The primary function of the Mid State Transition Coordination Site in the Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell is to provide training and technical assistance to school districts to improve adult outcomes for students with disabilities through sound transition planning. The purpose of this article is to illustrate how the Mid State Transition Coordination Site works with a district when providing transition technical assistance and training. This article highlights the process of providing technical assistance to the Syracuse City School District as the district begins to address the question “What can we do to improve the successful transition for students with disabilities in Syracuse City School District?” The district is now engaging in the exploration, design and implementation of an intervention, The Syracuse Transition Portfolio Project, to improve the outcomes for its students with disabilities.

Background

Syracuse City School District is one of the five largest districts in New York State, including four high schools, a technology center and ten middle schools. The Middle School to High School Transition Portfolio Project SY 2005-2007 is a pilot project created as a result of a series of interviews and surveys with community service providers...
during the summer of 2005. Results of the interviews indicated that students need: 1) to understand their interests, abilities and skills 2) to have the ability to articulate this information to others, and 3) to leave school with the necessary records and documentation in order to receive the appropriate supports to achieve success.

**Development**

The Syracuse City School District Development Team includes: 1) teachers, administrators and interns from one high school and one middle school, 2) community based teachers and high school counselor, 3) State Education Quality Assurance Associate, and 4) the Mid State Transition Site Coordinator (Cornell). The team decided to design individual student information portfolios which would pass from teachers at the middle school to receiving high school teachers.

The team agreed on a set of project objectives: 1) conduct a foundational assessment and planning for transfer from middle school to high school, 2) create a communication loop between middle school teachers, high school teachers, and school counselors. The project team also established a set of guidelines, 1) don’t duplicate what already exists, 2) no extra paperwork, and 3) keep it simple and friendly. The portfolio includes information about students’ interests, abilities, overall skills, experiences, and information regarding academic styles and skills. Throughout the year, the middle school teachers tested the assessment tools with eight students. The teachers concluded that the students benefited from the assessments and the assessments provided good information. The team anticipates that teachers will use the portfolio to write individualized plans to form strategies for successful learning. School counselors can use the information to design the four year guidance plan and, most importantly, students can use it for self-advocacy as they plan for their future.

**Pilot**

At the end of the school year the portfolio was completed and sent to print. The plan for next year is to introduce the portfolio to the remaining middle schools and the high school special education teachers. It is the goal of the project to have these portfolios in place for the high school class of 2007.

This diverse and committed team is well on the way to having a successful transition tool and communication process.

**Systems Change**
Linking Parents to Resources

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers can provide critical transition planning support for parents of children with disabilities. All states have federally-funded centers that serve families of children and young adults from birth to age 22 with disabilities. These include physical, cognitive, emotional, and learning disabilities. They help families in obtaining an array of supports. This includes:

- appropriate education and services for their children with disabilities;
- work to improve education results for all children;
- train and inform parents and professionals on a variety of topics;
- resolve problems between families and schools or other agencies; and,
- connect children with disabilities to community resources that address their needs.

To learn more about the Support Center nearest you, link using the directory provided below.

The Advocacy Center
590 South Avenue
Averill Court
Rochester, NY 14620
585-546-1700
585-546-7069 FAX
1-800-650-4967 (NY only)
E-mail: jblackwell@advocacycenter.com
Website: www.advocacycenter.com
Statewide except for New York City.

The Family as a Critical Partner in the Achievement of a Successful Employment Outcome

NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE!

This new publication explores how the family can be a critical partner in the achievement of successful employment outcomes for individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services. It is the result of a year long study conducted for the 26th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues. The study group producing this report was composed of vocational rehabilitation professionals, family members and consumers - including a Center staff member from the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER). Study group activities, including this report, were coordinated by the Region 6 Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) at the University of Arkansas. The document contains:

- an administrative guide for rehabilitation professionals;
- sections identifying and explaining the roles of the VR counselor, consumer and family;
- training materials and tools to help facili-
High school graduation signifies a time filled with many challenges and changes. It is a time anxiously awaited by students and parents, filled with hopes and dreams of successfully leaving high school and moving into employment and/or post-secondary education. Halpern (1992) has defined this transition as “a period of floundering that occurs for at least the first several years after leaving school as adolescents attempt to assume a variety of adult roles in their communities” (p. 203). Unfortunately for students with disabilities the “floundering period” often lasts for years, and in some cases, a lifetime. To ensure full implementation of IDEA and to help youth with disabilities and their families achieve desired post-school outcomes, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) helps states build their capacity to support and improve transition planning, services, and outcomes for youth with disabilities.

The NSTTAC is directed and staffed by the Special Education Program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in partnership with the Special Education Programs at Western Michigan University and Appalachian State University. NSTTAC will help states build their capacity to support and improve transition planning, services, and outcomes for youth with disabilities and will disseminate information and provide technical assistance on scientifically-based research practices with an emphasis on building and sustaining state-level infrastructures of support and district-level demonstrations.
activities will include, at a minimum: (a) an analysis of IDEA Part B State Annual Performance Reports; (b) identifying and synthesizing effective and promising practices from the WWC, as well as other OSEP-funded centers; (c) consulting with other relevant federal and state agencies; and (d) conducting literature reviews, as needed.

3. Assistance and dissemination. The plan will identify each activity necessary to advance implementation of transition-related actions in states and demonstrate the strategic relationship of these actions to improved outcomes for youth with disabilities.

4. Implementing a strategic plan for technical assistance that enhances state capacity to support and improve transition planning, services, and outcomes using a capacity building institute model which is a proven process for linking research-based practices to state and local implementation, an accessible website and other activities. Capacity building will be planned in collaboration with other OSEP funded technical assistance centers, regional resource centers for special education, state directors of special education, and regional parent training and information centers.

5. Developing and disseminating an array of products to state-specific audiences including students, families, teachers, rehabilitation counselors, administrators, policymakers, and researchers. Products and strategies will be developed and disseminated in collaboration with other technical assistance providers, organizations, and agencies.

For more information, call 704-687-8606 or visit the website at www.nsttac.org.
TransQUAL Online is a tool to support school district teams as they collaboratively review and improve their practices in career development and transition for secondary students with disabilities. The TransQUAL website supports continuous improvement, with features that encourage multiple uses and incremental change in educational policies and programs.

With a grant from the New York State Education Department, the Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) has developed an Internal Development Team, with representation from the Mid-State Transition Coordination Site, Northeast ADA & IT Center, and EDI’s Research Team. We have established a New York State Review and Approval Team, and are soliciting ideas to enhance the website from the University of Oregon, University of North Carolina, University of Minnesota, and Apple Corporation.

Over one-third of the school districts in New York State have used the online toolkit since it was established in the year 2000. In the Mid-State Transition Coordination Site, 46 school districts and 3 BOCES programs have developed a total of 136 TransQUAL Work Plans. These Work Plans have addressed a variety of issues for students, the most popular of which include: Vocational Assessment, Students Participation, Program Policy, Program Philosophy, and Academic Skills Instruction. Figure 1 is a map of the Mid-State Region, highlighting school districts that have used TransQUAL Online to develop Work Plans.

Future plans for TransQUAL Online include: increasing the interactivity between school district teams; developing research questions and strategies; and improving online learning opportunities via podcasting and online discussions. For more information about TransQUAL Online, please contact:

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AIM: dbrew826

Number of academic years TransQUAL Work Plans were created by Mid-State school districts, separated by BOCES region: January 2000 through March 2006

Legend:
- 2 or more academic years of Work Plan(s)
- 1 academic year of Work Plan(s)
- 0 Work Plans created
Exceptional Family Resources (EFR)
is a family-centered agency committed to creating partnerships with a diverse community of people who have disabilities and their families. They provide information, advocacy, respite, and supports to meet individuals needs and reflect their visions, in order to enhance their lives while fostering community awareness and acceptance.

This umbrella organization includes Parent to Parent of NYS North Central Region, covering nine counties; service coordination and other HCBS Medicaid Waiver services; recreation programs; and a number of other family supports.

EFR also publishes an extensive online resource guide to services located within the Midstate Region.

Online Resource Guide:

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**Watertown**
Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL)
V/TTY: (315) 785-8703

**Exceptional Family Resources (EFR)**
1065 James Street, Suite 220
Syracuse, NY 13203
V: (315) 478-1462
Fax: (315) 478-1467

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### Independent Living Centers

**Binghamton**
Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC)
V/TTY: (607) 724-2111

**Cortland**
Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI)
V/TTY: (607) 753-7363

**Ithaca**
Fingerlakes Independence Center (FLIC)
V/TTY: (607) 272-2433

**Syracuse**
ARISE
V: (315) 472-3171
TTY: (315) 479-6363

**Syracuse/Oswego**
ARISE/Oswego Satellite
V: (315) 342-4088

**Utica**
Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL)
V: (315) 797-4642
TTY: (315) 797-5837

**Utica/Herkimer**
Resource Center for Independent Living
V: (315) 866-7245
TTY: (315) 866-7246