

Community of Practice in Transition: Secondary to Postsecondary

Recommendations and best practice for successful student transition

Report to Wyoming Department of Education

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Secondary to Post Secondary



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING



2013 Community of Practice in Transition: Secondary to Postsecondary Members

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Introduction

During 2013 the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) in collaboration with the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), Special Programs Division developed a community of practice for student transition (CoP-T). The goal of this project was to bring together leading professionals and parent advocates from around the state to identify best practices and recommendations for improving transition practices in Wyoming.

Three small communities, consisting of 10-15 members each convened at the University of Wyoming in Laramie in February/April and again in October for two in-person working sessions. These sessions were designed to address improving the transitions of students in three identified critical areas: a) transition from early childhood programs to the school districts; b) transition from secondary schools to postsecondary education, employment and community living; and c) transitions of students with social, emotional, and behavioral needs to and from behavioral interventions. Each community, through weekly and monthly E-mail correspondence and teleconference meetings, developed a guidance document. Although final recommendations for improving practices are similar across all documents, key differences exist that are critical to successful transitions for the targeted population or identified transition period.

This guidance document consists of five sections: purpose, background, best practices, challenges, and recommendations. The purpose and background sections describe key areas of focus for the community's specific area of transition. The best practice section was developed through a robust literature search to identify nationally-recognized best practices that could be appropriately implemented in Wyoming. The challenges section presents agency infrastructure, educational and advocacy practices, and service disparities that may present challenges for successful student transitions. The recommendations section provides the ideas and information from the community members that are most likely to result in successful student outcomes.

The following document is the culmination of the hard work and yearlong commitment of the members of all three Community of Practice in Transition and WIND Facilitators, Sandra A. Hubert and Laurie Westlake; WIND administrators, Sandy Root-Elledge and Canyon Hardesty; and WIND information specialist, Sara DiRienzo. This document represents professional and expert recommendations for improving transition practices throughout Wyoming. This document, although intended for improving practices of the Wyoming Department of Education as well as local school districts addresses the multiple state, community, and individual stakeholders whose collaborative involvement is key to successful outcomes of students during transition periods

Purpose

The Wyoming Department of Education supported the formation of the Community of Practice-Transition from Secondary to Postsecondary Education, Independent Living and Employment, through a contract with the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities. The primary goal for the CoP-T was to research best practices to support successful transition for children and families, present recommendations and offer guidance for transition planning. The CoP-T's vision is to enhance coordination and collaboration efforts across multiple agencies and systems in order to support intentional team planning for successful transition for children and their families.

The purpose of this Guidance Document is to educate and inform the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) and other related stakeholders on how to facilitate long-term, positive outcomes for individuals transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education, independent living and/or employment settings, thereby eliciting successful change in transition practices. These recommendations do not take the place of laws or regulations. Wyoming Rules and Regulations in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004, IDEA, form the foundation for the establishment of best practices and transition strategies as described in this document. The intended audiences for the Guidance Document are the Wyoming Department of Education, school district employees (i.e. administrators, secondary school teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.), adult service providers (directors, administrators, counselors, therapists, etc.), councils and boards with oversight responsibilities, and parents.

The CoP Secondary to Postsecondary Transition (CoP-T-SPS) members represent local school districts, adult community programs, independent living programs, and WDE personnel. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals and institutions that provided invaluable support for the development of this Guidance Document:

WDE for providing the impetus to convene a statewide Community of Practice to examine postsecondary transition for Wyoming Students, particularly Tiffany Dobler, Special Programs Administrator and Kimberly Harper, Special Programs Administrator of Learning, who provided us with feedback regarding the direction of our work

The Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) for providing the facilities, facilitators, and access to research to support the development of the Guidance Document, particularly the following faculty and staff who have been working closely with our group in an advisory and supporting role.

Sandy Hubert, Project Coordinator, CoP-T who has worked tirelessly with us since the CoP-T's inception as meeting facilitator, go-to person, advisor, and chief communicator, without whose efforts and oversight we would not have produced this Guidance Document,

AND

Sandy Root-Elledge, WIND Associate Director

Laurie Westlake, Facilitator and WIND Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs

Canyon Hardesty, WIND Coordinator of Community Education

Sara DiRienzo, WIND Information Specialist

Marjorie Daley, WIND Administrative Assistant

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Martin Agran, Ph.D., Professional Studies, University of Wyoming, for offering insight into self-determination and the transition of students with disabilities.

Background

The CoP-T-SPS met face-to-face for the first time in February 2013. At that time, there was an opportunity to do some team building and receive information on the purpose and functioning of the Community of Practice. WDE shared statewide data on indicators 13 and 14 with the group. Indicator 13 is a compliance indicator for the completion of transition plans in IEPs and Indicator 14 provides detailed information on postsecondary survey results. This survey data identifies whether students are competitively employed and/or attending postsecondary educational institutions after leaving high school. Indicator 13 data showed good compliance results. However, Indicator 14 data was less definitive, both in the response rate and in the actual number of graduated high school students either employed or enrolled in postsecondary education one year after graduation.

Once the data and information were shared, the group was charged with identifying issues and providing guidance to the state on how to improve services for postsecondary transition. The group determined three overarching themes on which to concentrate attention to enhance transition practices in Wyoming:

- 1) Developing self-determination and self-advocacy skills among high school students;
- 2) Focusing transition planning on building skills and linking students to services beyond high school; and
- 3) Building service network relationships to support service provision.

On the basis of these themes, members of the CoP-T researched best practices across the United States, reviewing websites and identifying model programs. As CoP-T members reported information they found through research, the team decided that they needed more local feedback. After extensive discussion, the CoP-T members identified primary stakeholders in postsecondary transition and a comprehensive survey was created. The team determined that a comprehensive survey was needed to obtain information throughout the state on what was working and what was not working in Wyoming in regards to secondary transition. The team developed questions that addressed each area of secondary transition based on the three previously identified themes: self-determination, building transition skills and development of service networks. The CoP-T members needed local current data, and not just from current team members. The survey was created, modified and finally complete.

In May, this survey was sent to each school district's special education director requesting information on the three identified themes with regard to their individual districts. The directors were given the option of completing the survey themselves or forwarding it to the staff in their district responsible for providing postsecondary transition services. Return rate on the survey was 56 percent. Data gathered from the survey provided the CoP with some excellent feedback in order to proceed in developing a plan for the Guidance Document. A comprehensive list of people throughout the state responsible for transition was also completed based on respondents to the survey.

The CoP-T members obtained data from several other sources, including: a March 2013 State Independent Living Council (SILC) Needs Assessment survey of consumers and agencies; a June 2013 Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Needs Assessment Consumer survey; and a

Provider survey. This data was reviewed for its pertinence to postsecondary transition. The team discussed the development of a parent survey since parents are a key stakeholder in the transition process. However, given the timeline for completing the Guidance Document, this survey was tabled to a later date. The team believes it is still necessary to gather information from both parents and students in order to create a more complete picture of postsecondary transition.

In July 2013, the team presented to representatives of the Wyoming Department of Education the work they had already completed along with plans for future steps. In turn, the staff at the WDE provided the team with additional guidance. For example, it was brought to the team's attention that in 2008 a statewide plan for postsecondary transition had been previously developed with the assistance of the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC).

During CoP-T team discussions, members challenged the following educational practices, suggesting that they could significantly impact the provision of transition services in Wyoming: the legacy of No Child Left Behind which gives priority to testing and proficiency rather than to students' transition needs; the new proposed laws on teacher accountability which emphasize students' growth on test scores thereby minimizing instruction in other areas vital to postsecondary transition; the change in age at which transition services are required to be provided in Wyoming – from 14 years to 16 years.

In summary, the members of the CoP-T have extensively researched national postsecondary transition practices, reviewed current data on postsecondary transition statewide indicators, and initiated and reviewed a survey from educational personnel throughout the state, in addition to reviewing other completed surveys of stakeholders. Locating and reviewing past statewide transition plans and understanding the requirements of federal and statewide laws related to transition, have helped the team to identify background information in the development of a comprehensive plan for postsecondary transition in the state.

Best Practices

Students in today's educational setting deserve a meaningful education with purposeful transition to post high school outcomes. In order to create these opportunities for our youth we must look at research on best practices in the areas of self-determination and advocacy skills, focus on transition planning, and build the services network relationships to support service provisions. To help our Wyoming students, the Cop-T looked to research and data both nationally and within our state.

Developing self-determination and advocacy skills among youth creates a more positive quality of life. When students learn about themselves and understand their strengths and weaknesses they will learn to value themselves. As adults these students can take control over choices, decisions, and take responsibility for their actions. Research found that instruction in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making skills will help students to have a greater attachment to school (NASET, 2005). Students will also demonstrate less risky behavior, better academic performance, higher graduation rates, fewer arrest rates, and fewer pregnancies. Research findings indicate there are numerous curricular and instructional models available for schools to implement into their current instructional setting (AUCD, 2013). Self-determination is a process that should begin in early elementary school and continue throughout the school years. In early high school the transition

process begins to allow students to be actively involved with the process. Students should be aware of options, set short and long term goals, participate in their IEP meetings, and assess progress towards their goals. Research states that self-determination must be purposefully developed beginning with the student understanding their disability; it is recommended that self-determination is taught in a social setting allowing the students to apply their skills to a wide variety of settings (NASSET, 2005). Students with disabilities who have self-determination skills have more positive educational outcomes and have a greater chance in being successful in making the transition to adulthood, including achieving employment and community independence. Researchers also found that one year after high school graduation students with learning disabilities that received self-determination training were more likely to achieve positive adult outcomes including employed at a higher rate earning more per hour when compared to peers who had not received the training.

The results of the May, 2013 CoP survey indicated that a majority of Wyoming districts and teachers are addressing self-determination through a variety of activities, programs and curricula. Examples include:

- Unique Curriculum
- LifeNet
- 7 Habits for Highly Effective Teens
- Career Decision Making System-Revised
- Development of student portfolios
- Student participation in IEP design and implementation
- In-class workshops facilitated by the transition coordinator

To create successful transitions one must focus on the transition planning, building skills, and planning services needed beyond high school. Career preparatory is essential throughout school both in the classroom and community based experiences. Research findings include those with a strong academic curriculum and a vocational training will have better outcomes. These students are more likely to graduate from high school, be employed with higher paying jobs, enroll in postsecondary education, be competitively employed, and make more informed decisions (NASSET, 2005). Workplace readiness can be created through paid and unpaid internships, guest lecturers from community businesses, career days, youth apprenticeships, and job shadowing. School sponsored work experiences create unique learning opportunities to include; career-related preferences, navigate interpersonal relationships more effectively, and develop a greater self-determination. Meaningful school and community based work experience create real world applications for students to build upon their skills and apply existing knowledge to the workplace while allowing students to see the practical value of high school. When creating successful work experiences the following must be taken into consideration; careful planning must be made, matching student interests and abilities to a work experience program, a connection between work experience and school curriculum, and individual supports and accommodations. Self-determination and career development skills should be infused in the general education curriculum.

Research indicates students entering the workforce today after high school now need the same level of skills and knowledge as students entering college; therefore, it is imperative that parents, teachers and employers have high expectations for all students (Bangser, 2008).

Wyoming demonstrates several best practices when addressing building skills and planning for service beyond high school as part of transition planning. According to the data gathered from the May, 2013 CoP survey, districts do this in a variety of ways such as:

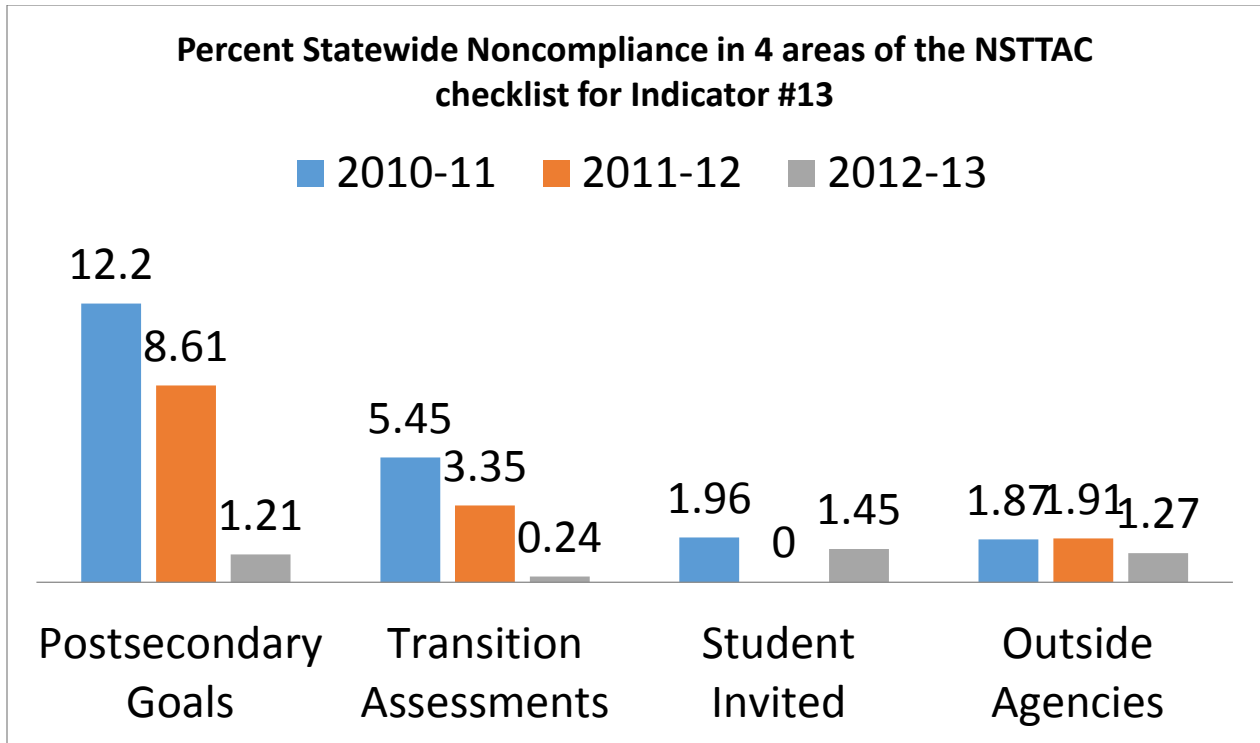
- Use of a Transition Specialist
- DVR visits with students in a small group setting 3-4 times a year
- Having students learn about the Career/Tech Cluster
- ABLÉ program
- Work study programs
- Use and development of a student portfolio (Juniors) including:
 - Resume
 - Interest survey(s)
 - Five year plan
 - Attending a college fair

The data below demonstrates an increase in compliance of Indicator 13 in Wyoming over three years.

Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service's needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority ("What is indicator 13?," 2004).

Indicator 13 consists of eight components, four of which are cited because of their applicability to the increasing focus on building transition-oriented skills and connecting students to agencies for post-high school services.

- Inviting Outside Agencies
 - 2010-11 - 1.87% non-compliant
 - 2011-12 - 1.91% non-compliant
 - 2012-13 - 1.27% non-compliant
- Inviting Student to the IEP
 - 2010-11 - 1.96% non-compliant
 - 2011-12 - 0.00% non-compliant
 - 2012-13 - 1.45% non-compliant
- Providing transition assessments
 - 2010-11 - 5.45% non-compliant
 - 2011-12 - 3.35% non-compliant
 - 2012-13 - 0.24% non-compliant
- Establishing postsecondary goals
 - 2010-11 - 12.2% non-compliant
 - 2011-12 - 8.61% non-compliant
 - 2012-13 - 1.21% non-compliant



Meeting the diverse needs of students transitioning to life after high school cannot be the sole purpose of the school district, school community, service agency, or family. No single entity can do it alone. Research suggests that systems can work more effectively together (NASET, 2005). This collaborative approach will bring together community agencies to create collective expertise, sharing of resources, knowledge, and skills. To create a positive collaboration, systems need to be in place such as: written interagency agreements, development and delivery of cross-agency training opportunities, interagency planning teams, curriculum that supports identification and accomplishment of transition goals to prepare students for work, postsecondary, and community living environments. Links with school and rehabilitation professionals provide services and other links while the student is still in school. There are a number of research studies that report family involvement creates positive outcomes for youth with and without disabilities. The identified outcomes include; improved achievement test scores, lower risk of dropout, improved attendance, improved student behavior, increase in grade point average, greater commitment to schoolwork, and an improved attitude toward school. Collaboration with postsecondary institutions and employers create smoother transitions to college and workforce. Offering dual credit programs allow high school students to be more prepared and earn college credits. Employers who provide work-based learning opportunities recognize that this experience will create better prepared employees. Employers also gain practice in working with individuals to create work environments that maximize productivity and minimize impact of disability (NASET, 2005).

Results of the May 2013 CoP survey indicate that some educational institutions and agencies in Wyoming are already collaborating to benefit students transitioning out of high school. This team approach includes:

- Use of a transition specialist and/or job coach to facilitate communication between adult service providers and the student/family;
- DVR visits with students in a small group setting three-four times a year;
- In addition to DVR and Social Security, connecting school districts with additional community agencies such as:
 - Magic City
 - LifeNet, Trio
 - NOWCAP
 - PEAK Wellness Center
 - Tribal Employment agencies
 - Job Corp
 - RENEW
 - Easter Seals
 - Eagle Ridge
 - Local Business
 - Community College Representatives
 - Western Wyoming Community College
 - Sheridan Community College
 - Central Wyoming College

Challenges

The following section describes barriers to implementing best practices for postsecondary transition in Wyoming. Evidence to support such challenges was gathered from a number of sources and is described below. Effective implementation of practices is also cited where appropriate.

- The State Independent Living Council (SILC) Needs Assessment (March 2013):
Comments: Transition Services needed for youth with disabilities in your area
(Providers)

Question 2: What are the needs of youth in transition from High School to postsecondary school, work and the community?

Providers had many more responses to the question about high school transition services than did consumers. This is most likely explained by the advanced age of the consumer respondents and the fact that transition services from high school are not pertinent. The question was open-ended and responses were categorized according to 15 common themes. The most frequent comments were about the need for agency collaboration for effective planning with families. Providers requested more services for supported and transitional housing, vocational training, work experience in real job sites, job placement assistance, supported employment, career planning, and independent living skills such as cooking and money management. Many respondents commented that community-based transition services outside the school system seem to be limited to individuals who are eligible for the Children's Mental Health Waiver and that many more families need these

services. Other critical services identified for transition age youth include transportation, training and recreation activities. Several respondents would like programs that support young people with disabilities to attend college and partnerships with business to create employment opportunities. Finally, there needs to be more frequent and effective dissemination of information about agencies and service programs for both parents and providers. Below is a list of needs identified through the assessment

1. agency collaboration/agency awareness
2. supported / transitional housing
3. work opportunities/experiences
4. job skills/vocational training
5. independent living skills
6. services other than waiver
7. career planning/transition planning/quality of life plan
8. job finding/placement
9. transportation services/ training
10. recreation activities
11. funding
12. college supports
13. networking/partnerships with businesses
14. parent/provider transition fair
15. Other

A summary of the CoP Postsecondary Transition Survey to School Districts (May 2013):

Theme 1: Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

- Data results indicate that the majority of districts/teachers are addressing self-determination and self-advocacy through a variety of activities and/or school programs. A specific curriculum is not necessarily being used.

Theme 2: Transition Planning focused on Building Skills and Planning for Services Beyond High School

- Overall communication with students seems good to very good.
- Lack of communication and training for parents about the difference between the student's IEP-504-ADA
- Need for more communication and training for school staff about transition assessments and transition activities and strategies (the need for resources)
- Need for more discussion about the student's self-determination and self-advocacy with the adult/outside agency
- Communication with students, parents, and school staff during the IEP meeting (yearly) as well as in a variety of other locations (indicating multiple meetings may take place)
- Adult/outside agency communication occurs most often through email or phone, and to a lesser extent at the IEP meeting.
- Need for training between the adult/outside agency and the school district

Theme 3: Service Network Relationships

- Lack of Social Security agency resource for students

- Multiple ways to connect agencies with the student and parent

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Needs Assessment (June 2013):

- **CONSUMER SURVEY**

A survey was conducted of WY-DVR consumers who had been accepted into VR services but had not received services under their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The survey asked them to identify their service needs and barriers to employment as well as any other comments. Of the 1600 surveys mailed, 323 were completed and returned, resulting in a useable response rate of 20 percent.

The five needs marked most frequently in the order of need are education and training, job search, career/job decision-making and selection, program eligibility, and transportation. Individuals with the most significant disabilities rated the same five services highest although transportation was rated higher than program eligibility.

- **PROVIDER SURVEY**

Providers were surveyed to obtain a different perspective on the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities. The survey questions were structured as similar as possible to the consumer survey to allow comparisons between the findings from the two surveys. In addition to being asked about service needs, providers were also asked about the availability of services. Almost 200 providers completed one or more survey questions (n=196).

Looking at the demand for services, the four services that ranked highest were career/job decision making and selection, life skills training, job search, and understanding the impact of consumers' work earnings on their government benefits. The services most available were job search, career/job decision-making and selection, and assistive technology. Looking at availability (or supply), the services that were perceived as having the tightest supply were housing, transportation, legal and advocacy, and life skills training.

When asked to identify unserved and underserved groups, providers most frequently indicated individuals with mental illness. This group was followed by young adults and youth-in-transition. Respondents mentioned people with cognitive and intellectual/developmental disabilities as the next unserved/underserved group. Providers made recommendations on how to better serve the unserved and underserved. These included: improve overall service provision; reduce case load sizes and increase counselors' knowledge of resources; improve education and outreach on services, including building community awareness; improve collaboration with other agencies; and address funding issues, especially increasing funding for services. Providers viewed the top four barriers to employment as transportation, followed by employer and social discrimination, assessing interests and choosing careers, and lack of consumer motivation.

Based on the above data concerning challenges to implementing best practices in Wyoming, the following barriers have been identified:

1. Lack of a state transition coordinator position at the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE)

- A designated leader is necessary to facilitate a collaborative working relationship between stakeholders at the state, community and school level.
- A designated leader could provide supports to local school districts.

A designated leader could develop effective marketing of the CoP Transition Plan and WDE Transition website for successful changes in transition. Marketing must be developed for the following:

- Students
- Parents
- School districts including administration, general educators and special education staff
- Service providers/agencies
- Postsecondary education/training programs (college and technical training institutions)
- Employers

2. Lack of quality training and resources for school district staff responsible for youth transition

- Currently individuals must travel out of state to attend transition training.
- The WDE website does not provide transition resources.

3. Lack of importance placed on transition service activities at the high school level for special education students

- Currently the focus is test scores and teacher accountability. Equal emphasis should be placed on developing self-determination and advocacy skills, independent living skills, employability skills, work experiences and community involvement.
- For a majority of students on IEPs, there is no consistent expectation of skills development other than academic standards.
- The current WDE IEP paperwork does not place transition outcomes at the beginning of the IEP. The students desired outcomes should come before the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.
- There is no consistent training/model used for educators to help students with disabilities develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities report: A Collaborative Interagency, Interdisciplinary Approach to Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood (May 2013) promotes four core concepts:

- ✓ Transition planning should include all the perspectives, disciplines, and organizations that will impact the transitioning youth.

- ✓ Self-determination should be the foundation for transition planning.
- ✓ Interagency collaboration is essential to effective transition.
- ✓ Transition should be viewed through a cultural lens.

4. Lack of organized interagency collaboration and interagency training

- An increased focus on interagency collaboration will be necessary to ensure student success.
 - A collaborative effort by WDE and the CoP Postsecondary Transition Group will be needed to lead and effect changes in the transition process among school districts and stakeholder agencies outside of education.
- There is a lack of school district and agency knowledge and understanding concerning how youth in transition will make application for and access:
 - Social Security
 - Child waiver to adult waiver services
 - Adult services without waiver services
 - DVR/employment services
 - Independent living services
 - Postsecondary education and training
 - Other community/agency services

5. Lack of an adequate longitudinal tracking system to track success rates of youth transition from school

- An effective longitudinal tracking system should include school districts, adult service agencies, colleges/training institutions, and employers. This would provide improved data on the success of youth transition. Wyoming is one of only two states, which lack such a tracking system; New Mexico is the other.

6. Limited mental health services available via waiver for emotional and mental health disabled youth in transition

- The Children's Mental Health Waiver includes mental health services until the age of 19. Those mental health services are less available on the adult waiver. The Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program can assist young adults on Medicaid. Under EPSDT, eligible children and youth are entitled to regular check-ups and full physical and mental health care from birth up to age 21. Young adults can access mental health services via the Community Mental Health Centers in the state, paying Copay on a sliding income-based scale, but it is not a waiver service. Mental health services available to adults through Community Mental Health Centers are: case management, clinical assessment, consultation, emergency services, medication management, recreation/socialization (for SPMI), rehabilitative services and therapy. Some centers provide optional services including day treatment; jail based treatment and re-entry, jail diversion, peer specialist services, group rehabilitative services, intensive individual rehabilitation, specialized services for older adults, and supported employment. In addition, some

centers fund housing options including group homes and supportive housing and crisis stabilization in 4 areas of the state.

- Expansion of Medicaid via the Affordable Care Act would make mental health services more available to those on Medicaid through the age of 26. However, that has not been done in Wyoming.

Recommendations

Through research the CoP Secondary to Postsecondary Transition identified three main areas on which to concentrate attention in order to improve the postsecondary transition process for students with disabilities. First, students must be provided with opportunities to develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Second, transition planning must focus on skill building and be linked to necessary adult services. Third, educational institutions and adult service providers must participate in meaningful partnerships to provide a network of appropriate services; meeting the needs of youth in transition increases successful outcomes when students enter the adult world.

Recommendations for addressing challenges in implementing best practices to support our students with disabilities as they transition from public education to career and adult life are listed below.

1. The first set of recommendations are directed at the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) and include the following:

- Staff a full time Transition Coordinator position at WDE whose responsibilities include providing technical assistance, regular communication and decision making to support student transition needs among identified stakeholders
- Staff a Webmaster position to update/maintain a postsecondary transition web page
- Establish a definition for “Highly qualified Transition Coordinator/Teacher” for LEA staffing purposes
- Establish expectations for high quality Transition IEPs and implementing these IEPs with fidelity
- Participate in development of a data based measure of quality outcomes for transitioned students based on longitudinal data collection
- Although 504 students are not considered in Special Education Services, develop a systematic method for ensuring their access to appropriate community adult services.
- Develop and implement policies that refocus special education to address broad based skill development and experiential learning opportunities in preparation for adult life.
- Develop meaningful value for the “*Certificate of Completion*” alternative to a diploma (Consider patterning it after the Career Readiness Certificate by identifying specific skills or skill categories)
- Share this Guidance Document and responsibility for its implementation with other education leaders and with related service agencies

2. This second set of recommendations relates to agencies, most especially to the formation of agency partnerships in order to more efficiently and effectively meets the needs of transitioning students.

- Implement service provision using the Community Wraparound Model through the establishment of formal and informal documented agreements
- Assume appropriate responsibility for implementation of this Guidance Document
- Develop and participate in longitudinal data collection across public school, postsecondary education, career training, and adult service providers
- Streamline service needs evaluations and application processes to allow multiple agency usage of documentation and reduce costs across agencies
- Provide routine training and information about services provided by agency partners and service providers to each agency, as well as other identified stakeholder groups
- Establish/continue Community of Practice groups to support implementation of long term goals and policy recommendations
- Implement the community wraparound model of service delivery
- Facilitate frequent and coordinated communication among partner agencies
- Provide routine and continuous training on transition needs and resources to community members and educators at all levels from school administration and school boards to para-educators.

Since students spend a substantial amount of their time in school, the schools have an excellent opportunity as well as an obligation to meet their postsecondary transition needs. Therefore, the next set of recommendations should be considered at the school district level.

- Invest in and train highly qualified transition coordinators/transition teachers
- Utilize self-determination and self-advocacy programming that is scientifically designed to provide valid evidence of progress in skill development from an early age through completion of public education
- Provide routine and continuous training on transition needs and resources to educators at all levels from school boards and school administration to para-educators and parents
- Develop and implement documented agreements between schools and adult service providers
- Recommend transition planning for students earlier than age 16 as appropriate
- Develop policy and practices that include and value student/family/community input in recognition of cultural diversity
- Develop policy and practices that place high value on adult living and career readiness skill development for students with disabilities
- Promote district wide practices that support experiential learning and understanding of the critical role that experiential learning plays in skill development
- Establish community wide, measurable opportunities for experiential learning for students with disabilities
- Emphasize development and implementation of high quality transition IEPs to reflect individualized student needs and appropriate service implementation

Parents and other family members play a critical role in assisting their students with postsecondary transition. At the same time navigating this process when the student has disabilities can prove especially confusing and frustrating. Therefore, the next set of recommendations addresses parents and families of youth with disabilities.

- Establish opportunities for all parents and those of culturally diverse backgrounds to form positive parent supports in the community
- Develop and support opportunities for experiential, community based learning and living for people with disabilities
- Participate in continuous training on transition needs and resources available in the community
- Place emphasis on development of self-determination, adult living skills and career readiness in the education of students with disabilities
- Establish appropriate expectations for your child and their future as adults early in their life

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Glossary of Terms

ABLE program (ABLE) - Adult based learning environment. This is a community-based transition program for students that have completed their high school experience, who have not taken a diploma and/or are not working towards a regular diploma, and who the IEP has determined have transition needs. It addresses community based instruction needs in all of the areas of transition including employment (including integrated employment and prevocational skills), community participation, postsecondary education, independent living skills and adult services based on the individual student needs through the IEP team process.

ADA-Americans with Disabilities Act- Refers to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. It also applies to the United States Congress. To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual with a disability. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

Adult Waiver- The Adult Developmental Disabilities (DD) Home and Community Based Waiver is intended to support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families so the individuals can remain in their home communities and learn skills that will assist them in becoming more independent. The Adult Waiver serves those participants who are 21 years of age or older. The Adult Waiver requires certain requirements in order to be successfully admitted onto the waiver.

Career Readiness Certificate – A National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success. The credential verifies the following skills: problem solving, critical thinking, reading and using work-related text, applying information from workplace documents to solve problems, applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems, setting up and performing work-related mathematical calculations, locating, synthesizing, and applying information that is presented graphically, comparing, summarizing, and analyzing information presented in multiple related graphics. The certificate can be earned by passing three ACT WorkKeys assessment: applied mathematics, locating information, reading for information. The WorkKeys assessment measures “real world skills that employers believe are critical to job success”.

Certificate of Completion -A **Certificate of Completion** is not an academic credential and there are no state course or grade requirements necessary to earn a certificate of completion. A student successfully working toward his/her IEP goals is generally eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion.

Children’s Mental Health Waiver- Children’s Mental Health Waiver is a Department of Health Medicaid program with a limited number of funding opportunities using High Fidelity Wraparound that aims to help children of Wyoming reduce their level of service needs and

increase their natural supports in a relatively short amount of time. It provides individualized services and support based on unique strengths and needs of children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. It utilizes a team and goal oriented process for success.

Child Waiver- The Child Developmental Disabilities Home and Community-Based Waiver allows for the provision of services that the regular state **Medicaid** plan will not cover for eligible children with developmental disabilities in Wyoming. The Child DD Waiver began in July 1992 and is administered by the Developmental Disabilities Division. Children ages birth through 20 years are eligible if they have been diagnosed with mental retardation or a related condition and meet the level of care for an ICF/MR. The goal of the waiver is to provide home and community based services that enable the child to stay in the local community rather than being institutionalized. The intent of the Waiver is to relieve pressures on families by assisting them in meeting the needs of their child with developmental disabilities

Community Wraparound Model- Many times children and their families have needs that cross agency boundaries. Therefore, interagency cooperation is an integral part of the Wraparound planning process. It is essential that all services are developed cooperatively and are coordinated. The interagency team shares responsibility, expertise, and mutual support while designing creative services that meet an individual's strengths and needs across home, school and community. A Wraparound Plan is continually reviewed and modified based on the child and family's developing strengths and evolving needs. Wraparound interventions are flexible because the approach is multi-faceted, taking all aspects of the child's history and current life situation into account. Wraparound is a dynamic process with core elements, not a program or service. This process is based on individualized, strength based, needs-driven planning and service delivery. Wraparound is not something that you 'get', it's something you 'do'; it's a process, not a program.

CoP-T -Community of Practice- A community of practice is formed by a group of people who engage in a process of collective learning and regular interaction in a shared domain. In this case, concern and desire to improve transition outcomes for students as they prepare to leave high school and enter the world of service and opportunity post-high school.

DVR-Division of Vocational Rehabilitation- A division of Wyoming Workforce Services Agency of Wyoming responsible for carrying out the mandates of The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Title V. The Act was put in place to correct the problem of discrimination against people with disabilities in the United States. Affirmative action programs were established in Title V, Sections 501, 502, 503, and 504. Individuals who qualify as having a disability have experienced discrimination both because of negative attitudes in regards to their ability to be an effective employee, as well as the physical barriers at work facilities. The Title V of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act requires private employers with federal contracts over \$2,500 to take affirmative action to hire individuals with a mental or physical disability. While this means that employers must make reasonable accommodations for disabled employees, it does not mean they must hire unqualified individuals. There are additional sections of the Act that provide vocational counseling, training assistance and job placement for individuals with severe disabilities.

EPSDT Program (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program) - EPSDT is the child health component of Medicaid. It is required in every state and is designed to improve the health of low-income children, by financing appropriate and necessary pediatric services.

IDEA Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004-The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the nation's federal special education law that ensures public schools serve the educational needs of students with disabilities. IDEA requires that schools provide special education services to eligible students as outlined in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). IDEA also provides very specific requirements to guarantee a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). FAPE and LRE are the protected rights of every eligible child, in all fifty states and U.S. territories.

IEP-Individualized Education Plan-The Individualized Education Program is a written document required for each child who is eligible to receive special education services. It is provided to a student who has been determined to have a disability and who needs special education services because of the disability.

Indicator 13- Indicator 13 is a percent of youth with IEP's aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of student who has reached the age of majority.

Indicator 14- Indicator 14 is the percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:

- Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.
- Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.
- Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

IL-Independent Living- A living arrangement that maximizes independence and self-determination, especially of disabled persons living in a community instead of in a medical facility. Also: A social movement asserting that people with disabilities should have the same civil rights and life choices as people without disabilities.

IPE- Individualized Plan for Employment- An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is the plan needed to reach the agreed upon work goal. It is the road map to your vocational rehabilitation. Information included on the IPE should include: A Work Goal. This should be a job that you are interested in doing and that you will be able to do when your plan is completed. It will take into account such things as your abilities, interest and work goal. Your VR counselor

can help you to look for a work goal that is right for you. Actions needed to reach your work goal and how long it will take you to complete them. A Progress Outline of how progress towards your work goal will be evaluated. A list of services that you will require to reach your work goal as well as a provider(s) who will provide the services you need to go to work.

Job Coach- A job coach is an approved specialist providing training to an employee. The job coach uses structured intervention techniques to help the employee-learn to perform job tasks to the employer's specifications and to learn the interpersonal skills necessary to be accepted as a worker at the job site and in related community contacts. In addition to job-site training, job coaching includes related assignment, job development, counseling, advocacy, travel training and other services needed to maintain the employment.

LEA-Local Education Agency (School District) - A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

Longitudinal data- A dataset is longitudinal if it tracks the same type of information on the same subjects at multiple points in time. The primary advantage of longitudinal databases is that they can measure change. So we can evaluate the effect of a specific policy by looking at student performance before as well as after the policy was introduced. Longitudinal data also allow us to use analytic strategies to measure the impact of various policies with reasonable precision.

Medicaid Waiver- The provision of the Social Security Act that authorizes the secretary of Health and Human Services to grant waivers of certain Medicaid statutory requirements so that a state may furnish home and community-based services to Medicaid beneficiaries who need a level of institutional care that is provided in a hospital, nursing facility or intermediate care facility for persons with intellectual disability (ICF/ID).

NCLB-No Child Left Behind Education Act- Is the current version of President Lyndon Johnson's *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), whose purpose was to raise achievement and close achievement gaps.

NSTTAC-National Secondary Transitions Technical Assistance Center. NSTTAC objectives include:

Assist State Education Agencies with collecting data on IDEA (2004) Part B State Performance Plan Indicator 13 and using these data to improve transition services; Generate knowledge that provides a foundation for states to improve transition services that enhance post-school outcomes; Build capacity of states and local educational agencies to implement effective transition education and services that improve post-school outcomes; and Disseminate information to state personnel, practitioners, researchers, parents, and students regarding effective transition education and services that improve post-school outcomes.

Postsecondary- Refers to a form of higher education beyond high-school. This could be community college, university, technical school.

Secondary Transition- Refers to the shift in planning and transition services for students to preparation for life after high school. In IDEA, the term 'transition services' means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: (A) "Is designed to be a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (B) Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests...."

Self-advocacy - Self-advocacy is enabling and empowering students to direct their own lives. Self-advocacy refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions.

Self-determination - Self-determination refers to a characteristic of a person that leads them to make choices, and decisions based on their own preferences and interests, to monitor and regulate their own actions and to be goal-oriented and self-direction.

SILC-State Independent Living Council- The Wyoming Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) was established under the authority of Title VII Section 705, of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act as amended (P.L. 102-569). The SILC's primary purpose, together with the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), is to jointly develop, and sign the State's Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). Additionally, monitor, review, and evaluate the implementation of the SPIL. The SILC work with two centers for Independent Living (CIL's); and the Brain Injury Association of Wyoming (BIAW) concerning different independent living issues that affects the citizens of Wyoming living with significant disabilities. The SILC philosophy states, "We believe and support the independent living philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy, in order to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities and the integration and full inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream of American society."

SPMI - Serious and Persistent Mental Illness

SSI-Social Security Insurance- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a Federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes): It is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income, and it provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter

Supported employment- Rehabilitation Act Section 7(35) Supported employment

(A) In general The term "supported employment" means competitive work in integrated work settings, or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive work, consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals, for individuals with the most significant disabilities--

(i)(I) for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred; or

(II) for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and

(ii) who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services for the period, and any extension, described in paragraph (36)(C) and extended services after the transition described in paragraph (13)(C) in order to perform such work.

(B) Certain transitional employment

Such term includes transitional employment for persons who are individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness.

Transition specialist- The Council for Exceptional Children defines Transition Specialist as: An individual, who plans, coordinates, delivers, and evaluates transition education and services at the school or system level, in conjunction with other educators, families, students, and representatives of community organizations.

WDE-Wyoming Department of Education- The Wyoming Department of Education is the state education agency of Wyoming. It is headquartered at the Hathaway Building in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

WIND- The Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) is a member of the national network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). WIND works to assist individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, professionals, and University of Wyoming students through education, training, community services, and early intervention.

504 students-(Section 504)- Section 504 is a part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination based upon disability. Section 504 is an anti-discrimination, civil rights statute that requires the needs of students with disabilities to be met as adequately as the needs of the non-disabled are met. Further, **Section 504 states that:** “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in section 706(8) of this title, shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...” [29 U.S.C. §794(a), 34 C.F.R. §104.4(a)].