Title: Characteristics of Students Who Do and Do Not Receive Transition Services

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Introduction: Under IDEA, all students with disabilities, aged 16-18, receiving services should have transition plans and receive transition services. However, schools are often not in compliance with providing transition services, possibly providing transition planning only in the later years (Landmark & Zhang, 2013). Yet, early transition-planning produces better post-school outcomes in postsecondary education, independent living, and employment (Johnson et al., 2002). In this study, we compared the characteristics of students with disabilities who did versus did not receive transition services. We address the following questions: (1) What percentage of students 16-18 years receive transition services? (2) What is the relation between maladaptive behavior, level of functioning, age, and type of school on the receipt of transition services?

Method: From a national, web-based parent survey, we examined a subgroup of students, ages of 16 through 18 (N = 189). Parent respondents were mostly White, well-educated, and married mothers. Children were mostly males with ID, Autism, and LD. In addition to providing their child’s age, gender, and diagnosis (more than one of 15 diagnostic categories could be checked), parents were asked to provide their child’s current school placement, whether the child received any of 14 different services (including transition services; Summer et al., 2007), the child’s level of adaptive behavior (from performance on 15 adaptive items); and degree of maladaptive behavior (using the Scales of Independent Behavior—Revised; Bruininks, Woodcock, Weatherman, & Hill, 1996). We then analyzed each variable both independently and in a logistic regression to determine which student characteristics predicted the student receiving transition services.

Results: Even though 100% of students 16-18 years should receive some type of transition service only 54% of parents reported that their child received transition services. Only 30% of students who were reported to have high adaptive scores received transition services, compared to 59% of students reported to have low adaptive scores $\chi^2$(df=1, N=189) =9.013, p=.003. Students who did not receive transition services were reported to have significantly less severe behavior problems $\chi^2$ (df=1, N=189) =6.81, p=.009. After conducting a logistic regression, we found that students who were reported to have more problem behavior are twice as likely to receive transition services than those with no problem behavior. Students who were reported to have high adaptive scores are 1/3 less likely to receive transition services than those reported to have low adaptive scores.

Discussion: Although all students with disabilities should be receiving transition services, those who report higher adaptive scores, with less severe behavior problems, are less often receiving transition services. Professionals and practitioners need to ensure that all students receive the support they need through transition services to improve their post-school outcomes. These students might benefit from even a minimal amount of support. These results have implications for improving policies and practice for implementation of transition planning and provision of services for self-advocates, practitioners, service providers, families, and school personnel.

References/Citations: