

GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY TRANSITION COUNCIL FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

2015 REPORT

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Co-chair, Suzanne Page, Assistant State Superintendent, Maryland State Department of
Education Division of Rehabilitation Services

I. BACKGROUND

The Interagency Transition Council for Youth with Disabilities (IATC) was first created on December 7, 2000 to improve the postsecondary outcomes of youth with disabilities in Maryland. It was reconstituted on August 7, 2007 by Executive Order 01.01.2007.13.

The primary responsibility of the IATC is to review, revise and update annually the Interagency State Plan for Transitioning Youth with Disabilities to ensure effective interagency planning and delivery of services for secondary students with disabilities. Additionally, the IATC is tasked with identifying and reporting activities of each partner who impacts the delivery, quality and availability of transition services. The IATC also serves in an advisory capacity to all transition-related federal grants.

The IATC met four times during the reporting period: October 15, 2014; January 14, 2015; March 23, 2014; and June 9, 2015.

State Agency Acronyms Used in this Report

- BHA – Behavioral Health Administration (part of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene)
- CMS – Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (federal)
- DBM – Department of Budget and Management
- DDA – Developmental Disabilities Administration (part of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene)
- DHMH – Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- DHR – Department of Human Resources
- DJS – Department of Juvenile Services
- DLLR – Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
- DORS – Division of Rehabilitation Services (part of the Maryland State Department of Education)
- GOC – Governor’s Office for Children
- GWIB – Governor’s Workforce Investment Board
- MDOD – Maryland Department of Disabilities
- MHEC – Maryland Higher Education Commission
- MDTAP – Maryland Technology Assistance Program
- MSDE – Maryland State Department of Education

II. SIGNIFICANT POLICY CHANGES

Workforce Investment Opportunities Act

The work of IATC partner agencies, particularly MSDE, DLLR and GWIB, have been significantly impacted by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which was signed into law on July 22, 2014 and went into effect July 1, 2015.

WIOA's Title I Youth Program funds, which are targeted at young adults classified as either "in-school" or "out-of-school," are intended to assist in career and educational development. These funds are allocated to states by the U.S. Department of Labor according to a formula. While WIOA preserved many aspects of youth services previously provided under the Workforce Investment Act, it also instituted key changes, including: increasing the amount of youth services funds that must be spent on out-of-school youth; expanding the age of eligibility for out-of-school services; making disability a core category for eligibility for all youth services; and expanding the required youth services program elements.

Under WIOA, at least 75% of federally-allocated Title I Youth Program funds must be used for out-of-school youth, an increase from the 30% required under WIA. The types of services funded include training and youth development programs for young people who have left school, as well as after-school services and employment supports for young people still in school. Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) now must spend at least 20% of WIOA Title I Youth Program funds on work experiences that incorporate academic and occupational education.

WIOA places a priority on providing services to youth with disabilities. Youth with disabilities ages 16 -24 who are not attending school are eligible for out-of-school services. Youth with disabilities up to age of 21 are eligible for in-school services if they are low-income or meet other eligibility criteria. WIOA also represents new opportunities for support for young job seekers with disabilities by increasing the responsibility of Workforce Investment Boards and America's Job Centers to be fully accessible and offer necessary accommodations to provide job seekers with disabilities effective and meaningful participation in the use of skills training and career development.

Maryland state agencies are in the process of planning and developing policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the WIOA requirements. Comments on proposed federal regulations were completed June 15, 2015 and final regulations are forthcoming.

Changes to Rules Affecting Home and Community Based Waivers

Maryland youth and adults receiving services through Home and Community Based Waivers will have new opportunities for full integration into the community. In March 2015, DHMH submitted a 5-year transition plan to CMS to bring Maryland's Home and Community Based Waivers into compliance with new CMS regulations. The new regulations emphasize that individuals should not be isolated from the community, and that services must be provided in the most integrated settings possible. These changes will have significant impact on day programs and employment services offered to people with disabilities receiving services through these waivers.

ABLE Act

The federal Achieving Better Life Experiences (ABLE) Act, signed into law in December 2014, directed states to create programs to manage tax-exempt accounts for qualified people who acquired a disability prior to the age of 26. Assets kept in these accounts will not disqualify account beneficiaries from federally-funded benefits programs such as Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Maryland passed SB761 in May 2015, which created the Task Force on Maryland's ABLE Program. This Task Force will study the implementation of the federal ABLE Act. The Task Force, a combination of Governor appointees and State agency representatives, will submit a report and recommendations for legislation on December 1, 2015. MDOD chairs and staffs the Task Force.

III. GRANT AWARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

PROMISE

MDOD is leading the statewide implementation of Maryland PROMISE, a \$31 million national research grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education, to recruit 2,000 youth between the ages of 14 and 16 who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. This effort has been successful in recruiting over 1,300 youth thus far with nearly 600 youth receiving enhanced services to increase their educational and employment outcomes. Lessons learned from PROMISE can inform strategies to improve engagement and outcomes for youth and families with multiple barriers. MDOD will continue to work with IATC member agencies (MSDE, DLLR, DHMH, DJS, DHR) and other key state agency partners in this interagency effort.

Healthy Transitions

BHA had previously received a federal grant called the Healthy Transitions Initiative (HTI), which ended on September 30, 2014. Maryland received a second grant, now referred to as Healthy Transitions (HT), which starts October 1, 2015. The grants are similar, but there is an increased focus on outreach and education in the new HT grant; it provides for the hiring of an Outreach and Education Specialist.

HT is a program for youth ages 16-25 with significant mental health conditions. “Mental health conditions” is a new federal term which encapsulates “emotional and behavioral disabilities” (describing youth) and “mental illness” (describing adults). The goal of the initiative is to create seamless transition for participants moving from youth to adult services. Services include intensive treatment, community interventions, and family supports. Qualitative and quantitative data is collected.

Participants are screened for co-occurring conditions such as traumatic brain injury, substance use, and somatic complications. It was found in the HTI study that 55% of participants had a TBI and 30-50% had chronic health problems.

The first HTI grant was for services to Washington and Frederick counties; these programs will continue using state dollars. The second HT grant covers Howard County and the tri-county

region of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties. The HT service providers are Humanim in partnership with Way Station (Howard County) and Pathways (Tri-county).

Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

In August 2015, Towson University, supported by several IATC partner agencies, submitted a grant application to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education requesting Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) funds to develop inclusive postsecondary education programs on several college campuses. The notice of awards will be released in the fall of 2015.

IV. INTERAGENCY STATE PLAN FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Interagency State Plan is undergoing its annual review, and final revisions will be voted on by members during the October 2015 meeting. The three major goals comprising the strategic plan are:

1. Every student with a disability will exit secondary school prepared for employment.
2. Every student with a disability will exit secondary school aware of postsecondary education and training program options.
3. Every student with a disability and their family will have information and support to successfully navigate the transition process.

The following pages contain descriptions of the strategies that were implemented to support these goals, and the progress IATC partner agencies have made in reaching these goals.

EMPLOYMENT

GOAL *Every student with a disability will exit school prepared for employment*

STRATEGIES

- Students with disabilities will receive supported employment services.
- Students with disabilities will be trained for and placed in competitive employment.
- Students with disabilities will participate in internship and summer employment opportunities.

PROGRESS

- **Supported Employment and Competitive Employment.**
 - During the reporting period, 9,303 consumers ages 14-22 received services through DORS; 804 consumers attained competitive employment.
 - In FY2015, BHA provided 366 transition-age youth with Supported Employment services. BHA has also begun a feasibility study of expanding Supported Employment services for transition-age youth, using funding secured from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.
 - DDA served 671 transition-age youth through the Governor's Transitioning Youth Initiative, which allows DDA, in collaboration with DORS, to provide supported employment and other day services for eligible graduating students who otherwise may not have received DDA services.
- **QUEST Internship Program.** The QUEST Internship Program, a partnership of DORS, DBM and participating State agencies, affords State agencies the opportunity to provide mentoring services for persons with disabilities through unpaid part-time or full-time internships. In the past year, 33 individuals (7 of whom were ages 14-22) have participated in the QUEST Internship Program.
- **Summer Employment.** Approximately 240 youth served by DORS participated in Summer Employment programs in FY2014.
- **Project Search Expansion.** DORS' Project Search, a business-led school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace, expanded this past year to Howard County. There are nine programs currently operating in Maryland.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

GOAL *Every student with a disability will exit secondary school aware of postsecondary education and training program options.*

STRATEGIES

- Students with disabilities will graduate from high school.
- Students with disabilities will receive support in postsecondary education settings.

PROGRESS

- **Graduation Rates.** The 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities in FFY2013 was 60.03%; 3,847 youth with IEPs out of a possible 6,408 graduated with a regular diploma. The graduation rate for regular education students was 87.64%. This data reflects a 27.61 percentage point gap between the graduation rate of nondisabled peers and youth with disabilities who received services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- **Career and Technology Education.** In the Class of 2014, 97.25% of the students with a disability that were Career Technology and Education concentrators graduated high school.
- **Postsecondary Supports.** DORS supported 748 students ages 14-22 in postsecondary education: 305 in College/University, 346 in Vocational and Occupational Skills Training; and 97 in Workforce Technology Center trainings.
- **DORS Pathways Program Expansion.** The DORS Pathways Program, an educational support program for students in postsecondary education with an Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis, expanded to Montgomery College this past year. The Pathways Program is also available at all three Community College of Baltimore County sites and Howard Community College.
- **The Task Force to Study the Impact of Expanding Credit and Non-credit Courses for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities,** chaired by MHEC and composed in part of several IATC members, will conclude its study at the end of 2015.

TRANSITION PROCESS

GOAL *Every student with a disability and their family will have information and supports to successfully navigate the transition process.*

STRATEGIES

- Students with disabilities exiting high school will receive an Exit Document that outlines the student's employment and postsecondary education goals.
- Students with disabilities will have streamlined access to support services.

PROGRESS

- **Postsecondary Outcomes.** As reported by Maryland's local school systems and public agencies, there were 19,324 students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) age 16 and older in FFY 2013. Of the 19,324 students, 19,316 (99.96%) had IEPs that were 100% compliant with federal guidelines. Maryland also met its target of having 82% of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school (the exact percent for FY2013 was 82.59%).
- **Updated Transitioning Youth Handbook.** IATC partner agencies supported MSDE staff in updating the Transition Handbook, which is provided to all students receiving IEP services in Maryland's public schools. The Transition Handbook contains an overview of the transition process from high school to postsecondary options and includes information about adult service agencies and other resources.
- **Transitioning Youth Conference.** The 2014 Maryland Transition Conference, organized and hosted by the IATC, was held on November 14, 2014 in Linthicum Heights, MD. The conference, which was attended by 239 youth, parents, advocates and professionals, had 15 breakout sessions covering topics including: transition planning, employment, postsecondary education, financial aid, housing, financial management, health care and self-advocacy.
- **Maryland Transitioning Youth Website and Social Media.** MDOD and MDTAP staff continued to maintain the IATC's website (mdtransition.org) and share information about transition on the IATC Twitter and Facebook platforms. The website received 38,841 unique visitors in the 2014-2015 reporting period.

- **Addressing Service Gaps.** GOC is taking the lead in working with IATC partner agencies to support Governor Hogan's goal of an economically secure Maryland by improving outcomes among disconnected youth ages 16-24 who are not working and not enrolled in school. Youth with disabilities are often disconnected and struggle to enter the adult workforce due to multiple systemic and individual barriers. As a member, GOC informs and supports the work of the IATC by providing analysis of State policies that impact youth disconnection, identifying gaps in services, and providing information on promising strategies for re-connection.
- **Addressing the Needs of Youth in Care.** In FY2015, 1,295 youth in DJS detention and treatment were provided special education services. DJS continues to work on the implementation of the Re-Entry Strategic plan, which covers five domains: (1) public safety; (2) housing and family; (3) education; (4) career development and employment; and (5) somatic and behavioral health. The goal is to create a seamless transition for youth released from placement and returning to the community; working collaboratively with our partner agencies and JSE/MSDE to ensure a smooth transition.
- **Addressing the Needs of Youth in Crisis.** BHA continues to develop the Maryland Early Intervention Program (EIP) is a specialized program with expertise in the early identification, evaluation and comprehensive psychiatric treatment of adolescents and young adults with psychotic disorders. The EIP will take a broad public health perspective, addressing issues of aggression, violence and substance use that are associated with criminal acts and constitute a risk to public safety; and associated problems, such as metabolic risks and other co-occurring medical conditions. The goal is to develop a comprehensive, statewide program. All EIP activities will be guided by a multi-disciplinary Advisory Council, including youth, family and consumer advocacy.

V. LIST OF IATC MEMBERS

The membership of the IATC is provided for in Executive Order 01.01.2007.13

Co-Chair: Carol A. Beatty, Secretary of Disabilities

Co-Chair: Suzanne R. Page, Assistant State Superintendent for Rehabilitation Services

Appointed by Governor to 3-year terms (terms expire 2016)

- Joanna Falcone
- Jeanne Furman
- Catherine E. Lyle
- Shelly Allred
- Linda Schnapp, Ph.D.
- Sarah Sorensen

Student representative appointed by Governor

- one vacancy

Representing State Dept. of Education

- Suzanne R. Page, Assistant State Superintendent for Rehabilitation Services
- Paul E. Dunford, designee of Assistant State Superintendent for Special Education & Early Intervention Services
- Mary L. O'Connor, designee of Assistant State Superintendent for Career & College Readiness
- Richard D. Scott, designee of Assistant State Superintendent for Student & School Services
- Adele W. Connolly
- Joyce Serio
- Christy Stuart

Representing Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene

- Patricia Sastoque, designee of Deputy Secretary for Developmental Disabilities
- Mona M. Figueroa, designee of Executive Director, Behavioral Health Administration.

Representing Dept. of Human Resources

- Carlton G. Fonville

Representing Dept. of Juvenile Services

- LaSandra T. Diggs

Representing Dept. of Labor, Licensing, & Regulation

- Diane N. Pabich
- Carolynette Snowden

Representing Maryland Commission on Disabilities

- one vacancy

Representing Maryland Higher Education Commission

- Glennis Daniels-Bacchus
- Jennie Hunter-Cevera

Representing Maryland Technology Assistance Program

- James D. McCarthy

Ex officio

- Carol A. Beatty, Secretary of Disabilities
- Jack R. Smith, Ph.D., Interim State Superintendent of Schools
- Christina E. Drushel, designee of Executive Director, Governor's Office for Children.

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