

Early Start to Supported Employment Pilot Six-Month Report September 2005

Purpose of Supported Employment Pilot

Over the past few years, interagency collaborative efforts in the transition process have yielded some positive results. However, many students with significant disabilities experience difficult and unsuccessful transitions to adult service options. In response to this, The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and the Department of Education (DDOE) have agreed to pilot a project to align resources that would prevent a gap in services to students needing supported employment services upon leaving school and entering the workforce. The "Early Start to Supported Employment" (ESSE) is intended to demonstrate the feasibility of a more seamless transition for students leaving school and entering the adult workforce. The outcome of paid work with post-school support in place before leaving school is the primary goal of this pilot. There is a commitment from each agency to conduct this pilot over multiple years in order to learn how to more effectively support successful employment outcomes for students requiring long-term adult services. Early Start began in the spring of 2005 for students leaving the school systems in the summer of 2006.

Pilot Overview:

The ESSE Pilot officially began in March 2005. There have been three project team meetings and numerous outreach opportunities to enlist schools, adult service providers, students and their families. The state advisory group includes a facilitator/evaluator, representatives from adult service providers, DDDS, DVR, DDOE and school programs. Mark Chamberlin, DDOE transition specialist, serves as the lead on the pilot, having overall responsibilities for the pilot activities. Margaret Haas, DDDS transition representative for Kent and Sussex Counties, serves as co-chair for the advisory group. Dr. George Tilson, senior Vice President of TransCen, Inc. is serving as the facilitator for the pilot advisory meetings, and will conduct both formative and summative evaluations of the pilot. Contact has been made with parents in hopes of having them join the advisory group in the fall.

As a result of the efforts of all members of the pilot advisory group and transition representatives from schools and districts, eighteen students from eight school programs around the State have been selected to be the initial participants. Two very successful Open Houses culminated in fifteen of the students/families choosing providers for the pilot during the coming year. All approved adult service providers have participated in meetings with agencies and parents.

This six-month report highlights the activities of the ESSE pilot from March through August 2005. It will also highlight important next steps for the fall, as well as initial activities in preparation for the students who may participate in the ESSE pilot during the 2006-2007 school year.

The ESSE Pilot Advisory Group will next meet on October 11, 2005. At this meeting, the advisory group will review pilot activities to date, listen to reports on individual student progress, identify next steps, and make final approval on formative and summative evaluation components. Any changes to student selection for the next year, timelines, materials, and other pilot activities for the 2006-2007 school year will also be discussed.

Timeline/Description of Project Activities:

March 2005: A pilot meeting was organized with representatives from DDOE, school districts, DDDS, DVR and adult service providers to lay the groundwork for the pilot. As a result of that meeting, student selection criteria, a suggested timeline for pilot activities, and needed materials were developed. DDDS identified an initial pool of 76 students potentially leaving school in 2006 that may be eligible for supported employment. During this meeting, it was recommended that DDOE be the lead agency, and that an ESSE Pilot Advisory group made up of stakeholders be organized. Students must be:

- ▶ Already determined eligible for DDDS services
- ▶ Entering their last year in school
- ▶ Motivated to work and possess knowledge of work preferences with some independence in work situations, and
- ▶ Supported by family in obtaining long-term employment while still in school

The suggested timeline for the ESSE pilot is:

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| Spring 2005: | Schools and agencies identify students for participation |
| Summer 2005: | Students and families agree to participation and select adult service provider |
| Fall/Winter '05/'06: | Supported Employment Assessments completed prior to student's last year |
| | Job Development authorized |
| Spring '06: | Job Development Process completed |
| Sept after Graduation: | Follow-up funding provided to support employment success |

April 2005: The advisory group was identified, draft materials were presented and approved with changes, outreach planning took place, and DDDS took the lead on initial identification of students. The outreach activities included:

- ▶ DCDT Newsletter
- ▶ Kent/Sussex and New Castle County Regional Transition Advisory Council meetings
- ▶ Countywide Special Education Director meetings
- ▶ Statewide Special Education Leadership meeting
- ▶ Meeting of Adult Service Providers
- ▶ Summer Transition Institute, co-sponsored by DCDT, DDOE and DVR

May 2005: Seventeen students were initially identified for the pilot at the May meeting, and project materials were approved by the advisory group. The group determined that two Open Houses would be designed to inform families and students of the adult providers that would provide supported employment services. A list of suggested questions for providers was developed, and a project evaluation component was drafted. The materials approved by the Advisory Group were:

- ▶ Current Supported Employment Timeline and a Suggested Timeline for ESSE pilot
- ▶ Parent Manual on Supported Employment (English, with Spanish version partially completed)
- ▶ Supported Employment Fact Sheet and Brochure
- ▶ Initial Student Review Form
- ▶ Student/Family Consent Form (English and Spanish versions)
- ▶ Confirmation Form of Student Participation (English and Spanish versions)
- ▶ Suggested Questions for Parents (English and Spanish versions)

June 2005: Schools were asked to complete all required forms for participation in the ESSE pilot with families and return to DDOE. Invitations were sent to families for Open Houses to be held in July. Pilot

members and school representatives followed up with phone calls to families concerning the Open Houses.

Schools (Students Participating)

Eighteen students met the selection criteria and are participating in the ESSE pilot. They represent 8 different schools in Delaware, including:

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| Laurel High School (1) | Transition Partnership at UD (2) |
| Howard T. Ennis School (3) | Brandywine High School (2) |
| John S. Charlton School (3) | William Penn High School (2) |
| Lake Forest High School (1) | Delcastle High School (4) |

July 2005: Open Houses were held in New Castle County at the Marshallton Building. The Kent/Sussex Open House was held at the First State Senior Center in Milford.

July 13 - New Castle County: Seven of 10 students and families were able to come. All but one of the adult providers attended the Open House. Transition specialists from each district participating attended, along with the DVR supported employment counselor, DDOE and DDDS transition specialist for New Castle Co. The meeting was held from 2:00-4:00 PM.

July 19 – Kent /Sussex Counties: Six of the eight students and families attended, and all the adult service providers were represented. School representatives for each student attended, and DDOE, DDDS and DVR counselor attended. The Open House was held from 5:00-7:00 PM.

Feedback: All students and families had ample time to meet with each adult provider. All who attended the open houses reported that the opportunity for families to meet face-to-face with adult service providers was of great benefit. The families reported being very pleased with the meeting. Each Open House had an intimate, relaxed atmosphere, making casual conversation easy for students, families and providers. One teacher stated that the Open House was a great venue, but that it should take place during the school year in the future, making it easier for all to attend.

August 2005: Selection of Providers

As of August 29, 2005, 15 of the 18 students and families selected adult service providers. Nine providers were chosen. They were (# of students in parentheses):

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| Community Integrated Services (3) | Heartwood (1) |
| The Salvation Army (1) | AHEDD (1) |
| Elwyn (4) | The Arc (1) |
| Easter Seals (2) | Kent Sussex Industries (1) |
| Opportunity Center, Inc. (1) | |

DDDS will work with the other three families on their selection of providers during September 2005.

Next Steps:

October 2005:

Early Start to Supported Employment Pilot Advisory Group will meet at Easter Seals in Dover on October 11, 2005. The meeting will be from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

DVR Intake process: It is recommended that each county hold meetings with school representatives, families, DDDS and DVR occur during the month of October to complete the DVR intakes for exiting students. Schools will invite the students and parents to the intake meeting. Adult service providers chosen by the families will also be invited by DDDS. Appointment times will be designated for each student, eliminating the need for those attending to attend the entire meeting.

November:

DVR Supported Employment Assessment: DVR will provide supported employment assessments for all students between October and January 2006.

Countywide Meetings for '06-'07 Student Selection:

In order to improve the process, it is recommended that each county conduct meetings for DVR, DDDS and school representatives to review students recommended for the next year's pilot in November 2005. Schools will be asked to refer any students they think may be successful candidates for supported employment. This will be an expansion of the current student participants, relaxing the stricter criteria developed for the initial pool of students.

Monthly Reports:

Each adult provider provides monthly reports to track progress of all students involved in the pilot. These monthly reports will, in turn, be used by the State Pilot Advisory Group to monitor activities for all students involved.

Materials developed for the Early Supported Employment are available on the DDOE website at www.doe.k12.de.us

If there are any questions concerning pilot activities, please contact Mark Chamberlin, DDOE, at 302-735-4210, or email Mark at mchamberlin@doe.k12.de.us