

The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act 2014: Students in Transition

What is WIOA?

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law in July 2014 reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and amending the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This piece of legislation represents a renewed commitment to the workforce development system and is designed to strengthen our nation's workforce to address the needs of current employees, jobseekers, and employers. The purpose of WIOA is to provide workforce activities to assist job seekers in accessing employment, education, training, and related supports, integrate and improve the service delivery to assist workers in achieving a family-sustaining wage, and ensure the workforce meets the skill requirements of employers to compete in the global economy.

What is Title IV of WIOA?

The focus of Title IV of the WIOA legislation is specifically on transition-related regulations for youth and students with disabilities. This provision includes a requirement that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies must set aside 15% of their federal funds to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities who are eligible **or potentially eligible** to receive VR services. Providing services to students who are potentially eligible to receive VR services is a shift from traditional VR practices.

Eligible Students under Pre-ETS

- Have a disability
- Qualify for and receive special education or related services under an IEP or 504 Plan
- Participate in secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program
- Are aged 14 to 22

Authorized Pre-ETS Activities

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) identifies mandated funding in five required service areas. In Virginia, these services are administered through the Department for Aging Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), and may be provided by DARS or DBVI transition counselors through specific programming.

Five Required Pre-ETS Activities

1. Job exploration counseling in a classroom or community setting
2. Work-based learning experiences that may include in-school and afterschool opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
5. Instruction in self-advocacy

How does Title IV of WIOA Impact Schools?

LEAs are still responsible for providing and paying for transition services or related services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) as required under IDEA for students with disabilities. The focus should be on ensuring that each student with a disability participates in career exploration and work opportunities while in an education program, and is well prepared to maintain competitive integrated employment as an adult.

To learn more about Pre-ETS services in Virginia, contact your local DARS or DBVI office.

DARS Toll Free Number: 1-800-552-5019

DBVI Toll Free Number: 1-800-622-2155