

Southern Tier



Steps to Success!

For Students with Disabilities

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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Questions or comments:

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VESID's Eligibility Criteria

- * Individual must have a permanent, documented disability
- * The disability must pose an impediment to employment
- * Individual must require services to successfully enter and maintain employment
- * Individual must be able to benefit from services

The State Education Department does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, race, gender, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or sexual orientation in its recruitment, educational programs, services and activities.

She's Sorting it All Out!

Amanda Tharratt was referred to VESID in her senior year by the Transition Coordinator of the Broome-Tioga BOCES Oak Tree Program.

Amanda, who has Asperger's Syndrome, was a well-rounded, active student. She was a volunteer with the Animal Care Council, and worked in the school library sorting and shelving books. She was also active in her community, speaking to various service organizations, agencies and school districts, including Broome Community College, about autism and offering suggestions about what helps and what hinders those who are autistic.

Amanda's VESID counselor worked with Amanda to identify a supported employment program that would meet her needs. Amanda was referred to Community Options in Binghamton, which helped her plan for employment after graduation. With the help of a job coach, Amanda was hired and trained as a file clerk for the radiology department at Wilson General Medical Center in Johnson City. Amanda loves her job, and her employer is very pleased with her performance. Amanda's coworkers are very supportive, and recently threw a 20th birthday party for her at work, complete with decorations and presents.

Amanda's interest in sorting things is put to good use in her position at Wilson. She has made friends among her coworkers, and now needs minimal contact with her Community Options job coach. Thanks to the partnership between BOCES, VESID, and Community Options, Amanda was able to successfully "sort her way through" the transition from school to work, and is successfully balancing her job, her community work, and her leisure time.



April is Autism Awareness Month

Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) is a neurological disorder that affects a child's ability to communicate, understand language, play, and relate to others. PDD represents a distinct category of developmental disabilities that share many of the same characteristics.

Some or all of the following characteristics may be observed in mild to severe forms:

- Communication problems (e.g., using and understanding language);
- Difficulty relating to people, objects, and events;
- Unusual play with toys and other objects;
- Difficulty with changes in routine or familiar surroundings; and
- Repetitive body movements or behavior patterns.

Children with autism or PDD vary widely in abilities, intelligence, and behaviors. Some children do not speak; others have language that often includes repeated phrases or conversations. Children with more advanced language skills tend to use a small range of topics and have difficulty with abstract concepts. Repetitive play skills, a limited range of interests, and impaired social skills are generally evident as well. Unusual responses to sensory information—for example, loud noises, lights, certain textures of food or fabrics—are also common.

From National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), www.nichcy.org

Southern Tier VESID Staff Corner...

Cynthia Singer will be joining the Elmira office as a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in March. Cynthia comes to us from the Utica District Office, where she was a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for over 15 years. Welcome Cindy!





A Resource for Accommodations

The Job Accommodation Network is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy

of the U.S. Department of Labor. It is a wonderful resource for students, teachers, employers, and employees, and others who are seeking information on how to accommodate a task for a person with a disability, whether it involves a physical or a mental impairment.

JAN's website, www.jan.wvu.edu, encourages self-directed research by providing a searchable online accommodation resource (soar). This part of the website also provides examples of actual scenarios JAN has been presented and the recommended accommodation and cost. This can be especially helpful for someone preparing for a job interview who wants to know what solutions may be available to accommodate a work task.

Following are some of the actual scenarios

presented to JAN regarding individuals with autism:

- An applicant with Asperger Syndrome is applying for a research position with a chemical company. He has a verbal communication deficit, though can communicate properly through handwriting and by email. The employer wants to provide accommodations during the first stage interview, which involves answering questions from a three-person search committee. JAN suggested providing the questions in advance and allowing the applicant to furnish written responses during the interview. Approximate accommodation cost is \$0.
- A kitchen worker with autism has difficulty controlling emotions at work when his routines or job tasks are changed. JAN suggested providing employee with a picture chart, which would identify all tasks to be completed in a week. Meet with the employee daily or weekly to remind the employee of upcoming tasks or changes in routine, so he will not become anxious or upset. Approximate accommodation cost is \$0.
- A social worker with Asperger Syndrome works for a group home. He is extremely disorganized, and often comes to work unprepared. JAN suggested making a list of job-essential items (keys, cell-phone, calculator, day-planner, and roster) for the employee to tape inside his book bag. The employee can review the list prior to leaving for work, to make sure he has the items he will need to perform his job tasks. Approximate accommodation cost is \$5.
- A cleaning staff person with Asperger Syndrome was not cleaning to quality standards. JAN suggested using a job coach to model skills and techniques for cleaning. JAN also suggested using a multi-set alarm watch to help the employee budget time, allowing herself enough time to complete each task to the employer's standards. Approximate accommodation cost is under \$35.

To contact the Job Accommodation Network, call 1-800-526-7234, 1-877-781-9403 (TTY) or email them at jan@jan.wvu.edu.



By Diane Marshall, MTP Coordinator
GST BOCES

Our region was notified last spring that we have been awarded 7 of 60 Model Transition Program grants statewide.

Locally, the Greater Southern Tier BOCES (GST) will coordinate four of the five projects that encompass all 21 local component districts. GST is the only BOCES region in the New York State that has their entire region receiving the benefits of this grant. Elmira was also awarded an MTP grant for its two high schools, Elmira Free Academy and Southside.

The Ithaca City school district and a group of five schools headed by Lansing school district were awarded the other two MTP projects in the region.

The seven MTP grants will bring in excess of 4 million dollars into the GST region over the next 3.5 years. These funds are earmarked to improve transition services to students with disabilities and to better prepare them for referral to Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), ultimately resulting in more students with disabilities becoming successfully employed in our region.

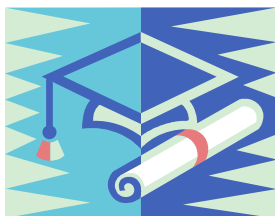
VESID has also awarded a

contract to Cornell University to conduct the research and a contract to the University at Buffalo to provide training to the sixty grants statewide.

GST BOCES is proud to have the support of our partnering agencies including The CSS Workforce New York, Corning Community College, Alfred State College, AIM Independent Living Center, Allegany ARC, Chemung ARC, Steuben ARC and Schuyler ARC.

Since initiation, the MTP has supported assessments, job shadowing, job coaching, work experience, career fairs, college experiences, soft skills trainings, collaborations such as the Transition Support Group (TSG) and so much more.

We are anxious to showcase the best practices we presently support (Unique Programming, Parent Participation, Work Experiences and College Training), develop additional practices to address gaps and with the tremendous influx of additional fiscal and human resources to this region, substantially increase successful transitions of our high school students with disabilities.



Did You Know?

VESID can pay for up to \$1,100 per year for books/supplies for college students, regardless of family income?

Services for students with learning disabilities, such as readers and notetakers, as well as interpreter services for students with hearing impairments, also can be provided regardless of income.



Check out our website at www.vesid.nysed.gov/southerntier