



## Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services

# Pre-Employment and Transition Services (PETS)



# Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)

## **Today:**

- Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services basics.
- General themes in the Act and what we know so far.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS)
- The draft regulations are out now for comment. The final regulations will be adopted in 2016.

# Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS)

## VRBS Basics- Current Service Model

- Federally and State funded program.
- Mission: To promote work and independence for Montanans with disabilities.
- Eligibility based

# Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS)

## The VRBS Process:

- Eligibility
- Plan development
- Services
- Outcome

# Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)

## **Background:**

- Executive order focused on job-driven workforce services
- Rehabilitation and unemployment rates for persons with disabilities.
- Graduation rates for students with disabilities.

# Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)

## **Resulting Changes/Themes in the Act:**

- Focus on employer/VR relationships
- Focus on Unified State Plan for work services providers
- Increased and mandated focus on youth in transitions

# Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)

## **Resulting Changes/Themes in the Act:**

- Competitive/integrated employment focus
- Limitations on the payment of subminimum wages
- Use of the individual's experiences in work settings for determining eligibility and rehabilitation need.

# Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and WIOA

- RSA requires 15% of the Federal VRBS grant to be reserved for Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS).
- The 15% would include costs associated with PETS and counselor/instructor time for travel and providing PETS.
- 50% of the Supported Employment allotment must be spent serving youth with the most significant disabilities.



# Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and WIOA

## Supported Employment changes:

- Focus on competitive/integrated employment
- Eliminate the use of subminimum wage in employment outcome
- If employed in competitive and not integrated must be short term (not to exceed 6 months) and moving toward competitive/integrated.
- Extend provision of supported employment services from 18 to 24 months.

# Pre-Employment Transition Services

- New service category to VRBS
- High school based program
- Educational in nature
- Service to groups beyond traditional individual plan-based services
- Services expanded to those eligible and potentially eligible.

# Pre-Employment Transition Services

## Required Services under PETS

1. Job exploration counseling
2. Work –based learning experiences
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs
4. Workplace readiness training
5. Instruction in self-advocacy

# Pre-Employment Transition Services and Students

WIOA defines youth and students with disabilities separately. Youth with disabilities are age 14 to 24. Students with disabilities under WIOA are age 15 (turning 16 within the academic year) and until they leave high school.

PETS pertain only to students with disabilities.

VRBS may serve all youth with disabilities but can only count the PETS reserve funds on students with disabilities (age 15 to exit year).

PETS will focus on sophomores, juniors and seniors.

# Current VRBS Transition Services

- VR counselors are assigned to each school district across the state.
- Adopt-a-School for larger high schools
- Attendance at IEPs and transition planning
- Taking applications while student is in high school

# Pre-Employment Transition Services and Schools

- Because the WIOA changes are new, VRBS has begun conversations about Pre-Employment Transitions Services with schools and our community partners.
- VRBS Regional Administrators or their designees will make contact with School district superintendents, principals and special education directors to launch the VRBS/school collaboration.
- The initial meeting will include an informational letter covering the required services.

## Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services

### Pre-Employment Transition Services

In July of 2014 the reauthorization of Workforce Investment Act took place. The new act is now called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and includes many changes focused on students with disabilities. Under the new Act the Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) program has added a new service category, Pre-Employment Transition Services. Below is an explanation of the components with the Pre-employment Transition Services and how our program may assist your efforts with students' transitions needs.

1. **Job Exploration Counseling:** VRBS will work with the school and student to assist in exploring the world of work and career choices. This could include interest and abilities surveys, reviewing career websites, job shadowing, mentoring at local businesses, high school-based courses on career choices and informational interviews.
2. **Work-based learning experiences:** VRBS can facilitate paid or non-paid work experiences in the community, help seek volunteer positions, short or long term internships, on the job training, apprenticeships and mentoring activities. VRBS may be able to pay for the wages and employment costs, transportation and staff costs to allow students to attend these options.
3. **Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary education:** For those students seeking further education VRBS can assist with exploring these options. This could include exploration of career paths, referrals to campus resources (Career Services, disability and academic support services), preparation for entrance testing, campus visits, review of entrance requirements, links to Federal Financial Aid, the Student Assistance Foundation, Employment Opportunity Centers and TRIO programs and college preparation camps (summers).
4. **Work place readiness:** These services focus on preparing the student for the workplace. Services may include soft-skill training, peer mentoring, independent living skills, accessing transportation services, customer service skills, classes at Adult Education, HRDC or Job Services.
5. **Instruction in self-advocacy:** Helping a student understand more about themselves and how to interact with the world. Services could include courses taught by Independent Living Centers, peer mentoring, Disability Mentoring Day, attendance at the Montana Youth Leadership Forum and Montana Youth Transitions conference, instruction in peer mentoring, learning about assistive technology and understanding accommodations in the work place.

# Pre-Employment Transition Services and Schools

- PETS will be educationally focused and utilize new and established partners. PETS is a new category of VRBS services.
- The schools will be a key partner and VRBS will be able to assist with the costs of the school providing PETS to students. This may include costs of transportation, staffing costs, curriculum development and purchase of curriculum supports.
- VRBS is developing contracts to use with schools for the provision of PETS services.



# Pre-Employment Transition Services and Schools

- The title of the new Act is Innovation and Opportunity. It is a new directive and direction to involve VRBS with schools in a much more active way.
- It is our opportunity to explore and initiate new services for students with disabilities and enact more inclusive activities to increase their ability to flourish in the economy and life.
- Any new idea or service under PETS must be tailored toward the educational needs of the student(s) and the goal of competitive/integrated employment.
- New Pre-Employment Transition Services are not meant to reduce the responsibility of schools to provide transition services. The intent is to enhance the resources available to students with disabilities.

# Required Pre-Employment Transition Services

**1. Job Exploration Counseling.** These are services to assist the student in exploring the world of work and learning more about their interests, abilities and future career goals. Services may include the following:

- Vocational guidance and counseling
- Interpretation of existing assessments done in the school.
- Using the MCIS tools with the student (e.g., Interest Profiler, Work Skills, Reality Check, etc.)
- Exploring the Department of Labor and Industry website. There are some great resources including the portal to MCIS, the Career Resource Network including a tab for Students.
- Facilitating job shadowing, informational interviews, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- Disability Mentoring Day (Week) or anytime an employer will mentor a young person
- Job Clubs

# Required Pre-Employment Transition Services

## **Job Exploration Counseling (cont.)**

- Payment of transportation to job shadowing, informational interviews, tours of Job Services, college Career Services, IL Centers, career fairs, etc.
- Registration fees for career seminars, career fairs, career camps, etc.
- Job search assistance by Community Rehabilitation Programs
- Volunteer site facilitation by the school, IL Center or CRP

# Required Pre-Employment Transition Services

**2.Work-based learning experience.** The new Act encourages experience over continual assessment. The intent is to have students try-out jobs or gain work experience prior to graduation.

Services under this category could include:

- Jobs performed in the school (paid or unpaid)
- Jobs performed outside of the school
- Volunteer positions in the community
- Internships both paid and unpaid
- Participation in Mentoring Day
- Informational interviews
- Job shadowing

# Required Pre-Employment Transition Services

**3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education.** For those students seeking further education past high school VRBS can assist them with the following services:

- Referrals to campus services (Career Services, Disability Support Services, TRIO and Educational Opportunity Centers)
- Preparation for entrance testing
- Campus visits
- Review of entrance requirements
- Links to FAFSA, Student Assistance Foundation and other funding resources
- College preparation camps and college open houses

# Required Pre-Employment Transition Services

**4. Work place readiness, training to develop social skills and independent living.** These services focus on preparing the student for entering the world of work and living independently.

Services could include:

- Soft skills training
- Working/Living with a disability classes
- Work skills training
- Peer mentoring and supports
- Independent living skills
- Customer service skills
- Classes at Job Services, HRDCs, Adult Education, IL Centers

# Required Pre-Employment Transition Services

**5. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.** Helping the student help themselves and develop the skills to flourish in the economy and life.

Services could include:

- IL classes on peer mentoring, living well with a disability, self advocacy, disability history
- Attending Montana Youth Leadership Forum or the Montana Youth Conference
- Job Mentoring activities
- Instruction in assistive technology and accommodations in the workplace

# Conclusion VRBS and WIOA

Draft Regulations have been posted for public comment.

Final regulations to be adopted in 2016.

Montana VRBS moving forward current services and expansion of new PETS in schools.

Talking with school districts and surveying needs, new ideas, new directions and new services.



# Contact Info and Resources

Mark Mahnke, VRBS Training and Transitions Coordinator:

[mmahnke@mt.gov](mailto:mmahnke@mt.gov), Phone: 406-655-7627

Montana Youth Transitions Program:

<http://montanayouthtransitions.org/>

State Vocational Rehabilitation Services program; State Supported Employment Services program; Limitations on the Use of Subminimum Wage:

[TEXT]

*This project is funded in whole or in part under a contract with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. The statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Department.*

