

Approved Transition/Vocational Programs

Over the past several years there has been an increase in the number of school districts contracting with rehabilitation facilities and adult service providers for the provision of transition/vocational services for high school students with disabilities. These services include, but are not limited to, vocational evaluations, job development, job-coaching support, job placement and life/social skills assessment and training. This article will expand upon previous Bureau guidance issued in December, 2000, and help to clarify current Bureau practices and procedures related to the approval, coding and use of new and existing adult services to assist students in meeting IEP transition goals and objectives.

Facility Code Components for Transition/Vocational Programs and Services

The use of transition/vocational programs and services is allowed under Connecticut General Statute Section 10-76d(d): “Any local or regional board of education may enter into a contract with the owners or operators of any sheltered workshop or rehabilitation center for provision of an education occupational training program for children requiring special education who are at least sixteen years of age, provided such workshop or institution shall have been approved by an appropriate state agency.” In the Public School Information System (PSIS), when reporting about students, every program is given a separate **Facility Code**, which is a seven-digit number indicating the educational location of each student. The first three digits of the Facility code is the District Code, the fourth and fifth digits are the School Code and the last two digits refer to the Institution Code. **All existing and new transition/vocational programs must fit into one of the three Facility Code categories listed below:**

A. Transition/Vocational Programs Coded as “82”

The Bureau interprets “approved by an appropriate state agency” as any rehabilitation center or adult service provider that holds a current and valid contract as a vendor with state agencies such as the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB); Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS); Department of Developmental Services (DDS); and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). These service providers (often called Community Rehabilitation Providers – CRPs) as well as transition services provided to students with disabilities in a college or university setting (e.g., Hamden Transition Academy, Western Connection, Middlesex Transition Academy) have an Institution Code of “82” in the PSIS system. For example, the Hamden Transition Academy is 062-01-82 and the Kennedy Center in Trumbull is 144-01-82.

B. District-wide Special Education Programs that Provide Transition/Vocational Services

District operated special education programs that provide only transition/vocational services and are in a location other than a public school (e.g., apartment, church, municipal administration building, private school campus) are assigned a School Code (4th and 5th digits of the Facility Code) of “90” (may be “90 - 98” if the district has more than one program) with

an Institution Code of "11," designating that it is operated by a public school. For example, West Hartford's WAAVE Program (Applied Academic/Vocational Experience) that is on the campus of Northwest Catholic High School has a code of 155-90-11. These programs have separate reporting requirements and a Program Status Report must be signed by the superintendent and returned to Amarildo Monsalve (amarildo.monsalve@ct.gov) in the Bureau of Data Collection, Research, and Evaluation.

C. Transition/Vocational Programs Located within Public High Schools

Transition/vocational programs that are operated by a district and the base of operation is located within a public high school, are coded the same as the high school (Institution Code of "11"). Students in these programs may spend the majority of their time out in the community as long as some time is spent in the school on a regular basis. The School Code for these programs would be in the "60s," indicating a specific high school. For example, the transition/vocational program, Academy of Western Connecticut that is based at Danbury High School, is coded as 034-61-11.

Locating Appropriate Codes for Transition/Vocational Programs

When reporting a Facility Code in PSIS or the Special Education Data Application and Collection system (SEDAC) for students who are between the ages of 17 and 21, districts can locate the "82" or "90" codes for such programs in the Public School Information System (PSIS) Facility Code List. If a program in which a district has placed a student to receive transition/vocational services does not have a Facility Code in PSIS, please contact Laura Guerrero at laura.guerrera@ct.gov. Districts must supply the name and address (street, town, zip code) of the program and its primary contact person with a phone number and email address. Department personnel will contact the transition/vocational program, determine if it is an approved vendor of a state agency, and assign a Facility Code to be posted in PSIS. Programs with which a district is currently contracted that are not an approved vendor of a state agency, will be informed about the vendor approval process and will have until June 30, 2009 to become an approved provider of transition/vocational services for students with disabilities. If these programs do not become an approved vendor, their current Facility Code will be closed as of June 30, 2009 and districts may report such students using a generic code as of July 1, 2009.

Applying for Excess Cost Grants for Transition/Vocational Services

As indicated in the October, 2008 memo regarding Excess Cost Grants (see October 2008 Bulletin), a district may utilize a transition/vocational program or services to provide occupational training programs to eligible students and may receive an excess cost grant under the following conditions (See CGS §10-76d(d):

- 1.) The district is eligible for an excess cost grant if the program or services are being provided by an **approved** vendor of such services (i.e., approved vendor of a CT state agency),

- 2.) The student is not working on earning credits for a regular high school diploma,
- 3.) The student is between the ages of 16 and 21, and
- 4.) The grant threshold is met.

Students in a transition/vocational program that is reported using a generic code are not in an approved program and therefore, districts are not eligible for an excess cost grant for students attending those programs.

In addition, transition/vocational programs are not approved to be providing academics toward a high school diploma. Any program that is coded as an "82" in the SEDAC system by the Department of Education is not approved to provide academic credit toward a regular high school diploma. A district will not be eligible to receive an excess cost grant if a student is earning academic credit toward a regular high school diploma in a facility coded as an "82", transition/vocational program.

A district has the authority (per CGS §10-76d(d)) to place a child in a non-approved program; however, the costs of such placements are ineligible for any State reimbursement. Furthermore, for placement in any program, it is the district's responsibility to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students, including access to the general education curriculum, instruction provided by highly qualified teachers, progress on IEP goals and objectives that are measured and documented on a prescribed schedule, participation in statewide and district testing, and education in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Determining Home School for Students in Transition/Vocational Programs

In SEDAC, the Home Facility Code is defined as the public school the student would normally attend if not a special education student. This item can be found on page one of the IEP and in most cases the Facility Code 1 and Home Facility Code are the same number. However, in the case of students in age-appropriate community based transition programs and other transition/vocational programs (Institution Code of the Facility Code 1 is "82" or the School Code of the Facility Code 1 is 90-98) the following criteria apply:

- If the student is greater than or equal to age 17 and the time with non-disabled peers (TWNDP) is greater than or equal to 80%, then the Facility Code 1 is allowed to be the home school.
- If the student is greater than or equal to age 17 and the TWNDP is less than 80% then the Facility Code 1 cannot be the home school.

When determining if community-based job placements or skills training programs should count as TWNDP, all of the following apply:

- The job placement occurs in an inclusive setting where individuals with and without disabilities are present. Think about the "look around" rule – when you are in the setting in which the student is being educated, "look around" to see if there are individuals without disabilities present;
- The job experience is one at which any student could potentially work;
- It is not a job placement that has been designed **just** for students with disabilities; and

- The community-based job placement and/or skills training program is part of the student's educational program (i.e., not just an after-school job).

Further information to assist districts in defining TWNDP for transition-aged students is available in the November 2008 Bureau Bulletin.

Contact Dr. Patricia Anderson at 860-713-6923 or patricia.anderson@ct.gov if you have additional questions about the coding or use of transition/vocational programs and services to assist students in meeting their postsecondary goals or post-school outcome goal statements.

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