

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.

National Survey: Outreach to the Community

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

ISSUE

There is scant literature regarding current practices of providing educational supports to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. A national survey was conducted which provides important information for researchers and program implementers seeking to ascertain the current status of educational support offerings in postsecondary programs. 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 Supports. The survey data and various sub-analyses will provide a comprehensive baseline of information to address issues surrounding educational support provision and students with disabilities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Beyond providing educational supports that meet the needs of the students with disabilities on campus, colleges are also expected to facilitate a student's linkages with other community resources. One of the study questions within the survey focused on the extent to which postsecondary institutions reach out to other community resources available to assist students with disabilities.

A second question explored the types of resources or agencies that postsecondary support providers had contacted and linked.

METHOD

A survey instrument was developed and distributed to a national sample of more than 1500 Disability Support Coordinators. More than 650 respondents completed the survey, providing a profile of educational support offerings found on postsecondary campuses. 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.

Respondents were asked to answer three questions regarding whether or not they maintained outreach programs (q8); whether or not they've reached out to certain types of community resources (q9); and whether or not they had negotiated vocational rehabilitation agreements for serving students with disabilities (q10).

KEY FINDINGS

Nearly 75% of the surveyed postsecondary institutions assist and facilitate a student's linkages with other community resources.

More than 50% of the surveyed institutions did not maintain connections with the following resources:

- Federal programs related to employment in your community (63.5%, no)
- Business /employers (67.5, no%)

- Parent / family organizations (54.3%, no)
- Consumers/advocacy groups (59.8%, no)

Nearly half of the responding schools had negotiated agreements with vocational rehabilitation and/or other community human service agency.

When comparing between different types of postsecondary institutions, we found that:

- Public schools and two-year schools facilitate a student's linkages with other community resources significantly more than four-year schools and private schools.
- Public schools and two-year schools conduct outreach activities to more different types of community resources than four-year schools and private schools.

Public institutions conduct significantly more outreach activities to the following community agencies or resources than private schools:

- High school counselors or transition coordinators
- Special education teachers
- State vocational rehabilitation personnel
- Other rehabilitation professionals
- Federal programs related to employment in your community
- Business/employers
- Parent/family organizations
- Consumer/advocacy groups

Two-year schools conducted outreach to the following resources or agencies significantly more than four-year schools:

- High school counselors or transition coordinators
- Special education teachers
- State vocational rehabilitation personnel
- Other rehabilitation professionals

- Federal programs related to employment in your community
- Business/employers

Both public schools and two-year schools have completed negotiated vocational rehabilitation and / or interagency agreements more often than private or four-year schools.

IMPLICATIONS

Many of the surveyed institutions have not conducted outreach to community resources and agencies related to employment, which might consequently affect their capacities to help students with disabilities find and be supported in subsequent employment. Postsecondary institutions should consider building closer connections with their community business/employers to facilitate the transfer of supports from educational settings to the workplace setting. This need has been expressed by students with disabilities as important when they are considering the investment of time and energy required to attend and complete postsecondary education.

Outreach programs related to employment (government and local business) are in need of improvement at most schools.

Two-year public, postsecondary schools could serve as a model for other postsecondary institutions to gain knowledge and experience with successful community outreach programs focused upon the needs of students with disabilities.

For further information on this Brief or for an Executive Summary/Full Report on the National Survey of Educational Supports Provision, please contact Chuan Chang at (808) 956 – 2898, chuanc@hawaii.edu or go to the Center website www.rrtc.hawaii.edu

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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."