NEW YORK STATE | Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

WILLOW BAER
Commissioner

Dear Director of Special Education and/or Committee on Special Education (CSE) Chairperson:

New York State schools offer many supports and services to students with developmental disabilities including helping young adults and their families plan for their future. The NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is here to help as you work with young adults and their families to make important decisions about their future.

Our mutual goal is to ensure that when students graduate with a Regents or local diploma or their access to a free appropriate public education ends, they are ready to move into the adult services best meeting their needs.

OPWDD is the primary state agency responsible for providing supports and services to people with developmental disabilities who meet our eligibility criteria. OPWDD can provide supports and services for students and their families while the students are still in school to help them have greater success and to help them navigate the transition process to adulthood. Services can include supports at home and in the community, and employment training and support.

For OPWDD services to be available when the students complete their education programs, **the students and their families must contact OPWDD and request the services**. You can help by encouraging families to begin the process of determining OPWDD eligibility and planning for services ahead of time. Be sure to let students and their families know they can contact OPWDD at any time to learn about supports and services.

If the student is fifteen years old or older, families are encouraged to start the transition process as soon as possible. As you know, NYSED regulations require that the transition planning process begin by age 15. Transition planning with OPWDD should begin at least three years before the student completes their educational program so transition of services from school to adult life is as seamless as possible.

The attached letter and brochure for students with developmental disabilities and their families provide helpful information about our services and the transition planning process. Please share them with 15 to 21-year-old students who you believe may be eligible for OPWDD services, their parents/guardians, and their teachers. Please encourage them to contact OPWDD's Front Door at **866-946-9733** and view the OPWDD Front Door Videos at https://opwdd.ny.gov/get-started to learn more about OPWDD eligibility and services. Students who already have OPWDD eligibility and are connected to a Care Coordination Organization (CCO) should contact their Care Manager to help them request adult services.

For OPWDD and the school to work together, schools must have parents or guardians interested in allowing the school to share the student's educational and health records with OPWDD or to tell OPWDD about students who may be eligible for OPWDD services fill out a Consent to Release Information form (attached).

Please remember that local school districts must notify OPWDD if a student in your district who may be OPWDD eligible is placed in a residential school. Email this notification to residential.school@opwdd.ny.gov. OPWDD is committed to helping students successfully transition from their residential educational placement to OPWDD adult services. Residential School Transition Coordinators (RSTC) help students and families with this process, but advanced planning is vital for success.

If you have any questions, please contact the Local School Transition Coordinator at your local OPWDD Regional Field Office by calling **866-946-9733** or emailing info@opwdd.ny.gov**.** For general questions related to school transition, please email student.transition@opwdd.ny.gov.

Sincerely,

Fechner Stecker
Director, Community Transitions Unit

cc:
D. Regan
E. Wright
OPWDD Regional Field Office Directors
OPWDD Local School Transition Coordinators
OPWDD Residential School Transition Coordinators

Enc: Local School Transition Parent-Guardian Letter
006 School Transition brochure for families
Local School Transition Coordinator Contact List
Residential School Transition Coordinator Contact List
Consent Form

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