

Post-Secondary Transition Ad Hoc Committee Report and Recommendations

Purpose:

The Ad Hoc Committee on Post-Secondary Transition was established to review and discuss information on issues related to making post-secondary transition a priority at the state and local level through improved collaboration by increasing services to schools uniform throughout the state and develop recommendations to the Office for Exceptional Children that should be considered in addressing training and education of students that would prepare them for employment, education, and independent living skills upon graduation.

Committee Charge:

To address this topic, the Office for Exceptional Children provided information, resources, and/or data related to post-secondary transition. This included currently available online guidance documents, state profile data, State Performance Plan indicator data, Ohio Longitudinal Transition Study data, and state partnerships with the Ohio Rehabilitation Service Commission and State Support Team agencies. The committee was charged to share perceptions about issues on the topic including areas of strength and areas of weakness and recommend actions that OEC can take to address the identified problems.

Background:

The Post-Secondary transition Ad Hoc Committee was co-chaired by Vicki Clark and Kathleen Hall. The committee members included:

- Patricia Cloppert, Administrator for Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities
- Mary Binegar, Teacher Representative with the Ohio Education Association
- Stephanie Barber-Maynard, Individual with Disabilities
- Jane Brandt, State Juvenile and Adult Corrections Agencies/Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections
- Elaine Siefring, Parent of Children with Disabilities
- Eric Bortmas, Individual with Disabilities
- Neva Fox, Parent of Children with Disabilities
- Marla Himmeger, Retired from SAPEC
- Jennifer Kirby, Individual with Disabilities
- Lawrence Dennis, OEC Liason
- John Hurley, Ohio Department of Mental Health
- Ben Hollinger,
- Aneesa Locke-Hines, Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission
- JoHannah Ward, OEC Liason

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The committee met in September and November 2012 and in January, March, and May 2013, to review information and data provided by OEC and by committee members from around the state of Ohio, to share experiences and collectively reflect on Post-Secondary Transition. Some of the information provided by committee members to the Transition Group was obtained from parents, job training coordinators, work study coordinators, vocational special education coordinators, and career assessment specialists, and other qualified individuals. Several team members brought in resources from their geographical locations in the State based on services available in their region from Career Centers, Educational Service Centers. And State Support Teams. Information was also obtained from OCALI, Ed Resources, NASET, CEC, OSU Nisonger Center (services available for students with disabilities such as training and college programs), OCECD, and various other federal, state, and local agency reports. The committee maintained notes which provide a summary of the discussions and a list of documents reviewed.

This report summarized the Ad Hoc Committee's statement of the problem and defines the recommendations approved by SAPEC for submission to OEC for consideration.

Recommendations and Discussions

Problem Statement 1:

The new proposed Ohio Operating Standards have reduced requirements for school districts in regards to employing a certified individual to provide post-secondary transition services.

Recommendation:

Specify in the new operating standards what positions school employees should hold to provide transition services.

Discussion:

Old operating standards clarified "Job training coordinators, vocational special education coordinators, career assessment specialists, work study coordinators, or other qualified individuals", along with the transition to work endorsement. New proposed standards indicate that the "Individuals coordinating transition shall either obtain the transition to work endorsement OR..." Old standards required an "AND" rather than "OR" in the language, thus increasing education and training requirements for individuals providing transition service (See section 3301-51-01 Section 635 iii). Under new standards, the committee fears that the burden on transition services will fall in the hands of school counselors or intervention specialists with no specific training in the area of transition, thus reducing the quality of transition services provided. Parents on the committee have expressed frustration that they are the ones informing school districts of services available after researching on their own what is available in the community;

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this may only get worse if specific training and education requirements are not met by individuals providing transition services to students.

Data provided on our Ohio 2012-13 state profile indicates 97.9% of school districts met secondary transition requirements based on indicator 13. Indicator 14 indicates that 67.10% of our students were enrolled in higher education, employed, or training which was another indicator not met. This indicates that though most of our students with disabilities in Ohio have a transition plan included in their IEP, approximately 1/3 graduate and are not enrolled in higher education, employed, or receiving training after high school. By further reducing requirements in who is providing transition services, do we expect that our profile data will improve?

Under current standards, individuals that provide transition services (job training coordinators, vocational special education coordinators, career assessment specialist, work study coordinators, or other qualified individuals) are tasked with many responsibilities. Within these responsibilities is the advisement on career-technical programs available in the regions that students reside. Ohio Longitudinal Transition Study (OLTS) data indicated that students with learning disabilities were 30% more likely to enter full-time employment if they had 3 or more semesters of career tech, and students with other health impairments were more than twice as likely to enter full time employment, and students with multiple disabilities were more than three times as likely to enter employment 20 or more hours per week. Career-tech guidance is a vital component to post-secondary transition for students with disabilities; are we willing to risk that guidance to be provided by someone without expertise in transition services? Similar data supporting the use of work study, job training, or college planning services for students with disabilities is included in OLTS data.

Finally, there are no requirements included in new standards to address case load ratios for an individual providing transition services. Furthermore, previous standards did not include a recommended caseload for “job training coordinators, vocational special education coordinators, career assessment specialists, work study coordinators, or other qualified individuals”. Is it possible that these individuals were expected to do so much with too many students to provide effective transition services? Many on our committee discussed that transition coordinators within these job titles were servicing students from multiple school districts across county lines with different services available, limiting their ability to provide high-quality services in the past. Will that problem be solved by adding transition duties to another individual who has more limited education and training specific to the field of transition services, awareness of community resources, and with other assigned duties leading to limited availability to assist students in the process?

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Problem Statement 2:

Parents require more guidance about services available to their child with a disability, as consistency of post-secondary services available to students with disabilities varies widely across Ohio.

Recommendation

Provide an appendices in the Whose Idea Is This book in regards to state agencies that are available to assist families with post-secondary transition (i.e.: Board of Developmental Disabilities, BVR, Social Security, Success for Youth, Job and Family Services) along with a short description of what services each agency may be able to provide for an eligible individual.

Discussion

Within each of these agencies are a multitude of services available to individuals who qualify and those services may vary by region of the state or what grant funding the agency may have received. However, providing parents with these initial resources may help them begin to prepare for post-secondary transition for their child if someone else in the school district is not aware of what resources are available in his or her community. Better informed parents may ensure that the correct process for transition services is being done in schools for their children. Many other pieces of information are shared with parents throughout the year (i.e.: prior notice, notification of scholarship programs, etc.) yet this information is never universally shared with parents across the state. Transition information is not uniform from school district to school district. This is information that helps inform parents about decision related to post-secondary training and education for employment and independent living skills. The middle school parents and students need to be educated of the assistance and opportunities that are available to enable them to begin planning their transition options for planning now to prepare for later options. ODE provides an excellent website on transition services if parents are able to locate that particular webpage and have internet accessibility. Other than an ODE representative on our committee, no other committee representatives were aware of the ODE website until the committee started collaborating on resources that were available. Awareness of what programs are out there for students with disabilities is vital in the process of post-secondary transition services.