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Postsecondary Education And Training Preparation Toolkit

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Acknowledgments

The Toolkit resources developed by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) are intended to reflect the best knowledge and comprehensive information the field has identified on a topic. Each Toolkit offers a variety of resources and perspectives on a topic in one location. The Postsecondary Education and Training Preparation Toolkit was originally developed in collaboration with National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) Content Advisory Resource Expert (CARE) Team and others in the field with knowledge on this topic. Contributors included Loujeania Baker, Ellen Cushing, Elizabeth Getzel, Debra Hart, Sam Johnston, Kyle Reardon, Stephan Smith, Skip Stahl, and Martha Thurlow. NTACT:C staff updated the toolkit in 2023.

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Introduction

Welcome to the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative's (NTACT:C) *Postsecondary Education and Training Preparation Toolkit*. NTACT:C assists state education and vocational rehabilitation agencies in implementing programs and practices that increase the percentage of students with disabilities (a) accessing and succeeding in rigorous academic coursework and (b) accessing and succeeding in career-related curricula designed to prepare them for success in postsecondary education, training, and credential attainment. To this end, the *Postsecondary Education and Training (PSET) Preparation Toolkit* is a compilation of effective practices in this area.

The Toolkit explains the array of PSET options for young adults with disabilities after they complete high school. Just as there is a wide range of skills and needs demonstrated by individuals with disabilities, there is an array of opportunities, services, and programs in PSET settings. Hence, this Toolkit is intended as a resource for any student with a disability, family member, service provider, or educator of a student with a disability, to consider options and plan for PSET access and success. Surrounding the topic of PSET preparation are laws regarding access and supports, financial considerations, as well as varied purposes for participating in postsecondary education. Because of the wide breadth of this topic, the Toolkit's organization:

- poses questions a user might ask regarding the broad topic of PSET for students with disabilities, with more specific questions to go deeper into a topic; and
- allows a user to dig deeper into specific topical areas by linking to additional resources which may come from outside of NTACT:C's website or resources.

Regarding the required Pre-Employment Transition Service of counseling on postsecondary education opportunities as authorized through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, please see specific information under Pre-Employment Transition Services at www.transitionta.org, or connect with the Rehabilitation Services Administration – in tandem with this Toolkit. NTACT:C partnered with experts in the field of transition planning, graduation, school completion, and postsecondary education and training for students with disabilities to provide a broad compendium of information.

This Toolkit, like other Toolkits at www.transitionta.org, is dynamic in nature and as such, will continue to grow as NTACT:C further identifies and develops resources and tools useful in the implementation of effective practices specific to access and success in PSET for students with disabilities. Finally, there are numerous live links to resources on NTACT:C's website and other internet resources within the Toolkit; as a result, it functions best if you take a moment to create your login at www.transitionta.org, to access all of the resources available.

Section I: Rationale

WHAT ARE THE DATA REGARDING PSET ENROLLMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?

More individuals with and without disabilities enroll in college today than 20 years ago. According to data from the National Center on Education Statistics (2016), there was a 42% increase in college enrollment in the United States from 1998 to 2012. In fall of 2020, which is the first year that fall enrollment may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States was 15.9 million students, a decrease by 9% since 2009. In contrast, total undergraduate enrollment is projected to increase by 8 percent (from 15.9 million to 17.1 million students) between 2020 and 2030.

The same report indicated the largest segment of that growth was for individuals ages 18 to 24. Additionally, Hispanic students showed the largest growth in college enrollment; all racial/ethnic groups showed a decrease in enrollment in 2020. Between 2009 and 2020, enrollment increased by 10 percent at 4-year institutions while enrollment decreased by 35 percent at 2-year institutions. However, between 2020 and 2030, undergraduate enrollment in 4-year institutions is projected to increase by 3 percent while enrollment in 2-year institutions is projected to increase by 19 percent Finally, the report projects Associate's degrees to be conferred at more than double the rate of Bachelor's degrees through 2023. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education summarized data from five data sets (US DOE, 2017) and concluded that 11% of undergraduates are students with disabilities. The report included detailed tables regarding various disability groups, services, and their outcomes.

- In terms of college students with disabilities requesting and receiving accommodations, a new report in 2022 from the National Center for

> Education Statistics reveals that only about one-third of students with disabilities inform their college of their disability. The majority of students with disabilities who enrolled in college went to a 4-year institution. Sixty-nine percent of students with disabilities went to 4-year colleges and 28 percent went to 2-year colleges, and only between 12 and 13 percent informed their institutions of their current disabilities and need for accommodations.

With changes to the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA, 2008), enrollment in postsecondary education by students with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities has also increased in the last decade. Students with intellectual disabilities may receive funding from the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and Federal Work-Study programs. In 2016, of the 4,700 degree granting institutions in the United States, only 263 offered programs for students with intellectual disabilities (Glatter, 2017). However, this was a 77% increase in institutions with programming for this specific population over nine years (Glatter, 2017). By 2022, that number had increased to 314 (ThinkCollege.net) and represents a combination of Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Programs (students have exited their local education agencies and no longer receive IDEA services) and College-Based Transition Services (CBTS) programs (students are aged 18-21 and still receiving IDEA services by their local education agency).

Since 2006, state education agencies have been required to report data regarding the enrollment in postsecondary education of former students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) one year after exiting high school. Since a common measure for this reporting was put in place in 2009, median enrollment has fluctuated between 26% and 29% of potential exiters enrolled.

According to a U.S. Department of Education report (2016), there is a 60% completion rate for all first-time students at four-year colleges and universities and approximately 30% at two-year colleges. Statistics for students with disabilities enrolling and then obtaining a degree are more discouraging. The National Center for Education Statistics (2009) found 29% of individuals with disabilities (up to 8 years out of high school) graduated from a 4-year institution compared to 59% of students without disabilities (6-year graduation rate). However, more recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), indicate 16.4% of individuals with a disability earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 34.6% of those without a disability. It should be noted that even in the absence of earning diplomas, individuals enrolled in postsecondary education are more likely to find jobs that pay better wages compared to their peers who did not have any postsecondary education experiences

(Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003; Leonhardt, 2011; Marcotte, et al., 2005). Findings show that youth who exited the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program after receiving postsecondary education services reported higher weekly wages compared to their peers who did not receive any postsecondary education services (Gilmore et al., 2001; Migliore et al., 2009).

Data regarding participation in training programs or non-traditional learning beyond high school are unclear. States report annually regarding student engagement in "some other postsecondary education or training"; however, disaggregation of these data for specific types of programs or descriptive information is not available at the national level. A recent examination by the National Center on Education Statistics (2018) includes data on enrollment and completion of non-degree credentialing programs. While 45% of working adults report a postsecondary degree, 58% of working adults report having either a postsecondary degree or some postsecondary work credential, including an occupational certificate or license. There are recent trends toward earning badges and micro-credentials that represent very specific skill development for employers, but very little data on access for people with disabilities.

WHAT ARE THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS OR PROTECTIONS RELATED TO ACCESSING PSET?

One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, also known as IDEA, is to ensure all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. [34 CFR 300.1(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1400(d)(1)(A)]. In IDEA 2004, Congress added "further education" as a purpose of the law, establishing a new expected outcome of special education.

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs began tracking this performance through the State Performance Plan data submitted annually. Within this process, States report on the percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school and were: "(a) enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school, (b) enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school, or (c) enrolled in higher education or some other postsecondary education or training program...within one year of leaving high school" (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(B)). "Enrolled in higher education" means youth have been enrolled on a full- or part-time basis in a community college (2-year program) or college/university

(4- or more year program) for at least one complete term according to the SPP Indicators for State Improvement. Another requirement of IDEA (2004) is that upon exit from high school, a student with a disability must be provided "with a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance and recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals" (IDEA Regulations 34 C.F.R. §300.305(e)(3). While the Summary of Performance (SOP) document is not a required precursor to PSET participation, it is intended to assist students, in part, as they link to postsecondary education service providers.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (P.L. 110-315) (HEOA) was enacted on August 14, 2008 and reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (the HEA). The HEOA created opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities in postsecondary settings by:

1. Creating eligibility for Federal Financial Aid by waiving certain criteria (e.g. regular high school diploma) including:
    - Pell Grants
    - Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants
    - Federal Work-Study Program
2. Funding the Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID), which provides grants to institutions of higher education or consortia of institutions of higher education to enable them to create or expand high quality, inclusive model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities.
3. Providing a Coordinating Center designed to coordinate model programs and provide technical assistance, evaluation, and develop accreditation standards for postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities.
4. Establishing the National Center Dissemination center to provide support services for all students with disabilities, including students with intellectual disabilities.

Additionally, the HEOA provided a statutory definition of Universal Design for Learning, addressing accessibility of content at institutes for higher education.

While the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (2014) did not affect access to postsecondary education by students with disabilities, one of the five required pre-employment transition services of the act is relevant to the topic. *The preamble to the final regulations explain that*

> "counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education in a group setting may include information on course offerings, career options, the types of academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace, and postsecondary opportunities associated with career fields or pathways. This information may also be provided on an individual basis and may include advising students and parents or representatives on academic curricula, college application and admissions processes, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and resources that may be used to support individual student success in education and training, which could include disability support services." (Final VR Regulations at 81 FR 55683,55694-55695, August 19, 2016).

This provision in the Act suggests an opportunity for VR and educators to each have roles in preparing students with disabilities to plan for success in postsecondary education and training (PSET).

Section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), requires each State to adopt the same challenging academic content standards and aligned academic achievement standards for all public schools and public school students in the State, and on November 16, 2015, the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, issued a *Dear Colleague Letter* to clarify "that an individualized education program (IEP) for an eligible child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be aligned with the State's academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled," further ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, are held to rigorous academic standards and high expectations.

While not required by federal legislation, many states have developed definitions of college and career ready over the last decade that are framing the national conversation regarding postsecondary education expectations for all students, including students with disabilities. A variety of resources in this area were organized through the previously funded Comprehensive Center for College and Career Readiness and Success and now maintained through the American Institutes for Research. According to a 2016 analysis of states' work to define college readiness, definitions included such skills as academic knowledge, critical thinking, collaborative traits, resilience, and community involvement (English, et al., 2016). As a result, the environment is ripe with possibilities for all students to succeed through

additional education beyond high school. The resources in the remaining sections of the *Postsecondary Education and Training Preparation Toolkit* can help more students and their IEP teams plan for PSET success.

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Section II: What is Postsecondary Education and Training?

WHAT TYPES OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (PSET) ARE AVAILABLE?

Many states and local districts have focused attention in the last several years on "college" readiness. Within those discussions, college readiness may be defined as having "attained the knowledge, skills, and disposition needed to succeed in credit-bearing (non-remedial) postsecondary coursework or a workforce training program in order to earn the credentials necessary to qualify for a meaningful career aligned to his or her goals and offering a competitive salary" (National Forum on Education Statistics, 2015). A framework for college and career readiness (Morningstar et al., 2015) expanded on this definition and other research on the topic for students with disabilities.

As noted in Section I, OSEP provides definitions for "postsecondary education" and "other" PSET. In A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities

4-YEAR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

- Bachelor's degree granting program with or without registration with the office of disability services
- Bachelor's degree granting program through a specialized program for students with disabilities
- Non-degree granting, certificate program for students with ID included within all components of a 4-year college/ university
- Non-degree granting, certificate program located at 4-year college/ university

2-YEAR COLLEGE

- Associate's degree granting program
- Non-degree granting, certificate program for students with ID included within all components of a 2-year college
- Non-degree granting, certificate program located at 2-year college

OTHER PSET OPTIONS

- Non-degree or certification program for students with disabilities located in the setting of a 2- or 4-year college/ university
- 13th year Bridge Programs (usually during last year of high school or semester/ summer before beginning postsecondary education)
- Vocational or technical programs/schools
- Adult education and continuing education programs
- Life skills programs in higher education settings
- Apprenticeship programs
- Employer-provided job-training programs
- Pre-apprenticeship programs (e.g. Job Corps)

Within these definitions are numerous types of programs. Below is a list with some common characteristics.

See Section VII of the PSET Preparation Toolkit for additional guidance regarding the various types of programs available after high school.

Many states have developed their own guidance to navigating the various options for PSET for all students. For example, see:

Florida's Project 10 Guidance on Postsecondary Options – This website provides various guidance documents to assist students and families as they plan.

Minnesota's Guide to Postsecondary Enrollment Options This guide provides definitions, eligibility information, and planning documents for students and families as they plan. Minnesota also established the Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium and has a resource website at https://transitionta.org/postsecondary-education-training-prep/.

Next Steps New Hampshire - This website provides resources on college, apprenticeship, and trade school options and planning resources for New Hampshire students. It includes resources regarding the roles of vocational rehabilitation services, as well as tips on important skills to develop in preparing for postsecondary education and training.

North Carolina's Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability – This document provides a list and basic information on the PSET programs in North Carolina for college-age students with intellectual disabilities.

Get Ready for College: A Resource for Teens with Disabilities – This virtual course for high school students interested in college may satisfy virtual credits toward a Virginia diploma, but is relevant for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities in any state. While self-paced, it is recommended that course completion be facilitated.

Wisconsin's Opening Doors to Postsecondary Education and Training Handbook – This handbook is intended to assist students and families in Wisconsin (and other states) with their plans for postsecondary learning.

Maryland's Hub for Inclusive Higher Education offers resources and background on programming for inclusive higher education, featuring their program at the University of Maryland College Park.

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN PSET?

Services available to support young adults with disabilities in PSET are as varied as the programs. However, there are some generally accepted types of support that may assist an individual as they plan including (a) basic, (b) coordinated, and (c) comprehensive services. Traditionally these may be services available to students pursuing an associates or bachelor's degree, whether online or in a traditional campus setting, or other vocational certification, without modifications.

BASIC

- Most colleges and universities fall into this category
- Supports (i.e., accommodations) offered are the minimum necessary to comply with the law – frequently may include extended time or separate test location, use of speech to text supports, note-taking, technologies for students with physical or sensory disabilities
- Services are coordinated through a disability services office

- Most appropriate for students who are effective self-advocates and who are independent
- Overview of Legal Obligations for Accessibility (from CAST)

COORDINATED

- Often inform faculty of student's needed accommodations, but students will also need to be moderately active self-advocates
- Offer a "Learning Center" (or similarly named program) with additional services for students with disabilities
- Offer a disability specialist and professionals with some specific experience and training with specific learning disabilities (most common)
- "Learning Center" will usually operate on a drop-in basis with part-time staff and peer tutors who may be undergraduate or graduate students. There is not necessarily a single service provider who will work with the same students routinely.
- May provide group workshops to assist students with learning strategies, advocacy training, note- or test-taking skills, managing stress
- No additional cost for services
- May offer such as accommodations as organizational supports, course substitutions, pre-enrollment preparation

COMPREHENSIVE

- Offers most support and may be a program designed for students with a specific disability, such as autism or specific learning disability
- May have separate admissions process from the college or university
- Will employ several learning specialists, as well as peer tutors in some cases

- Provide an assigned advisor with whom the student will meet on a regularly scheduled basis
- Usually require student-driven development of a support plan (a contractual agreement) with program staff
- Greater opportunity for 1:1 attention and support and usually paired with the same tutors consistently
- Often a fee is involved for this level of service; though students may wean themselves to less structured, coordinated services
- Assistive technology is readily available
- May require participation in specific classes, workshops, or organizations
- Writing and math labs are typically available to all students
- Additional services may include monitoring grades, classes taught at the program office, counseling

Many colleges and universities (including online degree programs) provide supports for all freshmen -such as freshman transition programs - which may include writing instruction, study skills, and campus/resource orientation. Additionally, most colleges have writing and math centers available to all students at no charge. It is important for an applicant to become familiar with the supports offered for free through a college's disability supports services and those which may require additional fees. In Section VII of this Toolkit, view an example of a planning tool a student and their IEP team might use to assess the levels of support available in different PSET programs being considered.

Students, parents, school counselors, teachers, or transition coordinators should also consult the National Database, assembled by the National Center for College Students with Disabilities (Avellone & Scott, 2017) and the college or university disability services offices directly for the most accurate information. Additionally, VR can assist a high school student or college student as they plan for accommodations they may need to access in any PSET program, as an important step toward employment.

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Section III: What skills do students need to succeed?

WHAT ACADEMIC SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS IN COLLEGE OR TRAINING AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

Students need to be fluent readers with proficient comprehension skills, have a mastery of written language, and be able to apply math content knowledge to a variety of scenarios to be academically successful in college. Data from the 2017 Condition of College and Career Readiness National Report published by ACT indicated only 27% of all students tested met all four college and career readiness standards (I.e., English, Math, Reading, and Science). Other skills, named by Morningstar et al. (2015) as "academic engagement" include ability to link factual knowledge and organize concepts across content areas, as well as behaviors such as attendance, productivity, and class participation. Additionally, these authors also named "critical thinking" skills such as hypothesizing solutions and collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing various kinds of data as important academic skills for success in college and careers.

Basic, and certainly coordinated and comprehensive disability services, typically address these skills once students are on campus. However, it is still important that high school special education teachers and IEP teams also ensure the development and mastery of these academic skills for students planning to attend postsecondary education or training beyond high school. There are a number of resources that talk about levels of academic skills and explore effective practices to teach academic skills to students with disabilities:
Linking High School Curricula to Postschool Outcomes,
Resources for Students with Disabilities
How Do You Know Students are College and Career Ready?

WHAT "NON-ACADEMIC" SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT FOR COLLEGE READINESS AND SUCCESS?

Based on research to determine the construct validity of a measure of college and career readiness for students with and without disabilities, the College and Career Readiness for Transition (CCR4T), Lombardi et al. (2023) identified four domains that include skills deemed as academic and non-academic. The domains are Academic Engagement and Processes, Interpersonal Engagement, Ownership of Learning, and Career Development. The skills associated with each domain include processes

for learning academic and transition-related content and application such as active engagement in classroom instruction, critical thinking, sense of belonging, test taking, self-determination, and activities that support competencies in postsecondary education, employment, and community engagement. For the most current information visit the CCR4T website. The table below includes information about the types of skills associated with each domain.

Academic Engagement and Processes	Ownership of learning
• Homework completions • Attendance • Making connections across content and courses • Critical thinking skills	• Growth mindset • Self-determination skills • Working with others to solve problems • Taking risks and understanding consequences
Interpersonal Engagement	**Career Development**
• Social skills and the ability to interact with others • Adaptability across environments • Collaboration with peers • Sense of belonging	• Engagement in transition-related activities that facilitate career planning • Development of graduation plans • Career exploration • Financial literacy

Measuring and identifying students' strengths and needs in these academic and non-academic skill areas should be part of PSET preparation. Collecting these data should be documented as part of the transition assessment process. Transition services for specific instruction to address specific skill deficits would be appropriate. Additionally, the student's SOP could denote strengths and needs in these areas, which could assist a young person in communicating to VR, disability services, or even a tutor about the supports that might benefit their performance in college. A skills and behavior assessment would also be beneficial.

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Section IV: How can students with disabilities plan to access postsecondary education and training?

ARE THE LAWS FOR K-12 EDUCATION DIFFERENT THAN FOR PSET AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

All states provide a free, public education to all students with disabilities until graduation or at least to age 21. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures that both private and government-funded postsecondary programs must be accessible to individuals with disabilities; however, there are no direct services or funding for students with disabilities in conjunction with the ADA. This document, explaining Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act provides clarity regarding admissions and accessibility into PSET. Additionally this chart delineates the differences between K12 and postsecondary education. It is important to highlight the differences between academic accommodations and modifications, as discussed in the linked chart. In K-12 education under IDEA, students with disabilities may be entitled to both accommodations, which are alterations of environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows a student to gain access to the curricular content, as well as modifications, which are changes in the curriculum that may be made for students who are unable to comprehend all of the curricular content as identified in their IEP. However, only accommodations may be used in (a) state assessments of academic progress, (b) college entrance exams, and (c) college coursework, in pursuit of a terminal degree.

Colleges have different mechanisms for providing accommodations to which students with disabilities may be entitled, and these services may include student accessibilities offices, writing centers, learning labs, and/or academic coaching centers. It is important to note that in all cases, students must independently access – and keep accessing – these services in order to receive their accommodations. Whereas, under IDEA, teachers and schools are obligated to ensure that each student is receiving their accommodations and modifications, ADA simply states colleges must make these services available. This highlights the importance of self-advocacy skills, as students will need to advocate for what they need and ensure they are accessing the services and supports to allow them to be successful. Providing self-advocacy instruction is another area where either educators or VR service providers may play an important role in preparing students. This instruction may occur as a collaborative effort between schools and VR, or it may occur independently. It is critical students are prepared to advocate for themselves. For

more detailed guidance on how VR, specifically, may support these skills, view #5 in the Transition Services section of the Competitive Integrated Employment Toolkit

WHAT DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT OR DIFFERENT PROGRAMS?

Just as the laws that govern access to services change from secondary to postsecondary education, the documentation needed to access services in those programs change. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) provides guidance on applying for college and the information an applicant may be expected to provide in order to access supports as a student with a disability. Because each institution may require slightly different types of documentation regarding an individual's disability and support needs, it is important for a student, with support of their family and IEP team, to gather information from a specific institution. As noted in the OCR guide,

> "Institutions may set their own requirements for documentation so long as they are reasonable and comply with Section 504 and Title II. It is not uncommon for documentation standards to vary from institution to institution; thus, students with disabilities should research documentation standards at those institutions that interest them. A student must provide documentation, upon request, that he or she has a disability, that is, an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity and that supports the need for an academic adjustment. The documentation should identify how a student's ability to function is limited as a result of the disability. The primary purpose of the documentation is to establish a disability in order to help the institution work interactively with the student to identify appropriate services. The focus should be on whether the information adequately documents the existence of a current disability and need for an academic adjustment." (FAQ Question 7, OCR, 2011, retrieved Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators).

Entrance requirements for individual PSET programs vary widely and each must be reviewed by any student planning to apply. College entrance exams such as the SAT® or the *American College Test (ACT)*, specific coursework (e.g., number of math courses, foreign language), essays, or interviews are likely required components of the admissions requirements for a 4-year college/university. However, not all colleges/universities require these components. It is critical for a student and family to be informed regarding both the state's graduation requirements, as well as the

specific entrance requirements of possible PSET programs for themselves or their child early in their high school career. The College Navigator from the U.S. Department of Education and a student's school counselor are reliable sources for this information. Specifically for students with disabilities, a student's counselor, special education teacher, or transition coordinator, and the National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) provide a wealth of resources for future college students, and specifically highlights this Tips for Campus Visits from HBCU Disability Consortium. Additionally, it is important that students and their IEP teams understand how to use accommodations in the assessment process and what documentation may be required to access accommodations on certain types of assessments that may be components of the admission requirements for a program.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING NECESSARY TESTING TO DOCUMENT THE EXISTENCE OF A DISABILITY?

Currently, the student and family have the responsibility of obtaining documentation of the existence of a disability. Institutions of postsecondary education are not required to conduct or pay for an evaluation to document a student's disability and need for an academic adjustment, although some institutions do so. An IEP team may determine that evaluations are necessary as part of a student's re-evaluation for services, though are not required to do so under IDEA (2004). It may also be appropriate for a student to be evaluated for eligibility for VR services, which might be another source of documentation needed for PSET supports and an excellent opportunity to collaborate among the student, family, school, and VR to plan for the student's successful future.

Another useful tool at this juncture of planning, is a student's Summary of Performance (SOP). In addition, a student receiving services under Part B of the IDEA must be provided with a summary of his or her academic achievements and functional performance that includes recommendations on how to assist in meeting the student's postsecondary goals. This summary may provide helpful information about disability and the need for an academic adjustment (IDEA Regulations 34 C.F.R. §300.305(e)(3)). In fact, the SOP may be the most current documentation of disability and support needs available to students preparing to go to college (Shaw et al., 2010). However, reviews of practice indicate that not all states or local districts complete the SOP in a manner that is useful for college or employment planning (Shaw et al., 2010). While the SOP holds promise, if executed well, this same review of practice noted that some disability support service offices do not want to accept the SOP because they do not want to be "subject to IDEA" (p. 146) and did not feel

the SOP would be "helpful or objective enough to support documentation decisions" (p. 146).

IS A STUDENT'S MOST RECENT INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) OR SECTION 504 PLAN SUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT THE EXISTENCE OF A DISABILITY AND THE NEED FOR AN ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT IN A POSTSECONDARY SETTING?

Though an IEP or Section 504 plan may help identify services that have been used by the student in the past, they generally are not sufficient documentation to support the existence of a current disability and need for an academic adjustment from an institution of postsecondary education. Assessment information and other material used to develop an IEP or Section 504 plan may be helpful to document a current disability or the need for an academic adjustment or auxiliary aids and services. Almost all colleges and universities will require current evaluation results, confirming a student's diagnosis of a disability and needed or recommended accommodations, associated with the disability for services to be provided. The RISE Act of 2021, if passed, would improve the process for students who qualify for disability services by requiring colleges to accept a wider variety of forms of documentation, such as an IEP, 504 plan, doctor's note, or an evaluation by a psychologist. Current practices are considered restrictive due to many colleges only accepting certain documentation, which can involve costly out-of-pocket payments by students for new evaluations.

Documentation of a disability, including current evaluation data, is also necessary for students or young adults to be provided accommodations through employer-based training programs. VR agencies are excellent resources for navigating and assisting young adults who are seeking postsecondary training with an employer or through a non-traditional or non-degree program. Additionally, Centers for Independent Living (CIL) are good resources to assist in transition planning to access and enroll in postsecondary training programs focused skills for navigating and engaging in one's community and other daily living skills. Consult the Independent Living Research Utilization program for information on CILs.

SHOULD A STUDENT DISCLOSE ABOUT THEIR DISABILITY WHEN APPLYING TO COLLEGE?

It is a personal decision to determine whether or not to disclose one's disability to anyone else. That said, there may be advantages to disclosing upon applying, such

as explaining a lower SAT® or ACT scores, or significant discrepancies between subtests of the SAT® /ACT, or a dramatic improvement in course performance in high school after accessing a specific form of assistive technology. Additionally, instructors and accessibility services professionals may be better able to recommend appropriate supports and services to help the student achieve success if the disability is disclosed. Cole and Cawthon (2016) concluded that students who disclosed their disability chose to do so based on past positive experiences with teachers or professors about their learning and perceived the professor or instructor as kind. In addition, findings from a review of literature regarding support services in college (Madaus et al., 2016) indicated that disclosing one's disability as early as possible upon entry to college was associated with success in college.

The reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act in 2014 required all federal contractors or subcontractors to attempt to have 7% of their workforce be qualified individuals with disabilities. This provision has led the Office of Management and Budget to make a form available to employers including those with training arms to gather: voluntary disability disclosure information. The 411 on Disability Disclosure is a frequently used resource to assist students and youth as they examine the pros and cons of disclosure.

WHAT ARE GOOD PLANNING PROCESSES FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING WHILE STUDENTS ARE STILL IN K-12?

Transition-focused education is a perspective on the education and services provided to students with disabilities that include "academic, career, and extracurricular instruction" (Kohler & Field, 2003) that are individualized, strengths based, and always (from elementary school through high school) focused on post-school goals. It is a comprehensive, coordinated approach to education including course participation, specific instruction, and services needed to achieve those goals. Considering PSET as an outcome throughout a student's educational career has implications for many aspects of the K-12 experience. Additionally, identifying postsecondary education as a goal should encourage an IEP planning team to identify specific skills and experiences the student needs now – in 7th grade, 10th grade, 12th grade, or post-12th grade – that will prepare him or her for the greatest likelihood of success.

The opportunity for students to engage in Career and Technical Education while in high school can provide the needed skills and preparation for postsecondary education and entering the workforce. Career and technical education (CTE) provides students with the academic, technical, and employability skills and

knowledge to pursue postsecondary training or higher education and enter a career field prepared for ongoing learning (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Association for Career and Technical Education, & National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, 2010).

It is critical that parents and educators understand the impact of curricular decisions made at very young ages. Research indicates a student's program of study is correlated with their postsecondary outcomes (Newman & Madaus, 2015; Test et al., 2009). As students with disabilities move into middle school and high school, the courses they complete to achieve a diploma also dictate the postsecondary education options available to them after high school. For example, a student who accesses the general curriculum through extended standards throughout elementary school and demonstrates proficiency in the general education curriculum through alternate assessments may not be in a position to complete courses in high school that are required for admission to a degree granting institution. Further, a student accessing the general curriculum, almost solely in classes with peers with disabilities and completing an aligned pathway toward a diploma is less likely to complete courses required for successful enrollment in traditional postsecondary education. As a result, students, families, and IEP teams need to carefully consider decisions to place students in specific curricular options from elementary through middle and high school. Finally, if a student is interested in furthering their education in alignment with a specific career field, completing relevant career and technical education course sequences may best prepare them for postsecondary education, as well as postsecondary training programs – depending on the student's goals and support needs.

Degree-granting institutions are postsecondary institutions that provide study beyond secondary school and offer programs terminating in an associate's, baccalaureate, or higher degree and participate in federal financial aid programs (Hussar & Bailey, 2016). For a student to enroll in degree-granting institutions, usually the student must demonstrate competencies with specific academic skills. Students who participate in rigorous academic instruction in K-12 are more likely demonstrate skills and meet qualifications to apply to such degree granting postsecondary programs (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014; Gregg, 2007). In July of 2019, the National Association of Secondary School Principals revised their Position Statement about promoting rigorous courses, offering lists of recommendations for how to incoprprate rigor for all students that will then lead to college preparedness and success.

Not every degree-granting program requires a student to complete the standard, college-ready curriculum. Again, those details should be examined by a student and family with a school counselor, a graduation coach, or the IEP team. Career certification, associate degree, and some bachelor degree programs may expect a high school diploma, but allow students to complete various course sequences to achieve the diploma. Many states offer pathways toward a diploma that reflect the U.S. Department of Labor's career clusters. Planning with a school counselor, VR counselor, and the entire IEP team includes a process of setting educational goals and determining the best path to meet those goals. This requires students to work with a counselor or teacher to access resources, so they best understand the labor market and various career pathway options. This planning process is fostered in many middle and high schools for all students as part of the graduation planning process and for students with disabilities may also be achieved through a rigorous transition assessment and planning process.

Typically, a high school diploma is required to access many types of postsecondary education. As noted in Wilkins and Bost's 2016 review of dropout prevention interventions, not graduating from high school with a standard diploma is associated with negative adult outcomes such as unemployment, low wages, incarceration, poverty, and poor health. The importance of graduation and implementation of effective practices has gained momentum over the last two decades; however, there continues to be a graduation rate gap for students with disabilities. According to a 2017 national report, the gap between graduation rates for students with and without disabilities is 21.2 percentage points nationally (GradNation, 2017). In four states, the graduation rate for students with disabilities is below 50 percent. Please see NTACT:C's School Completion Toolkit at It is critical school teams and IEP teams attend to factors likely to lead a student to graduation including (a) using data systems that identify students at risk of dropping out early, (b) implementing quality mentoring programs, (c) positively and meaningfully engaging with families, and (d) providing effective academic interventions for all students – including students with disabilities (Wilkins & Bost, 2016).

Considering postsecondary education or training as an outcome throughout a student's educational career has implications for many aspects of the K-12 experience. Identifying postsecondary education as a goal should encourage an IEP planning team to identify specific skills and experiences the student needs now that will prepare him or her for the greatest likelihood of success.

Title I of the 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as the, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), allows for the inclusion in graduation accountability of a diploma option for students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards. The inclusion of a State-defined alternate diploma in the Title I Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) accountability was new for states with this legislation. Several states, as of Spring 2018, had adopted or were moving to an adopt this option. Guidance on this legislation and necessary considerations are available in Considerations for Developing State Defined Alternate Diploma for

Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities developed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition.

Of course, once a student's IEP is required to identify a postsecondary education/training goal – somewhere between the ages of 13 and 16 (depending on state law), a student's courses of study, transition services, and annual goals must align with the identified postsecondary education and training goals. These are legal requirements from IDEA (2004); but, should be much more than simple items on a checklist to comply with the law.

As noted in Section I, part of planning for postsecondary education access and success can also use the IDEA (2004) SOP (SOP) document. The SOP provides a "summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals." [IDEA Regulations 34 C.F.R. §300.305(e)(3).] The SOP must be completed during the student's last year of services; however, compiling relevant information throughout high school is encouraged. To develop the SOP, the student and IEP team should work together to provide information to appropriate postsecondary settings about accommodations that do and do not work well for the student. This process helps the student, particularly when the student is closely involved, learn what to advocate for when arriving on a postsecondary campus or employed in a workplace. Ideally, a student will be able to share the SOP with future employers and postsecondary institutions in order to obtain reasonable accommodations, as well as to share information about what types of supports work best. While there is not a mandatory template for the SOP, sample templates that are considered best practice are available. The NTACT:C website offers two sample SOP documents (Ohio's Summary

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The SOP provides a "summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals." Ideally, a student will be able to share the SOP with future employers and postsecondary institutions in order to obtain reasonable accommodations, as well as to share information about what types of supports work best.

of Performance Packet and North Carolina's Summary of Performance Document, and an annotated bibliography as resources, and can be found at Summary of Performance . These resources are especially important to consider implementing as students progress towards graduation. Teachers may consider making it a point to complete an SOP on all students with disabilities who have expressed a desire to pursue postsecondary education. It is important to note the SOP could be used for students who have IEPs and/or 504 plans under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

It is important that student-focused, student-driven, and student-led philosophies are reflected at every stage of planning. Self-determination and its component skills of goal setting and self-advocacy are predictors of success in postsecondary education (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Shogren et al., 2018). Ensuring the student's interests and strengths are the focus of decisions regarding curricula, placement, and post-school goals regarding education and training are critical to a young person's success in those goals. Similarly, research indicates that student engagement in school work and the school community are associated with high school completion (Appleton et al., 2008).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the various roles and responsibilities associated with the planning process. The student is, of course, central to planning for PSET success. All others are advisors and navigators. Due to potential costs and support needs, family members are also clearly critical to PSET planning.

- Family members may help students understand the importance of additional education after high school and may have a role in decisions regarding the financing of, and transportation to, PSET programs.
- Teachers play a critical role by providing rigorous academic instruction and opportunities to develop employment, self-determination, and other independent living skills.
- Special education teachers may also be engaged in helping the student plan access to supports and accommodations, completing and interpreting transition assessment results, and preparing for the IEP meeting.
- VR counselors may provide counseling on postsecondary education and training as one of the required pre-employment transition services offered to individual students or groups of students (#3 in Transition Services section of the Competitive Integrated Toolkit provides more detailed guidance on this role)
- School counselors and related service providers may be involved in providing information and resources through assessments, consultations, and services to assist the student and the IEP team as they identify courses of study and

transition services during middle and high school that best prepare a student for PSET success.

Students are the primary drivers and consumers of the PSET planning. The following timeline may be a helpful guide to the PSET application process. While developed for students with disabilities applying to 2- and 4-year colleges, the steps could be adapted depending on the type of program a student is considering and the level of support the student may need from counselors, teachers, and family members to prepare to attend any PSET program.

GRADUATION YEAR COLLEGE APPLICATION TIMELINE

Create a master list that includes

- ❑ College entrance exams and their fees, dates, and registration deadlines
- ❑ College application due dates
  - Make note of the decision type (Early Action, Early Decision, Regular Decision)
- ❑ Financial aid application forms required and their deadlines
- ❑ Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) deadlines
- ❑ Other necessary materials (recommendations, transcripts, etc.)
- ❑ The student's high school's own application processing deadlines

In general

- ❑ If needed, register to take the ACT in September and the SAT® in October (many colleges are test-optional after Covid; check with each institution)
- ❑ Narrow college choices to 5-7 colleges - Apply only to schools the student wants to attend
  - Be sure to have a range of schools from "safety" schools to "reach" schools
- ❑ Gather up-to-date tax information as close to January 1 as possible for financial aid applications
- ❑ Write essays early; edit, proofread, and revise
- ❑ Look out for scholarship opportunities
- ❑ Check with college financial aid offices for school-specific scholarship information, costs, and any additional financial aid forms required
- ❑ Apply for VR services and, if eligible, develop an individualized plan for employment that may include financial assistance for postsecondary education and training (needed to achieve a specific vocational goal)
- ❑ Have SAT® and/or ACT scores sent to colleges, if appropriate. Some colleges

are test-optional after Covid, and the team may decide not to send scores.

September

- ❑ Prepare all rolling admissions applications early
- ❑ Keep copies of everything or document the dates applications are submitted online
- ❑ Ask teachers, counselors, or other references to write letters of recommendation well in advance (3-4 weeks)
- ❑ If needed take the ACT
- ❑ Be sure to have essays proofread (ask a teacher)

October

- ❑ Prepare Early Decision or Early Action applications by October 1
    - Be sure to verify the schools' application dates/deadlines
- ❑ Continue to look out for scholarships and make sure to meet the deadlines
- ❑ If needed take the SAT®

November

- ❑ Finalize college applications – some Early Action deadlines are November 1
- ❑ Try to complete at least one application by Thanksgiving
- ❑ Make sure transcript requests are into the high school's counseling office well in advance, at least 2 weeks before the deadline – check with colleges to see if they want the applicant's first semester grades

December

- ❑ Make sure all applications are completed by December 1 (if not completed for Early Action by November 1) and keep copies of everything sent to colleges
- ❑ Some Early Action decisions come out in December
- ❑ Prepare to complete the FAFSA as close to January 1 as possible

January

- ❑ Complete the FAFSA as soon as possible
- ❑ Continue looking out for scholarship opportunities and meeting the deadlines
- ❑ Some decisions come out at the end of January

February

- ❑ Do not stop working hard now that college applications are submitted
    - Remember the schools will request a final transcript

March

- ❑ Watch out for final college acceptance decisions
- ❑ College acceptance letters and financial aid offers should be received early March through mid-April. If placed on the wait list of a school the students would like to attend, send additional information to update and support their application at this time

April

- ❑ If necessary, attend college campus "Accepted Student Events" to help make a decision
- ❑ Colleges cannot require a deposit or commitment to attend before May 1 (common reply date)
- ❑ By the postmarked date of May 1 the student must inform every college of either acceptance or rejection of the offer of admission and/or financial aid.
- ❑ Notify the high school counseling office of the student's college choice as soon as a decision has been made, so the student's final transcript can be sent following graduation
- ❑ Contact the financial aid office of the college the student plan to attend with any questions concerning the financial aid package (if applicable)

May

- ❑ The deposit must reach the selected college/ university by May 1 (common reply date)
- ❑ Make sure final transcripts are sent to the selected college

NOTES:

- ❑ Be sure to have a professional email
- ❑ Contact disability services before classes begin to arrange for accommodations
    - Find out what documentation the selected school requires
    - Be sure to have the necessary documentation (e.g., recent psychological testing, SOP, Section 504 documentation, IEP)
- ❑ Keep a secure record of usernames and passwords for online applications (to the schools to which you apply)

ARE THERE FINANCIAL SUPPORTS OR CHALLENGES ABOUT WHICH STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD BE AWARE?

Each student and family must consider the financial burden of PSET. Without scholarships or loans, unlike K-12 education, PSET is a substantial expense for an individual or their family. Individuals and families pay for PSET on a payment

schedule determined with the institution. Any student planning for PSET may work with their school counselor regarding available grants or scholarships for which they may apply and can search online for possible resources from community organizations, local businesses, or religious institutions. Additionally, an individual may investigate possible grants or scholarships available from the specific PSET to which they plan to apply. As noted in Section 1, students with intellectual disabilities (ID) can qualify for financial aid to federally approved postsecondary programs in order to access further education and training. Unlike other students with disabilities, students with ID may use their high school IEPs to document their disability and access accommodations in their higher education program (HEOA PL 110-315).

School counselors and PSET settings will also have information regarding student loans, which are then required to be paid back over a period of time. VR counselors may also assist with college affordability planning as a pre-employment transition service. A student may apply for VR services and, if eligible, develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE) that contains the services and supports, including postsecondary education and training, needed to achieve a specific vocational goal. VR services available include financial assistance for postsecondary education and training. Training provided through an employer or adult education programs accessed through an IPE or services provided through an adult agency for individuals with disabilities may negate or, at least, defray costs of non-traditional training programs after high school.

In addition to planning for the costs of participating in education or training, families may need to consider housing expenses, depending on the program. If students are attending a program away from their home, costs of campus or off-campus living must be planned. According to a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development study, over half of all college students living off campus, apart from family have incomes below the poverty level (Sackett et at., 2016). Of course, completing a college program increases probability of earnings; but, planning for housing costs while in school is important.

WHAT ABOUT POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS WHO MAY NOT GO THROUGH A TYPICAL ADMISSIONS PROCESS?

As highlighted in Section I of this toolkit, the Higher Education Opportunity Act recognizes Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Programs (CTP) for student with intellectual disabilities. There are over 300 programs that support students

with ID in programming on college campuses, many of which have achieved the CTP status. There is a current database of these programs at the College Search for students with intellectual disabilities, where students and families can search by state and program features (such as offers financial aid as a CTP, serves students in or our of secondary school, offers housing, 2- or 4-year institutions, level of inclusion in academics, and disability eligibility).

There are two options for postsecondary opportunities for students with ID: College Based Transition Services (CBTS), for students who are still receiving IDEA services from their Local Education Agencies up through age 21; and Inclusive Post Secondary Education Programs (IPSE) for students who have exited their school systems and are no longer served under IDEA. If students and families think they would be interested in college options, there are ways to prepare while in middle and high school to get ready for a college experience, including:

- Spending time away from family, such as at a camp
- Taking classes in inclusive settings
- Participating in work experiences
- Opening a bank account and understand basic money protocols
- Participating in extracurricular activities
- Developing basic independent living skills (transportation, self-care and hygiene, schedule management, following map directions, etc.)
- Developing self-advocacy skills (asking for help, understanding safe actions, etc.)
- Practicing the use of technology
- The list below in Section V is very applicable to this population as well!

In terms of program costs, the CBTS programs for students still receiving IDEA services have most costs covered by the LEA. There may be small additional costs for books, campus fees, etc. For IPSE programs for students who have left their LEA and no longer receive IDEA services, the costs vary but typically include the standard tuition, room, board and college fees charge by the Institution of Higher Education; there is often an additional Program fee to cover the extra support provided by the program, and those fees vary widely by institution. Several ways that costs may be offset for families include:

- Student Federal Financial Aid (for CTP programs that are eligible to offer that)
- In some states, the state Vocational Rehabilitation agency provides tuition support
- In some states, Medicaid waivers can cover individualized supports

- ABLE Accounts (or 529A Savings Plans in ABLE Accounts and Investments) can help pay for college through ABLE Savings Accounts
- Scholarships specific to individual programs

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Section V: What effective practices and strategies exist to prepare students?

WHAT SKILLS OR ACTIVITIES ARE LIKELY TO PREPARE STUDENTS TO ENTER AND SUCCEED IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION?

Findings from correlational research regarding outcomes for students with disabilities can provide guidance here. Teachers, students, and all members of IEP teams should focus on ensuring factors and skills correlated with postsecondary education enrollment for students with disabilities are at the core of student's programs at least by high school. Each of the "predictors" below are correlated with enrollment in postsecondary education. Rowe et al. (2014) conducted a Delphi study and identified operational definitions and essential characteristics of these predictors. The full list of predictors and characteristics are included in the Predictor Implementation Self-Assessment and some characteristics are included below.

Career Awareness

- Provide numerous opportunities to learn about various careers
- Identify skills for occupations aligned with core content

Career & Technical Education (Vocational Education)

- Provide connection to postsecondary education and employment through site visits
- Provide opportunities to earn certificates in certain career areas
- Provide career counseling
- Provide accommodations to ensure student access and mastery of content

Goal Setting

- Teach goal setting and attainment strategies

Inclusion in General Education

- Develop a school atmosphere receptive to including students with disabilities at all levels of the school building
- Use diverse instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students including UDL and technology
- Engage students as active participants in general education
- Provide specific instruction to support students with disabilities

Interagency Collaboration

- Develop an agreed upon mission and vision of transition services and programs
- Coordinate policies and procedures for service delivery and resource sharing
- Conduct asset/resource mapping to identify strengths and gaps in service delivery
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities and schedule regular times for planning and measuring progress

Paid Employment

- Provide opportunities for all students to participate in job shadowing, work-study, apprenticeships, or internships
- Provide instruction in soft skills (e.g., problem solving, responding to feedback), and occupation specific skills (e.g., clerical, mechanical)

Parent Expectations

- Provide parents with information about postsecondary education and training options
- Provide parents with models or examples of students with disabilities who are or have participated in postsecondary education and training

Self-care/ Independent Living

- Offer instruction on (a) financial planning, (b) self-care, (c) food preparation, (d) housekeeping, (e) home maintenance, (f) transportation, (g) clothing care, (h) accessing community services, (i) time management, (j) citizenship, and (k) peer relationships
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice independent living skills throughout the school day
- Teach recreation skills that can be performed alone or with others in both organized and informal settings

Self-determination and Self-advocacy (essential characteristics)

- Use a student driven IEP and SOP process
- Embed choice in daily lessons across the curriculum
- Teach students self-monitoring strategies and provide opportunities for use of these strategies
- Explicitly teach students self-advocacy skills
- Foster development of students' leadership skills

- Ensure students with complex disabilities have a functional community system

Social skills

- Integrate social skills instruction across the curriculum
- Use direct instruction curriculum to teach communication, interpersonal, conversational, negotiation, conflict, and group skills in context
- Use ecological assessments to identify social skills students will be expected to perform in future contexts

WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC SKILLS STUDENTS NEED?

Factors associated with postsecondary education enrollment, identified through research, should be made available in students' programs. Also, instructional strategies for teaching the skills associated with college readiness should be implemented. Central to NTACT:C's knowledge translation efforts is the identification of evidence-based, research-based, and promising practices to teach skills to secondary students with disabilities. NTACT:C has identified effective practices to teach academic skills in secondary settings to students with disabilities, including strategy instruction to teach reading comprehension skills, graduated sequence of instruction to teach algebra, and peer-assisted instruction across core academic content areas. Additionally, there are Effective Practices and Lesson Starters to teach such skills as goal attainment and social skills. There are also resources classroom teachers and other IEP team members can access on financial literacy, school-community-business partnerships, family engagement, and other factors associated with postsecondary education and training access. Finally, it is imperative for educators, service providers, counselors, family members, and students to use effective instructional strategies.

ARE THERE EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS THAT CURRENTLY EXIST THAT INCLUDE THESE PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES?

There are programs focused on preparing students for college which include students with disabilities, such as AVID or Project Lead the Way. Most programs that do include students with disabilities, do not disaggregate efficacy data for students with disabilities. IEP teams should explore programs available through their school, community organizations, and institutions of higher education and confirm their focus on specific populations including students with disabilities and others as they prepare an individual or groups of students for college success.

HOW CAN I INCORPORATE THOSE PRACTICES OR STRATEGIES INTO MY IEP, CLASSROOM, SCHOOL, DISTRICT, OR COMMUNITY?

Examine your data and plan for implementation.

- At the individual student level, examine a student's performance data (transition assessment and other ongoing measures of academic performance) to determine areas of strength and need.
- Identify gaps between current skills and skills identified for PSET success.
- Teach those skills using effective practices.
- Family members can also use assessment information to identify gaps and provide students opportunities to develop skills at home and in the community. Additionally, students can also be a part of identifying their current strengths and areas for improvement, in order to be ready for PSET success.

At the classroom, school, or program level, examine the data across your student population.

- Consider outcome data (post-school). Is there a specific population you, your school, your organization want to "target" to improve access to PSET?
- Engage with other stakeholders from secondary schools, parent organizations, VR agencies, community service providers, higher education, training programs, employers and then consider the community's resources to assist in implementing effective practices.
- Plan to implement.
- Implement and collect data regarding student progress and outcomes along the way. Whether at the student or system level, following the model of (a) plan (using your data), (b) do (with effective practices targeting critical skills), (c) study (review your implementation and impact data and make necessary adjustments), (d) act (continue implementation) repeatedly is a successful process.

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Section VI: What can be done to increase the likelihood of success once enrolled in PSET?

As noted in the Introduction to this Toolkit, data indicate that college students with disabilities complete programs at rates far below those of individuals without disabilities. Results for individuals participating in non-degree programs or employer training programs are less definitive. In the end, simply enrolling temporarily in a PSET program is not enough. Students want to participate and complete such programs to gain skills for future employment or better employment, to develop important life skills, and to engage in learning and living with other young adults. Ensuring that students succeed in PSET must all be important to the planning and services students engage in while in secondary school.

WHAT DO PROGRAMS DESIGNED FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN PSET SETTINGS DO TO HELP YOUNG ADULTS SUCCEED?

There are programs that work to improve PSET completion rates for all students: see College Completion Toolkit (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Some sample aspects of programs include:

- systematic use of data to identify struggling students
- increased frequency of academic advising
- imbedding remediation "courses" in credit-bearing introductory level courses
- addressing remediation through summer bridge programming – with opportunities to earn credits
- interdisciplinary team (academic affairs, residence life, athletics, counseling services) approach to supporting first year students

Additionally, there are PSET comprehensive programs designed to improve the success of students with specific disabilities. There has been an increase in the number of programs for students with intellectual disabilities (ID) to access college. As mentioned in Section V, many of the resources and information contained in this Toolkit apply to students with intellectual disabilities when considering college *as a post-school goal*. Students with ID who participate in college classes with their peers without disabilities, access existing services on campus like disability support services, writing or math labs, or counseling assist students in meeting the challenges in higher education. Additionally, more specific supports including peer support or academic coaches can assist students with ID to fully participate in academic classes by helping students learn how to locate information, understanding instructions and organizing thoughts. Another significant support is

technology. Students with ID who access technology for academic and social interactions are able to communicate with their college peers, faculty, and other staff on campus. The use of text to speech, Marco Polo app, and other assistive technology can assist students with ID in college and employment.

In a research study with recent college graduates with disabilities, researchers found that extra time on exams, test proctoring, and tutoring were the top three disability related services associated with degree completion for student participants (Huber, Oswald, Webb, & Avila-John, 2014). Madaus et al. (2018) reviewed the intervention literature regarding the efficacy of support services provided for students with disabilities at four- and two-year degree-granting institutions. While authors noted the need for greater rigor in the quality of the implementation of future studies, a few implications for practice were shared including:

- early disclosure to the office of disability studies to access supports
- participation in study groups and advising opportunities with professors
- participating in extracurricular activities to engage in the college community.

The What Works Clearinghouse has disseminated six researched recommendations to increase the success of academically underprepared students in PSET (Bailey et al., 2016). These recommendations included:

- use of multiple measures to assess and place students,
- incentivizing participation in enhanced advising activities,
- offering performance-based monetary incentives to students
- compress developmental education within course redesign
- teach self-regulated learning,
- implement comprehensive and integrated support programs.

More detail about these strategies is available here:
Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education - a Practice Guide for College and University Administrators, Advisers and Faculty

Using universal design for learning (UDL) approaches to develop syllabi is another strategy to increase the likelihood of success of all students in postsecondary courses. Professors and instructors can access resources, such as UDL syllabus guidance from the website of Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education for explanations, resources, tips, and sample syllabi that consider a diverse group of learners in higher education classrooms. An example of university supports can be

found on the UC Berkeley Teaching and Learning Center website . Such resources can assist postsecondary institutions to be proactive in addressing the needs of students with disabilities, ensuring success for more students.

The statutory definition of UDL, provided through the HEOA (2008) was included in at least one grant program with funds designated to community and technical colleges. The $2 billion U.S. Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grants required all grant recipients to use UDL to ensure students with disabilities were fully included in TAACCCT-funded courses and programs. The content and courses must be in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). Other provisions in the HEOA address students having information on the cost of textbooks, which may also have implications for instructors providing syllabi in a timely manner to account for braille or audio files of required materials. The National Center on Universal Design for Learning provides resources for both professionals and students related to these issues.

Various assistive technologies have also been used to help students in areas such as written language (e.g., word prediction, outlining programs), reading comprehension (e.g., screen readers), organizational strategies (e.g., personal data managers), and listening aids (e.g., recording lectures; Mull & Sitlington, 2003; Raskind & Higgins, 1998). Shaw et al. (2009) noted that not only is it important for students to possess the general technology competencies expected of college students (e.g., use of the Internet, spreadsheets, online research) but, assistive technology should be part of students' transition plans. While shown to be effective accommodations which compensate for functional limitations, frequently college students do not possess the prerequisite skills for using technology to augment their learning.

Some examples of universally available assistive technologies that may benefit some students with disabilities include

- Screen readers /text-to-speech (e.g., Read and Write Gold)
- Speech-to-text (e.g., Read and Write Gold)
- Audio books (mp3/mp4)
- LiveScribe© pens
- Calendar/Organizational software (e.g., Google calendar, Outlook)
- Online transcription apps (for note-taking; e.g., Sonocent)

- Alternate Text Labs

Regarding technology use, directors and teachers in college programs strongly recommend high school students become familiar with using technology generally. For example, most colleges or universities require students to register for classes, retrieve and submit class assignments, and manage meal plan and other accounts through online systems. Many businesses only accept applications for employment through digital formats, rather than in person or on paper. Additionally, professors, advisors, employers, and peers often share information using email, group chats, in-house communication systems, or social media.

WHAT ROLES CAN VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS PLAY IN INCREASING THE LIKELIHOOD OF A PERSON'S SUCCESS ONCE ADMITTED TO A PSET PROGRAM?

It is frequently noted in resources regarding differences between high school and college that the role of the parent and others shrinks dramatically when a student transitions from high school to postsecondary education. As noted earlier in the Toolkit in Sections I and III there are both legal and developmental reasons for this shift. However, the student is not – or should not – be expected to completely "go it alone."

Most traditional colleges have some level of expectation of parent or family contact. From family orientation and parent weekends to specific websites, family Facebook pages, or electronic messaging services, colleges and university programs understand the importance of parents having quality communication from the institution. Additionally, comprehensive programs for college students with disabilities are likely to have additional means of communication. In an online video-based discussion of "Family Engagement in Postsecondary Education" hosted by the National Collaborative on Workforce Development for Youth in February, 2017 parent and family program professionals from four universities shared suggestions for professional staff and family members. Some of the wisdom shared included:

- leveraging parent communication with students, (i.e., open communication between college, student, parent; "just-in-time" messaging; apprise parents of campus resources so they can direct their student to those resources);
- renaming campus disability resource offices/services for students with disabilities to "Student Access Services" for positive focus on services staff provide rather than challenges or obstacles students face;

- promoting Universal Design in ideas, programs, buildings, and environments and varying delivery and modality of information to parents and families;
- using student-first language; and
- organizing and involving parents in a campus family support network.

Parents and families are likely to continue to provide some level of financial support while a child is participating in postsecondary education. The degree of this support will vary. Parents and families are also likely to continue to provide emotional support, even for students who have moved out of the home to attend school and other logistical support (e.g., transportation, meals, schedule arrangements) for students who are living at home while attending postsecondary education.

When a student turns 18, rights to access educational transcripts and other documents transfer from the parents to the student, according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232g). These regulations and a desire for young adults to develop stronger skills of independent living and self-determination, parents and families and a young adult student should plan and clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities before and during the transition to postsecondary education. Professionals in this area advise parents and families shifting from a role of caretaker to advisor.

HOW CAN THIS INFORM MY PRACTICE?

It is our hope that by teachers, students, parents, and other members of the IEP team developing a clearer understanding of what PSET may entail – planning and service delivery and instruction will be better tailored to adequately prepare students with disabilities for success in postsecondary education and training opportunities, leading to increasingly positive adult outcomes.

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