



Memo

Date: October 2020

To: All Minnesota School Districts and Charter Schools

From:

- Robyn Widley, Director of Special Education, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)
- Dee Torgerson, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
- Natasha Jerde, Director of State Services for the Blind (SSB)

RE: The partnership between Education and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies in serving youth with disabilities

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (Pub. L. 113-128) created a new vision for how America prepares an educated and skilled workforce that expands opportunity for workers and employers. WIOA calls for Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and State Services for the Blind (SSB), in collaboration with local educational agencies, to ensure that Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are available statewide to all students with disabilities who are ages 14 through 21.

The five [Pre-ETS services](#) are:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary educational programs
- Workplace readiness training
- Instruction in self-advocacy

Memorandum of Understanding

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) are providing guidance and resources for schools and VRS and SSB staff to help coordinate a system of career supports for students with disabilities. In June 2020 we re-committed our dedication to these efforts through an updated [Memorandum of Understanding](#).

Referring Students for Pre-ETS and other VR Services

- Students who are Blind, DeafBlind, or Low Vision should be referred to [Sheila Koenig](#) at SSB.
- All other students with disabilities should be referred to a [VRS staff person assigned to your school](#).

Resources

We are happy to announce a new [planning guide](#) to assist schools and VRS/SSB to re-initiate partnerships for the 2020-21 school year.

There are also two new short videos:

- One for [school staff](#) that illustrates the benefits of school and VRS collaboration
- One for [students/families](#) that describes VRS Student Career Services

SSB also has [videos for students, parents, and teachers](#).

Partnerships

With the challenges that COVID-19 poses, VRS and SSB rely on schools to assist in making virtual connections with students. We hope that high schools and VRS and SSB staff can connect and support each other in finding the best ways to serve students with disabilities and ensure that they are prepared for postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment.