Building Bridges: Strengthening School Partnerships for Effective Pre-ETS and Work-Based Learning

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Sonoran Center for
Excellence in Disabilities

Agenda

Overview of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Pre Employment Transition Services (PreETS)

Overview of Employment First

Sonoran Center's PreETS Project

How the Sonoran Center can partner with providers

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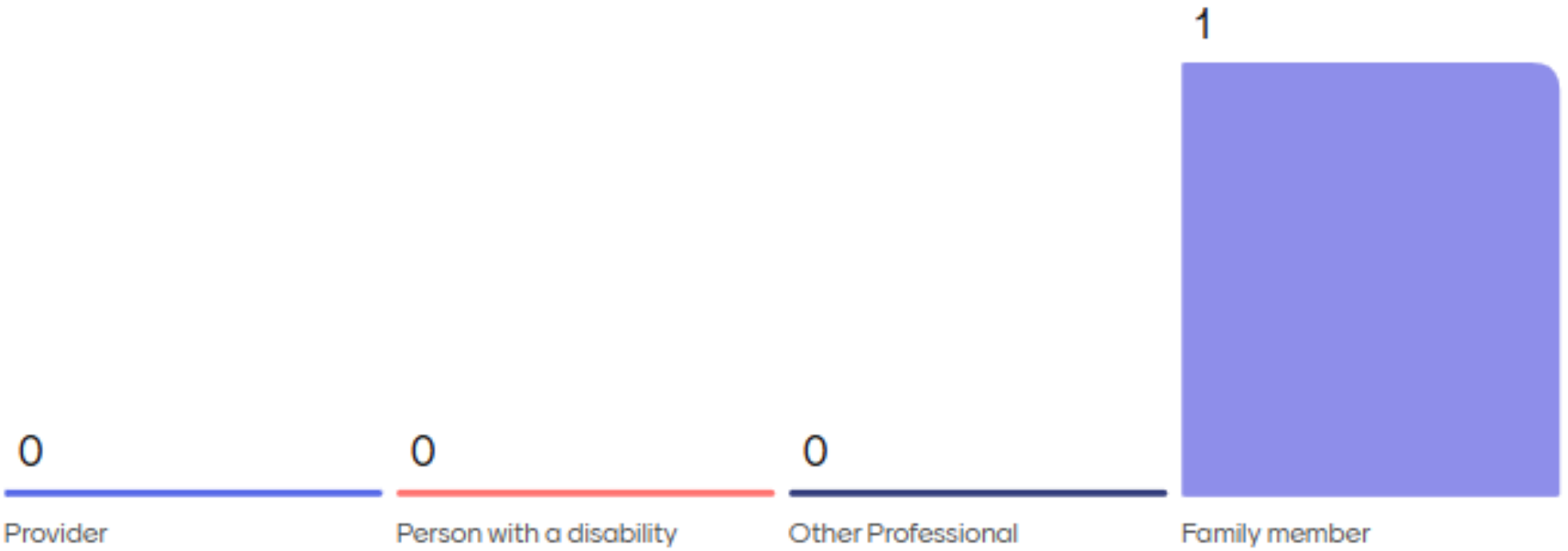
What is your role?



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Pre-workshop survey

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What do you hope to get out of this workshop?

More ideas on working with schools

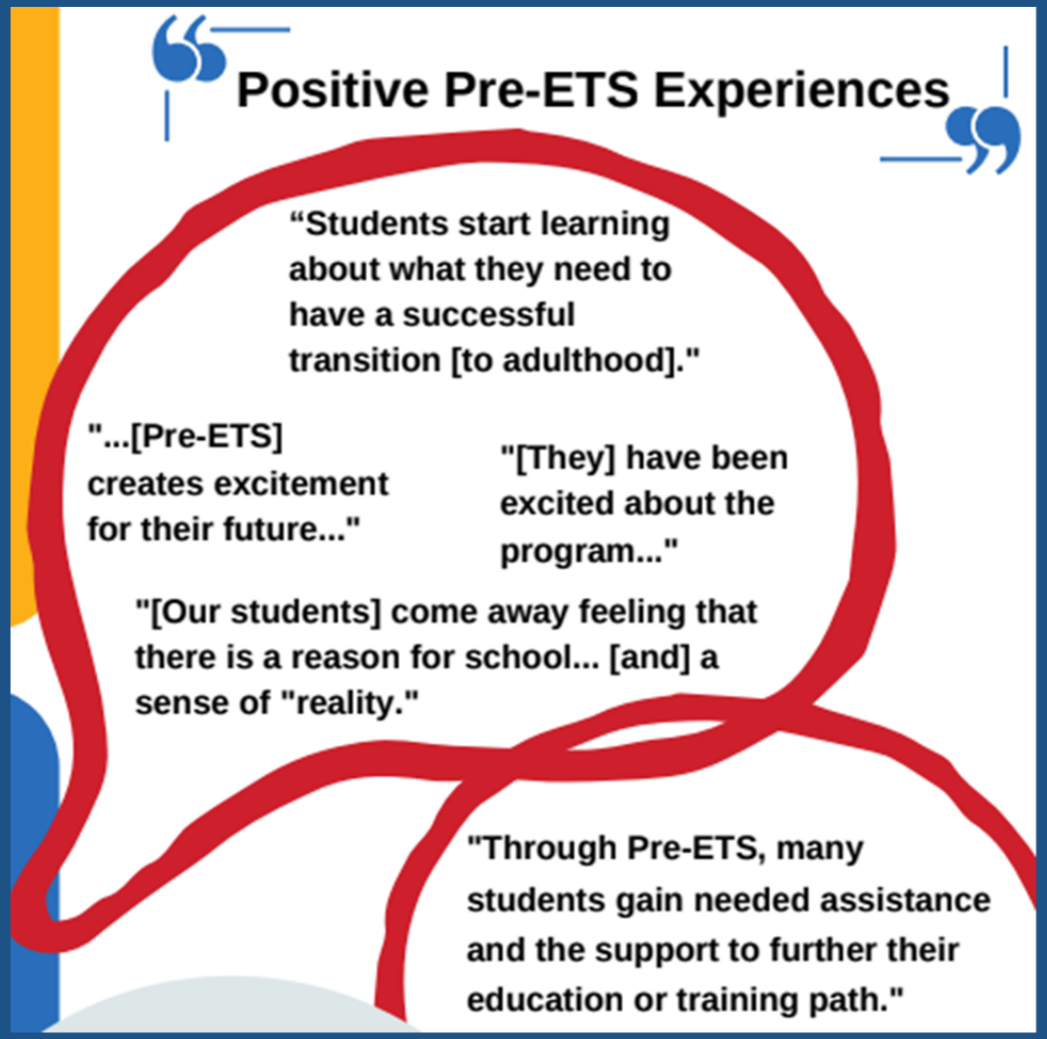
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

- Vocational Rehabilitation assists individuals who have disabilities to overcome barriers to employment and become as economically independent as possible by helping them to prepare for, enter into, or retain employment.

- VR provides a variety of services to help individuals explore their unique skills, abilities, and needs, learning about potential career pathways, and obtain the skills needed to succeed in their chosen employment goal.

- VR collaborates with community organizations, Federal/State agencies, clients, employers, and businesses.

Pre-ETS General Overview



Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are five employment related services to help youth with a disability in an education program ages 14-22 to develop a career pathway and help facilitate an individual's transition from school to work.

Vocational Rehabilitation provides the funding for the service so there is no cost to the school or student/family and may be provided by:

- VR Counselors
- 20 Contracted providers depending on their geographic area that are listed in a Contractor Directory.
- The Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities to rural areas and underserved populations
- Diverse Ability Arizona Youth Leadership Forums

Collaboration between schools and Vocational Rehabilitation to incorporate Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as part of a student's transition plan can enhance secondary transition planning school efforts and expand opportunities for students with disabilities to likely increase postsecondary success.

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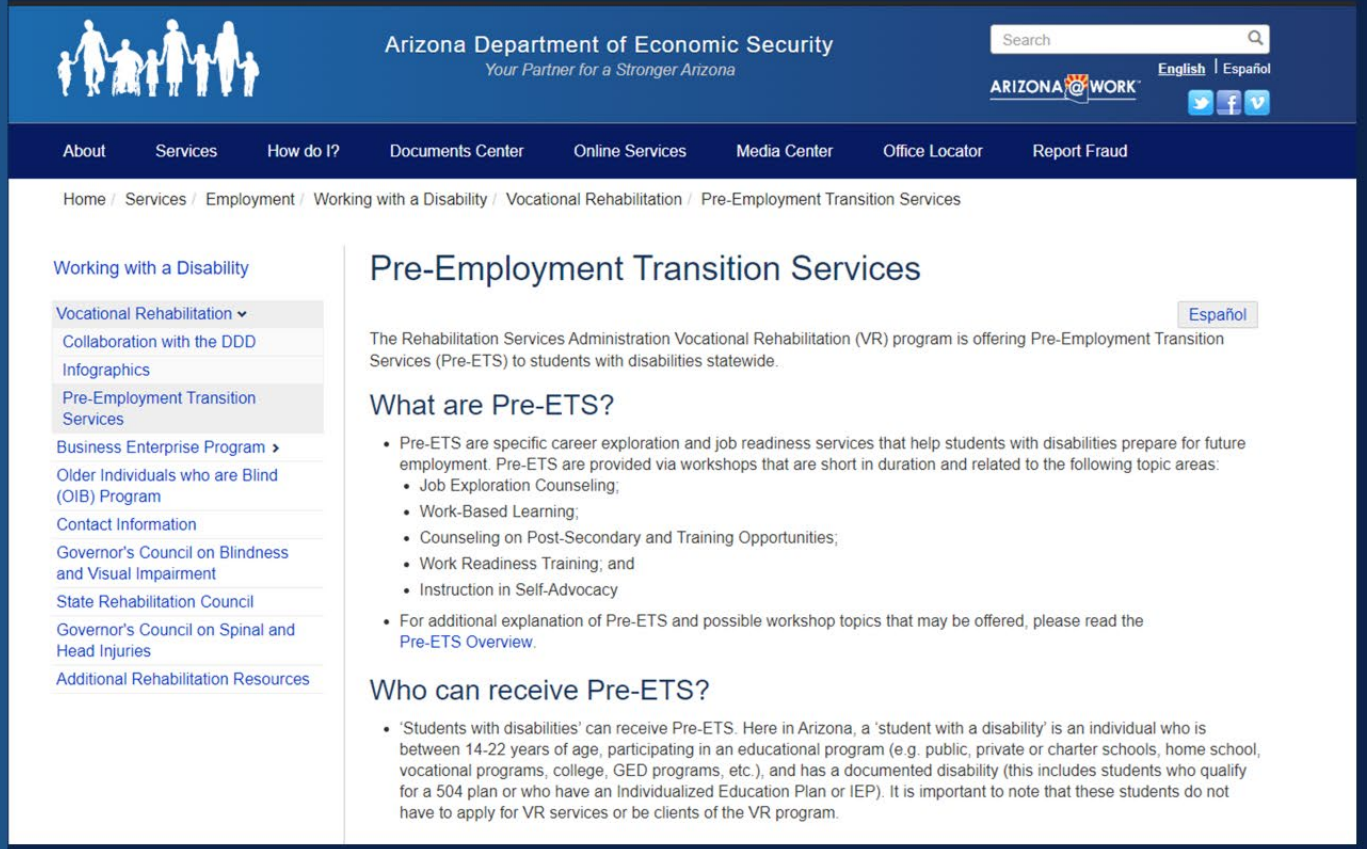
Pre-Employment Transition Service Areas

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Counseling On Opportunities For Enrollment In Comprehensive Transition Or Post-Secondary Educational Programs At Institutes Of Higher Education
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Instruction in Self-Advocacy
- **Work-Based Learning Experiences**

How to Access Pre-ETS

Do an internet search using: “Arizona Pre-Employment Transition Services” and look for DES webpage



Some Good Things to Remember About Pre-ETS

- Vendors can be allowed on school campus.
  - Schools can decided to have vendors on school property during or after the school day.
- Pre-ETS can be provided during school day.
  - Administrators can allow Pre-ETS to be provided during the school day
  - School administrators can determine when the best time(s) to allow Pre-ETS can be provided.
- Schools are critical to supporting the provision of pre-ETS.
  - WIOA does require collaboration with VR to allow students to access Pre-ETS.
- Pre-ETS are not duplicate services of IDEA transition services.
  - Pre-ETS cover a wide multitude of activities related to creating a career pathway which are focused on students developing future employment. It is important to remember that while schools may be doing some of these activities, students may need more to help them discover their future pathway.

A Little Project History

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) requires that state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies set aside 15% of their budget for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre ETS).
- Vocational Rehabilitation partners with The Sonoran Center to provide Work-Based Learning Experience
- Successful Partnership with three schools to start
- Today we continue to work to improve capacity in schools across the state and in underserved communities.

Employment First-it's a shift in Mindset

Everyone can work with supports

MINDSHIFT

EXPECTING JOB READINESS FIRST

ASSUMING SHELTERED OR CENTER-BASED EMPLOYMENT IS THE ONLY OPTION

ASSUMING COMPETITIVE JOBS ARE TOO DEMANDING

MINDSHIFT

Thinking Only Certain Jobs are Suitable for People with Disabilities

Stereotypes and biases lead to doubt of capabilitites

Underestimating the Value of On-the-Job Supports

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PreETS word cloud

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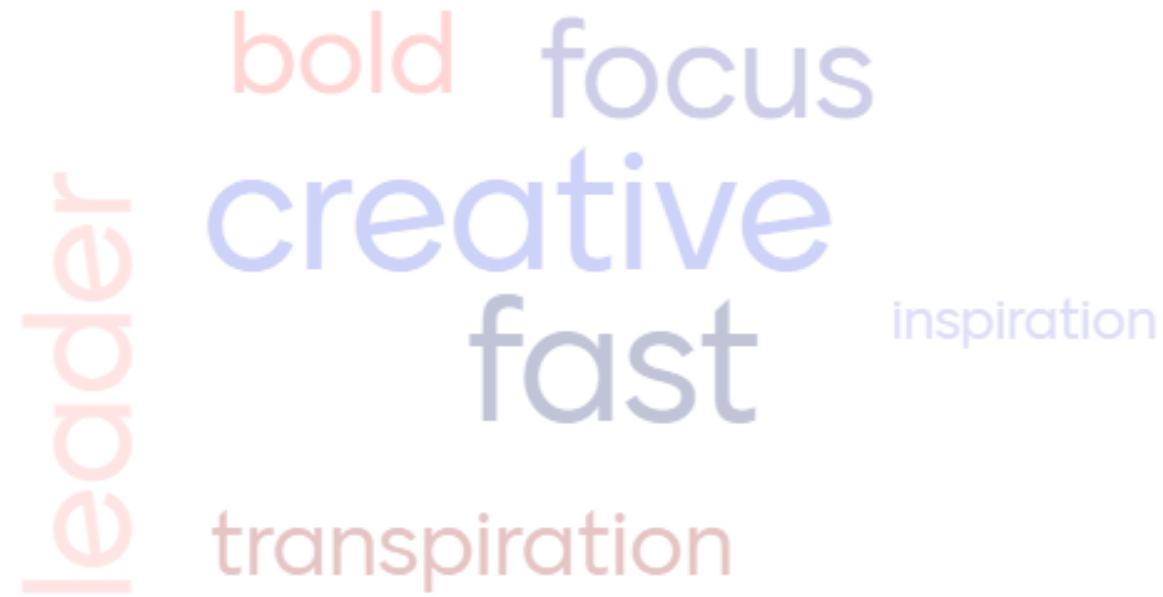

What help would you like with PreETS?

bold

focus

creative

leader

fast

inspiration

transpiration

Services Provided by the Sonoran Center

- Develop partnerships with school districts and charters
- Create new Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE) sites both in the community and virtually with local and remote employers
- Coach schools to develop business relationships
  - Create a successful WBL model for schools to follow
- Paid summer work experiences

Work-Based Learning Experience

- Experiences for transition-aged youth in underserved and rural populations through virtual and hands-on experiences
- Opportunity to focus on soft skills/ transferable skills
- Quality over quantity
- Patience and creativity
- Rapport
- Ongoing communication
- Sustainability of the school's transition program

Total number of partnered schools

19

Number of student participants (2024-2025 school year)

143

Number of schools in the planning process

3

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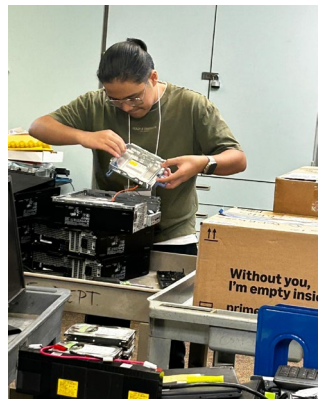
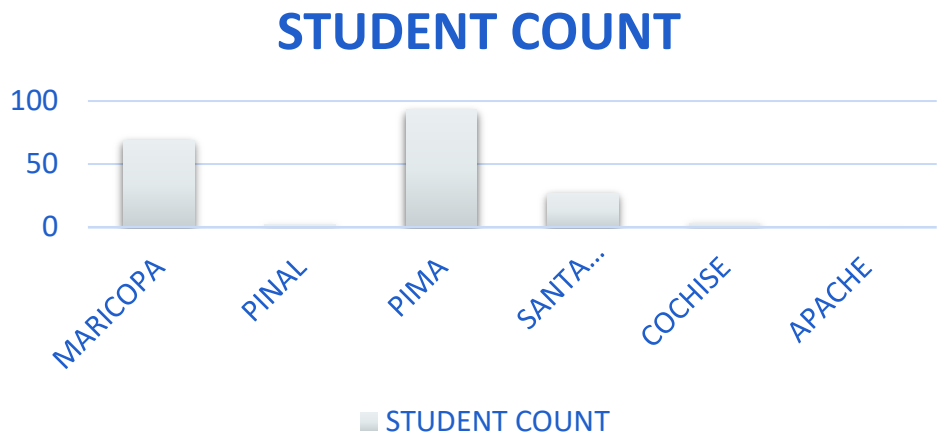
Summer Work Program Experience

- Individualized community placements
- Expanded to 6 counties
  (Pima/Santa Cruz/Cochise/Maricopa/Pinal/Apache)
- Vocational Specialist on site (Fading plans optional)
- Ongoing communication
- Relationship building
- Resume Builder
- Paid experience

Number of Participants
194

Community partnerships
65





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Strategies for Connecting with Schools

- Meeting in-person, working with their schedule, and adapting.
- Building a strong relationship with the school staff, including school leadership
  - Spend half a day observing the class/program
- Utilizing school staff knowledge
- Ongoing/continuous communication
  - Quarterly check-in's
- Sharing materials from PreETS activities with school staff to review with students

Strategies for Connecting with Employers

- Research the local area
- Use connections the school already has
- Go in person and have infographic or basic information ready to share
    - Share the benefit to their business
    - Share about Employment First
- Ask if they are interested in job shadowing, work-based learning experiences, or both

Build the bridge between schools and employers

- Invite 2-3 school staff to attend Work-Based Learning (WBLE)
- Train the trainer: school staff can observe and be trained by job coach/PreETS instructor
- Include school point person in all communications with the employer
- Facilitate the conversation between employer and school for extended work-based learning opportunities
- Be an ongoing resource – check in at least quarterly with both the employer and school

How our project can help support your work

- In collaboration, not competition
- Providers can do all 5 PreETS areas and Sonoran Center can provide extended WBLE to help solidify employer/school relationship
- Connections with employers
- Connections with schools
- Job coach with us for the Summer Work Program and connect with students who can become clients

Sonoran Center and Best Buddies Partnership

- This summer, Best Buddies and the Sonoran Center partnered together for our Summer Work Program in Buckeye.

- Best Buddies has been working with high schools in the Buckeye area and has strong relationships with the schools and families.

- One of their staff has been working as a job coach for the Summer Work Program at an employer site in Buckeye.

- Best Buddies has been encouraged to share information about their services with the SWP students they work with.

Perspective

Employer:
…Welcoming individuals with disabilities to join our workforce. The staff learn that people with disabilities can provide several benefits to our team, and it helps them when considering hiring an individual with a disability in the future.

Teacher:
I absolutely love working with Sonoran Center for Disabilities. The Vocational Specialist is the best! She is good at communicating and supporting our students in every way. The Vocational Specialist did an amazing job assisting our students in their Work-Based Learning Experience!

Student:
I feel good about the work I am doing, and I like to work with other people.

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We want your feedback!

Add QR Code

Contact us:
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