

Proposed

Attachment 4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials

Formal Interagency Agreement with the State Educational Agency

Understanding the importance of interagency planning and the need to increase the availability, access and quality of transition services, CBVH continues to work with school districts as they develop and implement transition services. The Joint Agreement on the Provision of Transition Services, signed in 1993 by CBVH, the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and the Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education (EMS) in the State Education Department articulates the expected relationship between vocational rehabilitation and secondary education programs in New York State. The joint agreement covers the following:

1. Increasing successful transition outcomes;
2. Enhancing vocational assessments;
3. Implementing transition planning procedures; and,
4. Implementing functional referral criteria for schools to refer students to VESID and to CBVH.

Roles and Responsibilities

The joint agreement clarifies that school districts have the primary planning and programmatic responsibilities for the provision of transition services for their students in school. School districts are financially responsible for transition services mandated for school districts by Federal or State statutes and regulations. CBVH personnel currently have a consulting role with the schools to see that adult services are involved in the planning and decision-making process regarding transition services for students with disabilities. CBVH is responsible only for services written into the IEP by the Committee on Special Education with the direct knowledge and agreement of the CBVH counselor. The transition services for youth are to be aligned with labor market needs and integrated community living opportunities, and coordinated with the adult world to facilitate employment, post-secondary education, and community living outcomes. CBVH may be consulted for vocational evaluation interpretation, occupational opportunities, decision making with the Committee on Special Education, coordination with adult services, peer counseling, role modeling and job placement analysis. CBVH will provide transition services if they are beyond the scope of the special education program and within the scope of VR services. Assessments for in-school youth may be purchased by CBVH when existing assessments fail to provide adequate information for the counselor to determine CBVH eligibility or to develop plans for CBVH services. In addition, if the student needs specific vocational services to prepare for employment upon exiting school, CBVH will fund these services.

Consultation and Technical Assistance

CBVH staff is required to consult with school personnel to assist in recommending assessment practices and interpreting results in relation to employment. CBVH counselors assist the school by identifying resources in the community that are familiar with blindness and that offer comprehensive assessments.

As a participant in the school's transition process, CBVH staff are encouraged to contribute knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes, and to discuss post-school plans with the youth, family and school personnel.

Procedures for Outreach

A standardized process has been implemented for school district referrals. ACCES-VR and CBVH collaborate with school districts and other State agencies to facilitate a coordinated approach to the provision of transition services and to eliminate the duplication of assessment, services and reporting. The agreement specifically states that every student with a disability will receive comprehensive, coordinated educational services to prepare for employment, post-secondary education or community living when they leave school.

Plans, policies and procedures for coordination with education officials and roles and responsibilities of each agency

The CBVH transition policy states that as a participant in the school's transition planning process, CBVH staff should contribute knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes, and identify the need for involvement by other State agencies, adult service programs, independent living centers, and community based services whose resources can assist students who are legally blind, their families, and education personnel during the transition process. It also states that CBVH is responsible only for services written into the IEP by the Committee on Special Education with the direct knowledge and agreement of the CBVH counselor. Financial responsibility for services, other than those which are mandated for school districts by Federal or State statute or regulation, may be shared by other agencies, including CBVH.

Cooperative efforts between the schools and CBVH take place on a daily basis at the district office level. CBVH Children's Consultants provide schools with technical support, help parents learn to advocate effectively for their children, and purchase services to supplement those that school districts are required to provide. As the student nears transition age, the CBVH Children's Consultants' familiarity with particular students allows for a more effective transition to the vocational rehabilitation program. In cooperation with the school and community agencies, CBVH vocational rehabilitation counselors encourage and help individuals to live independently and develop meaningful employment plans. During school years, CBVH counselors can provide vocational guidance and counseling, resource information, and the preparation of post high school service plans. In addition, CBVH counselors may be able to provide job related occupational tools, purchase low vision aids, assist in obtaining employment and facilitate summer employment. CBVH currently employs eight vocational rehabilitation counselors who work exclusively with transition age youth.

The transition counselors have provided educational guidance to CBVH vocational rehabilitation counselors and encouraged student and parent involvement in the transition process. Brochures describing CBVH services have been widely distributed. The brochures are available in regular print, large print and Braille (upon request) and electronically. A publication called "Transition: A Guide for Parents and Students" has been developed and distributed to families and school personnel. CBVH staff frequently visit transition career fairs and attend high school open houses and present information about CBVH at college programs that are held on college campuses. In addition, staff participates in transition conferences and works closely with many staff from local school districts to reinforce the mission of VR, explain the role VR plays in the transition process, and discuss VR policies and procedures.

The 1993 agreement states that transition services and the agencies responsible for the provision of such services should be indicated on the Individual Education Plan (IEP) for all students with disabilities, ages 15 years or older. The CBVH Transition Policy recommends that the student's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) be developed, to the extent possible, during the annual review of the transition component of the IEP. At that time, information required on the IPE should be consistent with the content of the IEP, including vocational goals, educational and rehabilitation objectives, projected dates and responsibilities for participation in the transition process. CBVH policy requires that an IPE be completed for each eligible student by the time the student graduates from high school. CBVH transition counselors have received training on this policy requirement and on the requirements of developing an IPE and coordinating the IPE with the IEP. All CBVH transition counselors have been actively developing employment plans for youth.

CBVH is currently in the process of revising the State Education Agency (SEA) Agreement. This agreement will no longer include the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, now called Adult, Career and Continuing Services (ACCES), but will be a separate agreement with the State Education Agency, Office of P-12 Education. Specifically, the new agreement will:

- delineate the responsibilities of CBVH to provide consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of youth from school to post-school activities;
- provide for the responsibilities of each party with respect to the provision of transition planning in order to facilitate the development of the Individualized Education Program;
- include the financial responsibilities of each agency related to the provision of services, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
- include the procedures for outreach to, and identification of, students with disabilities in need of transition services.

The New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative

The New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC) is a five-year federally funded project which provides technical assistance to improve services for children and youth who are deaf-blind (ages 0-21). The NYDBC is housed at Queens College in Flushing, New York and is funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). CBVH has agreed to collaborate on specific initiatives with NYDBC. Specifically, CBVH assisted NYDBC in disseminating a state-wide needs assessment to increase the early identification of children who are deaf-blind in New York State. CBVH staff will also receive considerable technical assistance and training from NYDBC that will increase knowledge and skills in addressing the developmental and educational needs of children who are deaf-blind.

During the past year CBVH staff has received training on a number of topics, including:

- An overview of deaf-blindness;
- communication strategies for individuals who are deaf blind, and
- person centered planning for individuals who are deaf-blind.

CBVH staff attended a regional focus group hosted by NYDBC. The focus group included a variety of professionals, parents and consumers.

CBVH will also be involved in collaborative relationships with local, regional and statewide teams (as necessary) to support and improve systems to better serve children and youth.