



# Way 2 Work



## Interagency Collaboration: Working Together for Better Outcomes

### **Interagency Teams: Collaboration for Better Outcomes**

Interagency collaboration is considered a best practice in school-to-work transition to achieve positive post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Way2Work Maryland incorporates service coordination through inter-agency collaboration as a key element in the model, which was designed to evaluate the impact of work-based learning experiences on post-school outcomes for students with disabilities using a two-group randomized controlled trial. This *Brief* describes the Way2Work approach to inter-agency service collaboration.

### **Way2Work Maryland**

Way2Work Maryland, developed as a partnership between the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and the University of Maryland (UMD), is a career-based transition intervention designed for students with disabilities enrolled in secondary school. The intervention consists of four key components: (a) early referral to DORS for pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS) (b) work-based learning experiences in community integrated settings – both paid and unpaid; (c) paid employment and (d) strategic coordination of service delivery across multiple agencies. The service delivery leader in Way2Work is the MD local education agency (LEA), or school district, with eight LEAs recruited and selected to implement the model in two sequential cohorts.

### **Way2Work Interagency Collaboration Teams**

Each participating LEA is required to identify and convene a local interagency team, called a Maryland Interagency Team or MIAT. These teams meet monthly, and are supported by technical assistance staff from the University of Maryland who ensure implementation fidelity to the Way2Work model.

#### **MIAT Team Members**

- School-based transition and related personnel
- Vocational rehabilitation staff from the Maryland State Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
- Community rehabilitation providers
- Representatives from ancillary agencies
  - Local developmental disability and mental health administrations
  - Post-secondary institutions

### **The MIAT Approach to Inter-agency Collaboration**

The eight MIATs coordinate services to students enrolled at their project site. The MIAT is led by a designated transition staff member from the local school district, who conducts the meetings and tracks student progress in an online management information system (MIS). Each MIAT is responsible for ensuring that students receive all four of the Way2Work components, a task that requires intensive service coordination among schools, VR, and local community rehabilitation providers which are authorized and funded by DORS to deliver work-based learning experiences.

MIAT Members' Responsibilities and Benefits of Collaboration

| Partner Organization        | Responsibility  | Benefits   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| LEA staff/districts         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain continuous contact with students and families</li> <li>Make referrals to DORS for Pre-ETS application</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve transition services for students with IEPs/504 plans</li> <li>Improve post-school outcomes for IDEA Indicator 14</li> </ul>   |
| DORS staff/Agency           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve student applications for Pre-ETS</li> <li>Authorize CRPs to deliver Pre-ETS to approved students</li> <li>Determine student eligibility for full VR case applications</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve and expand Pre-ETs services to eligible students</li> <li>Increase outreach to youth, schools and families</li> <li>Expend mandated 15% federal reserve</li> </ul>          |
| Community Providers         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure work-based learning experiences for individual students;</li> <li>Negotiate workplace agreements between student and employers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend and expand existing services to a new population</li> <li>Increase program income via new service contracts for Pre-ETs with VR</li> <li>Expand business partners</li> </ul> |
| Business/employers          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in classroom-based career development activities, such as mock interviews, transition fairs</li> <li>Provide work experiences</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase job referrals</li> <li>Reduce hiring costs via pre-screened applicants</li> <li>Increase local visibility</li> </ul>   |
| Post-secondary Institutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information for post-school enrollment</li> <li>Host students' visits to sites</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand enrollment</li> <li>Increase institution's visibility in local and state school districts</li> </ul>   |
| Families                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist students with time management and transportation to work-based learning sites</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students acquire work experiences</li> <li>Paid jobs— students make money</li> </ul>  |

**Motivating and Sustaining Interagency Teams**

Inter-agency collaboration is a core component of the Way2Work model. Periodically we assess team perceptions of collaboration in order to identify team challenges and strengths. Through these efforts, we have identified the central characteristics that empower teams to achieve positive student outcomes.

Does your team have the **MOST**?

- Motivation to Succeed
- Openness and Mutual Respect
- Support for Team Goals
- Trust in Each Other

**Lessons Learned:**

**Inter-agency Collaboration**

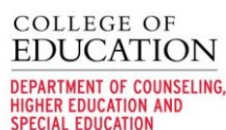
*Service coordination creates a seamless transition system for positive post-school outcomes.*

*Data-driven team decision-making. What gets measured gets done. Way2Work staff use real time data generated by the project MIS to help teams monitor progress, recognize service gaps, and generate solutions.*

*Individualized and coordinated action planning to help students achieve work-based learning and other transition goals. The team meets regularly to discuss progress and updates to individual student's transition plan to maximize communication, resources, and expertise of all partners.*

*Clear roles and responsibilities allow for a better functioning team. Roles and responsibilities of team members need to be clearly defined and understood. Identify an individual to lead, coordinate, and manage team functions as well as facilitate ongoing communication among all partners.*

*Accountability for student outcomes is the responsibility of the entire team. Using the team as a unit for achieving service outcomes mitigates service silos and inter-agency conflict and competition.*



[www.way2workmd.net](http://www.way2workmd.net)

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