



Montana Youth Transitions Project

Our Mission

The Montana Youth Transitions Project is a partnership of Montana families, nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies devoted to improving the quality of life for youth with disabilities by creating a seamless system of support through the transition from high school to adult life.

Summary

There are over 6,700 youth with disabilities in Montana high schools. The drop-out rate of these young people is twice that of their peers. The partners of the Montana Youth Transitions Project want to create a regional and state strategy by which training and supports are created while a youth is still in school which will lead to successful outcomes after high school.

During the 2009 legislative session, \$50,000 a year for each year of the biennium was provided by the legislature. Those funds were received beginning July 1, 2009. The following information shows the significant impact that the project funded with those monies has had in the first 16 months.

Statistics

- **Annual Transitions Conference**

An annual conference addressing the issues surrounding transition has been a priority for the project. It provides a venue for families, professionals, and business to come together and discuss the issues. The planning committee for the conferences is comprised of stakeholders from both the public and private sector from across the state. The 2009 and 2010 conference saw an overall attendance of 265 individuals. In 2009 there were 11 youth with disabilities in attendance and in 2010 there were 23 youth with disabilities. Funding for the conference comes from sponsors and registration fees with the only expense being staff time to facilitate and coordinate the planning process.
- **MYTransitions Web Site**

A second priority of the MYT Project is the creation of a comprehensive sustainable transition web site. The MYT Project web site is www.montanayouthtransitions.org. The MYT Project sought sponsors for the web site and for \$1,000 individuals or programs could become a sponsor for 5 years. With our current sponsors we have funding to maintain the site for 10 years. The web site has a steering committee comprised of partners from across the state and they meet by phone on a quarterly basis. The only cost related to the web site is staff time to conduct all administrative tasks

related to a web site. The statistics show that in July 2009 show that the web site had 1,215 and 1,855 pages were viewed. By October 1010 there were 2,815 visits and 5,483 pages were viewed. This shows a significant increase of the impact that the web site is having for people across Montana needing to locate transition resources.

- **Regional Transition Groups**

The MYT Project acknowledges that there the resources and transition needs are varied across the state. To this end the Project has created regional Transition meetings that will bring together families, professions and businesses together regionally to address issues in their area. The meetings are modeled after regional groups that were created by OPI during the System Change Grant of the 1990's. The regional meetings began in May 2010 in five areas: Missoula/Kalispell, Helena/Butte/Bozeman, Great Falls, Billings, and Miles City. Each region meets as often as their need dictates. During the first six months of regional meetings there were 211 people in attendance from across the state. The cost related to this activity is travel, copying of agendas and minutes, and staff time to facilitate and administer these meetings.

- **Disability Mentoring Day**

The third Wednesday of October each year the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) coordinates a national effort of Disability Mentoring Day. This event provides job shadowing opportunities for youth with disabilities. A sociological showed that youth with disabilities were more likely to be successful after high school if they had the opportunity to job shadow while still in school. Disability Mentoring Day was held on October 20, 2010 in three cities in Montana and 52 youth with disabilities participated in job shadowing opportunities. A steering committee is being created to assist with the planning and implementation of Disability Mentoring Day 2011. The cost of this activity is staff time recruiting students to participate and locating businesses and professionals to provide job shadowing opportunities.

Conclusion

The Montana Youth Transitions Project has created a model where partners in the public and private sector come together and pool their staff time and agency resources to create systemic solutions to the issue of transition. This model through coordination of efforts and seeking financial partners have created a cost effective approach to an issue to potentially can affect 6,700+ youth and their families in Montana. We have shown in 16 months the impact that creating public and private partnerships can have on this issue and hope that Montana will continue to provide funding to this effort.