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MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
Assistant Superintendents for Instruction
Exceptional Student Education Administrators

FROM: Cheri Pierson Yecke, Ph.D.

DATE: August 4, 2006

SUBJECT: REVISED - TRANSITION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Contact Information:

Dr. Janet Adams
(850) 245-0478
Janet.Adams@fldoe.org

K12: 2006-99

The purposes of this memorandum are to clarify some of the requirements for and emphasize the importance of transition services for students with disabilities, beginning no later than age 14. Educators in Florida are working to ensure that students with disabilities attain high levels of achievement and successfully transition from school to adult life. Transition services for youth with disabilities are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) and its implementing regulations, as well as Florida statute and State Board of Education rule. House Bill 7087 (A++), with its focus on the Florida Ready to Work Certification Program, further supports transition planning for all students, including students with disabilities.

The term transition services, as defined in IDEA 2004, means a coordinated set of activities for a student that is designed within a results-oriented process, focusing on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate the movement from school to postschool activities. Postschool activities include postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. Transition planning involves ongoing collaboration among the student, the family, educators, and agency personnel to meet each student's transition needs. It focuses on the plans and dreams a student has for his or her future. IDEA 2004 specifies that by age 16, the transition individual educational plan (IEP) must include appropriate measurable, postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessment related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate,

CHERI PIERSON YECKE, PH.D.
CHANCELLOR, K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

independent living skills. In addition, the transition IEP must identify the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the student in reaching his or her postsecondary goals.

According to Rule 6A-6.03028, Florida Administrative Code, "Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities," planning for transition services must be addressed as part of the student's IEP, beginning on or before the student's 14th birthday. Persons who must be invited to the transition IEP meeting include the student, his or her parents, and appropriate school personnel. This rule also requires that the transition IEP team consider instruction or the provision of information in the area of self-determination to assist the student to actively participate in his or her transition IEP meeting and self-advocate, if appropriate.

Since transition planning is a multi-year process, and information is needed at various decision-making points, it is helpful to provide information about agencies (e.g., brochures) to students and their families beginning on or before the student's 14th birthday. It is also important for the IEP team to consider possible agency representatives to be invited to the transition IEP meeting that will be held on or before the student's 16th birthday. Any team member, including the student, the parent, educators, or others present at the meeting, may suggest agencies to be invited to subsequent meetings.

Beginning by the student's 16th birthday (or younger if determined appropriate by the transition IEP team), the transition IEP must include a statement of needed transition services for the student including, if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. To implement this requirement, the school district shall invite representatives of any agencies that may be responsible for providing or paying for agency services. If an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not do so, the school district shall take other steps to obtain the participation of the agency in the planning of any transition services.

The transition IEP team may begin transition planning with agency representatives earlier than age 16 for some students, particularly those at risk of dropping out of school and students with significant disabilities or complex needs. Additional information about transition requirements may be found in the document, *Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities – A Guide for Families*, available at the following Web site: <http://www.firn.edu/doi/bin00014/pdf/trangide.pdf>, or it can be ordered from the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Clearinghouse Information Center, (850) 245-0477.

A state-level agreement to support the transition process for students with disabilities has recently been signed by partner agencies, including the:

- Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Division of Blind Services
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services
- Department of Children and Families, Mental Health Program Offices

These agencies are working closely on initiatives to strengthen transition outcomes for students with disabilities. This agreement, which was recently disseminated to exceptional student education (ESE) and student services administrators and other transition stakeholders, serves as a model for the development of local cooperative agreements between school districts and local agencies.

House Bill 7087 (A++) supports transition goals in various ways. Specifically, students will be required to declare a high school major area of interest, which may target employment in a specific career field. The Florida Ready to Work Certification Program will enhance the workplace skills of Florida's students to better prepare them for successful employment in specific occupations. The program is composed of:

- A comprehensive identification of workplace skills for each identified occupation
- A pre-instructional assessment that delineates a student's mastery level on the specific workplace skills
- A targeted instructional program limited to those identified workplace skills in which the student is not proficient
- A certificate awarded to the student upon successful completion of the program
- A portfolio that delineates the skills demonstrated by the student as evidence of the student's preparation for employment

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services supports transition efforts in a variety of ways, including the funding of two statewide transition projects. These projects provide technical assistance and training, and develop resource materials to support transition efforts. Projects include the Career Development and Transition Project (Transition Center) at the University of Florida and the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Project at the University of South Florida. Project Web sites provide useful information about transition and may be accessed as follows:

- Transition Center <http://www.thetransitioncenter.org>
- TIP Project <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>

If you have questions or would like additional information regarding the provision of transition services, please contact Dr. Janet Adams, Program Specialist, at (850) 245-0478 or Janet.Adams@fldoe.org.

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