Utah State Board of Education | Special Education Services

UTAH STATE SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SSIP) EVALUATION PLAN

A UTAH BOARD OF EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

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SSIP INTRODUCTION

Utah's State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) describes the state system of postsecondary transition service providers and the efforts to build capacity to assist LEAs to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and then to evaluate the impact of Utah's improvement efforts. These improvement efforts aligned with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The success of the SSIP requires systematic improvement across the Utah State Board of Education (USBE), local education agencies (LEAs), and community partner agencies to leverage existing strengths while simultaneously closing system gaps. These stakeholders need to make the following systems changes to impact the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR):

- Increase capacity to implement the SSIP
- Align and leverage current postsecondary transition improvement initiatives across stakeholders
- Increase utilization of evidence-based practices (EBPs)
- Improve infrastructure and coordination for delivering effective professional learning (PL) and technical assistance (TA)
- Increase meaningful collaboration of state and local stakeholders around SSIP efforts
- Increase capacity to effectively utilize available national TA resources
- Increase capacity at the local level to implement systems that support effective implementation of postsecondary transition planning
- Increase capacity to implement general supervision systems that support effective implementation of the IDEA and ESSA

These combined efforts will lead to higher quality postsecondary transition planning for students with disabilities which in turn will improve state results in graduation, dropout, and post-school outcomes in employment, further education, and independent living as students with disabilities will have the knowledge and skills they need to achieve postschool success.

The Coordinating Council for People with Disabilities (CCPD) created by Utah statute spent more than a year collaboratively determining that improving postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities is a vital need in Utah. This led to Utah's change of SiMR focus to postsecondary transition and creation of the Statewide

Collaborative on Improving Postsecondary Transition Outcomes for Students with Disabilities (STC) to address the CCPD priority. The STC is a working partnership of state agencies and many other organizations that serve youth with disabilities across the state. The STC includes agencies and organizations that are disability-specific and agencies who serve the general population of youth to ensure the state infrastructure analysis thoroughly articulated the needs and resources of youth with disabilities.

The SiMR was selected after a review of Utah Postschool Outcomes Survey (Indicator 14) data over the five previous years, in which a high number of individuals with disabilities reported being unengaged or under-engaged in meaningful postschool activities one year after exiting school. Students continuing with special education services beyond their senior year tend to be those individuals more significantly impacted by their disability and are at the highest risk for under-engagement after leaving the school system. To meet the needs of this population, Utah's SiMR is to reduce the percentage of students ages 19–22 exiting a post-high program who report being unengaged or under-engaged on the Indicator 14 survey by 20 percentage points over a five-year period (from 45.65% in FFY 2020 to 25.65% by FFY 2025).

Utah's SSIP Theory of Action development began with the identification of common concerns and a vision for improvement among the postsecondary transition stakeholders that make up the STC. Those concerns were transformed into three Broad Improvement Strategies, including:

I. Comprehensive postsecondary transition supports for youth and families,
II. Creating a smooth flow of postsecondary transition services with clearly defined definitions and timelines for most effective service delivery, and
III. Coordination of services to replace a system where agencies serve students with disabilities in silos rather than collaboratively.

Utah then reiterated the process to bring the broad continuum of Utah's special education stakeholders to consensus about what specific improvement activities would need to be implemented to achieve the SiMR.

SSIP EVALUATION PLAN

Utah's evaluation plan for the SSIP has two major parts. The first is the SiMR target calculation, which is to reduce the percentage of students ages 19–22 exiting a post-high program who report being unengaged or under-engaged on the Indicator 14 survey by 20 percentage points over a five-year period (from 45.65% in FFY 2020 to 25.65% by FFY 2025). This target is calculated from a subset of the Indicator 14 postschool outcomes survey. This is the data Utah reports to OSEP in the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) online reporting tool.

Data is collected for the first part of the evaluation plan through the Indicator 14 Postschool Outcomes Survey (PSO) data and then a subset is identified based on the age of the student at the time of exit from school. The data is analyzed collaboratively by the USBE Special Education and Data and Statistics teams by comparing current year data to previous trend data and the data for this SiMR target population with all respondents to the PSO survey. Data is not collected on outcomes for students without disabilities so there is no comparison available for this population.

The second part of the evaluation is the evaluation of the components within each of the three Broad Improvement Strategies identified in the Theory of Action including comprehensive supports for youth and families, smooth flow of services, and coordination of services. Utah will evaluate the outcomes of the improvement strategies by:

- Evaluating and adding to the infrastructure improvements needed to better support the implementation of the SSIP
- Comparing the outputs from previous SSIP implementation years with the current year's outputs
- Reviewing activities and progress with stakeholders

To summarize what is required to implement each strategy, common components or considerations of each strategy were turned into improvement activities. These are listed below.

Requirements to Implement Strategies

Strategy I: Comprehensive Supports for Youth and Families

Strategy I addresses equitable access to supports and resources for transition-age youth and their families. It addresses the "who."

1. Professional learning for educators
    a. Improve local education agency (LEA) attendance and participation in the Annual Postsecondary Transition Institute for educators (this institute is designed for teams to return year after year to set and complete annual goals to build capacity within their LEA to engage in quality postsecondary transition planning for students with disabilities as mandated in IDEA)
2. Education and opportunities for youth and families (sharing information and improving skills)
    a. Improve attendance and participation in Transition University for youth with disabilities and their families through the Utah Parent Center (UPC)
    b. Improve enrollment in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities through vocational rehabilitation
    c. Improve utilization of the Transition Elevated planning app among students with disabilities as they participate in the development of their own Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition plan
3. Improved access to supports and services for underserved populations
    a. Improve access to and enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways for students with disabilities
    b. Improve LEA knowledge and utilization of the Career Development Credential for students with disabilities

Strategy II: Smooth Flow of Services for Transition-Age Youth

Strategy II describes the ideal set of transition services and experiences. It addresses the "what."

1. Improve data match across agencies from 80% to 100%

    a. Student-level data sharing agreements in place between USBE, Department of Workforce Services (DWS), and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
    b. Establish a baseline for student-level data match across agencies
2. Tracking services and engagement over time by student
    a. Map services received for a representative sample of 2020 exiters (2021 survey respondents)
3. Create a Portrait of Postsecondary Transition for students with disabilities based on students in the exiter sample who are engaged in the community after school (Indicator 14C)
    a. Create a flow of services timeline for students, families, and educators
    b. Compile student success examples to share with students, families, and educators

Strategy III: Coordination of Services for Transition-Age Youth in Utah

Strategy III addresses systemic intentional coordination, streamlined referral processes, active collaboration, and educating youth and families. It addresses the "how."

1. Create a systematic referral process to use for referrals across agencies
    a. Create a standardized referral form with release of information for use between agencies
    b. Create a repository with each agency's information to which postsecondary transition stakeholders can refer students and families
2. Improve data sharing system to improve communication and coordination in co-serving youth across agencies
    a. Create an addendum for agency progress reporting forms to track information sharing between agencies
    b. Establish a baseline for the number of LEAs and outside agencies sharing progress data for students being co-served
3. Create a common language to communicate with families about transition without jargon specific to different agencies
    a. Create a universal document with a common vision of postsecondary transition and a glossary of terms
    b. Build a website to house the vision and resources for postsecondary transition in Utah

During the first year of the implementation of the evaluation plan, Utah gathered baseline data on all target activities and outputs identified in the Theory of Action and Logic Model and review activities and progress with stakeholders. Most of Utah's data is related to outputs, as opposed to student outcomes, and the fact that all stakeholders actively contributed to choosing output targets supports Utah's decision to implement these strategies. During this second year of implementation of the evaluation plan, strategy and activity outcomes were compared to the baseline data.

SSIP FFY 2022 EVALUATION RESULTS

SiMR Target Calculation Evaluation Results

Utah reported a decrease of those students reporting as unengaged or under-engaged this year. Utah experienced a decrease in the dropout rate for students with disabilities in FFY 2022. This recovery from increases in dropout rates in previous years helped improve our SiMR achievement of more positive postschool outcomes. Utah also experienced a decrease in the FFY 2022 graduation rate due in part to an increase in students exiting and moving into adult education. This pursuit of other avenues to complete high school requirements may also explain some of the positive shift in postschool outcomes on this year's SiMR.

Based on Utah's 2022 postschool outcomes survey data, many former students identified the following barriers to achieving their postschool goals: mental health issues, physical/disability-related health issues, lack of employment support, COVID-19-related issues, and lack of support from adult services (e.g., lack of providers, turnover in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offices, dissatisfaction with VR services/poor experience, long wait times, and long Division of Services for People with Disabilities waitlist time). Increased interagency collaboration and awareness of available services related to the SSIP broad improvement strategies and the work of the STC may be having a positive effect on postschool outcomes as well.

Table 1 below shows the target and actual data for SiMR for this reporting period. For 2022-2023, the SiMR was reported with a 43.15% target and 41.18% actual unengaged or under-engaged.

Year	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Target	45.65%	43.15%	40.65%	35.65%	25.65%
Actual	48.73%	41.18%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 1: Utah's SiMR Targets and Actual Data

SiMR Broad Improvement Strategies Evaluation Results

To achieve the identified systems changes, the USBE in coordination with the STC implemented the following activities (with their related outcomes) for each Improvement Strategy during this reporting period.

Strategy I: Comprehensive Supports for Youth and Families

The Annual Postsecondary Transition Institute

The Postsecondary Transition Institute (Institute) hosted 265 participants from 34 LEA teams in June 2023. This is an improvement over the baseline year that included 207 participants from 32 LEA teams. Twenty-seven LEA teams (79.41%) submitted plans to the USBE Postsecondary transition team for review. This is an improvement over the 68.75% of teams submitting plans in the baseline year. The Supports for Youth and Families Workgroup (a subcommittee of the STC) analyzed the feedback from the Institute to identify patterns that might inform why teams are not attending and areas for improvement to better meet the needs of professionals who are attending. Themes were identified from the participant feedback and shared with the Institute planning team for use in planning the Institute next year.

Transition University

Thirty-eight youth with disabilities and 279 family members were trained using the Transition University curriculum between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. This is an improvement from the 23 youth with disabilities and 265 family members trained during the baseline year.

Pre-ETS

A total of 27,792 transition-age youth were served in special education and 10,500 students had 504 plans in place in the 2022-23 school year. This means that 38,292 students in Utah schools were potentially eligible for Pre-ETS services. During the period from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, 3254 students accessed Pre-ETS services. Therefore, of the students potentially eligible for Pre-ETS services, an estimate of 8.5% accessed these services. This is an improvement over just under 8% in the baseline year. It is important to note that the number of students potentially eligible and the number of students accessing Pre-ETS both increased in this reporting period and an increase in percentage served was still identified.

Note: The percentage served continues to be an estimate because the number of potentially eligible students was based on the number of students who have a current IEP or 504 plan. Therefore, the number of students served in Pre-ETS includes students who have current IEP and 504 plans as well as students who are eligible for Pre-ETS with a medical diagnosis but do not have an IEP or 504. Those students who qualify for Pre-ETS without an IEP or 504 could not reliably be excluded from the Pre-ETS data due to current data collection processes. So, the percentage of potentially eligible students receiving Pre-ETS services is likely slightly lower than reported, but this is the best comparison available with current data collection practices and remains consistent with the data collected and reported in the baseline year.

Transition Elevated App Utilization

A total of 1,766 students used the Transition Elevated planning app in the 2022-23 school year to help them prepare to participate in their postsecondary transition Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is an improvement from the baseline year of 1,503 students using the app.

Patterns of CTE Participation for Students with Disabilities

In the baseline reporting period, the USBE postsecondary transition team analyzed four years of CTE enrollment data from the 2018 school year through the 2021 school year. Statistical means were established for CTE pathway completers (3.0 credits completed) and CTE pathway concentrators (1.5 credits completed) for students without disabilities and students with disabilities. On average, students with disabilities were less likely to concentrate in a CTE pathway than general education students by 3.26 percentage points and students with disabilities were less likely to complete a CTE pathway than students without disabilities by 3.10 percentage points. This disparity represents a slight underrepresentation of students with disabilities in CTE pathways in Utah overall. The same data was then analyzed by LEA. Seven LEAs (5 districts and 2 charter schools) were identified as exemplars for representation of students with disabilities in CTE pathways consistently over the four years examined. Twelve LEAs (6 districts and 6 charter schools) were found to show consistent underrepresentation of students with disabilities in CTE pathways over the four years examined. The remaining LEAs showed mixed results resulting in average levels of representation.

Using the baseline data from the last reporting period, a focus group study was designed this year to explore the practices of both the schools with consistent representation and those with underrepresentation of students with disabilities in

CTE to identify patterns of practices that may inform TA and PL efforts to improve this outcome.

Strategy II: Smooth Flow of Services

Improve Data Match Between Agencies to 100%

Current data sharing agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between the USBE and other state agencies were reviewed. It was determined that a new data sharing agreement was needed between the USBE, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) to support improved collaboration between agencies in co-serving students with disabilities. A draft outline for the new agreement was produced by the Flow of Services Workgroup (a subcommittee of the STC) in the baseline year. The draft outline produced last reporting period was reviewed by all participating agencies and it was determined that one broad data sharing agreement would not be able to meet all the desired purposes of the committee. Two types of documents were needed: an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and specific local data sharing agreements for the purpose of sharing student-level data to enhance coordination while co-serving students. The committee reviewed the MOU used by the State of Maine and has begun drafting a similar MOU for Utah to include the DWS, the DHHS, and the USBE.

Map Services and Engagement Over Time

Interviews with Indicator 14 respondents to examine service patterns over time for those who reported being engaged in meaningful post school activities and for those who reported being under-engaged or unengaged in meaningful post school activities were postponed allowing time for putting into place a more reliable means to contact possible interviewees and improve sample size for this exploration. The new sample group is intended to be 2023 exiters who complete the survey in 2024.

Portrait of Postsecondary Transition

In the beginning stage of development for the Portrait of Postsecondary Transition for students with disabilities, a TA request was submitted to the National Technical Assistance Center for Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) for support in this endeavor. An intensive TA agreement is in development to guide this partnership. Agencies participating in the STC have begun identifying the best flow of services and timelines for services for their agency in preparation for building the Portrait of Postsecondary Transition.

Strategy III: Coordination of Services

Create a Systematic Referral Process

The Coordination of Services Workgroup (a subcommittee of the STC) drafted a universal referral form for all agencies in the STC to use when referring students to services from other providers. The form was reviewed by all agencies to be sure it contained the information that is universally collected by agencies upon referral. The form was finalized and approved during this reporting period in preparation for piloting it with educators. The purpose of creating a system-wide referral form was to simplify referral process for both students with disabilities and their families and service providers. This is the first step in coming together as a statewide system of postsecondary transition stakeholders instead of individual agencies acting in silos.

Create a Common Language and Vision for Postsecondary Transition in Utah

The development of a one-stop postsecondary transition website for Utah is almost complete. The structure of the website has been designed and content development is about 90% complete. The Coordination of Services Workgroup acted as the stakeholder group to ensure content represented the statewide system of postsecondary transition rather than one or two individual agencies. As part of this effort, the workgroup drafted the vision statement for postsecondary transition for the State of Utah and the purpose statement for the website. They also reviewed and offered feedback on the content for the educators and community partners pages.

CONCLUSION

Based on discussions with Utah's stakeholders during this reporting period, they agreed that the SSIP activities currently being implemented were appropriate to impact the SiMR and to improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.