**Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities**

Drop in call # 3, January 23, 2019 highlights:

The *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* were developed to ensure that students with deaf-blindness and long-term support needs are included and can access quality lives in their communities. Based on current laws, policies, and best practices, they provide information and recommendations in six essential areas:

* + Training and technical assistance to increase expectations
	+ Work experiences
	+ Community activities and living
	+ School-adult agency collaboration
	+ Qualified personnel in schools and adult service agencies
	+ Family education and engagement

Recommendation #3: Work Experiences: Building from interests, strengths and support needs #1; introducing the possibility of Employment for All students with deaf-blindness and preparation from work through an evolution of work experiences.

All young adults need the opportunity to explore work. Students with disabilities are no different. Research shows us that students with disabilities who have paid work experience prior to exiting high school are more likely to work as adults. Parent expectations of their child with a disability working is strongly correlated with that adult child working in the community as an adult, especially for students with more significant impact of disability.

For students with deaf-blindness and additional disabilities it is important for work experiences to be well matched to who they are to maximize their participation and competence. Miranda’s story in Youth Voices (link) is a great example of a school team looking for tasks that she was motivated to do and identifying strategies for her to participate in the work experience. Success in work experiences help build the team and families vision of the possibility of community employment for that student.

Some states have a clear philosophy and legislation that drives the opportunity for all students to access community employment. States that that have a strong Employment First Policy may also have more supports for students to try out work during their transition years. Recommendation #3 talks about Employment First. For information about your state’s Employment First status visit <https://public.tableau.com/profile/nord0364#!/vizhome/APSEEmploymentFirst/EmploymentFirst>

**Are students with deaf-blindness getting access to community work experiences?**

Attendees on the call reported that it varies by school districts. Some schools have robust work experience programs where others don’t. Interestingly in Wyoming the larger schools didn’t always have the most opportunities; some of the smaller rural communities were really creative and provided many local opportunities for students with disabilities.

PA is wondering if students with deaf-blindness in approved private schools are getting access to VR services and or work experiences.

**Who is supporting students to participate in Work experiences?**

**Is it dependent on school staff? Do VR or Developmental Disabilites services play a role while the student is still in school?**

Attendees reported that VR involvement varies by VR geographic office. In some areas the local VR office is contracting with Community Rehabilitation Programs to support students on work experience sites.

Pre-ETS funding can NOT pay for job coaching or transportation. However VR can open a case for a student who needs those services and fund job coaching and or transportation. Sometimes schools provide those services.

\*\* Suggestion that families be provided with a fact sheet about funding options and what their child can access through Pre-ETs.

Other concerns expressed by the group-

If students are going to school outside their home community, they still need to be connected to employers and community rehabilitation programs back in their home community when they exit school. \*\* NJ mentioned having difficulties with community vendors not wanting to serve students with higher needs. One family has been turned down by 3 agencies.

How do you support families to think about their connections in the communities to potential employers for their adult child?