

June 21, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents
Vocational Rehabilitation Area Directors
Exceptional Student Education Administrators
Career and Technical Education Directors
Adult Education Directors
Community College Occupational Deans

FROM: Shan Goff, Chief
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Division of Public Schools and Community Education

Loretta Costin, Director
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Division of Workforce Development

SUBJECT: Interagency Collaboration and Transition for Students with Disabilities

The Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services (BISCS), Division of Public Schools and Community Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and the Bureau of Program Planning and Development, Division of Workforce Development (DWD) are mutually committed to collaborate in the development of a coordinated support system which meets the needs of Florida's children and youth with disabilities and promotes their successful transition into the community and the workforce. The purposes of this memorandum are to affirm this state level commitment and to promote interagency collaboration for transition at the local level. Thus this memorandum should be shared with staff who have responsibility for transition activities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act address transition requirements for students with disabilities and require interagency collaboration to ensure that transition services are delivered in a coordinated manner to minimize gaps, maximize

the efficient use of resources, and promote positive student outcomes. Several initiatives are in place and others are being planned to facilitate interagency collaboration at the state and local levels and increase the number of students with disabilities who successfully transition from school to adult life.

At the state level, BISCs, DVR, DWD, and other agency representatives participate in the Agency Partners for People with Disabilities, an interagency council that meets on an ongoing basis to address issues across agencies impacting individuals with disabilities. Agency Partners members identified transition as a major issue on which to focus attention and resources. A state level interagency cooperative agreement is in the process of revision and will be disseminated statewide. Also, an action plan was developed that identifies activities to implement the interagency agreement and promote policies and practices that facilitate collaboration.

Project *CONNECT*, funded by BISCs, was initiated to increase the involvement of educators, individuals with disabilities and their families, community-based organizations, agencies, and businesses in the transition planning process. Local Project *CONNECT* sites (currently 18-25 sites/21-28 counties) are:

- Forming or revitalizing local interagency transition councils
- Conducting focus groups to identify local community needs
- Identifying strengths, gaps, and barriers to interagency collaboration in transition planning
- Developing local solutions for local problems
- Developing local interagency cooperative agreements or ways of work
- Implementing recommended transition practices

State level project staff are developing a statewide infrastructure for support and collaboration and collecting data to identify needs and evaluate implementation. State level agency staff are actively involved in this project, using recommendations from local sites in planning and policy development.

BISCs, DVR, and DWD will continue to work closely together to promote collaboration among appropriate agency personnel responsible for transition at both state and local levels. Activities will include:

- Providing collaborative funding for transition-related projects
- Developing and disseminating products designed for a diverse audience (students, families, educators, and agencies)
- Disseminating information relating to statutes, rules, policies, and promising practices
- Supporting cross-agency training at the state, regional, and local levels

Each district is encouraged to establish a working team of representatives involved in transition to ensure effective coordination of services between local education and vocational rehabilitation agencies. State staff as well as Project *CONNECT* staff and participants are committed to providing technical assistance and support to district teams.

Please do not hesitate to contact the staff listed below if you have questions or need additional information. We look forward to working with you as partners in the transition effort to ensure that all of Florida's students with disabilities reach their desired postschool outcomes.

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