

Comments from Peer Reviewers

“The most important impact this paper can have in the post-secondary setting is for high level administrators to read this paper and to embrace the needs of students with disabilities from a whole campus perspective and not just from the legal standpoint. This is an extremely well-written paper that clearly defines the differences between the IDEA in secondary education and the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act as they are implemented in postsecondary education and employment. The authors have done an excellent job of pointing out the discrepancies in how students with disabilities are ‘provided for’ in the secondary setting and how they are expected to advocate for themselves in postsecondary education and employment environments. Discrepancies in language of the laws are clearly articulated and it is obvious to the reader just how differently each setting addresses the need for accommodation. It is also apparent to the reader that students who have disabilities in secondary settings are provided with ‘services’ and ‘related services’ and that those kinds of supports do not exist in postsecondary school and employment. Youth with disabilities must be able to clearly articulate and anticipate their needs in both postsecondary and employment settings...Recommendations for policy changes and outcomes for youth with disabilities are well thought out and inclusive for youth who transition through secondary school settings under the IDEA.”

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White Paper

*Services, Supports and Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities:
An Analysis Across Secondary Education, Postsecondary Education and
Employment*

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that discrepancies in the provision of modes of assistance to individuals with disabilities across the environments of secondary school, postsecondary school and employment present significant obstacles to their participation in postsecondary education and employment.

“Modes of assistance” is defined as procedural, contextual or physical aspects of the environment that are provided or modified in order to make a setting more accessible to individuals with disabilities. In this paper, “modes of assistance” is the umbrella term that is used for words such as “services,” “supports,” and “accommodations.”

How the report is organized

This paper will seek to further clarify and describe the issue and to review the legal considerations related to the issue. The paper will:

1. Define and describe how the terms “services,” “supports” and “accommodations” are used, often in confusing and conflicting ways, in legal and practical contexts across the environments of secondary education and transition, postsecondary education, and employment.
 - ① *Defining Modes of Assistance*
 - ② *Discrepancies Across Environments*
 - ③ *Implications & Recommendations*

There has been striking and disturbingly persistent evidence that youth with disabilities are more likely to drop out of high school, less likely to pursue postsecondary education, and less likely to be employed than are youth without disabilities.

2. Examine how discrepancies in the modes of assistance across these environments impact transition between environments and post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
3. Recommend changes in policy and practice, as well as areas of further research, which could be used to address the problems created by these discrepancies and consequentially could improve the post-school quality of life of individuals with disabilities.

Executive Summary

DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

There is concern among special educators, individuals with disabilities and their supporters, and others in the field of disability about the poor educational and employment outcomes of youth with disabilities (Benz & Halpern, 1987; J. Blackorby & M. Wagner, 1996; Gajar, 1998; Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985; National Council on Disability, 2001, June 14; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Stodden & Dowrick, 1999; Thurow, 1996; Wagner & Balckorby, 1996b). Within the past twenty years, there has been striking and disturbingly persistent evidence that youth with disabilities are more likely to drop out of high school, less likely to pursue postsecondary education, and less likely to be employed than are youth without disabilities (Benz & Halpern, 1987; Edgar, 1987; National Organization on Disabilities, 1998; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Stodden & Dowrick, 2001). These poor outcomes exist despite the passage of laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that are supposedly designed to ensure equal access to and participation in society by individuals with disabilities.

An increasing body of literature has pointed to the often substandard content of the secondary school curriculum for special education students as a significant barrier to the attainment of postsecondary education and employment goals for youth with disabilities (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Edgar, 1987; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hatch, 1998; Hocutt, 1996; Rojewski, 1996, 1999). However, little attention has been paid to how the kinds and components of support provision to individuals with disabilities may be impacting the success of these individuals in different environments. There is evidence that these modes of assistance are legislated and applied differently in secondary school, postsecondary school, and employment, which significantly affects an individual's transition across these three environments. Namely:

- 1. The terminology that is used to describe assistance in both legal and practical contexts changes across the environments of secondary education, postsecondary education, and employment.**

For example, at the secondary school level, where the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates the provision of assistance to youth with disabilities, assistance is geared around “services.” At the postsecondary and employment levels, where the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are the primary mandates for the provision of assistance, individuals with disabilities receive “accommodations” and “supports.” The same term, such as the term “service,” may even take on different meanings when it is applied in different environments.

2. There is a marked difference in the types of assistance that are offered across these environments, and in the entire process of accountability and decision-making concerning assistance provision.

During secondary school, schools are responsible for identifying and assessing students with disabilities, and with developing an Individual Education Program (IEP) that outlines each student’s assistance needs. Because of the prescriptive nature of the IDEA, there is a tendency for secondary schools to place students with disabilities in special classrooms for all or part of their curricula, deemed a “direct service” (Fleischer & Zames, 2001; Malloy, 1997; Stodden, Stodden, & Gilmore, Submitted). The district might also supplement special education or general education with “related services.” At the postsecondary level, students are no longer covered under IDEA and must identify themselves as having a disability and must provide the school with documentation of their disability. Postsecondary schools will tend to provide students with “accommodations” based on their type of disability (i.e., learning disability, visual impairment, etc.), and based upon a minimalist interpretation of the concept of “reasonableness.” Similarly, at the employment level an individual with a disability must self-identify. Employers have much discretion in the provision of assistance (O’Brien, 2001, Hazer & Bedell, 2000). There is a tendency at the employment level to provide assistance based on minimal job requirements and with minimizing cost.

IMPACT OF THE PROBLEM

The critical issues outlined above have not yet been adequately described. This paper seeks to define these issues and concludes that:

- 1. The roles and accountability of various stakeholders shifts as youth with disabilities move across environments. Youth are often not adequately prepared in terms of the self-advocacy and self-determination skills that they need in order to successfully navigate this shift.**

Specifically, at the secondary level, school districts are required by law to be responsible for identifying students, determining outcomes, developing service plans and delivering direct and related services (IDEA). At the postsecondary and em-

ployment levels the individual with a disability has much more responsibility and institutions/employers are less accountable (Stodden & Dowrick, 2000, Spring).

2. **The kinds of assistance and modes of delivery that are appropriate in different environments change. Again, youth with disabilities are often not adequately prepared for these changes.**

At the secondary level assistance is organized very differently than at the postsecondary and employment levels. Youth with disabilities transition to post-school environments without the skills that are necessary to identify their support needs and to link their needs with desired outcomes (Benz, Doren, & Yovanoff, 1998; Jose Blackorby & Mary Wagner, 1996; Izzo, 2001, March). The level of support also decreases significantly as youth transition out of high-school, leaving them without the assistance they are used to.

3. **The outcomes of assistance provision are focused upon immediate rather than upon long-term objectives. This means that while youth with disabilities may be able to function within their immediate environment, they may not be preparing to achieve in the long term.**

Because of the focus on meeting legal mandates rather than addressing individual success, the goals of assistance provision in all three environments are often short-sighted. The long-term goals of the individual with a disability are disregarded in favor of "quick fixes."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the negative impact of discrepancies in modes of assistance as outlined in this paper, a number of recommendations are made, including the need to:

1. **Examine differences in the intent of federal policies related to individuals with disabilities and how the language that stems from these intentions may be clarified to improve practice.**
2. **Better prepare youth with disabilities to make the transition between secondary, postsecondary and employment environments.**
3. **Define and link assistance with outcomes and future needs.**
4. **Conduct further research that will identify the effectiveness of various kinds of assistance in different environments and contexts.**

Defining Modes of Assistance

Many practitioners are focused on following the letter of the law, trying to define what they are obligated to provide, and ignoring the actual needs of youth with disabilities.

The inconsistent and interchangeable use of “services,” “supports” and “accommodations” becomes important because of the relationship between how these terms are applied and how they are defined, or not, by legal mandates such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The meaning that is attributed to terminology, and the modes of assistance that they signify, appears to shift across secondary school, postsecondary school and employment, due in part to the prescriptiveness of the laws that govern these environments. **Essentially, the degree to which a law is prescriptive translates into the practical components of assistance provision. Many practitioners are focused on following the letter of the law, in other words trying to define what they are obligated to provide, and ignore the actual needs of youth with disabilities** (Colvert & Smith, 2000). What is particularly interesting is that there appears to be no middle ground between the tight mandates of the IDEA and the looser mandates of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. In the case of secondary school environments, this means that youth with disabilities are often placed in special and segregated classrooms where a variety of services can be provided “directly” (Fleischer & Zames, 2001). In the case of postsecondary school and employment environments, this means that students are offered a “menu” of services that are quite limited (Citrus College Online, 2000; Disability Support Services, 2002; Office for Students with Disabilities, 2001a; Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, 2000).

The following section will explore differences in how terminology is used to describe assistance provision to individuals with disabilities across secondary school, postsecondary school and employment through an analysis of the terms “services,” “accommodations” and “supports.” The section is divided into legal and practical considerations.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

As students with disabilities transition out of secondary education, there are significant changes in the type of assistance that Federal policy requires and the intent of the laws that govern policy. These changes include:

- **FAPE Versus Reasonableness** - During secondary education, which falls under the umbrella of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), services and service plans for students with disabilities are based on the individual needs that must be met in order to ensure a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Once students graduate from high

school, the IDEA no longer applies and the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are the primary laws that govern the provision of assistance. Assistance under these laws is based upon what is deemed “reasonable” and does not extend an individual’s opportunities beyond those that are available to the average person. Students moving from high school to postsecondary education or employment may find themselves suddenly without the modes of assistance they are used to.

- **Benefit Versus Nondiscrimination** – Since the IDEA is an educational act establishing Federal programs, the provision of assistance in secondary school environments under the IDEA is initiated and paid for by the government, and purposed to benefit the individual and improve post-school outcomes. As civil rights laws, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA are mainly aimed at equity and nondiscrimination.
- **Prescriptive Versus Flexible** - The IDEA restricts the provision of assistance because it is too prescriptive in terms of defining the roles of stakeholders, fiscal responsibilities, and the processes that must be included in service delivery. The Rehabilitation Act and the ADA, by contrast, restrict the provision of assistance because they are too flexible and offer numerous opportunities for a variety of interpretations.
- **Services Versus Accommodations** – The IDEA focuses on the “services” that must be provided at the secondary school level. The Rehabilitation Act and the ADA focus on the circumstances under which institutions and employers must “accommodate” individuals with disabilities.

The sections below examine legal considerations for assistance provision as it relates to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Each section provides (a) an overview of a law, (b) an outline of the definitions of assistance that appear in the law, (c) a discussion of the environments to which the law applies, and (d) a summary of key points that are relevant to the law’s intent and use of terminology (See Table 1).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Overview

IDEA is an education act establishing a Federal program, and therefore is much more prescriptive than are Section 504 or the ADA about such factors as responsibility, funding, scope of provision, and definitions of terminology. School districts are responsible for identifying children with disabilities, assessing their needs, and providing them with services to enable “free appropriate public education (FAPE).” The education agency is also responsible for assessment, involving parents in decision making, and creating a service and outcome plan, known as an

Individual Education Program (IEP). Federal money is provided to state educational agencies for providing these services, along with competitive grants for improving services to students with disabilities. In the IDEA, definitions for IEP requirements, free appropriate public education, and various types of services (transitional, supplementary, etc.) are more elaborate than definitions of assistance in the ADA.

The IDEA focuses on “services” and “related services” for children with disabilities and “supports” for families, teachers and staff. The term “services” is used to cover anything that helps students with disabilities benefit from their special education, enables them to participate in general education, enables them to attain general education standards (Thurlow, 2001), or prepares them for transition out of secondary education. Although the IDEA lists many kinds of service providers, such as psychologists and doctors, it does not define what specifically should be offered. What and how services are offered is determined by the students’ IEP. IEP meetings consist of parents, teachers, agency representatives, service providers and the student, where appropriate. Each IEP is specific to individual needs and goals.

It is important to remember that for the IDEA, the responsibility for meeting its mandates lies with the State, using public/taxpayer funds. If a student has a disability, the State is required to assess the disability and provide the services considered appropriate for the student to benefit from a free appropriate public education. The word “appropriate” is used by the IDEA often, and could be very subjective. State standards are supposed to determine what is appropriate. Although “appropriate” appears considerably more often than the term “best,” IDEA does provide financial incentive for improving services through special competitive grants. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA do not.

A significant difference between the IDEA and the ADA and section 504 is that in the IDEA the purpose is aimed at benefiting the individual rather than conforming the organization. The individual with disabilities is supposed to benefit from the services provided under this Act.

SEC 601(c)(5):

(C) coordinating this Act with other local, educational service agency, State, and Federal school improvement efforts in order to ensure that such children *benefit* from such efforts and that *special education can become a service for such children rather than a place where they are sent*, (italics added)

The IDEA only applies through secondary school and transition planning, until graduation or until the child reaches the age of 21. Once a student receives his or her high school diploma, the state is no longer obligated to provide a free appropriate public education or any services related to it.

TABLE 1: Comparison of Assistance Across Three Acts

Act	IDEA	ADA	Rehabilitation Act, Section 504
Accommodation(s)	Used only once <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided for participation in statewide assessments 	Used 48 times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Reasonable” - assistance that does not impose “undue hardship” 	Used 15 times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Reasonable”
Service(s)	Used 514 times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplementary Transition Related to special education Designed to meet individual needs 	Used 180 times. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What all individuals have a right to participate in because of their public nature “Auxiliary aids and services” - communication-related 	Used 680 times in the Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational rehabilitation centers Based on individual needs No mention of direct services in Sec 504
Support(s)	Used 67 times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial support Support for service personnel 	Does not appear	Used 130 times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not well defined Mixed with “services”
Decision Making	IEP and standards of the State education agency	Public and private entities	Any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance
What is Provided	Services to help students with disabilities benefit from education	Reasonable accommodations that would not lead to undue hardship	Accessibility
Effective Practice	“Free and Appropriate” “Least Restrictive Environment”	Providing extra services at a “greater level” is not prevented, but not required	No mention of effective practices in Sec 504
Responsibility for Provision	State and local agencies are responsible for provision. Federal government mandates, funds, and dictates provision.	Organization is responsible for provision. Federal Agencies are responsible for establishing and implementing regulations	The Federally funded programs are responsible for provision. Federal Agencies are responsible for establishing and implementing regulations.
Initiation of Assistance	The State	The organization for permanent modifications. Individuals for accommodations	Federally funded programs for permanent alterations. Individuals for accommodations
Roles of Stakeholders	Partnerships - individuals with disabilities, parents, the State agency, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals	No partnerships - organizations v. individuals with disabilities	No partnerships - organizations v. individuals with disabilities
Financial Responsibility	The government	The entities (organizations)	The Federally funded programs
Outcomes	Measured by assessments Transition services	Violations	Violations Vocation

Defininitions

The contrast between the relatively high level of assistance that is provided under IDEA and much lower level of assistance that is provided in post-secondary environments poses many transition issues for individuals with disabilities.

The term “accommodations” is used only once in the IDEA, in the context of special provisions for participation in statewide assessments.

By contrast, “service” or “services” appears 514 times in the IDEA and is classified into many different sub-sets. According to the IDEA, a service is deemed to be beneficial if it is designed to meet the unique needs of the individual and if it prepares them for the future [Sec 601(d)(1)(A)].

Different kinds of services as outlined in the IDEA include:

- Those related to special education (these can be services outside of the special education framework that assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, ranging from transportation to therapy and recreation). SEC 602(22)
- Those that are components of special education (specifically, specially designed instruction). SEC 602(25) and SEC 601(c)(5)(C)
- Those provided by specific educational agencies
- Those related to early intervention
- Those related to media (closed captioning, accessible textbooks, etc.), SEC 687(c)
- Those related to helping children and their families with technology SEC 602(2)
- Those related to maximizing the integrated education of students with disabilities (supplementary services) SEC 602(29), SEC 612(a)(5)
- Those related to transition, focused on post-school outcomes SEC 602(30)

The term “support” or “supports” appears 67 times, most often in reference to financial support or support for service personnel. “Support” is distinguished from “direct services” [for example, in SEC 611(f)(3)(A)], perhaps suggesting that support is not direct. Supports are for the personnel that will be serving the child with a disability. The children get services; the service personnel get support. Most of the time the term “support” is used in reference to funding via grants from the government.

Other important terms in the IDEA are “Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)” and “Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).” It should be noted that though these concepts may be intended to direct youth out of special classrooms wherever possible, youth with disabilities still tend to be directed into direct services that are provided in special classrooms (Fleischer & Zames, 2001). According to IDEA, 1997,

- **“free appropriate public education” means special education and related services that:**

- A. Have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
 - B. Meet the standards of the State educational agency;
 - C. Include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education in the State involved; and
 - D. Are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required under section 614(d).” [Section 602(8)].
- **“least-restrictive environment” means:**
 - A. The presumption that children with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their non-disabled peers and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily [Section 612(a)(5)(A)]

Application Across Environments

IDEA only covers education through secondary school. The services and supports provided via this Act do not extend to postsecondary education or employment. The contrast between the relatively high level of assistance that is provided under IDEA and much lower level of assistance that is provided in postsecondary environments poses many transition issues for individuals with disabilities.

Key Points

Under the IDEA:

- Schools are responsible for the identification, assessment, development of Individual Education Plans, delivery of direct and related services, and the educational outcomes of children and youth with disabilities.
- There is a focus on services rather than on accommodations.
- There is a focus on quality, least restrictive environment and the provision of a free, appropriate public education.
- Federal funds are available for the provision of assistance.
- The law only applies until a child graduates from secondary school or reaches the age of 21.

Rehabilitation Act

Overview

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was the primary access law protecting individuals with disabilities in postsecondary educational institutions and employment before the Americans with Disabilities Act. In general, section 504 prohibits any program receiving Federal support from discriminating against individuals on the basis of their disability. It applies to public entities or entities receiving Federal funds (as opposed to the ADA, which extends protection to the private sector).

The responsibility of meeting the mandates of section 504 is on the programs under its jurisdiction (including institutions of higher education). However, rather than receiving Federal funding for the purpose of assisting individuals with disabilities, programs are held accountable by litigation. It is up to individuals with disabilities or the Federal government to press charges if discrimination exists.

See the section on the ADA for additional comments.

Definitions

The bulk of the Rehabilitation Act is dedicated to establishing vocational rehabilitation centers, and uses the term “services” to describe the function of these centers. Federal regulations based on section 504 refer to related services (to special education) and nonacademic services in relation to secondary education, and counseling services in relation to secondary and postsecondary education. “Services” is not used in relation to employment.

The term “support” is used in this Act more than it is in the IDEA or the ADA. The definition of “support” is much more varied in this Act, used in terms like “support services,” “support staff,” “natural supports,” and “supported employment.” The distinction between “services” and “support” is ambiguous, since “support” is not limited to finances and can be direct to individuals with disabilities as well as indirect. In this Act, the term “support” may be a general term for any kind of assistance. The term “support” does not appear in section 504 or in section 504 Federal regulations for education and employment.

The term “accommodations” does not appear frequently in the Rehabilitation Act, and not at all in section 504. However, “reasonable accommodations” is used in Federal regulations for employment based on section 504 in a manner consistent with its use in the ADA (45CFR Subtitle A § 84.12).

Application Across Environments

Section 504 covers secondary school, postsecondary school, and employment, as long as the programs in question receive Federal assistance.

The Rehabilitation Act states that State Departments of Rehabilitation can be involved in the IEPs of students with disabilities, especially where transition services are concerned. Beyond that, secondary education is not mentioned in the Rehabilitation Act. Federal regulations for secondary education use language similar to that of the IDEA, where schools are required to pay for services that assist students with disabilities in acquiring a free and appropriate public education. The language in subpart D of 45CFR Subtitle A, Part 84, refers to related services, counseling and extracurricular services, but not to accommodations and supports.

At the age of 16, vocational rehabilitation services are available to eligible adults with disabilities, but are aimed at supporting employment, not postsecondary education. In fact, institutions of higher education are mentioned in the Rehabilitation Act mostly in terms of vocational rehabilitation personnel training and research. Federal regulations for section 504 for postsecondary education and employment more closely resemble the ADA. Postsecondary institutions are required to make academic adjustments and provide auxiliary aids such as readers and accessible housing. The main premise of this subpart (45CFR Subtitle A, Part 84, Subpart E) is focused on nondiscrimination in the normal operations of postsecondary institutions such as admissions and financial aid.

Regulations for employment (45CFR subtitle A, Part 84, Subpart B) define “reasonable accommodations,” such as making facilities accessible, job restructuring, and interpreters, and also define undue hardship based on the size, budget, and type of operation of the program. Again, the focus of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is on nondiscrimination in the normal operations of employment, such as recruitment, hiring, promotion, transfer, leaves of absence, fringe benefits, etc. Services, however, are not mentioned in section 504 Federal regulations for employment.

Key Points

Under the Rehabilitation Act:

- Individuals with disabilities are responsible for identifying themselves, undergoing assessment and seeking out assistance.
- Public institutions bear the cost of assistance provision.
- There is a focus on services and supports.
- There is a focus on nondiscrimination.
- The receipt of Federal funds by public institutions is linked to compliance with the law.
- The law applies across all environments but is applied mostly in postsecondary and employment environments.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Overview

The ADA, a civil rights act, applies broadly across environments. It covers both the public and private sectors, and it is often applied in conjunction with other laws. As with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the ADA is much more open to interpretation than the IDEA.

In high school, under the IDEA, the needs of individuals with disabilities are assessed and a plan is designed for them. After secondary school, the kind of assistance an organization provides is determined by what is “reasonable.”

Under this Act, it is the responsibility of individuals with disabilities to self-identify, request assistance, and provide documentation of disability. In high school, under the IDEA, the needs of individuals with disabilities are assessed and a plan is designed for them. However, after secondary school, once an individual identifies his or her disability, the kind of assistance an organization provides is determined by what is “reasonable” and would not impose “undue hardship” on the organization. The term “accommodation” emerges in the ADA, where it was rarely used in the IDEA or the Rehabilitation Act. In particular, “reasonable accommodation” is the defining point in terms of what institutions “have to” provide and what they “might” provide. The term “services” is also used in the ADA, but mostly in terms of existing public services that need adjustment. Services for individuals with disabilities are required mostly in terms of “auxiliary services” (communication-related), which are defined much more narrowly than are services as defined by the IDEA. The word “support” does not appear in the ADA. Another interesting usage of terminology is “documented disability that significantly limits life activities.” This ambiguous phrase is another point of “have to” versus “might.” The courts are forced to interpret which activities are “life activities,” and how significantly they have to be “limited” in order to require an employer to provide accommodations (DeBettencourt, 2002; Thomas, 2000). Court interpretations of “disability” and “reasonable accommodations” have tended to be narrow, often in favor of the employers, rather than the employees (Fleischer & Zames, 2001; O'Brien, 2001).

Definitions

The words “accommodation” or “accommodations” appear 48 times in the ADA. “Accommodations” appears to be used to refer to any changes in normal operation or physical facility the entity might make for the individual with a disability. If an entity does not make reasonable accommodations, it is considered to be discrimination.

SEC. 101 (9) DEFINITION: Reasonable accommodations

“The term reasonable accommodation may include

- (A) making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities; and
- (B) job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, ap-

appropriate adjustment or modifications of examinations, training materials or policies, the provision of qualified readers or interpreters, and other similar accommodation for individuals with disabilities.”

The words “service” or “services” appear 180 times in the ADA. Most of the time “services” is not specific to individuals with disabilities. More often “services” refers to what all individuals have a right to participate in because of their public nature (i.e., public transportation, public education, etc.). The term “auxiliary aids and services” refers to direct assistance to individuals with disabilities. Auxiliary aids and services must be available in case an individual with a disability attempting to use the public service (i.e., eating in a dining car) requires them. “Accommodations,” on the other hand, are made when an individual with a disability requires them on a more regular basis (i.e., an employee or applicant).
SEC. 3 (1) DEFINITION: Auxiliary aids and services

“The term auxiliary aids and services includes

- (A) qualified interpreters or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments;
- (B) qualified readers, taped texts, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments;
- (C) acquisition or modification of equipment or devices; and other similar services and actions.”

The word “supports” does not appear in the ADA.

Application Across Environments

Of the three Acts considered in this section, the ADA covers a broader range of environments for individuals with disabilities. The ADA is the primary protection of civil rights for individuals with disabilities in employment and in postsecondary education.

In the secondary education environment, the ADA requires alterations to facilities and procedures (such as assessments). These requirements can overlap with the services provided under the IDEA.

In the postsecondary education environment, students with disabilities, who are no longer covered by the IDEA, rely on the ADA to make higher education accessible. In postsecondary institutions there is no IEP developed for the student. It is the students’ responsibility to identify their disability and their assistance needs. Disability service programs in higher education are accountable to ADA mandates. Under the ADA, incentive for postsecondary institutions to provide assistance to students is based upon the threat of lawsuits rather than the reward of Federal grant money for improvements.

In the employment environment, as in the postsecondary environment, it is the responsibility of individuals to identify their disabilities and assistance requirements. Employers, with some exceptions, could be guilty of discrimination if they do not make reasonable accommodations. Depending on an organization's size, resources, operations, composition, structure, and functions of the workforce; the geographic separateness, administrative or fiscal relationship of the facility or facilities, and the estimated cost of accommodations required under the ADA, the organization may show that certain accommodations are not "reasonable" because they impose "undue hardship" on the organization. These terms are generally interpreted on a case-by-case basis in the courts, often resulting in summary judgments for the employers (Lee, 1996; Thomas, 2000). There have been few cases specifically about "undue hardship" (burden of proof lies first on the individual with a disability to prove that they are "disabled," "otherwise qualified," and require "reasonable accommodations" before employers are required to prove "undue hardship"). This fact, coupled with the findings that accommodations generally are free or of moderate cost, lead Lee (2001) to conclude that "employers should have little to fear from the ADA" (p. 236). However, employers still exhibit biases about accommodating disabled workers (Eagleton Institute of Politics, 1993aa; 1993bb; Lee, 1996; McFarlin, Song, & Sonntag, 1991).

Key Points

Under the ADA:

- Individuals with disabilities are responsible for identifying themselves, undergoing assessment and seeking out assistance.
- Institutions and employers bear the cost of assistance provision.
- There is a focus on accommodations rather than on services or supports.
- There is a focus on nondiscrimination, reasonableness and undue hardship.
- There is no link between Federal funds and compliance with the law.
- The law applies across all environments.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

How services, accommodations, and supports are defined and applied in practice differs across secondary school, postsecondary school and employment, mirroring to a great extent the intent of the policy that applies in each environment.

At the secondary level:

- "Services" and "related services" are applied much more frequently than are "accommodations" or "supports."

- The prescriptive nature of the IDEA means that services are used to encompass many, if not all, forms of “special” assistance to youth with disabilities in the school environment, including the provision of “special education” courses of study and classrooms designated for youth according to type or level of disability. Even though the provision of services as a “placement in a separate setting or special education classroom” is discouraged under the reauthorized IDEA (1997; Section 612(a)(5)(A)) there is concern that this practice continues as a common method of addressing the learning and behavior needs of youth with disabilities in secondary schools.
- Other uses of the term “services” appear to offer a greater amount of flexibility in terms of course modifications, curriculum, staffing and environments than do related modes of assistance, i.e. menus of accommodations and supports, at the postsecondary and employment levels (Disability Support Services, 2002; Office for Students with Disabilities, 2001b).

At the postsecondary level:

- The term “accommodation” replaces “service” as a primary frame of reference. However, in most instances an accommodation at the postsecondary level cannot be equated with a service at the secondary level (Bursuck & Rose, 1992; Deshler, Ellis, & Lenz, 1996; Gajar, 1992; Gartin, Rumrill, & Serebreni, 1996; Shaw, Brinkerhoff, Kristler, & McGuire, 1990).
- The looseness of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA means that terminology is applied quite differently across postsecondary institutions (See Table 2). However, seldom, if ever, are modes of assistance actually *defined* by postsecondary institutions.
- Although how assistance is described may differ across postsecondary institutions, the actual types of assistance that are offered do not vary dramatically (See Table 2).
- There is a divergence from the provision of individualized services to the offering of a set “menu” of services/accommodations/supports from which the student is assigned or chooses depending on their disability (i.e. whether they are blind, have a learning disability, etc.) (Citrus College Online, 2000; Disability Support Services, 2002; Office for Students with Disabilities, 2001b; Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, 2000).

At the employment level:

- There is little focus on disability “services” at the employment level, but rather a tendency for employers to express disability-related assistance as a means of “accommodating” or “supporting” one of many diverse groups

(i.e. women, religious and ethnic groups) (Ford, 2002; IBM, 2002; McDonald's, 2002).

- Interpretations about what constitutes assistance to employees with disabilities is often left to the discretion of personnel officers (Society for Human Resource Management, 1999), most of who have little, if any, knowledge about disability (Colvert & Smith, 2000).
- For individuals with disabilities, the employment environment is a contradiction; where decisions about what kinds of assistance to provide are made on a person by person basis (similar to the secondary school level), yet where the focus upon the restrictive bounds of “reasonableness” becomes even more pronounced than at the postsecondary level (Hazer, 2000).

The sections below outline these practical considerations for assistance provision across the three environments of secondary school and transition, postsecondary school, and employment. Each section discusses components and examples of services, accommodations and supports in that environment. The degree of depth to which each term is discussed varies across environments because of the more prominent use of some terms over others, i.e. the use of “services” at the secondary level and “accommodations” at the postsecondary level.

Secondary School and Transition

Services

Components of a service at the secondary school level. An important aspect of services is that they involve the addition or substitution of one means of delivering instruction for another (i.e. a sign language interpreter would not normally be present in the classroom, adaptive physical education is substituted for regular physical education). Services are typically not a natural part of the environment, but are brought in/offered (by the provider) specifically for the youth with a disability (the customer) (Disability Services, 2001; McBurney Center, 1998; Merriam-Webster Inc., 1999; Office for Students with Disabilities). Services at the secondary level also tend to be on-going rather than short-term, in other words they are offered consistently over a span of months or years.

Services in secondary school can include assignment to a special education classroom. Such classrooms often reflect a lower level of curriculum content, referred to as “watered down”, or the teaching of various life skills rather than addressing State Curriculum Content Standards that other students are asked to attain (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Edgar, 1998b; Hatch, 1998; U. S. Department of Education, 1996; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Placement in a special education content classroom may include a number of differences (beyond content expectations), including reduced class size, increased attention to students on the part of the in-

structor, and less demanding work schedules. These types of service or special environments are not found in postsecondary education or post-school employment settings, thus further complicating the transition of youth with disabilities to those environments.

Examples of services at the secondary school level. As stated above, “services” and “related services” are the terms most commonly used at the secondary school level to describe a placement or a program of activity, with various levels of assistance provided to youth with disabilities. Services encompass everything from identification as a child with a disability, to assessment for eligibility for special education services and determination of placement, to the detailed process of development of the Individual Education Program (IEP), and the eventual delivery of assistance or assignment to a special program of activity. Services might be direct, commonly composing of placement in a special education class or program, or related, composing of additional services or equipment that is brought in to the school.

Direct Services:

- **Provision of a separate program of study within a “special class” assigned according to type/level of disability.** This method of special education service delivery has historically been the method of choice for local school districts (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999; McLaughlin, Fuchs, & Hardman, 1999; Stodden, Stodden et al., Submitted), and is known as the “least restrictive environment,” especially when addressing the needs of youth with significant disabilities. Services, focused upon separate classroom placement and/or a separate program of study based upon disability label or level, usually do not address the content standards or the support expectations placed upon other students in secondary schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Edgar, 1998b; Hatch, 1998; U. S. Department of Education, 1996; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Youth with disabilities receiving this type of special education service often do not receive a high school diploma and do not participate in statewide tests taken by other students (Balcazar & Keys, 1997; Capital Publications Inc., 1997; Cheney & Harvey, 1994; Gronna, Jenkins, & Chin-Chance, 1998; Stodden, Dowrick, Stodden, & Gilmore, Submitted; Stodden, Stodden et al., Submitted; Vanderwood, McGrew, & Ysseldyke, 1998).
- **Provision of “special and separate content classes” assigned according to perceptions of student ability.** This method of special education service delivery is applied to many youth with disabilities in secondary schools, especially for youth having difficulty participating or attaining satisfactory outcomes within the general education curriculum tracks. Such

Special Education classrooms often reflect a lower level of curriculum content, referred to as “watered down”, or the teaching of various life skills rather than addressing State Curriculum Content Standards that other students are asked to attain.

classes are offered in core academic areas, with the curriculum content rigor and/or amount reduced to fit the level of students placed in the courses (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Edgar, 1998b; Hatch, 1998; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Often special content classes have smaller teacher student ratios and a number of other supports available. Also, this service model often includes alternative instructional content and may involve youth participation in the community and other settings. Attempts have been made to structure special classes as a service that intensely supports youth to attain the same academic content requirements as do all other students.

- **Provision of “special services, including separate content” within the regular school classroom with other students.** This method of special education service delivery is provided in the same setting as for all other youth taking courses of study, but may involve lower level or reduced content expectations for the course being taught. Also, such service approaches often involve the provision of additional personnel time (special education teacher or assistant) and special grading or monitoring criteria not applied to other students (McLaughlin et al., 1999).

Related services might be separate or might be integrated into direct services. There are new Federal guidelines that state that “related services” must be related to the achievement of educational outcomes.

Related Services:

- Assessment of academic and service needs
- Sign language interpretation
- Physical therapy
- Material conversion (i.e. from print to Braille)
- Speech/language therapy/audiology
- Tutoring
- Provision of adaptive technology and instruction in the use of technology
- Adaptive physical education
- Transportation
- Classroom aide (personnel)
- Provision of assistance or special instruction from other paraprofessionals.

There is debate around whether or not services that are related to transition should be included as direct/related services or should be labeled “transition services.”

Transition services:

- Training in social skills
- Job skills
- Daily living skills
- Career and further education guidance
- Mentoring
- Supported employment.

Accommodations

Components of an accommodation at the secondary school level. Accommodations at the secondary school level can be defined as “changes in materials or procedures that provide access to instruction and assessments for students with disabilities” (Thurlow, 2001). Where the provision of services might involve bringing in something that would not normally exist in the school environment, the provision of accommodations would involve altering something that already exists. Accommodations are used more in the case of youth with physical disabilities (structural accommodations) and youth with sensory disabilities. They are rarely applied to cases of youth with learning and behavior disabilities.

The focus of special education in elementary and secondary school has historically been to provide a program of services, often focused upon separate settings and content, rather than focusing upon providing different types/levels of accommodations and supports for youth with disabilities to achieve within regular classroom settings and with the same curriculum content standards as other youth (Fleischer & Zames, 2001; Lipsky & Gartner, 1999; Malloy, 1997; McLaughlin et al., 1999; Stodden, Stodden et al., Submitted). Also, given such service provision at the elementary school level, youth with disabilities have often not learned the necessary pre-requisite skills and content to participate and succeed in secondary school curriculum (Stodden, Stodden et al., Submitted). For these reasons, secondary school personnel must continue separate and sub-standard direct service approaches rather than work to accommodate and support the participation of youth with disabilities within settings and curriculum applied to all students.

Examples of accommodations at the secondary school level. Thurlow (2001) discusses the need for a link between “instructional accommodations” and “assessment accommodations.” Accommodations include changes in materials and curriculum such as alternative assignments and tape recorded versions of printed materials, changes in methods and strategies such as highlighting key points to remember and presenting material in multiple formats, changes in setting such as a separate room, changes in timing such as extended time, changes in scheduling, changes in presentation such as via sign language, and changes in response such as the use of

reference materials. The term “modifications” also appears frequently in the literature. There is some confusion among practitioners about whether or not a “modification” can be equated with an “accommodation.” Some suggest that “modification” is a separate term that should be used to describe something that changes the construct of a procedure or means of assessment (i.e. transcription into Braille) (Thurlow, 2001).

Supports

Components of a support at the secondary school level. In the secondary school environment, “support” does not necessarily differ significantly from how one would describe the process of teaching or supporting any child to learn or to transition to adult life.

Examples of supports at the secondary school level. In the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) “support” is used to describe financial support to school districts or to describe support that is given to school personnel and families in order to increase their capacity to work with youth with disabilities. Support at the secondary level could be applied in goal setting as a rationale for the provision of services, i.e. “We will *support* the child to learn or to transition from secondary school to postsecondary school through the provision of specific services.”

Postsecondary School

Services

Components of a service at the postsecondary level. Services at the postsecondary level tend to be geared for use by categories of students rather than by individual students (Center on Disabilities, 2000; Office for Students with Disabilities, 2001a; Office of Disability Services, 2001; Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, 2000). For example, a University might have a staff of sign language interpreters who provide interpretation services to all students who are deaf sign language-users on campus (Disability Services, 2001; Disability Support Services, 2002; Office of Disability Services, 2001; Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, 2000). Or notetaker services may be available to students who have difficulty accessing speech or print (i.e. students with visual impairments, hearing impairments or learning disabilities) (Center on Disabilities, 2000; Disability Services, 2001; Disability Support Services, 2002; Office of Disability Services, 2001). So on the one hand, by appearance, services are very general and can be equated with the services that are available to any student. But on the other hand, whereas any student can access financial aid services at a university, a student has to meet certain criteria (i.e. have a “documented disability”) in order to access interpreter services (McBurney Center, 1998; Office of Disability Services, 2002; Student Support Services Program, 2001).

Many postsecondary institutions use the ADA as a guide to the type and scope of assistance that they offer to students with disabilities.

Examples of services at the postsecondary level. The term “service” tends to be used by postsecondary institutions to describe the general activities of programs that are designed to assist students with disabilities, for example, “Services available to students with disabilities include...” (Citrus College Online, 2000; Office for Students with Disabilities, 2001b; Office of Disability Services, 2001; Student Support Services Program, 2001). The term is also likely to be used to describe assistance that involves interaction with another individual, for instance “interpreter services,” “transportation services” or “counseling services” (See Table 2). However, the use of terminology at the postsecondary level varies so that where one school might describe sign language interpretation as a “service,” another might describe it as an “accommodation” (See Table 2) (McBurney Center, 1998; Office for Students with Disabilities, 2001b; Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, 2000; Student Support Services Program, 2001).

Accommodations

Components of an accommodation at the postsecondary level. The term “accommodation” is commonly used to describe assistance to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. It is not uncommon for postsecondary institutions to use the term “reasonable accommodations” to categorize assistance (Disability Services, 2001; Disabled Student Services, 2001b; McBurney Center, 1998), providing evidence that many postsecondary institutions use the ADA as a guide to the type and scope of assistance that they offer to students with disabilities. An interesting dimension of the link between the ADA and its application at the postsecondary level is that postsecondary schools will often describe what they do not provide and to whom they do not provide it. For example, a school may state that “reasonable accommodations” (Citrus College Online, 2000) are provided only to students who are “qualified” or who have a “documented disability” or even, in the case of one school, are provided to students with “a documented disability which limits one or more major life activities and which imposes an educational limitation” (Citrus College Online, 2000). A school may also state that they will provide a “determination of reasonable accommodation” for the student, and that they do not provide accommodations such as personal care attendants or assistance with the purchase of technology (Thomas, 2000).

This focus on “reasonableness” and “what we can and cannot provide for you” makes the accommodation process at the postsecondary level functional rather than interactive (i.e. “I will accommodate you”) and discretionary on the part of the provider (the school). The implication is that while the school has to “accommodate” the student by law, the school itself, rather than the student or even the law, will define the meaning of the term “accommodation.”

Examples of accommodations at the postsecondary level. While some postsecondary institutions may not offer all of the accommodations listed below, few offer much

more. Many schools appear to be focused upon meeting what is “reasonable” under the law rather than upon what an individual student may need in order to be successful at college (Stodden, Stodden, Gilmore, & Galloway, submitted for publication). Examples of accommodations as applied at the postsecondary level include exam modifications, priority enrollment, sign language interpretation or other communication assistance, access to adaptive technology, the provision of notetakers, tutoring, academic or career counseling, transportation bus lift, orientation, provision of accessible on-campus housing, lab and library assistance, the provision of readers, advocacy, peer mentoring, and transcription into alternative formats (See Table 2).

Supports

Components of a support at the postsecondary level. “Supports” are very vague in their application at the postsecondary level and the term is not used very widely. Section 504 and the ADA do not require that institutions “support” individuals with disabilities. Whereas at the secondary level it is clear that schools must provide individuals with disabilities with a “free and appropriate public education” through whatever means of support that entails, at the postsecondary level the line between the provision of assistance and “reasonableness” is much less clear (DeBettencourt, 2002; Thomas, 2000).

Examples of supports at the postsecondary level. As at the secondary level, a support at the postsecondary level might be used in the context of describing services and accommodations in general, i.e., “support services” (Disability Support Services, 2002; Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, 2000).

Employment

Services

Components of a service at the employment level. It is highly unusual for an employer to offer a disability-related “service” to an employee. The provision of a service for an employee with a disability would tend to involve contracting with an outside service-provider and is often framed as an accommodation.

Examples of services at the employment level. An employer might contract to bring in an outside service, such as a sign language interpreter, job coach, or transcriber.

TABLE 2: Examples of Accommodations, Supports and Services
Listed on Websites of Five Postsecondary Institutions¹

	Accommodation	Support	Service
Michigan State	Housing Enrollment assistance Advising on needs Assistive tech Orientation Peer networking Transport options Tactile maps Interpreters Accessible housing Referral Consult with faculty		Parking and transport Consultation on programs Assessing and addressing student needs Accommodations Equipment provision Access to print ASL Interpreter services Transportation
University of Illinois, Chicago	(Equates with Assistance) Assistive tech Academic ASL Interpreters Readers Lab Assistance Course and program mods Exam mods Note takers Alternative formats Info and referral		
Columbia University	(Under services) Extended time on exams Proctored exams Readers Tape recorder Note-taker Books on tape Use computer during exams	Academic skill development (i.e. tutoring, study skills)	Exam and class accoms Peer networking Access tours Adaptive equip loan Academic skill development Personal and career counseling Resource library on disability
University of Maryland	Adaptive tech ALDs Classroom access Large print Extended exam time Interpreter <u>services</u> Lab/lib assistance		Academic advising Accom counseling Advocacy Mentoring Note taking Paratransit Priority reg Recorded books ASL interpreter Study skills Exam pro ctoring
Citrus College			Adapted physical ed Adapted computer tech Adapted testing Campus and community referral Counseling and advising Instructor liaison LD program Note-takers Readers Reg assistance Sign lang interpreter Adapted tech instru ction

¹ The schools that were selected for representation in this table were chosen because of the comprehensiveness of the online description of their services and is not intended to critique or promote any particular institution. The table is meant to serve as an illustration of some similarities and differences that may exist across institutions in terms of support services to postsecondary students with disabilities.

Accommodations

Depending on the employer, an employee with a disability will face widely different conceptions of their assistance needs and of an employer's obligation to provide for these needs.

Components of an accommodation at the employment level. The desire to keep production costs down provides many employers with an incentive to use a minimalist interpretation of “reasonableness” as a means of defining accommodations for employees with disabilities (Hazer, 2000). Employers will also vary in their understanding of and commitment to employees with disabilities (Luecking, 2002, March). Essentially, employers are not bound to employ or to accommodate individuals with disabilities beyond what is required by law. They can interpret “accommodation” as loosely or tightly as an individual employee or the law will allow. In addition to the incentive of meeting legal mandates, employers do have an incentive to ensure that their employees are productive (Luecking, 2000, 2002, March). The outcome of this dichotomy of incentives and disincentives is that depending on the employer, an employee with a disability will face widely different conceptions of their assistance needs and of an employers obligation to provide for these needs.

Examples of accommodations at the employment level. Attempts to balance legal requirements with production costs and employee productivity creates extreme variability in terms of what kinds of accommodations employers will offer employees with disabilities (Hazer, 2000). Examples of employment accommodations include readers, adaptive computer equipment for an employees individual use, modified work hours, and a modified job description and physical environment (Program on Employment and Disability, 1999).

Supports

Components of a support at the employment level. The use of the word “support” at the employment level, whether it is equated with accommodations or represents other means of assisting an employee with a disability, appears at times to be intentionally vague. For example, the following quote comes from the Ford Motor Company web site (2000): “These company-sponsored Employee Resource Groups provide support and fellowship, identify barriers, contribute to employees' professional development, and provide organized activities for employees of diverse backgrounds.” Even many large national companies do not advertise the fact that they will provide employees with disabilities with “accommodations,” which bring to mind the obligation to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Rather they say that they will provide the “supports” that all employees need in order to be productive. A support can be much more broadly interpreted than an accommodation or a service. And while whether or not an employer is “accommodating” an employee with a disability is subject to interpretation by law, whether or not they are “supporting” them is much more ambiguous.

Examples of supports at the employment level. The term “support” is sometimes substituted for the term “accommodation” at the employment level, and thus examples

The Federal policy shift experienced as youth depart lower education has significant impacts upon youth with disabilities as they seek assistance within postsecondary education and employment settings.

of “supports” would be similar to examples of accommodations. Some employers use the term “supports” to indicate assistance that involves the good will of other employees or that involves an attempt to bridge communication or attitudinal barriers (DiLeo, Luecking, & Hathaway, 1995; Luecking, 2002, March; Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 1997; Rogan, Banks, & Howard, 2000; Targett West & Anglin, 2001). Examples of such supports would be another employee taking notes for an employee with a hearing impairment at meetings (DiversityCareers, 2001), arrangements for assisting an employee in a wheelchair to evacuate if the building is on fire (Esight Careers Network, 2001), offering sign language classes to employees (DiversityCareers, 2001), or offering disability awareness training (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

Discrepancies in the Provision of Assistance Across Environments

INTRODUCTION

An exploration of variables surrounding the different types of assistance (services, supports, & accommodations) found as youth with disabilities transition from secondary education to postsecondary education and employment is rare in the professional literature. More significant, there seems to be little understanding of the process of assistance provision during these transitions, or of the potential negative impact that is experienced by youth with disabilities as they seek to prepare for and successfully access adult roles of value in their community. There is little empirical evidence surrounding the value of specific types of assistance, or the transition of specific types of assistance from one environment to another. As youth with disabilities transition from lower education to higher education, they are significantly impacted by movement from the guidance of one Federal policy (IDEA) to policy that is much less prescriptive and focused upon participation in normal adult community roles (ADA; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act). The Federal policy shift experienced as youth depart lower education has significant impacts upon youth with disabilities as they seek assistance within postsecondary education and employment settings.

Following are a listing of discrepancies in the provision of assistance that limit practice as youth with disabilities prepare for and make this transition:

Discrepancies in Principle

- ***Scope of Responsibility*** - Lower education often has a focus upon providing separate, special services and programs that address the numerous needs of a child, whereas postsecondary education and employment settings more often focus upon making specific, reasonable accommodations

that support persons with disabilities to function in the same environments and roles as all other persons.

- ***Roles and Responsibilities of Participants*** - Lower education has a focus on taking complete responsibility for the planning, development and delivery of a service, whereas postsecondary education and employment settings focus upon “reasonable” and “specific” supports or accommodations (as applied to a specific course or activity) and the youth is responsible for planning and ensuring delivery.

The section below outlines these discrepancies as they impact youth in secondary school, postsecondary school, and employment environments.

Discrepancies in Provision

- ***Process of Determination*** - Lower education is charged with the management and coordination of special education and related services, whereas in postsecondary education and employment settings, youth with disabilities are fully responsible for obtaining and managing their educational and related supports across school, home and community.
- ***Outcomes*** - Lower education is charged with responsibility for a student’s educational success, whereas postsecondary education and employment settings focus only on assisting access – youth become responsible for their own success.

The section below outlines these discrepancies as they impact youth in secondary school, postsecondary school, and employment environments.

DISCREPANCIES IN PRINCIPLE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Introduction

The types of participants and the expectations of those who participate in the process of deciding and providing assistance to youth with disabilities in secondary, postsecondary, and employment settings varies widely as youth transition across these environments (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Stodden et al., submitted for publication). These discrepancies contribute to poor outcomes for youth with disabilities. More specifically, these poor outcomes are the result of policy and practice in the sending environment and the failure to prepare youth with disabilities for the expectations of the receiving environment (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Edgar, 1998a; Shaw et al., 1990; U. S. Department of Education, 1995, 1996, October; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Two considerations are important to youth with disabilities, and their supporters, in this discussion:

1. Who participates in and is responsible for the decision making and provision process?
2. What are the responsibilities, roles, and expectations of those participating? These changing roles can have a negative impact upon youth with disabilities.

Secondary School

Scope of Responsibility

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) prescribes fiscal and institutional responsibility at each level of assistance provision at the secondary school level, from the identification of a child with a disability to the assessment of their needs to the development of the Individual Education Program (IEP) to the delivery of services (DeBettencourt, 2002; Kupper, 1997; Rosenfeld, 2002). At each of these stages, the school district undoubtedly bears primary responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of the mandate are met (DeBettencourt, 2002; Kupper, 1997). States also receive Federal funds for the provision of special education and related services.

Placing the burden of responsibility for the provision of assistance to students with disabilities with the State does not mean that every child who has a disability is actually identified and assessed before or at the secondary school level. However, it does mean that a majority of school-aged youth with disabilities should receive attention in this area. According to the IDEA the student with a disability and/or their parents are free to request that the student be assessed for identification of a disability and related needs. However, even if they do not make such a request it is still quite possible that the school district will initiate and provide these services (DeBettencourt, 2002; Kupper, 1997).

Roles and Participant Responsibility

The selection of participants in the process of determining and providing assistance to youth with disabilities in lower education is specifically detailed in the IDEA as the parent of a child with a disability (and/or an advocate), a special education administrator responsible for providing programs, and educational and related services personnel providing the program of services (DeBettencourt, 2002; Kupper, 1997; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2001, December). At age 16, under IDEA, the youth with a disability is encouraged to attend planning sessions and be involved in the development of their Individualized Educational Plan. However, few students are prepared or choose to participate (Brinckerhoff, 1994). The delivery of the plan and monitoring/follow-up of the activities to be provided becomes the sole responsibility of the local education agency and any contracted providers of related services. Roles and expectations of persons attending IEP meetings and those delivering special education and related services often remain the same from the time children are in pre-

As children without disabilities proceed through the lower education years, their perception of their own roles and responsibilities concerning their education, shift significantly as they enter adolescence in the high school years.

school programs on through high school or until age 21. Further, under the IDEA, persons delivering educational and related services have a responsibility to ensure the impact of their services upon the success of the educational outcomes of children with disabilities (i.e., grades and test scores) (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2001, December).

As children without disabilities proceed through the lower education years, their perception of roles and responsibilities, concerning themselves and their education, shift significantly as they enter adolescence in the high school years. They progressively are prepared for and provided the opportunity to contribute to real decisions about themselves and their educational program, with the accompanying accountability for the outcomes of their decisions. Given the prescribed nature of the educational assistance decision making and provision process mandates under IDEA, youth with disabilities do not always have the opportunity for this normal process of learning about and accepting increased responsibility and accountability for one's own life decisions (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo, Hertzfeld, & Aaron, 2001). Many efforts over the past twenty years to teach youth with disabilities "self-determination" skills have been separated from the process where decisions are made and assistance is provided, with little focus upon what is involved in learning increased responsibility and accountability for making decisions about one's own needs and actions (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001).

Postsecondary School

Scope of Responsibility

Responsibility for the provision of assistance to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level is much less clear and universally applied than at the secondary school level. The Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) only state that the student must be accommodated "within reason" and that these accommodations should be, again within reason, at the expense of the institution ("Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990," 1990; Rosenfeld, 2002; Thomas, 2000). There is no designation about where funds should come from, what kinds of accommodations should be provided, where and by whom, etc. Funding for the provision of assistance to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level is a low priority with most institutions (National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2000, June). As a result, funding for assistance is often inadequate and disability service units are put in the position of having to make decisions based upon cost rather than upon effectiveness (National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2000, June).

Postsecondary schools are also under no obligation to identify or to assess a student with a disability. Therefore "provision" begins and ends with providing a

specific accommodation for a specific circumstance (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001; Rosenfeld, 2002).

Roles and Participant Responsibility

The roles of participants who are involved with the determination and provision of educational assistance during the postsecondary school years are not as clearly defined as they are at the secondary level, and are determined more by the intent and advocacy of the youth with a disability (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Stodden, Whelley, Chuan, & Harding, 2001). In most instances, disability support personnel are available on postsecondary education campuses, even though their level of expertise and ability to be of assistance will vary extensively across institutions (National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2000, June; Stodden et al., 2001). Youth with disabilities are expected, as are all other students in postsecondary education, to take full responsibility for planning their own educational program – this includes asking for and obtaining any supports required to participate in that program (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001; Stodden et al., 2001). Deciding to make a request, as well as preparing and providing data to support the need for disability accommodations or assistance, is the primary responsibility of the student. Further, explaining one's disability/educational needs and compensatory strengths to postsecondary disability support personnel and individual instructors is a primary responsibility and role of the student. It is the student's responsibility to advocate for and obtain required educational assistance, manage and monitor the delivery of that support provision, and balance these with any needed related services and supports (i.e., transportation) (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001; Stodden et al., 2001). Many youth with disabilities, who have little or no preparation for this task, find the responsibilities that go with this role overwhelming and impossible, resulting in reduced course loads and much higher dropout rates than is seen with other youth (J. Blackorby & M. Wagner, 1996; National Organization on Disabilities, 1998; Stodden & Dowrick, 2001; Wagner & Balckorby, 1996b; Witte, Philips, & Kakela, 1998).

Many youth with disabilities require family or peer support as they seek to move through the world of postsecondary education (Stodden et al., submitted for publication). Even with extensive assistance from family members and peers, role expectations are that students will contribute to and make decisions about their needs for assistance, as well as understand and speak for themselves in situations where decisions are made and where follow-through is required. All youth possess a range of skills and experience in these areas, but it is evident that such skills and experience are even more important for youth with disabilities, given their additional needs for assistance and support (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001; Stodden et al., 2001).

The implications of the shift of responsibility for identification and assessment from the school to the individual is that it becomes more likely that a student will

either not receive disability-related assistance or will receive inadequate assistance, especially if (a) the student is unaware that they have a disability or is unwilling to identify themselves as having a disability, (b) the student is not aware that they are entitled to assistance or is unwilling to seek out assistance or, (c) the student is unable or unwilling to provide documentation of their disability (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001; Stodden et al., 2001). The other issue is that in order for the student to receive the type and quality of assistance that they require for postsecondary success, they need to be aware of the implications that their disability has on their ability to function in the postsecondary environment (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001; Stodden et al., submitted for publication; Stodden et al., 2001). They also need to have knowledge about the kinds of services to which they are entitled and to possess the advocacy skills that they need in order to procure assistance (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Izzo et al., 2001; Stodden & Dowrick, 1999; Stodden et al., submitted for publication; Stodden et al., 2001).

Employment

Scope of Responsibility

Employers, i.e. private agencies and institutions, are clearly responsible for providing assistance to their employees ("Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990," 1990). As a result, responsibility for the provision of assistance shifts from the public to the private sector. The term "reasonable" becomes an important indicator of responsibility at the employment level ("Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990," 1990). In fact whatever is not "reasonable" for the employer to provide becomes the responsibility of the employee. If it is determined that a company cannot afford specific accommodations or if these accommodations would significantly interfere with the nature of their business, a.k.a. create an "undue burden," then it may be left to the employee to either (a) fund an accommodation themselves (or seek funding elsewhere), (b) accept an accommodation that does not entirely meet their needs, (c) give up their employment, or (d) become involved in a time consuming and costly appeals process.

Roles and Participant Responsibility

Participant roles and responsibilities in the determination and provision of accommodations in employment settings are even less defined and are even more dependent upon the intent and advocacy of the youth with a disability than in postsecondary settings. For example, employment settings often have no single person with extensive knowledge of disability needs and employers are often characterized as having distrust and fear of disability issues (Hazer, 2000; Luecking, 2002, March). This situation requires the person with a disability to clearly describe and advocate their specific disability related needs and strengths that are directly related to the employment position under consideration. The role of the employer is to provide a "reasonable accommodation" ("Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990," 1990) in-relation to the person's disability, thus supporting ac-

cess within the workplace to required job functions. It remains the responsibility of the person with a disability to demonstrate success on the job and to obtain and manage all related supports that are necessary to function and to be successful within the employment setting (Luecking, 2002, March).

Many persons with disabilities are not prepared for or experienced enough to successfully fulfill the roles and responsibilities that are expected of them when seeking and participating in employment settings (Luecking, 2002, March; Stodden & Dowrick, 2001). There appears to be little opportunity in secondary or postsecondary school to develop these skills and obtain the experience to navigate the employment market. These skills are critical for all youth to participate in employment, yet for persons with disabilities, such skills are even more important given their additional accommodation and related service needs (Luecking, 2002, March).

DISCREPANCIES IN PROVISION: PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

The process and basis for determining if and what educational assistance will be provided to youth with disabilities in secondary and postsecondary education and employment settings varies widely. Most important is the fact that youth with disabilities are impacted in negative ways as they transition across these environments and seek to successfully and meaningfully participate as an adult in their community of choosing. In particular:

- The basis for determining the type and level of assistance to be received shifts significantly as youth with disabilities transition from lower education to postsecondary education and employment settings, and
- The process used to determine the type and level of assistance to be received shifts full circle as youth transition from lower education to adult environments.

Additionally, consideration of long-term outcomes, and thereby linkage with future needs, is problematic across all three environments. In particular:

- The provision of assistance and the assessment of outcomes often focus upon current outcomes and needs and neglect linkages to future outcomes and needs.
- There is a lack of clarity about the meaning of “positive outcomes.” Different stakeholders may have different goals for assistance provision.

Secondary School

Process of Determining Assistance

The IEP process, as delineated in IDEA, requires the input of service providers, parents and advocates, but does little to model or prepare youth with disabilities for what to expect after leaving secondary school.

The process for determining educational assistance for children and youth with disabilities in lower education is detailed very specifically in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as the steps educators and parents must follow in the development of an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) ("IDEA," 1993). The process is delineated as the Federally mandated steps to be followed to determine a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for children with disabilities ("IDEA," 1993). With the exception that youth with disabilities are encouraged to attend their IEP meeting during the secondary school years (indications are that few youth attend (Johnson, 2001)), the IEP and assistance determination process as applied in pre-school and elementary school settings is frequently the same as that which is applied to adolescents in secondary school preparing to participate in adult environments. This can be true even with the requirement that districts develop an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) for students that outlines the student's post-secondary school plans and steps to be taken in order to meet these goals.

The IEP process, as delineated in the IDEA, requires the input of service providers and parents or their advocates into decisions concerning the types and levels of assistance to be received by the child ("IDEA," 1993), but does little to model or prepare youth with disabilities for what to expect after leaving secondary school. As children without disabilities proceed through their lower education years, opportunities are made increasingly available for such youth to become aware of and explore their needs and interests related to post-school environments. Further, such youth are supported and expected to progressively contribute to decisions and plans for their course of study and to accept responsibility for moving toward the future. They learn the skills that are necessary to advocate for what they will need to be successful in post-school environments. For youth with disabilities, the place where such decisions are discussed and made is during the IEP. However, most youth with disabilities leave the IEP process with a complete lack of awareness or understanding of their own disability and/or the assistance needs they might have in order to successfully function in post-school environments (Grigal, 1997; National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2000, June). Further, most youth with disabilities leave the IEP process with few or no advocacy skills, or little understanding of how to advocate for their assistance needs in post-school environments (Grigal, 1997; National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2000, June).

The basis for making decisions regarding the provision and type/level of assistance to be offered to a youth during the secondary school years is closely linked to the eligibility determination process under the IDEA. This eligibility process is focused upon meeting specific criteria under numerous disability categories and

may have little to do with one's assistance needs (Grigal, 1997; Stodden, 2002). Thus, often data or information collected in this process is of little value to the youth or those attempting to assist or support their educational progress in secondary school. Also, youth with disabilities often have little concern or interest in the basis of their assistance because it is taken for granted that assistance will be provided based on Federal Mandates (Grigal, 1997). Of greatest concern is what this process models and teaches youth with disabilities. They are ill-prepared in secondary school for the changes in thinking that they will encounter about why and if assistance is to be provided in post-school environments.

Outcomes

The IEP is one means of measuring accountability to the student and the school in that each year specific goals are developed for each student and the services that are needed in order for the student to meet these goals are outlined ("IDEA," 1993; Johnson). In theory, each year's IEP must look back on the last and indicate whether the previous year's goals were met ("IDEA," 1993). In practice, this does not always occur (Grigal, 1997). Nor does the fact that goals were met mean that these goals were necessarily the most appropriate for each student. Sometimes an IEP team is motivated by the need to be accountable so it creates goals for the student that it knows can be achieved irregardless of the quality of the services or supports that are linked with these goals (Stodden, 2002).

Consideration of outcomes for youth with disabilities at the secondary level often focuses upon immediate rather than long-term goals as a measure for success. For example, the IEP of a student with a learning disability might state that the student's goal is to, "Pass all of his/her classes with at least a grade of 'C' or better." In order for the student to meet this goal it might be recommended that the school provide three hours of tutoring a week, placement in a special classroom for math, and additional time for the student to complete exams. While at the end of the school year the student may actually have passed all of his/her classes with a "C," there has been no means of measuring (a) whether the actual assistance that was provided is linked to the fact that the student received a grade of "C" or better, or (b) whether the goal that was set was appropriate to the student's desires and capabilities, i.e. if the goal had been to achieve a grade of "B" or better would the student have been able to achieve this goal with the same level of assistance that was provided for a goal of "C" or better?

The issue of focusing on short-term versus long-term goals often boils down to the goals of the individual versus the goals of the school. The achievement of long-term goals occurs in many steps. If short-term goals are not matched with long-term goals then long-term goals are often unachievable. For a majority of students the achievement of long-term goals is possible through their motivation to succeed. For students with disabilities, the achievement of long-term goals may also be dependent upon short-term goals that are decided by others and the assis-

tance that the students do or do not receive from the schools (Grigal, 1997; Stodden, 2002). For example, suppose the student described above has a long-term goal of becoming a doctor and the way to become a doctor is to attend medical school and the way to attend medical school is to attend an undergraduate university of the caliber that only accepts students who have a “B” average and who have participated in at least two extra curricular activities? The school, on the other hand, has a goal of maintaining its accountability to the State and Federal governments through ensuring that (a) students receive a free and appropriate public education and that, (b) students with disabilities are given the same opportunity to a free and appropriate public education as are other students. Teachers and parents may also have minimal goals for a student that impact the IEP process (Grigal, 1997; Stodden, 2002).

Postsecondary School

Process of Determining Assistance

The universal process for determining educational assistance for youth with disabilities in higher education is undefined, un-mandated, and varies extensively from one program setting to the next (Stodden, 2002; Stodden & Dowrick, 1999). Further, youth with disabilities become the entity or person wholly responsible for initiating, leading, managing, and following through with a process of determining assistance that might be provided by the postsecondary institution (Stodden & Dowrick, 1999). Without the mandates of the IDEA, nothing similar to an individualized planning process exists in postsecondary education settings. Typically, youth are expected to take the initiative to declare their status as a person with a disability, provide assessment data that would verify their specific disability, and then work with the disability support office to plan and participate in one or more of the accommodations or supports that might be available (Stodden & Dowrick, 1999). Further determination of the extent to which the accommodation might be implemented must be negotiated between the student and each instructor. Given the lack of experience with disability among postsecondary instructional faculty, this process may require an extensive explanation of one’s disability and justification for the proposed accommodation to be provided (Stodden & Dowrick, 1999). This process often requires the student to have an understanding of the course content to be encountered and the range of teaching methods that each instructor may use – given this information the student is often required to speak specifically to their disability related needs and how they might be most efficiently addressed in each course.

In postsecondary education settings, the process of determining educational assistance is often impacted by what the institution has available and is able to provide (National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2000, June). Typically a menu of possible accommodations and supports is used for discussion– the scope and depth of this menu is impacted by the extent of interest in supporting persons with disabilities at each institution and the amount of funding

There is very little empirical evidence that actually matches the provision of specific types of assistance with any type of outcome at the postsecondary level.

available for such services. Unlike lower education, postsecondary educational institutions often do not provide per capita funding for disability support services, so as increased numbers of youth with disabilities enter the determination process in postsecondary education, support budgets become thin and must impact decisions (Gajar, 1998).

Outcomes

While there may be fiscal accountability to the State at public postsecondary institutions, institutions often are not held accountable for the achievement of specific goals or the provision of specific services unless through litigation under the ADA. Thus, at the postsecondary level there is little focus upon the long-term goals of the student in the determination of what types of assistance to offer the student with a disability (Stodden et al., submitted for publication). In fact, there is often not even a focus on the student's short-term goals. A student is assigned accommodations based on their category of disability and whether or not the student succeeds is viewed as the responsibility of the student (Stodden et al., submitted for publication). There is very little empirical evidence that actually matches the provision of specific types of assistance with any type of outcome at the postsecondary level (Shaw, 2002; Stodden & Dowrick, 1999). For example, a postsecondary student who is blind might be provided with access to a computer that converts text to speech, given extra time to take exams, and encouraged to ask fellow students to take notes for them in class. It is more than likely that the determination of these assistance "needs" were based upon the fact that the student is blind and this type of assistance is "normally given" to students who are blind, rather than upon any evidence that these three types of assistance will help the student to meet any achievable goals.

Employment

Process of Determining Assistance

The universal process of determining assistance for persons with disabilities in employment settings is often dependent upon the motivation of the applicant and the expectations and attitudes of the employer (Hazer, 2000; Luecking, 2002, March). The determination process is somewhat similar to postsecondary education settings, but often lacking the assistance of a specific office or knowledgeable person concerning what accommodations or supports might be required to complete the required job tasks. Further, the discussion of assistance needs must often be initiated by the person with a disability during the process of applying for a position, adding weight to the decision about whether or not to hire the individual (Hazer, 2000; Luecking, 2002, March). Typically the person with a disability is required to understand their own disability limitations and strengths and to be able to speak about them very clearly within the content of the requirements of the position under consideration (Hazer, 2000; Luecking, 2002, March). Employers may have little knowledge of disability needs or how to talk about them (Luecking,

2002, March). Further, employer's decisions may be influenced by fears concerning liability and potential additional costs that may be incurred through making accommodations (Hazer, 2000).

It is clear that the process for determining assistance for youth with disabilities as they prepare and transition across lower education, postsecondary education and employment settings changes significantly with the passage into and through each environment. Characteristics of this shift include movement from (1) a mandated, individualized, and parent/agency driven planning process to a youth initiated, undefined process without required procedures or mandated outcomes; (2) parent/agency driven responsibility for decision making to youth driven responsibility for initiation, management, and follow-through of the decision making process; and (3) decisions and expectations of a comprehensive program of services (lower education) to decisions about specific and separate accommodations and supports to be implemented in the same post-school settings within which all other persons seek to access and participate.

Outcomes

An employer is under no obligation to spend "x" amount of dollars for the provision of assistance to an employee, nor in most cases is there an entity outside of the organization to which the employer routinely must demonstrate that the provision of assistance to employees with disabilities is achieving specific goals and objectives.

In the context of employment, the focus of assistance provision tends to be upon enabling the employee to perform the tasks that are necessary in order to complete the requirements of their position (Luecking, 2000). The measure of outcome in this case would be whether or not the employee does in fact meet their job requirements. If the employee does not meet these requirements it is a matter of subjectivity on the part of the employer as to whether or not this failure to meet requirements was due to inadequate or inappropriate assistance or to some other intrinsic quality of the employee (Luecking, 2000). At the employment level, it is generally dependent upon the employee to match their goals with their assistance needs and to advocate for the provision of such assistance (Luecking, 2000). Often an employee with a disability is put into the position of having to accept accommodations that, while adequate for an entry level position, do not allow them to progress on a career path that is typical for employees without disabilities (Callahan & Mank, 1998).

Implications and Recommendations

Based upon the above review of the provision of educational and related assistance in secondary school, postsecondary school and employment, the following implications are evident:

1. ***Students with disabilities are currently not encouraged to develop the self-determination skills that they will need in order to function in post-school settings.*** Youth with disabilities are not adequately prepared in secondary school to participate in the process of determining, advocating for, or managing the types of assistance and methods of provision found in post-school environments. Youth with disabilities transition from a secondary school environment where they are often observers or passive participants in the process of determining and obtaining educational assistance. In post-school environments, they are expected to clearly describe and advocate for the supports they may require in specific learning and work environments. Often youth with disabilities are left to make this transition without the necessary knowledge or skills in self-advocacy, self-awareness or self-determination required to access post-school environments.
2. ***Students with disabilities often do not have an adequate understanding of their disability and related assistance needs.*** While an emphasis on high academic expectations is important for access and success in postsecondary education, equally important for youth with disabilities is the need for an understanding of their disability and the types of assistance that are required for them to function within a range of environments. If such knowledge and skills were taught in high school, youth with disabilities would be prepared to initiate discussions with admissions counselors in postsecondary education and employers in work settings, and advocate for the specific accommodations necessary for them to access and participate with all other students and employees. For youth with disabilities, poor post-school outcomes are often attributed to a lack of understanding that they may not receive the same specialized and individualized services and supports they received in high school. Often, parents and youth with disabilities are surprised to learn that the methods of disability assistance determination and the types of assistance provided change significantly after leaving secondary school.
3. ***Students, parents and teachers lack awareness about differences in the Federal policies that govern disability-related assistance provision in secondary school, postsecondary school, and employment settings.*** The varying levels of Federal policy prescriptiveness guiding assis-

tance provision tend to be misunderstood or overlooked by educators and others preparing youth and their family members for transition. Federal policy during secondary school (IDEA) tends to be highly prescriptive, focused upon educational benefit and achievement. During the post-school years, the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA tend to be much less prescriptive and focus on basic access to settings and programs. Practitioners tend to focus on the provision of assistance as a quick fix or legal obligation rather than as preparing youth for future success in post-school roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Recommendations for Improvements to Policy

1. **Resources for Research and Training** - There is a need to devote more resources to exploring the role of educational assistance provision for youth with disabilities as they prepare for post-school environments. These resources could be devoted to research and training to further explore how assistance is provided and what types of assistance are provided, and the impact upon outcomes for youth with disabilities in the transition process.
2. **Terminology** - There needs to be clarification of the language surrounding assistance provision in Federal policy so that language is used consistently across policies as youth with disabilities transition to post-school settings. Current policies, for example those stemming from IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act, and the ADA, use the terms “services,” “supports,” and “accommodations” inconsistently, creating barriers for youth with disabilities, their family members, and practitioners. These barriers could be eliminated by seeking consistency in the use of terminology and by focusing upon preparing youth to function in post-school environments.
3. **Effective Practice** - Policy should emphasize research-proven effective practice (practice that is linked to positive outcomes), rather than minimum standards that satisfy prescriptive federal policy. When policy is guided by minimum standards of practice, such policies should be supplemented with incentives for the provision of assistance that is based upon effective practice.
4. **Accountability** - Assistance providers for individuals with disabilities in all environments should be more accountable for the long-term outcomes of assistance provision. This can be accomplished through incentives for the utilization of effective practices, and through policy directives that require better mapping of assistance provision and follow up.

The energy invested in the process of assistance provision is meaningless if it does not assist successful transition outcomes.

5. **Self-Determination** - Federal policy at the secondary school level should incorporate requirements for the development of self-advocacy, self-awareness and self-determination knowledge and skills for youth with disabilities, ensuring effective preparation for post-school environments. This can be accomplished through policy that a) guides the development of additions and modifications to general education core curriculum, b) alters the role and responsibility of youth with disabilities in the IEP process, and c) takes a stronger stand on the importance of fully including youth with disabilities in the initiation, advocacy, and management of their own assistance provision process at an early age.

Recommendations for Improvements to Practice

1. **Research-Proven Practice** - There is a need for increased efforts to apply research-proven practice when assessing the effectiveness of modes of assistance provision for youth with disabilities in secondary school. Currently, such decisions are often based upon the assessed deficits of the child and prescriptive federal policy, rather than upon the consideration of knowledge about the needs of the young person for transition to post-school environments.
2. **Focus upon Post-school Outcomes Rather than Minimal Compliance** - With a focus upon mandated procedures of the IEP process as the method for determining modes of assistance for youth with disabilities in secondary school, there is little attention to preparation for post-school outcomes. The energy invested in the process of assistance provision is meaningless if it does not assist successful transition outcomes. Practitioners should consider individual assistance-related needs within the context of post-school environments, rather than fitting people and types of assistance into broad categories or focusing only upon the short-term educational needs of youth.
3. **Teaching Responsibility to Youth with Disabilities** - A major shift for all youth transitioning to adult roles in postsecondary education and employment is a sense of immediate and increased responsibility and independence. As most youth move through middle and secondary school they are given increasing responsibility for their own learning and the assistance they need to benefit from instruction. Often, youth with disabilities who have an IEP in place do not have the opportunity to experience this increased responsibility or learn the skills and knowledge necessary to assume such independence. Since the types of assistance provided for youth with disabilities in secondary school are decided as part of IEP planning, it is critical that such youth have an active role and an

planning, it is critical that such youth have an active role and an opportunity to make decisions which carry responsibility and consequences similar to the adult roles for which they are preparing. Secondary school personnel need to increase the participation of youth with disabilities in the planning and implementation of their own educational assistance. Given that currently many youth with disabilities have minimal or no involvement in the IEP process, there is also a need to improve the guidance and level of support that is offered to individuals with disabilities at the postsecondary and employment level.

4. ***Focus upon Transitioning Modes of Assistance*** – Currently little planning is conducted around the transition of disability services, supports or accommodations to post-school settings. Transition planning is often focused on a long-term career or community living goal, with little thought given to the modes of assistance offered within those settings. Personnel at the secondary school level should involve the student in a process of planning and mapping the level and types of assistance provision found within these post-school environments. Practitioners must think of where the youth with a disability is coming from and where they are going, and match the provision of assistance to these long-term goals.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. ***Student Participation and Self-Advocacy*** – There is a need to support research, training and project models that focus on enhancing student participation in the IEP and assistance provision process and on increasing student self-advocacy skills that can be applied to post-school environments. These projects should focus on the needs of students with disabilities in secondary school, as they prepare to transition into postsecondary school and employment.
2. ***Self-Determination*** - There is a need to support research, training and project models that aim to increase students' understanding of their disability and how different learning strategies and modes of assistance are linked to their disability. There should also be an emphasis on teaching students to effectively communicate this understanding, in the form of self-advocacy, in secondary, postsecondary and employment environments.
3. ***Preparation for Success in Post-School Roles*** – There is a need to support research, training and project models that examine the relationship between modes of assistance and specific educational and post-school outcomes. These projects should emphasize high expectations and positive outcomes in the long-term rather than emphasizing short-term bene-

Youth with disabilities have the same right to be successful and to achieve their life goals as do youth without disabilities.

fit. In order to promote a seamless transition between secondary school and postsecondary school/employment, there is also a need to support projects that increase student, parent and teacher awareness about the differences between the mandates and assistance-provision process' in these three environments.

Summary

The purpose of this paper has been to draw attention to the importance of the provision of assistance in the post-school success of youth with disabilities. Further, the paper has highlighted discrepancies in the provision of assistance that negatively impact this success. The key points that were made in regards to the provision of assistance across the environments of secondary school, postsecondary school and employment include evidence that:

- There are inconsistencies in intent, application and processes of assistance provision across environments.

This paper has addressed these issues by:

- Describing in detail the definition and application of modes of assistance for youth with disabilities across secondary school, postsecondary school and employment.
- Examining the impact of discrepancies in assistance provision that negatively affect the transition and participation of youth with disabilities in these three environments, and
- Suggesting ways of improving the provision of assistance to youth with disabilities through improvements in policy and practice and through suggestions for further research.

Youth with disabilities have the same right to be successful and to achieve their life goals as do youth without disabilities. Although policies such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are a positive step towards protecting this right, the application of these laws has not gone far enough towards giving youth with disabilities the same opportunities for postsecondary education and employment that are available to other youth. During secondary school there is a focus upon providing youth with disabilities with prescriptive, specialized services, often in segregated environments focused specifically upon learning or behavior deficit experienced by the student. Students with disabilities are not active participants in

the decision making process around their supports. Thus, they leave secondary school without advocacy skills, without knowledge of the impact that their disability has upon their learning and the related modes of assistance that can help to mitigate this impact, and without an understanding of how to negotiate the “real world” where institutions are focused upon providing “reasonable accommodations” rather than upon meeting individual needs.

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