



**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
What Pennsylvania's Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities
Need to Know**

INTRODUCTION

This publication is intended to introduce you, your family members, and other supporters, to services you may be eligible for under WIOA. Although many services are available under WIOA, this document focuses on transition to employment services that are available for youth with disabilities. These transition services are intended to help you find competitive, integrated employment that is consistent with your interests and abilities. A goal of WIOA is to increase opportunities for all youth to participate in work-based learning through summer employment, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, internships and other similar experiences.

What Is WIOA?

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a Federal law signed July 22, 2014. It is intended to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in competitive and integrated employment.

WIOA requires various providers including the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and others to work together to ensure that youth with disabilities have access to necessary services and supports.

For more general information about WIOA programs for youth with and without disabilities, please visit:

https://www.doleta.gov/WIOA/Docs/WIOA_YouthProgram_FactSheet.pdf.

Where Do I Go For Transition and Employment Services?

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)

OVR is the designated agency responsible for promoting the employment of individuals with disabilities by providing vocational rehabilitation, job training, and placement services pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. §§ 701 et seq.).

OVR provides services to eligible individuals with disabilities. Services are provided both directly by OVR counselors and staff, and through a network of approved vendors. OVR services must be individualized to meet the employment goals of the person with a disability. Under WIOA, OVR must set aside at least 15% of its federal case service dollars to provide “pre-employment transition services” (PETS) to “Students with Disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services.”

Who is a Student with a Disability?

A student with a disability is an individual with a disability in a secondary, postsecondary or other recognized education program who –

- is not younger than the earliest age for the provision of transition services under section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) unless the state elects a lower minimum age for receipt of pre-employment services and is not younger than that minimum age**; and
- is not older than 21; unless the individual state law provides for a higher maximum age for receipt of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.); and is not older than that maximum age; and

**In Pennsylvania, a student with a disability can remain in school until the end of the school year in which she turns the age of 21 and can receive transition services from the age of 14.

- is eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (20 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.); or
- is an individual with a disability for purposes of Section 504.

*A student with a disability may or may not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If this student has an IEP and is at least 14 years old, the IEP must include goals related to employment.

What are Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS)?

WIOA added a new section to the Rehabilitation Act which requires each state to provide, or otherwise arrange for the provision of, preemployment transition services (PETS) for all eligible students with disabilities.

Required PETS Under WIOA

1. Job Exploration Counseling, or Career counseling/guidance involves a wide variety of professional activities which help people deal with career-related challenges. Career counseling is also offered in various settings, including in groups and individually, in-person or by means of digital communication. Job Exploration activities may include:
 - a. Career Awareness (gaining knowledge of career paths)
 - b. Informational Interviews (informal conversations with someone working in that career)
 - c. Career Speakers (speakers who will provide an overview of a specific job or career area)
 - d. Vocational Assessments (tests to help individuals determine how well they may match a certain career)
 - e. Job Clubs (formal or informal group of networkers and job seekers)
 - f. Job Shadowing (on-the-job learning)
 - g. Career Student Organization (based in high schools and VoTech centers)
 - h. Volunteering (donating time or efforts for a cause or organization without being paid)

- i. Workplace Simulations and Workplace Tours/ Field Trips (group excursions for the purpose of first-hand observation to specific work sites)
2. Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBL) which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible). Where paid WBL experiences are provided, the wages are to be paid at no less than minimum wage.
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs which may be enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education.
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Workplace readiness traits describe a number of commonly expected skills that employers seek from most employees. Work readiness skills are a set of skills and behaviors that are necessary for any job. Work readiness skills are sometimes called soft skills, employability skills, or job readiness skills.
5. Instruction in self-advocacy which may include instruction in self-advocacy and self-determination with assistance from peer mentors.

Transition Services, Including Pre-employment Transition Services (PETS), for Students and Youth With Disabilities.

Pennsylvania OVR does this and more...

OVR will collaborate with employers to provide students and youth with disabilities opportunities for career exploration that would lead to competitive, integrated employment. Students and youth with disabilities will be given opportunities to complete work-based learning experiences to develop soft skills and work-related skills. Students and youth with disabilities may be afforded opportunities to complete mock interviews with employers, job shadowing

experiences, career days, disability mentoring days with employers, and other PETS to prepare students for competitive integrated employment.

Some on-going initiatives serving transition-age youth with disabilities that OVR supports are:

1. Early Reach initiative designed to reach youth with disabilities earlier in their secondary school enrollment and make them aware of OVR services and how they can leverage general and special education programming to assist in transitioning from secondary education to employment and postsecondary education;
2. Access College – Employment Success grant awarded to D.R.E.A.M. Partnership to create college-based certificate programs for young adults with intellectual disabilities;
3. Project SEARCH, a work-readiness program for secondary school youth providing on-the-job work experience through rotational internships;
4. Promoting Academic Success (PAS) program, a one-credit college course for students with disabilities to help them see if postsecondary education is an appropriate goal;
5. Summer Academy, a three-week intensive training on the Penn State University campus for students who are blind or visually impaired who plan to attend college.

How do I start?

A student with a disability who may need vocational guidance and assistance in preparing for, obtaining or maintaining competitive employment may be referred to OVR. WIOA describes competitive integrated employment as: part or full-time work performed by an individual which is compensated by at least minimum wage under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA); occurs in a location which affords the opportunity to interact with other individuals who do not have disabilities; and provides an opportunity for advancement similar to that of nondisabled peers in similar positions.

A referral to OVR can be made by anyone, including the student, a family member or school/agency personnel. Students under the age of 18 must have parent/guardian permission to become involved with OVR services. You may access the OVR Office Directory online at <http://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/OVROffice-Directory.aspx> or by calling -

OVR CENTRAL OFFICE

1521 N. 6th Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
717-787-5244 Voice
717-787-4885 TTY
800-442-6351 Voice
866-830-7327 TTY

Blindness & Visual Services

1521 N. 6th Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
717-787-6176 Voice
800-622-2842 Voice

OVR Counselors are specially trained to determine if a student is eligible for OVR services. They use existing records (medical, psychological, vocational, etc.), staff observations, family input and student self-evaluations to help make an eligibility determination.

OVR is responsible for the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that promotes or facilitates the accomplishment of short-term, intermediate and long-term vocational rehabilitation goals and objectives.

Where do I go if I Encounter Barriers?

For questions or concerns, please call Disability Rights Pennsylvania at 1-800-692-7443.

Contact Information

If you need more information or need help, please contact Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP) at 800-692-7443 (voice) or 877-375-7139 (TDD). The email address is: intake@disabilityrightspa.org.

The mission of Disability Rights Pennsylvania is to advance, protect, and advocate for the human, civil, and legal rights of Pennsylvanians with disabilities. Due to our limited resources, Disability Rights Pennsylvania cannot provide individual services to every person with advocacy and legal issues. Disability Rights Pennsylvania prioritizes cases that have the potential to result in widespread, systemic changes to benefit persons with disabilities. While we cannot provide assistance to everyone, we do seek to provide every individual with information and referral options.

IMPORTANT: This publication is for general informational purposes only. This publication is not intended, nor should be construed, to create an attorney-client relationship between Disability Rights Pennsylvania and any person. Nothing in this publication should be considered to be legal advice.

PLEASE NOTE: For information in alternative formats or a language other than English, contact Disability Rights Pennsylvania at 800-692-7443, Ext. 400, TDD: 877-375-7139 or intake@disabilityrightspa.org.