



Pre-Employment Transition Services: A Meta View with Tools & Resources & Training

MELISSA DIEHL: Hello, everyone, and thank you for joining us. We are the Center for Innovative Training and Vocational Rehabilitation. And we are joined today with presenters from the WINTAC pre-employment transition services team and the NTACTION, National Technical Assistance Center on Transition. And I am Melissa Diehl with the VW team, formerly with the WINTAC. and I'm joined by Christine Johnson, my colleague, and Ruth Allison at the Center for Transition and Career and Innovation College of Education now at the University of Maryland.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON: Today's focus will be on providing an overview of what pre-employment transition services are. We're going to take a tour of both the WINTAC and the NTACTION websites to explore the resources, tools, and training that's available for pre-employment transition services. And the third thing that we'll do today is to look at the technical assistance and the collaboration that is going to happen between VR and education beyond 2020.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act really gives us the vision for pre-employment transition services. And it was really designed to help improve the transition of students with disabilities as they are exiting school and moving on to either post-secondary education or employment outcome.

It's also focused on increasing the opportunities for students with disabilities and letting them practice and improve workplace readiness skills. And by doing so, students, by participating in the five required pre-employment transition services, will be able to really explore other options once they leave high school-- so allowing them to be able to earn industry recognized credentials and have meaningful post-secondary employment.

MELISSA DIEHL: Pre-employment transition services represent the earliest set of services that are available to students with disabilities in the continuum of services that are available under the Rehabilitation VR program. Pre-employment transition services are designed to be short-term in nature and are really there to help students identify career interests which can be

further explored through those additional either VR transition services or other individualized VR services once the student applies and is eligible for VR.

So pre-employment transition services, as Christine shared, was reauthorized-- the Rehabilitation Act was reauthorized and amended through WIOA. And pre-employment transition services basically states that the VR agency has to reserve and set aside no less than 15% of their federal funds to provide pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities in their state who may need them. Pre-employment transition services has three main components. That's the way I like to think about them. There are three buckets, if you will.

And the first are the required activities. So we call those the five required pre-employment transition services activities. And these five required activities must be made available and provided to all students in the state who may need them. Next, is the coordination activities. And there are four pre-employment transition services coordination activities.

And these activities are really essential for providing and arranging those pre-employment transition services that have to be carried out by the VR program in collaboration with their state and local education agencies. And then that third bucket-- if funds remain from that reserve set aside for pre-employment transition services after they've been provided those required and coordination activities and funds still remain, then the VR agency can use their set-aside funds to provide these nine authorized activities, which are really designed to improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-secondary enter employment and help support the arrangement of those pre-employment transition services, activities.

RUTH ALLISON: There are five required pre-employment transition services. The first is job exploration counseling-- second, work-based learning experiences which can include in-school or after-school opportunities or experiences outside the traditional school setting including internships, which are provided in an integrated environment in the community to the maximum extent possible.

The third is counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education. Fourth is workplace readiness training, which is really designed to develop the social skills and independent living. And the last is instruction in self-advocacy, including person-centered planning. It may include peer mentoring, including peer mentoring from individuals with disabilities working in competitive, integrated employment.

MELISSA DIEHL: So in July of 2014, the president signed into law the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. And its implementing regulations were completed in August of 2016, which included the funds reserved to provide and arrange for the pre-employment transition services for all students with disabilities who may need them.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON: The purpose, as Missy stated earlier, is really to allow for an early start a career exploration for students with disabilities. Again, pre-employment transition services are those earliest set of services that are now available for students with disabilities under the VR program. They are short-term in nature. And they're designed to help students identify career interests and to be able to explore them before graduation or exit from high school and then moving on to post-secondary activities.

RUTH ALLISON: The National Technical Assistance Center, NTAC, was funded in 2014 and was the first National Technical Assistance Center funded jointly by the Office of Special Education Programs OSEP and RSA. And the goal of our center has been to really assist state education agencies, local education agencies, and state VR agencies and the folks working in the field in VR to really implement evidence-based and promising practices ensuring that students with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, graduate prepared for success in both post-secondary education and employment.

So from the get go NTAC did have a dual customer both education and VR. And as Missy talked about, the Rehabilitation Act as amended by WIOA was reauthorized in 2014, which meant that first year, NTAC was the sole TA provider for VR in education.

So we were thrilled that in 2015, RSA funded the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center, which really provided an excellent opportunity for NTAC to collaborate with WINTAC to support the implementation of WIOA with in NTAC's role being more on the collaboration and coordination of services between VR and education.

MELISSA DIEHL: And on the WINTAC side, our focus was on the implementation for state VR agencies and their partners of WIOA and its implementing provisions, which included pre-employment transition services.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON: So now we're going to have a bit of a show and tell. And we're going to start with the NTAC center. And Ruth will take us on that.

RUTH ALLISON: OK. So, Christine, let's first go to the home page. And as you can see, our website is transitionta.org. So this is our home page that Christine has brought up. And you can get around our website in a couple different ways.

Up top, you have four topics, resources that have dropdown menus, effective practices, events, and autism resources. So that's one way. You can also use the search engine down below and just type in pre-employment transition services.

And when you do that, an array of resources will come up. I think there's 10 or 11 pages. And this is a simple way, I think, to find specific resources around pre-employment transition services. And as Christine pulls that up, you will see the multitude of things that are listed.

And then the third way is search by topic on the left-hand side. So there's transition planning, graduation, post-school success, and data analysis and you. Say you had three different ways. But I think the simplest way to find pre-employment transition services is just to use the search bar.

The next area that I wanted to highlight is the effective practices. Remember, I taught that one of our main functions was really increasing the implementation of effective practices. And here, you'll find different effective practices and predictors. And predictors are those things that if we do these practices, it increases the likelihood of a positive post-school outcome.

And so down below, you have evidence-based practices, which are the highest level, than the research and the promising. And you can see they're detailed in terms of which each of those practices mean. In terms of evidence-based, it demonstrates a strong record of success. And then research sufficient record and promising demonstrates some success.

So I'd encourage you to check this out. And I'm sure many of you are already implementing evidence-based and promising and research-based practices. So it can confirm you're doing the right things. But you also might get some additional ideas in terms of how to engage families, that's a predictor-- and so maybe what are some of those practices you can increase family engagement. Now we'll move on to the toolkits.

We have a number of toolkits. And many of these that I'm going to highlight-- well, actually, all of these-- have been developed in partnership with WINTAC. And so the first one I wanted to highlight is the competitive integrated employment toolkit. And this was really the first toolkit that we developed as a framework to really assist state and local teams and collaboratively to implement IDA transition services and pre-employment transition services.

And there's basically four sections here. The first section is really describing what competitive integrated employment is, why it's important. The next really drills down to outlining transition services under IDA and pre-employment transition services. And there's a chart there that actually has evidence-based practices that align with each of the pre-employment transition services area.

The third section is on interagency collaboration. How do you collaborate effectively with education? What are some of the strategies? And the last section is on professional development and what are some information and resources that are useful in developing skills necessary for both education and VR professionals working in the field.

Just as Christine is going back to the toolkits, I just also want to highlight in many of these toolkits, we secure feedback from the field. So we have focus groups or vocational rehabilitation counselors and teachers to determine what they feel it is effective.

The interagency agreement toolkit is another one we want to highlight. And this toolkit provides guidance on the development of formal interagency agreements between VR and education agency as part of the requirements outlined in IDA in the Rehabilitation Act as amended by WIOA. And the guide is very use user friendly. And it provides really a roadmap for folks to work through the specific steps to develop a state or local interagency agreement.

There's helpful discussion prompts, which are provided and designed to really facilitate that joint conversation between education and VR at both the state and local level. And the local level discussion prompts can also be used in developing a connection to the state formal interagency agreement and how to implement different things at the local level as well as how do you customize it to really meet the individual needs of your local context.

Another toolkit we wanted to highlight is the resource mapping guide. And this would just be another toolkit that could be useful for day-to-day use and working with your education partners. This resource is really intended to guide teams in identifying and aligning resources as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities which we know is so important to really create that seamless transition process for our students.

There's worksheets that are provided that can assist you at the local level to map out what services are being provided by the school. And given that, once those are identified, it really helps VR hone in on what are the specific pre-employment transition services you will provide in that local school district. So we're not duplicating or supplanting services.

So next, Christine, I think, we'll go back and look at the webinars. And we have hosted a number of webinars that would be useful to gain additional information about pre-employment transition services. Once again, we tag team this a lot with our friends at WINTAC. But you'll see an event page, which is a good place to find out what things are happening as well as what events have taken place.

And since we're nearing the end of NTACTION, I would focus on the events and webinar tab here and encourage you to look through it to determine if their past webinars you'd either like to review and maybe just a couple of examples-- innovative state examples are pre-employment transition services, implementation in schools. Or you might also want to look at Ask the Expert Offerings, which are also listed here. And these consist of a webinar followed by an opportunity to ask questions from experts.

And whether you're looking at Ask the Experts or the webinars, I highly encourage you to also look at the PowerPoints and all the resources that are provided during the webinars. You can download those. And they're there great day-to-day tools that you can use in your work.

And then the last thing we want to highlight, which is another resource, is the Pre-employment Transition Services, a Guide for Collaboration Among State VR Agencies and Education Partners. This guide was just developed this past year, and once again, is a collaboration with WINTAC.

We've learned a lot in terms of coordinating services between VR and education. And a lot of those lessons and strategies and resources are included here. But the first section is really focused on a shared understanding of requirements of IDA and the Rehabilitation Act.

The second section really focuses on how do you build those local partnerships and establish those day-to-day practices, as well as what are those annual practices you need to complete to improve the effectiveness of the partnership? The second section is building that system at the - or building your system level collaboration. And then the third section is really focused on, how do you work together to implement individualized student services?

So this section outlines ways partners can identify roles and responsibilities to support the individual goals of individual students and helping them achieve their goals. And the last section, we're really proud of. And we think this is so important. It's really how to partner with families and really re-imagine the way we partners with families.

And there's just practical strategies and resources to use. The last thing I want to highlight about the guide is there's a local partnership guide that's included in this toolkit or guide. And it aligns with the four areas that I just mentioned.

And so it really does take you step by step in terms of how you develop those partnerships at the local level. And it gives you questions to consider as you work together.

MELISSA DIEHL: Thanks, Ruth. Next, we're going to just give you a little bit of a tour on what is available on the WINTAC.org website. And I just wanted to, while Christine's loading that, just take a moment to just talk about-- because the WINTAC grant and the NTACTION grant are at the end of their five-year cycle, just to let you know that on this WINTAC site, right now we're in October of 2020.

And this will be available at a minimum through December of 2020. And then after that, the site is not going to go away. You won't see maybe new content. So folks have been asking quite often very recently about what's going to happen to their resources.

And we'll be talking about new technical assistance going forward. And while we're migrating things, we just wanted you to know that these sites aren't going anywhere right now. You can still access the information that we're about to show you one WINTAC. And, Ruth, I'm assuming the same is true for you all. Until the new site is up and going, folks can still access things on the NTACTION site. Is That right?

RUTH ALLISON: That is correct. Thanks for bringing that up. I forgot to mention that. But, yes, it will.

MELISSA DIEHL: Super, super. So we wanted to basically show you our pre-employment transition section of the WINTAC site. So, Christine, when you go there on the left hand side, you will see this menu where there's an overview, promising practices, resources, training, laws, regs, and policy, FAQs, and intensive TA result.

But we're going to focus on three main areas today where folks spend most of their time when they come to our website. The first place is the training portion of our website. And here, you're going to see a whole bunch of different trainings that we've posted, either that we've created or we've created jointly with our partners at the NTACTION or another entity that we might have collaborated with.

And usually, the most recent will be on top. But there's a whole host of different trainings that you can find that are available to watch as either an archive or they've been prerecorded. And you can watch them on demand. And they're available for CRC credits if you need them.

So there's everything from an overview of pre-employment transition services, which gives you, if you have new staff who are just trying to understand what are pre-employment transition services and what do they look like to information on the partnership. We did one early on with our partners at NTACTION and RSA on the agreement with education, which I think, Ruth, that was predated even our toolkit that Ruth shared with you on the agreement with education in VR.

So it just gives you a whole host of different topics. We also did webinars introducing some of the tools that Ruth shared with you on the VR education guide. And I think there's another one on the guide for community rehabilitation providers. So just a host of different things where we've tried to crossover maybe what's available on the resources section and walk through that with folks.

Just want to point out to you all if you haven't seen our Explore Work modules that were developed by ERI, we do have a webinar that walks folks through that. So Explore Work are actually content and modules that students can either take or can be facilitated by a provider, a teacher, or VR counselor, whatever.

But there are a host of information there. I think we're going to be updating that recorded webinar, because there's been some updates to the modules themselves. But in the meantime, that is available-- a nice walkthrough on how you can use those modules right from our training page.

All right, Christine. Next, if you want to just take us to the FAQs. This is probably the second most frequently visited page on our site. But we have a host of FAQs. And we've divided them up into basically the FAQs that we developed under which WINTAC for pre-employment transition services.

And then there are FAQs that are federal funders that are RSA have posted that you can easily access links to where those are posted on RSA's website, and then additional FAQs that we might have collected, which cross over another section like period of performance or the RSA 911. Because those things can intersect with pre-employment transition services.

But if we go down to the pre-employment transition services FAQs, we've tried to kind of subcategorize those into questions that are more administrative in nature to probably the most

frequent set of questions, which is around allowable costs related to pre-employment transition services, some on contracting for the provision of services, documentation, and then just more general definitions of pre-employment transition services, and then in-service delivery, staff time charging.

So we've tried to group that. But just like Ruth shared with the NTACT site, if you go to the top, you can-- and you don't have to show and tell this, Christine, but just so folks know-- if you go to the FAQ, you should be able to download them as well. There was a download page where you can download all of the FAQs.

Also, if you hit Control F, the search function will appear on your screen. And you can just search by keyword. Christine, I think you're going to show that, right? So if you put time in there, Christine, I think it would take you to the FAQs that would have to do with staff time. Yep. You can see where that takes you right there.

So that's one little trick. And you can do that on any web page. If folks don't know, it's a nice little trick. If you hit Control F on any web page, you can do a little search. So those are the FAQs.

And then the third main section is our resources page. So some of the resources that we have are going to be very duplicative of what is available on the NTACT site. Because as Ruth shared, we have done a lot of joint tools and resources. So those live on both of our websites so that there's no wrong door no matter where you're looking. If you're looking on their site or ours, you can find it.

At the top of our resources, we have some of the COVID-19 resources that we've been compiling and some provider resources and a whole host of things. I think we literally have a couple different resources as I know that the NTACT folks also have additional COVID-related resources as well.

Then in the next section, we have our pre-employment transition resources. So you'll see we have that CRP guidebook, the VR education. Christine is scrolling down here to some of the RSA resources that we've collected and then other resources that pertain to students with disabilities.

And then at the very bottom, we have a whole bunch of external links and resources that pertain to students with disabilities. But, Christine, if you could scroll up for me to that blue section or the pink section up top here where we have most of our resources, you'll see that

they mirror those FAQs where we've tried to subcategorize them into resources that relate to time tracking or tracking of reporting of service delivery to the actual service and implementation and then on the things that pertain to VR and education and collaboration.

So you can find things. If you ever have trouble, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us on today's webinar. Our contact information is going to be on the last slide. And if you spend more than a minute looking for something, that's too long. Just give us a holler. You can reach out to us via email. We'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON: We're happy to also be able to share that we have now available the pre-employment transition services five-part training series that is focused on resources and strategies. This is brand new. And I should be showing you now. Again, this is on our training page where you will see that. These are a series of pre-recorded webinars.

They are highlighting, of course, the five required pre-employment transition services. No matter which of the five webinars you look at or all of them, you're going to see that they all have included curricula and activities that can be used for that particular service, some state spotlights showing what's happening across our nation, some examples of expected outcomes, and ways to identify student progress, some tips on how to successfully deliver that particular service, and additional supports and resources that you can use to provide services for students with disabilities.

Again, these five webinars were co-hosted by the WINTAC and NTACTION staff. They are closed captioned, and with a copy of a transcript, also available for 1.5 CRC credits. And on our page here, you'll see the links to each of those webinars. Just click on it. It'll take you there. You sign up. So we're very happy to have that ready for everyone at this point.

RUTH ALLISON: And we have been hinting about some big news. And we are thrilled to announce that there is a new National Technical Assistance Center for Transition. It is NTACTION 2.0. Our partners are UNC Charlotte, East Tennessee State University, George Washington University, Portland State University, and the Universities of Kansas, Maryland, and Oregon.

And we've mentioned several times throughout the webinar how WINTAC NTACTION has collaborated over the last five years. And so we're really thrilled now that we are going to be under one TA center. We feel it's going to be a benefit for our joint customers from education and VR.

And so we're just so excited. And, Christine and Missy, I don't know if you want to add anything else. I know we're all pretty stoked about this.

MELISSA DIEHL: Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. It just makes sense. I think over the years, we're kind of like peanut butter and jelly. And now we can do so under one roof. So very exciting. And good things to come. And hopefully, we can demonstrate how that collaboration works on the national level from the TA perspective, which can ultimately help states and their VR agencies and education partners collaborate more effectively.

So the last thing we wanted to just show you here is just some extra resources that you can get to through this PowerPoint presentation. So we have the WIOA. We have the regulations on this page if you're ever wanting, if you don't already have a copy, download it or print it and dog-eared like we do.

Those are available for download both on RSA's website and the WINTAC website and I'm sure a host of other places if you search the internet. But they're here in a quick and easy link for you.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON: The second resource slide actually shows-- we've actually looked at these through the little show and tell tours. I think the last link is one we have not shown yet. And, again, it's another resource-- the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training materials.

MELISSA DIEHL: And I think, Christine, there's one other link on here that we didn't talk about that came out from our federal partners within OSERS that you might want to pop up.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON: And this is the Transition Guide to Post-secondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities

MELISSA DIEHL: Yeah. And there was an original version of this that came out a few years ago. And last year OSERS updated this. It's an excellent guide, very comprehensive. And if you haven't had a chance to review this guide, we would encourage you to do so, which is one of the reasons we wanted to share the quick link for you.

Well, that's all we have today for our meta webinar on pre-employment transition services. We have really enjoyed serving the state VR agencies and their education partners over the past five years and in NTAC's case, six years. And we look forward to doing so and this new grant cycle together as NTACTION 2.0. Thank you all.