

# ***Project CONNECT***

## **Project Overview, Page 1**

### **Project Component Expectations**

#### **A. Focus Groups**

- Each Project will begin by conducting focus groups. Focus group participants will identify and discuss existing collaboration, barriers to collaboration, and community-based solutions. A report on focus group results is due by January 31, 2008.
- Agencies and individuals recommended to participate in focus groups include representatives from Exceptional Student Education (ESE), vocational and adult education, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Division of Blind Services (DBS), Juvenile Justice (JJ), drop-out prevention, Social Security Administration (SSA), the Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Children's Medical Services, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Disabilities (SEDNET), service providers from community-based organizations (including health and mental health), post-secondary education, transportation, parent organizations, and employers.
- Focus groups must include students and adults with disabilities and their families. Their participation must represent at least 25% of the focus group total.
- Training in how to conduct focus groups will be provided at the September training.

#### **B. Interagency Working Component**

- Sites will be expected to :
  - design and implement strategies to increase agency participation in students' Transition IEP meetings,
  - form or expand community transition teams,
  - develop an interagency agreement or memorandum of understanding, and
  - develop an action plan for ongoing implementation of the interagency agreement.
- Sites will expand the implementation of effective transition practices and the range of transition services.
- If applicants do not have an existing interagency council, a core group comprised of directors/designees from (a) school district Exceptional Student Education and vocational education, (b) the local community college (CC), (c) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), (d) Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), (e) Division of Blind Services, (f) individuals with disabilities and their families, and (g) any other supporting agencies may function as the initial group.
- Selected participants from sites must attend an initial training during **September 2007** sponsored by The Transition Center. **Selected participants must attend scheduled *Project CONNECT* meetings.**

# ***Project CONNECT***

## **Project Overview, Page 2**

### **B. Interagency Working Component, Continued**

- Sites will receive ongoing technical assistance through *Project CONNECT* at The Transition Center.
- Sites will incorporate information compiled from focus group work into their planning and provide feedback on the impact of the information.
- Sites will participate in data collection and evaluation of Project initiatives.
- Sites will integrate Project activities as an essential part of school district and interagency initiatives.
- Sites will submit quarterly reports, including a final report with budget summary.
- Sites will participate in the development of local and state products.

### **Financial Component**

NOTE: *Funding is contingent on continued allocation of IDEA, Part B funds.*

- Travel for five people for the initial training and for project coordinator(s) or designee(s) to subsequent meetings with The Transition Center will be paid for by The Transition Center. Additional participants are welcomed and encouraged to attend at local expense.
- Each new site will receive a mini-grant of \$6,500 for Project activities, including \$1,500 for conducting focus groups and \$5,000 for project operation. This funding must be used to facilitate interagency collaboration. Funds are usually disseminated in October or November (this is contingent upon The Transition Center receipt of IDEA, Part B funds.)
- Sites will provide a budget summary with each end of the year report.

**Applications must be received by May 31, 2007. Please send one copy-ready (no staples or fastenings) and one additional copy to:**

Joyce H. Lubbers  
Coordinator, *Project CONNECT*  
The Transition Center  
G315 Norman Hall  
P.O. Box 117050  
Gainesville, FL 32611-7050  
Phone: 352-392-0701 ext. 285  
Fax: 352-392-4443  
Email: [jlubbers@coe.ufl.edu](mailto:jlubbers@coe.ufl.edu)

### ***Project CONNECT Mission Statement***

The mission statement of *Project CONNECT* is to identify promising practices for providing comprehensive and continuous transition services from school to post-school adult life for students with disabilities by enhancing community partnerships.

# ***Project CONNECT***

## **Project Overview, Page 3**

### **Definitions**

**Appendix** – The appendix includes any additional attachments at the end of the application. The appendix may include items that support the grant applications such as letters of support for the application, a current interagency agreement, or information about an existing interagency team. *Including an appendix as part of the application is optional.*

**Data collection** – Data collection is an integral part of the project and ties in with the accountability process of the Florida Department of Education. Data is used on an ongoing basis by teams to determine the needs and goals of the council. Data collection is organized in two areas: focus groups and end of year reporting.

- Focus group information is used to identify perceptions, strengths, gaps, and barriers in transition services for students with disabilities. Focus group information is used to determine initial directions for a local team.
- The end of the year report includes a collection of information that is easy to collect (such as a list of the members of an interagency team or team minutes) or information that already exists in school districts and agencies (such as the number of students with disabilities enrolled in vocational education courses).

**Effective transition practices** – The Florida Department of Education and *Project CONNECT* have identified transition practices considered to be evidence-based. Evidence-based transition practices include, *among others*, self-determination, community-based instruction, supported competitive employment, the use of the Modified Occupational Completion Points (MOCs), and the use of inclusive instructional practices, which promote access to the general curriculum.

**Focus Group** – Holding a focus group is one method of conducting research on the current perceptions of transition services in the local community. The resulting information is used to establish the foundation for the work of the interagency team. Focus groups are made up of eight (8) to twelve (12) participants from a homogenous group (such as parents, or students with disabilities, or agency representatives.) A facilitator guides the discussion on a specific topic of interest by using a set of guided questions.

**Interagency Agreement** – For purposes of this project, an interagency agreement is a document developed among local community organizations (such as the school district, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, or mental health providers) that identifies the responsibilities of each organization that is participating in the transition process. Multiple formats may be used.

**Work Plan** - The Work Plan identifies the team's priority goals and objectives for the year. The plan states what will be done, the timeline for completion, and evaluation of what has been accomplished.

# ***Project CONNECT***

## **Project Overview, Page 4**

### **Acronyms**

APD	Agency for Persons with Disabilities (formerly Developmental Disabilities Program)
BEES	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (Florida Department of Education)
CBVA	Curriculum Based Vocational Assessment
CC	Community College
DBS	Division of Blind Services
DCF	Department of Children and Families
DOE	Department of Education
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
FND	Florida Network on Disabilities
JJ	Juvenile Justice
MOCs	Modified Occupational Completion Points
SEDNET	Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional Disabilities
SSA	Social Security Administration
Transition IEP	Transition Individual Educational Plan