Five state agency practitioners presented a panel about Youth-Focused Initiatives. This panel presentation was followed by small and large group discussions, and report-outs about emerging practices and recommendations to the field.

**Emerging Practices**

» **Partner with consumer organizations.** South Carolina Blind is contracting with two Independent Living Centers and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of South Carolina to provide Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services), including self-advocacy, work readiness, college tours, career exploration, and work-based learning. Nebraska Blind contracted with NFB to provide career mentoring.

» **Partner with general VR agency to provide Pre-ETS services.** There are only 525 students in Kentucky who are blind/visually impaired (BVI), so Kentucky Blind partnered with the general VR agency to spend the required services.

» **Use interns/practicum students to provide services.** University of Kentucky students provide work experiences to Pre-ETS students and receive internship/practicum credit.

» **Train Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) on working with BVI students.** Pennsylvania Combined includes this training in their CRP contracts.

» **Provide social skills training as part of Pre-ETS.** Nebraska Blind, Kentucky Blind, and Idaho Blind all provide specific training on basic social skills.

» **Use certified teachers to provide Pre-ETS.** Missouri VR contracts with the University of Missouri to provide Pre-ETS; they hire certified teachers to provide services after school and during the summer. Alaska VR has a similar program. Pennsylvania VR pays for teachers to participate in their summer programs for BVI youth.

» **Educate Workforce Development Boards and One-Stops about the capabilities and needs of BVI students.** Michigan Blind uses One-Stop business connections to do mock interviews and coaching.

» **Offer a Deaf-Blind expanded core curriculum week.** Kentucky VR collaborated with the University of Kentucky to host a summer program for Deaf-Blind youth. Students who graduate from the program become peer mentors to new students.

**Recommendations for the Field**

» **Connect with other WIOA partners** to access resources for summer work programs, internships, etc. developed for all job seekers.

» **Market summer opportunities as early as possible.** Students and families need time to complete paperwork and work around other summer activities like vacations.

» **Collaborate with schools, universities, and other partners.** At the same time, it’s important to clarify VR and school system roles.

» **Advocate for Teachers for the Visually Impaired to be trained in employment and WIOA issues.**

» **Shift the focus from college degree programs to include technical training as well.**

» **Use progressive employment approaches like informational interviews and job shadowing to show employers what BVI students can do.**

» **Require students to interview** for summer jobs/internships, even if the job has been set aside for them.

» **Use BVI professionals as instructors/mentors.** Connect students with people who are employed in their fields of interest.

» **Avoid doing things for students that they could learn to do for themselves.**

» **Offer emotional skills and financial literacy training** as part of Pre-ETS.

» **Give opportunities for students to meet peers from other communities.** Sometimes they are the only BVI student in their local community and school.

**Panelists**

REBECCA BATES
South Carolina Blind: summer teen programs and student internships

CAROL JENKINS
Nebraska Blind: initiatives for students and youth with disabilities

SHIRLEY ROBINSON
Georgia VR Agency: partnership with consumer groups to provide transition services

CORA MCNABB
Kentucky Office for the Blind: collaborative efforts in summer work programs, STEM camps, post-secondary education programs

JOE STRECHAY
Pennsylvania OVR: summer programs, STEM events, and partnerships
Funder information

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