In the last Focus Flyer, I discussed transition timelines and what should be done in the transition process before a certain age. In this last part of the three part series, I would like to focus on transition contacts, which are agencies or individuals who can provide services after graduating from the school setting. These contacts, in best case scenario, should be involved early on in the transition process. Let’s take a look at transition contacts available for Mississipians:

**Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS)**

MDRS provides numerous programs, agencies, and facilities that work together to meet the needs of Mississipians with disabilities.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)**

VR is one of the most thought of agencies under MDRS. It provides services designed to improve economic opportunities for individuals with physical and mental disabilities through employment.

An individual who is eligible for services is one who has a physical or mental impairment, which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and can benefit from VR services in order to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment.

Types of programs and services provided by VR include but are not limited to deaf program, job development, job placement, job training, supported employment, transition services, employability skills training program.

To contact someone in the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation call the main office at 601.853.5100 and ask for a VR counselor or district manager in your area.
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB)
OVRB serves individuals through Mississippi who are blind or visually impaired. These services offered through a variety of special programs are unique in that they are designed to meet the personal and vocational needs specific to those who have severe loss of sight. Types of programs and services provided by OVRB include but are not limited to job development, job placement, job training, orientation and mobility, communications, physical conditioning, and independent living services.

OVRB administers the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) that provides full-time job opportunities for legally blind Mississippians. BEP vendors are self-employed business persons who operate a variety of food service operations. For more information, call MDRS at 601.853.5100.

The Addie McBryde Center for the Blind (AMC)
AMC is part of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind or Visually Impaired. It is a personal adjustment center that is located in the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. Some of the services that AMC provides are orientation and mobility, communication/advanced communication, personal management, techniques of daily living, leisure education, low vision evaluations, and a deaf-blind program. For more information, or to arrange a tour, contact: Karen Brown, director, at 601.364.2700.

Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP)
OSDP provides services to individuals with the most severe disabilities who do not necessarily demonstrate immediate potential for competitive employment. An individual who is eligible is one who has a severe disability, which constitutes multiple barriers to the individual’s capacity to live independently and exhibits a strong likelihood that the individual will be able to live significantly more independent at home, avoiding institutionalization. Types of services include but are not limited to home and vehicle modification, durable medical equipment, personal care attendant services, and peer counseling. For more information call MDRS at 601.853.5100.

Office of Disability Determination Services (ODDS)
ODDS is funded entirely through the Social Security Administration. It establishes eligibility for Mississippians with severe disabilities that apply for Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income. These individuals must first apply for benefits at their local Social Security office and their applications are then forwarded on to ODDS for determination. For more information, call MDRS at 601.853.5100.

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)
ODHH is part of MDRS and is specifically for the deaf and hard of hearing. ODHH works with the deaf community to provide quality interpreting services; teach sign language to businesses, government agencies, and employers of the deaf; train agencies and companies how to properly use a TTY/TDD; and provide sensitivity training to the public. For more information, call Denee Smith at 601.898.7056.
Home and Community Based Waiver Services (HCBS)

Millcreek

Millcreek is one of the well known community based programs in the state of Mississippi. There are seven locations across the state. The locations include Jackson, Moss Point, Collins, Tupelo, Grenada, Port Gibson, and Long Beach. These programs are funded by Medicaid under the Community Based Services Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD) Waiver Program administered by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH). The HDBS programs provide a wide variety of services which include respite care; attendant care; behavioral support; day habilitation; prevocational/supported employment; and therapy services, such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy. For more information contact Danny Cowart at 601.849.4221.

Willowood Developmental Center

Willowood has a variety of services including a community based program along with prevocational supported employment, day habilitation, community living, and vocational services. For more information call 601.366.0149.

Mississippi's State Regional Centers

The regional centers are usually where eligibility for the Home and Community Based Waiver Services begins. In order for a person to be eligible for HBCS, the individual must go through an evaluation process. All regional centers have a division of community services.

There are several regional centers across the State which include Hudspeth - Jackson 601.664.6100; Boswell-Magee 601.867.5000; North Mississippi Regional-Tupelo 662.234.1476; South Mississippi Regional-Long Beach 228.867.1327; and Ellisville State School–Ellisville 601.477.6167.

Advocacy Contacts

ARC of Mississippi - Matt Nalker, Executive Director, 601.982.1180
My Voice My Choice - Charity Drummond, Coordinator, 601.982.1180
Mississippi Client Assistance Program, 800.962.2400

Living Options and Contacts

Creative Community Living – Brenda Havens or Carolyn Taylor, 601.607.2981
Home of Your Own (HOYO) - Cassie Hicks, 601.266.5163

National Resources

National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness - 617.923.8076
Mississippi Deaf-Blind Project

The University of Southern Mississippi
Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
118 College Drive # 5115
Hattiesburg, MS  39406-0001

Phone: 800.264.5135
Fax: 601.266.4978
E-mail: deaf-blind@usm.edu

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Summer 2006 Workshops

• American Association of Deaf-Blind
  27th Biennial Conference
  Baltimore, MD
  June 17-23, 2006
  For more information call 301.495.4402.

• Annual Tri-State Conference on
  Recreation Inclusion
  Pearl River Resort in Choctaw, MS
  July 6-7, 2006
  Professionals $60; Families $30
  Contact Rick Green at 601.266.5576.

• Advocacy and Leadership
  an NTAC Parent Workshop
  Tampa, FL
  July 13-14, 2006
  Contact Cassondra Holly at 601.259.2575.

• Functional Communication:
  Using Calendar systems and objects
  Two-day workshop
  presented by Bernie Wynn
  of the Helen Keller National Center
  South MS Regional Center, Long Beach, MS
  July 18, 2006 (8:30 a.m. —4:30 p.m.) and
  July 19, 2006 ( 8:30 a.m.—2:00 p.m.)
  Contact Cassondra Holly at 601.259.2575.

• ARC Annual Conference
  Eagle Ridge Conference Center
  Raymond, MS
  July 20-21, 2006
  Contact Cindy Dittus at 601.982.1180.

• Educating Students with Deaf-Blindness: National Conference
  Presented by Dr. Jan Van Dijk
  Greensboro, NC
  July 21-24, 2006
  Contacts: Ken Prohn  828.227.3377 or
            Chris Jones  919.807.3991

AA/EOE/ADA

We’re on the Web!
www.usm.edu/msdb

IDEAs that Work
Office of Special Education Programs