AWARENESS - PROVIDING INFORMATION ON CVTE PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

It is critically important that students, parents and guardians understand what CVTE programs are, where they are located, their value and outcomes for students, and how to apply and participate. Accordingly, access to information about CVTE programs is a fundamental component of **admissions**. This section explains how CVTE schools/programs can provide necessary information to students and their families to improve **equitable access** to CVTE programs. CVTE schools/programs, along with sending school districts, should take intentional steps to provide clear and accurate information that is free of bias to students and their families. **Both sending and receiving districts should read this section in its entirety.**

REQUIREMENTS

SENDING DISTRICTS

Pursuant to Massachusetts regulations, a sending district must:

- Offer CVTE schools/programs opportunities to provide middle school students with information about vocational programs and careers on-site at their middle schools, as well as through mail and email.
    - These opportunities must be meaningful and substantive for students to be able to engage with CVTE schools/programs and learn about their programs. Leaving pamphlets or other written information at a sending district in a location visible to students, on its own, does not provide this substantive opportunity.
    - Some examples of opportunities a middle school could provide are:
        - Host a CVTE presentation at their middle school for **all** students (e.g., through an assembly or during a rotating enrichment period).
        - Schedule an 8th grade visit with staffing support (e.g. 8th grade teachers to chaperone) during a school day to the local or regional CVTE school/program so that middle schoolers can observe the educational opportunities offered through this type of educational model.
        - Host a high school and/or career awareness event, inviting the district's high school, area CVTE schools/programs, and employers, as part of a comprehensive career and academic planning program such as the one supported by MyCAP.

- If a member of a regional vocational school, release the names and addresses of grade 7 and 8 students no later than October 15th of each year to authorized school personnel of the regional vocational school district.
    - Provided that the sending school gives public notice of this release and allows parents and eligible students reasonable time to request that their information not be released without their consent
    - Sending districts should share information about grade 7 and 8 students consistent with their policies for sharing directory information, and must offer families and eligible students reasonable time to request that their information not be released without consent.

NOTE: to assist regional vocational schools in providing program information to families of grade 7 and 8 students, sending districts are strongly encouraged to consider appropriate modifications to their policies for sharing directory information where needed to include the primary language spoken in the home.

A sending district must not:

- Unreasonably withhold student access to tours of CVTE schools/programs during the school day
- Count middle school student tours of CVTE schools/programs during the school day as unexcused absences
    - Provided that the school/program confirms the student's participation.

RECEIVING DISTRICTS

Pursuant to Massachusetts regulations, a receiving district must:

- Submit its admissions policy to the Department by October 1 (see section 6);
- Publish the policy annually in its Program of Studies;
- Post a copy on the school website;
- Provide a copy to each student applicant and their parent/guardian;
- Make all admissions materials available in both English and the primary language of the home, if such primary language is other than English.

RECEIVING AND SENDING DISTRICTS

Pursuant to Massachusetts regulations, both sending and receiving districts must:

- Present students with a broad spectrum of education and career opportunities.

Sending and receiving districts must not:

- Present race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation as limiting factors in career determination; or
- Employ any materials, tests, or procedures for guidance purposes that discriminate or limit a student’s choice on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

The Model Policy Template further describes admissions communication polices.

CONSIDERATIONS

SENDING DISTRICTS

Have the facts.

- Communicate with CVTE schools/programs regularly to stay informed on how your students might benefit from vocational technical education.
    - CVTE schools/programs prepare students for both higher education and careers.
    - CVTE schools/programs provide technical skills and knowledge that can set students on a range of career paths, including by providing a head start on professional licensure.

Honor student agency.

- Students and their families are best positioned to decide the educational option that is best for them.
    - School staff (teachers, guidance counselors) are there to provide information and support to **all** students.

RECEIVING DISTRICTS

Know your community and the students you are serving.

- Knowledge of your school community's demographics is essential to providing information.
- Regularly sending out home language surveys is an excellent way to help make sure you are reaching all families.
- Make sure that materials you provide are accessible to all interested students, including those whose primary language is not English.

Review Data – see the Local Data Review and Reflection section for more information

- Remember that data shows us what is happening, and good data analysis shows us *why* it is happening.
- Reviewing data on the community and on enrolled students helps districts not only see who is being served, but also who could be served.
- This type of data review and analysis can improve targeted recruitment plans.
- Remember that low or missing student data for a particular population does not necessarily mean lack of interest.

  An example: If the sending community data accounts for speakers of four primary languages, yet enrolled student data (including data from Home Language Surveys) shows that English is the primary language of all enrolled students, this should prompt analysis and questions that can lead to better outreach and information sharing.

Engage with your families and community.

Engaging with families and the community presents an important learning opportunity for the district. The Department's Office for College, Career, and Technical Education (OCCTE) unit has interviewed students, most of whom report that they learned about CVTE schools/programs from their friends and older siblings. This speaks to the power of networking and **social capital**. While effective for some students, it should not be the only source of information that reaches students.

Districts need to engage with families and the community with intention to reach all populations. As one example, cultural centers and other local community organizations can be an excellent source to connect students with information about CVTE. They can create opportunities for families (including those whose students are not enrolled in programs) to share their perspectives with school administrators and staff on ways to reach prospective students.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN DISTRICTS

To best support students, districts should maintain open communication and provide information to students and their families through collaborative efforts. It is essential that receiving and sending districts work together to provide information that is accurate, clear, and timely.

Areas for collaboration include:

- **Culturally-responsive recruitment, admissions, and learning environments.** A focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-bias and anti-racism training, especially for staff involved with recruitment and admissions, can improve practices such as tours, information sessions, interviews and application review, and inspire other systemic changes.
- **Coordination between counselors.** Admissions and counseling staff at CVTE schools and programs should prioritize providing middle school guidance counselors with the information they need to explain CVTE as an educational option to all students, with particular emphasis on reaching students who receive special education or English learner services.
- **English Learner (EL) recruitment and success.** Designating an EL specialist at the CVTE school/program to work with sending districts is an excellent way to develop targeted, culturally-responsive strategies to attract, recruit, and retain ELs throughout the admissions cycle. The EL specialist can help design and implement an inclusive and accessible admissions process and collaborate with sending districts to provide support to ELs.
- **Presentations in middle schools and open houses.** Middle school presentations and open houses require coordination and collaboration between districts, including arranging schedules and transportation (where applicable). These student experiences are most effective when districts plan and work together. Consider holding an annual planning meeting for this purpose.
- **Application forms and processes**. Completing application forms may require assistance from sending and receiving districts. Districts that use the same forms each year have a familiarity and understanding that students and their families may not share. It is important to have a plan for assisting students and families, to designate contact persons to answer questions or provide assistance, and to include their contact information on all application forms and platforms.
- **Navigating the** Chapter 74 Nonresident Tuition Process can be challenging for students and their families, especially for new students, students who change programs, and students who move. It is important to have a plan in place for helping students navigate this process, and include all necessary contact information on all application forms and platforms.
- **Addressing both the Awareness Gap** (in who applies) **and Opportunity Gap** (in who is offered admission). *See* section Local Data Review and Reflection on the Chapter 74 Admissions & Waitlist Collection for more information.

IDENTIFYING, PREVENTING, AND INTERRUPTING BIAS

Identifying, preventing, and interrupting bias requires intention, knowledge, and resources.

Sending and receiving districts should be mindful of the following:

- Provide information that is accurate, free of bias, and that reaches all students, including potential applicants and enrolled students.
- Clearly communicate in recruitment materials that CVTE schools/programs may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

  Note: The Department also encourages districts to explicitly acknowledge non-discrimination based on homelessness.
- Staff information sessions, recruitment teams, and admissions teams to the greatest extent possible with members representative of the communities they serve, so that interested students can see themselves reflected in the school community.
- Regularly review the information provided to students for bias and stereotyping.
- Create a climate among staff and faculty where equitable recruitment information sharing practices are embraced and valued.

NOTE: The Office of Public School Monitoring includes multiple resources on understanding and preventing bias in their Tiered Focused Monitoring Civil Rights Toolkit.

Regular Review of Information Content and Delivery

Regular review of admissions and recruitment information for content and delivery promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Essential Questions:

- Is the information accurate and current?
- Is it free of bias and stereotyping?
- Are in-person presentations being delivered by a diverse population?
- Are supports in place for students who need assistance in accessing and understanding the information?
- What is the makeup of the community and the student body, and how has this been considered in the information content and how it is messaged?

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

School counselors play an important role in the admissions process. Be intentional about including them in trainings on equitable access, reviewing the information they provide to students, and supporting them with resources for effective communication with all students.

- School counselors and other staff involved in career planning and development can work more effectively when they have comprehensive knowledge of CVTE programs, including information about professional certifications, work-based learning opportunities, and postsecondary options like articulation agreements and registered apprenticeship training.
- School counselors may need support from the district to communicate with students who are ELs or who have sensory impairments.
- School counselors can seek out professional development opportunities on providing counseling practices that are free of bias and stereotyping.
- School counselors can use **Career Plans** to actively involve students in program decisions. Plans such as MyCAP are built with student engagement in mind.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Students that belong to "special populations" under federal laws for CVTE schools/programs ("Perkins V") may experience unique informational challenges. Perkins V defines "special populations" to include the following groups:

- individuals with disabilities;
- individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low income youth and adults;
- individuals preparing for non-traditional fields;
- single parents, including single pregnant women;
- out-of-workforce individuals;
- English learners;
- homeless individuals;
- youth who are in, or who have aged out of the foster care system; and
- youth with a parent who is in active military duty.

Please review Perkins V's discussion of these special populations, as well as student groups protected under Massachusetts' Access to Equal Educational Opportunity regulations, for requirements concerning both sending districts and CVTE schools/programs.

THE DEPARTMENT'S OFFICE FOR COLLEGE, CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (OCCTE)

Sending and receiving districts, students, and their families can reach out to OCCTE with questions. OCCTE Contacts:

- OCCTE email: ccte@mass.gov
- CVTE District Liaison List