

# VSAC outreach: frequently asked questions

## What is Career & Education Outreach?

VSAC's Career & Education Outreach (CEO) Programs provides career and post-secondary information and counseling services to students in Vermont's public middle schools and high schools, and to adults through an appointment and referral process.

### Outcomes for FY08

- Outreach served 1,277 middle school students, 1,902 high school students, and 2,019 adults through the TRiO or GEAR UP programs. Total contacts in individual or group settings: 11,554 middle school students, 28,145 high school students, and 7,564 adults.
- Eighty-five percent of Outreach students graduating from high school in 2008 were enrolled in a postsecondary program in the fall of 2008.
- Nearly 1,300 scholarships totaling more than \$4 million were awarded to Outreach students for the 2007–2008 academic year.

## Why offer CEO services?

VSAC's mission is to ensure that Vermonters have the financial aid they need to pursue education or training beyond high school, and that they have the information and advice needed to make education or career plans.

## Who receives CEO services?

CEO serves any Vermonter who would like information about career planning (including early college planning), education and training beyond high school, and the financial aid process. In addition, with the assistance of three federal grants, CEO offers intensive assistance to middle school and high school students, and to adult learners who have low incomes or would be the first in their families to attend college. Eligible students in grades 6–12 are served through the Talent Search and GEAR UP programs, while adults are served through a program called Educational Opportunity Center. CEO is also home to VSAC's Career Planning Initiative, the goal of which is to create a career development system for all Vermonters.

## What federal grants support the work of CEO?

CEO receives funding from the federal TRiO programs to support its Talent Search and Educational Opportunity Center initiatives. The TRiO programs were established in 1965 as part of President Johnson's "War on Poverty." VSAC began receiving funding for Talent Search in 1969 and for EOC in 1991. The GEAR UP program was established in the 1990s. VSAC was awarded its first GEAR UP grant in 1999.

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## What services are provided?

- **Statewide services:** Programs are provided to help parents of middle school students begin to plan for their children's future beyond high school. Workshops for middle school students help them think about the future, enhance their awareness of careers and postsecondary education, and provide information about high-school course selection and options after high school. Presentations for high school students cover career decision-making, college awareness, and the financial aid process. High school students can also attend VSAC-sponsored college planning events (College Pathways) and career fairs, and can receive help applying for financial aid. Adults receive assistance, individually or in groups, with education planning, college selection, career decision-making, and financial aid.
- **Talent Search:** This program provides ongoing individual/group counseling sessions to assist students with decision-making, academic skills and course selection, career exploration, college options, and the financial aid process. College visits and a summer program are offered to all students each year.
- **Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP):** This program is similar to Talent Search except that it targets groups of students in the most needy schools, as well as individual students statewide. Eligible students may receive a scholarship upon completion of high school. GEAR UP also partners with qualified schools in need of resources for activities necessary to meet action-planning goals.
- **Educational Opportunity Center:** As is the case with the general adult population, clients eligible for this program receive assistance with education planning, college selection, career decision-making, and financial aid. Help is provided on an individual basis or through workshops such as "Career Focus," "Returning to Learning," "Personality and Career Choice," and "Learning Styles." Clients served include participants in the state's Reach Up program, which provides welfare-to-work opportunities. Under a contract with the Economic Services Division of the Department for Children and Families, CEO provides career and education planning assistance to Reach Up participants who are pursuing education beyond high school.
- **Career Planning Initiative:** VSAC's Career Planning Initiative provides career exploration resources to all Vermonters, as well as training and support in the use of these resources to school counselors, teachers, and other professionals involved in the career exploration process. The initiative offers statewide career fairs, a career conference for professionals, counseling services in the VSAC Resource Center, workshops, customized training for professionals, career program consultations to schools, and Web-based career tools. This area also oversees aspects of VSAC's Start Where You Are college access project and the Vermont Career Gateway Web portal.

## Where are services provided?

Direct service to participants is provided by more than 32 counselors who live in the communities they serve. Services are offered to every public middle and high school. Adult participants are seen at all regional One Stop Career Centers of the state Department of Labor (DOL), all sites of the Community College of Vermont (CCV), many regional Department for Children and Families (DCF) offices, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) offices, regional technical centers, adult education centers, and parent-child centers. CEO provides counseling in the VSAC Resource Center and maintains an administrative office; both are in Winooski.

## **How are services funded?**

Services are funded through a combination of federal and private money. Federal grants for the TRiO and GEAR UP programs, funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, expire every five to six years and are renewed following a competitive process. Another grant pays for specific services provided to clients in the Reach Up program.

## **Does CEO duplicate schools' services?**

CEO strives to complement or supplement — not duplicate — the information and counseling services students receive from their schools. Changes in society and the economy have made it necessary for many school counselors to focus on crisis intervention, family issues, and technical or administrative duties. This has left little time to address career development needs and to provide the level of postsecondary advising most students need. Through VSAC's two middle and high school college access programs (Talent Search and GEAR UP), students meet with their VSAC counselors every month to explore careers and work on planning for postsecondary education. The CEO counselors also provide classroom presentations to students and their parents on a range of topics related to planning for college. VSAC is the only Vermont entity that provides comprehensive and unbiased free information to students seeking opportunities in higher education.

## **Is CEO involved in other collaborations?**

CEO has a written agreement with the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to provide adult counseling services to its clients. A second DCF agreement permits access to students in foster care, for recruitment to our TRiO and GEAR UP programs. GEAR UP partners with the Vermont State Colleges, the University of Vermont, the Vermont Principals' Association, and others to address school improvement issues statewide. In addition, CEO works with many groups and agencies to provide services to Vermonters of all ages. Among these are the Vermont departments of Education, Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Corrections; adult education and literacy providers; and all Vermont middle schools, high schools, and colleges. On college campuses, CEO works closely with Student Support Services, another TRiO program. CEO also collaborates with chambers of commerce, technical schools, businesses, and agencies to provide career and education fairs to Vermonters. The Career Planning Initiative also coordinates the Career Planning Task Force. This group consists of the Vermont Department of Labor, the Vermont Department of Education, and the Vermont School Counselor Association. The goal of the task force is to create a statewide career development system.