Agency Involvement in Transition: Agencies Reach out to Assist Those in Need of Services

Transition Age Students and School - Agency Involvement

One of the areas of transition planning that schools, parents and students with disabilities often find challenging is navigating the referral and service systems with appropriate agencies. This edition of the Transition Times focuses on initiatives regarding several agencies which may be of interest to those involved in transition planning.

Cornell Spearheads Transition Articulation Agreements Between Schools & New York State VESID District Offices

Marianne Murphy, Mid-State Transition Coordination Site (TCS) Coordinator, and her colleagues at Cornell University have developed an Articulation Agreement template for helping VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities) Vocational Rehabilitation district office staff and schools arrive at smoothly coordinated referrals and services to assist secondary students with disabilities to obtain and succeed in postsecondary education and work. In the following two articles, Marian Ferguson, Senior Counselor, Binghamton District VESID, and Marianne Murphy, provide insight regarding this initiative.
Implementing Articulation Agreements in the Binghamton Region

By Marian Ferguson

Southern Tier VESID, DCMO SETRC, ONC SETRC, VESID Regional Associates and the Mid-State Transition Coordination Site representatives have recently met with Bainbridge-Guilford, Greene, Sidney, Franklin and Morris school district’s CSE and transition staff to work on articulation agreements. The agreement outlines the number of potential referrals for two years, how referrals will be made, how documentation will be exchanged and how communication/feedback will be handled. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties and includes contact information for school district and VESID administrators. The meetings to work on the agreements allowed discussion of the current process, identification of barriers, and problem solving as a group. Final copies of the agreement will be shared with all parties. The agreements will be reviewed on at least an annual basis. The feedback on the process has been positive. The Syracuse region has been using this process for a few years and has found it to be an effective tool.

The Articulation Agreement was developed at Cornell University by the Mid-State Transition team in collaboration with representatives from Syracuse including VESID Quality Assurance, District Office staff and input from several focus groups of school district personnel and VESID counselors. The Mid-State Coordination site is developing a web based format for the Articulation Agreement to be used throughout the state.

Reflections on the Transition Articulation Agreement Process

By Marianne Murphy

What is the Transition Articulation Agreement? It is an agreement between a school district and VESID that clearly states the procedure by which the two will collaborate.

One of the simplest ways I can illustrate the effectiveness of the Transition Articulation Agreement between VESID and a school district is by sharing a common response to the process. Inevitably when I approach a school district about sitting down with VESID to complete an articulation agreement, staff tell me, “we know how to contact VESID; we don’t have many children who qualify; what can VESID really do for our children when they leave school?” When the two agencies actually meet, I begin to hear a change, (I think it is defined as the “AH HA” factor), “I didn’t know VESID could do that”, “Did she say children who get resource room might be eligible?”, “Students with disabilities who are not in special education can be referred?” “College bound students?” By the end of the meeting when the team (VESID and district) is asked for feedback, they report how much they learned about VESID services and the need for sending the right documentation in a timely fashion so students can be made eligible before they exit school. The bottom line is that both agencies have a plan to work together; they felt the meeting was very beneficial; and each agency learned a lot about the other.

The Transition Articulation Agreement approach combines process and structure. The initial meeting between the agencies is grounded in a mutual understanding and respect for the different systems and operations unique to each agency. This frees the team to interact and design procedures by which referrals are made, how documentation is exchanged, timelines are set, and how communication is facilitated between the two agencies.
The district team is a multidisciplinary team which includes all school personnel critical to the transition process. The district team meets with the VESID counselor assigned to their school. The combined group reviews the existing practices that are used to identify and refer students with disabilities to VESID and check if all students who are potentially eligible for VESID services are being referred. After the strengths and gaps are identified, the team agrees on a plan designed to improve two-way communications. The key issues addressed in the agreement are contact information, referral process, appropriate documentation, and the design of a feedback loop concerning graduated students who were referred to VESID. The team uses the simple articulation agreement form to guide the process and document what needs to happen, who does it, when, and how to provide feedback.

A noteworthy result of bringing the partners together has been how efficient this process is as a training opportunity. By the time the agreement is developed, staff members report they understand VESID and the procedures necessary to support the smooth transition for students with disabilities to work, further education or training.

### VESID District Offices Located in the Mid-State Transition Coordination Site Region

**Binghamton and Elmira**
Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins

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<tr>
<th>Office Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Tier Binghamton Office</td>
<td>244 West Water Street, Elmira, NY 14901</td>
<td>Voice: 607.734.5294, TTY: 607.734.4676, Toll-free: 800.888.5020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Tier Elmira Office</td>
<td>44 Hawley Street, Binghamton, NY 13901-4470</td>
<td>Voice: 607.721.8400, TTY: 607.721.8408, Toll-free: 800.888.5010</td>
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**Utica Office**
Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Lewis, Montgomery and Oneida Counties

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<tr>
<td>Utica District Office</td>
<td>207 Genesee Street, Utica, NY 13501</td>
<td>315.793.2536</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloversville Office</td>
<td>518.773.2884</td>
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**Syracuse District Office**
Onondaga, Cayuga, Oswego, Madison, Jefferson, and Cortland Counties

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Broome DDSO Increases Planning with Schools, Creates “Local Opportunities Committee”

The new Local Opportunities Committee fills the role of what used to be the CSEP (Community Services Expansion Plan) Committee. It meets monthly in each county and is chaired by the Developmental Disability Program Specialist attached to that county. It is comprised of agency staff, parent representatives, Family Supports and Services Council representatives, and a representative from the DDSO fiscal office. The DDSO has recently started to contact school districts to encourage their participation on this committee.

The committee’s function is to review and approve requests for services such as residential / day habilitation, environmental modifications, adaptive technology, etc. The DDSO also uses this committee to update information on people who are living with their families and will need residential placements in the future through OMRDD’s NYS-CARES program. It is anticipated that by involving school districts in this process the DDSO will be able to collect and update information on people who will be aging out of school and work with agencies to meet their needs at the time of graduation.

School districts can get involved by contacting the Developmental Disability Program Specialist who chairs the committee. Their names and phone numbers are included in the contact information. The specifics of meeting time and location vary with each county. The school will get that information when they contact the chairperson.

Garry Naylor, OMRDDD
Broome Developmental Disabilities Service Office
249 Glenwood Road
Binghamton, NY 13905
Voice: 607.770.0255
Email: garry.naylor@omr.state.ny.us

Garry Naylor is a Developmental Disabilities Program Specialist II in the Executive Office at Broome Developmental Services in Binghamton, NY. Mr. Naylor currently coordinates the activities of the DDSO in regard to NYS-CARES, a registration and placement tracking initiative for individuals in need of residential services, and Consolidated Supports and Services, a Medicaid Waiver service which enables individuals to design and direct their own individualized services. Mr. Naylor also co-chairs the DDSO Admission/Placement Committee and serves on the DDSO Central Opportunities Committee, Community Services Committee, Treatment Services Committee and Aging Out Committee.

“Understanding human needs is half the job of meeting them.”
Adlai E. Stevenson Jr., (1900-1965) as quoted in a speech on October 3, 1952

Another agency that is often found assisting some adolescents and young adults with disabilities in the transition planning process is the NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Like VESID, OMRDD is divided up into geographic regions. These regional centers are called Developmental Disabilities Services Offices (DDSO’s). Like their sister state agency, VESID, OMRDD is also reaching out to local school districts to assist with transition planning.
Coordinated Children’s Services Initiative (CCSI): Increasing Interagency Collaboration Efforts

Since the early 1990’s, a determined network of agencies and individuals has been put into place to help further strengthen and streamline community systems of care, including interagency transition efforts, among NYS providers, agencies, and families.

The Coordinated Children’s Services Initiative (CCSI) is a partnership of service systems, families, and youth working to support localities in creating systems of care so children with cross-systems needs remain with their families, in their schools, and in their communities. Children with cross-systems needs have or are at risk for having complex needs that necessitate collaboration between multiple service delivery systems, families, and youth to create a comprehensive, coordinated system of care.

The CCSI promotes a set of core principles at all levels of government, across a broad range of service agencies, and throughout the service planning and delivery process. These principles guide a process of integrated planning that develops and delivers individualized services to children and their families. The process utilizes strength-based, culturally competent approaches to identify and meet a child and family’s needs, consistent and meaningful family and youth involvement, individualized planning, and encourages creative, flexible decision making and funding strategies.

The CCSI is not a service “program” in the traditional sense of the word; rather, the CCSI provides a structure and flexibility to promote locally designed interagency processes that lead to successful programs for the most vulnerable of children and their families. While the CCSI builds upon the unique strengths of each local service system, there are common features that can be found in participating counties across the state.

The CCSI incorporates a three-tiered approach:

• Tier I is a local service planning team that accepts referrals and develops individualized, strength-based plans of action for children and their families. Team composition varies according to the needs of each child and family, but includes the child and family, a family support representative, and (as needed) representatives from mental hygiene, education, juvenile justice, probation, health, and other county child and family services systems.

• Tier II includes county government and service agency leaders, school officials, and family representatives to address local and state-level solutions to cross-systems issues. New York City’s CCSI also includes a city-wide team of officials, family, and systems representatives.

• Tier III is a statewide board made up of family and youth representatives and officials from nine state agencies. Tier III meets regularly to review and implement systems change at the state level.

Central New York Regional Interagency Technical Assistance Team (RITAT) Mission Statement

The Central Region Team strives to ensure optimal regional coordination of various New York State agency initiatives which are designed to address the health and well being of children and their families in the Central New York Region. Shared knowledge, leadership skills, and experience are used to maximize technical assistance and consultation efforts, avoid duplication and help identify and target issues, barriers, gaps in services and needed outreach and education.
Support for localities is also offered through Regional Technical Assistance Teams that consist of field staff representatives from participating CCSI agencies, family organizations/advocates, and county-level staff (the Central NY RTAT mission statement appears on the previous page.)

CCSI Home Page:  www.ccf.state.ny.us/resources/ccspCCSI.htm

CCSI Statewide Contact:
Tyler Spangenberg
CCSI Statewide Director
52 Washington Street
West Building Room 256
Rensselaer, NY 12144
Voice:  518.473.3652
Fax:  518.473.2570
Email:  tyler.spangenberg@ocfs.state.ny.us

New York State Council on Children and Families (www.ccf.state.ny.us)

Legislation that established the CCSI structure, roles, and responsibilities was enacted in 2002 under the Council on Children and Families. The council is administratively part of the Office of Children and Family Services.

The following information is reprinted directly from the Council Homepage:

What is the Council?
The Council on Children and Families was established in Executive Law in 1977 to improve and strengthen services to children and families provided at the state and local levels by public and private organizations. This is accomplished through better coordination between and among service providers and supervisory agencies; more meaningful accountability; improved selection, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of services; better management and research capabilities; and useful mechanisms to resolve interagency conflicts regarding the provision of services.

In 2003, the Council on Children and Families was administratively merged with the Office of Children and Family Services. The Council’s role and structure remain unique within state government and its purpose remains steadfast. The purpose of the Council is to coordinate the efforts of state agencies providing services to children and families and to develop more streamlined policies concerning these services. Because the Council does not have direct responsibility for the operation of programs or for the provision of services, it can maintain a broad and neutral perspective across the policies, programs and issues of its member agencies.

The Council continues to provide a neutral forum for the identification and resolution of issues that require policy planning and analysis, program development, and operations within an interagency framework. The Council is able to carry out its mission with the support of the State’s twelve health, education and human services agencies that comprise its membership.
Although state agencies are working hard to provide an umbrella of services for individuals with disabilities, each individual and each community setting may present unique needs that need to be met in alternative ways. In the following article Shammi Carr, Technical Assistant with the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center - Region II, Northeast Americans with Disabilities Act Center at Cornell University and a systems advocate familiar with both social and public policy issues as they relate to the independence of people with disabilities, discusses alternative local sources of assistance for transitioning students and families.

### Strategies for Finding Local Agencies and Resources

*By Shammi Carr*

Informed consumers become familiar with the big state funded agencies, like VESID, OMRDD, Independent Living Centers (ILCs), and the Department of Mental Health (OMH). But, what do you do when your child or your family needs or desires services beyond the typical county service provider (DDSO, DOMH, ILC, etc.)? Here are three simple steps to advance the transition plan of a youth who may be looking for non-traditional services:

1. The first step is to assess the student’s needs. What level of supports does the student need for their adult life? If it’s independent living or supportive employment, there’s a good chance there might be service providers in your community who will do an equally good job as the county or larger organizations. Many people are reluctant to access the larger providers because of the fear of not getting customized services. Think beyond just the typical large provider. Many of the smaller non-profits have specialization which might be a better match for the student.

2. The second step is to identify and list existing community programs and services. One place you can always start is the United Way. They publish a directory for the county they serve and will have a complete listing of all volunteer agencies (even the ones they don’t fund). You can find them in your phone book or on-line. A great example of a directory for people with disabilities is from Exceptional Family Resources, based in Syracuse. They have a directory they up-date every two years of all the

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**DBTAC-Northeast ADA Center (Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center)**

[www.dbtacnortheast.com](http://www.dbtacnortheast.com)

The Center is expert in dealing with several disability related laws including the newly reauthorized IDEIA. Parents, transition specialists, school personnel and students are welcome to contact us with questions on transition including rights and responsibilities with employment, college, community living and participation.

DBTAC-Northeast ADA Center
Cornell University
201 ILR Extension Building
Ithaca, NY 14853-3901
Voice/TTY/Spanish: 1-800-949-4232
Fax: 607-255-2763
Email: dbtacnortheast@cornell.edu
(New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands)
services in their county specific to disability. This type of directory is a model for other counties and can be found at http://www.contactefr.org/EFR_ResManual0608.pdf. Other agencies to think about are Boys and Girls Clubs, Urban Leagues, local community centers and churches and Catholic Charities.

3. Finally, once the student has identified her/his needs, it’s time for the design of a plan. Students can explore which agencies they would like to work with and put them into their Transition IEP/goals. They can invite the agency to a meeting to discuss overall the services they can provide as the student transitions to the adult world. Many smaller agencies are overlooked because they are not always on referring lists, so that is why it’s important to work with agencies like United Way, who can provide a plethora of referrals for services. If a student wants work or to live independently (maybe with some supports) but doesn’t want to go through the state system (for example DDSO or OMH), then they can seek agencies that are more suited to them.

There has been a surge of faith-based organizations due to recent funding that has become available to them through the federal government. Perhaps the student has a strong religious background and would like to get services from a Jewish, Muslim or Catholic provider. Perhaps the student comes from a different cultural background and working with a Spanish organization or Native American Center is better suited for them and their family. This, again, is where the student (along with the family) can seek providers that not only provide the necessary independent living skills but also align with their own personal interests such as culture, religion or language.

**Yellow Pages for Kids with Disabilities**

[www.yellowpagesforkids.com](http://www.yellowpagesforkids.com)

“All the information you need, in one place.” Maintained online by the popular Wrightslaw special education law site, the Yellow Pages for Kids with Disabilities is a comprehensive resource that offers listings to anyone, so the consumer should thoroughly check out all advertisers. This web-based directory features the following resources:

- Separate listings for each state and territory
- Disability information groups
- Evaluators
- Tutors
- Support groups
- Advocacy groups
- State agencies

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man”.

*George Bernard Shaw, (1856-1950)*