

# Transition to Careers Subcommittee

Findings and Conclusions presented to ACICEID May 11

# Transition to Careers Subcommittee Members

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# Preliminary Findings & Conclusions

## Overall Finding:

- No youth should leave their entitlement to secondary education without a community work experience or paid job. This should be true for all students, including students with intellectual/developmental disabilities and other significant disabilities.

# Findings & Conclusions in 7 key areas

- 14c certificates – School Based Work Experience Programs
- Early Work Experiences
- Postsecondary Education
- Family Expectations
- System Integration/Seamless Transition
- Research and Data Needs
- Professional Supports and Incentives

# 14c certificates – School Based Work Experience Programs

## Background:

- SWEPs are a type of 14c certificate that are typically issued for schools, but work may occur in a variety of locations, including community.
- There are 270 active SWEP certificates nationally. Wage and Hour is unsure of the number of students associated with each certificate.
- In 2013 75% of SWEPs nationally were issued in CA. As of spring 2014 California Dept. of Education is preventing the use of SWEP certificates in majority of its transition (Workability) programs. It is expected this policy change will virtually eliminate the use of sub-minimum wage certificates by CA schools.

# 14c certificates – School Based Work Experience Programs

## **Findings:**

- There is no evidence that use of SWEP certificates improves postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities.
- Wage and Hour has limited information on the types or number of students who use SWEP certificates. SWEPs are not monitored more rigorously than other certificates issued by DOL.
- WIOA Section 511 provides limitations on the use of subminimum wage programs for youth transitioning from school, intended to insure that transition to competitive, integrated employment or post-secondary activities is the primary goal for youth in transition, including youth with significant disabilities.

# 14c Certificates – School Based Work Experience Programs

## **Conclusions:**

- Youth have greater likelihood of exiting school with paid work at competitive wage when their work experiences and transition programming focus on ensuring work experiences at competitive wages.
- Programs and funding models that were previously used to support use of SWEP certificates can transition to models that promote competitive wage work experiences in integrated settings.

# 14c Certificates – School Based Work Experience Programs

## **Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Immediately discontinue issuance of SWEPs.
- Assist school districts to transition to other proven models for youth that include internships and other community work experiences that lead to competitive wage employment.



# Early Work Experiences (Findings, 1)

## Findings:

- Early paid employment/work experiences is the number one predictor of post-school employment success for youth with I/DD.
- National Longitudinal Transition Study data shows that students who might be categorized as I/DD or having other “significant disabilities” through IDEA categories have low employment outcomes up to four years out of school (31%ID, 47% autism, 33% multiple disabilities). Employment for youth with I/DD generally falls into low status, low wage jobs.
- Overall engagement in any category of activity post school for youth with the most significant disabilities is low - only 2/3 are doing anything four years out of school – and that includes sheltered employment.

# Early Work Experiences (Findings, 2)

## Findings:

- There are barriers in the current system (including funding and other policies) that prevent systems from supporting work experiences for youth with the most significant disabilities.
- Research shows that timely Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services play an important early intervention role by diverting workers with disabilities from public benefits. Partnerships in Employment (PIE) grant states report early connection to vocational rehabilitation counselors as the most important change in practice that has improved employment outcomes for youth in their projects.
- State systems struggle to align policy and practice to adequately support youth work experiences. For example, some state VR systems deem that youth must have the assurance of follow-along services; Medicaid DD/Waiver agencies believe they must secure a denial from VR before they will provide employment supports.
- Secondary education is not adequately preparing youth with basic employment or postsecondary education skills (i.e. writing, software, soft skills.)

# Early Work Experiences - (Conclusions, 1)

## **Conclusions:**

- Youth with I/DD or other significant disabilities need additional supports to access early work experiences including: enhanced training of professionals; higher expectations; incentives in the system.
- Data must more adequately capture, monitor and incentivize high quality post-school outcomes for youth.
- Earlier and more seamless access to vocational rehabilitation supports can offer the supports youth with significant disabilities they need to benefit from early work experiences.
- Youth with the most significant disabilities often need access to extended support to secure employment - longer than the typical expected VR closure of 18 months.

# Early Work Experiences - (Recommendations)

## **Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Barriers must be removed to allow families and youth to access vocational rehabilitation supports (i.e. paperwork and application burden, language barriers).
- Promising models like Wisconsin's Youth On the Job training wage (funded by vocational rehabilitation) that provides a wage subsidy of up to 100% for up to 500 hours for a permanent job offer for a youth should be explored further.
- Barriers in the system must be addressed to allow for earlier and multiple work experiences for youth prior to school exit. (See system integration)

# Postsecondary Education (Findings, 1)

## Findings:

- Youth with disabilities who engage in postsecondary education & clients of vocational rehabilitation are more likely to secure integrated competitive employment than those who do not.
- Students with ID who have even one or two PSE classes can earn up to 70% higher wages than those who do not participate in PSE.
- Participation in any type of postsecondary education (vocational education classes, college certificate, 2-year and/or one college class) significantly enhances ability to secure ICE.
- The use of placement testing is a significant barrier to accessing PSE for youth with ID/DD SWD, especially in 2-year colleges.

# Postsecondary Education (Findings,2)

## Findings:

- Students with ID/D face unique challenges gaining access to postsecondary education to include:
  1. Lack of self determination training/skills and ability to identify accommodation needs
  2. Lack of overall preparation for successful PSE participation, including: lack of access to core content; high degree of “learned helplessness”; education in segregated settings; lack of any employment preparation, coursework or experiences.
  3. Low expectation by families, teachers, counselors, and student
  4. Lack of awareness of postsecondary education opportunities
  5. Lack of education and or support to meet post secondary education requirements

# Postsecondary Education (Findings,3)

## Findings:

- College faculty/instructors have little training or background in the area of accommodations
- Faculty/instructors lack background in designing coursework aligned with career pathways that will lead to skilled jobs.
- Some Existing post-secondary programs for youth with I/DD remain largely segregated.
- Many existing postsecondary programs for youth with I/DD do not include employment preparation or work experiences and are not focused on career pathways that lead to skilled jobs.
- Higher education institutions have been slow to embrace policy changes that allow full participation by students with I/DD.

# Postsecondary Education (Conclusion, 1)

## **Conclusions:**

- Universal instructional design must be more broadly implemented in postsecondary education institutions, to support students with a variety of learning needs.
- Self-Determination needs to be more broadly implemented at the secondary education level.
- Students with ID/D must have access to the General Education Curriculum
- Schools must focus on improving the student completion rate – secondary education.
- PSE programs should not use placement testing to screen students out of the system rather gather data to understand individual academic strengths and weaknesses.
- Academic Career Planning for students with I/DD early can ensure students with disabilities plan for and access the coursework and experiences necessary to pursue a career pathway to a skilled job.
- Parents, students and teachers often misunderstand the accommodations and support differences between the secondary and postsecondary environments.



# Postsecondary Education (Recommendations)

## **Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Prior to each student's secondary graduation the student's IEP team must identify and engage the responsible agencies, resources, and accommodations required for PSE.
- All parties involved in a youth's education must understand and promote the value of, preparation for and participation in PSE.
- IEP teams and other engaged agencies must identify and clearly document the specific types and levels of accommodations and supports a student will need to participate at the postsecondary level.
- PSE experiences must involve internships and multiple paid employment experiences and graduate students from PSE with a career of choice. The entire postsecondary experience for a student with ID/D must be oriented and coordinated toward a career.
- Secondary teachers and paraprofessionals require improved training on appropriate strategies to prepare students with disabilities for PSE.

# Family Expectations (Findings, 1)

## Findings

- Expectations about self-determination, employment, valued social roles and adult outcomes start early in life with families.
- Parent expectations is among the strongest predictor of educational outcomes, including college and employment.
- Families of children/youth with disabilities need assistance in learning about and creating expectations, aspirations and a vision for the future – not just this year’s program/plan, but the long range goal that focuses on adult life early.
- Primary influencers include pediatricians and health-related professionals, as well as early childhood professionals and K-12 educators.
- Families receive too many negative messages from too many touch points in the system that reinforce cultural low expectations.
- Poverty/economic security overlay in the family cannot be ignored.

# Family Expectations (Findings, 2)

## Findings

- Waiting until students are “transition age” to talk about employment is too late.
- Parents often feel that the roles were not defined and find transition planning puzzling, leaving them to feel powerless due to a lack of knowledge about the systems.
- Challenges faced by families of youth with disabilities are compounded greatly when they are from a different culture or speak a different language.
- Research is needed to explore the ways in which family factors interact with other influences to shape the skills, services, and supports of transition-age youth with severe disabilities during and after high school.
- Family support in the form of peer to peer networks can be an important influencer to improve expectations.

# Family Expectations (Conclusions, 1)

## Conclusions

- There is limited empirical research on families specific to the transition periods. It would be useful to know more broadly the difficulties that families face, which in turn negatively impacts participation.
- Those parent who expect their child with ID/D to get a paying job after high school are more likely to secure employment.
- Parent expectations that their child with ID/D would eventually be self-supporting is highly associated with employment.
- Families need early information about benefits and work incentives.
- Youth who have regular household responsibilities are more likely to achieve employment after high school.

# Family Expectations (Recommendations)

## **Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Multiple agencies must engage with families earlier to embed a focus on high expectations, long-range planning: Parent Training and Information Centers, Family-to-Family Health Centers, IDEA Part B/C, Family Support Programs.
- Prioritize the use of Student-led IEPs at an early age to improve outcomes and family expectations.
- Embed discussions earlier into IEP process – pre-transition age.
- Restructure the IEP process as a ladder toward post-school outcomes vs. year-to-year planning.

# System Integration/Seamless Transition (Findings,1)

## Finding

- Payer of last resort policies result in roadblocks to funding. Medicaid or Vocational Rehabilitation funded supports that should be available to enable summer, weekend, and after-school employment experiences are either not promoted or not readily available.
- Students with the most significant disabilities navigate complex systems in moving from high school into adult life: IDEA K-12/transition services, SSI/SSDI, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid/LTSS, post-secondary education, employment supports, etc. that are often poorly coordinated and do not share aligned outcome goals.
- Despite requirements in IDEA, often transition planning for youth is weak and does not incorporate/coordinate all of the services and supports.

# System Integration/Seamless Transition (Conclusions, 1)

## Conclusions

- Interagency coordination between the State Education Agency, State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the state Medicaid Agency or Long-Term Care Developmental Disabilities Agency can improve outcomes for youth.
- Jurisdictions in which there has been opportunity to “create a table” for systems collaboration and focus on the coordination and sequencing of funding and activities have shown some success in improving employment outcomes.
- Aligning multiple system outcomes/expectations may reduce barriers.
- Section 511 of WIOA does not mandate all players to be at the table to coordinate around the needs of youth with significant disabilities.

# System Integration/Seamless Transition

(Recommendations, 1)

## **Preliminary Recommendations**

- Coordination of supports, services and funding for youth must occur at the federal, state and local levels.
- Interagency coordination between the State Education Agency, State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the state Medicaid Agency or Long-Term Care Developmental Disabilities Agency must be mandated. Federal agencies must provide implementation guidance.
- Federally mandated Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) should include the Medicaid agency, specify practices for braiding of resources, clarify funder of last resort mandates, clearly identify roles and responsibilities and have a plan for dissemination of this information to families and professionals with benchmarking and shared data collection processes and analyses, and track outcomes of collaboration over time.



# System Integration/Seamless Transition

(Recommendations, 2)

## **Preliminary Recommendations**

- States must work toward presumptive eligibility across programs for youth with I/DD to the greatest degree possible with a focus on securing automatic VR eligibility for waiver eligible youth who desire employment.
- Develop a common application and process to access VR employment supports that is streamlined for youth who are IDEA eligible and unlikely to earn a diploma prior to exit from IDEA entitlement.
- Develop a pilot or demonstration project to waive policy requirements across multiple authorities (IDEA, ESEA, VR, SSA) to allow blending of funds to drive toward competitive, integrated employment outcomes.
- Change policies that do not allow transfer of assistive technology devices required through the IEP to follow a student into the work or postsecondary environment.

# Research and Data Needs (Findings, 1)

## Findings

- Many youth with ID/D and their families live in poverty and need basic human needs met before a job search.
- Health Care and SSA benefits remain a barrier to employment for youth. Many households depend on that source of funding to cover basic family needs.
- Increased number of youth with ID/D are getting SSA benefits and staying on rolls.
- Affordable transportation remains a problem in most communities and transition programs lack funding to provide transportation.

# Research and Data Needs (Findings, 2)

## Findings

- Meaningful assessment is very important within the transition planning process because students with severe disabilities— like all adolescents—clearly possess unique amalgamations of strengths and needs.
- Data demonstrates improved employment outcomes when transition planning began earlier than age 16 for ID/D.
- There is little capacity in communities that have relied on sheltered workshops to provide meaningful community employment or other daily activities in the community for youth with significant disabilities.

# Research and Data Needs (Findings, 2)

## Findings

- IDEA Post-school outcome data (Indicator 14) is not currently used for benchmarking, compliance or improvement purposes.
- Indicator 14 data does not differentiate sheltered work outcomes from other types of employment outcomes that are less than 20 hours a week.
- IDEA Indicator 13 allows sheltered work to qualify as an employment goal.

# Research and Data Needs (Conclusions)

## Conclusions

- Research is needed to address ways to meaningfully include all stakeholders in the assessment process for ID/D and to include their perspectives more accurately into the planning process.
- High quality studies with experimental or quasiexperimental research designs are needed to identify best practices in transition. (to date this has not been done). More specifically research is needed to assess a package of comprehensive best practices in transition.
- Need research validated educational methodologies that verify that inclusion of students with ID/D in the general education classrooms supports college and workforce readiness.
- IDEA indicators can be used to benchmark, collect valuable data and drive better employment outcomes for youth.

# Research and Data (Recommendations)

## **Preliminary Recommendations**

- Schools should be prohibited from identifying placement in a subminimum wage program as an acceptable post-school transition goal or service on the transition plan as per Indicator 13.
- Design a research study that is specifically designed to measure the use and impact of comprehensive set of best practices in transition.
- Issue guidance on data collection and analysis related to postsecondary outcomes (Indicator 14). Make Indicator 14 data collection annual and mandatory.
- Conduct research to assess college and workforce readiness skills acquired by youth with I/DD in high quality inclusive general education environments.
- Require data collection to indicate where youth end up when sheltered workshops close or downsize in a community.

# Professional Supports and Incentives (Findings)

## Findings

- Many systems touch and influence youth with I/DD as they transition to adulthood including secondary and post-secondary education, Social Security, medical, welfare, CRPs, workforce development (One-Stops), VR and others.
- As youth transition from an entitlement system to an eligibility system, the workforce staff is uniquely positioned to provide training on labor market information, career exploration and career readiness skills to its partners.
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- Staff in these systems often
  - lack high expectations for employment outcomes for youth with I/DD
  - knowledge about resources available across the systems
  - opportunities to learn how other systems function and what services other agencies in the community/state can provide to support integrated competitive employment for youth between 16-24.

# Professional Supports and Incentives (Findings)

## Findings

- National data shows that less than half of all special education personnel prep programs address transition standards, and only 45% offer a stand-alone course on transition.
- High expectations of teachers also correlate with better employment outcomes. In a 2010 study, students whose teachers expected them to work during the summer were 15 times more likely to work than teachers without that expectation.
- There is a wide variation in state VR transition statistics suggesting VR could improve its services for transition-age youth by developing specific standards and guidelines for VR agencies and staff serving youth between 16 and 24.
- Waiver case managers do not have training on EBP in supported employment and approve high rates of adult day services with no employment.



# Professional Supports and Incentives (Conclusions)

## Conclusions

- Redefine “Highly Qualified Special Education Teacher” to reflect the unique skills necessary to effectively provide and plan for required transition services that lead to employment outcomes.
- Under WIOA, , youth with disabilities will receive extensive pre-employment transition services and this provides an opportunity for the systems to cross-train staff at all levels.
- Encourage and possibly provide incentives for VR and school systems staff coordinating early in a youth’s educational career.

# Professional Supports and Incentives

(recommendations)

## Possible Recommendation

- Require states to adopt transition competencies that emphasize competitive integrated employment outcomes as part of teacher certification.
- Tie professional certifications and Medicaid provider qualifications to specific competencies related to understanding employment opportunities for Medicaid beneficiaries
- Promote and fund pre-service training for professionals across the systems to emphasize parent engagement strategies, use of labor market information, understanding of career pathways, and focuses on building high expectations related to employment.