

Technical Assistance about Transition and Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) Project,
PACER Center, Minneapolis, MN
and
Youth and Parent Participation Technical Assistance Network,
National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), University of Minnesota
present

a capacity building institute

2001: A Transition Odyssey

Technical Assistance about Transition and the Rehabilitation Act

June 7-9, 2001
Minneapolis, MN

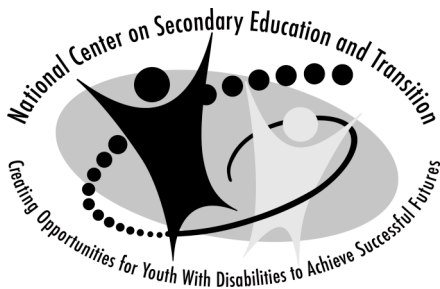


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Introduction

This National Capacity Building Institute was held June 7-9, 2001, at the PACER Center in Minneapolis, MN. It was a joint effort between PACER Center's Technical Assistance about Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) Project and the Youth and Parent Participation Technical Assistance Network at the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. The three-day institute included nationally recognized speakers on transition planning and discussion groups focusing on parent involvement in postsecondary education. The following document is a summary of the presentations and discussions that occurred in this gathering of professionals, educators, and consumers.

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Postsecondary Employment Success Through Blended Resources at the Point of Transition

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A critical issue is how to support youth with disabilities as they transition from school to work. The goal of public education should be adult employment regardless of the disability. In considering this issue it is important to examine (1) what we already know from policy and research about transition from policy and research perspectives, (2) examples of interagency collaborations occurring in the area of postsecondary employment for young adults with disabilities, and (3) what gaps remain to be addressed.

What we know from policy and research

Current policy, including IDEA and WIA, supports transition planning while the scope of research on effective transition methodology seems to be expanding. Given the presence of supportive policy and effective methodology it is surprising to see continued low employment rates for adults with disabilities. In fact, the employment rate for individuals with severe and/or multiple disabilities is below eight percent. Low rates of adult employment may be explained by a difficult transition between the educational system and adult services.

Interagency collaborations

Bridges Project: The Marriott Foundation sponsors Bridges from School to Work, a program providing youth with disabilities a paid internship during their final year of high school. From 1993-1997 this six-state program employed a total of 3,024 youth. A majority of the participating youth had a learning disability; others had emotional, cognitive, mobility, hearing, and visual disabilities. None of the participants had severe disabilities.

The youth completed a pre-internship orientation followed by 12 weeks of work. They received pre and post internship placement support and mentoring from project staff. The program resulted in 86% of youth completing their internship with 77% securing a post internship job offer with the host company. No differences were found in internship completion or job offers across demographic categories. Work behaviors—including the number of hours worked, attendance, and wages—were all predictors of internship completion and job offers.

The Bridges project conducted follow-up with participants at six and twenty-four month intervals following internship completion. At six months 68% of participants were still employed and at twenty-four months 60% were employed. Students with emotional disabilities were half as likely as individuals with other disabilities to be employed twelve months following internship completion.

Students with mental retardation also had a lower overall rate of employment at twelve months compared with the rest of the sample.

Three important conclusions from the Bridges project are: (1) work experience is valuable for all youth with disabilities, (2) successful high school employment leads to higher adult employment, and (3) continued postsecondary support is necessary for youth who have varying disabilities to sustain long-term adult employment. The Bridges projects did not address supporting employment of youth with severe disabilities.

Collaborative projects beyond Bridges have made strides in service integration for these youth.

Service Integration for Transition of Youth with Severe Disabilities: This project facilitated the participation of students with severe disabilities in their final year of high school in a community-based transition class. This class included paid employment in an integrated work place. Employment specialists from adult services worked with school personnel and the student to secure and maintain employment. In addition to classroom and employment activities, youth were encouraged to participate in non-work activities in community settings.

The intended outcomes for the youth participating in the service integration project were (1) to secure paid employment, (2) to receive postschool support to sustain their employment success, and (3) to experience no disruption in services between their last year of school and the postsecondary years.

The project resulted in an overall postsecondary employment rate of 83%. In addition, 88% of participants were served by the same adult agency following school completion as they had been during their final year in high school.

Implications

Planning is imperative to securing adult employment after completing high school. Students should not exit the public schools without knowing where they will work and securing supports to maintain employment. This goal may be accomplished by developing secondary programs and curricula that integrate early service planning and employment experience. A key element of the service integration model is collaboration between education and adult services systems. This collaborative effort leads to joint funding efforts between school systems and adult services and the potential of seamless services for youth and families.

What All Students Should Know and be Able to Do: Access to the General Curriculum

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The general education curriculum outlines a core set of competencies that all students should possess and be able to utilize. Equal rights means not only that everyone has access to the general education curriculum, but also that they are actively receiving the information.

Standards-based reform must involve high standards and accountability for all students. Student IEPs must include goals and objectives highlighting involvement and progress towards the general education curriculum. How the general education curriculum is utilized is negotiable. Elements of the curriculum which may be tailored to meet student needs include the schedule, place, time, structure, instructional methods, and methods of assessment.

It is unclear if students with disabilities are accessing the general education curriculum. McLaughlin (2000) finds that while 80% of students with disabilities are in general education classrooms, it is unclear whether these students are engaged with the curriculum. High school students with disabilities appear to take more vocational and fewer academic courses. This finding indicates that students with disabilities are steered towards vocational pathways.

McLaughlin (2000) cites various challenges to students with disabilities accessing the general education curriculum. Many teachers may not understand the meaning of curriculum, particularly, the importance of scope and sequence in IEP planning. In addition, teachers may struggle with competing priorities of content versus remediation. McLaughlin cites solutions including more collaboration between general educators and special educators. Included within this collaboration must be a joint understanding of the general education curriculum. The team must also understand that it is acceptable to move forward in content prior to every functional skill being in place for the student.

The role of the IEP team in relation to the general education curriculum is to (1) define critical knowledge and performance expectations in the general curriculum; (2) identify necessary aids, supports, and services; (3) reflect upon the longitudinal view of learning; and (4) integrate and align content and instruction. The IEP team's task is to set high expectations in formulating the IEP goals and objectives in relation to the content and performance standards.

It is important to consider if standards need to be broad or narrow, content- or performance-based. Broad academic expectations for all students include the ability to access information, read written or pictorial print, quantify, write, and predict the next event. In planning mastery of these standards, the IEP team must consider ways to integrate learning into diverse settings. Creativity and flexibility while maintaining high standards and high expectations is key to supporting students' access to the general education curriculum.

Visitability—What is it?

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Visitability is an initiative that seeks to ensure that single-family homes, duplexes, and triplexes built with public money adhere to certain design standards: no step entrance, bathroom on the main level, and 32-inch or wider doorways.

Visitability standards make sense for several reasons:

- The population is getting older. Homes being built today will need to accommodate a physically limited population. Homes built with these standards will support elderly individuals staying in their homes and being self-sufficient for a longer period of time.
- Basic access standards at the time of building the home allow as many individuals as possible to remain in their homes after acquiring a disability.
- Visitability standards support the development of community. These standards remove barriers to neighbors visiting neighbors, children playing at each other's homes, and individuals attending community events. Individual with disabilities will be able to visit friends and neighbors, decreasing feelings of isolation.
- It is more cost-effective to build homes according to these standards than to make changes once the house is built. The cost of incorporating visitability in a new home depends on site, design of home, and planning. The average cost per site is \$200-\$300. Incorporating the same features after the construction of the home is around \$10,000.

Visitability standards have been included in housing laws in some states. Federal HUD policy recommends builders adhere to visitability and design standards but does not enforce their use. In the state of Minnesota, visitability is being debated in the legislature.

Universal Design for Learning: Tools and Strategies to Support Diverse Learners

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Universal design began in architecture. Architects believed it was important to consider the needs of the broadest range of users. This included designing multiple entry points into a building. “Universal” in this sense referred to the presence of alternatives rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Adaptability in design is subtle and adapted into the design itself.

In education, curricula are often designed in a manner that makes learning totally inaccessible to many students with disabilities. Curricula may be designed in a way that is unresponsive to individual difference. Some students may not be able to access the textbook. The concept of universality used by architects is important when considering curricula. Many alternatives to learning must be available so students have equal access to content. Educators and professionals in the field must look at accessible design for education material from multiple pathways to learning.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a new educational approach to instruction and curriculum that uses technology to support diverse learners. Students with disabilities fall along a continuum of learner differences common to all students rather than consisting of a different category. Teacher adjustments and curriculum adaptations should be made for all students, not just those with disabilities. This approach is useful because it supports all learner styles.

The UDL approach to assessment takes into account learners with diverse needs, including students with disabilities. All students do not learn in the same way. If the assessment technique is the same for every student, some students will not accurately demonstrate their skill level. Assessment development must take into account goals, curriculum, materials, multiple means of expression and control, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of engagement.

Brain research indicates that learning occurs when material is presented in multiple forms. This may include visual, auditory, and text examples of the same material. Multiple forms of presentation of material enhances learning of all students, not just those with disabilities.

Access to education does not mean access to learning. CAST is developing Web-based technology to support all students in gaining access to learning. This technology makes alternatives to learning available based on the needs of individual students. CAST has developed interactive Web learning modules where the experience can be customized based on the experience of the individual learner. CAST’s initiatives in technology development have incorporated core UDL concepts including alternatives to learning, flexibility, and individual student needs.

Cultural Shifting: Blazing New Trails to Community

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People with disabilities experience sanctioned exclusion and a life apart from community. A more inclusive community where everyone is welcomed is the ideal. Why have we not achieved this goal of a more inclusive and integrated community experience for individuals with disabilities?

The lens used to serve individuals with disabilities is getting us lost on the road to community inclusion. A medical or difference model is used, focusing on deficits rather than similarity. This model tends to utilize a congregative approach, view the expert as in control, aim to fix the person, see the person as the problem, and label problems. This medical model reinforces stereotyping and the segmenting of society. Assessment techniques focus on finding the problems of the individual, not the strengths or avenues for commonality.

How do we get from a medical model which supports exclusion to everyone having an inclusive community experience? The route to an inclusive community starts with understanding the meaning of community and culture and shifting from this medical, clinical thinking to a cultural model.

“Community” is a network of different people who regularly come together for common purpose or celebration. What connects people and builds inclusive community is commonality, not difference. Finding and utilizing avenues of connection is the route to community inclusion. Once a group of people establishes behaviors around a common cause they become a community.

Building community based on commonality involves a process called cultural shifting. The first step in cultural shifting is identifying an individual’s passion and determining where others with this passion congregate. Points of commonality and connection must be identified. The next step is identifying and teaching the rituals, patterns, and jargon used in the established community. Rituals are the deeply rooted behaviors that the community holds as important, patterns are the social movements of the members of the culture, and jargon is the language the community uses to do its business. An individual must learn these aspects of the established community in order to become a member. The final step in shifting towards inclusive community experience involves enlisting the support of individuals who serve as the gatekeepers for the community. Gatekeepers hold formal or informal power or influence over a new member becoming part of the community.

Achieving a cultural model that supports connection and inclusion involves getting beyond difference. The values required to get to this way of interacting are not complicated. Basic human values of kindness, hospitality, generosity, compassion, and forgiveness can get us where we are going.

Shine Up and Step Out

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4-H is one of the oldest youth development programs. 4-H programs focus on hands-on leadership development, building friendships and life skills.

In 1999, 4-H formed a partnership with the North Carolina Council on Disabilities to create a learning environment in which diverse youth and adults could reach their fullest potential. This partnership developed a national 4-H inclusion curriculum entitled Shine Up and Step Out. This curriculum is designed to raise awareness among 3rd to 6th graders about people with disabilities or disabling illnesses. Currently, national 4-H is piloting a five-state inclusion program utilizing the curriculum. In North Carolina, the curriculum and other inclusion activities have included wheelchair basketball tournaments, conducting community accessibility surveys, and creating inclusion clubs at local schools.

4-H National Leadership Opportunities:

Citizens Washington Focus (CWF) is a weeklong leadership program open to youth ages 15-19. CWF provides unique, exciting experiences that will help youth to become "Better Citizens Today, Better Leaders Tomorrow." For more information, go to www.fourhcouncil.edu or call 1-800-Four-H-DC.

The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century is a foundation developed to identify critical youth development strategies for the 21st century. For more information, go to www.fourhcouncil.edu or call (301) 961-2900.

Charting Community Connections (CCC) is a community-based process where adults and youth work as partners to explore gifts, strengths, and assets related to community past, place, relations, and vision of the future. For more information about CCC go to www.fourhcouncil.edu/cyc/ccs.htm or call (301) 961-2972.

Here to Stay! **Serving the Needs of Immigrant Families**

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Individuals in helping professions learn that providing culturally appropriate services involves knowing as much as possible about the culture of the people with whom you are working. Gaining basic understanding of a culture can be helpful provided it does not lead to the assumption that every family within the culture is the same.

Families within the same culture differ in terms of beliefs, values, and traditions. When serving immigrant families it is essential to remember that every family is unique. In order to consider each family's uniqueness it is helpful to actually get to know the family. The service provider should ask questions about family values and traditions. Asking these questions avoids the common pitfall of making overgeneralizations and assumptions about a culture.

Barriers to utilizing resources exist for immigrant families. Barriers include language and incompatibility of the dominant culture's service structure with the unique needs of the family. For example, Hispanic families who come into the American school system often struggle. These families have never experienced a school system structured as it is in the United States. They must adapt to functioning within this system.

Removing barriers for immigrant families involves considering the preferred method of communication. Service providers must give families information in a way they can access. For example, sending a written notice of an IEP meeting to a family may not be an effective form of communication, however, visiting the family at their home and discussing the meeting may be more helpful.

Finally, it is imperative to remember that good intentions are not enough to meet the needs of immigrant families. It is a thoughtful and intentional process that must be continually evaluated by self and others.

Restorative Justice and Girls

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Youth with Disabilities and Crime

Many youth involved with the juvenile justice system report a disability. Disabilities of youth involved in the system include learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, posttraumatic stress syndrome, developmental disabilities, and depression. For most kids, the presence of a disability is not the cause of the criminal behavior but one of the many risk factors impacting their life.

Juvenile Justice Trends

- Declining rates of serious violent juvenile offenses;
- increasing rates of incarceration;
- heightened involvement of private ventures in corrections;
- expanding media coverage of violent crimes; and
- elevated numbers of juveniles being put into the adult corrections system.

More adolescent girls are being arrested in the U. S. than ever before. Most girls are arrested for non-violent crimes with the largest increase in arrests in the areas of drug use and curfew violations. Adolescent female offenders demonstrate a unique pathway into the system and therefore have different needs than their male counterparts.

Trends Among Adolescent Female Offenders

- High rates of mental health concerns;
- experience of sexual abuse, childhood abuse and neglect, and other traumatic experiences;
- parents who were themselves abused and neglected as children;
- parents with alcohol and drug abuse concerns;
- substance use and abuse prior to entry into the system;
- strained mother/daughter relationships; and
- suicide attempts.

These trends demonstrate the multiple risk factors in the lives of adolescent female offenders, suggesting the unique needs of these youth. Some interventions being used in the system are simply increasing the problematic behaviors. Having all male security and corrections staff, conducting body searches, and strapping girls to their beds as a form of restraint re-traumatize girls and do little to decrease problematic behaviors.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections has responded to the unique needs of female offenders by creating a department of planning for female offenders and female-only correction facilities. The female juvenile offender program seeks to intentionally intervene in the lives of girls by addressing both offender and victim dynamics. In these programs, girls are held accountable for their behavior while they are provided support and healing in addressing their own victimization.

The female juvenile justice program is structured as a restorative justice approach to offending. Restorative justice is the idea that any group of people has the resources within itself to develop and maintain a safe and healthy community. This approach is about people because ultimately crime hurts relationships.

The system cannot “fix” female juvenile offenders. It takes the community surrounding the youth to step up and work together. When girls get to the point of being committed to a juvenile facility, they are often far removed from the community. The aim of the female juvenile offender program is to address offending and victimization through reconnecting and reintegrating the girls into the community in a way they feel good about.

The female juvenile justice program uses a Native American Tribal approach called Circles of Support to reintegrate adolescent females into society. Circles of Support seek to bring together individuals who will support and care about the youth regardless of their behavior. Staff works with girls to identify individuals who are the support people in their lives. They encourage girls to consider who has showed support and caring in the past. It is often difficult for these girls to identify support people because they feel they have burned every bridge. Staff contacts the identified individuals and invites them to join in a Circle of Support for the girl. In the circle, the first goal is establish support. Before offending behaviors can be addressed, the girl must feel that even though she has done bad things, there are still people in her life who care. Individuals participating in the circle express care and concern, confront the behaviors of the youth, and share how they will support the girl in reintegrating into the community.

Circles of Support continue to be utilized by the adolescent female offenders program because of the positive experiences of the girls involved. Families have asked to continue participating in the circles long after their daughter leaves the program due to the positive and helpful skills they have learned by doing Circles of Support.

Expanding Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities

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The mandate of the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities is to create a coordinated, aggressive national policy to increase participation of Americans with disabilities in the competitive labor market. Included in this task force is a specific youth initiative that seeks to improve employment outcomes of persons with disabilities by addressing the education, transition, employment, health and rehabilitation, and independent living issues of youth with disabilities.

In June 2000 the Presidential Task Force hosted the National Summit on Young People with Disabilities. A Youth-to-Work Initiative and an Interagency Initiative came out of this summit. A youth advisory committee was developed to include the perspective of youth and young adults in carrying out the mandate of the task force.

The Office of Disability Employment Policy within the Department of Labor is active in supporting young people with disabilities. The mission of this department is to bring a heightened and permanent long-term focus to the goal of increasing employment of persons with disabilities. Current projects of this department include:

- *Employment Assistance Referral Network (EARN)*: a national toll-free telephone and electronic information referral service for employers who are seeking to hire workers with disabilities.
- *High School/High Tech*: a community-based partnership that encourages youth with disabilities to explore career opportunities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology.
- *Workforce Recruitment Program*: a nationwide resource of employers to identify qualified employees both from postsecondary institutions and a variety of fields.
- *Youth Leadership Forum*: a unique career leadership opportunity for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities.
- *Job Accommodation Network*: a toll-free information and referral service on job accommodations for people with disabilities; the employment provisions of ADA; and resources for technical assistance, funding, education, and services related to the employment of people with disabilities.
- *Customized Employment Grants* to local workforce investment boards to build capacity in local one stop centers to provide customized employment services to people with disabilities.

The New Freedom Initiative sets aside more than \$1 billion over the next five years for the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce, increasing access to assistive technology, and promoting community-based services and supports. The key components of this initiative are:

- Increasing access to assistive universally designed technologies;
- Expanding educational opportunities;

- Promoting home ownership;
- Integrating Americans with disabilities into the workforce; and
- Promoting full access to community life.

There are four major themes in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in the area of youth services delivery. These themes are:

- Improvement in educational achievement;
- Preparation for and success in employment;
- Supports available for youth; and
- Services provided which help youth develop as citizens and leaders.

Within WIA there are several new youth program requirements offering various opportunities for reform. These include:

- Leadership development and soft skills programs;
- Follow up services;
- Summer employment activities; and
- Requirements for providing services to out of school youth.

Tools for Effective Job Developers

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Students with disabilities often do not work with traditional career services offices. These offices are at times staffed by counselors who do not know how to work with students with disabilities and feel intimidated by this lack of knowledge. The trend among students with disabilities at Cal State Northridge is that they do not attend career fairs and do not self-refer to the career services office.

Transition Resources and Career Services for Students with Disabilities (TRACS) takes a different approach to serving students with disabilities in the job search process. Their philosophy is, "We're not going to get you a job but you are going to get yourself a job". The student must get the job themselves so they own it and feel invested in it. TRACS believes that the best practice of career services with students with disabilities includes follow-up after job placement. Educating the student on employee rights is also imperative. The student must be prepared to anticipate questions that the potential employer is thinking but legally cannot ask. These are the questions which will keep the employer from hiring them. For example, when a student who uses a wheelchair applies for an office support job the employer may wonder how they would manage to operate the copier. The employer may be concerned about the potential for injury while on the job exposing them to additional liability. The student must decide whether to voluntarily address the question. The student must be prepared to dispel the employer's fear so that this does not keep them from being hired.

TRACS has developed a three-track approach to meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

- **Track I:** Facilitate transition of students with disabilities into higher education and employment.
- **Track II:** Develop networks and partnerships among employers and service providers.
- **Track III:** Disseminate nationally a well-documented replicable model program.

TRACS has created a student handbook entitled Job Seeking Skills for People with Disabilities. Its sections include:

- personality, interests, values, and skills;
- disability considerations and implications in the workplace;
- potential occupations, goal setting and action planning;
- resume development;
- preparing for job interviews;
- job search and effective networking techniques;
- marketing oneself and one's disability;
- employer and employee expectations; and
- the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Facilitated Discussion on Parent Involvement in Postsecondary Education

MISC GROUP: 10 participants work with parents of youth with disabilities, 4 were persons with disabilities, and 5 were siblings of persons with disabilities or other family members

PARENT GROUP: 7 parents who had children with disabilities (varying ages)

POSTSECONDARY PARENT GROUP: 12 parents whose youth with disabilities were in or had attended postsecondary education

1. What experiences have you had supporting youth with disabilities in postsecondary settings, both personally and professionally?

MISC GROUP

- The five-year systems change grant
- Teach job readiness skills
- Work with parents
- Both parents and youth want information
- Student-led IEP training with youth and families
- Advocacy/self-advocacy issues for both youth and families
- Most youth and families are not prepared to take on postsecondary education
- Youth and families receive information but not in a way that is useful

PARENT GROUP

- How to get high schools to work with postsecondary staff, they don't help the kids learn that system and VR has been no help
- My son went to a university without any help and ended up dropping out
- It is impossible to find support staff and making those connections with kids
- The issue of student services' support staff not knowing how to make accommodations
- VR told my son that he did not qualify for services before age 18 if the family had available resources
- My son failed until the VR counselor finally asked him what he wanted to do, which was be a tattoo artist and now he is in postsecondary for that and is succeeding

POSTSECONDARY PARENT GROUP

- PA College of Tech (now Penn State) has a placement test so I asked the transition IEP team to teach to the test
- All colleges, including technical colleges, are requiring higher and higher academic skills and parents need to know this so they can address this at the IEP meetings and advocate for students to increase reading, writing, and math skills
- My student with ADD stopped getting any help at all in bartending school and the counselor was without a degree and didn't know what help should be available
- Kids don't want help—they need time in college to fail and then opportunity to regroup
- Student does not encourage families to be there
- There is a very quick shift from high school to college as far as parent involvement
- The shift of parent involvement in the IEP should start earlier so that the student has more time to learn assertiveness and self-advocacy
- There doesn't seem to be an agreement on what accommodations/modifications can be used for youth with hidden disabilities (LD, ADD, ED)
- Very few students are using accommodations when taking the SAT, ACT, etc.

2. What kind of help do youth with disabilities need in postsecondary education?

MISC GROUP

- A site visit to the college before they attend
- Social skills prior to attending college
- Mentors and internships/real experiences
- Volunteer work
- Resume writing
- Remedial classes
- Mother needs more support for students
- Meetings with other students with and without disabilities
- More orientation than that given to students without disabilities, including concrete expectations and requirements and how to plan and work through their issues. They need to know what will be asked of them.
- Social integration, not just academic. They need to party, they have not had that freedom up to this point so they will need information and support about drugs and alcohol.
- Students need to know what employers expect and the accommodation needs that they have and are they excessive or unreasonable.
- Colleges and other postsecondary institutions need to do a better job of explaining student rights to youth with disabilities. Many do not know about the ADA or 504.
- Students with disabilities need to know why they must identify and disclose their disability in order to receive accommodations.
- When small rural colleges do not have an office of disability they need to incorporate the support within their student services department.

PARENT GROUP

- Start early to prepare them
- Get rid of the arbitrary age requirements for certain programs such as postsecondary education option (PSEO)
- Help kids define their interests and abilities
- Explore more issues of self-actualization and choices vs. disability issues
- Rehabilitation should have higher expectations and not limit requests
- Peer support/mentor model for long-term support (other students)

POSTSECONDARY PARENT GROUP

- Kids with LD/ED are told to drop out of high school. It then takes them 5-6 years to get back to any kind of school or postsecondary institution and they don't have a current IEP or any documentation of disability and accommodations
- Families may be the primary role model and schools must recognize and support this
- PA does a full IQ and achievement test in junior and senior years to see if kids are capable of college
- Juniors and seniors need more access to postsecondary classes (for credit or non-credit)
- HS seniors should have a mentor (older student, professor, etc.) to assist with the transition to college
- Rehab counselor could be the person to pull all the pieces together
- Parents and students should look at the college's record for making accommodations and how their office of disability support actually supports the students
- College disability services should meet with youth and advocate to determine what are the needs and who can meet them

3. Who currently provides this type of support and assistance?

MISC GROUP

- Student services, office of disability
- Varies, not working well
- Other disability agencies
- Some community colleges have excellent systems in place but the student still must disclose and identify their needs
- Information is given to the student, not families, so they are not involved
- If a college does have a student support office they usually provide support for a specific class but not career development
- Career counselors at the high school and college level are not prepared to work with youth with disabilities
- Students with disabilities do not go to career guidance offices
- Many of those offices are understaffed and have few resources
- Should do what families do for students without disabilities; open houses, etc. to explore resources
- Families can help their sons and daughters find volunteer opportunities and learn the value of these opportunities
- Allowed me to fail—parent was there if I needed her but more of an invisible support net
- Had people in the community that watched out for me because I was away from home
- Although support is needed I appreciated the independence and separation from family
- Parents allowed me to solve my own problems and accommodation needs
- Parents told me they thought I could make it and that confidence helped
- Talk about issues with parents but always have students follow-up on the communication and requests

PARENT GROUP

- No consistency, no designated role
- Postsecondary support not enough, they can facilitate access to classes but that is not broad enough, youth need other kinds of social/emotional support to succeed
- High school transition staff should/could work with postsecondary, especially those served 18-21 who are also in postsecondary settings
- Parents need to start early and teach self-advocacy skills to their children
- Utilize the PSEO option more often so that the high school transition teachers can better work with postsecondary

4. How should supports and assistance be coordinated?

POSTSECONDARY PARENT GROUP

- Disability support services should coordinate services
- Student should coordinate and build self-determination skills
- Colleges must have policies and buy-in attitude to support youth with disabilities
- VR can coordinate

5. What role do parents/families currently play in supporting youth in postsecondary education?

PARENT GROUP

- Parents being able to “let go” and trust their child
- Filling out the necessary paperwork for financial aid
- Monitoring grades and social activities
- Financial support
- Transportation
- Process facilitation

6. Should parent involvement at the postsecondary level be encouraged or discouraged? What roles should families play for postsecondary students?

MISC GROUP

- Parents should be encouraged but need to know there are boundaries
- Parents should ask “what can my son or daughter do to fix the problem (not how can I fix the problem)
- Parents should encourage students to accept the disability and ask for accommodations
- Mother told me once that I was too independent, but I never would have succeeded if parents had not sent me to mainstream school and encouraged independence
- Remind parents that children will become adults
- Parents need to educate their sons and daughters about how the disability will affect their health, learning, stamina and ability to live independent
- Financial help
- Parents can help identify safety nets

PARENT GROUP

- It depends on how well others are doing their job. If they don't do their job then parents have to step in and be that support
- Need to find out how youth feel about having their parents involved
- As needed and appropriate
- Youth don't always want parents advocating for them regarding the disability; another adult would be better
- Medical and health issues do not always get addressed in college so parents have to step in or it might be life-threatening. Who could help with that so that parents wouldn't have to?
- Parents should be able to play the same role as they do with their children without disabilities

7. Are there barriers to parental involvement at the postsecondary level?

MISC GROUP

- YES!
- Student rights and privacy
- The typical struggle between child and parent and how to support youth at a time of independence
- Schools should be more open to communication with parents while still respecting students' privacy

PARENT GROUP

- Social stigma of parent involvement for youth with disabilities
- Legal issues—student is their own guardian
- Identifying who else can provide service and support if denied by one agency
- Lack of independence of youth who have been in a special education system that promotes dependence
- Lack of knowledge of the ADA and 504
- Parents of youth with disabilities are not “hip” and their involvement may embarrass youth

POSTSECONDARY PARENT GROUP

- Yes, confidentiality
- Ceiling on expectations for youth with disabilities
- What are parents and youth without disabilities demanding?
- Attitudes: professors do not see the value of parental involvement

8. If you think parent involvement in postsecondary education is beneficial for youth with disabilities, what would improve parent participation?

PARENT GROUP

- Parents and youth must talk and establish how they can work together to achieve success in college. Talk early during the transition planning process to determine the best way for parents to be part of the team providing support
- Parent involvement may be contradictory to self-determination
- Educate the disability services staff about parent involvement and how to include it without being intrusive

Additional thoughts:

PARENT GROUP

- Make it easier for all youth to receive support for achieving their educational goals
- Work with all students to identify learning styles and necessary accommodations
- Developmentally, youth are not able to accept their disability and ask for help. Adolescence is a time of autonomy, independence, fitting in, and feeling competent, not needy.
- Will the study in Hawaii consider type of disability and gender when analyzing the data?

POSTSECONDARY PARENT GROUP

- Parents should be less involved and let their kids fail
- Consider the support that all youth receive from their parents
- Remove parent support and put other supports in place
- Have college students mentor high school youth
- Parents need to recognize when their children are not ready to attend college
- High stakes testing has hurt a lot of youth with disabilities
- Need to coordinate between disability support services and financial aid so that student can understand how to attend and the cost

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