

## **Coordination with Education Officials [Attachment 4.8(b)(2)]**

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) continues to provide transition services for those youth with disabilities leaving the secondary education system, who are pursuing employment opportunities in adult life. This is accomplished by reviewing, updating, and renewing the formal interagency agreement between LRS and the Department of Education (DOE) as needed based upon both agencies' policy and/or procedure changes; ongoing collaboration; joint development and evaluation of goals, and specialized training for both LRS and DOE agency staff.

LRS policy requires the development and approval of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for eligible students who have official transition plans in place with the state education system. The IPEs are to be developed as early as possible in the transition process, but at the latest, by the time each Vocational Rehabilitation eligible student leaves the high school setting.

The formal interagency agreement provides for initial contact to be made with the transition student as early as age sixteen. This is accomplished by the development of criteria and timelines for an effective and efficient referral process; provision of orientation and information sessions for students and their families; and LRS counselors determining transitions students' eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services within the timelines established by agency policy. For each student determined eligible for services, every effort will be made to ensure those who are in an Order of Selection (OOS) category currently being served by LRS leave the school system with an approved IPE in place that incorporates appropriate segments of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and projected employment needs, as applicable.

The formal interagency agreement also outlines both agencies responsibility to coordinate the provision of services, conduct outreach, and identify financial responsibility as needed. The DOE will assure that all students with disabilities and their families have knowledge of LRS policies and services including brochures and promotional information supplied by LRS. Information dissemination begins with the writing of the transition service page and continues through referral to LRS. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) also:

- invite LRS representatives to IEP meetings at the students request, when a transition service page is being written for a student with a disability who may be eligible for and/or interested in vocational rehabilitation services;
- facilitate appropriate orientation meetings among LRS staff, student and family members;
- provide time for LRS staff to meet with teachers, guidance counselors, and other appropriate personnel for such purposes as information sharing/gathering at both the individual and agency levels;

- and assist in the development, provision, and evaluation of interagency vocational assessment processes and functional vocational transition programs;

LRS will use agency funds for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services on the approved IPE that relate directly to the achievement of the agreed upon vocational goal, which is not the responsibility of the education system. The DOE will use agency funds for the provision of educational services on the approved IEP that relate directly to the achievement of the agreed upon educational goal.

LRS continues to renew and revise existing local cooperative agreements, as applicable, with the 65 parishes and 4 special school systems in Louisiana.

LRS previously had two designated transition counselors in the Thibodeaux and Shreveport regions. This year we have designated transition counselors in the remaining 6 regions. We continue to plan training specific to transition that will give the counselors the additional guidance and resources needed to better serve transition students.

LRS implemented a pilot program in January 2007, in the Thibodeaux region, entitled "Bridging the Gap." This program is providing job readiness training to select students while they are still in high school. The students receive intense job readiness training and job placement services in their exit year. Thus far the program is proving successful. In addition a Regional Transition Core Team (South Central Louisiana Region III Core Transition Team) was formed in the Thibodeaux Region area in 2007. This team ensures the successful linkage of students with disabilities to appropriate support service agencies. DOE and LRS plan to establish regional teams throughout the state as well as parish core teams. This will be part of the state transition plan.

The LRS Program Coordinator for Transition and the Program Manager for the Department of Education continue to work closely together collaborating on joint agency trainings and meetings throughout the year to network and share information. They are also responsible for assisting in the coordination and provision of transition services within each agency to address the improvement of agency operations through collaborative problem solving on identified barriers (e.g. policies, eligibility process, resource allocation); assurance of effective service provision through the support of local interagency core teams, cross-agency training, outreach, and other needed activities; capacity building of young adult and family outreach efforts; continued support of innovative models and practices related to transition; and continuous provision of information and technical assistance.

Recently a team of eight representatives from various agencies including DOE, Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, Families Helping Families, Work Incentives Program, Department of Labor and LRS attended the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center's conference where attendees received assistance in writing a state plan for transition services. Part of this plan includes obtaining an

executive order from the governor to re-establish the Louisiana Statewide Transition Council. Some of the partner agencies to be included are Louisiana Rehabilitation Services; Louisiana Department of Education - Division of Special Populations; Louisiana Department of Labor-Workforce Investment; Families Helping Families; Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities; Office of Mental Health, Governors Office of Disability Affairs, and the United Houma Nation.

The Program Coordinator is serving on the Alternate Diploma Task Force – part of the High School Re-Design Effort and continues to participate in the quarterly Special Education Advisory Council, and the Department of Education State Performance Plan Committee.