

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
*Supporting the Governor's Initiatives for System-wide Reform:
Getting Results for All Students*

SPECIAL EDUCATION PERFORMANCE GRANT
*Transition From School to Community-Based Employment for
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

I. PURPOSE OF TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO COMMUNITY-BASED EMPLOYMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS GRANT

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education is requesting proposals from Local Education Agencies interested in establishing or expanding programming efforts for transition from school to community-based competitive employment for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders for the 2008-2009 academic year.

The purpose of the **Transition from School to Community-Based Employment for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders Grant** is to:

- (1) Establish or expand the programming of transition from school to community-based competitive employment for students in Pennsylvania with Autism Spectrum Disorders who have a postsecondary goal of employment.
- (2) Bring together youth and families, educational, agency, and business partners to develop and implement systematic career development strategies, with a strong emphasis on transition and career assessment specific to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders with a goal of community-based competitive employment.

II. APPLICATION CRITERIA AND GRANT PRIORITIES

A. ELIGIBILITY

Local Education Agencies - including school districts, intermediate units, approved private schools and charter schools - are eligible to apply. Grant monies will be awarded to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that have formally linked or, through the proposal, demonstrate that they will link with parents/parent group(s)/parent organization(s), the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation District Office, community business(es), and as appropriate the Mental Retardation County Office and/or the Mental Health County Office in their geographically-defined service delivery area. The funding available to each successful grant applicant involves up to \$45,000 for the first year (September, 2008 through June, 2009) with the possibility of additional funding the second year. Whereas, additional funding is contingent, in part, on successful progress in the goals agreed upon at the time of the award. The grant proposal must reflect and explicitly document, an establishment or expansion or of services over and beyond existing services.

B. ASSURANCES

Local Education Agencies must agree to the following assurances to ensure quality and fidelity to the state purpose of the performance grant.

- Assurance that all activities and expenditures of funds conducted in association with the program are in direct compliance with the provisions of the funding authorities.
- Assurance that the reporting requirement outlined in the application package will be submitted in a timely manner.

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- Assurance that program staff will participate in all required PaTTAN/PDE training and technical assistance activities.
- Assurance that collaboration with appropriate partners to strengthen and extend impact will be a priority of the project.

C. GRANT PRIORITIES

The following four (4) essential program goals must be addressed in the grant application.

- 1. Identify students who will be targeted for this grant:** Targeted students need to be identified as having an Autism Spectrum Disorder and have a postsecondary goal of employment.
- 2. Develop a systematic career development implementation plan:** The grantee must establish or expand a systematic career development implementation plan within the first 3 months of the grant period. The plan will need to include the following components.
 - a) A comprehensive autism assessment for intervention planning transition and career assessment.

Definition: The process of collecting data on the individual's needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, personal, and social environments. Assessment data serve as the common thread in the transition process and forms the basis for defining goals and services. Both informal and formal assessment information should assist in identifying appropriate work experiences and/or courses of study for students. A thorough job analysis must be completed when establishing community-based instructional programming.

- b) A continuum of evidence based instruction for individuals with Autism, related to establishing and strengthening skills that will have the greatest utility and generality in the work and community settings.
Instruction needs include work-related social skills, communication, self and behavioral regulation training.

Definition: School-Based Programming addresses the needs of students prior to their engagement in community-based employment and is essential to their success in the workplace. Effective school-based programming includes evidence based instruction in all skill domain areas across people, places and environments to promote: a) generalization of skills and independence on the job, b) effective communication and interaction with employers and colleagues, c) safe behavioral regulation in a variety of situations, and d) the tools to self-advocate to have needs met.

Whereas, Community-Based Instructional Programming is relevant to the students' strengths and interests as they relate to the requirements of the workplace. Special emphasis should be placed on assessing the environmental sensory, social, communication, and behavioral regulation demands as they relate to each individual's unique profile of abilities and needs.

- c) A plan for business, agencies and family/caregiver partnerships.

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Definition: Business/Agency Partnerships are between the local education agency and one or more business/agency partners with the intent to support community-based employment for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The partnership includes provision for providing the partners with autism awareness training, if applicable.

Definition: Family/Caregiver Partnerships support family/caregiver participation in the transition process by providing a variety of materials, opportunities, and outreach programs to strengthen the partner's understanding and participation in the process.

- 3. Engage Targeted Students:** All identified students must be engaged in the systematic career development plan, including active engagement in community-based instructional programming using evidence-based instruction throughout the majority of the grant period.
- 4. Collection of student data:** All targeted students must have a portfolio representing their experience(s) that includes evidence of data collected during the grant period.

D. ADDITIONAL GRANT REQUIREMENTS

Beyond the priorities delineated in section C, funded projects also must demonstrate a commitment to the following requirements through explicit objectives and/or activities written into the grant proposal.

1. Collect, share, and report efficacy and outcome data. Instructional adjustments within the school and community-based settings must be based on progress monitoring and regular data analysis.
2. Submit quarterly reports and a summative annual report on specified activities and budget expenditures in a format to be provided.
3. Develop family and staff training and technical assistance plans for agency, business, educational, and support personnel, (i.e. all staff across agencies through co-training arrangements).
4. Agree to disseminate materials and effective programs/practices through publications and trainings as requested by PDE.

E. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Grant awardees will receive support as follows:

- Technical assistance provided by PaTTAN and Intermediate Unit Training and Consultation System (TaCS) personnel.
- Technical assistance and networking opportunities supporting:
 - Initial grant application training on required grant elements
 - PaTTAN and PDE trainings and/or meetings, 5 minimum, designed to provide support for funded project priorities
 - Two (2) onsite visits with PaTTAN and Intermediate Unit Training and Consultation System staff (TaCS)
 - Other, as determined by the need of the grantee