

*Supported Employment:
What Students, Families, and
Transition Specialists Need to Know*

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What did we want to find out?

1. What skills do transitioning young adults with intellectual and other severe disabilities need to acquire in order to be successful in adult agencies that provide supported employment?
2. What do families and special educators need to know about CRP recruitment and eligibility policies?
3. What kinds of vocational assessment and work experiences are most crucial for being successful in community or supported employment?
4. What suggestions do CRPs have for families and educators that would improve the transition from school to programs that support adults with significant disabilities?

Why is this important?

- Limited empirical evidence indicating which educational or transition practices lead to supported employment as a postsecondary outcome for individuals with intellectual and other severe disabilities (Inge & Moon, 2006)
- Youth with intellectual and other severe disabilities typically receive long-term supports from a Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)
- CRPs that provide supported employment services are evolving and different providers often different types of services

How did we do it?

- Administered questionnaire to 12 CRPs in Maryland that provide an array of services (supported employment, enclave, sheltered work)
- Interviews were conducted at site with a person with knowledge of supported employment services.

The Questionnaire

- *Demographic Information*
- *Checklist of 59 skills; Participants rated from 1 to 3 with “1” being most critical and “3” being not critical to successful supported employment.*
- *Open-ended questions*

Sample Questionnaire Items

What skills do transitioning young adults with intellectual and other severe disabilities need to acquire in order to be successful in adult agencies that provide supported employment?

Please rank the following skills in terms of importance for successful supported employment (1= critically important, 2= helps but is not critical, 3= does not make a difference):

- _____ Can problem solve or use ID if lost
- _____ Can express work preferences
- _____ Has acceptable hygiene habits

Sample Questionnaire Items

What do families and special educators need to know about CRP recruitment and eligibility?

1. Describe the process your agency uses to recruit and accept clients.
2. What funding sources are necessary for accepting clients?

Sample Questionnaire Items

What kinds of vocational assessment and work experiences are most crucial for being successful in community or supported employment?

9b. Does the type or amount of unpaid job experiences matter?

11. Is it important for you to know the employment interests and preferences of transitioning youth who apply to your agency?

Sample Questionnaire Items

What suggestions do you have for families and educators that would improve the transition from school to programs that support adults with significant disabilities?

24. What would you like students with disabilities and their families to understand about services your agency provides?
25. What would you like secondary special educators or transition specialists to understand about services your agency provides? How do you see their role in the process?

Skill Domains in Order of Perceived Importance

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Mean Rating on 3-Point Scale^a</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Self-Management (SM)	1.51	1
Social/Self-Determination/ Communication (SSDC)	1.54	2
General Community Functioning (GCF)	1.78	3
Vocational (V)	1.78	3
Academic (A)	2.04	4
Recreation (R)	2.42	5

Note. SM=Self-Management, SSDC= Social/Self-Determination/Communication, GCF= General Community Functioning, V= Vocational, A= Academic, R= Recreation
a1= critically important, 2= helps but is not critical, 3= does not make a difference

Most Critical Answers by Research Question

What do families and special educators need to know about CRP recruitment and eligibility policies?

Recruitment

- CRPs accept long-term DDA funding (100%)
- VR funding is not critical (100%)
- CRPs receive IEPs from schools (100%)
- CRPs would participate in IEPs if invited (100%)
- CRPs are unaware of Summary of Performance (100%)

Eligibility

- Paid work experience not essential to acceptance (100%)
- Paid work experience impacts initial program placement (83.33%)
- Parents have unrealistic expectations (58.33%)
- Poor behavior or hygiene can prohibit youth from receiving services (41.67%)

Most Critical Answers by Research Question

What kinds of vocational assessment and work experiences are most crucial for being successful in community or supported employment?

Assessment

- CRPs want to know vocational interests and preferences (83.33%)
- CRPs do not know vocational preferences of transitioning youth (75%)
- CRPs do not receive resumes/portfolios/relevant vocational info (75%)
- CRPs do not usually use formal assessments (75%)
- Families usually report preferences more than students (58.33%)

Work Experiences

- If transitioning youth has paid job, CRPs would maintain it (100%)
- Transportation logistics are important to maintaining employment (100%)
- CRPs do not value stipend positions (25%)

Most Critical Answers by Research Question

What suggestions do you have for families and educators that would improve the transition from school to programs that support adults with intellectual and other severe disabilities?

Families

- Understand scope of services of CRPs (100%)
- Understand age of majority; roles change when youth enter the adult system (33.33%)
- Know the difference between subsidized work in schools and paid employment (25%)

Educators

- Prepare families for transition (100%)
- Provide authentic, realistic information about transitioning youth (83.33%)

Suggestions for Students & Families Based on findings

- Must have DDA/Medicaid Waiver funding
- Visit the agencies and ask questions about the scope of services and the job development process
- Make sure IEP goals reflect real-life post-school needs and includes community based instruction
- Understand *community* or *supported employment* may not be individualized
- Learn about the roles of various personnel in state and community agencies
- If individual community placements are the goal- fade support in final school years

Suggestions for Teachers

Based on findings

- Educate/empower families to understand the adult system (including vocabulary, timelines, scope of services, and limitations)
- If individual community placements are the goal- fade support in final school years
- Take the time to get to know each family's unique strengths, needs and goals for their student. Use person-centered planning approaches.

Bottom line...

- Teachers and parents need to understand that the parental role after special education is different
 - Eligibility vs. Entitlement!!!
- It is important to understand the scope of services that CRPs can provide
- If supported employment is the goal, students, families, and teachers should systematically try to teach the most essential skills.

Limitations and “Next Steps”

- This study used a small sample of CRPs. Future research should replicate this study with a larger sample.
- There is a need for clarifying the use of “supported employment” across CRPs