**New Community Opportunities Center at ILRU Presents...**

**Expanding CIL Capacity through Youth Transition Services:**

**Collaborating with School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation**

**Part 1**

**July 10, 2013**

**Presented by Peter Darling and Maureen O'Donnell, Granite State Independent Living Center**

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>> OPERATOR: Welcome to the New Community Opportunities Center at ILRU Webinar... "Expanding CIL Capacity Through Youth Transition Services: Collaborating with School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation."

I'm your operator, Patricia.

Today we'll be taking questions through the webinar platform and over the telephone. On the web, just type your question into the box shown on your screen. We will begin taking telephone questions shortly after 4:00 p.m. Eastern time. We'll make an announcement when we're ready to begin taking questions by phone. At that time, press star pound. You will then hearing a prompt advising your line has been opened. We'll take the questions in the order received.

The hosts for today's webinar teleconference are ILRU's Richard Petty and Utah State University's Jeff Sheen.

Good afternoon, Richard and Jeff.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Thank you, Patricia, and welcome to everyone. This webinar is presented by ILRU's New Community Opportunities Center. The center assists Centers for Independent Living to start and grow new community programs while securing resources to fund those services. The New Community Opportunities Center ‑‑ excuse me. Let me just adjust my audio, everyone.

The New Community Opportunities Center presents on location trainings and webinars like this one. ILRU's New Community Opportunities Center is funded through the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Their endorsement of the content of this webinar should not be inferred. Jeff will be hosting the webinar with us today along with me. The new community opportunities center is funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Today this is the inauguration of a new web platform for us here at ILRU. That platform is adobe connect. We believe it's going to provide a better user experience for all participants and especially for those who use text captioning. The text screen ‑‑ the text captioning screen will appear in the same ‑‑ in the same screen as the PowerPoint slides. Of course, those slides ‑‑ that's the same screen that you're familiar with from our previous platform. Also, those who prefer to use text stream captioning will still have that option. That's for those who prefer it or need to use that approach. We encourage those of you who are participating by phone to print out the slides, the PowerPoints, for this webinar. Those were attached to the confirmation message that you received that allowed you to register for this webinar. If you print out those PowerPoints you can follow along just as those who are participating on the web will be able to follow the presentation. Also, you'll be able to ask questions through the chat feature if you're participating on the web. You'll just enter the question into the box that you see there on your screen and we'll try to respond to those questions as we proceed through the webinar today. As Patricia said, later on we will be taking telephone questions. When we're ready to take those questions, Patricia will give you the instructions on how to let us know you have a question and we'll take the questions in the order that they're received. Now let's move on to today's webinar: "Youth transition: Working with school districts and rehabilitation. This is a two‑part webinar. Next week we'll continue with the webinar, but today we have a presentation from Granite State Independent Living in New Hampshire, and our presenters are Peter Darling and Maureen O'Donnell. Many of you already know that Granite State is a well-respected center. It's been around for a number of years and has many excellent programs, and Peter and Darlene run one that has been recognized for its excellence. There's much that we can learn from them in this webinar today.

We'll begin with a PowerPoint that Peter and Maureen have prepared and then following that Jeff Sheen and I will ask questions. Many of those questions came from those that you submitted with your registration we have a few that we have here at ILRU also. And that follows the PowerPoint. As we begin I would like to ask Peter Darling if Peter you would tell us a little about Granite State Independent Living.

>> PETER DARLING: Sure, Richard. First of all I would like to thank Richard, Jeff and Patricia for this opportunity. It's very exciting time for us to be able to expand sort of our experience through a nationwide audience, I think is what we have here, is truly, I think exciting. Let me start by giving you a little context about our CIL here in New Hampshire. Again, Granite State Independent Living. We call ourselves GSIL. We were founded in 1980 and have always been the state's only CIL. We currently have four Part C grants, but from day one the thought was that utilizing this funding through one entity was the best way to address the state state's needs most effectively and efficiently.

For those that don't know New Hampshire, geographically, it's a tiny state. We're probably 200 miles north to south. To us it's huge. But, anyway.

A little bit more about us... we certainly, I think, come from a similar background. We were founded on the principles of consumer control, self‑direction, empowerment, advocacy, giving voice. All of those things are critical to everything we do. And along with our core services we've developed an extensive array of in‑home support services. On a weekly basis we have a payroll of ‑‑ from our attendant care programs in excess of 700 staff. Corporately or actually what we designate as corporate employees, we have 110. So we're fairly large, at least by our estimations.

Let me tell you a little bit more. Until 2004 Granite State Independent Living did not have an employment component or focus in any way. I think the feel young by the leadership at that particular point in time was that they really needed employment as one of the components if individuals were really going to have any real sense of true independence they couldn't do it without greater economic independence. So I think as they looked around the landscape here in New Hampshire they had two choices: One was develop it or the other was to see if they could partner, and what they ended up doing at that point was they found an employment‑focused nonprofit who they acquired and essentially took on a service network and system that was already in place. So that seemed to be the most efficient way for them to do it, and I can tell you it has worked out in many different ways, one of which is something we'll talk about today.

We have extensive experience with ‑‑ in employment. We've had federal grants. Certainly a lot of state grants of a smaller scope. One of the things we did during that time was we had a thing called Projects with Industry. That was RSA special demonstrations money. And for ‑‑ probably had those grants for 20 years, but for part of that we were working in sort of the old school to work in the mid‑'90s, and that sort of, again, helped set the foundation for what we're doing today, but we had that for about eight years.

Granite State Independent Living is an employment network. We made that decision when the regulations changed back in ‑‑ it was either 2007 or '08, and we have finally found our way to feeling that we have a handle on that and can actually generate revenue to cover costs. So that feels good.

We also by circumstance have the state's only work incentives planning and assistance program. That's the Social Security Administration's WIPA program that again many of you probably are aware of and is so vital for individuals looking to either return to work or increase their hours of participation.

So that's it in a nutshell very quickly. We want to get on and tell you about, really, something that we've just started, and I'm going to turn it over to Maureen, who will present you with a PowerPoint and talk about our transition program. Maureen?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yes, good afternoon, everyone. This is Maureen. If you can get to slide 2. I would like to just give you a brief overview of the program GSIL created called the ELO program. In 2009 our ‑‑ gave GSIL the opportunity to develop a response to an RFP that was looking to work in a school district that was struggling with the issue of students with a disability dropping out of high school or at risk of dropping out. Students were disengaged. They had poor attendance. Minimal academic credits. They lacked soft skills and had little preparation for the life ahead of them. There was no model in place to guide us in addressing these concerns. And the key component to our program model, our extended learning opportunities we call ELOs.

ELOs give students the opportunity to earn high school credits for learning that takes place outside of the traditional classroom. Hence, the name Earn & Learn program. Some examples are apprenticeships, community service, independent study, internships, online courses, performing groups and private instruction. ELOs are awarded with the mastery. GSIL has created numerous ELOs such as career exploration, independent living skills training, we call consumer science, personal finance, health, et cetera. These ELOs help students to successfully transition to the responsibilities of adult life.

Slide 5.

Our goal is to reengage at risk high school students in their education and to return to back to school and graduate and we do this by providing a variety of career exploration and independent living skills training such as career assessments, work experiences out in the community, practicing interviews, writing resumes, developing those soft skills, learning about public transportation, health, personal finance and advocacy.

Students start to begin to see the relevancy of their learning, which results in returning back to school, graduation and job placements. We use the community as the classroom where business partners teach students. For example, a local business comes in, teaches the students about budgeting, writing checks, mortgages, loans, et cetera, and the students then earn half a business math credit for this.

Our independent living coordinator at GSIL teaches students how to live on their own and make some informed decisions. And this entire Earn & Learn experience is part of every students IEP and transition plan.

Slide 6.

Our philosophy is based on self‑efficacy. Albert Bandura. It's the belief in one's own ability to succeed in a particular situation. Self‑efficacy comes from mastery of experiences, social model and persuasion and psychological responses. Self‑efficacy influenced the way people think, the way they behave and the way they respond.

Slide 7.

Our ingredients, relationship building with students, rigor in content material and relevancy. We have no school rules. We have workplace expectations such as showing up every day and on time, respect for themselves and others, taking responsibility for their actions, appropriate language and dress, hygiene and honesty. We adjust the ‑‑ address the needs of the whole child, including the students physical, social and emotional health and well‑being. We involve students, parents and school person in VR in the entire process from referral, recruitment and orientation to the exit plan meetings and return back to school. We have a strong connection in the community. In the classroom we meet the needs of different learning styles and we use many computer‑based programs such as key train, career ready 101 and bridges transition for career assessments and explorations.

Slide 8.

At the beginning of the program back in 2009 we worked with that students on an individual basis. However, after about six months or so, we realized this was not efficient and we needed to really address the potential void of a summer without access to students. So this is really when we created the first group ELO, which we now called Earn & Learn Opportunities program. The first day at GSIL is just like the first day on the job. The HR director from GSIL comes down and completes the hiring process with the students. They go over the I9, the W‑4 forms, applications, emergency forms, et cetera. Soft skills are the glue of our program. We're developing strong work ethic, positive attitudes and good communication skills. Each year our Earn & Learn Opportunities provides students with at risk ‑‑ extended learning opportunities. We have three sessions a year. We have a fall and a spring, which are about 15 weeks. And it's every day 9:00 to 12:00 and then we have a summer program which is five weeks from 9:00 to 1:00, and to give you an idea of the credits that students earn in the fall and spring, students can earn up to four academic credits and in the summer it's 1.5. Part of the curriculum is academics and the other time is spent at their job sites. So during the school year students will come to GSIL four day as week for the academics and one day at their job site and in the summer a little bit different, three days of academics and two days at their job site. VR customers play an important role throughout the program with referrals, career planning and all the students become VR customers. We are involved with the school system from the start of the program with referrals and recruitment process. We're also attending the student IEP meetings and then the students return back to school and we provide follow‑up services. A certified school personnel evaluates the student's progress in the program and the school grants the credits.

Slide 9.

We have many key partners involved in the program from New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation and local school district are key partners along with local businesses and families. The Mayor of the City of Manchester is our biggest fan. He's a real true believer in the program and attends all the graduations as well as some other state politicians. We have tours at post‑secondary institutions and college students actually assist with the tutoring and mentoring of students. We have tours of the resources in the community such as like teen health clinic, child health services and mental health centers.

Slide 10.

Highlights. Students begin the program oftentimes not knowing a single person. We have students from three of the high schools, but they leave as a unified group. They build such positive relationships and develop such good friendships. We really value the feedback that we receive from our advisory group members, businesses and parents. And the graduation is really a time for the students to celebrate their accomplishments and to shine, and it's not unheard of to have 75 to 80 family and friends attend the graduation of 12 to 15 students. Success stories... many of the students for the first time in their lives are feeling empowered. They can make two choices about their futures. For some it was their first IEP they attended. We have several students who for the first time in their ‑‑ in the first ‑‑ in their family to graduate from high school. And the average attendance rate of the students attending the program is 93%. We're ‑‑ where in the past many of these students probably were absent 60 to 90 days of the school year. And in the next two weeks we'll actually be celebrating our 10th Earn & Learn program graduation.

Slide 11.

Outcomes. This is just to give you some idea of our accomplishments year‑to‑date. We started in November of 2009. We have engaged 141 students who have dropped out of school or at risk of dropping out and we have 22 active. Students have completed 374 ELOs with the obtainment of 258 full academic credits. We supported and made possible the graduation of 44 students with six students obtaining their GED. So it's a total of 50 students. We created 82 work experiences. We supported eight students who went from their internship to paid employment. And currently we have 14 students placed in career jobs.

Slide 12.

>> Sustainability is always a concern. For the first two years of the program we were funded slowly by VR and now the school district saw the value of this program and the changes it made in the lives of the students and the successful outcomes that now we are funded two‑thirds by the local school district and a third by Vocational Rehabilitation. We're constantly refining our approach with VR and the school districts through our monthly advisory group meetings. And successful integration back to school continues to be a concern and an issue. We're working very closely with the school district making sure there's plans in place so when they return back to school it's welcoming for all of them.

And maintaining our partnership with businesses, we're constantly solidifying contacts. There's changes with staff, different businesses. So that has always been an issue for us.

Slide 13.

This is a painting of a student. It happened to catcher the eye of the Mayor. And he uses this quote not only at every one of our graduations, because he attends all of our graduations but every graduation within the school district and it says "Life isn't about finding yourself, life is about creating yourself."

And that is the end of the slide presentation.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Maureen, thank you. That's an excellent presentation. And let's begin with a couple of questions about centers and the relationship that centers have in the community and let me ask the first question to Peter.

Peter, has the fact that you're an organization that's led and staffed by people with disabilities had an effect on your relationships with school districts and Vocational Rehabilitation? Peter, do we have you there? Peter may be on mute.

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yes. Hi. Can you hear me?

>> RICHARD PETTY: Yes, we can hear you. While we're working on that ‑‑ why don't we ‑‑ let's come back to that question because I've got a similar one for you, and I think Peter wanted to answer that question.

Peter, is that you?

Well, let me just ask Maureen: Because you operate with consumer control and because you vest power and authority in the people that you serve, sometimes some might think that that could create some uncomfortable situations with school districts and with others. Have you found that to be the case? And if you have, how have you dealt with it?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: This is a great question. I think it integrates really well with the issues around transition planning. First of all, I would like to ‑‑ we'd like to recognize that for individuals between the ages of 3 to 21, the school district is really the legal entity and responsible party. And our funding through VR, initially we had 100% funding and right now we have a third of the funding. But while both of these are true, all entities view the Earn & Learn program as really the pathway to greater student engagement and participation in their IEPs and transition planning processes.

We're now moving to the next generation of improvements by adding parent engagement to the process. So for the first time in the students and their parents' lives school had no real value and they had become December engaged and could not see the relevancy it had to their personal situations. So the Earn & Learn program has changed this and made it possible for students to be more fully ‑‑ they can fully understand their place in education and in their future and to finally have a voice, again, in their IEP and transition process.

This past year we've included the addition of the IL service coordination to the program as noted in the PowerPoint Earn & Learn has incorporated strong IL component into the academic credits and now the support of the IL service coordinator position takes that sense of control to just a higher level.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Great.

Richard ‑‑

>> JEFF SHEEN: This is Jeff. If I can jump in. I have a couple questions before we get too far from Maureen's PowerPoint that I think are pertinent to the discussion that have come in on the chat box.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Please do.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Maureen, there has been a couple questions, logistics on your program on how many staff you have working, do any of them have teaching certificates and how did you get a school district to approve your classes for school credit?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: All great questions. We have three staff members on ‑‑ with the Earn & Learn program, and some of our backgrounds, for myself, I was a teacher in the past, but the other two staff members do not have an education degree. However, one is moving on and getting her master's.

Working with the ‑‑ the last question was?

>> JEFF SHEEN: How did you get approved from the district to give credit, to give academic credit for what you were doing?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Right. What we did is we role the ELOs and we had it approved through the school district and that was difficult at the beginning. Just to let you know, ELOs were fairly new to the district when we got started. So that we were learning along with the district ‑‑ actually, we became the experts because we had to do so much research. But what happens is we have created a curriculum, we got it approved through the school districts, and what happens is throughout the program, highly qualified teacher from the district comes in and evaluates the student's progress. So they'll look there their binders, journals, and then at the very end there is a final project and that's when they demonstrate mastery of the skill that they've learned. For example, with career exploration, for example, they have to have a completed resume, you know, they have their mock interviews, a completed application. It's pretty rigid. There's certain goals, objectives that are set that they have to complete. So we don't grant the credits. It's the school district that grants the credits.

In regards to independent living, we call it consumer science because that's what the district wants to call it. But we actually have someone from the ‑‑ a community partner from the YWCA that comes in and teaches good decision‑making, how to make good decisions around drugs and alcohol. We talk about health. We do a whole piece of public transportation. And those are specific goals that are set and the teacher from the school district comes over and just ‑‑ with the rubric makes sure that all those competencies have been mastered.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you, Maureen, for that clarification. Before I turn it back to you, Richard, just for the participants, we will try to get to as many questions that come in on the chat as possible, but we really feel like some of the conversation we've set up ahead of time will address most of those. So if at the end of this conversation you still have the same question I would ask you to just restate that in a chat towards the end of this discussion. So, Richard?

>> RICHARD PETTY: Okay. Peter, I wonder if you've been able to join us again?

>> PETER DARLING: So do I.

>> RICHARD PETTY: You have been. You are there.

>> PETER DARLING: I don't know what happened. Apologize.

>> RICHARD PETTY: We're glad you're back. It's live, so things like that happen. Could I just step back and ask the question that I was going to ask of you just a moment ago, and that is: Because you're an organization that's led and run by people with disabilities, do you think that's affected your relationships with the school districts and VR, either positively or negatively or not at all, maybe?

>> PETER DARLING: It almost feels like not at all. But, again, I think that would be naive. For instance, obviously, when someone with a more apparent disability enters a room, it would be foolish to not imagine that there might be some reaction, either surprise or whatever. Certainly not necessarily negative but, you know, I think we still live in a world where the fact that somebody can roll in who uses a wheelchair or those kinds of things still probably gets attention.

I think the good news is that after 33 years we are a pretty strong and known entity. I think we're so respected for the advocacy work that we do that ‑‑ and I really feel that that has really cut us some real credibility. I think another thing ‑‑ if you look at any situation, if you can bring value to whoever you're talking about, whether it's a stakeholder, a constituent, a consumer, an audience in the community, or you can explain how you bring that value, I think that at least grants you some credibility right up front.

Again, I know it existed because I remember those days, to be honest with you, but I think we've really moved past that and the fact that, yes, we're excited that we employ a population that is not typical to any business environment, but I think we bring ‑‑ I mean, all of our folks are qualified applicants. And if they're not for whatever reason or whatever area, we certainly, as we would in any situation, address that and make sure that they are competent in areas that they need to or don't put them in front of a situation that they can't handle. So does that answer it?

>> RICHARD PETTY: Maybe there will be more questions about that.

>> PETER DARLING: I guess the short answer is I guess we've moved past that by and large. [] better informed choices about employment and education and living independently. Another thing would be greater economic independence and self‑sufficiency. You know, we're teaching students work skills, how to get a job, and most importantly how to keep that job. The other would be focuses on the IL skill attainment prior to graduation, and as a platform for skills to their adult life. So the most important thing is if we're reaching these kids before they get to be adults, we're hopefully setting that foundation.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Good.

>> JEFF SHEEN: This is Jeff. I want to chime in here if I can, Richard. Peter or Maureen, you've been do this for quite a while. You had some success, but, really I know a lot of folks are curious from the get‑go, what are some of the initial barriers that you had to work around to get all these things started with the school system and Vocational Rehabilitation?

>> PETER DARLING: Let's just start, if we look at this specific project, when the ARRA money became available, Maureen sorted of hinted what we were sort of tasked to do through that RFP process was to reengage students who really had lost their way educationally. They were either ‑‑ had dropped out or were so close to it that their very poor attendance or compliance in general was just so remiss that, you know what were you going to do about it. And most schools nationwide struggle with this, or many schools do, and the situation we were thrown into was no different. We were given that tool of extended learning opportunities which, again, most folks listening, I'm sure are still struggling to quite understand it as a concept, but New Hampshire about six or seven years ago did a high school redesign, and at the state level they just said we are failing a large number of students because we're not meeting their academic needs through the learning styles and environments in which they can succeed. And extended learning opportunities actually came from the State Board of Education and were sort of pushed down onto the school districts. And so when we got the money and we got the city to where we were to work, nobody really quite knew what this was or as Maureen said, what they needed to be, what they were, were they things they could feel proud they were granting credit around and so on. And so we were in essence breaking a lot of new ground, and that was both exciting but it did have some barriers, for instance, getting sign‑off, even though we went through the process that Maureen described, we would be told, well, go to the assistant principal. They can sign off on it. After the teacher had, you know. Then the assistant principal would say go to guidance. Then we would go to guidance and they would say go to special ed. Anyway, you get the gist of it. There was lots of sort of process things that had to be worked out, but those were frustrating because we had done the work. The students had made the commitment. And we wanted to be sure they got the credit. Fortunately we worked through those.

Other barriers, these are kids who by and large, I hate to say this, but had become pretty good at what they do, and that's failing academically. Some of them are ‑‑ I don't know that they're truly proud, but they outwardly want to portray themselves as proud of the fact that they're pretty good at it. However, we've just through this process that Maureen described ‑‑ the fact that we hire them, we don't talk about school. I will tell you that we don't manipulate them, but we in essence bring them into academia without ever saying we're doing English, we're now doing math. Maureen has been able to integrate a full four‑hour day into complete academics essentially talking about the world of work and making so many ‑‑ or their life outside of work, but not their life at school. So we really found, I think, creative ways of reengaging them.

So getting back to your barrier question, one of the problems we found early on was they were so excited by school and their success that initially we had a great deal of trouble getting them to go back to their school that had sent them. That required us, then, to rethink that process. So now we have six weeks prior to their leaving us, the school comes back in, planning meetings take place, where will you go back to school, what will you take academically, what do you need to achieve your career goal? And, again, it's been incredibly helpful to do that. We also now help point people at the school who we call the champions so that when they do, in fact, return to school they feel welcomed. I can be honest with you and say that some of them returning after a semester were not necessarily greeted with, "oh, boy, Tom's back." I'm sure it was more like, "Here we go again." So we had to address that. That was a significant barrier. How do we take a student who has a reputation of perhaps being noncompliant, have actually turned them around but get those adults in that environment to see him as having made that transition. So had to do a lot of things to remove some attitudinal barriers. That's long‑winded but hopefully that helped.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Maureen, do you have anything to add about the barriers piece?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: No, it's pretty much what Peter ‑‑ yeah, just some days it's challenging working with the schools and I think the most important part was just trying to find that point person at the school because initially we were getting referrals and information from guidance counselors and special ed directors and getting different information from top administrators. So it was important to find that key person in each school.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Great. Jeff, let's come back to you in just a minute for some web questions, but I have a question for Peter or Maureen or both of you, and it's back to how you got the first contract with the schools. Did you reach out to them? Did they reach out to you? How did you actually start that process? Who was your patron there? How did you go about it?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Initially when we received the ARRA funds through the Department of Education Vocational Rehabilitation, that was the starting point. So we approached the schools with letting them know that we received a grant, we received the funding to work with students who have dropped out of school, or at risk of dropping out of school, and to focus on some transition‑focused activities for academic credit. So that's really how we got started. So that was the first two years. The past year and a half we really don't have a formal contract or grant working with Vocational Rehabilitation. It's more of a Memorandum of Understanding, and it's a fee for service. With the schools, you know, we started work with the schools, and right now as I mentioned we have two‑thirds of funding coming from the school districts, and it's not ‑‑ we don't have like an official contract. It's really a verbal agreement working with the schools.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Did you reach out to them when you were writing the proposal and ask them for their support? Was there someone that seemed to be supportive of the idea either before or after the proposal?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yes, actually in the school districts that we work in, we have a school of technology where students are able to learn the different trades, and that was the first place that we targeted so that maybe possibly we would get some students that are already there learning a trade, at risk of dropping out and they had another program for the students who were at risk, and so that's the first place that we got started, and then from there we were invited to attend all the alternative Ed meetings with the alternative ed programs in the city. So we got to learn about the different meetings, different programs, and then it morphed into the connecting with the other schools. And I think as Peter mentioned we have the PWI contract, so we were already familiar with administrators from the different high schools. So we've had ‑‑ and I've had 20 years of experience working with those schools.

>> RICHARD PETTY: So your track record and your projects with industry were something you were able to leverage to help you with that?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yes.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Maureen, someone asked kind of a clarifying question about the contract with the school. They asked, why don't you have a written contract with the schools? Have you tried it or do you just find it unnecessary?

>> PETER DARLING: Jeff, I'll try to answer that. I'm going to back up a little bit.

We had the grant. We were fortunate enough to, I think, provide a service that was valued, and then we realized Vocational Rehabilitation should not be funding school‑age programs at the level that they were. I mean, they used ARRA funds to get it initiated, but they couldn't continue it at the rate or the cost that it was. So we were into our second year of funding and we realized we needed to do something significantly different. We had to change that appreciation that the school had of what we brought to some ownership in it. So we were fortunate enough to have from the superintendent's office an assistant superintendent and a student personnel director who had sort of come to realize just what value we did bring, and we ask if we could form an advisory group that could meet and go over the core elements of the project and meet on a regular basis. It ended up being monthly. To look at each element of the project, have open dialogue about how to make each element either richer, better, more embedded or whatever would improve it, and then use that as our vehicle to both improve and to carry it forward. So by the end of that second year when we went and set voc. rehab can't pay for this or continue at the level of funding, you need to, you know, as a district, step up with some funding, they did do it. The reason there's no contract is that that particular school board will not allow that district to enter into contracts with outside entities for things such as this, and it's probably ‑‑ they haven't told us specifically, but I can imagine it's because they don't want the liability in a bad funding year of having a contract that says they have to give us X, Y or Z and not be able to live up to it. So we do not ‑‑ we have a fee for service. We do not have a contract. It's a little bit scary, but, again, I think we are addressing the points. So we're not too concerned. But that's a good question, why can't you get a contract. We wish we had one.

>> JEFF SHEEN: I think that's very helpful. You set up a nice Segway to talk about VR in a couple minutes but there's a couple context questions I want to fact up. Those questions are basically, you know, what types of disabilities are you seeing with the students? Did they drop out largely because of the disability? Or were they at risk of dropping out because of the disability? Or was it more general? And then do they get paid while they're in the program? Or is it only when they get the job that they're actually paid to be there? So kind of a three‑for‑one deal there.

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: So the type of disabilities ‑‑ all disabilities, the majority, I would say, learning disabilities and mental health issues, a lot of students have ADD, ADHD, and in regards to being paid, it's a little unique. During the summer, the session that we have right now, the students are paid. They are paid for the academics as well as their work experience. During the school year, which are each 15 weeks, they are not paid, however, we have incentives. So during the school year, based upon attendance and participation they will get an incentive. It might be $5. It might be a gift card to Dunkin doughnuts or McDonald's. But there is an incentive during the school year.

And the third question ‑‑

>> JEFF SHEEN: The other question was: Is the disability typically related to why they're at risk of dropping out or why they did drop out in your experience?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, and I think it's just more the disengaged. They don't really see the relevancy of why they're at school. "Where am I going to go from here?" So I think that's what the project does. We're really teaching some career‑focused ‑‑ giving them some career‑focused information so that they can take that and say, "Oh, if I'm interested in nursing, I need to go back to school, do well in those math classes, and, you know, continue on with my education to get to where I want to be five years from now."

>> JEFF SHEEN: That's very helpful, Peter and Maureen. That answered some questions I've seen come in. Let me shift now back, Peter, to you and talk a little more about the he Vocational Rehabilitation relationship. I think you've given us a sense, at least from the grant period, that that was positive. You might have answered pieces but let me ask it. Sometimes there can be friction between organizations that have different philosophies and approaches. For example, VR traditional is kind of medical fixed individual model where centers on the other hand are really about changing the environment, making it more inclusive. Has this created challenges as you worked with your VR agency, the different philosophies or approaches?

>> PETER DARLING: Again, I'd say in general, no. We've been fortunate. But let me tell you some of why that difference might exist. In part, I think it's because transition is a true focus of the New Hampshire VR program. They, I think, realized that without more attention to that population, waiting ‑‑ and waiting for these individuals to become adults or age out of the school system, without some sort of attention is not a good investment of their dollars. So in some ways ‑‑ that doesn't answer your sort of more specific thing around choice and control. Because again we're in a unique leadership role in this grant ‑‑ I mean, we don't tell either VR or the school what to do, but just the fact that we own the product, I believe, means that we do get to control some things. So we've been able to, I think ‑‑ for instance, typically VR would be the one who would establish with an individual, student or adult, what their vocational goal is. In this case, we do it with the student. Voc. rehab doesn't do it. That took some getting used to. You know, counselors kind of ‑‑ you know, one of them a couple years ago had the quote, saying, you get to have all the fun. Because that aspect of, I think, developing either a youth or adult vocationally is fun because it's exploratory, it's exciting. Again, some uniquenesses and some things we've been able to bring to bear have not made that a significant problem. There are always issues, again, that individuals probably us included bring to any situation that we have to be on our toes for.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Jeff, any other web questions we want to cover before we move on here?

>> JEFF SHEEN: Just a few that have come in. One was: Is this particular program statewide or is it just within the districts within your area?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: It is just with the local district for now, and I think ‑‑ we will be expanding, we're hoping, real soon, but right now the grant is just with the one school district with the three high schools.

>> JEFF SHEEN:.

>> PETER DARLING: Let me add to that. When we received the money, the intent of creating something ‑‑ the word they used was scalable, you know, able to be replicated, was critical. So that lots of the work we did really, and Maureen alluded to it, we have very specific curricula for each of those academic courses because we needed to be able to show that to potentially additional districts who wanted to do it. We have been encouraged to find other districts who would embrace the model, and hopefully want to start their own version of it in their neck of the woods. And we're actually pretty close to finding in another part of the state ‑‑ we actually have approached three school districts and are working on a cooperative with the feeling that maybe one school district would be too small to take on the financial burden alone, but that through a cooperative, and if transportation ‑‑ that ends up being a deal breaker just from cost ‑‑ but if transportation wasn't an incredible cost, that that might be a way to do it, you know, one of them have three students, another have seven or eight, and another have six. Something like that. So we've tried to find creative ways to move it to its second iteration and hopefully from there we'll maybe have a third, fourth and fifth.

I think everyone is aware of ‑‑ I'm not sure I'll give the quote exactly right, but, you know, the best predictor of post‑secondary success for a student with disability is vocational exposures. That certainly could be as easy as just some sort of an internship, but maybe actual paid employment. It's just an incredible preparatory activity that we hope to make that available to more and more statewide.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Peter, Maureen, how do you get your students to be VR clients when they are in high school or are they considered VR clients at that point?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yes, they are all VR clients, and that's interesting we're going through this issue that we have some students that are 15 or 16 years old with maybe only one or two credits knowing they probably won't graduate for another two or three years. So we're making a lot of changes with that process that we really want to focus on students that are close to graduation. Typically maybe they're in their junior or senior year in high school. So that VR will work with them, put them in a plan, and we do some job experiences, but, again, they can't count them as a placement or 26 until they're out of high school and they've been in employment for at least 90 days. So we've had no problems getting them to be VR clients during our program.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thanks, Richard. I think we can turn that back over to you now.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Well, Peter, you began talking about some your expansion plans. Do you have any other plans for expansion or improving the program?

>> PETER DARLING: The expansion is slower than ‑‑ well, actually I'm not going to say than we'd like. I don't want to say it's a delicate model, but there's so many ingredients to it that I think are unique and will be difficult to replicate. For instance, getting the right people, the right attitudes, the right just sort of posturing is going to be critical. By that I mean the staff that we hire to support this program. Funding is always an issue. I think we've seen schools just in crisis, you know to varying levels. This summer doesn't feel as bad statewide but, you know, two or three years ago so many schools were just laying off large numbers of students, you know, cutting extracurricular, cutting, you know, all kinds of things, and so having extra funds, even though we feel these are funds that they're going to expend anyway, you know, we can help direct them in a more positive and meaningful way and truly bring value both to the district, but to the community, too.

Peter doesn't graduate just an expensive adult.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Peter, let me ask you while we have you here, what advice do you have for a center that's just starting to think about working with schools and VR? And Maureen, you can chime in here, too. I think a lot of the participants on this call, on this webinar, are kind of in that boat, they haven't started, they're starting to think about it. What kind of advice do you have at this point?

>> PETER DARLING: That is a good question. Because, again, when we think about this program, and when we had this opportunity, we realized so much of what we had was perhaps richer than others might have the just sort of to fall back on. I will ‑‑ I can allude to our projects with industry had us with working schools. The fact we're VR vendor means we have a relationship. All of those things. Some things that I think are easy and practical are getting, for instance, an IL service coordinator involved in a local ‑‑ in New Hampshire we have a lot of Community of Practice groups, and Community of Practice employment or Community of Practice transition and that's a local group ‑‑ well, we have a statewide group but there are several local groups, and if you can get involved with them ‑‑ I mean, they would be more than happy to have participation. I promise you. It's not something that you have to beg to be on or feel like you wouldn't be appreciated. You'd really be welcomed. I think your voice, that difference, and I think just knowing what we do about CILs, our experience, our ‑‑ you know, what we just know and bring to any table is ‑‑ if we do it well ‑‑ I mean, it's really valued. So just being a voice at meetings. Maybe you're quiet for the first one or two and then you start adding. It would start to connect you, and that from I believe you might then find a school or a situation where you could that offer ‑‑ again, I'm not telling people to do this, but one thing that we have done in our past is, you know, you offer to do sort of a ‑‑ you know, a people first presentation to a group or you offer to do some independent living skills instruction and/or a group. We've had several of those through our history. And, again, it's a way to get into the school, demonstrate your value, what you can bring to it, and that from then maybe the school can find some money to ‑‑ you know, to move over to you. Then you can start to access small local foundations or funding sources. Banks, for instance, you're never going to get rich getting money from them, but you can get small amounts of seed money from them to support a community‑related activity, and this is a great one to do. So I honestly think there's a number of ways that you can get involved with the schools. With VR, if you don't provide employment, it is going to be a little harder because, again, I don't want to imagine, but I know enough to know that there's ‑‑ sometimes the relationships are not as solid as we would like them to be. But, again, I think if you can present yourself to VR as adding something, I can tell you having done employment services for a number of years, the one thing VR isn't as good at as we are is those situations that an individual with a disability experiences outside of work. I mean, VR might themselves or through another agent be able to assist someone finding a job, but once they've found that job, post that 90‑day period or maybe a little longer, but lots of things happen in someone's life, and just because they have a job doesn't mean their life has gotten better. I'm going to tell you it's gotten more complex. So as a CIL there are certain things we could bring to bear. It might be help with budgeting, help with transportation, other community resource development. I think VR, if we approach them with what we can bring of value, I think we can make partners of them more and more.

>> RICHARD PETTY: We're very close to moving on to telephone questions, but before we do that, and before we have more web questions, I wanted to ask one question that I think is an important one in several ‑‑ and several people asked this in their registration forms, and that is: What success have you had in getting parents involved? And what recommendations do you have for getting parents more involved?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: I think a few ideas is having parents attend ‑‑ we have here ‑‑ we have transition fairs at the schools, having the students ‑‑ I mean, parents attend the open house and then have someone from the CIL who has a booth set up. Set‑up times to present to the local school or special education, be it those meetings and guidance counselor meetings. It's been a challenge for us as well, you know. It's even been difficult ‑‑ we have an orientation that parents need to attend before their son or daughter attends the program, and we make it that it's a mandatory meeting that they get there. We serve food. Sometimes that helps. But that has been a struggle for us. Schools are always looking for community resources, so as a CIL, if we can come in and talk with, again, those ‑‑ attend some of those meetings, the guidance counselor meetings and explain what we're all about and how we can help families.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Jeff, are there other web questions right now? If so, let's do those, and if not why don't we move onto phone questions.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Patricia, if you want to remind folks who have a phone question how to do that and we'll see if there are any there and if not we'll come back to web questions. Let's go to the phone now, Patricia.

>> OPERATOR: No problem. Ladies and gentlemen, if you would like to ask a question over the phone, you will need to be dialed into the conference at 1‑800‑832‑0736. You will then be prompted to enter the conference room star 9782067 #and then press star #. You will hear a prompt advising your line has been opened. One motion for question.

>> JEFF SHEEN: While we wait to see if anybody calls in with a question, let me throw this quick one out. We have several folks that have asked about your actual lesson plan, the curriculum you're using. Where did you get that? How much work have you done on it? Things like that.

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, we actually created the curriculum. Being a teacher in the past, I've had some experience with writing objectives and goals, and it was easier for me because I've had experience with VR in doing career exploration for a number of years. So I just created that curriculum. We have several ELOs. So, for example, if we have six or seven ELOs, all the program is integrated. For example, you will do career exploration, which they'll get a credit. They'll also get half a credit for information/communication technology which is part of their computer class. We're doing resumes. We do resumes on a Word document. So we explain how to do bullets, different fonts. That's the teaching. For example, with Excel, when we're doing personal finance, when the bank is going over personal finance and budgeting we do the budget on an Excel spreadsheet. So they are meeting the competencies through a variety of ways so that they're not really doing a math class. They're really not doing a computer class. They're learning about jobs and they're obtaining the competencies through many different venues.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you, Maureen. I know there are questions about maybe how to access your curriculum but I think we'll have your contact information at the end that folks can certainly contact you with those types of questions.

Patricia did anyone cue up with questions?

>> OPERATOR: I'm not showing questions now. If you would like to ask an audio question please dial into 1‑800‑832‑0736 and enter the conference room number star 9782067 pound. Then press star pound. You will then again be prompted that your line has been opened.

>> RICHARD PETTY: And if you're already dialed in, all you need to do is press star pound.

>> OPERATOR: It looks like we have an audio question at the moment.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Let's go to that question, Patricia.

>> CALLER: My name is ARIAS, and ‑‑ my name is ARIAS and I just had a question about you guys talked about maintaining the partnerships and how sometimes turnover can affect you guys. How did that affect ‑‑ how did you guys find that affected the graduation rate ‑‑ or the employment rate, when it came to the turnover and the not the same people being in the position. Did you find it harder for them to train the incoming people on the people that were working or graduating from your program?

>> PETER DARLING: Let me just make sure. It feels almost like two questions on the turnover. The classes themselves, you start and you complete. So there isn't really turnover and nobody starts ‑‑ for instance, it's not rolling admission. We normally start with 15, we end with between 12 and 13, two students to end deselect themselves. We don't to end throw people out.

Turnover, though, is a problem in other areas. Turnover is a problem at Vocational Rehabilitation. If we have a counselor who we are connected with and have a strong relationship and then found that the process works well and a new person will throw some initial barriers into that as they learn how best to navigate this field.

School personnel, Maureen pointed out that we have designated sort of point persons at each of the three schools who send students. We know in the past we've lost a point person over the summer for various reasons and, you know, that next one just doesn't quite have the same level of understanding of expectations. So, again, it's a lot of revisiting and relearning. I'm not sure that answers your question, but that's sort of how turnover can affect you.

>> CALLER: It does. It answers it. And then my next question is you talked about losing a point person in the schools, and so do you guys open yourselves up to kind of revisit and retrain the new person if needed? I'm just trying to ‑‑

>> PETER DARLING: Yes, we clearly would, and, again, we use many ways to do that. One is that we are always ‑‑ one ‑‑ as Maureen said, there's three staff. Two of our staff are in the schools almost daily. They're in there either to recruit, they're in there to help sustain the returning students. So we have lots of contact in the schools. So I think that helps do that.

Maureen?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Then I think with the advisory groups we would have that individual come to our advisory group meetings and they would get a clear understanding from the others as well as us as how our process works.

>> CALLER: Thank you.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Before we go on to our next phone question, there's one question that came in that we're probably not going to be able to address, and perhaps if there are those on the webinar who can, they can type their information into the web platform or they could ‑‑ they could e‑mail us at the address where your registration came from and you might be able to help someone else who asked this question, and the question was about American Indians or Alaskan natives and knowing that New Hampshire doesn't have any tribal nations and probably fewer Alaskan natives, I don't believe that Maureen or Peter will be able to answer that question. Perhaps others on the webinar can. And if you have ideas about involvement and services and supports related to transition that you can offer to others, well, please share those.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thanks, Richard. Patricia, do we have other callers that have questions?

>> OPERATOR: And we do have additional audio questions.

>> JEFF SHEEN: I think, Richard, we have time for a few more, then.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Let's do.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Please. The next person.

>> OPERATOR: No problem. One moment.

>> CALLER: What kind of barriers have you all encountered regarding parents' cooperation because the student is getting a Social Security check and they do not want them to go to work because they don't want to lose that check?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, I mean, I just experienced that this summer. Not too many of our students are receiving Social Security, but because they are students and receiving a minimal paycheck, there are some exclusions. I mean, that's really not my expertise, but it doesn't seem ‑‑ the parents don't seem really concerned. I haven't had any issues at all.

>> PETER DARLING: This is Peter. I'll sort of throw this in. I'm not sure if you heard this, but we're fortunate enough to have the Social Security Administration's funded Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Project, also part of our organization. So we have pretty ready access to provide families and individuals with that information, and, again, a generalization, a student might be receiving Supplemental Security Income, they could be receiving additional things, but that tends not to be affected by the amounts of money they earn during their experience with us, but having the individual and the parent exposed to that information early on, I think, helps address their potential fears and lack of awareness as they move forward into adult life.

>> CALLER: Okay. Thanks.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Next question, Patricia?

>> OPERATOR: Thank you. It looks like we have one additional audio question in the queue.

>> CALLER: Hello. I had actually two questions. The first was: Do you have different point people at each school, say, a guidance counselor in one school, a superintendent in another, and maybe a special education teacher in a third? Or is it all the same position in each school?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: So in regards to the point person who we go to for all the referrals, et cetera?

>> CALLER: Well, you had mentioned that you kind of highlighted one person at each school as kind of the champion who really supports the program and is your go‑to person.

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Right. That is the guidance counselor is who we go to for ‑‑ at the high schools there is a guidance counselor just for special ed. So that's the guidance counselor we use. However in the advisory group meetings, the assistant principals as well as administrative assistant principals attend the meetings. But the guidance counselor is the one who gets in contact with the other guidance counselors to make those referrals.

>> CALLER: Is the advisory group just made up of principals and assistant principals or do you have teachers and guidance counselors as well?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Guidance counselor as well, and case managers.

>> PETER DARLING: Could I just throw in ‑‑ you can continue ‑‑ if that feels administrative heavy, it is potentially, and that's purposeful. What we found is that we went in with essentially free service, they loved it, they appreciated it, but ‑‑ you know, they only embrace it when they own it, and the only way you can sort of make inroads or make a difference in school environments or any environment is to have some administrative support. If they just know you're there, that isn't enough. You want their buy‑in, their understanding so that when things aren't working as smoothly as they need to be ‑‑ again, not in a punitive way, but you can bring that up and they can help facilitate whatever needs to be improved or removed.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Was there a follow‑up question?

>> CALLER: Yeah, my second question was about how you got buy‑in with the different businesses, the local businesses. How did you get them to come and teach your students about budgeting and other things like that? And how did you get them to hire your students?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, great questions. You know, we just went throughout and asked. I mean, sometimes people don't think that you can go and ask businesses, but, for example, there was a local bank. Just approached them. And I know they have to do a lot of community work. So what better person to ask to do personal finance. So the students are learning all about check writing. And we have the computer class as well that we're doing part of it, but we have many businesses that have much more expertise, and they are very open to coming in and teaching the students. We have a lot of nonprofit agencies such as the Y ‑‑ our YWCA and YMCA that come in and teach, as well as ‑‑ I shouldn't say they're always coming to GSIL. We have gone to their sites also. So it's not just they're at GSIL every day. We're out in the community probably half the time. [ INAUDIBLE ] transportation, what we do is we provide public transportation ‑‑ no, sorry, we don't do it. We do public transportation training. So we're in contact with the local transit authority, and they are actually ‑‑ we're very fortunate here, I guess, in New Hampshire. They actually will go and pick up a student at their ‑‑ take a bus, pick up the student at the site and travel around with them making sure they understand bus routes, making sure they know where the mall is and other parts of the town. So I guess we are fortunate.

>> CALLER: Thank you.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you. Patricia, have any more calls or questions come?

>> OPERATOR: And there are no further questions in the queue.

>> JEFF SHEEN: We're getting close to the end but let me ask one final question I've seen a few times. Peter, when you talked about the fee for service agreement, there has been some questions about what does that amount to? As far as what is the school paying for these services? What that is kind of the standard rate that you're ‑‑

>> PETER DARLING: Owe in terms of dollars? They want a real number?

>> JEFF SHEEN: They want real numbers, Peter.

>> PETER DARLING: No, I'm buying time, Richard, because I'm trying to do the math, because summer session is different than the other. Approximately it would be about, oh, $5500 for the school district to buy a 16‑week program for a student. That would give them access to four academic credits.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Great. Thank you. One final question, Richard, that came in, if I can: Do you all have ‑‑ Maureen, you talked about developing the curriculum and doing a lot of work on that. Do you have other recommendations for web sites or other ideas of additional curriculum that you thought would be relevant to this issue?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, we use some of the computer software programs. We use Key Train. I don't know if anybody with familiar with. Career ready 101. It has reading, math and work habits, you know, work ethics, skill training. As well as with bridges transition with choices. It goes over a lot of career exploration, career guidance. It has a whole curriculum on resume writing, interviewing. So between those two sites are really good web sites.

The other is I ask the school a lot of times what their curriculum looks like. So the school is really open a lot of times to give us what their curriculum is, and there's a lot of free web sites. If you just Google certain curriculums you can find out so much information. I don't have any particular sites right now that I could think of that I use.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Great, thank you. Richard, turn it back over to you.

>> RICHARD PETTY: All right. I have a final question, and we might have a moment for another web question before we conclude, but as sort of a final question for Peter and Maureen, and that is: Do you have recommendations that you would make to a center that wanted to get involved, wanted to start this kind of a program? Anything that you recommend for them in starting a program?

>> PETER DARLING: Yeah, I think my recommendation is to start something. I don't know how large or small you are, and there's probably representation from both ends of the spectrum and everything in between, but do something with the students. Again, experientially, as students leave the world of entitlement, which are public schools, the adult world is for most ‑‑ or many of them is so totally different, and we used to have a thing here, it's not funny, don't let them graduate to their couch. We want to be sure that ‑‑ in any way that we can that we get students with disabilities much more actively involved in their life, in their community and work is a great vehicle to do that. Any kind of exposures. Again, most of us don't have dollars to do that or excess dollars, but, again, even if you can do it in a small way in one school, you will be making a critical difference. So I would just strongly encourage that. Historically we have not been strong through our 33 years with transitioning youth. Most of the attention went to the adult area. But I think it's an area of great need. So anything small, to me, would be meaningful.

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, and I would just like to add, if there was a way you could create just a small pilot within a school so that you can really demonstrate the value to that school I think would be invaluable.

>> JEFF SHEEN: This is Jeff. Let me jump in with one more quick question that's come in, and it's kind of in this area. As you work with these young adults you get them engaged, you have some success with them, do you have ways that you've used to keep them engaged as they are becoming adults and they've left kind of this program, but are they still engaged with the center there?

>> PETER DARLING: Yes and no. I think that's been something we've been highly aware of. Part of ‑‑ the good news is they are enrolled automatically in VR, and when they graduate or when they drop out or when ‑‑ whatever happens to them, we've always got that conduit to continued contact and hopefully positive movement forward. We have assigned an IL service coordinator to the project and are trying to, you know, not only integrate those services while they're with us but to make those services and the awareness of the services much more prominent in their adult life as they transition. So we still have lots of work to do. We're far from perfect on that. Again, some of that is just the amount of dollars and some of it is just other things.

Maureen?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: I'm just hoping through the early learning ‑‑ Earn & Learn experience they had they learn about a broad away of community resources but hopefully we set a foundation for them to continue on with us or continue on with learning and their education. So...

>> RICHARD PETTY: Great. Jeff, do you have any ‑‑ we've got room, time, for another quick web question if you have one.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Let me ask one that just came in, then. It was somebody that wanted us ‑‑ Maureen, if you could just review the transportation arrangements about getting the students to the job sites. Who is responsible to provide that transportation?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, they're actually responsible. What we do is we do a lot of the training, again, the public transportation. So three days a week they come to our office at GSIL and the other two days they go to their work sites. Also there are some students who will receive some funding through the school district to get that transportation, but we are really trying to promote independence. So that's why we ‑‑ they are providing their own transportation. But, again, ultimately, as I said before, the school district is ‑‑ would be the person responsible.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you. There was one final question that: Some states ‑‑ the VR doesn't start working with youth until their senior year but it sounded like from earlier discussion you're working with folks as young as 15 and 16, is that correct?

>> MAUREEN O'DONNELL: Yeah, usually around 16 is when we're starting.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Great. Thank you. Thanks, Richard. That's it.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Thank you. Maureen and Peter, wonderful job. Thank you so much for your presentation and for answering all of our questions. It's been a real privilege to learn from you both today. I'd also like to acknowledge some other folks who have been involved in this particular webinar. Darrell Jones here at ILRU began working with Maureen and Peter in the original concept of this webinar. Sharon Finney has done hours of work developing this new platform for us here at ILRU and in organizing this webinar. Carol Eubanks worked with us on developing the slides. Dawn handled registration and Marge has helped out with our ‑‑ our web work, and we're always appreciative of our associates at Utah State University, Jeff Sheen. So thanks to all of them and it is great to have such a nice, large audience for this webinar, and we hope, we trust that we've been able to answer almost all of the questions that we've had either with the ‑‑ that came in through the registration or that we've had during the webinar today. If you do have other questions, you have Maureen's contact information. You can also write us at ILRU in response to the e‑mail announcement that you received. You can respond to that and we'll get those questions and try to answer them also.

We very much appreciate your response to our evaluation. We use the evaluations in helping to make our future webinars better, and it's very brief. I promise that it will take very little time for you to complete it, and we'd like your response to the content of this webinar and to the new platform that we've had. We want to know how well that has worked for you. We are always working to make the experience that you have in our webinars better.

And I'll want to make sure that everyone knows that our second webinar on youth transition, working with school districts and Vocational Rehabilitation, will be next Wednesday July 17 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern time and we'll be learning from the folks at Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and they have another great program for us to explore next week. So we're looking forward to that, and we hope that you'll return to hear from the folks at Lehigh Valley.

And that, everyone, should conclude our webinar. We look forward to being together again next week. Good afternoon.