



RESEARCH FINDINGS BRIEF

APRIL 2000 • STUDY AREA 4d, VOLUME 4

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.

National Survey: Transfer of Supports to the Workplace

AUDIENCE Disability Support Coordinators, Career Placement Specialists, Faculty Instructors, Teaching Assistants, Students with Disabilities, Administrators, Related Agencies (Vocational Rehabilitation), Employers, Other Researchers, Policy makers (Federal and State Agencies).

ISSUE

There is scant literature regarding the current practice of providing educational supports to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. Further, little is known or understood of the transfer of educational supports to subsequent work settings following postsecondary education. A national survey was conducted which provides crucial information for researchers seeking to ascertain the current status of educational supports offered in postsecondary programs and the transfer of those supports to subsequent work settings. Information shared in this Brief contributes to one of the four priority areas as identified in the Strategic Program of Research for the RRTC on Postsecondary Educational Support. The survey and the sub-analyses will provide a comprehensive baseline of data to address issues concerning educational support provision.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Do disability support programs in postsecondary institutions coordinate the transfer of educational supports for students with disabilities to their postgraduate employment or work place settings?

METHOD

A survey instrument was developed and distributed to a national sample of more than 1500 disability support coordinators in postsecondary education programs. More than 650 respondents completed the survey providing a profile of educational support provision during the school years and as transferred into subsequent workplace settings. The respondents within the sample were profiled as follows: 422 were from public schools vs. 193 from private schools; 246 were from two-year or less than two-year schools vs. 369 from four-year schools.

Survey participants were asked:

“Has your program attempted to coordinate the transfer of educational supports to subsequent post-graduate employment settings for students with disabilities?”

FINDINGS

- 61% of responding programs offer career/vocational assessment and counseling for students with disabilities, focused upon assisting students in the selection of career fields and employment, which could be readily accommodated or supported. An intent of this service was to provide students with disabilities with information to assist their selection of a suitable field of study or major.

- 46% of the responding programs offer job placement assistance to students with disabilities (unclear whether this is the same type of service provided to all students). Respondents did not indicate whether additional or special assistance was provided to address the transfer of supports to the placement.

However, for most postsecondary programs, the provision of supports and assistance end upon graduation - approximately one in four schools offered some assistance or facilitation for the transfer of supports to subsequent work settings.

- **73%** of the respondents answered “**NO**” to the question, “Has your program attempted to coordinate the transfer of educational supports to students post-graduate employment setting?”
- Many disability support and career placement offices in postsecondary programs seem not to view the transfer of supports from an educational setting to subsequent work settings as a part of their role or responsibility.
- Beyond the fact that few postsecondary programs provide this service or focus upon the transfer of supports to the work setting, little is known about this process, i.e., what types of service or assistance would be of benefit to students and to employers, who would provide this assistance, and how would supporters and employers work together with other agencies.

IMPLICATIONS

Clearly, the transition of educational supports from postsecondary school to subsequent work settings is

an important part of life-long learning and employment for persons with disabilities. During student lead focus group activities, students with disabilities expressed significant concerns and fears about subsequent employment opportunities following postsecondary education. Concern for the transfer of supports to the workplace was one of a list of fears faced by students as they approach and progress through postsecondary education. Most students express uncertainty about whom, if anyone will be of assistance and are fearful that employers will not provide supports as offered in postsecondary school, thus making their education efforts meaningless. If guidance or policy were available for students with disabilities, the transfer of supports to the work setting many more students with disabilities might consider and approach postsecondary education and life-long learning opportunities.

Postsecondary schools could ask in questionnaire format which of the supports, students with disabilities found to be most effective and which they think would be most useful in a subsequent work setting. This information could be shared as a beginning discussion with potential employers of students with disabilities.

For further information on this brief or for an executive summary/full report on the National Survey of Educational Support Provision, please contact Tom Harding (808) 956 – 5344; tharding1@yahoo.com, or go to the Center web site www.rrtc.hawaii.edu

The RRTC on Postsecondary Educational Supports is supported by grant #H133B980043 from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) within the U.S. Department of Education. Opinions and perceptions as shared in this document are those of the researchers involved and no endorsement is implied by the funding agent.

Central RRTC Contact Information:

Center on Disability Studies • University of Hawai'i at Manoa
 Director – Robert Stodden • (808) 956-9199 • stodden@hawaii.edu
 1776 University Avenue, UA 4-6 • Honolulu, HI 96822;
 WEB: www.rrtc.hawaii.edu • EMAIL: rrtc@cds.hawaii.edu •
 Administrative Assistant, Juana Tabali Weir (808) 956-3975 • juana@hawaii.edu