

impression (exclusive of a postage meter machine impression) that is readily identifiable, without further action, as having been supplied or affixed on the date of mailing by an employee of the U.S. Postal Service.

2. *Withdrawal of Applications.*

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice or telegram (including mail gram) received at any time before an award is made. Applications may be withdrawn in person by the applicant or by an authorized representative thereof, if the representative's identity is made known and the representative signs a receipt of the proposal.

3. *Hand-Delivered Proposals.* It is preferred that applications be mailed at least five days prior to the closing date. To be considered for funding, hand-delivered applications must be received by 4:45 p.m., e.t., at the specified address. Failure to adhere to the above instructions will be basis for a determination of non-responsiveness. Overnight express mail from carriers other than the U.S. Postal Service will be considered hand-delivered applications and must be received by the above specified date and time.

Part II. Authority

Omnibus Appropriations Resolution, 2003, Pub. L. 1087; Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2001, Pub. L. 106–554, 29 U.S.C. 557b.

Part III. Background

Young people with disabilities experience significant challenges in making a successful transition to adult life. According to the U.S. Department of Education, national high school graduation rates (e.g., diplomas, GED, alternative certificates) for students with disabilities lag considerably below that of youth without disabilities. Nearly nine-tenths or 88% of students without disabilities graduate as compared to only 62% of those with disabilities.⁴ Moreover, students with disabilities experience a school drop out rate that is three times greater than that for youth without disabilities—31% vs. 11%. Youth with emotional disabilities experience an even higher drop out rate of 54%.

It is estimated that only one-third of young people with disabilities who need job training receive it. Young

people with disabilities also have significantly lower rates of participation in post-secondary education. Finally, the Social Security Administration has found that many young people with disabilities entering the Supplementary Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) rolls are likely to remain on the program rolls for their entire lives.

As reflected in President George W. Bush's New Freedom Initiative, DOL's strategic goals and the Leave No Child Behind Act of 2001 (Pub. L. 107–110), young people with disabilities should have the opportunity to make a smooth transition from school to work and/or post-secondary education, to engage in meaningful employment, to live within their communities, and to contribute as productive citizens to society. Over the last 10 years, a number of Federal laws and policies have been implemented to facilitate access to transition planning activities, employment, and community living for youth with disabilities including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975, as amended (IDEA); the Rehabilitation Act, as amended; the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (Perkins Act) (Pub. L. 101–392); the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103–329); the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) (Pub. L. 105–220, 29 U.S.C. 2801 *et seq.*); and the Leave No Child Behind Act.

Among the most significant pieces of Federal legislation for youth with disabilities is IDEA, which focuses on supports and services for infants, preschoolers, school-aged children, and youth. Transition planning and services were included as new, but key, components in the 1990 reauthorization of IDEA. Under IDEA, "transition services" are defined in part as "a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that (A) is designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation." 20 U.S.C. 1401(30). Under IDEA, as reauthorized in 1997, a statement of transition service needs must be included in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) beginning at age 14.

By age 16, or younger if appropriate, the IEP must include a statement of needed transition services that describes related services and community

experiences necessary for the student to engage in meaningful employment and/or post-secondary education and successful community living. Transition services must be based upon the individual student's preferences, interests, and needs, and include:

- Instruction;
- Related services;
- Community experiences;
- Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and
- Acquisition of daily living skills, including functional vocational evaluation when appropriate.

The school system is responsible for ensuring that each youth receives all needed transition services. As discussed below, however, multiple agencies such as vocational rehabilitation agencies need to be involved in transition to ensure success.

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, also includes a number of provisions that impact the transition planning process. Because it uses the same definition of transition as IDEA, and requires that rehabilitation and education agencies undertake actions to facilitate transition, the Rehabilitation Act promotes coordination of transition and rehabilitation. Premised on consumer involvement, the Rehabilitation Act requires that an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which identifies a vocational goal and all the services needed to achieve that goal, be developed in coordination with the IPE. After the student has been determined eligible, transition services may be provided based upon the individual student's needs including no-cost services such as career guidance and counseling and unpaid on the job training, as well as "purchased" services such as assistive technology assessment and devices and supported employment.

The Perkins Act also provides Federal assistance for vocational education programs in both secondary and post-secondary settings. The provisions of the Perkins Act state that schools will assist "special populations" (which includes students with disabilities) to enter vocational education programs and will assist students with disabilities in fulfilling the transitional services requirement of IDEA.

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, which sunset in October of 2001, paved the way for a new approach to learning and employment in America. Jointly administered by the United States Departments of Education and Labor, School-to-Work brought together parents, teachers, and business leaders to create courses to prepare students

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2000* in Brief, Jeanne H. Nathanson NCES 2001–045, Washington, DC; U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, *Twenty-second Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act*, Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000.