**Topic: Vocational Rehabilitation Transition:**

The group was asked for feedback regarding the identified issues below, from a recent RSA Technical Assistance Circular, as well as whether they have identified additional issues

- The effective collaboration between VR services and State educational agencies for the provision of transition services;
- The VR process as it relates to referral and application for services, the determination of eligibility, and the development of the IPE; and
- The services that may be provided through the VR program.

### Questions discussed during the forum:

1. **In your opinion, what transition services may be most beneficial for transition aged students?**
2. **What are the current barriers for students with disabilities for transitioning from school to work?**
3. **What can we learn from some success stories in Indiana or other states?**
4. **How can current partnerships (i.e. schools, DOE, providers, families, etc.) be strengthened to better prepare students for life after high school?**
5. **Where are the pitfalls of the current referral process for VR?**

### Next Steps:

1. Increase “visibility” of VR within school settings
2. Educate schools, parents, providers, VR staff about VR’s eligibility and appropriate services.
3. Better education is needed about Benefits (“fear of losing benefits”)
4. What can we learn from Project SEARCH?

### Feedback

1. **What are the current barriers for students with disabilities for transitioning from school to work?**
   - Lack of support system
   - Lack of transportation to work, to VR (can VR come to the home, the school?)
   - Have to get permission from parents to invite VRC to conference
   - Legal difficulties - criminal history
   - Education of families on working and benefits - fear of loss of benefits check - need to help families understand they can improve their situation through work
   - Some schools don’t have means of getting students out on work sites - need to increase opportunities
   - Unrealistic expectations
   - Lack of time/structure to spend adequate discovery time with students under RBF
2. In your opinion, what transition services may be most beneficial for transition aged students?
   - Work readiness, soft skills and social skills development - best way to do this is through meaningful work experiences
   - Project SEARCH – key concepts that work: being part of an organization, learning skills, getting praise, setting expectations, involvement of school system and rest of team - huge support system, EC knows student so well that making a good job match is easier and more successful.
   - Technology assessments to see what students may benefit from when they leave school – i.e. iPads.
   - Job task analysis – this often does not get completed in the rush to get a case moving forward into placement and stabilization.

3. Where are the pitfalls of the current referral process for VR?
   - Teachers unaware of VR or have missing info
   - Students don't want to self-identify
   - Timeliness issues - length of time from referral to VR until services begin
   - Consumers don't follow up after application or referral – we lose people
   - We don’t always go to individuals and catch them where they are on a regular bases – catch them in their typical setting i.e. school
   - VR Office signage does not provide good explanation - need to explain what it is so people know if they can benefit
   - Visibility of VR is low - increasing presence of VR staff in schools will help
   - Message is not always consistent
   - Capacity of staff - insufficient staff to address need

4. How can current partnerships (i.e. schools, DOE, providers, families, etc.) be strengthened to better prepare students for life after high school?
   - Joint training, especially on procedural matters (consistency issues)
   - Identify other partners - DWD, BDDS, post-secondary schools, DMHA, DOJ, Chambers, IDEC, Alternative training beyond traditional post-secondary schools i.e. Ivy tech certificate programs
   - Improve communication
   - Develop transition councils
   - Develop and utilizing BLNs
   - Share success stories – find a means of doing this more regularly

5. What can we learn from some success stories in Indiana or other states?
   - Project search is a good model – look at key concepts and apply to every-day practice of supported employment
   - VR Transition grants – a best practice, i.e. single point of contact immersed in school
   - Target students most at risk of falling through cracks
   - Education provided for teachers
   - Better coordinate with other partners to cut down on duplication
   - Any types of work experience/summer internships (learn a lot about student - good discovery)
   - Benefits Information Network (BIN) – important to give good info
• Joint training - we all hear the same message
• Annual transition fair - students K-12 on IEP/504 – a draw was Colts player as keynote speaker, teacher incentives for getting students/families to attend, door prizes; 30 vendors; called community and transition resource fair (Monroe co.)
• Presence of other partners on site i.e. VRC as WorkOne - increases ease of access for individuals and education about one another from agency perspective

Additional comments and suggestions:

• Partner with DWD - single contact for employment services and assistance with career planning/jobs
• Partner with appropriate entities to develop business relationships/hiring opportunities
• Complete a psych evaluation and physical on all who enter VR as MSD - would help with getting appropriate documentation for extended supports purposes - people losing follow along b/c can't get diagnostics.
• Thanks for the opportunity to give feedback – please continue to seek stakeholder input.

• Communication Issues:
  o Need to bridge services between VR and schools and also between other service providers such as BDDS, case managers, and other adult service providers. A
  o An identified lack of communication from VR to case manager – each party needs a means of getting regular updates.
  o A lack of communication on the status of consumers waiver eligibility/status
  o Inconsistent messaging about VR – message is not always the same, and there is a lack of info or people have misinformation about VR.
  o For individuals on waivers - employment seems to be the last thought for case managers

• Outreach issues
  o Timing - outreach should start much earlier than high school (i.e. in kindergarten) but unsure how to accomplish this. There is a need to get families involved as soon as possible.
  o Approach – many kids fall through the cracks such as those with MI – need to develop relationships with school nurses (they often administer medications and know who the kids are who have a mental illness/behavior issues), and with school psychologists/counselors.
  o Some students do not want to be identified or labeled as a person with a disabilities and may be unlikely to respond to marketing/outreach that would mean they have to identify that way.
    i. Suggestion: Send info to ALL students, and not just those identified as having a disability.
    ii. Suggestion: More outreach to college student/disability service offices occur as they do not always know the extent of resources available.