

Supported Employment Services

Purpose of Guidance:

This guidance document is provided for special education directors, secondary special education teachers, administrators, and transition specialists. The Settlement Agreement for the *Lane v. Brown* case was approved in December 2015. A portion of the Settlement Agreement deals with transition services, and it provides that ODE shall require that the transition planning process include information about, and provide opportunities to experience, Supported Employment Services in Integrated Employment Settings for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) makes Supported Employment Services available to Oregon students who are found eligible to receive services, and ODE issues this guidance so that district IEP teams will take steps to inform themselves and others, including transition-age individuals and their families, of these services.

What Should Districts Do?

School Districts shall take the following steps:

1. Provide information to IEP teams (including parents) regarding Supported Employment Services available to students with I/DD to include and coordinate with individual transition planning.
2. Communicate and coordinate with VR or ODDS funded case managers, transition-age individuals, and their families to provide opportunities for students with I/DD to experience Supported Employment Services available through DHS in integrated employment settings.
3. Strongly consider beginning the transition process as early as possible, rather than waiting for the IEP year in which a student turns 16. The adoption of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 places added emphasis on providing Vocational Rehabilitation services to students as young as 14. The settlement agreement in the *Lane v. Brown* lawsuit also calls for the transition planning process to begin as young as age 14, if deemed appropriate by the student's IEP team. As a result of these developments, ODE is encouraging districts and IEP teams to consider the inclusion of transition goals in the IEP's of individual students with I/DD sooner than the required first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16.

What Are Supported Employment Services Provided Through DHS?

Supported Employment Services (SES) are individualized services that assist an individual with I/DD to obtain and maintain work in an Integrated Employment Setting. SES are provided or funded by the DHS and available to students with I/DD through (ODDS) or (VR). These services support the individual to work a maximum number of hours consistent with his/her interests and abilities. The services and supports are based on person-centered planning principles and evidence-based practices.

Supported Employment Services include post-secondary education and/or training for transition-age youth when included in a person's Individual Support Plans or Individual Plans for Employment. Services available include Discovery, job development, job-finding, job carving, job coaching, job training, job shadowing, co-worker and peer supports, and re-employment support.

Which Students Are Eligible To Receive Supported Employment Services Through DHS?

Students with I/DD between 14 and 21 years of age are eligible to receive Supported Employment Services through DHS, though certain approvals are required. Support services provided by ODDS to students who are under 18 years of age require approval from ODDS, while supported employment services provided through VR to students who are under 16 years of age require approval from VR.

What Are Supported Employment Services Provided Through Schools

For youth who are 14 to 18 and who are not otherwise eligible for VR services, supported employment services identified as appropriate for individual students through the IEP team process may include transitional services and supports, including instruction, community experiences, development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, school-based preparatory experiences, career preparation, and integrated work-based learning experiences (e.g., site visits, job shadowing, soft skill and job skill development, internships, part-time employment, and summer employment); youth development and leadership, including training in self-advocacy, self-determination and conflict resolution skills, peer and adult mentoring, and, where appropriate, daily living skills; and connecting activities, including exposure to post-school educational and community services, transportation, benefits planning, and assistive technology. However, IEP teams should be aware that a number of these services may also be available through VR or ODDS, and VR and/or ODDS should be involved in planning as soon as an IEP team determines it is appropriate.

What is an Integrated Employment Setting?

An Integrated Employment setting is a setting where work is paid at minimum wage or above, that is located at a place in the community where an employee with disabilities interacts with persons without disabilities (*i.e.* peer employees and customers) to the same extent that employees without disabilities do, and where employees with disabilities have the same opportunities for advancement that employees without disabilities have.

Are School Districts Required To Find Jobs For Students With I/DD?

While it's true that the IDEA, and its provision of FAPE, do not require school districts to find jobs for students with I/DD or other disabilities, nevertheless, school districts should make diligent efforts to ensure that these students have opportunities to experience Supported Employment Services in Integrated Employment Settings. Districts should ensure that IEP teams are aware of and promote the opportunities that are provided through Oregon VR and ODDS for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities to experience Supported Employment Services in Integrated Employment Settings. This is consistent with the requirement that districts ensure that a student's IEP, beginning at age 14 when deemed appropriate by the IEP team and no later than the year in which the student turns 16, includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills, and that transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the student in reaching those goals are provided.

Questions?

If you have questions, please contact Sally Simich, Secondary Transition Specialist at the Oregon Department of Education, (503) 947-5639, Sally.Simich@ode.state.or.us, or your regional Transition Network Facilitator..