Documenting Student Outcomes: How and Why to Collect Data on Your Graduates

Clare Papay and Kelly Kelley

November 2017
Today’s Objectives

Participants will be able to

1. Explain the importance of documenting outcomes on graduates of higher education programs.
2. Describe two strategies that can be used to stay in touch with program graduates.
3. Use a data collection tool to collect outcome data on program graduates.
Steps in Evaluation

- **Before students enter**
- **While students are in program**
- **After students exit**
- **As students exit**

The TPSID National Coordinating Center at Think College is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. The Center is funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education Grant #P407B100002.
Why collect student outcomes?

- Advocate
- Evaluate
- Publicize
Data collection tools
What data should you gather?

- Employment
- Further education
- Independent living
- Quality of life
When should you collect data?

• Key time points
  • 90-days after exit
  • 1 year after exit
  • Annually thereafter

• Decide what is important and feasible for your program
How should you collect data?

• Phone survey
• Paper survey
• Electronic survey

• Weigh the pros and cons of each and decide what works for you

Photo credit: Arcadia University
Example #1

TPSID Follow-Up Survey
- 90-day and annual survey (up to 5 years)
- 18 questions
- Aligned with Think College Data Network
- Administered by TPSID program
- Phone, paper, or e-survey
Example #2

Employment

UP Program Follow Along Questions for Recent Graduates

*2. I understand and agree to what is required of me to participate in this study
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

UP Program Alumni

3. What was the month & year your son or daughter started the UP Program?

4. Did your son or daughter remain in the UP Program for the entire two year period?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES SINCE LEAVING THE UP PROGRAM

NOTE: ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS PERTAIN TO PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT SINCE YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER LEFT THE UP PROGRAM IN THE COMMUNITY (meaning NOT IN (1) THE HOME: paid or unpaid domestic labor such as household or yard/lawn chores or babysitting; (2) SHELTERED WORKSHOPS/WORK CENTERS: entities that employ workers with disabilities in segregated settings and pay less than minimum wage)

5. At any time after leaving the UP program, has your son or daughter had one or more paid jobs (part-time or full-time) in the community?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

6. What is the minimum number of hours per week your son or daughter has worked on a job since leaving the UP Program? What is the maximum?
   MINIMUM work hours per week
   MAXIMUM work hours per week

7. What is the longest amount of time your son or daughter has maintained employment on a paid job in the community after leaving the UP program?

8. What is the total number of jobs (part-time or full-time) your son or daughter has held since completing the UP program? This includes multiple jobs held at once or consecutively.
   ○
Example #2

UP Program Follow Along Questions for Recent Graduates

9. In any of the jobs your son or daughter held, was he or she promoted or assigned to take on more responsibilities than at the beginning of the job?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please explain the promotion or new responsibilities.

10. Has your son or daughter maintained continuous, community employment since leaving the UP program?

☐ Yes
☐ No

11. Has your son or daughter been fired or laid off from any job since finishing the UP program?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If 'yes', explain why.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS

NOTE: ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS PERTAIN TO PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT SINCE YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER LEFT THE UP PROGRAM IN THE COMMUNITY (meaning NOT IN:
(1) THE HOME: paid or unpaid domestic labor such as household or yard/lawn chores or babysitting; (2) SHELTERED WORKSHOPS/WORK CENTERS: entities that employ workers with disabilities in segregated settings and pay less than minimum wage)

12. Does your son or daughter currently have a paid job in the community?

☐ Yes
☐ No
Example #2

13. At this time, if your son or daughter is presently working at a paid job in the community, which of the following best describes his or her field of employment?

- Computer, mathematical, architecture, engineering, and science occupations
- Education, training, and library occupations
- Arts, design, entertainment, sports, media occupations
- Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations
- Protective service occupations
- Food preparation and serving related occupations
- Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations
- Personal care and service occupations

[Other (please specify)]

14. At this time, if your son or daughter is presently working in a paid job in the community, what are the number of hours per week he or she is working?

[_________]

15. How much is your son or daughter currently paid?

[_________]

16. What is your son’s or daughter’s current annual income range?

[_________]

17. On your son or daughter’s current job, are benefits provided (e.g. paid vacation, health insurance, retirement) as part of the job?

[_________]

If yes, describe the benefits in the comment box.

18. If your son or daughter had one or more jobs in the community after leaving the UP program, how much was the job related to the vocational training he or she received in the UP program?

[_________]
Example #2

Living and Community Activities

UP Program Follow Along Questions for Recent Graduates

19. Which of the following benefits does your son or daughter receive, if any?
   - SSI (Social Security Income)
   - SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)
   - Medicaid
   - Medicare
   - Private health insurance
   - None
   Other (please specify)

   

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

20. Which of the following best describes your son’s or daughter’s living arrangements immediately AFTER completing the UP program?

21. Which of the following best describes your son’s or daughter’s living arrangements CURRENTLY?

22. Not including job related activities, how often does your son or daughter CURRENTLY leave the home to go into community settings?

23. How does your son or daughter travel around in the community?
   - Drives a car (has a driver’s license)
   - Walks or rides bike or other self-propelled vehicle
   - Relies on parents, family members, or friends
   - Use public transportation, para transit, or taxi
   - Uses transportation provided by an agency or organization.
   If transportation is provided by an agency or organization, please explain

The TPSID National Coordinating Center at Think College is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. The Center is funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education Grant #P407B100002.
**Example #2**

**UP Program Follow Along Questions for Recent Graduates**

24. Which of the following financial skills does your son or daughter have? (check all that apply)

- Manages a debit/credit card (knows PIN; tracks spending, etc.)
- Manages a savings account
- Manages a checking account
- Writes checks
- Pays bills (i.e., rent, internet, cable, power, etc.)

Other or more financial skills (please specify):

25. What is the best way to describe your son or daughters current relationship with a “significant other”?

26. Does your son or daughter currently receive any of the following services to support living in the community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services to Support Living in the Community</th>
<th>Services for Diagnosis and Health Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational services and job training</td>
<td>Medical for diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid</td>
<td>Speech or language therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational assistance/ supports/ tutoring</td>
<td>Audiology services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader or interpreter</td>
<td>Orientation and mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational or life skill therapy</td>
<td>Respite care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare or parenting skills training</td>
<td>Adult day or adult recreation program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological or mental health services</td>
<td>Housing assistance or services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work services</td>
<td>Personal assistant/aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapy</td>
<td>Nursing care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive technology</td>
<td>Case management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation services</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RECREATIONAL, LEISURE, AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**
Example #2

Some survey questions adapted from NLTS 2
Collecting data from former students
Strategies for collecting outcome data

Adapted from “Contacting Hard-to-Find Youth: Strategies for the Post-School Survey” by the National Post-School Outcomes Center

1. Provide pre-notification
2. Create familiarity
3. Show interest
4. Provide incentives
5. Stay in touch through social media and alumni activities and gatherings
6. Make contact
Provide pre-notification

- Inform students about the survey before they exit
- While they are still in college:
  - Explain the purpose of the outcome survey
  - Show students the questions
  - Explain the timeline for data collection
  - Share survey results with students
  - Provide information about the survey at the final exit meeting
  - Establish and have students join a Facebook page to stay in touch
  - Ask students for contact information
- After they exit:
  - Send a reminder before sending the survey
Create familiarity

• Explain why the survey is important and how it helps other students
• Show students examples of how survey information is used
• Share the survey with students and families so they know what will be asked
• Teach students the vocabulary of the survey
• Practice completing the survey
Show interest

• When conducting the survey
  • Be enthusiastic!
  • Be interested in the answers former students provide
  • Convey a non-judgmental tone
Provide incentives

• Give former students a reason to participate
• Doesn’t need to be monetary Remind students that the information they share is valuable
• Provide information about jobs, colleges, and services that former students may be eligible for
• If possible, provide modest gift certificates for completing the survey
Stay in touch: Social media

• Be sure to stay in touch and connected when possible with alumni and families through social media outlets
  • Many will typically update their employment status there when things change on their social media profiles
  • Many do enjoy staying connected with their friends and the program staff
  • Peer supports can usually contact graduates when staff may have been unsuccessful to help in gathering follow along data
Stay in touch: Alumni activities and gatherings

• Parallel with various college alumni groups and have associated gatherings to stay in touch:
  • Homecoming?
  • Family weekend?
  • Open House events?
  • Speaking at school events and fairs?
  • Family support and mentoring meetings?
  • Conferences and guest speaking events?
  • Featured stories in college magazines and media channels?
  • Other events?
Make contact

• Gather contact information before students exit
  • Home phone, cellphone, email, physical address, family address, social media

• Contact students regularly

• Ask students for updated contact information each time you make contact

• Maintain a database of contact information and dates of outreach

• Use the college and program name in any materials
Using outcome data
Analyzing data

• Look at:
  • Outcomes by cohort
  • Outcomes by program experiences
  • Trends in outcomes over time
Sharing your data

• Audiences to share data with

- Students: Former, current, and prospective
- Families
- College and university administration
- Legislators and policymakers
- Others involved in inclusive postsecondary education
- Researchers
Resources

• Branding your Post-School Outcomes Data Collection Process from the National Post-School Outcomes Center

• Post-School Data Collection Question Bank from the National Post-School Outcomes Center

• Dabbling in the Data from Public Profit

• Free resources on evaluation from Community Solutions