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October 6, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Exceptional Student Education Administrators
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Area Directors

From: Bill Palmer, Director 

Subject: School Work Experience Agreements

Since our communiqué in May and July 2006 the Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has received more technical assistance from the federal Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) regarding our draft model agreement with the school districts. They have now stated that our most recent proposed agreement complies with federal regulations that govern the public Vocational Rehabilitation program. Many districts had indicated an interest in participating in agreements to provide paid and un-paid community-based work experiences for students with disabilities who are eligible to receive DVR services. This interest was exciting to DVR, and we are very pleased that we can now offer you an agreement to implement an expanded partnership with the districts.

RSA advised us that a third party cooperative agreement must require some matching funds from the school districts in order to be consistent with our federal regulations. We realize this change will create a need to reexamine your school district's priorities and budget available to use as non-federal matching funds. The new proposed agreement requires 10% matching funds (non-federal) from the districts on the first employment specialist position. DVR will reimburse 90% of the cost of salaries and benefits with a ceiling of \$36,000 from DVR to \$4,000 from the school district. We will also reimburse up to 75% of the costs of salaries and benefits, to the school

BILL PALMER
Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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district's 25% (non-federal) match for additional employment specialist positions, up to a total of five positions. The ceiling on these additional positions would be \$30,000 annual salary funded by DVR to \$10,000 annual salary and benefits funded by the school district with non-federal funds.

School Districts can start with one position and increase the billing as they grow the program over the course of the three-year term of the agreement. This agreement would be effective upon the date of the final contract signatures by both parties and could take place anytime during the 2006-2007 school year. We want to leave the start date open-ended so the districts don't feel pressured to complete all the administrative tasks associated with starting a new program on a short timeframe. A proposed agreement is enclosed for your consideration. Once we have received a signed agreement, we must provide at least 30 days processing time for the Florida Department of Education to process the agreements. The effective date would be the date it is signed and executed, by the Florida Department of Education.

We look forward to working with you in the near future to provide new or expanded community-based work experiences for students with disabilities. We apologize for the need for these changes in the form of an agreement as we worked to gain the support of our federal partners and for the delays in issuing the enclosed proposed agreement. We truly hope the changes and delays don't prevent your participation. Although the advice from the federal RSA provided a set-back, we recognize that our federal partners did their best to advise us in a manner that ensured that the agreements will be consistent with federal regulations. We think the new agreements are still very attractive to school districts that share our interest in providing community-based work experiences for youth with disabilities. In many ways, we feel this new agreement is a better offer of partnership from DVR.

Thank you for your patience as we developed this new and/or expanded program. If you need additional information regarding an agreement between your district and DVR, please contact Pamela Lightbourne, Senior Management Analyst, DOE/DVR Contracts and Grants Section, by e-mail at Pamela.lightbourne@vr.fldoe.org or by phone: (850) 245-3275.

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What is the new Third Party Cooperative Agreement (TPCA) related to transition?

The new TPCA is a contractual written agreement between the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and a School District with the intent of:

- ⬇ Expanding paid and non-paid integrated Community Based Work Experience (CBWE) opportunities for transition students with disabilities , who are Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) eligible with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
- ⬇ Expanding the funds available for CBWE to VR transition students as preparation for successful postsecondary employment outcomes and inclusion into adult life.

What does the School District need to know about TPCA funding for an employment specialist?

- ⬇ The role of the full time employment specialist includes CBWE development, student placement, and job retention support.
- ⬇ DVR agrees to reimburse the School District up to \$36,000 towards the salary and benefits of one CBWE employment specialist, over the course of the academic school year, with 10% matching non-federal funds from the School District.
- ⬇ Services provided by the School District must either be new CBWE transition services provided to VR eligible students with an IPE, ages 16 and older **OR** existing CBWE transition services that have been modified or expanded.

What if the School District wants additional VR funding to support more than one employment specialist?

- ⬇ Four additional full time employment specialists may be requested by the School District, with a 25% non-federal funding match for each additional job coach.
- ⬇ DVR agrees to reimburse the School District up to \$30,000 for each additional employment specialist.

What additional incentives are available for School Districts participating in a TPCA with DVR?

- ⬇ This TPCA is designed as a 3 year renewable contract with DVR funding to support up to five full time employment specialists.
- ⬇ A School District is allowed to expand from 1 to 5 employment specialists during the course of the 3 year contract.
- ⬇ Each employment specialist is expected to serve at least 6 VR students annually, beginning with the second contract year.
- ⬇ If an employment specialist serves 10 or more VR participants during the school year, they will be eligible for a \$1000 performance payment benefit.

What are the School District benefits?

- ⬇ Increased financial resources for providing high school work experiences to students with disabilities
- ⬇ Expanded transition options for students with varying levels of disability
- ⬇ Increased family involvement in the transition process
- ⬇ Increased agency involvement in the transition process

What are the benefits for students?

- ⬇ Access and support for integrated community work experiences
- ⬇ Inclusion in youth work experience is the best predictor of adult employment success

Who do I contact for more information about TPCA contracting?

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 DOE/DVR Contracts & Grants
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Who do I contact for more information about transition services?

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation:
 Donni Sorrell,
 VR Administrator Transition Services
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Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services:
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 Transition Program Specialist
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