



**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**  
**DEPARTMENT FOR AGING AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES**

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To all Special Education Directors, School Counselors, and 504 Coordinators,

Welcome to the 2016-2017 school year! The purpose of this communication is to review our vocational rehabilitation and transition services and the role of the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) Transition Counselors. I also want to update on you the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-113publ128/pdf/PLAW-113publ128.pdf> and the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) that are required of all state VR agencies to provide to students with disabilities who are served under an IEP or 504 plan. Please note the underlined hyperlinks included for easy access to information that can be found on our agency website.

Many services provided through DRS are voluntary and based on an eligibility process. WIOA mandates that we provide Pre-ETS for students with disabilities aged 14 through 21 who are eligible for our services or who are ***potentially eligible*** for our services. There are five service categories that are outlined by WIOA and are considered Pre-ETS. The categories include job exploration counseling, work based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs, work place readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy. The 2016-2017 school year will be one full of change and adjustments as we implement the required mandates. In the near future, you will be hearing more about these services and our plans to offer training opportunities and increase information sharing to you and your staff and teachers. We look forward to continued collaboration with your schools and students.

You may have heard that due to limited resources, all eligible vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers cannot be served at this time. Federal law requires that DRS provide services to persons in priority categories called an Order of Selection (OOS). Individuals who are determined eligible for services are placed into priority categories based on severity of disability and served as resources become available. Currently the category that includes people with the most severe disabilities is open and we are serving those students and youth who fall within it. We encourage you to refer students even when eligible applicants are being placed on a waiting list. We take the severely disabled consumers off the waiting list in approximately three months of determination of eligibility, so please encourage staff to make referrals!

DRS has offices across the Commonwealth to provide employment services to individuals who meet the eligibility criteria for VR services and who want to work. Our Transition Counselors cover each high school and work with Transition Coordinators, Special Education Directors, and Special Education teachers to begin a dialogue with students regarding VR services about three years prior to their exit from school. Information about DRS services is found on our Transition Services Page (<http://www.vadars.org/transitionservices.htm>). You may want to share our Transition Flier with students and their families

Our Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center is a valuable resource for students with disabilities. The Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program offers vocational evaluation and planning

services for transitioning students. WWRC serves every disability category and is a wonderful option for students with disabilities who need a comprehensive evaluation or want vocational training after graduation. Also noteworthy is the fact that there are now 17 Project Search sites located all over Virginia. Project Search is a joint program between the LEA, DARS and Employment Service Organization and the host Business site. Project Search provides excellent work-place readiness training to approximately 175 students with disabilities.

If you would like additional information related to VR Transition Services, please contact Jean Steveson at [jean.steveson@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:jean.steveson@dars.virginia.gov) or by phone at (757)531-5298. Thank you for your continued partnership and everything you do to help students in the Commonwealth succeed!

Sincerely,

Jean Steveson  
Director of Transition Services  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Cc: Marianne Moore, VDOE