

5-30-14

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

**From: Vocational Rehabilitation Director Stephaine Parrish Taylor**

**Re: Employment First: Youth Transition Program (YTP)**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

Today's message is to inform you about one of our model programs. The Oregon Youth Transition Program (YTP) serves more than 1,300 youth with disabilities statewide. YTP operates as a partnership between Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the University of Oregon's College of Education, and local Oregon school districts.

The purpose of the program is to prepare youth with disabilities for employment or post-secondary education or training.

YTP started in seven high schools in 1990 under a federal grant to work with youth with learning disabilities. The program currently operates in 146 high schools in Oregon and serves students with all disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities. Primary support for YTP comes from VR, with matching funds by local school districts. The University of Oregon provides training and technical assistance to staff, and ODE provides access to data, guidance on educational requirements, as well as connections to local teachers.

YTP has two primary goals. The first goal is to improve post-school transition outcomes for youth with disabilities by preparing them for competitive community employment or career related post-secondary education or training. The second goal is to increase capacity and create systems change in schools and other agencies serving students with disabilities in transition from school to work.

In each participating school district, YTP services are provided by a transition specialist and a local VR Counselor. According to Keith Ozols, statewide coordinator for YTP, the transition specialist is a highly trained professional tasked with knowing the VR and ODE systems thoroughly, and working directly with students to ensure there are no gaps after leaving the school as they enter a job or post-secondary education.

“We have set the benchmark that at least 70 percent of YTP students should be working in a community job or in post-secondary education after they leave the program,” Ozols said. “The YTP Transition Specialist works with the case

managers, the teachers, the VR counselor, the family and the individual to really make sure everyone is working together toward that employment goal.”

Students participating in YTP receive:

- Individualized planning, focused on post-school goals, and help to coordinate school plans with relevant community agencies;
- Instruction in academic, vocational, independent living, and personal social skills and help to stay in and complete high school;
- Career development services including goal setting, career exploration, job search skills, and self-advocacy;
- Emphasis on paid employment such as connections with local employers, development of school-based businesses, on the job assessment and training;
- Support services such as individualized mentoring and support or referrals for additional specific interventions;
- Follow-up support for one year after leaving the program to assist in maintaining positive outcomes in jobs or post-secondary education.

YTP has received broad recognition for its work. The European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities recently named Oregon’s YTP as one of the 10 best practices in the world for employment support for people with disabilities.

VR is exploring a pilot project modeled on YTP only for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For more information on YTP, go to: <http://www.ytporegon.org>

Thank you all for your continued involvement, support, and advocacy for services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon. If you have comments or other questions, please email them to [employment.first@state.or.us](mailto:employment.first@state.or.us).

~ Stephaine

- A recent news article showcases some of the great work YTP is doing in the Gresham/Troutdale area: <http://www.pamplinmedia.com/go/42-news/221307-82171-reynolds-programs-bridge-student-transitions>