

GW HEATH Resource Center

Pathways to Employment: Non-Degree Postsecondary Options For Individuals with Disabilities (Part II)

By Mario Payne



HEATH's information specialist reports an increase in the number of queries about nonacademic, post-high school training options for individuals with developmental disabilities and other special learning needs. In the July 2000 issue of Information from HEATH, we provided an overview of the various training and employment models used to help students with special learning needs make the transition to independent living and satisfying employment (see [Nondegree Postsecondary Options for Individuals with Disabilities, Part I](#)). In this issue, we continue the discussion of nonacademic, nondegree postsecondary options by highlighting select programs and services throughout the United States. You may wish to consult the first article in the series for clarification of terms related to types of employment training methods and models.

Developmental disabilities (DDs), which result in substantial physical and/or mental impairments, refer to disabilities that manifest by the age of 22 and that are chronic, severe, and likely to continue indefinitely. Nearly 4 million Americans currently live with DDs, which include autism, brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, mental retardation, spina bifida, and various behaviour disorders. Although DDs can substantially limit an individual's capacity for independent living and for economic self-sufficiency, most individuals with DDs are quite capable of acquiring new information, developing new skills, and leading productive, independent lives. Unfortunately, most adults with DDs are either unemployed or underemployed, despite an ability and willingness to prepare for and secure meaningful employment. Many individuals with

DDs may require additional support, training, or vocational experience in order to obtain and maintain competitive employment in their communities.

Rather than simply placing clients within any available job, Goodwill helps clients secure positions that offer opportunities for advancement and personal growth. Thus, their programs provide skills training that caters to the workforce needs of the local community. For example, in Charlotte, North Carolina, one of the nation's top financial centers, the Careers in Banking program has trained more than 100 candidates for career track positions in the banking industry and relies heavily on input from banking professionals in the community. Students are trained in a real-world setting, using course curricula that focus on trade-specific skills, such as 10-key operation, proof encoding, keyboarding, and resume building. In Tucson, Arizona, Goodwill's "call center" training program prepares clients to become customer service agents for toll-free information lines. The program offers training in computer literacy, telephone etiquette, workload management, and motivation.

For additional information about Goodwill Industries' training opportunities in your area, please contact Goodwill Industries International, Inc., 9200 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814, (301) 530-6500, Goodwill@goodwill.org, or go to www.goodwill.org.

University Affiliated Programs (UAPs)

UAPs have been making a difference in the lives of people with DDs, their families, and their

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communities for nearly four decades. Authorized by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (P.L. 104-183), UAPs are found in every U.S. state and territory and typically are affiliated with major research universities. (The most recent reauthorization of the Act, in October 2000, changes the official name of the program to “University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service,” although it is still widely referred to as “University-Affiliated Programs.”)

The vision of UAPs is that all Americans, including those with disabilities, participate fully in the benefits of citizenship. Independence, productivity, and community inclusion are key components of this vision. By virtue of their placement within research universities, UAPs are in a unique position to facilitate the flow of disability-related information between the university and surrounding communities.

UAPs typically work with people with disabilities, members of their families, state and local government agencies, and community providers (such as the Association for Retarded Citizens, Goodwill Industries, Inc., and so forth) to offer vocational and independent living skills training, technical assistance, research, and information sharing.

For additional information about UAPs, and to identify the UAP in your state, contact the American Association of University Affiliated Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, 2630 Fenton Street, Suite 410, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 588-8252, (301) 588-2842(fax), or go to www.aauap.org.

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Devereux Centers

Devereux Centers offer a variety of services, including residential and day treatment programs, community-based group homes, respite care programs, hospital inpatient and outpatient settings, transitional living arrangements, supervised apartments, foster care homes, special education day schools, preventive and postdischarge services, aftercare programs, and vocational and

prevocational training. The 15 Devereux Centers throughout the United States offer a continuum of services that are arranged across five programs: Behavior Management, Day Training and Activity Center, Work Services, Supported Employment, and Life Enrichment.

To learn about the Devereux Center in your region and the services available, contact Devereux Treatment, 444 Devereux Drive, P.O. Box 638, Villanova, PA 19085, (610) 520-3000, info@devereux.org, or go to www.devereux.org.

LOCAL PROGRAMS

Life Skills Transitional Program (TX)

The Life Skills Transitional Program, a joint endeavor of Houston Community College System, Central College, and the Houston Independent School District, exposes high school students to the academic and social life of community college, giving them a taste of available opportunities upon graduation. The program, which prepares students to make a successful transition to adult life, works with over 100 students, the majority of whom have mental retardation as their primary disability.

During their senior year in high school, students are introduced to available college support services and then are given the Core Course in Transition Planning. The students, most of whom are referred to the Life Skills Transitional Program by high school faculty and administrators, are encouraged to establish an independent lifestyle and either enter postsecondary training or secure a job. The Life Skills Transitional Program assists students in finding a job, enrolling in postsecondary certificate programs, or taking continuing education classes to enhance lifelong learning.

For additional information, contact the Life Skills Transitional Program, Central College, 1300 Holman, SJAC Room 102, Houston, TX 77004, (713) 718-6164, or go to <http://ccollege.hccs.cc.tx.us>.

Melwood (MD)

Melwood offers job training, employment, community living, and leisure and travel opportunities for people with developmental

disabilities. Melwood serves the public and private sectors through contracts with federal government agencies; state, county, and local governments; and commercial firms. These partnerships provide meaningful job training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Melwood programs include a variety of vocational services for those who are independently employed, are working on contract crews, or are in a workshop setting. Job readiness training and life enrichment programs are also provided.

To learn more about available programs, contact Melwood, 5606 Dower House Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772, (301) 599-8000, or go to www.melwood.com.

Postsecondary Program School-to-Work Transition Activity (MD)

This collaborative program of the Carroll County Public Schools and Carroll Community College exposes students with developmental disabilities to independent employment. Participants spend half a day on the community college campus and the other half in either a paid or volunteer work assignment. Participants also receive residential and independent living training. The program serves approximately 25 students each semester, many of whom have mental retardation or other significant disabilities. To learn more about the Postsecondary Program School-to-Work Transition Activity, contact Joyce Sebian, support service specialist, at (410) 386-8329.

Project Forward (MA)

Project Forward, operated by Cape Cod Community College, encourages students with disabilities to develop employment skills, improve self-esteem, and acquire strategies to help them maximize their strengths. Currently, 45 students, most of whom have specific learning disabilities, are enrolled in the program. (Other disabilities represented include mental retardation, speech impairment, and hearing impairment.) Students enter Project Forward as part of a high school transition plan or by referral from other postsecondary programs seeking a vocational skills training component. The community college setting allows students opportunities to connect with their peers in an independent environment, earn credits, and participate in general education courses.

For additional information, contact Project Forward, Cape Cod Community College, 2240 Lyanough Road, West Barnstable, MA 02668-1599, or go to www.capecod.mass.edu.

Rural Transition Program Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC) (SD)

BHSSC is a multiservice collaboration between 12 member school districts in western South Dakota. Cooperative services include vocational/educational programs, technical assistance, and consultation to school districts. BHSSC currently serves approximately 200 individuals, most of whom have mental retardation as a primary diagnosis. Other clients are individuals with autism and emotional disturbances.

The students are referred to the program by their schools, the division of vocational rehabilitation, or other agencies. Project staff, relying on vocational assessments to determine a student's work skills and work readiness, develop an individualized plan to guide each student's transition into employment within the community. Every student's transition plan includes work-based learning. Two types of job placement are available to all students: Career Awareness and Entrepreneurial Sites. Career Awareness is a job shadowing rotation through five work sites, each lasting between three and four weeks. Students work in a variety of jobs, gaining experience and information to introduce them to job placements in the community. The Entrepreneurial Sites area exposes students who are considering starting a business of their own to successful entrepreneurs in the community.

For more information about the Rural Transition Program, contact Jim Parry, director, Technology and Innovations in Education, Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, 1925 Plaza Boulevard, Rapid City, SD 57702, (605) 394-1876, jparry@sdtie.sdserv.org, or go to www.ed.gov/technology/challenge/98ab.html.

The Transition Program (MA)

The Transition Program, designed expressly for students with learning disabilities and cognitive limitations, is operated within the Office for Disability Support Services at Middlesex

Community College. This two-year certificate program teaches consumer and business skills, independent living, and personal and social development. The cornerstone of the program is a semester-long internship in local business settings. The program offers the possibility of a successful educational experience for students who would have difficulty meeting the academic or cognitive demands of standard college coursework.

For additional information on The Transition Program, contact Kathleen Monagle, director, disability support services, at (781) 280-3631, monaglek@middlesex.cc.ma.us, or go to www.middlesex.cc.ma.us.

Transition Services Program/Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) (NY)

The Transition Services Program was developed by several BOCES chapters to address the needs of students with disabilities who had left formal schooling with inadequate vocational training. The program has reduced the dropout rate of at-risk students by revealing opportunities that may be available to them with additional training and a diploma. Currently 140 students are enrolled in the program, most of whom have mental retardation, serious emotional disturbances, specific learning disabilities, and/or multiple disabilities. Students are referred to the program from the Committee on Special Education or through their high school guidance department. The Transition Services Program is tailored to two different age groups: 13- to 15-year-olds participate in the prevocational training program, and 16- to 21-year-olds participate in onsite vocational training.

For additional information, contact Jean Seniecle Maxwell, coordinator, P.O. Box 4754, 6820 Thompson Road, Syracuse, NY 13221-4754, (607) 753-9301, or go to www.ocmboces.org.

Vocational Education, Community Transition, Occupational Relations (VECTOR) (MN)

Located on both the North and South campuses of Hennepin Technical College, VECTOR provides transition services to young adults with disabilities as they progress from educational settings toward

working and living independently in the community. Most students served have mild mental retardation or specific learning disabilities as their primary diagnoses. Other students have autism, traumatic brain injuries, or physical or other health-related disabilities.

For additional information about VECTOR, contact Darla Jackson, program facilitator, Intermediate District 287, 7101 Northland Circle, Suite 101, Brooklyn Park, MN 55428, (763) 536-0872, or go to www.int287.k12.mn.us.



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