



All State VR Agency Call Recap Call Date: August 11, 2015

Nate Arnold, SSA noted State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies with questions or concerns regarding Cost Reimbursement or the Ticket Portal (its use or access) should contact VR.Helpdesk@SSA.gov and are welcome to attend one of the August Ticket Portal Orientation Sessions.

In April SSA hosted the first in a three-part series of on serving *Youth in Transition* when Todd Honeycutt of Mathematica presented data on youth transitions and best practice research. Today's presentation was second in the webinar series. The third presentation will be in September as a separate call from the All VR call. The third presentation will focus on hearing from youth who have been successful in pursuing their employment goals, and also from those who have overcome obstacles with VR and Social Security.

Youth Transition Seminar: Best Practices - Presenters were Andrea Guest, Director, Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Suzanna Gamez, Youth Services Coordinator for Resources for Independence in Fresno California.

Part 1: "Early Start" to Supported Employment Program as a Possible Path to Competitive Work – Andrea Guest.

- WIOA contains Pre-employment Training Activities (PETS) now stipulated in the law for youth in transition.
- The WIOA also requires that 15% of VR funds be spent on youth PETS activities versus spending on traditional transition services. Until the WIOA regulations are issued, it is challenging to know what counts as a PETS activity. The PETS focus is on five areas including: Job exploration, career counseling, work-based learning opportunities, transition to post-secondary education activities, and self-advocacy.
- Delaware VR has had transition counselors assigned to every high school in the state for the past 15 years, and has placed an emphasis on students who are candidates for sheltered workshops, day programs or with no post-high school employment plan.
- Delaware VR developed an Early Start Collaboration program with the DE Department of Education, the state DD agency, and the local school districts.
- VR paid providers to start supported employment services before the youth left high school with community based assessments, locating a job and providing job coaching.
- SOS Includes a business partner, soft skills training in the business and paid internships, and has a 90% employment success rate.
- Summer is now used for potential VR consumers to receive PETS services. Funded 11 proposals from providers for summer services with early positive feedback on impact.
- Also funded students to attend the University of Delaware for a college experience. Students lived on campus, experienced college life and attended some classes.
- Will evaluate all the summer programs for future re-funding, and may also incorporate some of the programs into the school year.
- Our goal is full employment, competitive wages and reduced dependency on benefits.

Part 2: Soft Skills - Suzanna Gamez, Youth Services Coordinator for Resources for Independence in Fresno, California.

- Incorporating soft skills training for youth with disabilities is important to increase workplace success and job retention.
- Soft skills are social skills that are transferrable to many situations and good soft skills are expected by employers.
- Examples include: communicating effectively including attending to body language and active listening, showing up on time, being a self-advocate, taking responsibility
- We provide one-on-one case management focused on soft skills to help youth develop and master soft skills and transfer them to appropriate situations. For example, youth must call in for their appointments, not their parents.
- Interactive learning approaches are used including videos and role playing.
- Bridges to community summer program incorporates both in class and community based experiences – the course focuses on general life skills, social skills, and vocational skills and culminates in a volunteer work experience.
- The summer program is in partnership with local businesses and offers a variety of volunteer opportunities to apply skills learned in the classroom and community.
- We collaborate with 12 high schools and teach the importance of soft skills in the schools. We want to reach youth before they leave high school.
- We also hire youth interns for a year and host a self-advocacy for youth conference
- We assist youth in understanding VR and how they should approach VR with employment goals.
- At www.rcid.org we have soft skills development books and other materials for purchase.

Announcements

The next All VR Call will be September 15

Reminders

The full transcript and audio from the call are available at
<https://yourtickettowork.com/web/ttw/events-archive>