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Transition to Life after High school: How School Counselors can Assist Students with Disabilities

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A Little About Me...

- Undergrad in Special Education
 - Taught K-2 Self Contained Classroom
- Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling
 - Worked for Colorado Vocational Rehabilitation with a Transition Caseload
- PHD in Counselor Education
 - Teach School Counselors and Rehabilitation Counselors
- Research
 - Postsecondary Education and Employment for PWD

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Facts About Disability in Schools

- 2018-2019: 7.1 million students ages 3-21 received special education services (14% of all public school students).
- 33% of those students have a specific learning disability.
- Each year about 414k SWDs exit secondary education.
- (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)



What ASCA says About Students with Disabilities (SWD) in Transition

- A.10.g. Recognize the strengths of students with disabilities as well as their challenges and provide best practices and current research in supporting their academic, career and social/emotional needs.
- B.2.k. Affirm the abilities of and advocate for the learning needs of all students. School counselors support the provision of appropriate accommodations and accessibility.
- B.2.o. Promote equity and access for all students through the use of community resources.



What Federal Law Says...

- **Section 504** of the **Rehabilitation Act of 1973** mandates a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities while prohibiting discrimination.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** mandates FAPE within the mainstream education system.
- **504** and **IDEA** mandate that students with disabilities be served in a manner that would allow them to reach their maximum educational and vocational potential.
- **WIOA** (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2014) emphasizes provision of services to youth with disabilities to practice work skills and gain work experience.



What Research Says...

- Most School Counselor Education programs **do not require specific course work** related to disability (Milsom & Akos, 2007; Studer & Quigney, 2005).
- Studies show that school counselors **do not feel prepared** to work with students with disabilities (Alvarez et al., 2020; Milsom, 2002; Milsom & Akos, 2007).
- School Counselors have **a limited techniques and strategies** when it comes to students with disabilities (Kahveci, 2016).
- School counselors report **not feeling optimistic or competent** to serve in the 504 process for SWD (Goodman-Scott & Bates, 2020).
- Milsom (2002) found that transition planning is a “**least performed activity**” in school counseling.
- 78% of School Counselors reported being involved in transition planning for SWDs (Currier-Kipping et al., In Press).



Why is Transition Planning for SWD's so Vital?

- SWD enroll and complete college at lesser rates than peers without disabilities.
- In adulthood, PWD report a 19.3% employment rate compared to 66.3% for individuals without disabilities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).
- For those PWD who are employed, they statistically work fewer hours and for lower wages than people without disabilities.
- Employment is a very large indicator of both quality of life and independence in adulthood- PWD more likely to live in poverty (Sprunger et al., 2018).



What Transition Can Feel Like!





Comparing High School Vs. Higher Education

High School (Entitlement)

- School responsible for identifying SWD and assessing disability.
- Staff must involve Parents
- School must develop and provide IEP.
- School must provide services to students.

College/University (Eligibility)

- SWD must self-disclose and provide documentation.
- Student is considered an adult and under FERPA (Guardianship).
- Student must request specific accommodations.
- Student must activate and advocate for accommodations and structure their weekly schedules.



Transition Planning Started by Age 16

- **IDEA** mandates transition planning for students with disabilities.
- Goal: a smooth transition from high school to PSE, independent living, employment
- Based on: **STUDENT'S STRENGTHS, PREFERENCES, & INTERESTS.**
- Make sure strengths are addressed!



Transition Planning Recommendations

- Ensure the student is present and HEARD in the meeting.
- Community partners should be invited.
- Interagency collaboration is one of the key concepts that leads to successful transition (Test et al., 2009)
- Individualized to the student's interests.
- Student should be provided post-secondary options regardless of disability.
- Early work experiences are key to employment success long term (Think about internships, summer jobs, etc.) (Umpstead, Bon, & Eckes, 2019).



Community Resources: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

- Federally Mandated Program
- Assists PWD that create a barrier to obtaining or maintaining employment.
- WIOA- mandates 15% of VR funding goes to youth.
- Things VR can pay for (Differs state to state): Evaluation, therapy, training/education, assistive technology, transportation, job-placement, job-coaching, tools/equipment/clothing, interpreters, etc.



VR Transition Counselors Can...

- Give youth information about careers and job opportunities to help them decide on a job goal.
- Suggest ways to find out about his or her abilities, interests and needs for help through a career assessment.
- Help choose a work goal that fits the youth's choices, needs and abilities.
- Make recommendations on how the school program can help youth develop job skills.
- Help the youth find the training to prepare for his or her goal, whether it is college, trade school or on-the-job training.
- Help a youth find a job and follow up to make sure it is the right job for him or her.
- Attend the IEP or Section 504 planning meetings, which can be a helpful resource in transitioning into adult services, training, or employment.



Community Resources

- **Centers for Independent Living (CIL):** consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential private non-profit agency that is designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities, and provides an array of independent living services.
- **Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP):** agencies or individuals that are approved to provide employment support to individuals with disabilities served by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.



Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE)

- The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) emphasizes participation in inclusive college courses and internships and requires the students to be socially and academically integrated to the maximum extent possible.
- Designed for postsecondary students with intellectual disabilities to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction in order to prepare for employment.
- As of 2021, there are 308 IPSE programs nationwide.
- 17 in California!!!



Counseling With Parents About SWDs Transition

- About future planning & expectations
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- The right to fail- just like anyone else
- Resources & Rights



What Else Can You Do to Support SWD

- Avoid use of “suffering/suffers” instead say student who has... (specific disability).
- Avoid using “special/abnormal/atypical/differently abled” instead specify the disability.
- Avoid “confined to a wheelchair/ wheelchair bound” instead “uses a wheelchair” or “is a wheelchair user”.
- Avoid “disabled parking/handicapped toilet” instead use “accessible parking/toilet”.
- ASD Related: Special interest- Obsessed vs. Passionate



What Else Can You Do to Support SWD

- Make sure your office is accessible and sensory friendly (Lights, Sounds, Smells).
- Use curriculum that is inclusive and representative of ALL students
- While staying clear of “Inspiration Porn”
 - Portrayal of people who experience disability as inspirational solely or in part on the basis of their disability.
- Examples: Wheelchair user “your excuse is invalid”, sports start brings student with down syndrome to prom.
- Be knowledgeable of college disability resources offices and what the SWD will need to do in order to get accommodations in college/university.



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What Else Can You Do to Support SWD

Know Your Local Resources!

Referrals for Mental Health Counselors

Community Resources

Make connections with Local VR Counselors

Invite them for Transition Fairs, Parent Nights, Etc.

Post Secondary Education

Invite IPSE's to your college nights



Resources

- <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html>
- <https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary/>
- <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>
- <https://www.pacer.org/transition/learningcenter/postsecondary/college-options.asp>
- Stella Young: Inspiration Porn and the Objectification of Disability:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxrS7-l_sMQ&feature=youtu.be
- <https://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx>



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Questions, Comments, Concerns:

Contact Me!

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