

## Building Pre-ETS Partnerships with the 3 C's

Schools and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) collaborate to provide pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS). These services help students with disabilities identify career interests, practice workplace readiness skills, build job skills through real work experiences, and explore options after high school. Although working with multiple stakeholders to provide services can be challenging, the following strategies can help everyone to **communicate**, **collaborate**, and **coordinate** services.

### Communicate

Successful partnerships need clear and consistent communication. Without it, working together can be difficult. When communicating with stakeholders, stick with these strategies to ensure everyone is on the same page.

**Avoid using workplace jargon, short-hand, and acronyms to communicate ideas.** Every agency has its own language. While this often works at the home office, it is easy to forget that others may not understand. When working with people from different agencies, remember that jargon and acronyms can lead to misunderstandings and confusion.

**Plan meetings in advance.** Take time to think about communication before your next meeting. For example, provide a quick recap at the start to prepare everyone for the discussion to come. Also, at the end of each meeting, be sure to include the next meeting date on the calendar. This will help keep everyone connected and on track.

**When in doubt, just ask.** Working with multiple partners and managing different timelines can sometimes lead us to doubt our next steps. If you don't remember something, need to confirm a service, or haven't heard from your partner in a while, don't be afraid to reach out. The most important thing is to keep communicating.

### Collaborate

Once you and your team have developed successful communication, it's time to put this into action and learn how to work together.

**Share information and resources.** Exchange information about not only your students but also how your department or agency works. The more you learn about your partners and their resources, the better you will be able to solve problems. Each partner brings their own perspective, policies, and procedures to the team. The more that you know and understand about each other, the smoother your collaboration will become.

**Know your partners' strengths and needs.** Understanding your team members and their strengths also means understanding their needs and gaps. This might feel uncomfortable at first. It is hard to share the limitations and drawbacks of your services. However, you are actually creating an opportunity for your partners to contribute. Collaboration won't happen if we can't think of ways to help each other.

## Coordinate

Coordination involves collaboration and communication to provide services. When services are well coordinated, they build on each other, meet students' needs, and follow a logical flow.

**Plan services and activities collectively.** Everyone plays a role in planning services and activities. This makes work easier, prevents duplication of services, and helps students make progress. Schools know students' schedules, home considerations, and strengths. DARS offers perspectives on employment and supplemental services. Families are experts on students' day-to-day needs. Together, we benefit from collective knowledge and expertise.

**Keep effective practices in mind.** Use evidence-based practices and predictors. The biggest predictors of post-school employment are inclusion in general and Career and Technical Education, paid employment before graduation, family involvement, and starting the transition process early. Focus on providing these experiences for students to enhance the benefits of transition services.

**Stay student-centered.** Make time to learn about your students. What are their goals? What supports do they need? Use this information to provide relevant and timely services. Keep the students' outcomes as the main goal of the collaboration. Stay student-centered to ensure everyone remains focused on students' best interests. Together, as a team, you can better coordinate impactful, intentional, and well-planned services to more students.

## Conclusion

Communication, collaboration, and coordination are essential to student success after high school. You likely have experience working with professionals in other departments, agencies, and businesses. If so, you know that teamwork is not always easy. Keep these simple tips in mind to set yourself up for success.

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