



## 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: Types of Disability Receiving Supports in Postsecondary Settings

**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 for providing educational supports to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. A national survey was conducted to provide information about the current status of educational supports in postsecondary programs. Further, it not clear what types of disabilities are represented in postsecondary education 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 students with disabilities and educational support provision.

### RESEARCH QUESTION

- What is the range of different types of disabilities represented in postsecondary education programs (of those requesting supports)?
- For students with disabilities requesting educational supports in postsecondary

programs, do the numbers of persons in disability categories vary according to two-year - four-year institutions, and public- private institutions?

### 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 students with disabilities requesting supports in postsecondary education programs. 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 estimate the percentage of students with disabilities served by their institution with the following disability types:

- Multiple disability
- Blind or visual impairment
- Deaf or hearing impairment
- Health impairment
- Learning disability &/or attention deficit/ADHD
- Mental health/emotional/psychological disability
- Mobility impairment
- Orthopedic disability without mobility impairment
- Speech or language impairment
- Cognitive disability (including mental retardation)
- Acquired head injury/traumatic brain injury

- Other

## FINDINGS

The distribution of students with different types of disabilities reporting across two-year vs. four-year colleges:

		Two-year vs. Four-year	
		Two-year	Four-year
Multiple disability	Mean (%)	15.88	13.9-
	Standard Deviation	18.85	17.23
Blind or visual impairment	Mean (%)	4.12	4.13
	Standard Deviation	7.34	8.48
Deaf or hearing impairment	Mean (%)	5.30	3.95
	Standard Deviation	10.98	6.18
Health impairment	Mean (%)	7.48	8.21
	Standard Deviation	10.54	11.48
Learning disability & /or attention deficit / ADHD	Mean (%)	38.57	48.97
	Standard Deviation	27.33	29.00
Mental health/emotional/psychological disability	Mean (%)	9.02	7.60
	Standard Deviation	11.07	8.60
Mobility impairment	Mean (%)	8.35	6.43
	Standard Deviation	13.29	9.86
Orthopedic disability without mobility impairment	Mean (%)	3.34	1.98
	Standard Deviation	7.47	3.90
Speech or language impairment	Mean (%)	1.19	1.12
	Standard Deviation	2.92	2.88
Cognitive disability (including mental retardation)	Mean (%)	3.28	1.36
	Standard Deviation	7.52	5.22
Acquired head injury/traumatic brain injury	Mean (%)	2.29	2.37
	Standard Deviation	3.35	3.74

The majority of students with disabilities attending postsecondary education are categorized with learning disability &/or attention deficit/ADHD. Four year schools report significantly more students with learning disability &/or attention deficit disorder than two year programs. Two-year schools have significantly more students with a cognitive disability.

Distribution of students with different types of disabilities reporting across public and private institutions

		Public vs. Private	
		Public	Private
Multiple disability	Mean (%)	15.87	12.11
	Standard Deviation	18.14	17.15
Blind or visual impairment	Mean (%)	4.31	3.73
	Standard Deviation	6.64	10.47
Deaf or hearing impairment	Mean (%)	4.91	3.58
	Standard Deviation	8.79	7.59
Health impairment	Mean (%)	8.31	7.05
	Standard Deviation	11.02	11.29

Learning disability & /or attention deficit / ADHD	Mean (%)	42.27	50.38
	Standard Deviation	25.81	33.79
Mental health/emotional/psychological disability	Mean (%)	8.80	6.78
	Standard Deviation	9.83	9.22
Mobility impairment	Mean (%)	8.23	4.94
	Standard Deviation	11.29	11.30
Orthopedic disability without mobility impairment	Mean (%)	2.94	1.61
	Standard Deviation	6.17	4.13
Speech or language impairment	Mean (%)	1.11	1.24
	Standard Deviation	2.04	4.20
Cognitive disability (including mental retardation)	Mean (%)	2.69	.91
	Standard Deviation	7.27	2.99
Acquired head injury/traumatic brain injury	Mean (%)	2.64	1.66
	Standard Deviation	3.78	3.03

The majority of students with disabilities in postsecondary education are categorized with a learning disability &/or attention deficit/ADHD. Private schools have more students with learning disability &/or attention deficit disorder. Public schools have significantly more students with a cognitive disability and orthopedic disability without mobility impairment.

## IMPLICATIONS

- The greatest percentage of students receiving educational supports in postsecondary education programs are students with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit/ADHD. It is unknown how many or what types of students may not wish to declare their disability and thus are not eligible to receive disability support services.
- Efforts to identify the number and type of students who refuse to disclose their disability status are necessary to obtain a clear picture of the numbers and types of students with disabilities in postsecondary education.

- Private institutions should be made aware that the greatest number of students with disabilities attending their institutions are those with a learning disorder &/or attention deficit/ADHD; This information is important as private schools offer significantly fewer educational supports and accommodations for students with disabilities than public postsecondary institutions.

**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](mailto:chuanc@hawaii.edu) or go to the Center website [www.rrtc.hawaii.edu](http://www.rrtc.hawaii.edu)**

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### *Central RRTC Contact Information:*

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