

4-18-14

Employment First: Employment Question of the Month

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley

Re: Employment Question of the Month: VR Services and Transition Age Students

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

Every month, we will publish answers to an **Employment Question of the Month** submitted by stakeholders. These provide good discussion topics and help provide guidance on the work going forward as we implement the Governor's Executive Order 13-04 and the Employment First Integrated Work Plan. To submit a Question of the Month, email employment.first@state.or.us.

Stephaine Parrish Taylor, director of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Heather Lindsey, transition liaison with Oregon Department of Education (ODE), provided the answer to this month's question.

Question: "Can VR counselors work with students before they turn 18? If not, what kind of transition supports can they utilize before age 18?"

Answer: Transition from school to work or post-secondary education involves a number of partners and activities, and should begin well before transition-age services. Parents, family members, and friends should talk to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) about work as an expectation for everyone. Giving a young person household chores starts the development of a work ethic early in life. Hobbies and activities help to identify interests, talents, and skills. Volunteer opportunities provide additional opportunities to understand likes and dislikes, as well as exposure to integrated work activities.

VR services are geared to find individual employment in community integrated jobs at minimum wage or above. Services can begin as young as age 16. Typically, VR services start the same year a person is due to graduate from high school.

ODE starts the formal transition planning process the year a student turns 16. During this process, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team (which would include the student, parents, teacher, and adult transition agencies) will

identify the student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths that will help with developing successful post-secondary goals.

VR counselors can participate in the IEP meeting when requested by the student or their parent. The counselors can help during the transition from school to work process. VR counselors provide information about different jobs, accommodations or community resources.

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.