

MEMORANDUM

To: Leah Voorhies, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support
From: Utah Special Education Advisory Panel
Subject: IEP Transition Plans
Date: December 7, 2021

In our role as an advisory panel, we would like to provide input and recommendations to the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to improve post-secondary transition plans for secondary students with disabilities. Effective transitions rely on many agencies and individuals including many outside of the educational setting. Connecting students and families to these providers and resources are essential for successful transitions into adulthood. Below are areas of concern and possible solutions to consider for improving postsecondary outcomes.

Challenge 1: Supports for Parents and Students: Transition plans are as diverse as individual student needs. Part of the transition planning process is helping parents navigate the myriad of services and resources necessary to support their young adult. Communication about and availability of resources varies significantly based on location in the state. Parents are the experts on their student's needs, abilities, and goals. Transition plans should include and inform parents of resources, supports, and opportunities available.

Solution 1: LEAs should provide parents with a transition guide highlighting important considerations, resources, and local organizations. In order to accomplish this, USBE should develop a partnership with the Department of Health of Human Services to identify and communicate services for individuals with disabilities.

Challenge 2: Transition Data, Assessment, and Implementation: A USBE license in special education requires candidates to have experience "developing and implementing a secondary transition plan as it relates to post-secondary education and training, competitive employment and independent living." The scope of skills and time necessary to identify assessment tools, coordinate, and collaborate with a myriad of agencies, as well as educate and support families is beyond the expectation of USBE, yet secondary special education teachers are expected and required to meet these demands.

Solution 2: Utilizing key partnerships, USBE should develop a web-based transition assessment tool for educators, parents, and students to connect students to the most appropriate resources based on the student's individualized results. LEAs should develop professional standards and procedures to support best practices and identify local supports and opportunities. Schools should utilize transition specialists as part of IEP teams to develop and implement transition plans.

Challenge 3: Transition assessments and services often need to be adapted or modified to meet the needs of students with complex needs or low incidence disabilities. Collaboration with LEAs and adult service agencies is even more essential for the maintenance of outcomes as young adults with complex needs transition. When the time and process for this complex collaboration is not attended to, student outcomes may be impacted. USBE requires that "LEA must invite a representative of any participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services." (34CFR§300.321) to the IEP team meeting. This prompts the LEA to bring these individuals to the table but does not give guidance on effective processes to involve the agency partners in any assessment, outcome development, and service implementation.

Solution 3: USBE should support LEAs in identifying processes for including key organizations in transition assessment, outcome development, and service implementation along with the parent, student, and other IEP team members. One example of what this may be is transition panels that meet regularly to coordinate and discuss the needs of the students in a given LEA.

Challenge 4: Undocumented students are ineligible to participate in most state-funded transition services and cannot be counseled on post-secondary employment due to current state law. Also, current data required by federal law is overly simplistic and does not represent several populations, including transient students, students learning English, and students who may be participating in day programs at assisted living facilities.

Solution 4: USBE should begin acquiring data regarding the needs and outcomes of these underrepresented groups. This is essential for understanding and improving our state's post-secondary outcomes. USBE should create a specific guidance document for developing transition plans for undocumented students with disabilities.

Thank you for your time in considering our recommendations. Please contact the USEAP chair or co-chair with any questions you may have regarding our recommendations:

Steve Phelps: phelpss@gmail.com

Trent Nelson: trendnelson@hotmail.com