



Director: Mike Bullis • 541-346-1601 • bullism@uoregon.edu
Coordinator: Jane Falls • 541-346-0354 • jafalls@uoregon.edu
OSEP Project Officer: Selete Avoke • 202-245-7260
selete.avoke@ed.gov
Visit us at www.psocenter.org

Post-School Outcomes Surveys: Coming Soon to a Student Near You!

Prepared by:
Deborah Leuchovius, Project Director
Technical Assistance about Transition and the
Rehabilitation Act Project (TATRA)
at PACER Center

University of Oregon
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New Post-School Outcomes Surveys —Coming soon to a Student near You!

In April 2007, State Education Agencies began surveying former special education students—high school graduates, recent dropouts, and young adults reaching the state’s maximum age for special education students—to find out whether they have pursued further education or found competitive employment.

This information is newly required by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in response to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). It must be gathered annually between April and September of the year following a student's exit from high school. States must report the results in their Annual Performance Report to OSEP and to the public. The goal of this initiative is to improve secondary programs so they lead to better employment and postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities.

State education agencies have been developing their survey tools over the course of the past two years. The success of this project now depends on the timely participation of youth who had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and their families. Graduates from the class of 2006, young adults who aged out of their special education program, and youth with IEPs who dropped out of school during the 2005/2006 school year will be the first former special education students to participate in this national effort.

It is very important for youth and families who receive these surveys to fill them out and return them or to participate in a short phone interview when contacted. In doing so, they will be helping to shape the future of special education and the development of high quality results-oriented secondary transition programs.

*Parents want
an education system
that is results-oriented
and focused
on the child’s needs
—in school and beyond.*

Report of the President’s
Commission on Excellence in
Special Education, 2002

Why this is Important

Families, educators, policymakers and advocates all want to see more students with disabilities go on to postsecondary education, find meaningful employment, and achieve success in the adult world. There is shared concern over high drop-out rates and low employment rates among young adults with disabilities. There is also concern over the fact that youth with disabilities are less likely than their peers without disabilities to attend or successfully complete, postsecondary education programs.

Analyzing collected data and discussing the results should help educators and administrators identify and implement statewide transition practices that lead to better results. This process also helps them identify training areas for teachers, target resources to specific schools and school districts, and develop state improvement plans that result in better post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Students, families, and IEP teams can also use this information to make more informed decisions during the transition planning process and to identify services and programs that lead to better postsecondary outcomes. Ultimately, this initiative has the potential to provide schools, families, and policymakers with information that can be used to spread effective transition practices beyond individual programs of excellence to school districts in every corner of a state.

What to Expect

Although each state is free to design their own survey process, the National Post-School Outcomes Center (NPSO) created sample surveys for states containing both essential and optional questions (see below).

Surveys are likely to be short, and contain a combination of “yes or no” and multiple-choice questions. Most questions will focus on the current employment and postsecondary education activities of the young adult. Some states may ask additional

Impact on Educators

Post-school outcomes data will give us a better picture of how we REALLY DID in supporting our students when they were in our K-12 programs.

We can use this data for program improvement.

—Susan DuRant

Director of the South Carolina
Office of Exceptional Children



Impact on Students and Families

- *Families can be confident that transition programs focus on preparing students for post-school success*
- *Youth will have improved access to transition services that reflect best practice*
- *Families, youth, and transition planning teams can use data to make more informed choices*

questions to learn about the independent living situations of former students or to ask youth who dropped out of school why they did so.

Individual states may also use different survey procedures. For example, surveys could be conducted in person, by telephone, online, or through the mail. Information may be gathered by surveying the student directly or by asking a family member. States may send students and their families a notification letter informing them about the survey, requesting their participation, and explaining when and how they will be contacted.

Not every student in a particular class will be contacted. Although half the states plan to contact every student with an IEP who left their high school program the previous school year, others will be contacting a representative sample of former students.

Most states will ask students to complete the survey only one time. Some, however, may try to stay in touch for two or more years.

Information collected from all respondents will be compiled into anonymous statistical data to guide program improvement. Identities of individual respondents will never be reported. Data collected will not be shared with anyone, including the student's current employer or co-workers, or fellow students and faculty if they are enrolled in a college or university.

The National Post-School Outcomes Center and states that already have systems in place for collecting this information have helped states new to the process prepare for this ambitious undertaking.

The Importance of Responding

Participation in state post-school outcomes surveys is voluntary. However, youth and their families should know that their participation is important and valued. By giving a small amount of their time, they can make a big difference in the development of more effective special education and secondary transition programs for future students with disabilities.

*“I think this information
would be a good way
of educating people
about disabilities.*

*The data would help
in my efforts to advocate on
behalf of the disability
community and help
with future programming and
policymaking.”*

PACER

Parent Focus Group

Participant

For More Information

To find out about the data collection activities of your state check out the NPSO State Profile Database at www.psocenter.org. Profiles include such information as a description of how each state collects and uses post-school outcome data, state contacts, links to related Web sites, and survey instruments, and reports.

If your state is not yet listed, contact your state education agency about voluntarily completing the profile. You can find the Web site of your state office of special education online at www.nasdse.org/directors.cfm

If you cannot find information on your state's post-school data collection activities posted on the Web site of your state special education program, contact your state's director of special education or your state's transition coordinator to request more information.

*Note: This is not an actual survey. It contains examples of the **kind of questions** that states will ask in their own post-school surveys of former special education students. The progression of questions asked of each individual will differ based on preceding responses. Actual protocols developed by the National Post-School Outcomes Center are available online at www.psocenter.org*

SAMPLE POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES SURVEY QUESTIONS OF FORMER SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Questions about Current Work Status & Work History Since High School

1. *Right now* are you employed?
YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)
2. How many hours do you work each week?
IF MORE THAN ONE JOB, CONSIDER THE JOB WITH THE MOST HOURS.

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
1 – 20 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 – 35 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/>
36 – 40 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 41 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How long have you had your current job?

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
Less than 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 to 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. At any time since leaving high school, *have you ever been employed?*
YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)
5. For the last job you had, about how many hours did you work each week?

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
Up to 20 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 – 35 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
36 – 40 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 40 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. How much were you paid per hour at the last job you had?

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
Less than minimum wage	
Minimum wage	
More than minimum wage	
Other: <i>e.g. the rate paid per piece or job</i>	

7. Describe the job setting for your last job.

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
Competitive – paid work in a community setting: a “regular job”	
Sheltered employment – where most workers have disabilities: a center with people who have disabilities	
Supported employment – paid work in a community setting with on-going support services: a regular job with a job coach	

8. Are you currently looking for employment?

YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)

9. What reason best describes why you are not employed?

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
Enrolled in training program, college, or university	
Cannot find a job that I am interested in doing	
Cannot find any job	
Lack of skills needed	
Need transportation	
Don't want to lose government benefits (SSI)	
Need help finding a job	
Need help keeping a job	
Don't want to work	
Was fired from last job	
Parents/family don't want me to work	
Health or disability concerns	
Quit last job	
Other:	

Questions about Postsecondary Education and Training

10. *Right now*, are you enrolled in any type of school, training, or education program?
YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)
11. If yes, are you currently enrolled full time?
YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)
12. At any time since leaving high school, *have you ever* been enrolled in any type of school, training, or education program?
YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)
13. If yes, were you enrolled full-time?
YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)
14. What type of school or training program are you currently attending—or *did you attend*?

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
GED program or Adult Basis Education	
Vocational technical training	
Community education class(es)	
Two-year community college	
Four-year college or university	

15. Did you receive a degree, certification, or credentials from your training program?
YES or NO (*CIRCLE ONE*)
16. What was the highest degree you obtained?

	<i>CHECK ONE</i>
Not a degree program	
High school diploma equivalency (GED)	
Training certificate	
Associate degree (A.A.)	
Other: (<i>PLEASE SPECIFY</i>)	