

CAP UPDATE

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What Students Need to Know about Transition

By Margaret Passio McKenna

Most students can't wait to be an adult, to be their own boss. A little do they realize there is no big hurry to do this, Transition is smoother if the process occurs gradually and with a few tips that students need to know and learn.

Here are some tips that will help you make your own decisions better. It is good when a student wants to start taking responsibility for some of his/her decisions.

Be part of your team that's planning your education

Your team should include you-the student, your family, school staff, (teachers, guidance counselors) and personnel from outside agencies like OVR and MH/MR. Your team needs to concentrate on what you will be doing when you graduate from school. They need you to help them understand what you want to do. Your team is going to write a plan, an Individualized Education Program or IEP, for your education. The IEP lets all of your teachers know what you need to be working on and the best way for you to learn. Sometimes an educational assessment is needed to check how you are doing in school. This information needs to be part of your IEP.

As a team member these are a few steps you can take as a student to support your team.

You're a team member:

"Get Involved" Go to the IEP team meeting. Show up on time and be ready to do your part. Take an active role and be prepared. Think about what you want your life to be like after you leave school. Be part of the discussion and decisions. Remember, this is your plan and your future.

"Share Information" Only you know what you want your future to be. Share that with the team so you can work toward your goals. Tell others what you do well and what you'll need help with. If you're not sure what you want, tell them that too. Learning about different possibilities can be the first step of your plan. Make sure you help



the team understand what you're thinking.

"Ask Questions" This is your plan for the future. If there's anything you don't understand, ask!

Things to know and learn:

"Become an Employee" Sometimes students aren't sure what job they want to do when they leave school. This is ok. Learning about different jobs can help you decide. Plan on learning about and even trying many different jobs while you're still in school. Volunteering is one good way of learning about different jobs.

"Become a Community Member" Adults make lots of decisions including where to live, how to get around, where to get help and how to enjoy the time they're not working. Make sure your IEP helps you learn the things you'll need to know to make good decisions for **yourself**.

"Become a Self-Advocate" Most importantly, this means you have an idea of what you want and how to get it. Taking care of your self is really what it means to be an adult. Now is the time to learn the **skills** you'll need to do this. Becoming an active member of your IEP team is a great first step.

I realize this sounds like a lot of hard work. However, keep in mind that making your own decisions and becoming more independent and productive can be fun, exciting and challenging. There are so many benefits to this process. Best of all, your improved self-esteem and some self-confidence in yourself. If you have questions regarding transition, OVR and/or how to be your own advocate, please feel free to call our office, the Client Assistance Program at 1Â (888) 745-2357.

HISTORY AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED

Prepared by Jamie C. Ray, Esquire

(If you ever wondered why we have VR today, read on. . . .)

As early as the 20th Century, vocational rehabilitation meant providing a person with a disability with an artificial leg, a prosthetic eye, or perhaps training them for a job such as jewelry maker, or watch and clock repair person. In the beginning, it was an effort to "fix" the person. It was, at best, an effort to "repair" the individual so that he or she would "fit" within the traditionally accepted working world. In these early years, farming and railroad accidents were common, as were amputations from blood poisoning caused by unclean working conditions. Financial compensation for job-related injuries wasn't guaranteed and many people got nothing, or a few hundred dollars at best.

The first laws funding vocational rehabilitation were passed at the end of World War I. Congress first passed the Smith-Hughes Law (Vocational Education Act) of 1917, establishing a Federal Board for Vocational Education (FBVE) to work with men with disabilities in hospitals and encampments. The following year Congress unanimously ratified the Soldier's Rehabilitation Act to assist returning World War I veterans to join the labor pool (Lenihan 51; M. L. Walker 25). World War I created thousands of veterans with disabilities and in 1918, Congress passed the Soldiers Rehabilitation Act to provide them with job training. After much political wrangling, the general public was offered similar services when on June 2, 1920, President Woodrow Wilson created this country's vocational rehabilitation program as he signed into law PL 236.

In the early thirties, VR transferred to the Office of Education in the Department of the Interior. It did not thrive in this setting. Rehabilitation workers felt their role in placing people with disabilities in the workforce differed from a narrow focus on education. Ultimately, VR moved to the Federal Security Agency, created in 1939, along with the Office of Education, but it remained dissatisfied with its placement (M. L. Walker 102-103).

A year later, in 1940, Congress extended vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities working in sheltered workshops, those who were homebound, and those in the workforce who required services to remain employed. This significant increase in responsibility set the stage for greater funding and responsibility. VR grants increased 75% in 1940 and continued to increase throughout the 1940s. In July of 1943, services were broadened to include physical restoration and people with mental illness as clients (Scotch 21; Shapiro 143; M. L. Walker 103).

Mary Switzer became director of VR in 1950. A long-time advocate of vocational rehabilitation's mission, she spent her time expanding its role and power (M. L. Walker 125- 26, passim). She guided a comprehensive legislative package through congressional appropriations in 1954. Additional monies for training medical and rehabilitation professionals established long range agency precedents. Switzer persuaded Congress to fund research and development in medicine and rehabilitation engineering, in-service training programs, rehabilitation centers and sheltered workshops. She also obtained permission to create separate vocational rehabilitation agencies outside of state education agencies (Scotch, 1984, 22).

The Korean War provided the incentive for greater federal support of vocational rehabilitation and by 1958, the federal appropriation was \$65 million. Earlier Social Security Act amendments provided disability insurance benefits and stressed rehabilitation as a way of returning those who were able to gainful employment. A Disability Determination section of BVR was established in 1955 to process these claims.

In the Rehabilitation Act of 1972, Center for Independent Living founder, and disability-rights advocate, John Hessler and his colleagues developed a more comprehensive piece of legislation. It included concepts of independent living, client advocacy programs and some prohibitions of discrimination. Unfortunately, President Nixon vetoed this legislation. He predicted that no one had thoroughly assessed the ramifications of the legislation. His concern was that parts of the act, like independent living and Section 504, would cost too much, leading to great administrative problems.

In 1973, Congress passed another version of the Rehabilitation Act. This one contained changes by President Nixon, including eliminating independent living and client advocacy programs. But Section 504 remained in the compromise bill. President Nixon signed the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in September. But more struggles remained (Scotch 56-57). The cabinet department refused to issue regulations to implement the law. Finally, in 1977, vocational rehabilitation was truly "born". Since then, we, as vocational rehabilitation, and disability advocacy professionals, have been active participants in its continuing evolution.

Through the years vocational rehabilitation, and even what these words mean, have changed with society's ever changing views about individuals with disabilities, and with the changing needs of people themselves. Today, we are presented with a unique piece of legislation which, because it is now under the umbrella of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), is part of an overall attempt to provide a system of one-stop service delivery when it comes to the employment related needs of all Americans, with or without a disability.

Despite these many changes, the underlying purposes and principles of the Act remain visible today. This is reflected in both the written word of the law itself, and the visible impact that vocational rehabilitation continues to have on the lives of so many Americans with disabilities.

Are you up to the challenge?

We are looking for individuals with disabilities who are motivated and serious about becoming independent and productive.

If you are ready and interested in finding out the steps you need to take to get and keep a job, please notify us, CAP. The Client Assistance Program, CAP, is the statewide advocate for disabled individuals. We assist individuals with disabilities who require vocational rehabilitation services from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, OVR, so they can become employed.

We are in the process of taking a poll to see who would be excited about attending a CAP workshop. We will highlight for you how the OVR system works and sometimes doesn't work, what CAP can do to help you through this process and most importantly, how you can become your own self-advocate.

We will inform you, and inspire you to achieve an employment goal that is best for you.

How do you do this?

You can start by e-mailing us at jamiocray@aol.com.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES OF INTEREST

OVR State Board

December 4, 2007

Advisory Committee for the Blind (ACB)

November 20, 2007

Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PRC)

November 14, 2007

Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)

November 2, 2007

Advisory Committee for Persons Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACPDHH)

September 28, 2007

November 16, 2007

Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC)

November 27, 2007

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Upcoming Outreach Events**Jamie Ray to Speak at Brain Tumor Support Group**

Jamie Ray will speak to the Jefferson Hospital Brain Tumor Support Group on **October 17, 2007 at 7pm**. The group meets in Philadelphia. Topics covered will include the services provided by the Client Assistance Program, as well as information about Title I of the ADA, and Social Security Disability. For information on meeting location, or to RSVP, please call support group facilitator Ann Marie DiBona, RN at (856) 596-5572.

Advocate Margaret McKenna to speak at job club

On **Friday October 19, 2007 at 12:30 pm**, CAP Advocate Margaret McKenna will present to the Montgomery County Association for the Blind Job Club. This meeting will take place at the Robinsion Building, Philadelphia. This is located at 42 S. 15th Street. Please call Lynn if you would like more information or would like to attend. Her number is (610) 661-9800.

CAP Presentation at Bucks County CIL

On **October 22, 2007**, Margaret McKenna will provide a brief outreach presentation to staff at the Center for Independent Living of Bucks County. They are located at 2300 E. Lincoln Highway, Langhorne, PA.

Margaret McKenna to Present at Epilepsy Foundation of Eastern Pennsylvania

On **October 30, 2007**, Margaret McKenna will present to members of the Epilepsy Foundation of Eastern Pennsylvania. Their meeting will take place at the JFK MH/MR Center in Philadelphia. It is located at 112 Broad Street. For more information, please contact Michelle at the Epilepsy Foundation. She can be reached at (215) 629-5003 x 103.

CAP to Present at NFB of Pennsylvania Convention

November 9-11, 2007 the NFB of Pennsylvania will hold its annual convention in Pittsburgh, PA. Attorney Steve Pennington is scheduled to speak. For more information, please contact the NFB at 215-988-0888.

The above events are open to the public, please contact Jamie Ray at Jamiemray@aol.com if you would like more information.

Visit PA CAP on the WEB
<http://www.equalemployment.org>