

PAY Check: Braiding Funding Sources and Services to Support the Transition of Students to Community Life and Careers

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PAY CHECK OVERVIEW

The **Postsecondary Apprenticeship for Youth (or PAY Check)** is an innovative partnership between the LSU **Human Development Center (HDC)** – a UCEDD, state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), a Community College, and local employers. This partnership braids funding for services and supports for transition age students from various sources. PAY Check is a program that prepares students for their independent adult life in the community with post-secondary education, work-based high school diplomas, self-determination training, and paid apprenticeships.

PAY Check serves transition age students 18-21 years who are eligible for VR services and receive special education services or have a 504 plan at their school. PAY Check is a 3-5 semester program that incorporates four key features:

- Post-secondary education (PSE): Using public transportation for community college, selecting, enrolling and taking courses in the course catalog, participating in non- academic age-appropriate activities on campus, etc.;
- Work-based high school diplomas: Participating in professional career development activities at apprenticeship and PSE sites;
- Self-determination training: Learning community & work skills; and
- Paid apprenticeships: Gaining work- and soft-skills related to paid apprenticeships.

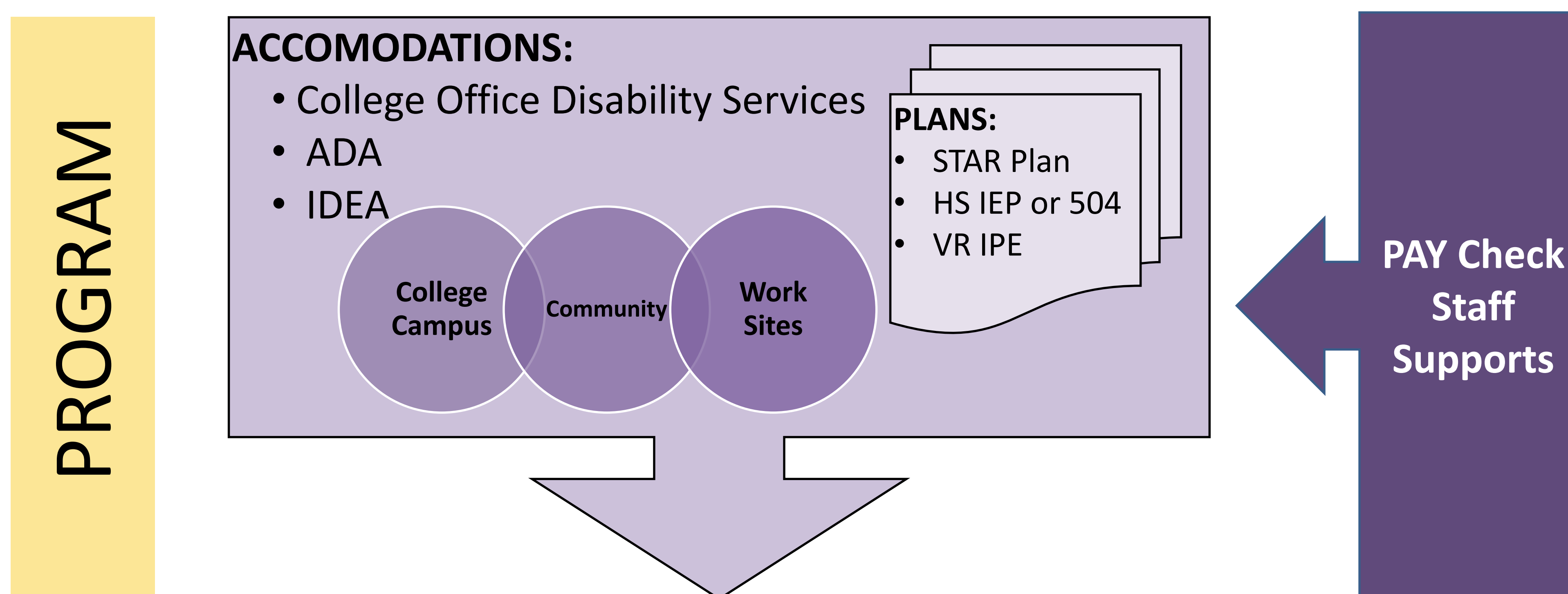
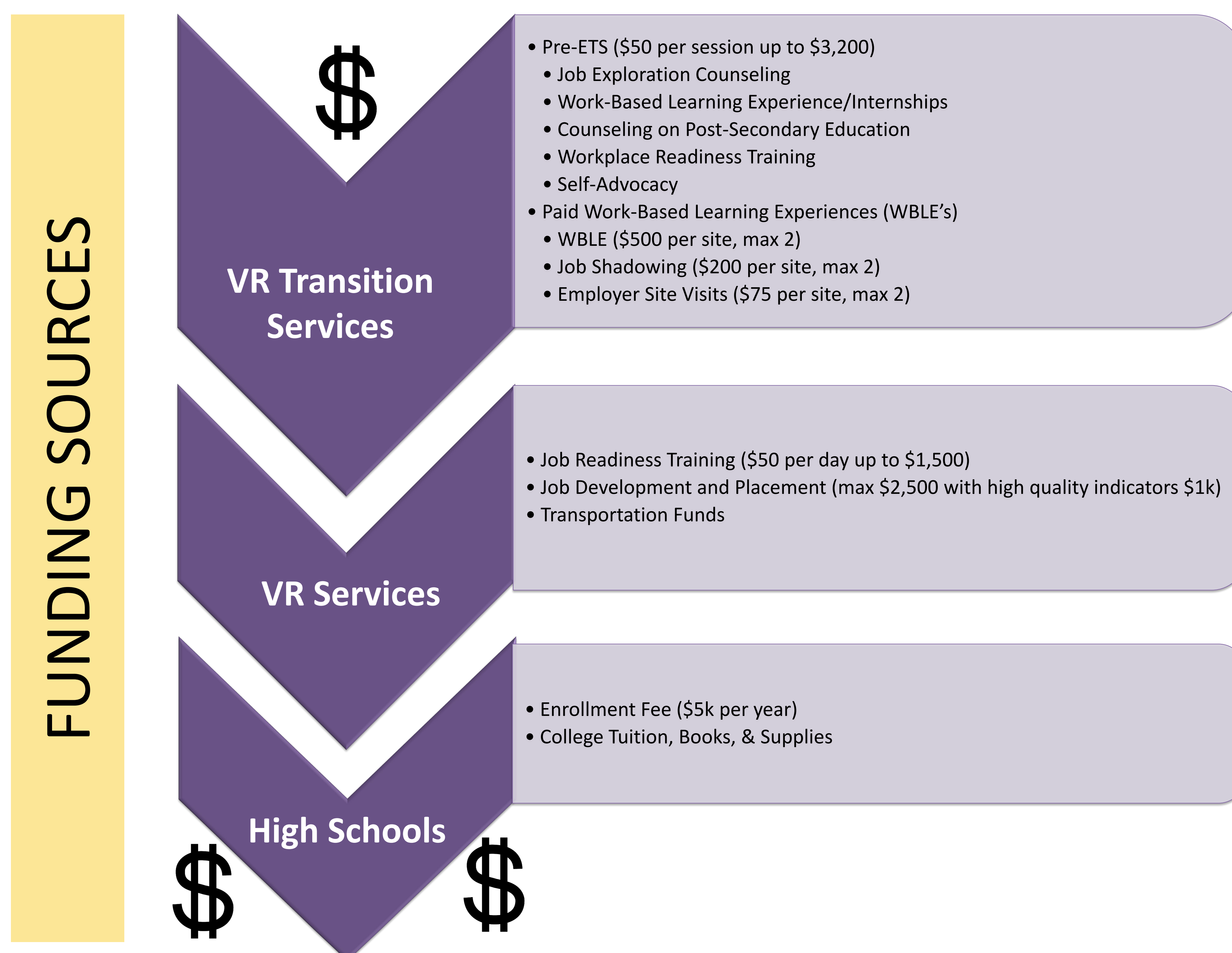
All aspects of PAY Check occur in integrated, authentic and age-appropriate settings within the community and provide opportunities for participants to acquire and engage in Pre-Employment Transition Skills (Pre-ETS), as outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA).

FUNDING SOURCES

Funding for the PAY Check Program comes from several sources: VR Services, each student's LEA or High School, and contributed support from the HDC's UCEDD core grant. Support services funded by the state VR and provided by PAY Check staff include: Pre-ETS services, Work Based Learning Experiences (WBLEs), Job Readiness Training, and Job Development and Placement. VR also provides public transportation funds for students to travel to the community college, community training and work sites. HDC contributes administrative support and overall project coordination. HDC became a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) in order to provide the above services to PAY Check students. State VR funding is also used for WBLEs that reimburse the employers for paid apprenticeship wages. Each student's LEA provides additional funding of \$5K per student as an enrollment fee plus their school also pays for their college tuition, books, and supplies.

PAY Check staff provide coordination between the PSE and paid apprenticeship sites to ensure participants have opportunities to learn and practice community and employment skills. The program works because all the collaborative partners (i.e., students and their families, VR, LEAs, PSE and paid apprenticeship sites) work together to provide the needed supports, services and funding so participants can succeed.

FUNDING FOR PAY CHECK



PAY CHECK PROGRAM

During the first semester, participants select, enroll, and complete community college courses at Delgado Community College (DCC). In the second semester, participants continue at DCC, and begin learning pre-employment transition skills, and receive on-the-job training at apprenticeship work sites. Examples of work learning experiences include Human Resources Clerk, Kiosk Attendant, and hospital Sterile Processing Aide. The third semester focuses on placement in a job related to their training from the previous semesters.

The PAY Check curriculum includes self-advocacy, independent living and social skills instruction, job and work readiness training, and self-determination training throughout. Other specific skills include: job exploration, interviewing, transportation, navigation, time management, goal setting, problem solving, banking, money management, and stress management. Specific opportunities to acquire and/or practice these learning objectives are individually identified and occur within the variety of integrated, authentic and age-appropriate settings/activities that comprise the program.

Each participant receives an individualized set of services provided by PAY Check staff and developed in their person-centered **Students Transitioning to Adult Roles (STAR)** planning process as developed by the Florida Consortium for Inclusive PSE. The STAR plan is coordinated with their high school's education plan (**Individualized Education Plan - IEP**, or 504 plan), and with their **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)** developed by their VR Counselor. In order to execute the STAR plan and determine who is responsible for what and when, collaboration and coordination is necessary between all concerned partners including the participants, families, high school teachers and administration, VR counselors, and PAY Check staff.

OUTCOMES

PAY Check participants complete the program with a wide variety of community skills, work and soft-skill employment skills, PSE experiences, high school diploma eligibility, and a path to job placement. PAY Check program completers acquire skills for a variety of activities that are requisite to full participation in the community, including but not limited to: banking and use of a debit card, using (smart) cell phones to stay in touch with family and staff while in the community without direct supervision, looking up information on search engines, and planning and using the public transportation system, including making transfers. Additionally, PAY Check participants set and monitor progress towards achieving personal goals, create a resume, perform personal job searches, and arrange and complete job interviews.

At the end of the program, program completers are provided with direct job placement supports by PAY Check staff. Participants who require additional support needs such as supported employment or customized employment are referred to other CRPs who provide these services.