

Pre-Employment Transition Services: What Secondary Special Education Teachers Need to Know

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A Quick Look

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014, state vocational rehabilitation (VR) services are required to include pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to qualified students with disabilities as they transition to postsecondary education and employment. Secondary special education teachers are typically the ones to connect students and their families with Pre-ETS services. As such, this article focuses on providing the necessary information for secondary special education teachers to be knowledgeable about what Pre-ETS entails and how to obtain those services for students with disabilities.

Key Findings

- The primary objective of Pre-ETS is to reduce barriers to employment.
- Pre-ETS complement transition services mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.
- The four criteria for eligibility for Pre-ETS include meeting (1) the state age requirement for IDEA-mandated transition services, (2) the disability-status eligibility as set by criteria for IDEA or Section 504, (3) the school status requirement of enrollment in an education program, and (4) the eligibility or potential eligibility for traditional VR services.
- The five required Pre-ETS services are (1) job exploration counseling, (2) work-based learning experiences, (3) postsecondary education counseling, (4) workplace readiness training, and (5) instruction in self-advocacy.

Putting it Into Practice

When it comes to implementation, the focus of this article is around best strategies secondary special education teachers can use to support students with disabilities and their families in accessing Pre-ETS.

The first suggestion is through making referrals to VR agencies. Since this is a requirement of accessing Pre-ETS services, it's important teachers reach out to their local VR agency to better understand the referral process. Second, since some activities must be carried out by VR agencies, teachers play a vital role in coordinating activities to be completed by VR agencies. This also requires working with the VR agency to understand what collaboration and coordination could look like. Finally, the article suggests that secondary special education teachers develop relationships with families and VR counselors to make the sharing of information much more effective throughout the process.

Where To Go from Here?

Increasing secondary special education teachers' knowledge of Pre-ETS and how to access services is a necessary step in ensuring more eligible students are able to benefit from these services. Beyond surface level awareness that these services exist and the conditions under which they can be accessed, it's important that teachers have a more comprehensive understanding of what is covered through the five core components of Pre-ETS. The article offers a list of sample activities and services for most of the five required services of Pre-ETS. These examples serve to spark ideas for how secondary special education teachers can use Pre-ETS services to fill in the gaps when it comes to preparing students for postsecondary transition into their future careers.

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