

Tips for parent centers and families:

Help your state make the most of post-school outcome surveys

Do you know how special education students are doing after they leave high school in your state?

Since 2004, U.S. states have collected information from former students with disabilities about their employment and further education activities in the first year after leaving high school. About one year after they leave school, young adults who had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are asked some very important questions: Are they enrolled in college? Have they found a job? Are they pursuing job training?

Although a youth's personal information is kept confidential, states compile a report summarizing the education and employment outcomes of all of the youth they have interviewed and include this information in their Annual Performance Report (APR) to the U.S. Department of Education. Answers to the key questions that follow can be found in the indicator 14 section of your state's State Performance Plan (SPP) for special education. This plan is publically posted on your State's special education department website.

How does your state conduct post-school outcome surveys?

Every state is required to conduct annual post-school outcomes surveys but each has developed its own process for doing so. Some states survey former special education students from *all* districts each year. Other states survey a *representative sample* of districts on a rotating basis, once every five years. How often surveys are conducted in a school district affects how PSO data is used for program improvement at the district level. If it is not clear how often each school district is surveyed from your state's SPP, contact your SEA Transition Specialist. (See box at right.)

How does your state use post-school outcome data?

The annual collection of post-school outcomes data can provide valuable information to state and local education personnel, parents, and other community stakeholders whose responsibility it is to prepare children with disabilities for college and careers. Post-school outcome data can help the state, school districts, families, and others assess how well transition programs are preparing youth for future success and to develop strategies to increase the number of students with disabilities who go on to post-secondary education and employment. What can be learned from the data your state has collected? Is the information easy to locate? Has it been shared with local school districts and the public? Is it presented in a format that can be easily understood by families and other non-professionals? Are families and other stakeholders included when results are interpreted and strategies discussed to address weaknesses and improve student outcomes?

HOW YOU CAN HELP AT THE STATE LEVEL

To learn more about what your state is currently doing:

- Read the Indicator 14" sections of your state's SPP and APR.
- How is the outcome data used to strengthen accountability, decision making, and program improvement systems as it relates to improving postsecondary outcomes for special education students?
- If you can't find answers to these questions in the APR/SPP, or have more questions, ask your State Transition Specialist/Coordinator for clarification.
- Ask to see a copy of the state survey. Are the questions clear to you?

Contact your State Transition Specialist/Coordinator to discuss ways family members or parent advocates can provide feedback on the survey process, and support the dissemination and use of post-school outcome findings:

- Learn about opportunities for families and other stakeholders to provide input and feedback. Can you participate in the meetings of your State Transition Team? Is a formal application needed to serve on a committee, or can you express interest by telephone?
- Will the state's post-school outcome activities/findings be discussed at a State Education Advisory Committee meeting? Can you attend and participate?

Learn about your state's survey & results

The National Post-School Outcome (NPSO) Center provides links to:

- *Each state's State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Reports/ (SPP/APR)*
- *Contact information for State Transition Coordinators*
- *Regional parent centers & information on parent centers in your state*

http://psocenter.org/content_Pages/47

Indicator 14

Indicator 14 requires states to report the "percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:

A. Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.

B. Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.

C. Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

(20 U.S.C.1416(a)(3)(B))

- Encourage your state to hold public events to present survey results and provide stakeholders with opportunities to discuss ways to improve transition policies/practices. Offer to help plan such activities for parent audiences.
- Volunteer for ad hoc committees related to the state's post-school survey design, implementation, and analysis.
- Encourage your state to use the NPSO Data Use Tool Kit, or STEPSS, to share and use post-school outcome data with school districts and stakeholders.

WAYS TO HELP SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Contact your school district's Special Education Director to discuss ways to increase district response rates, contact families that are difficult to reach, and use survey results to improve post-school outcomes for students.

- Raise awareness of the annual survey – and the importance of responding – at school events attended by parents of students with disabilities.
- Encourage the district to use materials developed by NPSO, PACER Center, and others to promote participation.
- Form or join a local stakeholder team examining the graduation, dropout, and PSO data in order to make decisions for program improvement using the data. Consider the following questions:
 - What patterns can be seen in the State and district graduation, dropout, and PSO data when you look at the categories of disability type, gender, method of exit, and race/ethnicity?
 - Is there a region or geographic area in the State where youth are graduating, dropping out or engaged at higher rates? What do you think contributes to the higher rates in this area?
 - How does your district's data compare to other districts? What district policies and/or procedures may be contributing to the graduation, dropout, and engagement outcomes for youth with disabilities?
 - What actions could the district take to improve graduation and engagement rates?
- If your state does not survey every school district on an annual basis, how frequently are former special education students in your district being surveyed? Is this interval frequent enough?
- Enough to support district level decision-making and program improvement?

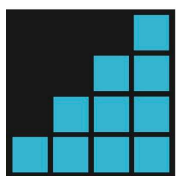
HELPFUL PARENT CENTER ACTIVITIES

- Invite the State Transition Coordinator to present information on survey results at an activity planned by your organization, such as a staff meeting, family forum, or annual transition conference.
- Use NPSO's "Be a Superstar" YouTube video at parent center transition workshops, and embed a copy on your website along with state contact information for those who want to learn more.
- Hand out flyers developed by your state or NPSO to promote survey participation at transition workshops.
- Include an article on your state's post-school outcome survey activities in the spring issue of your newsletter or on listservs, before annual survey activities begin in April.
- In collaboration with your State Department of Education, post a tutorial on your center's Website explaining the State's data collection activities, how to find survey information on the state agency website, and providing guidance for interpreting annual survey results.

INVOLVE INDIVIDUAL FAMILY MEMBERS

- Share NPSO resources/information with parents, your child's school/district, and other stakeholders.

Visit the NPSO website at psocenter.org to learn more about what information states are required to collect, how it needs to be reported, and what other states are doing to enhance survey questions and improve response rates.



**NATIONAL
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