

INQUIRY INTO TRANSITION SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL OR COMPLEX NEEDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Organisation: National Council on Intellectual Disability and Jobsupport

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The Director,
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000
socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au

RE: Inquiry into transition support for students with additional and/or complex needs and their families.

Dear Director,

Please accept this joint submission from the National Council on Intellectual Disability and Jobsupport,

National Council on Intellectual Disability

The National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID) was established over 50 years ago by parents and friends, in an endeavour to improve the quality of life of people with intellectual disability and to fill the need for national unity and information.

The Council is the recognised national peak body with the single focus on intellectual disability, i.e., our actions and priorities centre on issues that affect the lives of people with intellectual disability and their families. Our mission is to work to make the Australian community one in which people with intellectual disability are involved and accepted as equal participating members.

NCID has over 5,000 members representing all 8 States and Territories. In addition to having people with disability on its Board, NCID receives policy advice from Our Voice. Our Voice is a committee the membership of which is exclusively people with intellectual disability representing all States and Territories.

Jobsupport

Jobsupport's mission is to place, train and maintain as many people with a significant intellectual disability as possible into quality jobs in the regular workforce that meet both their employment needs and the needs of the employer.

Jobsupport was established in 1986 and today support over 550 people with an intellectual disability in jobs throughout the Sydney metropolitan area. Jobsupport delivers its mission through two programs.

Jobsupport's Open Employment service places people with an intellectual disability into paid jobs in the regular workforce. The program is part of the Disability Employment Network and is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Jobsupport's Transition to Work service is called Community Work Options. Community Work Options gives school leavers with an intellectual disability extra help before they attempt paid employment, by providing them with successful work experience and by addressing issues that are preventing their acceptance by an open employment service. This Transition to Work service is funded by the NSW Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC).

This submission focuses on the transition from school to work for people with intellectual disability. We have developed a set of key considerations for the Social Issues Committee.

Some key considerations in the transition from school to work

1. A presumption of employability in the open labour market

1.1. We must presume that people with intellectual disability have the capacity to be employed in the open labour market. Expectations have profound implications. If we agree that *schools are time-limited means to ends*,¹ what we do now is heavily influenced by the *ends* we are seeking to achieve. If our expectation is open employment, we have the technology for instructing and supporting young people with intellectual disability to achieve this goal.

¹ Brown, L., Shiraga, B., & Kessler, K. (2006). The Quest for Ordinary Lives: The Integrated Post-School Vocational Functioning of 50 Workers With Significant Disabilities. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31, 2, 93-121.

2. The goal is open employment. Non-work support is supplementary to, not a replacement for, employment.

2.1. Like other western economies, having a job is considered to be a valued adult role providing income, dignity, social growth, and mental and physical health.²

2.2. People with intellectual disability are typically at great risk of being perceived as *unable to work* in open employment. A focus on work is not intended to minimise the importance of other adult roles, but rather to emphasise the substantial influence that work can have on social inclusion.

2.3. The broader goal of *community inclusion* involving home, recreation, art, sport, and relationships, is a genuine human need for people with intellectual disability to be fulfilled, as it is for any member of our community. However, these adult roles and activities should not be perceived as *alternatives* to work. They are important aspects of personal growth and community participation and should be seen as *supplementary* to the role of work, not a replacement.³

3. Parent-Teacher Partnerships

3.1. Parent involvement is a significant factor in the transition outcomes for students.⁴ Teachers are a critical component of a partnership with parents in the implementation and success of a school to work transition model.⁵

3.2. The research literature suggests that educators should begin a partnership with parents from the beginning of the transition process.⁶ Exposing parents to the research evidence of open employment for people with intellectual disability, including results by

² Wehman, P. (2006). *Life Beyond the Classroom. Transition Strategies for Young People with Disabilities*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 35.

See Luecking, R. G. (2009). *The Way to Work. How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in Transition*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 1 - 'Work is good!'

³ Sulewski, J. S., Butterworth, J., & Gilmore, D. (2008). Community Based Nonwork Supports: Findings from the Natural Survey of Day and Employment Programs for People With Developmental Disabilities, *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 46, 6, 456-467, December, 2008

⁴ Wehman, P. (2006). *Life Beyond the Classroom. Transition Strategies for Young People with Disabilities*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 24

⁵ White, J & Weiner, J. S. (2004). Influence of least restrictive environment and community based training on integrated employment outcomes for transitioning students with severe disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 21, 149-156

⁶ Luecking, R. G. (2009). *The Way to Work. How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in Transition*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 83 - 98

successful open employment services, and to meet other parents and people with intellectual disability who are examples of success, allow parents and students to have informed choices when setting goals for school to work transition.

3.3. People with intellectual disability and their families should have access to performance data on the outcome performance on school to work programs and Commonwealth open employment services in their region. This data should include past performance of services in terms of results for the placement, retention and ongoing support rates of people with intellectual disability in employment. This should also include qualitative data on the average wages and average weekly hours of work achieved for clients with intellectual disability.

3.4. This information should permit individuals and families to make an informed choice when selecting a service to assist them with a goal of employment.

3.5. We congratulate both the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for making performance data on Transition to Work services

http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/sp/delivering_disability_services/post_schools_programs/transition_to_work/outcomes_in_transition_to_work) and open employment services available

(<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES/PerfFramework/Pages/DESStarRatings.aspx>)

3.6. This data needs to be improved by providing outcome performance by student characteristics including primary disability. The Department of Education and Training should request this data to be made available to schools, students and families

3.7. It is legitimate for schools to provide this objective performance data to students and families so that they may make informed choices on future transition to work decisions.

3.8. This objective performance data should also assist schools to determine the quality of transition to work and open employment programs that they may want to collaborate with in the best interests of the students.

3.9. The performance outcomes of transition to work and open employment services can vary from as high as 70% to below 20% for people with intellectual disability.

4. Community Based Curriculum and Systematic instruction

4.1. A core feature of successful school to work transition programs is the practice of community-based instruction (CBI) ^{7,8}. CBI is about instruction in natural settings, such as restaurants, shopping complexes, recreation centres, work sites, and other age appropriate settings in the community.

4.2. CBI is not meant to replace education in terms of class-based curriculum, but rather to expand and complement this with instruction in community places outside the classroom.

4.3. CBI exposes students to a variety of experiences while building skills to participate in activities that are typical in their community. These experiences provide a rich environment in which to learn adaptive social and communication behaviour with members of the community.

4.4. Education in the classroom needs to be supplemented with community-based instruction outside the classroom and in particular, systematic instruction in community settings and workplaces. ^{9,10}

4.5. An important teaching component of community-based instruction is the systematic instruction of job skills. Systematic instruction is the key instructional technology which provides the foundation for assisting people with intellectual disability to work productively in the open labour market.

5. Vocational Education and Training Pathways

5.1. Vocational Education and Training pathways have been given a high priority in national employment policy. There are two important considerations to be taken into account with this pathway for people with intellectual disability.

5.2. People with significant intellectual disability (moderate levels of intellectual disability or IQ <60) rarely achieve open employment outcomes through this pathway. Instead,

⁷ Falvey, M. A. (1989). Community-Based Curriculum. Instructional Strategies for Students with Severe Handicaps. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 5 & 6

⁸ Wehman, P. (Ed.). (2006). *Life Beyond the Classroom. Transition Strategies for Young People with Disabilities*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 155-157

⁹ Brown, L., Farrington, K., Suomi, J., Ziegler, M. (1999), Work -wage relationships and individuals with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 13, 5-13

¹⁰ Wehman, P. (2006). *Life Beyond the Classroom. Transition Strategies for Young People with Disabilities*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 155-157 p. 429

the research points to the “place and train” model to be more effective. This involves finding a job and providing training on the job. The success of this model dominates the findings of the research.

5.3. There is a strong view by many that vocational education and training pathways offer people with mild or learning disability pathways to open employment. The evidence of this at the moment in our opinion is patchy and unclear. Successful VET models for people with mild/learning intellectual disability still rely on explicit assistance with job search, on the job training, and long-term ongoing support.

6. Work experience while still at secondary school

6.1. Students need to have increasing opportunities for work experiences throughout secondary schooling, which ultimately should be a major component of their final year of secondary school.

6.2. This will of course be guided by the goals and choices of the students and their families. The clear message from the research, however, is that an evolving focus upon employment during secondary school sets the foundation for the early development of skills and behaviours that are relevant for work roles after school.¹¹

6.3. Work experience, including career explorations, are important school to work activities that increase the likelihood of youth with disability to get and keep a job as adults.¹²

7. Service Collaboration and Cooperation

7.1. Effective transition planning and service provision depends on functional linkages between school and adult service agencies.¹³

7.2. The pathway from school to work crosses the boundaries of education and employment sectors. Open employment and adult agencies should be fundamental partners with schools and families in the planning and implementation of a school to work curriculum before graduation, and ongoing employment and adult support after graduation.

¹¹ Luecking, R. G. (2009). *The Way to Work. How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in Transition*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 2

¹² Luecking, R. G. (2009). *The Way to Work. How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in Transition*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 4

¹³ Wehman, P. (1988). *Transition From School To Work*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore. p. 97

7.3. An early and strong collaboration offers the opportunity for shared resources and specialist knowledge of employment assistance to be shared across the education and employment sectors.¹⁴

7.4. Schools should be actively developing school to work transition plans and activities in cooperation with open employment and transition to work services. The selection of services should be influenced by the data as outlined above.

8. Quality Open Employment Service

8.1. Quality open employment service is a critical element of an effective school to work transition model. Youth with intellectual disability require access to competent open employment assistance and should establish a connection with such a service before they leave school.

9. Eligibility Assessment

9.1. The assessment of intellectual disability should be based on the international definition - which requires an intellectual function test (i.e. IQ) and an adaptive behaviour assessment. This needs to take into account the suitability of the assessment for the child's age and cultural background.

9.2. That this testing be only used for eligibility purposes to obtain additional resources.

9.3. Using functional assessments for transition planning is encouraged, but we caution the use of these assessments for eligibility resourcing as research suggests that there is considerable variance of validity and reliability with such tests¹⁵.

¹⁴ Certo, N., Luecking, R. G., Courey, S., Brown, L., Murphy, S., & Mautz, D. (2008). Plugging the Policy Gap at the Point of Transition for Individuals with Severe Intellectual Disabilities: An argument for a Seamless Transition and Federal Entitlement to Long Term Support. *In press*

¹⁵ Determining Eligibility for Social Security Benefits. Committee on Disability Determination for Mental Retardation [intellectual disability] Daniel J. Reschly, Tracy G. Myers, and Christine R. Hartel, *Editors* Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education National Research Council NATIONAL ACADEMY PRESS Washington, D.C., 2002

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Inquiry. Should you require further information, please contact Paul Cain at NCID; or Phil Tuckerman at Jobsupport

Yours sincerely,

Paul Cain

Director of Research and Strategy