

Perspectives on the Implementation of Pre-ETS services: Identification of Barriers and Facilitators to Early Career Planning for Youth with Disabilities

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A Quick Look

There are differences between and within states in the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with significant disabilities early in the career planning process. This complicates the delivery of services for these youth with disabilities (YWD) and leaves gaps in communication between families, educators, and vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors.

The objective of this study is to identify facilitators and barriers in the implementation of Pre-ETS to students with significant disabilities ages 14–16. Researchers from Virginia and Kentucky conducted semi-structured interviews with 56 participants representing VR counselors providing Pre-ETS, educators, and families.

Key Findings

- A majority of respondents stated that starting Pre-ETS with 14–16-year-olds provided numerous benefits.
- In both Virginia and Kentucky, educators and VR counselors expressed the need for more resources, particularly ongoing training for providing Pre-ETS to younger students in the transition process.
- Families recommended making activities meaningful and engaging by increasing job exploration and workplace readiness experiences.

Putting It Into Practice

This study provides a snapshot of the experiences of VR counselors, educators, and families/students in the implementation of Pre-ETS. As continuing research and demonstration of effective practices emerge, it is important that all stakeholder voices are included. This includes families, YWD, businesses, VR, and

educators. During the interviews, some VR and educator respondents expressed the need for more family involvement in the Pre-ETS process. Yet, family members expressed a need to understand Pre-ETS and the services provided. It is important that continued efforts are made to increase communication and collaboration among all stakeholders, and especially with families and YWD as implementation of Pre-ETS continues (Schutz et al., 2021).

Where To Go from Here?

The results of this study are an initial step to gaining a better understanding of the expressed benefits and challenges of providing Pre-ETS in local communities across two states. Although there were some differences in respondents' perceptions, there was general agreement from a majority of respondents that formed the five central themes of the results:

- Access to businesses
- Collaboration
- Implementation strategies for early career awareness
- Information needs on Pre-ETS implementation

The inclusion of key stakeholders including families, YWD, VR counselors, and educators each provided their unique perspectives on the themes that emerged through the interviews. As we learn more about how states are structuring their delivery of Pre-ETS, these stakeholder voices, along with employers, are a critical part in the development and implementation of career-related activities for all transition age youth, but more importantly, younger students with significant disabilities seeking to fulfill their career aspirations.

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