

## **AGENCY OVERVIEW**

### **ADULT AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES**

Special educators and families accessing community and adult agencies may feel like they have stepped into an overwhelming and complicated maze of new rules, regulations and requirements. Or, they may not have enough information to know where to begin. Special education services are mandated or required for all eligible students with disabilities in the public education system.. That is not the case in the adult world. While good services exist, the method for accessing these services is different from the school system. Adult and community services may have eligibility requirements, waiting lists and service gaps.

With declining resources and incredible demands on the community and adult service providers, partnership between the school, family, and agencies is critical. Early planning, intentional linkages to appropriate agencies and coordination of services are critical to the successful transition of students with disabilities to the adult world.

IDEA requires that the student's IEP include statements of interagency responsibilities or any linkages that are needed for the

student to successfully transition (300.347(b)(2)). To accomplish this, the district must invite a representative from any agency that is likely to provide or pay for transition services to the IEP meeting and take other steps to obtain participation of community agencies in the planning of transition services (300.344(b)(3)). These steps may include arranging regularly scheduled visits of agency representatives to the school, co-sponsoring agency nights for parents and students, sharing written materials with families, facilitating the referral process to various agencies, and arranging visits to community colleges and agency offices.

There are many agencies that serve youth and adults with disabilities. Some offer vocational and residential services, others provide personal support or financial assistance. The agencies that should be involved will vary from person to person depending on individual needs. A good starting place is to begin with the major state agencies. These agencies have services available throughout the state and the counselors will know of other resources available in your local area. The Agency Planning Chart included in this section is a useful tool for discussing and documenting agency linkages for each individual student.

## **AGENCY COORDINATION STRATEGIES**

When a student is preparing to leave school, or has very complex needs, it may be appropriate to have a representative from an adult agency attend an IEP meeting for an individual student. However, counselors and case managers in adult agencies carry large case loads and may have wide geographic areas to cover making attendance at IEP meetings difficult. There are a variety of ways in which schools can effectively link students with the appropriate adult and community agencies that are likely to provide services when the student leaves the school system. Many of these strategies would provide opportunities for several students and their parents to link with an agency representative at the same time. The most critical thing for teachers to remember is that relationships and consistent communication are the keys to successfully accessing services for youth.

### **The following strategies may assist you in coordinating with agencies:**

- Schedule regular times to meet with your agency representative and make referrals, monthly, quarterly, etc.
- Provide beginning of the year and mid-year updates on students.
- Provide space in the school for agency representatives to meet with parents, students, and other teachers.
- Become familiar with agency services, eligibility requirements, and the referral process.
- Obtain printed materials from agencies to share with parents and students.
- Co-sponsor an agency night for parents and students.
- Invite agency representatives to be available at Back-to-School nights or Parent-Teacher Conferences.
- Involve agency representatives in classroom or School to Career activities (mock interviews, video taping, preparing for job shadows, discussing employer needs).
- Connect with local Interagency Teams yourself or through a district representative.

## **PRIMARY STATE AGENCIES**

The information in this section will provide a summary of agency services and eligibility requirements. Many of these pages would be useful to copy and provide to parents as the basis for discussion about which agencies might be appropriate for an individual student. Space is provided at the bottom of each agency description sheet to fill in specific information about your local providers before copying. The information contained in this kit is very general in nature and is intended only as a starting point. Only the professionals in each respective agency make final decisions about eligibility and specific services.

To ensure that appropriate linkages are made for students before leaving the school system, use this summary information and the Agency Planning Chart to:

- Provide opportunities for parents and students to gather information about the different agencies
- Identify potential agencies for each individual student
- Assist parents and students to link with agency representatives at appropriate times
- Provide copies of student records that will be needed for eligibility determination
- Document efforts to link students on the Agency Planning Chart and on the IEP.

### **Colorado Department of Labor and Employment -- Workforce Centers**

Workforce Centers offer numerous services including work registration, job referrals, career guidance and counseling, job data banks, interviewing and networking skills, resume writing, and assessment. The Centers work closely with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to obtain more intensive services that may be needed by clients with disabilities. Find the nearest Workforce Center in your local phone book or visit their web site at <http://employsvcs.cdle.state.co.us/WFCs.html>.

### **Social Security Administration**

The Social Security Administration provides supplemental security income (SSI or SSDI) to persons who are disabled, fall below a specified level of income, and are unable to generate an adequate income through employment. Additional services include medical benefits through Medicaid. A youth with a disability can apply 6 months before they turn 18. The process can take up to a year. You may be denied the first time and should re-apply providing additional documentation.

## **Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)**

Vocational Rehabilitation assists individuals who have a physical or mental disability to enter, re-enter, or maintain employment and increase skills for living independently. DVR counselors can be helpful in linking clients with other agencies for support services that will enhance their ability to work. At this time, DVR does not have a wait list. The appropriate time to refer is when the student's focus shifts from education to employment and the student is available for services, usually during the last year of school. For students with more complex needs, it would be beneficial to work with a DVR counselor earlier for purposes of planning and service coordination. To find the nearest VR office, refer to your local phone book, call the state DVR office at (303) 866-4150, or visit their website at [www.cdhs.state.co.us/ods/dvr/index.html](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/ods/dvr/index.html).

## **School to Work Alliance Program – SWAP**

SWAP is an optional, collaboratively funded program between school districts and DVR. The program serves youth that have mild to moderate needs in employment, meet eligibility requirements for DVR services, and are likely to require short-term services to become successfully employed. Referral can be made through a DVR counselor or directly through a SWAP coordinator. To find out if SWAP is available in your area, talk to your special education teacher or contact your local DVR office.

## **Independent Living Centers (ILC)**

Independent Living Centers provide a variety of services to persons with a significant physical, mental, cognitive, or sensory disability to help them function more independently in their home, workplace, and community. There may be a small fee for some services. To find the ILC nearest to you, contact your local DVR office or call the state DVR office at (303) 866-4150.

## **Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and the Community Centered Board System (CCB)**

This agency is responsible for services for people who have a developmental disability, typically with an IQ score of 70 or below and adaptive behavior needs. The Division for Development Disabilities contracts with private not-for-profit agencies in local communities who are designated as community centered boards, CCBs. Each of the CCBs throughout Colorado has a designated geographical service area and offers a range of services including employment, residential, and community participation. Waiting lists for services can be very long. It is important for parents to add their child's name to the wait list at the age of 14 even if they are unsure about the types of services their child may need as an adult. Contact your local CCB or call the Division for Developmental Disabilities at (303) 866-7450 to identify the center nearest to you.

### **Colorado Division of Youth Services (DYS)**

The Division of Youth Services administers a statewide continuum of services and programs to assess, treat, and control youth aged 10 to 21 placed in its care for delinquent behavior. DYS programs serve detained and committed youths. Services may be provided, as appropriate, to assist youth to transition back into their community, such as academic and vocational training, independent living, and employment services.

### **Division of Mental Health and Community Mental Health Centers**

This agency serves persons with mental health needs through mental health centers and clinics throughout the state. An array of services is available to persons with major psychiatric diagnosis, chronic mental illness, or psychiatric emergency and their families. Mental health services are provided to persons with mental illness who are Medicaid eligible or who are without or have limited health insurance. For services nearest to you, refer to your local phone book or contact the state office of Human Services, Mental Health Services at (303) 866-7400.

### **Colorado Department of Child Welfare – Independent Living Services**

This program provides independent living preparation for youth who are preparing to emancipate from foster care services. Services are provided through county service coordinators. For youth who are receiving special education services, and are living in a foster care setting, efforts should be made to coordinate transition services with the student's case manager. Contact the Department of Social Services at (303) 866-4706 to identify the coordinator in your county.

### **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment**

This agency is responsible for protecting and improving the health and environment for people in Colorado. Services are provided through local health departments and county nursing service agencies. Services available include nutrition, pre-natal care, drug and alcohol intervention, immunization, health management of chronic conditions, and family planning. Refer to your local phone book or call (303) 692-2000 to locate services nearest to you.

### **Colorado Community College System (CCCS)**

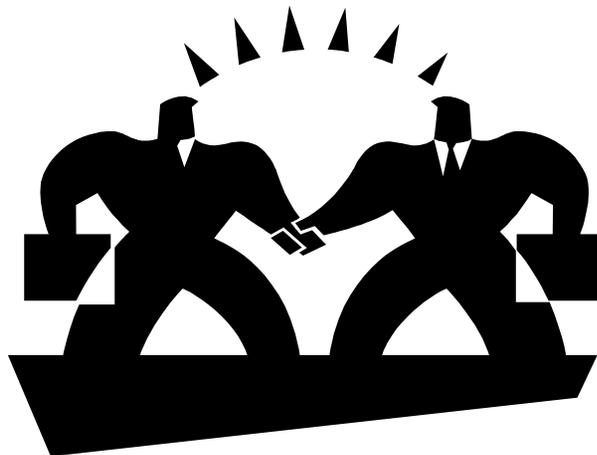
This state agency is responsible for secondary and post-secondary career and technical education. Services and support provided at secondary and post-secondary levels assist persons with disabilities to select and succeed in career/technical training programs. Each community college and vocational school has a Special Populations Coordinator or Disability Services Coordinator on staff.

## Post-Secondary Education System

Disability services providers at each community college, four-year college and university assist students with disabilities to select courses and obtain the supports necessary to succeed in the post-secondary education setting. Students must contact the Office of Disability Services at the college and provide documentation of disability in order to receive accommodations and/or services. For further information, contact your high school guidance counselor, special education teacher, or the post-secondary school you are interested in. Most schools now have web pages with basic information. *Colorado Options: A Handbook of Post-Secondary Education Services for Students with Disabilities* is available on the CDE website at [www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us) under Transition Resources.

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Information about these agencies and other services can be found in the [Resource Guide](#) developed by Colorado Project WIN, JFK Partners/UCHSC. The Resource Guide is available on their web site at [www.uchsc.edu/projectwin](http://www.uchsc.edu/projectwin).



## Agency questionnaire

Once you have identified agencies that may possibly provide services to your child or student, the following questions may be helpful in gathering and clarifying the information you will need to make a referral. Make several copies to use as you call the different agencies. Based on the agency, and the needs of the individual, some questions may not apply.

Agency Name \_\_\_\_\_

What services does your agency provide?

Do you provide financial assistance toward vocational training or post-secondary education?

What are the eligibility requirements?

Do you offer tutorial help?

How old does an individual need to be to apply for and receive your services?

Do you provide job placement?

Is there a waiting list for your services?

Do you provide on the job training?

Is there a fee for services offered?

Do you offer individual or family counseling?

Do you provide vocational evaluation?

What information and documentation is required in order to apply for services?

What is my role and level of involvement?



# AGENCY PLANNING CHART

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

|                             | Education / Academic | Career / Employment | Residential / Independent Living | Recreation / Leisure | Behavior / Social | Community Living (i.e. transportation) | Medical / Legal |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--|-----------------|
| Public Education            |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| CCC                         |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Post-Secondary Education    |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Vocational Rehab            |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Social Security             |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Workforce Center            |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Department of Child Welfare |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| CCB                         |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Mental Health               |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Independent Living Center   |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Division of Youth Services  |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Recreation District         |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
| Family                      |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |
|                             |                      |                     |                                  |                      |                   |  |                 |

Under each domain area, check the appropriate agency that would be most likely to provide services to this student based on individual needs and eligibility criteria. In many cases, the family will have responsibility. It may be helpful to list the date when a formal referral has been made.

