

## STATEWIDE TRANSITION INITIATIVES 2003-2004

Several initiatives are being implemented to help New Mexico's students served by IEPs to achieve improved post-school outcomes, due to their high dropout rates, their low participation rates in postsecondary education, and the state's areas of noncompliance cited by OSEP. These initiatives are funded again by the N.M. State Department of Education Special Education Unit, emerging from collaborative development over the past few years by a team representing NMSDE, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, New Mexico Highlands University, the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque Public Schools, the Center for Entrepreneurship, Parents Reaching Out, the Arc of N.M., the State School to Work Office, Santa Fe's Executive Leadership Council, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, and the National Transition Alliance. Numerous other stakeholders also contribute major time and efforts to each initiative, including students and parents, state and local agencies, advocacy organizations, employers, educators, and community leaders. New Mexico's transition efforts continue to use the conceptual framework of the Transition Taxonomy created by Dr. Paula Kohler, our long-term partner.

**Statewide Transition Coordinating Council:** Recommended by the 1994-1996 House Bill 981 Task Force on Transition of Youth with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education, this council consists of approximately 30 individuals who now meet quarterly to help plan and develop strategies to support a seamless transition system from school to adulthood for youth with disabilities. Their subgroups are working on four major tasks this year: state transition plan and interagency agreement, local interagency agreements and transition teams, marketing and outreach education, and professional development of key stakeholders, including those serving adjudicated youth in transition.

**Transition Specialist Cadre:** From the Summer 2000-2002 Transition Institutes, about 55 "transition specialists" were identified by their school districts to take the lead in developing or improving local systems' capacities to support appropriate transition services. They committed to participating in four training and technical assistance activities, preparing information for colleagues and community partners, and developing and carrying out action plans to address critical local priorities, all centered around enhancing student achievement of their desired post-school outcomes. They also recruit and lead district/agency teams for the annual Summer Transition Institute.

**Transition Outcomes Project:** Now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of growth, this project has helped districts to use procedures and tools to improve their transition planning within the IEP for 14-22 year olds. The Transition Outcomes Project, developed by Ed O'Leary of the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, trains teams to review IEP files to assess quality implementation of transition planning requirements and assist school personnel to make changes in district practice that local teams identify as critical.

**Pathways to the Diploma Training:** Trainers are available to districts to provide professional development experiences to educators and families about the graduation options available to students, the changes in those regulations that affect the role of local school boards, and the linkages of those options with student self-determination.

**Summer 2003 Transition Institute:** The annual Summer Transition Institute will build upon the past 4 institutes (student development, self-determination instruction, transition planning in the IEP, interagency collaboration) to support districts' creation of local action plans. This year, the focus is "Family Involvement in Transition." The audience remains statewide, with qualified facilitators and local and national "experts" helping local teams make significant, focused progress. Dates are June 16-18, 2003, at the Sagebrush Inn and Conference Center in Taos.

**Statewide Follow-up and Follow-along Studies:** These studies, funded by the NMSDE and carried out by the UNM Institute for Public Policy overseen by an advisory group, are just starting and will first randomly ask those who exited schools and special education programs at least one year earlier, about their school and post-school experiences. Tenth or 11<sup>th</sup> graders later will be randomly asked about their post-school goals and how their schooling is helping them achieve those.

**Self-Determination Skills Training:** Jointly funded by the NMSDE and the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council and implemented by REC 3 and REC 4, this new initiative has brought in a new national partner, Dr. James Martin of the University of Oklahoma, to train teachers across New Mexico to use the Choicemaker Self-Determination Curriculum, including the Self-Directed IEP module. Students learn to make choices, prepare for and direct their own IEP meetings, and develop, use, and assess their own goals and their plans to reach them.

**Related Initiative:**

**Entrepreneurship Training:** The Center for Entrepreneurship works with New Mexico districts to prepare teachers to help their K-12 students learn entrepreneurial skills. Numerous student-run businesses at all age levels have evolved, with the focus on helping students to identify their strengths and dreams and to link school experiences to life.

**For more information on the initiatives above, contact any of the following:**

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**N.M. Division on Career Development and Transition/New Mexico Transition Network:** New Mexico's DCDT chapter offers stimulating networking opportunities, an informative newsletter, and annual professional development events. Typical co-sponsored events include an Adult Services Fair, a national speaker, and an student entrepreneurship fair. Contact Cindy Wood, President (842-4556, FAX 843-3765, email wood\_c@aps.edu).