

History of Transition Programs with PARTNERS# from February 2007 to January 2017#

(#Jefferson County DD Program, DVR, School Districts, DDA & Supported Employment Agencies)

The Jefferson County Transition Network

A group called the Jefferson County Transition Network developed after a County Developmental Disability, (DD) sponsored meeting was held in February 2007 to discuss the low employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Jefferson County. During that meeting, it became apparent there was a need for more opportunities for students to learn job skills at school and to have real work experiences in the community for future vocational planning.

The Jefferson County Transition Network includes Chimacum School District representatives, Port Townsend School District representatives, Quilcene School District representatives, the Jefferson County Developmental Disabilities Program, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Work Source, Parents, Parent Coalition, Employment Service Agencies, continuing Education Programs and other Community Members. This group began meeting in 2007 and continues to meet in 2014, although with lesser participation.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Transition Grant

The Jefferson County Transition Grant process began in August of 2007 when we applied for a grant opportunity that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, (DVR) put out. We hoped the DVR grant would provide seed money to create additional vocational opportunities for students with disabilities. We hoped by blending resources; DVR grant money, County technical assistance/ training money, provider staff resources and School District funding we could establish a new Transition Program.

We did not receive seed money for a Transition Program, but received a contract with DVR for job development and coaching payments for any jobs that transpired through internships and DVR funded a Project SEARCH consultant from O'Neil and Associates to educate and develop internships at our Jefferson Healthcare Hospital.

The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Jobs by 21 Transition Partnership Project Grant

In the March of 2008, the Developmental Disabilities Administration, (DDA) put out a grant opportunity called the "Jobs to 21" Transition Partnership Project. The focus of this grant opportunity was to develop a collaborative Transition Program to support young adults with developmental disabilities to secure employment by age 21 and obtain positive post-school outcomes.

#This document is not meant to reflect all Transition Service Programs accomplished in Jefferson County during this time period. It is meant to reflect the Transition Service Programs and work done in partnership and collaboration with the County DD Program, School Districts, DVR, DDA and Supported Employment Agencies. Anna McEnergy/DD County Coordinator

The Jefferson County “Jobs to 21” grant application focused on creating a Project SEARCH High School Transition Program in our County. The Project Search model facilitates a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration and on-the-job-training and support. The main goal of this program is to provide real life work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills.

The outcome is successful transition from school to adult life, for students with developmental disabilities. We requested funding for two to three students who would be 21 years of age by June of 2009 but said we would like to have two other students who were not 20 also join the program.

As we stated in our first grant application with DVR, we continued to see this grant as a catalyst of change. Since the student population has decreased, it made sense for three Special Education Departments to join forces and collaborate to create a Jefferson County Special Education Consortium for transition.

The County DD Coordinator, Anna Mc Enery, in collaboration with the Special Education Departments applied for and was awarded \$15,000 of grant funding for the “Jobs to 21” Transition Partnership Project for Jefferson County.

Update on Project SEARCH

Our Project SEARCH consultant from O’Neil and Associates, the Chimacum Special Ed. Director and the DD Coordinator had a number of meetings with the Volunteer Coordinator for the Hospital and with the Human Resource Manager to gain support to create a Project SEARCH Program at the Jefferson Healthcare Hospital.

Port Townsend School District, (PTSD) could put \$5,000 towards the program but would need to have a meeting with the parents of transition students for the Project SEARCH Program to make sure they wanted to participate. The meeting was set with a request that the DD Coordinator attend. At that, meeting parents were incredibly enthusiastic about Project Search and so PTSD was officially on board.

In late October of 2008, the County DD Program sent out a Request for Proposal for an Employment Provider to work with transition students at the hospital Project SEARCH site with funding from the following sources: \$15,000 in grant funding from the County DD Program, \$5,000 from Port Townsend School District and \$10,000 from Chimacum School District for a total of \$30,000. (Quilcene School District had spoken about sending a student with an aide, as they were not able to financially participate).

Members of the RFP Review Committee: LaVonne Grimes, Chimacum Special Education Director, Carl Hanson, DD Advisory Board Co-Chair, Lesly Sheinbaum, DD Advisory Board Co-Chair & Anna Mc Enery, DD Coordinator met and reviewed the two proposals that were received for the Project SEARCH Program. After the Provider interviews, committee deliberation and points for each Provider were totaled, Skookum was chosen as the Employment Agency for the new Project SEARCH Program.

In late November, two staff from Skookum, the Project SEARCH consultant and the DD Coordinator met to go over the Project SEARCH goals and objectives. Then a meeting with the Special Education Directors from Port Townsend and Chimacum on next steps while reviewing a Memorandum of Understanding for the Transition Program; finally a meeting with parents of the Project SEARCH participants to give an overview of the Program and to answer questions.

The next day Skookum staff, the Project SEARCH consultant and the DD Coordinator met with the Volunteer Coordinator at Jefferson Health Care to discuss & finalize additional details of the Project SEARCH Program.

Goals and Outcomes:

- Project SEARCH proved to be an effective and exceptional off-campus transition program for students. It was also a positive challenge for those agencies working together to blend services. Space was limited and there was no designated space for class type activities.

2009-2010 School Year

- Another Request for Proposal (RFP) was created to continue the transition program using the Project SEARCH model. The RFP Review Committee interviewed both Providers, deliberated and totaled points for each Provider; this time Concerned Citizens, (with staff Kirsten Bryant as the Project SEARCH Coordinator & Linda Middleton Concerned Citizens, Executive Director) was selected to continue the Project SEARCH model. This program was operated at the hospital and served four students who rotated through different internship positions at the hospital.

2010-2011 School Year

- Concerned Citizens continued the Project SEARCH program at the hospital. Again, four students were served. This project was very successful in terms of vocational training, by providing real life work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills.
- There continued to be challenges as the hospital, the changes in patient volume, decreased the amount of work available and in turn reduced the number of rotations students, were offered.
- A new Vocational Program called Project TRANSITION was created by the Port Townsend Special Ed Director and the Jefferson County DD Coordinator.
- A Request for Qualifications, (RFQ) was created for Project TRANSITION. The goal of this Program was to qualify designated Employment Specialists who worked under a Supported Employment Agency. The staff then provided employment services and functional vocational assessments for up to nine, (9) Transition Students with mild, moderate to severe disabilities in Jefferson County. Both Supported Employment Agencies, Concerned Citizens & Skookum were qualified under the RFQ.
- Project TRANSITION was designated for Transition Students with Disabilities, (16-21 years of age) who were not a part of Project SEARCH. This was yet another example of innovative partnerships between the Special Education Departments, the Jefferson County DD Program and Supported Employment Agencies.

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2011-2012 School Year

- Concerned Citizens continued with Project SEARCH serving two students at the hospital. One student was placed in the laundry and the other on the Environmental Services team.
- A new project that was part of the Transition Network 5 year plan was begun. The Transition Academy (with Susan Prince as the Coordinator), was a collaborative effort between three school districts: Chimacum, Port Townsend and Quilcene, the Jefferson County DD Program and Supported Employment Agencies, Concerned Citizens and Skookum.

2011-2012 School Year-Continued

- This model was off campus and housed in a rental house in Port Townsend with a high rate of success for the students. Concerned Citizens was the lead but worked in collaboration with school district aids, and a staff from Skookum in this setting to provide many experiences for kids. Cooking, cleaning, household budgeting, working and volunteering in the community were some of the life skills experiences provided. It also became clear that case management was a part of the job descriptions, signing students up for Social Security, helping with homelessness, accessing food stamps were all a part of what these students needed to be successful.
- Port Townsend School District was the contracting agency and provided case management while Chimacum and Quilcene bought slots with some of their special education funding for their student participants. Seven, (7) students attended four days per week; five of those students experienced developmental disabilities; two had emotional and behavioral disorders. Four were from Port Townsend, one from Quilcene and two from Chimacum. This program became highly sought after by parents and school. At the end of the year, three students graduated with high school diplomas, and all students successfully completed their academics, gained experience in life skills, and had volunteered at multiple sites and positions.
- **What we learned:** We learned with the Transition Academy that the cost of the building rent and the fact that we shared it with the landlords after school hours complicated the whole environment. Collaboration is always difficult with too many cooks in the kitchen. Project SEARCH was a collaborative, community success, with the students acquiring competitive, marketable and transferable skills to enable them to apply for a related employment in the community.
- It was challenging to meet the standards of the Project SEARCH program, and it was difficult to work inside another organization melding the rules of the hospital, and Developmental Disabilities.
- The **Outcomes:** Juvenile diversion staff and counselors, mental health counselors, school district personnel, teachers, parents, community members, businesses, and other stakeholders sung the praises of what was happening at the Transition Academy. Students were successful, they were graduating, and many with jobs, their self- esteem had improved. They were on their way to successfully enter an adult world with adult challenges with some needed skills and knowledge to make the transition to adulthood. Two students participated in the graduation walk ceremony with their high school class, but came back to the Transition Academy for their transition years the next year. One student graduated after turning 21.

2012-2013 School Year

- Concerned Citizens rented more office space in their complex and remodeled it to provide a service that was a little more cost effective and less difficult to manage because it was not shared.
- Transition Academy was born through trial and error when dreamers thought outside the box on how to change student outcomes, but when the dreamers move on the dream changes. This was true this year as key positions in Port Townsend, and the student eligibility criteria changed the dream had to be redefined, calling for some creative problem solving.

2012-2013 School Year-Continued

- In this model the location was better, the age group changed from 18 to 21 to 16 to 21, admission criteria expanded to include a more diverse group of students. Typically those who struggled with the traditional educational setting.
- Project SEARCH was folded into the Transition Academy for this school year with two students continuing in their placement at the hospital. Both students in the project were hired into their positions by the end of the school year.
- In addition to the two students continuing at the hospital, six students were in the full day, five day per week program, six students were placed part time at the Transition Academy and part time at school. Most part time students attended three days per week. Concerned Citizens served 13 students.
- The makeup of the group of the 2012-13 school year was largely students who experience behavioral and emotional disorders. Some of the students had been expelled or had legal problems in their regular school, but this was a very successful year at the Academy, attendance and participation was high. Students reported a high level of satisfaction with their services. Concerned Citizens got very positive feedback from the Juvenile Probation Officers, and the Juvenile Court Judge.
- Two students with developmental disabilities were in their second year at the Academy. Initially, there was concern about how these groups would interact, but the results were very positive.
- **What we learned:** That the program model worked very well and addressed students' needs in a flexible way that encouraged learning and growth. That it is important to be flexible, change can be good, but change is hard. When new partners come in change needs to be very thoughtful and history needs to be embraced.
- **Outcomes:**
 - All six students who wished to be employed graduated with job placements or summer jobs. Three students graduated with volunteer placements.
 - Concerned Citizens was able to help facilitate the move of one student into her own apartment.
 - This school year students with Transition Academy staff worked in more 30 host job sites each week and provided more than 1,000 hours of volunteer labor to our community.
 - Concerned Citizens was awarded a used Wheelchair Lift Van by Jefferson Transit that seats 11 people in addition to two wheelchairs.
 - Undocumented successes were seen in students' smiles, communication, and eye contact, initiating conversations, feeling good about themselves and showing it. This was a very productive year.

2013-2014 School Year

- By the end of the previous school year, another change was taking place causing yet another change for us all. The visionaries were trying to preserve the stability of the program by contracting with the Educational School District (ESD) 114 to hold the contract. There was a decision to have a teacher on site to provide the educational components, allowing students to attend a full time off campus program.
- The goal was to serve 20 students from three districts, with a full time teacher on site. The ESD hired a teacher and we were ready to go. We had 15 students from Port Townsend with an expected 3-5 additional students from Chimacum. Concerned Citizens had rented and remodeled another room in their complex to house the academic component.
- As with all new things, it was difficult to get everything in place as quickly as we needed it. This caused difficulty in scheduling and implementing the academic component
- Although the startup was slow and difficult, the transition component continued to be successful and 15 students were working in 30 locations in work crews that allowed students to move in and out of work groups depending on their academic needs.
- Quilcene was excited to join us after students and principal visited, we would soon have 18 students, close to our goal of 20.
- In December, the ESD did an assessment of the educational component of the Academy and found serious deficiencies. The decision was made by the ESD and Port Townsend School district that the educational needs of students could not be met at this location. The Transition Academy was closed at the end of the semester.
- **What we learned:** When new programs are set up, they have to have all of the necessary materials before the students arrive. If it isn't broken, don't fix it. *As with all things, visions are developed over time, with visionaries who have a dream and work hard to make that dream come to fruition. When the people with a vision leave, sometimes the vision gets broken.*

Outcomes:

In closing, it took seven long years, (from 2007 to 2014) and a team of innovative forward thinking people that believed students with disabilities deserved community based vocational opportunities. As of January 2014, we have come full circle and are back to where we started, with no Project SEARCH or Transition Academy in Jefferson County.

In the very near future, it is our hope that by re-blending resources; DVR funding, grant money, County technical assistance/training money, Provider Staff resources and School District funding we can re-establish a Countywide Vocational Program for Students with Developmental & other Disabilities receiving Special Education Services.

Written by: Anna Mc Enery, Linda Middleton and Susan Prince

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR JEFFERSON COUNTY TRANSITION HISTORY from 2014 to 2017

Written by Taylor Webster

2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

* Anna McEnery and Patrick Kane spent the year discussing effective Transition Programs and brainstorming how to implement them.

2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR

* Anna McEnery and Patrick Kane continued the discussion about effective Transition Programs.

* Skookum held a contract with Port Townsend School District to serve 3 students for 2 hours per week each to do functional assessments.

* In the spring, Anna proposed the idea of using Fort Worden as a potential site for a Project Search-based Model that was unique to the Fort. Anna contracted with Jennifer White, a consultant to help with the development of the program.

* In the summer, ACE-IT was born, with the help of Jennifer White, consultant that was hired by the Public Health, County DD Program. Over 100 hours were spent during the summer to develop the program within the host business - Fort Worden - and to develop a set of rotating positions for four(4) students with developmental disabilities.

* Handbooks, policies, and procedures, performance reviews, Volunteer Internship Agreements, mock-interview evaluations, and training material for staff on how to work with co-workers with developmental disabilities was created for the 2016-2017 ACE-IT Transition Program.

2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR

* The ACE-IT Program served 4 students for 20 hours per week at Fort Worden. Some students went straight to the Fort and some came from the High School. The students received an hour of Employ-ability Skills Training where they were able to interview with Fort Worden staff, create resumes, send emails to their bosses, learn about time management, accepting criticism, health and safety, etc. They had 2-3 work shifts per day in various departments of Fort Worden. The students were naturally supported by the FW staff and experiencing individualized positions, which replicates the adult Supported Employment Program.

* Port Townsend School District also contracted with ACE-IT to provide Functional Assessments for 4 Seniors with Developmental Disabilities. Each student received service for 2 hours per week at local businesses.

* In May of 2017, the students hosted an Open House. Community members, parents, Fort Worden staff and board members, DD Advisory Board Members, all attended. The students presented their work on poster boards and Fort Worden staff spoke to their successes and how the ACE-IT Program has impacted their staff and community awareness. The story was covered by the Port Townsend Leader which printed the next week with a story and pictures of the students working.

* **WHAT WE LEARNED:** The Project Search based model worked well for Fort Worden and the students. They had the opportunity to thrive in an environment that considered them as interns, not adults. The Job Development piece was much more time-consuming than the contract allowed for. Students with higher needs need to have one-on-one support in this model since job coaches are split between students with moderate disabilities and checking in, as opposed to full-time support. While working within a host business, the needs and schedules of the business have to be a top priority. Without the business hosting, there is no program.

* **OUTCOMES:** Five students were hired for Paid Summer Positions. All received letters of recommendations from their Supervisors at Fort Worden. DSHS Case Managers, the DD County Coordinator & DD Advisory Board, Fort Worden staff, parents, and community members expressed their gratitude for the program and acknowledged the students success, as well as the program's. The ACE-IT Program had been a positive and progressive experience for all involved.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT PROPOSAL AND COST

The 2016-2017 proposal was "not to exceed" \$26,000 for four(4) students, each at 20 hrs a week at Fort Worden. We also had another contract in 2016-2017 to serve another four(4) students, who were still Seniors, by providing assessments for 2 hrs per week each, for a total cost of \$7,000. The total that was spent in 2016-2017 for Transition Services was \$33,000 for four(4) 20 hr/week students and four(4) 2 hr/week students.

The proposal for 2017-2018 was to serve *two groups of 4 students - 8 students total in the off-campus program ACE-IT*. In the "Considerations" section (of the proposal to PT Special Education Program), it outlines why it was necessary to have two groups of students- the requirement to provide quality, individualized positions for each student and the business needs of Fort Worden. The Fort was not able to provide 8 positions at one time.

Of the 8 students who were going to participate in the ACE-IT Program, two students had high needs and required 1-1 support when on the job. This was a realization and challenge that the ACE-IT program had in the 1st year. Throughout the year, a discussion ensued with the PT Special Ed Dept. about the fact that the two students with high needs would need additional support at Fort Worden, beginning in the Fall of 2017. The 2017-2018 proposal included a 2hr per day extra Job Coach to support them at much lower rate.

The 2017-2018 proposal was \$50,350 because the program was doubling in size and included two students with high needs. The proposal only increased by 1/2 (an increase of \$17,000) from the previous year - not the claimed "tripled". If the proposal would have tripled it would have been "\$99,000". Basically, the increase to serve twice the amount of students and provide more support was only an \$17,000 increase from the previous year.

Running a program of this caliber on the budget proposed should be considered economical for the PT School District because they do not have a paid "Transition Coordinator" on staff. (I have read that this is a requirement for Schools that have Transition Aged students.)

If we would have known in March – that PTSD was planning to not increase the budget, we could have tried to raise money through fundraising or grant-writing and still have been able to serve all students in the ACE-IT Program.

I hope this information is useful, while we are continuing to advocate for Transition Students and their families.

Written by Taylor Webster

(Please contact Anna McEnery if you have comments or would like to join the Transition Network @ amcenery@co.jefferson.wa.us or at 385-9410).