



Purpose

The following is guidance for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), education and other community-based agencies about the provision and coordination of transition services, provided through OOD, for students with disabilities (herein referred to as “students”), including:

- the roles of OOD VR Staff and VR Contractors in the transition planning process;
- eligibility for OOD transition services and how schools and other community-based agencies can help with this process; and
- timing of referral to OOD for transition services.

Why is Early Engagement in Transition Services so Important?

As students are entering high school, **career development activities (e.g. pre-employment transition services) take on added significance** as this is a natural time for students to begin making more educational choices related to their **future career goals**. VR Staff and VR Contractors can play an integral role in the **planning and evaluation process** these students and families are engaged in as they begin high school.

Research¹ shows that early engagement of students in transition to work activities leads to better outcomes. For example, students who:

- have a job at the time of exit from school are **5.1** times more likely to be remain employed;
- have had **2 or more authentic, paid work experiences** while in school are more likely to be engaged in post school employment or education; and
- received assistance from **3 to 6 community-based agencies** (like OOD) were more likely to be engaged in post school employment or education.

¹ National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT)

Team Planning

It takes an **agency neutral, person-centered, outcome-focused** approach to coordinate the many resources a student may have available to them to ensure a successful transition from school to work or post-school activities. VR Staff or VR Contractors can be a beneficial member of a student’s person-centered planning team (i.e. transition team) to ensure coordination of services, appropriate identification of a vocational goal through a **Backward Planning** process and alignment of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individual Service Plan (ISP), if applicable.

OOD is committed to helping students use the **OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) K-12 Tools**, including **the Backpack**, which can assist in a student’s career development. The student owns this information, and can share access to the Backpack contents with other agencies.

Expertise of OOD VR Staff or VR Contractors

VR Staff or VR Contractors bring vocational expertise to a person-centered planning team that includes the student, parents and/or legal guardians, the school, and other community-based agencies from which the student is eligible for services. VR Staff and VR Contractors work with students and their team to ensure coordination of services, identify appropriate employment goals, obtain work incentives counseling if necessary, and provide information about current labor market trends, in-demand jobs and other career-focused information.



Who is eligible for OOD Transition Services?

Transition services through OOD are for students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who have a physical, cognitive and/or mental impairment that causes a substantial barrier to his/her ability to get or keep a job. Students must also demonstrate a need for VR services and be able to benefit from VR services in terms of an employment outcome. OOD has recently eliminated its waiting list for services, which means students who meet eligibility requirements can begin receiving services immediately.

Application and Eligibility for OOD Transition Services

- In order to **expedite eligibility determination**, schools and other partners are encouraged to provide any information regarding the student’s functional limitations and existing documentation they may have about a student’s disability at the time of referral for services (e.g. ETR, IEP, FED form, OEDI, COEDI, other related medical and psychological reports). OOD’s agency goal is to make an eligibility determination within 30 days. It should not take longer than 60 days if existing information is readily available.
- Any assistance the school may be able to provide to **help coordinate the first meeting (i.e. initial interview), which must include the student and if applicable, his/her parent or legal guardian, is greatly appreciated and helps to ensure timely eligibility determination.**

When Should a Student Apply for OOD Transition Services?

Students can apply for services starting at age 14. Students who apply to OOD may be in different stages in terms of their career development, therefore, the timing for referral to OOD should be made on a **case by case basis, considering vocational need**. The following guidelines may be helpful in determining potential entry points, depending on an individual student’s circumstances.

Potential Entry Points for Referral to OOD Transition Services

Career Tech Interest

- Prior to when home schools begin the assessment process to determine if Career Tech is an appropriate option. Ideally **OOD would start working with these students at or before this time**, so information can be shared between agencies.
- OOD can help the student and teachers explore different options, further assess and define those Career Tech interests. OOD may be able to supplement some **Career Exploration** to guide decisions about what training area they wish to enter.

Post-Secondary Interest

- **Career Development, exploration and guidance** may be needed before a student exits high school to help that student develop a clear direction for choice of major.
- Working with students prior to graduation allows time for them to **explore postsecondary options** and obtain work experience needed to increase their employability.
- OOD may be able to contribute to college or other postsecondary training when it is **necessary to obtain an agreed upon employment outcome after graduation from high school**. The specific goal on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is not an “educational goal”, it is a specific employment outcome (e.g. Accountant). Therefore, any training purchased must be directly tied to that agreed upon **vocational goal and minimum qualifications required** for that job goal.



**School to
Work**

- Many students are seeking **a job that they can advance in** without postsecondary training. Ideally, OOD would begin working with these students as early as age 14 to allow time for any developmental activities (e.g. vocational guidance and counseling, job shadowing, interviewing, volunteering).
- OOD can help each student explore **in-demand jobs** and connect with authentic, community-based work experiences when they are of legal age for employment.
- **Progressive career development** can help students move from basic developmental activities to those requiring more skills and increased independence. Data-driven decisions ensure deliberate movement based on vocational need and mastery of benchmarks at each level of services. Services may include:
 - Summer Youth - Career Exploration;
 - Summer Youth - Work Experience;
 - Non-Permanent Job Development;
 - Job Coaching for a non-permanent (summer or after school) job while the student is still in high school; and
 - Job Development and Job Coaching for permanent employment.

**At-Risk
Youth**

- This population of students might benefit from engagement in **career technical education** or **work experience** to prevent dropping out of high school. VR services can be individualized based on their needs.

**Students
who require
extended
education
services and
defer
diploma**

- VR Staff and VR Contractors are available for consultation to discuss and plan for when to best access VR services so that provision of **services can coincide with their projected exit date from high school.**

**Online/Home
School
Students**

- Students **do not have to be associated with a particular school district** to apply for OOD services. Also, it is not required that youth be enrolled in school to receive OOD services.