

Section IV: Professional Development

At a Glance: This section provides an overview of effective practices around professional development as well general knowledge needed by transition professionals. Additional guidance is provided that outlines roles and specific knowledge needed to perform that role. A wide range of resources are provided to build or use in professional development activities:

Benefits of Professional Development:

Professional development (PD) is one key mechanism to assist agency personnel learning how to implement transition programs. The PD must consider not only the content (e.g. competitive integrated employment) but also identify effective practices for improving teacher performance and essential features of effective PD including professional learning communities (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009; DuFour, 2004). Doren, Flannery, Lombardi, and Kato (2012) highlight several effective features of PD including (a) training in small groups, (b) several trainings and continued practice over time, (c) active learning and the use of problem-solving strategies and scenarios, (d) an interactive approach that aligns with the participant's interests and experiences, and (e) use of professional learning communities. Additionally, to improve professional development, it is important to focus on the duration, collective participation, and core feature (i.e., content, active learning, and coherence) than the type of PD (Garet et al., 2001) Lastly, transition professional development programs should provide instruction to special educators on how to evaluate their own transition practices and apply those results to a larger framework (e.g., How do communication skills relate to a student being able to gain employment?). Evaluation of transition practices can assist practitioners in improving their ability to implement quality transition practices and improve transition programs (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009).

What Transition Professionals Need to Know

Morningstar and Clark (2003) describe five important areas to provide professional development in transition:

- 1. Knowledge of principles and basic concepts of transition education and service:** this includes the application of requirements of transition service outlined under IDEA as well as research bases practices focused on transition planning and the Individual Education Program (IEP).
- 2. Knowledge of models of transition education and services:** including knowledge of specific program models focused on individual planning and aligned with secondary education such as models of student focused planning, student development, family involvement, and interagency collaboration (Blalock et al., 2003; DCDT, 2000).
- 3. Skills in using strategies for developing, organizing, and implementing transition education and competencies:** including skills needed to implement effective transition models, transition assessment, service coordination, and curriculum planning within the context of general and special transition instructional programs.

4. **Knowledge and use of collaboration competencies:** understanding service coordination with the array of agencies, programs, and services to support young adults with disabilities
5. **Knowledge and skills to address systemic problems in transition services delivery:** the need to understand and address barriers and strategies for planning, developing, implementing, and promoting transition services and programs at local, state, and federal levels (Kohler, 1998).

The following table provides information about where to find materials that can be used to deliver professional development as well as courses that can be taken for credit.

Audience	Resource
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners • Administrators • Transition Specialists • Higher Education • Vocational Rehabilitation 	<p>The Iris Center The IRIS Center is a national center providing professional development resources. http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu Has a section for professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners can earn professional development hours by participating in the IRIS Star Legacy Modules. • Can earn Professional Development hours • 5 Modules for Transition <p>Located at: http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/iris-resource-locator/</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners • Principals • Transition Specialists • Vocational Rehabilitation 	<p>The National Technical Assistance Center for Transition (NTACT) Provide resources on evidence based practices in Secondary Transition for educators and vocational rehabilitation providers www.transitionta.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars • State Toolkit for Examining Post-School Success (STEPSS) STEPSS Facilitator Guide • An Evaluation Toolkit http://transitionta.org/evaluationtoolkit • Using VR data to improve outcomes Using VR Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational Rehabilitation 	<p>Explore Vocational Rehabilitation ExploreVR offers vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies easy and convenient access to a range of VR research, related data, and tools for planning, evaluation, and decision-making http://www.explorevr.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job-driven toolkits • Webinars • The Open Data Lab Publications of current research

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners • Administrators • Transition Specialists • Higher Education • Vocational Rehabilitation 	<p>The LEAD Center The LEAD Center’s work focuses on promoting innovation in policy, employment and economic advancement to advance individual and systems level change for all people with disabilities. http://www.leadcenter.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Center with articles, presentations, publications, reports, websites, and white papers. • Employment tab has webinars focused on current employment initiatives (e.g., customized employment)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners • Administrators • Transition Specialists • Vocational Rehabilitation 	<p>Employment First Employment First enhances lives by creating greater opportunities for all people to advance their careers. http://www.ohioemploymentfirst.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development for Employment includes a web-based training for effective supported employment. • By participating in the web-based training, practitioners could gain 12 CEUs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners • Administrators • Transition Specialists • Higher Education • Vocational Rehabilitation 	<p>The Transition Coalition Located at the University of Kansas, Beach Center on Disability maximizes professional development opportunities for secondary transition and college and career readiness of students with disabilities. http://transitioncoalition.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the tab Training there are resources including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Modules • Webinars • Ask the Experts • Self-study • Graduate programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners • Administrators • Transition Specialists • Higher Education 	<p>University of Maryland College of Education Graduate Certificate for Students in Transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate Certificate in Career Planning and Placement for Students in Transition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational Rehabilitation • Administrators • Transition Specialists 	<p>Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) A national membership organization for trainers and educators who work in the field of employment for people with disabilities http://www.acreducators.org</p> <p>Resources for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Training • Trainings (face-to-face, online, hybrid) • Competencies <p>Certificates (Basic Employment and Professional Employment Certificates)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practitioners• Administrators• Transition Specialists• Higher Education	<p>Pennsylvania Communities of Practice for Transition (PaTTAN)</p> <p>This website provides resources to build the capacity of local education agencies to serve students who receive special education services. They provide training materials that can result in continuing education credits</p> <p>PaTTAN website</p> <p>Pennsylvania Community on Transition Webinar Series</p>
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The table below can be used to assist those in higher education on the knowledge needed for personnel preparation.

Personnel Preparation Table for Higher Education

Personnel	Knowledge Needed
Special Education Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize specific roles and responsibilities for job coaches and paraeducators • Establishing regular meeting times for discussion • Provide joint feedback to help communication (Blalock, 1991). • Student-focused planning • Student development • Interagency collaboration • Family involvement • Program structures and policies (DCDT, 2000a). • Self-determination (e.g., decision making, goal setting, self-awareness) and social skills • Learning strategies and academic content • How to help identify and develop accommodations that students might need in school or community activities. • Determining specific goals and objectives (Blalock et al., 2003). • Within each domain of interagency collaboration; curriculum and instruction, student-focused planning and assessment, accountability, assessment, and post-school outcomes, and family involvement, special educators should demonstrate knowledge and skills within three levels of secondary school systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overarching secondary school systems, supports, and services ○ Specialized supports and services for students with diverse learning needs within the general secondary educational context; and finally ○ Specific transition services (Morningstar & Clark, 2003). • The skills to evaluate transition practices to improve their teaching and instruction (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009). • How to be involved in employment-related activities and interagency collaboration • How transition-related standards could be integrated into the general curriculum <p>Professional training on both collaboration knowledge and skills (Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009).</p>

<p>Transition Specialist/ Coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of agencies and systems change • Development and management of Individualized Transition Plans • Working with Others in the transition process • Vocational assessment and job development • Professionalism, advocacy, and legal issues • Job training and support • Assessment (general) competencies that are grounded in skills of communication, collaboration, and consultation (Defur & Taymans, 1995). • Historical, legal, and philosophical foundations of special education • Characteristics of learners • Assessment, evaluation, and diagnosis • Instructional content and practices in transition education • Planning and managing teaching and learning environment • Managing student behavior and social interaction skills • Communication and collaboration skills • The ability to establish partnerships with key stakeholders • Professional and ethical practices in transition (DCDT, 2000b).
<p>Paraeducators/ Job Coaches</p>	<p>Para-educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General knowledge (basic special education information plus concepts in interpretation and translation) • Cultural knowledge specific to the school's community. • Specific strategies with how to handle situations. <p>Job coaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer assessment • Consumer job duties and responsibilities • Job analysis of specific skills required • Communication with consumer on job expectations • Training of consumer on specific job skills • Training on work-related behaviors • Orientation of consumer to job site • Modifications/adaptations needed • Monitor relationships between co-workers • On-site supervision and prepare to fade out • Provide follow up services and job development (Blalock, 1991).

<p>Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of active involvement on IEP and transition planning• Rehabilitation technology• Employment training• Workplace demands and opportunities• Independent living support• Available services in the community.• Getting involved early with the IEP team• Transition programming and collaboration with schools and agencies (Blalock et al., 2003).• Understanding the functional limitation of various disabilities and the vocational implications of function limitations on employment especially those who may require specialized services such as individuals with traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress syndrome, mental illness, autism, blindness, or deaf-blindness• Vocational Assessment tools and strategies• Counseling and guidance skills (both individual and group)• Effective use of practices leading to competitive integrated employment such as support employment, internships, apprenticeships, paid work experiences• Case management and employment services planning• Understand the broad range of disability, employment, and social services program in the state and local area• In-depth knowledge of labor market trends, occupational requirements, and other labor market information• The use of labor market information for vocational rehabilitation counseling• The use of labor market information to support building and maintaining relationship with employers and to inform delivery of job development• Understand the effective utilization of rehabilitation technology and job accommodations• Understanding the provision of ADA and employment related laws• Advocacy skills• Skills to address cultural diversity• Understanding confidentiality and ethical standards and practices (WIOA, 2014).
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<p>Career Technical Education Teachers</p>	<p>Information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal mandates • Student characteristics • Vocational assessment strategies • Appropriate accommodations • Behavioral interventions • Transition planning • How to link to postsecondary settings • Gathering assessment information • How to facilitate student self-determination in setting goals • Provide career counseling • Acquire or design relevant job-related curriculum • How to coordinate with employers to create job exploration and placement sites • Collaboration with families, agencies and special education teachers to provide comprehensive support services (Blalock et al., 2003).
<p>General Education Teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to tie academic content to real-life experiences • Provide linkages to postsecondary options • Promote choice and responsibility in the context of self-determination and self-advocacy • Communicate closely with families about students’ future goals • The transition process within general education content and pedagogy courses • Information on the legal mandates for transition • Relevant transition curriculum and instruction, accommodations, and student involvement in educational decision-making. • Principles, models, and strategies to support career development and transition for all students (Blalock et al., 2003).
<p>Guidance Counselors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to provide resources, career education experiences, formal and informal assessments, linkages with postsecondary institutions, and strategies for self-advocacy and self-determination. • Collaborate with teachers and service providers to develop and provide student assessment data important for making educational and transition decisions • Their instruction should include disability-related and transition content (Blalock et al., 2003).