

Granite State Employment Project
State of New Hampshire
Department of Health and Human Services
Bureau of Developmental Services

Executive Summary

The Monadnock Center for Successful Transitions (MCST) is in a strategic position to meet the outcomes set forth by the Granite State Employment Project (GSEP). The challenge to improve transition and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the Southwestern region of New Hampshire motivates our work, and MCST is prepared to inspire existing partners and others in our region to meet this challenge. Our current vision is to prepare all youth (14-24) for a successful transition to adulthood by linking resources to assist students, families, schools, employers, and supporting services. As we embarked on the development of MCST over three years ago, we realized the need for leadership in transition and employment for individuals with disabilities in our region. A core group of key transition stakeholders from our region met to brainstorm ways to establish a centralized resource to connect transition, postsecondary and employment resources for individuals with disabilities.

In two short years, with funding from a grant proposal to the Workforce Opportunities Council, Inc., in cooperation with the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council, US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy, MCST emerged as a leader in providing technical assistance, establishing linkages, and providing training related to transition and, more specifically, employment for youth and young adults with disabilities. The focus on employment continues through a speaker's bureau to promote individuals with developmental disabilities as an underutilized workforce. Additional funding from the New Hampshire Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education State Improvement Grant II (SIG II) allows for the continuation of technical assistance and training in the region. The activities for the SIG II initiative match the vision of our organization and provide a solid base for the implementation and development of the GSEP pilot project goals.

Monadnock Developmental Services (MDS) is the fiscal agent for MCST. Keene State College is the primary subcontractor, assisting MCST in planning, coordination, and delivery of technical assistance and training for the Center. Hence, the Center has two main bases in the community where most operations and supports are conducted. The important partnership between MDS and KSC helps to maintain a strong connection to transition stakeholders in our community as these two organizations have provided leadership to the special education and the disability community in our region. To support the outcomes of the GSEP we will expand the population served to include adults and to create new partnerships through subcontracts which to develop an effective strategic plan. Subcontractors will include KSC to provide leadership on post secondary education and employment strategies for graduates as well as consultation on the data collection system; Southern New Hampshire University to take the lead in the development of the data collection system; Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce to provide outreach to the business community; Monadnock Family Services (MFS) and MDS to concentrate on professional development and training; The Institute for Community Inclusion to provide

job development and job coaching training; and ServiceLink, in collaboration with MDS and MFS, to focus on improving the coordination of service coordination. Additional subcontracts will be made with Granite State Independent Living and the DD Council.

Through the GSEP pilot project, we will expand our target population and provide technical assistance and training to employers and adult service agencies. The target disability populations served through the GSEP will include youth and adults who have learning disabilities, attention deficits, developmental disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, or physical disabilities. The service area for the proposed GSEP pilot project includes the 34 towns that make up the Monadnock region in southwestern New Hampshire. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2005), there were 6,575 individuals with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 living in Cheshire and the western part of Hillsborough counties who could potentially benefit from the leadership, training, and technical assistance provided by the Center. Through the development of a comprehensive employment database, MCST will track outcomes related to this project and employment trends for individuals with disabilities in the proposed pilot project region.

In the spirit of MCST vision, networks have been established with the following partners who support transition planning and employment for people with disabilities in our region: Monadnock Developmental Services, Monadnock Family Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Divisions of Children Youth and Families and Juvenile Justice, SAU 1, SAU 29, SAU 38, SAU 47, SAU 60, SAU 63, employers, individuals with disabilities and their families. Representatives from these organizations inform MCST activities and serve on our Advisory Board. Two additional MCST Advisory Board sub-groups inform our work (1) A School Transition Community of Practice group; and (2) Employment Sub-Group. These groups function as planning entities for the MCST as well as vehicles for the sharing of knowledge. MCST has developed strong connections at the state and national levels and participates on the New Hampshire Transition Community of Practice (NH COP) planning group. MCST actively works on the statewide level with the NH Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education; Vocational Rehabilitation, including planning New Hampshire Disability Mentoring Day; Area Agency Transition Coordinators, and The Transition Community of Practice.

The purpose of the proposed pilot project for the GSEP is to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities in the southwestern region of NH by building on existing partnerships and networks established by the MCST. The following goals will drive the efforts of this pilot project:

- **Expand** current collaborative networks and partnerships from among all stakeholders in our region to support individuals with disabilities to attain and maintain employment.
- **Engage** the business community in efforts to improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- **Create** a regional infrastructure to provide high quality, coordinated, employment supports and services for individuals with disabilities.
- **Develop** an employment database that provides regional employment information with the ability to be used statewide.
- **Coordinate** the support services necessary to obtain and sustain employment.