

RESEARCH FINDINGS BRIEF

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Overview of RRTC's Purpose

The purpose of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) is to conduct a strategic program of research, training, technical assistance, and information dissemination focused upon educational supports that increase access and improve outcomes for persons with disabilities in postsecondary education programs and subsequently, in the labor force. Addressing this priority, the primary goals of the RRTC are as follows: 1) To identify the nature and range of educational supports 2) To identify new technologies that improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities; 3) To identify effective supports and models of support delivery that contribute to improved outcomes for students with disabilities; 4) To investigate methods by which the supports in postsecondary programs can be extended to the employment environment, including students with severe disabilities; and 5) To provide training, technical assistance and information to educational support personnel, public and private rehabilitation personnel, career placement specialist, and students with disabilities concerning the effectiveness of specific educational supports and models of delivery in improving postsecondary educational and career outcomes of the people with disabilities.

Topical Review – Pursuing Postsecondary Education Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

AUDIENCE Disability service providers, rehabilitation counselors, higher education administration, special education teachers, transition coordinators, high school administrators, and families of students with disabilities.

ISSUE

The number of postsecondary students reporting a disability has increased dramatically, climbing from 2.6% in 1978, to 9.2% in 1994, to nearly 19% in 1996 (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Since 1990 there has been a 90% increase in the number of colleges/universities, technical institutions, community colleges and vocational technical centers offering opportunities for persons with disabilities to continue their education (Pierangelo & Crane, 1997). Nonetheless the enrollment of people with disabilities in postsecondary institutions is still 50% lower than enrollment among the general population. This gap in educational attainment significantly affects the long-term employment prospects for persons with disabilities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

N/A

METHOD

This chapter discusses a series of decisions that need to be made in order for individuals to select a program which best meets their academic and

personal needs. Current trends in postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities are explored. Critical factors in successfully transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education programs are discussed in addition to best practices in educating students with disabilities seeking advanced degrees.

FINDINGS

- Increased responsibility is placed on the student with a disability in higher education. He or she must provide documentation and assessment information, request and monitor accommodations, and coordinate individual transition supports.
- To enable students with disabilities to prepare for their transition to higher education, students need to explore postsecondary education settings, identify skills needed for a successful transition, and establish career goals.
- Important considerations for students entering postsecondary schools include understanding the range of accommodations that are available on campus and how to access them, developing skills to use and access assistive technology, and being able to self-monitor their progress through the use of time-management strategies.

IMPLICATIONS

- There is a need to actively involve students in their IEPs and preparation for college.

- There is a need to address specific transition issues for students with disabilities who are preparing to enter postsecondary education.
- There is a need for postsecondary institutions to educate instructors regarding disabilities and students' rights to accommodations and course modifications.

REFERENCE

Getzel, E.E., Stodden, R.A., & Briel, L. W. (in press). Pursuing postsecondary education opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In

P. Wehman (Ed.), *Life beyond the classroom: Transition strategies for young people with disabilities*, (3rd ed.). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

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The [RRTC] has established the leading database of articles, books, reports, videos, and other materials related specifically to practices, policies, and findings in postsecondary education for people with disabilities. Hundreds of references have been compiled, over half of them fully annotated. This searchable database is publicly available at www.rrtc.hawaii.edu/ - just click on "Search Research Database."