Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Overcoming Obstacles and Enhancing Success

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Overview

• Significantly fewer numbers of students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (ID/DD) go on to postsecondary (PSE) programs following high school compared to students without ID/DD.
• This issue affects not only the students and their families, but has negative implications for Michigan’s educational, economic, and social service systems as well.
• Current research identifies several existing obstacles to accessing PSE, but also highlights effective strategies for alleviating the effects of these roadblocks.
• We will review these findings and discuss strategies for addressing the obstacles that affect Michigan students with disabilities.
Access to PSE in Michigan

The Problem:

- Less than 5% of students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (ID/DD) attend postsecondary programs, including college and technical training programs.
- Neither students nor parents know where to find info/resources for considering college an option.
- Lack of sufficient preparatory activities at the high school level.

- Effective strategies and support for successful transition to PSE continues to build nationally.
- The situation for students with disabilities in Michigan is not clear.

- Statewide needs assessment done with Michigan students with disabilities and their families.
- Information was also gathered from disability and education professionals (i.e. special and general education teachers, school administrators).
Michigan PSE Project Overview

**DDI and DD Council’s PSE Project:**

- Identify existing resources that serve students.
- Determine unmet needs and gaps.
- Identify why students are not accessing the full array of services and supports available.
- Identify unintended barriers and special problems to overcome.
- Identify strategies to meet stakeholder desires and needs.

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**Michigan PSE Project Partners**

- Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council
- Developmental Disabilities Institute
- Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
- The Arc Michigan, Michigan Alliance for Families
- Michigan Community College Association
- Michigan Dept. of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (Formerly DELEG)
- The Arc of Kent County
- Michigan College Access Network
- Ready For Life Network
- Michigan Department of Community Health
- Parent & Advocates
Michigan PSE Project Overview

Results of Online Student/Family Survey:

- Total of 229 people completed the online student/family survey.
  - Avg. age of 37 years old
  - 67% Female
  - 81% Caucasian, 11% African-American
  - 46% reported disabilities
  - 53% family members
  - 42 Counties across Michigan represented
- Of those reporting disabilities:
  - 44% multiple disabilities
  - 21% Intellectual Disabilities
  - 21% Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

- Majority of respondents believed going to college/earning a degree was important.
- Only 18% had taken part in any college searches or campus visit activities during high school.
- Majority were unsure if college was an option for them.
- Most students had either a Certificate of Completion (27%) or did not finish high school with any documentation (46%).
- Of those in PSE Programs, only 23% are receiving college credit.
- Most PSE Program participants reported not being very socially active on their campuses.
Michigan PSE Project Overview

• Barriers to accessing PSE (According to students/family members):
  • Lack of support from teachers or counselors.
  • Lack of transportation options.
  • Not confident in meeting people/making friends.
  • Not confident in skills necessary to succeed in college.
  • Not confident that I can do well in college.
  • Lack of money/knowledge of grants or student loans.
  • No help from the disability support office at my school.
  • I am afraid to go to school.
  • Do not know where to get information on colleges.

Results of Online Professionals Survey:

• Total of 67 people completed the online professionals survey.
  • Avg. age of 44 years old
  • 79% Female
  • 94% Caucasian, 3% African-American
  • 10% reported disabilities
  • 39% family members
• Majority (87%) work with students/individuals with disabilities regularly
• Barriers identified by PROFESSIONALS:
  • Acquiring the (functional) skills necessary to succeed in post-high school settings such as college or work.
  • Knowledge of the supports and resources that exist to them in the community and on campus and how to ask for and attain them.
  • Eligibility (certificate vs. diploma) and the financial aspects of higher education.
  • Lack of transportation.
  • Lack of effective, realistic transition planning and follow-through from secondary to postsecondary educational settings.
  • Lack of support.
  • Lack of social skills and ability to navigate the community/college campus socially.

• Barriers identified by STUDENTS/FAMILIES:
  • Lack of support from teachers or counselors.
  • Lack of transportation options.
  • Not confident in meeting people/making friends.
  • Not confident in skills necessary to succeed in college.
  • Not confident that I can do well in college.
  • Lack of money/knowledge of grants or student loans.
  • No help from the disability support office at my school.
  • I am afraid to go to school.
  • Do not know where to get information on colleges.

Michigan PSE Project Overview

Action Plan Focus Areas:
1. Teacher & Staff Training
2. Community Partnerships and Collaborations
3. Hands-On Experiences and Opportunities for Students
4. Information & Family Outreach: Create Web-Based Information on PSE Programs in Michigan
5. Transportation
6. Self-Advocacy & Leadership Training for Students
7. Mentoring for Students in PSE Programs
8. Influence State Policy Using Evidence-Based Research & Practice
Students Sharing Success Learning Community

- The S3LC provides WSU students with disabilities an extra layer of academic and social support.
- Collaboration with the Americorps Urban Safety Project will enhance leadership, self-determination and community involvement.
- Addresses a gap identified in the literature:
  - Significantly lower 1st to 2nd year persistence rates of college students with disabilities (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011)

Access to PSE in Michigan: Moving Forward

*Where do we go from here?*

- Multi-level, multi-disciplinary collaboration is key in effectively addressing the issues that students, parents and educators face.
- Mentoring and peer support programs must be utilized more often and in more schools.
- Identifying successful transition and support strategies may offer insight into what can be used on a wider basis.
- Will only increase in importance as Michigan moves forward.
- MUST show PSE’s link to successful employment outcomes.
**Access to PSE in Michigan: Moving Forward**

- Coalition building vital:
  - More collaboration between educational, disability, social and community service, and employment entities.
  - Work toward policy change.
  - Demonstrate how PSE experiences positively impact individuals with disabilities and all of the systems listed above.
- Family outreach activities, coupled with readily available online resources need to be in greater supply.
- Must train high school administrators and teachers on the importance of early and often transition planning for students with disabilities.

**Resources**

- MI-TOP → [http://mi-top.cenmi.org](http://mi-top.cenmi.org)
- Think College → [http://www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)
- AHEAD → [http://www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)
- Know How to Go → [http://www.knowhow2go.org/](http://www.knowhow2go.org/)
- Transition to College (PERC) → [http://www.transitiontocollege.net/](http://www.transitiontocollege.net/)
Contact Information

Thank you!

- For more information on this topic:

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