Transition to Adult Productivity:
Supporting Secondary Students with Disabilities in Successful Movement to College and Career

March 4, 2016
10:00 - 11:15 a.m.
Capitol Visitors Center, SVC - 203

In cooperation with Honorary Co-Chairs
Sen. Lamar Alexander
Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, and
Rep. Michael Honda
Coalition Mission

To increase the visibility of the research funded by IES, strengthen IES programs by supporting strong and comprehensive reauthorization bills, and seek adequate and sustained funding for the research IES supports.
The National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), sponsors a comprehensive program of special education research designed to expand the knowledge and understanding of infants, toddlers and children with disabilities.
National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER)
Special Education Research on Transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCSER has funded research to:</th>
<th>NCSER funded programs have helped students with disabilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• explore data</td>
<td>• gain employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• innovate and develop programs</td>
<td>• succeed academically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assess developed programs to prepare students with disabilities for life after high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- postsecondary education</td>
<td>• socially thrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- workforce</td>
<td>after graduating from high school</td>
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<tr>
<td>- independent living</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- community engagement</td>
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Success in Postsecondary Education, Workforce, Independent Living, Community Engagement
Success in Postsecondary Education, Workforce, Independent Living, Community Engagement
Transitions: Insights from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2

Mary Wagner, Ph.D.

IES and Congressional staff briefings
Washington, D.C.
March 3-4, 2016
### NLTS2 overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratified random sample</th>
<th>Nationally representative sample of 500 LEAs and 40 special schools, stratified by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Geographic region</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enrollment size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• District wealth</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>11,280 special education students</td>
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<tr>
<th>Focused on</th>
<th>Youth ages 13 to 16 at start, 21-25 at last data collection</th>
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<th>Study years</th>
<th>2001-2011</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Generalizes to</th>
<th>All youth, each disability group and age cohort</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Longitudinal</th>
<th>5 waves of data collected over 9 years from parents, youth, direct student assessments, school staff and transcripts</th>
</tr>
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</table>
By SRI staff during NLTS2 (nlts2.org)

- 19 reports; 15 fact sheets; 7 data briefs; 7 newsletters; multiple annual presentations to relevant conferences; web tables presenting all data by disability, race/ethnicity, gender, income

Subsequent SRI secondary analyses grants focused on experiences and outcomes of youth:
- IES funding to study youth with LD, ED, ID, autism/ASD, who were deaf/hard of hearing, and who enrolled in postsecondary education
- NSF funding to study participation in STEM education/careers by youth with ASD
- NIH and NIDRR subgrant funding to study youth with ASD and ED

Other researchers using publicly available data for secondary analyses
- 84 peer reviewed journal articles published since 2011
- 104 authors involved
What Have We Learned About Transitioning Youth with Disabilities?
Progress is evident but uneven.

Comparisons with NLTS (conducted 1984-1993)

- Significant increases in:
  - Taking general ed academic subjects
  - Supports for general education teachers with special education students (e.g., special materials/equipment, inservice training, smaller class size, classroom aide).
  - Providing related services (health/mental health, social work, assistive technologies)
  - Absenteeism and suspensions

- Significant decreases in taking career/technical education courses
Progress is evident but uneven.

Significant increases in:
- High school completion
- Participation in community activities and volunteerism, voter registration
- Enrollment in 2-year and 4-year colleges and postsecondary CTE programs/schools
- “Productive engagement”—working and/or going to school
Continuing challenges

• No significant increases in
  – Employment rates
  – Job duration
  – Wages
  – Postsecondary education completion
  – Living arrangements

• A significant decline in working youth receiving employer-provided benefits
  ▪ Increasing arrest rates
Benefits were not equally distributed. For example:

- Significant increases in general education academic coursetaking occurred only for youth with LD and those who were deaf/hard of hearing.
- White youth and those from higher-income households experienced the greatest increase in academic coursetaking.
- Youth with ID and Hispanic youth experienced no improvement in grades.
- Youth with ED or OHI (including ADD/ADHD) and low income youth had the greatest increases in school suspensions and arrests.
What high school experiences help to improve post-high school employment?

- Graduating from high school
- Having a paid job in high school
- Earning 4 or more credits in occupationally specific career/technical education
- Receiving high school career counseling
- Effective transition planning
  - Receiving transition planning instruction
  - Schools contacting postsecondary CTE programs and employers as part of transition planning
What high school experiences help to improve postsecondary education participation?

Enrollment
- Graduating from high school
- Earning a higher proportion of HS credits from academic courses
- Achieving a higher GPA in academic courses
- Completing more advanced math courses
- Effective transition planning
  - Receiving instruction in self-determination and transition planning
  - High schools contacting postsecondary schools as part of transition planning
  - Representatives of postsecondary schools attending transition planning meetings

Postsecondary education completion
- Accessing supports in postsecondary school
Opportunities to strengthen IDEA in reauthorization

Prioritize increasing high school graduation rates

• Support implementation of evidence-based practices for dropout prevention (e.g., “Check and Connect”) and dropout recovery (e.g., Reintegration Toolkit)
• Increase in-class supports for struggling students
• Encourage a culture of success—every student succeeds
Opportunities to strengthen IDEA in reauthorization

Transition planning

• Start early—return the mandated starting age for transition planning to 14. Starting in high school is too late.

• Call for involving parents as partners in their students’ transition planning (e.g., goal setting, strategy development, holding high expectations)

• Provide transition planning instruction to high school students

• Include community members appropriate to each students’ goals (e.g., employers, college representatives, vocational rehabilitation staff)
Interagency Collaboration Made Easy: The CIRCLES Model for Transition Planning

David W. Test
Professor, UNC Charlotte
Co-Director, CIRCLES

Interagency Collaboration is Supported by Correlational Research

• Students who received assistance from 3 to 6 agencies (compared to fewer) were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment or education

• Interagency resources devoted to transition are:
  – positively correlated with participation in postsecondary education
  – predictive of post-school success in education and employment
First Experimental Study of Interagency Collaboration

• Funded by IES/NCSER from 2012-2015

• Transition Outcomes for Special Education Secondary Students

• Included 48 high schools randomly assigned
  ▪ 24 CIRCLES schools
  ▪ 24 services-as-usual schools
  ▪ Over 1000 students
Target Population for CIRCLES

• Students with disabilities who may need transition support from multiple agencies
• Unclear which agencies and supports will best meet students’ needs
• Students with disabilities who are at high risk for dropping-out of high school
CIRCLES involves:

- Community Level Team
- School Level Team
- IEP Team
Community Level Team

- Agencies/Service Providers
- Discuss policy/braid together resources
- Collaborate for service delivery
- Do NOT work directly with students
- Meet 2-4 times/year
- MOST IMPORTANTLY...appoint representatives to the School Level Team

BOSSES Executive-Level Folks
Stanly County Community Level Team

• Lack of training in areas where there were jobs in their county
• Community College administrator developed programs to be offered through continuing education in the missing areas
  – Food services needed building with a kitchen and team provided access to one
  – The team started a community garden in adjacent vacant lot to supply the kitchen and provide landscape students the option to work there
• All five programs created by this team started graduating students in 2014
School Level Team

Agencies/Service Providers, School Personnel

Direct Service Providers

- Work DIRECTLY with students/families
- Collaborate to provide services to INDIVIDUAL students
- Do transition planning with students from multiple schools
- Meet Monthly
- Pre-plan for, and submit transition goals, to the IEP team
Davidson County’s School Level Team

• Identified issue: students had to travel to the local community college to take the placement exam
• Team worked with the community college to begin administering placement exams at each high school
• This small shift in service delivery enabled more students to take the placement tests and enroll in community college
Student Level or IEP Team

School Personnel, Related Services
Personnel Specific to Individual Students

School and Student-Specific Team Members

• Prepare students to present their plans at the School Level Team meeting
• Bring pre-planning from School Level Team back to IEP meeting to help write transition component of IEP
Research Question #1: Is CIRCLES more effective than the services-as-usual at increasing students’ participation in IEP meetings?

• Results indicate students participating in CIRCLES demonstrate increased levels of IEP participation, with moderate to strong effects.
Research Question #2: Is CIRCLES more effective than the services-as-usual at increasing students’ level of self determination?

- Results indicate a moderate to strong impact on students’ opportunities to exhibit skills in school
Research Question #3: How do key stakeholders view CIRCLES?

- **Students**
  - 92% agreed they have been involved in preparing goals for their future after high school
  - 87% agreed their high school was helpful in preparing them for college
  - 86% agreed their high school was helpful in preparing them for employment
  - 93% agreed they knew what adult services would help them after high school
Research Question #3: How do key stakeholders view CIRCLES?

• Parents
  – 100% agreed they had an active role in the process of preparing their child for life after high school
  – 100% agreed they understood their child’s needs and goals
  – 92% agreed they communicated on a regular basis with school personnel on the process of preparing their child for life after high school
• Research Question #3: How do key stakeholders view CIRCLES?

• School and Community Agencies

  Reported *increased collaboration between schools and community agencies*

  • Schools reported high levels of collaboration, but saw a need to reach out to more local businesses and community and technical education providers
  • Agencies reported collaboration through CIRCLES strengthened their own agency outcomes, but a need to “braid” financial resources remains
What’s Happening Now?

- CIRCLES is continuing in 10 out of 12 school districts without research support
- Website of materials is available to help others replicate CIRCLES: [http://circles.uncc.edu/](http://circles.uncc.edu/)
- CIRCLES is being replicated in other states (AR, DC, FL, OH, NY, AR, TX)
- Funding from IES to initiate and evaluate this research was essential
Improving Transition to Adulthood through Self-determination Enhancement

Laurie E. Powers, Ph.D.
Impact of Self-determination on Transition to Adulthood Outcomes

- Emphasis on intervention research that goes beyond documenting problems to identifying and testing solutions
- Interrelating experimental (RCT) and qualitative studies to systematically evaluate outcomes and to dig deeper into effective processes
  - Emphasis on high rigor in study design, fidelity management, measurement and analyses
- Highest risk populations of young people in special education, including those with developmental disabilities and those in foster care
Why Focus on Youth in Special Education and Foster Care?

- Youth in foster care are very likely to receive special education services
  - About 60% of older youth in Special Education
  - Many youth (est. 25%) have developmental disabilities

- Youth in foster care face extreme disadvantage
  - Lower levels of postsecondary participation, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, mental health stressors, 10 times the incarceration rate of the general population

- Youth in foster care with disabilities face compounded disadvantage
  - Lower high school achievement, employment, social support and health, compared to youth in special education or foster care alone
  - Overrepresentation of ethnically diverse students in both groups
What is Self-determination?

- Acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life free from undue external influence or interference (Wehmeyer, 1996)
- Self-directed action to achieve personally valued goals (Powers, et al., 1996)
- Increasing self-determination involves learning to apply skills such as setting goals, planning, negotiation, problem-solving, managing discouragement and tracking accomplishments, rather than focusing on building typical transition skills (e.g., budgeting, cooking, work behaviors).
Essential Ingredients for Increasing Self-determination

• Having Information to make informed decisions
• Being exposed to opportunities to do activities, take risks, assume responsibilities
• Learning and practicing skills in self-direction and working with others
• Getting support from trusted others

Inclusion and Interdependence
“My Life” Intervention Model

- Youth-directed coaching from an adult or near peer
  - Provide a consistent, transparent, and accepting relationship
  - Introduce youth to achievement, partnership, and self-regulation self-determination skills
  - Coach youth through real life community experiences in pursuing their goals and managing barriers (at least 33% of time)
  - Support each youth to organize a youth-led transition planning meeting and to develop support agreements with personal allies

- Workshops with peers and successful near peers: youth-defined topics, peer support and fun

Primary objective: Experiencing success and believing you can achieve goals and manage barriers
Overview of Experimental Studies

- Series of studies reflecting a cycle of development, efficacy evaluation, and model refinement and adaptation
  1. Take Charge - Original development and testing of self-determination model for youth in secondary special education
  2. My Life Pilot - Tailoring and initial testing for youth in special education and foster care
  3. Project Success – Efficacy testing for improving secondary education and related outcomes
  4. Better Futures – Adapted for postsecondary focus and initial outcome evaluation
  5. My Life Efficacy Study – Efficacy testing for improving transition outcomes (analyses underway to clarify which youth and under what conditions the intervention is most effective)
Across the Studies…

- More than 650 youth in special education and foster care, ages 14-18.5 at study enrollment
- Population-based, inclusive recruitment
- Assign youth randomly to My Life or to community services as usual
- High fidelity in carrying out the intervention
- Unlike many studies that do not include follow-up, youth were followed for 6-12 month post intervention
- Low attrition compared to many other studies involving disadvantaged, transition-aged youth
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Intervention Effect Size at Follow-up</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>1,2,3,4</td>
<td>Moderate to large effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Large effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in Educational and Transition Planning (post-intervention)</td>
<td>1,2,3,4</td>
<td>Moderate to large effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits toward HS Graduation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moderate effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Preparation</td>
<td>3,4</td>
<td>Moderate to large effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Planning/Preparation</td>
<td>3,4</td>
<td>Moderate to large effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living Preparation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Moderate effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>3,4</td>
<td>Moderate to large effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>2,4</td>
<td>Moderate effects</td>
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## Outcomes: Transition Milestones

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Control vs. Intervention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Completion</td>
<td>2, 4</td>
<td>50% vs. 72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52% vs. 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Participation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36% vs. 73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>28% vs. 47%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37% vs. 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice Involvement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.7% vs. 5.4%</td>
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Youth Perspectives

▪ I started making goals. I started changing my life. I started getting a different state of mind. It felt good, too...

▪ “I spent half a day at the school bothering them about letting me go back [to school]. I had this call about a day and a half later saying we have accepted you. They said this kid is the first person who has ever come in to apply for herself.”

▪ “So if I can accomplish one thing, and then one thing went to another thing, that made me feel that I had hope that I could do it..”.

▪ “Practically everything that I've learned has become a habit.”

▪ “Instead of being like, okay, I'm done, it makes me want to be like, what can I continue doing so when I look back and can say, you know, I did a lot.”
Uptake and Policy Impacts

- My Life designated as an exemplary national model for positive youth development by the Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- My Life study incorporated into the What Works Clearinghouse; design standards met without reservation.
- Several local and national organizations have proactively adopted My Life: A certification training program has been developed for coaches and supervisors.
- Catalyst for district-wide training, inter-agency coordination, modified diploma legislation, national technical assistance on supporting youth in foster care with disabilities.
- Important qualitative data gathered related to effective coaching and mentoring strategies, experiences of youth exiting high school and foster care, and strategies for maintaining contact with youth during transition (as required by CFCIP; Public Law 106-169; National Youth in Transition Database).
Implications

- Young people with disabilities – even those doubly disadvantaged by foster care – can establish successful adult lives if provided with youth-directed support, information and opportunities to build self-determination and pursue their goals.

- Unequivocal findings from RCTs are essential for truly determining effective practices:
  - Enables differentiation of popular from evidence-based
  - Gets effective support to those in need
  - Promotes efficient use of funds and resources

- IES provides an essential national voice and support for rigorous special education implementation research that would not otherwise happen.
Thank You!

lpowers@pdx.edu

Citations available upon request
INVESTING IN STRONG TRANSITIONS
Toward a Future of Flourishing

Erik Carter | Congressional Briefing 2016
... meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living…"

“... an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.”

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT (2004)
EVIDENCE CHILDREN TEND TO GET OLDER WITH EACH PASSING YEAR
Toward a Future of Flourishing
78% of students have a transition goal to work in the community.

83% of parents consider some type of paid, community job to be important.

~15% of all adults with ID are working.

Sources: Butterworth et al. (2014); Blustein, Carter, & McMillan (in press); Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2012; Shogren & Plotter (2012); www.nlts2.org
PROJECT SUMMER
Connecting Youth with Severe Disabilities to Early Work Experiences
STATE OF STUCK: INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

Source: Butterworth et al. (2014); ICI National Survey of State IDD Agencies; www.thinkwork.org
26% working two years after high school

43% in segregated settings at low wages

POST-SCHOOL LANDSCAPE

Source: Carter, Austin, & Trainor (2012)
WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

2.5x WORKING DURING HIGH SCHOOL

5x HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Source: Carter, Ditchman, Sun, Trainor, Swedeen, & Owens (2010)
OUR MULTI-YEAR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

**Phase 1**
To what extent are youth with disabilities involved in employment during the summer months?
What factors are associated with youth participation in these activities?

**Phase 2**
What are the key barriers to and facilitators of youth employment?
What recommendations do stakeholders have for improving summer opportunities for youth?

**Phase 3**
How might we design transition services and supports to increase employment and other experiences for youth with disabilities during the summer months?

15% of youth with severe disabilities worked.

60% of youth without disabilities worked.

15x influence of teacher expectations.

Missed summer opportunities.
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS #1

RESOURCE MAPPING #2
INTENTIONAL PLANNING #3
COMMUNITY CONNECTOR #4
SUMMER EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

Intervention Comparison

Youth Without Disabilities

- Not Working
- Working

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Working</th>
<th>Working</th>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Without Disabilities</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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THE IES INVESTMENT
Toward a Future of Flourishing

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