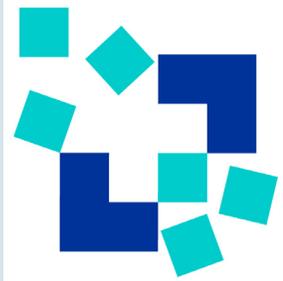


# Improving Transition Outcomes

An Innovative State Alignment Grant for Improving Transition Outcomes  
for Youth with Disabilities Through the Use of Intermediaries

## First Year Progress



A Governance Group of state agencies, collaborating to improve employment outcomes for Iowans with disabilities, received grant funding from the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through the use of local intermediaries.

With Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services taking the lead, the Department for the Blind, Department of Education, Department of Human Rights Division of Persons with Disabilities, Department of Human Services, Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council and Iowa Workforce Development monitor this effort. Operating as Improving Transition Outcomes (ITO), this project is charged with 1) developing a State Transition Plan, 2) conducting statewide Resource Mapping, 3) sponsoring local demonstrations and 4) sustaining these accomplishments. First year highlights show that VR is a critical partner.

## Community Demonstrations

In Council Bluffs, Counselor Lisa Chellew partnered with a local high school teacher, in a Train-the-Trainer approach, to team-teach Job Seeking Skills. The value of this partnership was demonstrated by other teachers incorporating this unit into their curriculum and the successful, Status 26 closure, of a client who was offered a job after completing the Job Seeking Skills unit.

In Hawarden, Counselor Randy Van Zee partnered with West Sioux Community School stakeholders to implement a curriculum based on the Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation model. Randy's expertise has been invaluable and school referrals to VR have significantly increased.

In Henry County, VR Supervisor Ruth Allison and VR Counselor Christian Gapen have been instrumental in securing connections with the local schools. Ruth assisted with gathering and organizing information from youth, families and educators for a "Sharing Key Discoveries" meeting attended by over 30 area stakeholders.

*VR is a critical partner in the success of each local demonstration*

## Success Highlights

Council Bluffs successfully: 1) Implemented E-Mentoring between more than thirty-five youth from six area high schools and employees from seven local employers 2) Identified job shadow and work experience opportunities 3) Recruited six youth to participate in the local Leadership Camp.

Hawarden successfully: 1) Implemented the C.A.S.E. curriculum based on Boston University's Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation 2) Opened the "Falcon Joe" coffee shop to provide entrepreneurial experience for youth 3) Secured businesses for classroom presentations, job shadows and work experiences.

*Community specific interventions with documented success*

Henry County successfully: 1) Conducted focus groups with youth and families and individual interviews with youth to identify "what is and isn't working with transition" 2) Conducted a "Sharing Key Discoveries" meeting with over 30 local stakeholders developing a Strategic Plan 3) Established a Youth Advisory Group of ten students with disabilities.

## Strengths & Challenges

Council Bluffs has expertise in mentoring and connecting employers and schools; they want more youth/family involvement and to strengthen their connection with the schools.



*A challenge for one community can be met with expertise from another*

West Sioux has a strong school connection, expertise in youth participation, vocational curriculum and locally grown entrepreneurship; they want to implement mentoring.

Henry County has expertise in conducting focus groups with youth and families; they want to implement vocational exploration and mentoring.

The strengths of one community provide a resource for another. By sharing "how we did it," communities across the State of Iowa will develop and implement strategies specific to their local needs. In this manner Iowa will achieve healthy sharing, learning, recreation, goal-setting and problem-solving, not only for youth with disabilities but for all youth.