

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL
EDUCATION

Rural Services Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

LOCATION

3601 C Street
Anchorage, Alaska
Teleconference

Meeting Date

March 14, 2011

Attendees:

Anna Attla, Co-Chair
Holli Yancey, Co-Chair
Pam Curns
Tom Cyrus
Mark Doughty
Belinda Burns

Community Members/Guests:

Lisa Balivet
Kris Green
Laurie Cooper
Steve Williams
Kenneth Smith

Staff:

Teresa Holt

Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo
Peninsula Reporting

Call to Order – 1:30 p.m.
Roll Call

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GOOD NEWS

Teresa Holt announced that Don Enoch has been hired as the special education administrator to replace Art Arnold at the State Department of Education.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members took turns introducing themselves.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Tom Cyrus **MOVED** to approve the minutes from the September 13, 2010 and December 13, 2010 meetings. The motion **PASSED**.

CORRESPONDENCE

Teresa Holt stated that Shane Southwick, the person heading up the Online With Libraries project, e-mailed her and she set up a meeting with him for April 15th to see what they are doing and what the timelines are. Teresa stated that she can ask Shane to join the next Rural Services Ad Hoc Committee meeting and provide them with an update.

WORK PLAN

- 1. Advocate for the implementation of transition services for youth with disabilities in rural communities.**

Teresa Holt stated that the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) is looking for comments on transition services. She stated that she would like to review the comments she received from the Rural and Education Committees. She reviewed the SVRC questions and committee comments as follows:

In your community, who are the participants or leaders in the transition process and what are their roles?

Students:

- It is important for students to have meaningful input in their IEP meetings, especially when meetings focus on transition services at 16
- The Council encourages districts to have student-led IEP meetings by age 16. The Council suggests Kodiak Island School District as an example of this.
- The Council recommends that VR and districts work together to provide interest and aptitudes assessments for students beginning at age 16. Parents should not have to pay for any of these transition assessments. The school districts and VR should cover the cost.

Parents:

- Parents should not be responsible for providing or arranging all the transition services on a student's IEP.
- School districts and VR should work together to assist students and parents with the VR intake process, such as an introduction night.
- VR should accept students at the age of 16.
- Schools should encourage parents to get permission for VR counselors to attend IEP meetings.

Pam Curns suggested adding some things that parents should be required to participate in as well.

Schools:

- School staff are responsible to hold IEP meetings that focus on transition by age 16 and provide needed services and assessments.
- Schools should provide a way for students to give meaningful input at IEP meetings, provide necessary evaluations and assessments, and provide services needed to reach IEP goals.

- The Council recommends that districts hold transition camps based on the Alaska Transition Outcomes Project or the ATOP model.
- Schools should collaborate with local colleges/universities to help students reach post-secondary goals.
- The teacher externship program is an excellent way for teachers to get to spend time working in VR offices to better understand the VR process. The Council recommends an expansion of this program.
- The IEP transition plan needs to be a meaningful plan that gets implemented. IEP plans should be specific with who will complete tasks, dates for completion and follow up to make sure the plan is being implemented.

Pam Curns commented that the teacher externship program no longer exists. She suggested recommending restarting this program. She also agreed that she would like to see more individualized IEP plans.

Tom Cyrus added that he has been working with the North Slope School District and the Northwest Arctic Borough School District to come up with MOAs that outline the rules and responsibilities of both parties.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

- VR should make it a priority to complete intake process for students with IEPs beginning at age 16. For students who are eligible for VR services, a VR counselor should be involved with the student's IEP.
- VR should work with districts to do a better job of collaboration.
- VR staff should present at the ASSEC on how collaboration between VR and schools can be done successfully.

Pam Curns stated that they would not be able to do intake for every student on an IEP, and suggested changing the language to students that have been referred to DVR. She noted that DVR doesn't have the resources or capacity to serve every student on an IEP.

Tom Cyrus commented that he's been trying to work with his local school districts to identify 14 year olds and then look at beginning to serve them when they turn 16. Pam Curns added that not every 14-year-old student is ready to look that far ahead.

Community Agencies:

- School districts and VR should become familiar with community providers in their area and the services that they provide.
- Encourage local providers to become involved in the IEP process.
- Schools can host a provider night so parents can become informed.
- Community agencies could include: DD providers, DMV, probate court staff, guardianship and conservators, representative payee agencies, Social Security staff, Adult Public Assistance, Section 8 housing, etc.

Businesses or Employers:

- Employers need to see the possibilities of hiring students with disabilities. It will require schools and VR staff to work together to recruit local employers to provide internships for students with disabilities. The Council recommends that Project SEARCH be expanded.
- ATOP transition camps encourage school staff and students to look at individual desires of the students. They create opportunities in the local community to allow students to learn real-life transition skills.

What are the critical elements needed to make transition successful?

- Student-led IEP meetings.
- Students advocating for themselves.
- Training for parents on transition services and how to access them.

- Students having a comprehensive evaluation prior to leaving school.
- Schools need training on adult services and how to make real-life transition opportunities for their students.
- VR staff need to be an active partner with the schools.

Kris Green suggested that they should also address adequate housing alternatives. Tom Cyrus agreed. Teresa Holt suggested that financial literacy is also another factor.

Belinda Burns stated that in Juneau they invite VR to IEP meetings and eligibility meetings at age 15 or 16. The plans are individualized to address adult life and dreams for the future. She stated that she has heard that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Juneau is exceptional.

Are there specific system change efforts that can result in more effective transition programs or services?

- Begin working with students at age 16.
- Difficulty can be finding training situations to give kids meaningful work options.
- Training for VR staff and schools on local DD providers, the waiver systems, Social Security, public assistance, etc.
- Staff exchange between VR staff and DD provider staff if feasible.
- State-level and local-level MOAs.
- ATOP.
- Mapping local community resources.
- Person-centered planning.

Belinda Burns stated that she believes their age 18 to 21 transition program is really good in Juneau. They do student-led person-centered planning meetings. She believes the program is vital to interfacing with the rest of the community.

Pam Curns suggested that there are other states that can be researched such as the Oregon Youth Transition Program where the school districts and VR worked together and leveraged funds for a

four to one federal to state match to create transition coordinators that were in each of the schools. She would love to see a program like that here in Alaska, at least regionally.

What challenges exist in providing community-based employment training for students, and what are some possible solutions?

Barriers:

- Lack of training opportunities in rural communities.
- Lack of knowledge of what adult services are available for both school staff and VR staff.
- VR services starting too late in the students' education process.

Tom Cyrus commented that there is a limited amount of opportunity for paid employment and job experiences in smaller villages.

The group discussed the successful hospital-based employment opportunities that have existed for people with disabilities.

Belinda Burns stated that some students in Juneau were able to find gainful employment in janitorial services through apprenticeships through DVR. Pam Curns stated that they do something similar in Fairbanks and pay the students stipends.

What role does assistive technology play in the transition process? Is there a holistic approach to identifying/selecting funding needed for assistive technology?

- Assistive technology plays a big role in making workplaces accessible for people needing accommodations.
- People might not know about all the AT alternatives available.

Belinda Burns stated that when 12th graders do assessments with DVR in Juneau, she believes ATLA is also involved in the

assessments. DVR has been able to come up with the funding for the AT that a student might need for college or a job placement.

Pam Curns stated that oftentimes, schools have AT, but teachers are not trained in how to use it.

Tom Cyrus agreed that there is a lot of technology, but oftentimes teachers aren't using it for people with disabilities. He has been trying to encourage teachers to get students proficient on the technology now rather than later when the students won't have time in their busy adult lives.

Belinda Burns commented that special ed teachers also have very full plates and adding the AT component can be very overwhelming. She suggested districts funding part of a position to be an AT expert for the special ed staff.

2. ILP and therapy services in rural communities.

Lisa Balivet stated that they distributed flip cameras to all their ILP agencies and they are being used a lot. Providers can use the cameras in a family home (with the parents' permission) and videotape the child and family interacting. They can upload the footage to YouSendIt, and another provider, such as a therapist, can view it and give recommendations. This method will bring additional services to families who would not otherwise have that contact.

It is using a store and forward method as opposed to live streaming. Lisa commented that they went with store and forward instead of live streaming because rural communities don't have high-speed Internet connectivity, and as a result, it was a difficult system to use.

Teresa Holt asked the group to think about other areas besides ILP that could benefit from the use of store and forward technology.

3. Work with GCI/TCC/State Library Association to improve Internet access for rural communities.

- American Telemedicine Association (ATA) - preconference meeting (September 20 – 22, 2011).

Teresa stated that the idea behind this preconference meeting was to have a meeting with Trust beneficiary stakeholders and others to discuss how they can use technology to get services for people with disabilities in rural Alaska. She stated that they could hold the meeting prior to or after the ATA conference September 20 – 22, and she suggested they could ask the Trust for funding for the preconference. She stated they also need to discuss how they would like the preconference to look and what issues they would like to see covered.

Kris Green felt this is critical information, and she would be willing to participate in planning sessions.

Mark Doughty, Pam Curns, and Tom Cyrus agreed that holding the preconference would be beneficial.

4. Advocate for FASD services in rural communities.

Teresa Holt stated that the FASD partnership committee meets monthly and they have eight subcommittees. Teresa stated that she may ask Teri Tibbett to come and give the Rural Ad Hoc Committee an update at their May meeting.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The face-to-face meeting will be held April 6 – 8 in Cordova. Teresa reviewed the itinerary of the meeting with committee members.

The next scheduled teleconference is May 9, 2011 at 1:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.