"Professional Employment for Individuals with Disabilities: Issues of Preparation and Transition."

February 12-13, 2003, Sheraton Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii

Sponsored by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), University of Minnesota, and the National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports (NCSPES), University of Hawaii. Co-sponsored by the Real Choices Project, the Center for the Study of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Disability (CLD), and the Hawaii Imua Project.
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Introduction

Aloha and welcome to the Proceedings document for the National Capacity Building Institute, Professional Employment for Individuals with Disabilities: Issues of Preparation and Transition. The Institute was held in Honolulu, Hawaii, on February 12-13, 2003, and was co-sponsored by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) and the National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports (NCSPES).

The Institute consisted of several components:

(1) **Online readings and discussion with authors & researchers.** Approximately a month prior to the Institute in Hawaii, participants were given the opportunity to read papers authored by the presenters. A rich on-line discussion evolved from these readings, with participants expressing their views about the goals of the rehabilitation system, the role of self-determination, the need for access to technology and access to postsecondary education, and general strategies for improving employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

(2) **Intensive presentations and discussions in Honolulu, Hawaii.** Participants came to Honolulu, Hawaii for a two-day workshop in collaboration with the Pacific Rim Conference on Disabilities. Speakers presented current information on topics including the need to expand opportunities for professional employment, the Glass Ceiling Effect, health and safety in the workplace, standards-based testing, international and cultural perspectives on employment, resource mapping, and collaborating with the Vocational Rehabilitation system. The discussion groups that followed were focused around six areas of participant interest, including (a) technology, (b) cognitive disability, (c) coordination of services, (d) the rehabilitation system, (e) cultural diversity, and (f) self-determination. These discussions exposed participants to a variety of perspectives, and provided them with the opportunity to share their views and link each presentation with the real world of disability through the development of recommendations for policy, practice and research.

(3) **Follow-up discussion surrounding next steps and the implementation of new knowledge and skills.** Participants were given the opportunity to continue the discussion around professional employment by participating in the post-Institute online discussion.

We would like to highlight the experience of one participant, Stephanie Burch, a high-school student who attended the event with her local Special Education Director:

“The conference was a learning experience for me. I learned many different things about the services that are out there. I learned that if you have a learning disability you can pursue anything if you want to. I also learned that there are programs out there at the schools to help people with these kinds of disabilities. From the conference I gained a lot more power to go to college and achieve my goals. Even though I am only a student I enjoyed the conference a lot. I would like to be a social worker, a school counselor, or a substance abuse counselor. In ten years [I know that] I will love my career… Self-determination means that I need to stay headstrong and be all that I can be. When I feel like there is no hope I just need to tell myself that I can and think of all the times people told me that I can’t make it. But I can…”
We hope that these Proceedings reflect the diversity of perspectives represented by participants and presenters. Thank you to all who participated! Please look for future Institutes on related transition and post-outcomes topics. To access these Proceedings online, or for more information about future Institutes or about the Post-Outcomes Network of the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, please go to the web at www.ncset.hawaii.edu. To obtain alternative formats of these Proceedings or to obtain copies of speaker papers, please contact Velina Sugiyama, Administrative Assistant, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1776 University Avenue, UA 4-6, Honolulu, HI 96822. Tel. 808-956-5688. Email: velina@hawaii.edu.

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February 12-13th
Capacity Building Institute Agenda

Sheraton Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

Molokai Ballroom

6:45 – 7:45am  Experiencing the Great Hawaiian Morning – (optional) Tai Chi, *Meet at 6:45 in the Niihau room*

8:30 – 9:00  Registration, Continental Breakfast and Introductions

9:00 – 9:15  David Johnson, Welcome and Introduction to NCSET

9:15 – 10:00  Robert Stodden and Megan Conway, “Professional Employment for Individuals with Disabilities: Issues of Preparation, Transition and Participation”

10:00 – 10:30  Lex Frieden “The Glass Ceiling Effect”

10:30 – 11:00  Small Groups - Introductions and Plan

11:00 – 12:00pm  Glen White “Health and Safety in the Workplace”

12:00 – 1:00  Lunch (provided in the Niihau Room)

1:00 – 2:00  Sheryl Burgstahler, “Role of Technology in Preparation for Employment”

2:00 – 3:00  Martha Thurlow, “The Promise of Standards-Based Secondary Education and Transition to Professional Employment”

3:00 – 3:15  Richard Radtke, Reaction

3:15 – 3:30  Break

3:30 – 5:00  Small Group Work

*Molokai Room, Kona and Kohala Rooms*
Thursday, February 13, 2003

_Oahu/Waialua Room_

6:45 – 7:45am  Experiencing the Great Hawaiian Morning – (optional) Canoe Paddle Activity,  
*Meet at 6:45 by the Sheraton Swimming Pool*

8:30 – 9:00  Continental Breakfast

9:00 – 10:00  Kathy Martinez, “International Perspective on Employment”

10:00 – 11:00  Mary Mack and Kelli Crane, “Resource Mapping as the Pathway for Youth with Disabilities in the Transition to Professional Employment”

11:00 – 12:00 pm  Peg Lamb and Cynthia Wright, “Supporting Transition to Employment Through A Collaborative Relationship with Vocational Rehabilitation”

12:00 – 1:00  Lunch (provided in the *Ni‘ihau Room*)

1:00 – 3:00  Small Group Work  
*Oahu/Waialua Room, Kona and Kohala Rooms*

3:00 – 3:30  Break

3:30 – 4:30  Group Presentations and Recommendations for Next Steps
Speaker Key Points

Robert Stodden and Megan Conway

- There is a need for development in the areas of self-determination and self-advocacy skills, the role of technology, and the coordination of services and supports across different agencies.

- Youth with disabilities often lack the academic skills required in postsecondary education. Therefore, there is a need to develop high expectations and entry access to postsecondary schools for youth with disabilities. We need to develop a higher level of expectations that youth will learn the skills to go on to postsecondary education and professional employment.

- There is a great need to move forward to meet the challenges of the changing world of work.

- Advancement within a professional career needs to be a possibility for everybody.

- Youth with disabilities need to have a greater “sense of opportunity” about their postsecondary and career options.

- Opportunities and attitudes of others in secondary school are critical to a student’s sense of opportunity.

- Access to career development and life-long learning needs to be considered when planning accommodations and supports throughout secondary education.

- Individuals with disabilities should have choices. The opinions of others about what is realistic should not dictate their choices.

- There is a need for collaboration between career counselors and special education teachers.

Lex Frieden

- The “glass ceiling effect” is a real barrier for people with disabilities.

- Most vocational counselors will not serve a person who is already employed.

- Schools are good at providing supports at a basic level, but not when it comes to issues of advancement in employment.

- Policy makers and researchers need to collaborate to provide data to support policy change.

- People with disabilities usually make decisions based on what is accessible, rather than on preferences or interest.
**Glen White**

- Comprehensive Plans of Disaster Preparation enable people with disabilities to escape disaster during emergencies.

- More than 50% of people with disabilities do not know whom to contact about emergency plans in their community.

- Safety accommodations include a buddy system, practical procedures, emergency apparatus for stairways, and infrared systems.

- There is a need to develop drills on safety measures to serve people with and without disabilities in the workforce.

**Sheryl Burgstahler**

- For people with disabilities, technology can maximize independence, productivity, and participation in pre-college education, postsecondary education, and employment.

- Computer technology can help maximize independence, success, productivity, and the ability to move on in one's life and career.

- Technology is available, but people with disabilities need to be trained to use it.

**Martha Thurlow**

- It is necessary to incorporate rich context-based teaching and not to worry about comparing students with disabilities with a test.

- Students have great skills, but because of their disabilities, they cannot demonstrate their skills on paper and pencil tests.

- Having high expectations for academic achievement will expand the types of careers students will have an opportunity to pursue.

- Self-determination in the curriculum helps students with disabilities to set high goals and expectations.
Kathy Martinez

- Shame is a big major barrier to people with disabilities, especially in minority cultures.

- In countries outside the United States, the Disability Rights Movement is fighting for community-based rehabilitation, family business, and working from home as part of independent living.

- There is a movement to have the United Nations ratify a convention declaring the human rights of people with disabilities.

Mary Mack and Kelli Crane

- Resource mapping is a pathway to linking community resources to build a system to assist people with disabilities in the transition to professional employment.

- About 45% of employers cite lack of related experience, skills and training as a major barrier to employing people with disabilities.

- Resource mapping is a great strategy for problem solving that involves different people with different backgrounds and experiences to collaborate in setting visions, goals, objectives and a plan of action.

- It is important to make sure that people who are receiving services are included in the mapping process.

Peg Lamp and Cynthia Wright

- Counselors need to be encouraged to get to know their clients and to learn more about their strengths and abilities.

- Counselors need to be encouraged to take the initiative in contacting students and providing them with support.

- Counselors can serve as a resource to teachers and students, and foster self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

- There is a need to examine the rules of measurement in determining rehabilitation counselors’ success in serving clients.

- Universities need to offer joint training of special education teachers, administrators, and rehabilitation counselors to develop greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of these professional and to foster more collaborative relationships.
Discussion Group Key Points

Individuals with Severe and Cognitive Disabilities
It was generally agreed that the issues concerning individuals with severe and cognitive impairments are similar to those for all individuals with disabilities. The implications and recommendations developed by this group were therefore quite general, and are integrated into the other topic areas presented below.

Self-Determination

Implications

- Students are not always aware of their own strengths, needs, and rights.
- Students are not always involved in their individualized education program (IEP).
- There is a need for more opportunities for students with disabilities to learn how to make choices and to experience the consequences of those choices in career exploration and educational settings.
- Many teachers do not know how to integrate the skills needed for transition into the general curricula.

Practice Recommendations

- Involve students in the planning, development and evaluation of the education and transition process so that they can learn to be self-determined.
- Start transition planning as early as middle school.
- Teach students about disability issues and laws so they can self-advocate for their own needs.
- Create opportunities for students to make choices related to personal, educational and career development throughout the K-12 system and beyond.
- Integrate the skills needed for self-determination, career development and transition into the general curricula so that students learn professional skills.
- Provide mentors to model positive behaviors, increasing students’ sense of opportunity.

Research Recommendations

- Identify components of self-determination within IEP and transition plans and the relationship of those components to student outcomes.
- Explore the effects of teacher expectations on self-esteem, sense of opportunity, and achievement.
- Identify the role of school counselors and disability service providers in fostering self-determination, and the specific strategies they use to do so.

Policy Recommendations

- Identify policies that foster or impede self-determination across elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education sectors.
- Fund arts, sports and other extracurricular activities at the State level so that students have opportunities to explore their strengths and interests and increase self-esteem.

Technology
Implications

- Assistive technology (AT) can help to increase employment outcomes.
- The availability of technology should promote and support high expectations for children with disabilities and their families.

Practice Recommendations

- Support students in a gradual process towards taking responsibility for the selection of technology and other accommodations and supports to meet their individual needs.
- Cover assistive technology and technology applications for students with disabilities in pre-service teacher training.
- Improve ongoing awareness and training for VR counselors on AT as a postsecondary and employment support.
- Improve collaboration between non-technical support people and technical personnel for a more seamless transition and higher expectations.

Research Recommendations

- Study the extent to which the application of universal design principles reduces the need to provide students with special technology-related accommodations.
- Explore the relationship between degree of choice and degree of prescription or availability and effective use of technology for people with disabilities.
- Identify exemplary practices that increase collaboration among stakeholders to provide students with an integrated and seamless system of technology supports that facilitate transition to postsecondary and career settings.

Policy Recommendations

- Promote seamless transitions, where technology is very pragmatic and grows with the child from secondary education through postsecondary education and careers.
- Provide funds to implement or integrate assistive technology early in the curriculum.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Implications

- There is a lack of awareness and understanding of how cultural and linguistic diversity effects employment for individuals with disabilities.
- There are not enough resources and training about the interplay of disabilities and cultural and linguistic diversity.

Practice Recommendations

- Establish an agency to sponsor programs to address the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity.
• Develop teams comprised of individuals from different cultural backgrounds or who have disabilities to develop programs within the context of their own cultures.
• Improve cultural networking to promote understanding of diversities.
• Provide more training on cultural and linguistic diversity issues.

Research Recommendations

• Conduct research on how cultural issues influence the families of people with disabilities in terms of access to services, the delivery of services, and the use of advocacy.
• Include Participatory Action Research when exploring other cultures.
• Identify cultural factors that contribute to successful outcomes.
• Include interviews of people from different cultures when doing research on self-determination to find out how different groups view and use self-determination.

Policy Recommendations

• Federally support research on cross-cultural issues on disability.
• Perpetuate efforts for exploring cross-cultural issues on disability, such as those of the National Council on Disability.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Implications

• Because of the shift in emphasis away from school-to-work activities and toward testing, students will be coming to VR with less or no vocational preparation.
• Safety issues should be an important part of any VR placement.
• There is tremendous variation between states regarding the resources and practices of VR systems.
• Low expectations become a self-fulfilling prophecy and lower employment outcomes for people with disabilities.
• Current policy and practice for measuring the success of VR counselors is restrictive and limits customers’ opportunities to achieve professional employment.

Practice Recommendations

• Develop a wide range of vendor opportunities to improve services for people with disabilities at the State level.
• Review brochures, videos, and other VR media to make sure they incorporate high expectations for people with disabilities.
• Integrate more input from clients—e.g., through customer satisfaction surveys—into the effectiveness of services.
• Promote postsecondary education. VR data shows that individuals with some college experience have better career outcomes and life satisfaction.
Research Recommendations

- Identify and share best practices of vocational rehabilitation.
- Review the VR system to determine its applicability to youth.
- Look at outcome measures based on career paths, not just on one job for life.
- Develop research to indicate the importance and relevance of postsecondary education for people with disabilities.

Policy Recommendations

- Include transition in No Child Left Behind legislation.
- Require VR counselors to incorporate safety issues into placement activities.
- Create multiple measures of the success of rehabilitation counselors other than rehabilitation closures alone.

Coordination and Management of Services

Implications

- Service providers are unaware of the resources and support options that are available, and underutilize them.
- Belief in the value of services leads to sense of opportunity, which leads to positive coordination of services.
- There needs to be an increase in awareness that transition services are part of a life-long process.

Practice Recommendations

- Share resources, staffing, and expertise across agencies to address individual needs, improve communication, implementation and services.
- Include more service providers in the IEP meeting to help the students and other IEP members understand what is available and to build relationships.
- Involve the community in identifying employment needs and how to meet them.
- Train teachers about how to provide accommodations and modifications.

Research Recommendations

- Explore how services coordinated in high school carry over for students going to college.
- Look at ways to generate money (e.g., employment networks).
- Examine processes within lives and not just outcomes.
- Take a comprehensive look at the processes involved in programs and pinpoint where activities fall through or fail to deliver.

Policy Recommendations

- Align supports and services at the state level.
- Mandate resource mapping in federal laws such as the IDEA, the Workforce Investment Act, and the Perkins Act, so that resources are mapped at the state level and local teams have an idea of the resources they need.
I have heard somewhere that employers’ attitudes toward people with disabilities have become more positive since the ADA was authorized. Do you think that is true?

Generally most studies indicate that when appropriate supports were provided, employer attitudes toward workers with disabilities improved, and that employers with prior positive contact held more favorable attitudes toward workers with disabilities.

Is the language reasonable accommodation and meaningful accommodation contained in Title II of the ADA? Administrators in some schools defer to the phrase meaningful accommodation (which connotes an optional service) when students try for accommodations that will assist them in their studies.

The phrase “meaningful accommodation” is not found in the ADA or Title II regulations. “Reasonable accommodations,” on the other hand, is often used in the ADA, as well as in the Rehabilitation Act regulations. An accommodation is “unreasonable” if it causes “undue hardship” for the organization… The problem is that many employers, administrators, etc. do not understand that most accommodations are reasonable.

I don’t think anyone would argue [about the fact] that access to electronic and information technology can help individuals with disabilities secure and succeed in employment. However, I regularly encounter students with disabilities at the high school and college levels who do not have access to these empowering tools. What do you think are the major challenges to assuring that students with disabilities have access to the technology that can help them succeed in high school, college and careers?

One issue of access for students in high school is the lack of funds to provide these technologies. However, that is not the major barrier, because even when the technology is available it is difficult to find the professional development time to train teachers and paraprofessionals.

I think it’s interesting how we talk about Rehab counselors and career counselors giving clients a “reality check” and at the same time we are supposed to think in terms of having high expectations for people. How can I, as a counselor, know what a student can and cannot do?

In transition planning, [we should make] sure the student who states an interest in the medical field has access to information/classes in biology, child development etc. Even a student that has low academics should be exposed to [opportunities that will help them] make determinations as to their interest and desire for a career in the helping professions.
There will be many students who will not, under any circumstances, meet the standards being tested. These students will therefore not receive a diploma and, under current regulations, will not be admitted to post secondary education. What do you suggest to support such students [continue into] higher education?

I believe that it is very important to have the system accountable first. If one is in a high stakes for students assessment system, it is critical that good decisions are being made about accommodations, that accommodation policies are well thought out and defined, and that there are alternative ways to show knowledge and skills. Ideally, these assessments should be better linked to what matters in post-school success and tied to important content standards.

What did you come away with from the Institute?

I think what I came away with is the importance of Post Secondary Education in some form or other for a better job outcome. [We should] encourage and empower people with disabilities to think higher than just getting a meaningful job, looking at that job as a stepping-stone to a possible career.
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