

INDICATOR 14: POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Completed by National Post-School Outcomes Center

INDICATOR

Indicator 14: Percent of youth who had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school (20 USC 1416(a)(3)(B)).

OVERVIEW

Since 2005, the U.S. States and jurisdictions have described in their State Performance Plans (SPPs) and Annual Performance Reports (APRs) as a system to collect information about the further education and employment activities of youth with disabilities who have been out of school for one year. Specifically, States are asked to report the “Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school” (20 USC 1416(a)(3)(B)).

Note: Reference to the 60 States, jurisdictions and territories in the remainder of this document will be as “States.” We use the term “engagement” when referring collectively to the sum of individuals who are competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both.

In December 2004, the National Post-School Outcomes (NPSO) Center was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to support States in the collection, analysis, and use of post-school outcome data for youth with disabilities. The mission of the NPSO Center is to assist States in developing a practical, yet rigorous data collection system designed to yield valid and reliable data and use that data to guide program improvement.

In the FFY 2006 SPPs (due to OSEP February 1, 2008), States were asked to report the first results of their data collection efforts by: (a) establishing a baseline of the State’s engagement rate (i.e., the aggregate percent of youth competitively employed, enrolled in postsecondary school, or both); (b) setting measurable and rigorous targets; and (c) identifying improvement activities designed to increase the engagement rate.

For the FFY 2007 APR (reported to OSEP February 1, 2009), States reported: (a) Actual Target Data (i.e., the engagement rate); (b) a discussion of Improvement Activities Completed and Explanation of Progress or Slippage that occurred; and (c) Revisions to Proposed Targets, Improvement Activities, Timeline, and Resources.

In summary of the actual data for Indicator 14, the median for the overall engagement rate (i.e., employed, enrolled in postsecondary school, or both) was 78.26% (SD = 9.74) with a minimum engagement rate reported by States of 48.00% and a maximum

engagement rate of 93.30%. The following is a more specific report on the NPSO Center's analysis of the FFY 2007 APRs for Indicator 14. Following a brief description of the analysis process used by Center staff, this report describes the States':

- Data collection methods, including sampling procedures
- Results relevant to engagement rate, representativeness and progress or slippage toward the targets
- Improvement activities
- Technical assistance (TA) as reported in the APRs

Analysis Process

NPSO Center staff analyzed APRs States submitted to OSEP. To conduct the analyses, a coding protocol was developed in alignment with the requirements of the APR; OSEP staff reviewed and approved the coding protocol. States were not required to report the method used to collect the data in the APR but had done so in the SPP of the previous year. The coding process used the FFY 2007 APRs (submitted to OSEP in February 2009) and the FFY 2006 SPPs (either the original submitted in February 2008 or, if revised, submitted in February 2009). To ensure inter-rate reliability, Center staff reviewed each APR twice using the approved coding protocol.

The coding protocol contained questions related to three primary themes:

- Data collection method and sampling procedures
- Results relevant to engagement rate, representativeness and progress or slippage toward the target
- Improvement activities and TA

The questions from the coding protocol corresponding to these areas are provided below as a means for organizing the remainder of the summary report.

Section I: Data Collection Method and Sampling Procedures

- 1) Did the State report a definition for: (a) competitive employment and (b) postsecondary school enrollment?
- 2) Did the State use a census or a sample to define on whom data were collected?
- 3) Did the sampling States include non-graduates (i.e., those who age-out or dropout) in their sampling frame?
- 4) Did the sampling States define a representative sample by disability type, ethnicity and gender?
- 5) What method did the State use to collect their post-school data (e.g., extant data or survey methodology)?
- 6) If a survey was conducted, what type of survey method was used (e.g., mail, web-based, phone, etc.)?
- 7) Who collected the data (e.g., school personnel or contractor)?
- 8) Who was the respondent (e.g., former student and/or parent/guardian)?

Section II: Results for Engagement Rate, Representativeness and Progress/Slippage toward the Target

- 9) Did the State describe how representative the respondent group was to the target leaver group (i.e., the representative sample or population) based on the categories of disability, race/ethnicity, gender and exit status?
- 10) Was the respondent group representative of the total leavers?
- 11) What was the percent of post-school engagement reported in the APR?
- 12) Did the State meet the FFY 2007 target?
- 13) Did the State report slippage or progress?
- 14) What justification/explanation did the State give to explain progress/slippage?

Section III: Improvement Activities and TA Services

- 15) Has the State accessed TA from the NPSO and other TA Centers or Regional Resource Centers in the past?
- 16) Does the State report a plan to access TA in the future?
- 17) What type of TA has the State received from NPSO Center?
- 18) What type of Improvement Activities has the State reported?

The results from this analysis were organized by the questions in the three sections presented above. Percentages are based on an N = 60, the total of all States, jurisdictions and territories. Percents may not total 100 percent based on rounding procedures. Where only a subset of the 60 States could be reported (e.g., only States who conducted a sample), we elected to present actual numbers and not percentages.

RESULTS

Section I: Data Collection Method and Sampling Procedures

This section describes the definitions States reported for competitive employment and postsecondary school and the method States reported for collecting data on school leavers with IEPs. This information was taken from the FFY 2007 APR (submitted in February 2009), revised FFY 2006 SPP (submitted in February 2009) when available and/or original FFY 2006 SPP (submitted in February 2008).

To address Indicator 14, States had the option of either conducting a census of all students with IEPs leaving high schools in their State in a particular year or establishing a representative sample of school leavers in their State for a particular year. In either case, data were to be gathered in such a way as to: (a) include students who graduated, completed high school with a modified completion document, aged out of school, dropped out or were expected to return but did not return for the current school year and (b) describe students in terms of their primary disability, gender and ethnicity.

States conducting a sample of school leavers were to describe the sampling methodology outlining how the design yielded valid and reliable estimates. That is,

States were to describe: (a) the sampling procedures (e.g., random, stratified, etc.); (b) the methods used to test the similarity or difference of the sample from the population of students with IEPs; and (c) how the State Education Agency addressed problems with response rates, missing data and selection bias.

Additionally, States were to describe their data collection method, including the: (a) type of data collected; (b) method of collection (e.g., an extant data set or survey); (c) “representativeness” of the data collected by gender, disability type and ethnicity; and (d) definitions of competitive employment and postsecondary school.

OSEP recommended, but did not require States to use the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (VRA) (29 USC 705(11) and 709(c)) definition of competitive employment. It reads: *Competitive employment means work—(i) In the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting; and (ii) For which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.* (Authority: Sections 7(11) and 12(c) of VRA.)

When defining postsecondary school, States were asked to report: (a) type of school, education or training; (b) whether enrollment was full-time or part-time; and (c) what constituted full-time enrollment.

The following summarizes the results based on the questions listed above.

- 1) Did the State report a definition for (a) competitive employment and (b) postsecondary school enrollment? Of the 60 States:
 - a. 59 States (98%) reported a definition for competitive employment. Of those:
 - 41 reported using the definition from the VRA as recommended in the OSEP Measurement Table.
 - 18 augmented the VRA definition or reported a definition of competitive employment different than the VRA definition.
 - Additions to the definition included categories of military, home or family business, supported employment, sheltered employment and/or training opportunities.
 - b. 58 (97%) reported a definition for postsecondary school. Of those:
 - 34 reported definitions that included: (a) the type of education; (b) whether enrollment was full- or part-time; and (c) what constitutes full-time enrollment.

- 2) Did the State use a census or a sample to define on whom data were collected? Of the 60 States:
- 36 (60%) reported they conducted a census of school leavers with disabilities.
 - 22 (37%) reported they identified a sample of school leavers with disabilities.
 - 2 (3%) did not report whether they conducted a census or identified a sample for the collection of post-school outcomes.
- 3) Did the sampling States include non-graduates (i.e., those who age-out or dropout) in their sampling frame? Of the 60 States:
- 33 (55%) reported they included students who graduated, aged-out and dropped out in the target leaver group.
 - 11 (13%) did not specify the students included in their target leaver group.
 - 8 (13%) reported they included students who graduated, aged-out, dropped out, and did not return in the target leaver group.
 - 7 (12%) specified they included students other than graduates (e.g., graduates and dropouts or graduates, dropouts and non-returns).
 - 1 (2%) included only graduates in their target leaver group.
- 4) Did the sampling States define a representative sample by disability type, ethnicity, and gender? Of the 22 States conducting a sample:
- 12 reported identifying a representative sample of school leavers based on disability category, race/ethnicity and gender.
- 5) What method did the State use to collect their post-school data (e.g., extant data or survey)? Of the 60 States:
- 58 (97%) reported their method of data collection.
 - 56 reported using a survey
 - 2 reported using extant databases.
 - 2 (3%) did not specify a data collection method.
- 6) If a survey was conducted, what type of survey method was used (e.g., mail, web-based, phone, etc.)? Of the 56 States who conducted a survey:
- 30 reported using an interview (i.e., phone or face-to-face contact).
 - 10 reported using a combination of survey methods (e.g., phone and mail).
 - 12 did not report a specific survey method.
 - 4 reported using a mail survey.

- 7) Who collected the data (e.g., school personnel or contractor)? Of the 56 States who conducted a survey:
- 24 reported State or local education agency personnel collected the data.
 - 15 reported a contractor collected the data.
 - 16 did not report who collected the data.
 - 1 left the decision to the local education agency to determine who would collect the data.
- 8) Who was the respondent (e.g., former student or parent/guardian)? Of the 56 States who conducted a survey:
- 19 reported respondents were parents or former students.
 - 14 reported respondents were only former students.
 - 22 did not specify who the respondents were for data collection.
 - 1 reported respondents were only parents.

Section II: Results for Engagement Rate, Representativeness and Progress/Slippage toward the Target

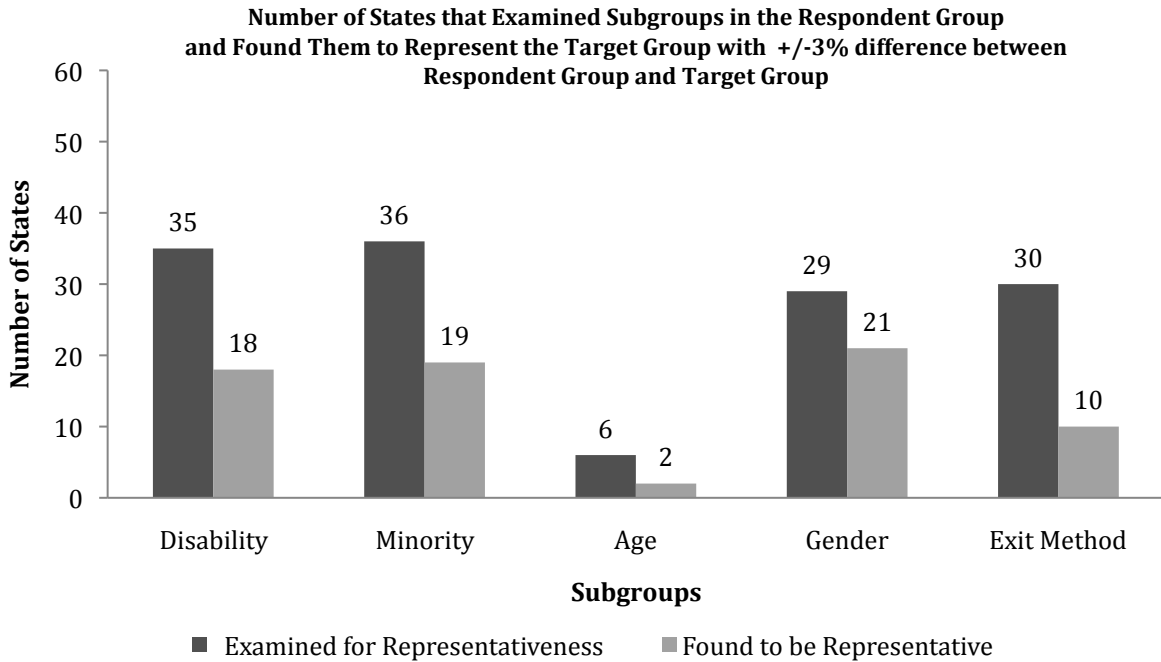
As noted previously, for the first time in the FFY 2007 APR (submitted in February 2009) States were to describe the actual data (i.e., engagement rate) obtained in the data collection and compare them to the FFY 2007 target set in the FFY 2006 SPP (submitted in February 2008). Furthermore, States were to describe progress or slippage toward the target. States were to include the numbers used in the calculations for the engagement rate.

Additionally, States were to identify any problems related to response rate, missing data, and/or selection bias. To analyze these potential problems areas, the States' response rates and respondent groups were examined to determine if they were representative of the total leavers on the categories of disability, race/ethnicity, age, gender, and exit status. The potential for missing data, selection bias, and whether the State acknowledged problems in these areas were also examined.

- 9) Did the State describe how representative the respondent group was to the target leave group (i.e., the representative sample or population) based on the categories of disability, race/ethnicity, gender and exit status?

Figure 1 presents the number of States that examined the respondent group to the target leaver group (i.e., representative sampling frame or population) by the subgroups of disability, race/ethnicity, age, gender, and exit status.

Figure 1: Subgroups Examined in the Response Group and Representative of the Target Group



10) Was the respondent group representative of the total leavers?

In survey methodology, it is important to understand who the respondents are, specifically, how similar or dissimilar the respondents are to the target population, as a measure of confidence that the respondents are reflective of all students who left school. In examining States’ description of the representativeness of the respondent group to the target leavers, NPSO Center staff qualitatively examined potential problems related to response rate, missing data, selection bias, and representativeness of the target group.

Across the 60 APRs, three common themes were noted:

- Great variation in response rates across States ranging from 14% to 94%. States often reported the cause of low response rates as lack of accurate leaver contact information.
- Representativeness of the respondent group to the target leaver group was either not examined or not addressed.
- Lack of actual numbers provided in the APR to calculate the percentages, verify the calculations or identify errors in the calculations for representativeness.

NPSO Center staff relied on the guideline of “important difference”, set at $\pm 3\%$, to determine whether the respondents represented the target leaver group. That

is, if the difference in proportion between the respondent group and the target group exceeded $\pm 3\%$, the difference was considered sufficient enough not to be representative. Applying a $\pm 3\%$ difference between the respondent group and the target leavers is consistent with the NPSO Response Calculator approved by OSEP.

Using the $\pm 3\%$ criterion to determine representativeness, 4 States were determined to have a respondent group representative of the target leavers based on all four categories—disability, gender, race/ethnicity, and exit status. In addition, there were States who reported their respondents were representative using an unspecified criterion; NPSO Center staff was unable to determine the accuracy of the calculations or a criterion that exceeded a $\pm 3\%$ difference between the respondent group and the target leaver group.

As evidenced in prior submissions, many States continue to have lower number of responses from leavers in two categories—those who dropped out of school and those who received special education services under the eligibility category of emotional/behavioral disabilities.

11) What was the percent of post-school engagement reported in the APR?

States were required to report only one percentage for this Indicator. That one percentage, referred to as “engagement”, is the unduplicated sum of former students who are or have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school or both within one year of leaving high school divided by the total number of youth who responded to the survey (i.e., assessed).

For the FFY 2007 reporting period, OSEP extracted the Actual Target Data (i.e., engagement rate for Indicator 14) reported by the States for use in this analysis. Therefore, as directed by OSEP, the following engagement rates are based solely on the percentages recorded by OSEP. According to the information provided to the TA Centers, all 60 States reported engagement data for FFY 2007.

Of the 60 States, 4 were recorded as having three data points, presumably the disaggregated percent of youth competitively employed, enrolled in postsecondary school or both, without a single aggregated percentage of engagement. Data from these four States are not included in the aggregated engagement rate. The median engagement rate was 78.26% (SD = 9.74) with a minimum engagement rate of 48.00% and a maximum engagement rate of 93.30%.

12) Did the State meet the FFY 2007 target?

To determine whether a State met the FFY 2007 target, NPSO Center staff compared the State's Actual Target Data (i.e., engagement rate) to the Measurable and Rigorous Target reported in the APR. Based on this calculation, if the Actual Target Data were greater than the target engagement rate, the State was coded as "met." Of the 60 States:

- 35 (58%) met the FFY 2007 target.
- 24 (40%) did not meet the FFY 2007 target.
- 1 (2%) reported meeting the targets, but the calculation could not be verified.

13) Did the State report slippage or progress? Of the 60 States:

- 28 (47%) reported making progress toward the target.
- 19 (32%) reported slippage.
- 12 (20%) did not indicate progress or slippage.
- 1 (2%) reported no change.

14) What justification/explanation did the State give to explain progress/ slippage?

States were instructed to explain progress or slippage. Half of the States either did not address reasons for slippage or progress or Stated there was no change between the baseline (FFY 2006) and the data reported in FFY 2007. NPSO Center staff qualitatively examined the explanations provided and identified some common themes.

States cited progress attributable to:

- Improvement activities, including training and professional development to teachers and interviewers, materials developed to address post-school options.
- More youth having driver's license, work-based learning opportunities.
- Gains in response rate and locating leavers in specific subgroups (e.g., emotional disabilities or dropout categories).
- Exiters received benefit from improvement activities.

States cited slippage attributable to:

- Lack of representation of subgroups in the respondent group.
- Increase in response rate from subgroups (e.g., dropouts) in the respondent group.
- Decrease in the number of youth in the sample; decrease in number of respondents.

- Economic downturn in States may be reflective of the decreased employment rates.
- Error made in FFY 2006 Indicator 14 calculations.

Section III: Improvement Activities and TA Services

Through the coding process, NPSO Center staff identified States reporting use of some type of TA to support the State in the development and implementation of their post-school outcome data collection process. Reported TA was provided by the NPSO Center, Regional Resource Centers and research experts in the field.

15) Has the State accessed TA from the NPSO in the past?

Of the 60 States, 36 (60%) reported in their APR accessing TA in the past or currently. In the past year, based on NPSO Center records, the Center has provided direct TA to 58 States (97%).

From the inception of the NPSO Center, all 60 States have received some type of TA from the Center. Specifically, all States have received 2 or more types of TA (e.g., teleconference participation, on-site consultation, information request, etc). In addition, 45 (75%) have accessed 4 or 5 types of TA from the Center. The average number of TA events participated in by an individual State is 21 (SD, 10.4). The minimum number of TA events in which a State has participated is 6 and the maximum number of TA events in which a State has participated is 56.

16) Does the State report a plan to access TA in the future? Of the 60 States:

- 31 (52%) reported plans to access TA in the future.
- 9 (15%) did not report having received TA in the past and did not indicate whether they plan to do so in the future.

17) What type of TA has the State received from NPSO Center?

Since the formation of the NPSO Center in December 2004, it has provided TA to all 60 States in their development of rigorous, yet practical, systems to collect post-school outcomes data on youth who had IEPs.

As cited in the Year 4 NPSO Evaluation Report (December 1, 2008 to November 30, 2009), the Center consulted with States in the following ways:

- 58 (97%) have received some type of information about Indicator 14 provided directly by the Center. The methods to provide such information included: teleconferences, participation in the NPSO Community of Practice, information requests directly from States via e-mail or phone, participation in the Secondary Transition State Planning Institute or Making Connections Across Indicators 1, 2, 13 and 14 regional events, and attending informational conference sessions at non-NPSO-sponsored conferences.

- 51 (85%) participated in NPSO–sponsored conferences such as the Secondary Transition State Planning Institute in Charlotte, NC or the Making Connections Across Indicators 1, 2, 13 and 14 regional events.
- 22 (53%) received individual consultation from Center staff.
- 9 (23%) received direct on-site consultation by NPSO staff in their States.

18) What type of Improvement Activities has the State reported?

The States' improvement activities were coded using the categories defined by OSEP (listed below). This coding assessment was a judgment by the coders based on the information provided by each State. At this time, a majority of States continue to focus on improving data collection and reporting (A, n = 51) and providing training/professional development and TA (C and D, n = 11 and 49, respectively) as their primary improvement activity.

The descriptions of improvement activity provided by States varied with regard to the type and scope of improvement activity listed, as well as the level of specificity. The level of specificity may lead to difficulties in evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement activities and their impact on improving the data collection systems and/or the post school outcomes of former students.

The summary for each improvement activity category are provided below:

- 51 States (85%) included at least one improvement activity pertaining to *Improve data collection and reporting* (A).
- 14 States (23%) included at least one improvement activity of *Improve systems administration and monitoring* (B).
- 11 States (18%) included at least one improvement activity of *Provide training/professional development* (C).
- 49 States (82%) included at least one improvement activity of *Provide TA* (D).
- 12 States (20%) included at least one improvement activity of *Clarify/examine/develop policies and procedures* (E).
- 11 States (18%) included at least one improvement activity of *Program development* (F).
- 26 States (43%) included at least one improvement activity of *Collaboration/coordination* (G).
- 9 States (15%) included at least one improvement activity *Evaluation* (H).
 - 1 State (2%) included an improvement activity related to *Increase/Adjust FTE* (I).
 - 3 States (5%) included an improvement activity that did not fit within the above listed categories. These included, but are not limited to: (a) rewrite State transition planning and anticipated services guide; (b) continue to work with the NPSO Center via an OSERS Grant; (c) launch websites; and (d) attend meetings.

SUMMARY

From this analysis and the work of the NPSO Center, States are demonstrating a good faith effort to design and implement rigorous, yet practical, systems to collect, analyze, and use post-school outcome data. Wide variation exists across States relative to: (a) methodologies for collecting data, (b) definitions of employment and postsecondary enrollment, (c) response rates, and (d) engagement rates. States have begun to analyze the representativeness of their respondent group compared to the target leavers, although this remains an area where improvement is needed. States in general need to focus improvement activities on increasing response rates by: (a) collecting better student exiting contact information and (b) defining strategies to collect post-school outcome data on groups demonstrating poor representativeness (e.g., dropouts, students with emotional/behavioral disabilities).

With the release of the OSEP-revised Measurement Table in February 2009, Indicator 14 has substantial changes specifically related to definitions and calculations of the outcome measures of employment and postsecondary education. These changes will require States to alter their data collection systems. States will now be required to submit new Indicator 14 baseline for the FFY 2009 (due February 2011 on the SPP template). The NPSO Center has started revising tools and resources and working with States to assist in the implementation of these changes.