs.
Individual student level	• Coordinate provision of individualized services and supports in both school and community settings • Develop and carry out a plan based on student identified career goals beyond high school • Engage and communicate on a regular basis with family regarding student needs and progress	• Student • School Administrator • Student's teachers (special ed, gen. ed., CTE) • VR Counselor • School Counselor • Family • Others specific to student needs (ie; CRP, probation)	• Identification of student career interests and needs • Development of plan with outcome oriented goals and activities. • Academic and employment skills development • Coordinated series of community based work experiences, including paid work • Regular communication with family about student progress and needs

Putting Collaboration into Practice

<u>State Level</u>

At the State Level, VR and Education, along with other critical partners, should create a proactive interagency plan/agreement to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to prepare for and achieve competitive integrated employment outcomes. The interagency plan/agreement can be used to create capacity of the service delivery system by providing resources and support to the activities and evidenced based practices that promote students

The IDEA §300.154 outlines the following requirements for the interagency agreement:

The Chief Executive Officer of a State or designee of that officer must ensure that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination is in effect between each non-educational public agency described in paragraph (b) of this section and the SEA, in order to ensure that all services described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section that are needed to ensure FAPE are provided, including the provision of these services during the pendency of any dispute under paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The agreement or mechanism must include the following:

o An identification of, or a method for defining, the financial responsibility to ensure FAPE to children with disabilities IDEA§300.154(a)(2)

o The conditions, terms, and procedures under which an LEA must be reimbursed by other agencies IDEA§300.154(a)(2)

o Procedures for resolving interagency disputes (including procedures under which LEAs may initiate proceedings) under the agreement or other mechanism to secure reimbursement from other agencies or otherwise implement the provisions of the agreement or mechanism. IDEA§300.154(a)(3)

o Policies and procedures for agencies to determine and identify the interagency coordination responsibilities of each agency to promote the coordination and timely and appropriate delivery of services IDEA§300.154(a)(4). Services to include but not limited to:

• Assistive technology devices and services IDEA §300.5 and §300.6

• Related Services in IDEA §300.34 including rehabilitation counseling

• Supplementary Aides and Services in IDEA §300.42

• Transition Services included in IDEA §300.43

o A process and responsibilities for LEA referrals to agencies that provide assistance to individuals with disabilities, and employment of students, including both employment by the public agency and assistance in making outside employment available. IDEA§300.107

o How professional development and technical assistance will be provided by the state agencies to ensure that teachers and administrators are fully informed of their responsibilities and provided TA and training necessary to assist in this effort. IDEA§300.119

Interagency State Level Collaboration Resources	
The Formal Interagency Agreement Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transition Services	The Toolkit provides information useful to state vocational rehabilitation agencies and education agencies in the development of their interagency agreement to provide transition services. The requirements of WIOA and IDEA are discussed along with a series of questions to help address the required content.
Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0	The Taxonomy 2.0 brings in the latest literature regarding predictors of post- school success, strategies to increase graduation and reduce dropout, school climate, and vocational rehabilitation services focused on fostering successful transition of students with disabilities in college and careers. Across categories, collaboration with service agencies, especially vocational rehabilitation, emphasize the importance of such connections prior to and during school and post-school transitions. This tool will help to better understand the practices important to providing effective transition services.
Model for State Capacity Building using the Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0	Building capacity within one's state is important to assuring that the state's young people with disabilities are successful in achieving valued adult outcomes. The model for extending transition research to practice within a state, focuses on two important components: increasing local capacity and facilitating implementation. The Model illustrates the structure state agencies can use to utilize the Taxonomy collaboratively across agencies.
Leading by Convening: A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement	This document provides information about the importance of engaging stakeholders in collaboration to align efforts and develop partnerships. Tools are provided to assist in developing cross agency collaboration.

Implications for Practice

- Develop an agreed upon mission and vision of transition services and programs
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities as part of the interagency agreement
- Establish multiple methods of communication and information sharing across agencies
- Provide cross discipline and agency professional learning opportunities
- Clarify connections between state level practices and local implementation

<u>Community Level</u>

Seamless transition depends upon functional linkages between schools, VR, and a variety of adult service and community agencies. The purpose of linking systems is to coordinate the delivery of services, share information, solve problems, and continue to build a stronger structure to improve employment outcomes for students. Local systems need to identify those key agencies that can provide the critical services to help students enter into work. The intent is to bring these partners together as a team to foster their collective expertise and combined resources to improve quality of transition planning and employment outcomes. Clear roles and responsibilities need to be defined for each professional on the cross-functional team to reduce gaps in service delivery, minimize duplication of services, and decrease unnecessary expenses.

It is logical for school systems or VR to take on a leadership role in convening the partners. When considering what partners need to be involved, the team lead should consider identifying those involved in assisting secondary students with career development process, work experiences, and paid employment. Possible partners to consider would include, vocational rehabilitation, student development programs, workforce development, employers, parents, and service providers that offer job development, placement, and support activities.

The entity identified to lead the Interagency team is responsible for convening the partners, establishing the meeting structure, facilitating the meeting, and serving as the primary communicator among all partners. All members of the team should feel a sense of ownership and commitment in order to get the work done. To achieve this intent, the team should:

- Establish and reflect a common vision (e.g., paid employer for students with disabilities prior to school exit).

- Agree on goals that are obtainable.

- Institute policy-making procedures that will frame the work of the team (e.g., lines of communication, reporting).

- Hold regular team and work group meetings.

- Develop well-planned agendas.

- Empower all team members to be active and equal members.

- Promote shared decision-making.

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of each team member.

The partnerships and process developed by the Community Level team should promote individualized services, support, and activities for students with disabilities. Roles and responsibilities of each partner are designed and focused on student employment outcomes.

The following table provides information about where to find materials that can be used to promote and facilitate interagency collaboration at the community level.

Interagency Collaboration Community Level Resources	
A Guide to Developing Collaborative School-Community Business Partnerships	This Guide presents approaches and considerations for the development and implementation of broadly inclusive partnerships that strive for this standard. The "gold standard" of student outcomes is when they are achieving employment and pursuing a clear career path. The activities transition and employment initiatives, and the partnerships that support them, are most appropriately judged against this standard
Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0	The Taxonomy 2.0 brings in the latest literature regarding predictors of post-school success, strategies to increase graduation and reduce dropout, school climate, and vocational rehabilitation services focused on fostering successful transition of students with disabilities in college and careers. Across categories, collaboration with service agencies, especially vocational rehabilitation, emphasize the importance of such connections prior to and during school and post-school transitions. This tool will help to better understand the practices important to providing effective transition services
Transition To Employment Toolkit	A comprehensive and contemporary view of the research-based strategies and models of school to work transition for students with disabilities in our country. The Toolkit provides strategies and resources that assist communities and schools develop and provide Transition Services using a collaborative process across agencies.

CIRCLES: Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional	Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students (CIRCLES), supports development of teams focused on transition outcomes for students with disabilities. CIRCLES involves three levels of interagency collaboration (i.e., community level team, school level team, and individual level team). The community level team provides administrative leadership for the array of transition services offered and assists in finding solutions for problems that may arise in service delivery. The school level team provides each student with access to an array of representatives from community agencies that may provide services to the student after graduation. The individual level team writes the IEP including the transition component

Implications for practice

- Define the team purpose – common goal is student employment

- Encourage, integrate, and value contributions from all team members during the student's transition plan.

- Ensure team members understand the roles of each partner and how each contributes to the overall transition plan for students.

- Meet regularly to discuss progress and updates to individual student's transition plan to maximize communication, resources, and expertise of all partners.

- Establish mechanism for ongoing communication among all partners

- Invite businesses to be part of the team and ensure that, when they are present, the topic is relevant to their needs

- Develop family resources that are user-friendly and limit use of agency jargon.

- Work jointly with parent networks for parent engagement strategies and connections.

- Form relationships and connections with postsecondary education entities to facilitate a more seamless transition for students pursing further education and training.

- Tour local businesses to gain a better understanding of employer's needs and the necessary job skills to be successful in the business

School Level

The school-level team works directly with families and students to facilitate a transition process based around a "student-centered" planning philosophy" (Aspel et al., 1999, p.7). They typically meet monthly to share information and conduct preplanning activities to support individual-level teams in developing transition IEPs.

The following table provides information about where to find materials that can be used to promote and facilitate interagency collaboration at the school level.

Interagency Collaboration School Level Resources	
A Guide to Developing Collaborative School-Community Business Partnerships	This Guide presents approaches and considerations for the development and implementation of broadly inclusive partnerships that strive for this standard. The "gold standard" of students' outcomes is when they are achieving employment and pursuing a clear career path. The activities transition and employment initiatives, and the partnerships that support them, are most appropriately judged against this standard.
Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0	The Taxonomy 2.0 brings in the latest literature regarding predictors of post- school success, strategies to increase graduation and reduce dropout, school climate, and vocational rehabilitation services focused on fostering successful transition of students with disabilities in college and careers. Across categories, collaboration with service agencies, especially vocational rehabilitation, emphasize the importance of such connections prior to and during school and post-school transitions. This tool will help to better understand the practices important to providing effective transition services.
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	may arise in service delivery. The school level team provides each student with access to an array of representatives from community agencies that may provide services to the student after graduation. The individual level team writes the IEP including the transition component
Transition To Employment Toolkit	A comprehensive and contemporary view of the research based strategies and models of school to work transition for students with disabilities in our country. The Toolkit provides strategies and resources that assist communities and schools develop and provide Transition Services using a collaborative process across agencies.
Effective Practices and Predictors Matrix (NTACT)	It is important for teams at the student level to understand current effective practices and predictors of postsecondary success. The Effective Practices and Predictors Matrix provides quick and easy access to information across all areas of secondary transition

Implications for practices:

- Provide opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate their knowledge of employability skills through curriculum and community experiences

- Ensure that students with disabilities have access to all available school-wide career technologies, work-based learning, and vocational and occupational course

- Provide information and training to families

- Invite VR staff or other workforce partners to assist in identifying and with the delivery of employability skills in the classroom

- Offer students a range of employment experience in and out school to broaden their knowledge of possible careers

Student Level

Student level transition team are needed to develop and implement individual transition plans. The student level teams writes the IEP, including the transition components. This team may take information from the school level team meeting and use it to assist in writing the IEP for the student. Student level meetings can be held at any time throughout the school year and are scheduled based on need to develop or revise the student's transition plan.

The following table provides information about where to find materials that can be used to promote and facilitate interagency collaboration at the student level.

Interagency Collaboration Student Level Resources	
Positive Personal Profile	A Positive Personal Profile (PPP) is a way to "take inventory" of all the attributes of students that will be relevant to their job search, employability, job match, retention and long-range career development. It is a mechanism for collecting information from a variety of sources, including assessments, observations, interviews, and discussions with the job seekers - and people who know them well. It collects information in a way the can easily be used by the IEP team to align the IEP and IPE (Tilson, G.)
CIRCLES: Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional	Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students (CIRCLES), supports development of teams focused on transition outcomes for students with disabilities. CIRCLES involves three levels of interagency collaboration (i.e., community level team, school level team, and individual level team). The community level team provides administrative leadership for the array of transition services offered and assists in finding solutions for problems that may arise in service delivery. The school level team provides each student with access to an array of representatives from community agencies that may provide services to the student after graduation. The individual level team writes the IEP including the transition component
Transition to Employment Toolkit	A comprehensive and contemporary view of the research based strategies and models of school to work transition for students with disabilities in our country. The Toolkit provides strategies and resources that assist communities and schools develop and provide Transition Services using a cross agency collaborative process.

Effective Practices and Predictors Matrix (NTACT)	It is important for teams at the student level to understand current effective practices and predictors of post secondary success. The Effective Practices and Predictors Matrix provides quick and easy access to information across all areas of secondary transition.

Implication for Practice

- Align course of study to meet post school employment goal

- Focus on strengths of students

- Engage families in the transition process

- Identify the employment skills that the student needs to be successful in their career

- Integrate labor market information into the student's transition planning

- Develop and align the IEP and IPE to reflect and support the student's career choice

Define individual roles of each person on the team

While the activities that a team member will focus on depends on whether they serve on a state, community, school, or student level team, the information and expertise they provide will be of a similar nature. The resource 'A Guide to Developing Collaborative School- Community Business Partnerships' http://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/Partnership_Guide.pdf provides information about developing collaborative teams focused on providing transition planning, career development and work experiences for students with disabilities. In the guide you'll find information about the role that each team member plays.

Models of Collaborative Transition Services

When determining how to coordinate and collaborate on transition services, education, VR and other relevant partners should work together to develop a model of seamless transition services. Models of seamless transition service that result in competitive integrated employment include a systematic delivery of specific evidence-based transition services beginning in early high school and the coordination of resources resulting in uninterrupted (seamless) transition from publicly supported secondary education to employment. That is, exiting school already in a competitive integrated job, with supports in place to keep this job and to aid the acquisition of new jobs and career advancement throughout one's adult life. The movement from school to employment and adult life is "seamless" because there is no interruption of service, support and employment status after school exit.

The following table provides information about where to find materials on research based models of collaborative transition services.

Researched Models	
Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative	The collaborative aims to improve the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities through a sequential delivery of specific transition service components beginning in early high school; and, the braiding of resources of transition partners resulting in uninterrupted, seamless transition from public secondary education to employment and/or postsecondary education. Key MSTC Partners/Collaborators in Maryland include: State Department of Education; Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Developmental Disabilities Administration; Mental Hygiene
CIRCLES: Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional	Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students (CIRCLES), supports development of teams focused on transition outcomes for students with disabilities. CIRCLES involves three levels of interagency collaboration (i.e., community level team, school level team, and individual level team). The community level team provides administrative leadership for the array of transition services offered and assists in finding solutions for problems that may arise in service delivery. The school level team provides each student with access to an array of representatives from community agencies that may provide services to the student after graduation. The individual level team writes the IEP including the transition component
Project SEARCH	The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique, business led, one year school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations.

State Teams and Resources	
[Virginia](#)	The mission of the Virginia's Intercommunity Transition Council is to promote successful transition outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities by providing leadership and innovation in employment, education, training, living independently, community participation, and community support systems that influence success for all students
[Oregon Youth Transition Project (YTP)](#)	YTP is co-managed statewide by the following group which is responsible for technical assistance, training, program evaluation, and other program management or development tasks. The Youth Transition Program (YTP) is an Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services program that serves students with disabilities statewide. YTP operates as a partnership between Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR**)**, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), and the University Of Oregon College Of Education **(**U of O/COE)