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You Don't Say! Parent Involvement Expectations, Communication  
and FERPA Requirements in Postsecondary Education Programs for  
Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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>> While everyone is getting settled, you can look at the link for captioning. The PowerPoint is also available if you'd like to access that before we get started. Hi, everybody, happy Thursday afternoon. I'm Rebecca Lazo. I'm happy to introduce today's webinar. You Don't Say! Family involvement, expectations, communication and FERPA requirements. Barb is our codirector and we're happy that the National Parent Center is one of our partners. We work closely to make sure we get information out to families for students with intellectual disabilities.

Just going to share this screen about using Zoom, in case anyone is unfamiliar. There's a black bar at the top or bottom of your screen. There's a picture where you can opt to see the chat and throughout the meeting, you'll be able to use that chat to put any questions in or say hello. Ask for any assistance if you need it. Please feel free to engage that way. Barb's also happy to take questions throughout the webinar, if she's at a good stopping point. We'll get her those questions. There's time at the end to receive questions as well. If you do use the

chat, make sure to select this right here. This blue bar should say all panelists and attendees if you want to ask a question of the entire group. If you have a question for me or Barb, you can put it there. It's nice to have everyone's questions show up so there's no repetition. Again... I'll put the URL for the handouts for today in the chat and I'll also put the URL -- since you can't click on my screen, I'll put the URL for the closed captioning as well.

So... both of those are there now.

So... PowerPoint, closed captioning, everyone's here. I'm going to advance this slide to Barb's introductory slide. If you'd let us know who is here today, if you could just click off which role or description is -- best fits you, we'd love to know who is in the audience today. So... thank you.

Barb, welcome. You can go ahead and say hi now if you'd like.

>> I'll say hi, I see they're still kind of typing --  
>> Yeah.

>> I'm anxious to see who's in our audience. I'll just say this, for webinars, sometimes, I think we think of the person presenting as an expert, somehow. I really feel like I'm lucky to be surrounded by all the people who are actually the experts. Those of you who have students enrolled in programs, those of you who are conducting programs, Higher Ed, staff, the researchers, the policymakers, the high school teachers, you work with the students and you live with this. I'm really hoping today, we can be interactive enough that we can learn from each other because... I think what we know most of all is that when people work together in partnership, you can do a lot of incredible things.

So... I'm seeing the results here, Rebecca, I don't know how long you need, but... it looks like we got a pretty good vote in here.

>> I can go ahead and close it. There we go. So... it looks like about 50% of the people here are from Higher Education, faculty or staff and parents of maybe future students, with IDD, also some parents have students that are enrolled. And a few policymakers and K-12 faculty. That's great.

>> Good. I want to thank you all for joining us today. I will say, I'm hoping that you're all kind of relaxed and in a good mood because I know here at PACER we're relaxed in the education calendar. Second week of June comes and you can almost hear a collective exhale to have gotten through the end of the year stuff and that mad pace that many of you including parents, students themselves have been maintaining. Hopefully you're off and taking time to be on the webinar today.

I want to tell you a little bit about who PACER is. I'm not going to spend long on this, but... I, our relationship with Think College is really, again, around family engagement, parent involvement and... Minnesota, each state has a parent training and information center, partially funded through Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. And Minnesota's Center, we're turning 40 this year. I've been with PACER about 16.5 years. In 2014, out of a recognition that there were some unique needs of families, of youth, to have additional family-friendly, accessible resources around the transition to adulthood, we decided to start the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment. PACER is a state center, but also a national center. We have some other national projects as well. Some of you may know about our assignment technology center and those resources.

But... PACER is really, feels privileged to be part of Think College. The people there are amazing. They really value family engagement, parent involvement. Together, I think we make an awesome team to help move this objective forward to really create some meaningful programs for students with disabilities.

So... at PACER, I'm part of a team, I codirect the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment. We worked hard on a long title, sorry. We have a transition team that work primarily from the time you're just about to get out of school, moving into young adulthood through the 20s, then we also have special education advocates who work around the transition during secondary Ed. So... we love to be a resource and... we love to connect with Think College and other national partners.

Let me tell you about basically what we do here. And... you can do the next slide, Rebecca.

So... in a nutshell, what we do, we really promote family involvement in transition as a research-based best practice. We

also promote building the capacity of professionals to really work effectively with youth and their families and to be able to support them and we support, we promote high expectations for all of us. But... especially for the young person and then, what we provide here is a lot of information. We produce resources, I'd like to say, we speak family and try to do that in accessible ways. We do a lot of referral, PACER doesn't claim to know everything, but what we're really good at is knowing who knows. We can connect you to the resources that you need. I hope that you'll use us for that. We also do direct assistance to families, as far as our National Center on Transition. Think College has a way for families to connect with them. Reach out if we can help. We engage with professionals and families.

We also do national conferences and provide technical assistance to other entities. This webinar is part of that technical assistance role that we play, regarding family engagement.

So... you can go ahead and go to the next slide. This is just a slide so you know where to find us. So... PACER has their general website, which is [www.PACER.org](http://www.PACER.org) and if you do `/transition`, it'll take you to our part of the world. Today's resources and things we're talking about, most of them will come under the tab that says learning center. There's a learning center for Postsecondary Ed, for the laws, for employment. In the postsecondary learning center, we'll have publications I talked about today. I'm going to show you a link to a really great FERPA video and all of that can be found here on the top of this page, you can sign up for two times a month newsletter. I'd be interested to know if anybody wants to type it in there, if you found out about this through our newsletter or through the Think College newsletter or if you found it on a website. Always interested to know so that we can do a better job of that.

But... you can sign up for the newsletter here, you can send us an e-mail. You can like us on Facebook and you'll get notified with all the new stuff that comes on our website.

So... just before we go to the next slide, want to mention why I'm doing this. Just a little bit. I don't want to take any time more than I need to, talking about me, but... I'm the parent of a young man who is now 29 with an intellectual, developmental disability. I came to PACER out of the passion

that I had as a parent and as an advocate and someone with some background and education, because of my son Brandon. He propelled me into this work when he was born. A professional said "would you come to a meeting?" I came to do this work because when he was in middle school, I was kind of figuring out how to navigate this. And how to advocate for inclusion. I thought "I wonder if there's a job where I could help other families who might not have all the resources I had?" And there was. It's like a dream come true job. I'm here as a professional who works in the field, but my primary role is one of a parent and helping people see things from a parent perspective.

So... Rebecca, you can go to the next slide. My favorite slide in today's presentation. We say at PACER, the rule is, if you do the presentation, you get to put your kid's picture in it. This is a picture, on the left, I want to introduce you to Brandon. That's Brandon when he was waiting for the bus when he was 5. His sister in third grade, Kristen, his big sister was off to the neighborhood school, but because there was a new school built for inclusion and we wanted inclusion for Brandon, he was waiting for the bus to take him to his inclusive kindergarten classroom. At that time, we had dreams of everything for Brandon that we had for our daughter, which would include going to college some day and at age 5, I was kind of hopeful about that.

I will say, between the two pictures, the picture on the right is Brandon when he graduated from a small residential, faith-based program here in Minnesota. The time in between was a lot of having to modify those expectations because the reality was when Brandon was in high school, there weren't colleges that he was going to be otherwise qualified to attend.

So... it's so exciting what's happened and what is happening and everyone on this call, on this webinar is a trailblazer and pioneer. In my, about 30 years of being involved, I think this is the biggest game-changer, I've seen, in a long time. I just want to mention one way it's a game-changer. So... when Brandon, when I was arguing for inclusion in middle school and then in high school when it was so tough and then he went to a segregated 18 to 21-year-old program and somehow that was going to prepare him for going to college, that was tough, but recently, a coworker, Judy came back from an IEP meeting and she was so excited. She was

working with the parents of a young -- a boy with Down Syndrome, going into a Pre-K classroom and... the school wanted him in a center-based program, but she was advocating for inclusion in his regular class. When they asked her why, she said... because we plan on him going to a college program some day. And he needs to be with his peers in order to be ready. It changed the whole trajectory of that meeting and his education.

This is a story to illustrate the power of parent expectations and the power of working with professionals effectively. What Brandon accomplished in his life and he's now living in an apartment with a roommate and he, he has a job in the community. What he accomplished in all those years, I couldn't make happen. My husband and I. Our family. We couldn't make that happen. We needed to work alongside all these dedicated professionals.

So... today, I just want this to frame all that we're going to talk about, some of it will be frustrations, maybe, with roles and expectations, but... at the heart of it, we can really do some incredible things if we maintain these high expectations and allow for meaningful interaction between parents and professionals.

And I want to mention too, I'm really sharing today, not just from my own personal perspective, it comes from working with and talking with families over the last 20-some years and PACER does all disabilities. But... today, we're really focused on those students with intellectual and development disabilities. Rebecca, you can go ahead and forward the slide.

And I wanted to mention another frame, kind of, to today's discussion, besides just an overarching high expectations and parent professional partnership, is that the comprehensive transition programs and Think College's coordinating center. You're all familiar with them, really who provide support and got this whole thing going. And they have some model accreditation standards. And... within their standards for the program, is the standard that I have on the screen. Which is, there are student services, standard four, to have a stated process for family engagement and communication that reflects the following. This is a little bit shortened version, but four elements here, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, a process for the provision of information to parents, student control over parental involvement, and that adheres to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA.

So because this is a best practice and accreditation standard, today's webinar really is going to try to get at those four points. And... again, try to share some of those strategies, best practices and ways that we might help programs get closer to meeting this and have families have an understanding of what to expect and how to participate in meaningful ways.

You can go ahead and move the slide, thank you. Okay... so... I always think it's important when we talk about students with disabilities, within special education, to recognize that first and foremost, they're a student, member of the whole school, community, when we talk about college programs, that are based on colleges and universities and we talk about parents, then we have to look at the big picture of parent involvement and it actually has had some changes over the years. And you know... when I was in college, things were different than they are now. One thing I noticed when I was doing research around this topic, online, was just the number of colleges now that have dedicated websites or webpages, this is just a few things I found. There's, there is a national association of Higher Ed parent, family, program professionals.

There's a, this is some examples of Harvard college has a monthly newsletter for parents. There's all sorts of things going on that has kind of illustrates that there's a different expectation, and right now, we're not talking about right or wrong, but today's parents there's a large number of them that have a higher expectation for knowing what's going on, sometimes the reasons cited, when you're spending \$40,000 a year, you want to be in the loop. That's a huge investment. There are other reasons as well.

Sometimes we're harder on parents of students with disabilities than we are on parents in general. Around our need to have communication and be in the loop for our students. One of the things that we did, recently around what I'm going to share today, we implemented a survey, a survey of programs and a survey to parents. I'll talk about how you can get involved if you haven't done that already... just in the last week or so, we've gotten over 40 responses. I have some kind of preliminary information I'll be sharing about some of those questions. Right now... 52% of the programs surveyed indicated they currently have program materials that explicitly describe the role of parent and guardians in the program. And the

expectations for involvement. And... I, you know... 52% is great. Many programs indicated they're moving in that direction, but that does mean that maybe for some of the parents out there, if you're in a program that's one of the 48. Maybe that is something that was a missing piece for you. I'm hoping programs today, will learn from each other and examples that we share will help you as you develop those materials.

So... Rebecca, do you have the poll question ready for the next question? Okay... as we look at how students in general, and expectations around how involved parents are, I thought it'd be fun -- I found some research on this too. A 2015 survey of typically, whatever we want to use. Typically-developing college students on university and college campuses. They asked them whether or not they had access to their students university, ID and password. I thought it'd be kind of interesting for you to take a wild guess at how that all played out. I'll wait just a minute. Of course... this doesn't go towards your final grade. It's really just a fun -- for me, it was a little bit of a fun fact that -- so... it looks like, I'm going to give you one more second here. This would give you access to a lot of information. As most schools seem to have portals. Where you can check that out. So... most of you voted. Okay... you're still voting. Should I go ahead and do the reveal? For our purposes, most of you thought it'd be between 0 and 25% of parents. That would have been my guess as well. Actually... it's over 51% of parents in a survey, a couple thousand parents, indicated they have that information. So... that tells us some things and I know there'd be a variety of responses to the appropriateness of that.

So... this is not going to be a webinar about how to get your students past IT. But... I think that it, it illustrates a point around the kind of parenting approaches that we are aware of and... this kind of parent, who maybe has the ID and password, we don't know, but... they might be referred to as one of the following. Rebecca, if you want to put up the next slide. Just take a look at, you know... these images, correspond to some of the wrap, bad wrap or actor at wrap. So the helicopter parent terminology has been around of a long time. The snowplow one was new to me. And... I saw in some articles and research, it's similar to being a lawn mower parent. I personally resonate with the bubble wrap kind of parent, especially around the protection of the emotional, social well-being of a young person.

But... I think everyone would probably agree that what we're hoping for is for parents to be able to move into that coaching, sideline coach, advisor, consultant, unfortunately, unpaid consultant. I'd add. Role... as the student is embarking on that transition to adulthood.

And... I think that sometimes we think, when we read about these kinds of things, like everybody is feeling kind of, you know... animosity between parents and professionals and the parent role. Really... I'll share some statistics later, but really, it seems to be a small number of parents that, professionals would feel were on the far end of the spectrum.

So... we're going to take a look at why parents may come across this way. And how we can work together more effectively to support parents in moving into those more appropriate and research-based best-practice kinds of roles. To support the students.

You can go ahead to the next slide. So... let's take a look, then, at parent involvement and what's expected. This is, expectations are everything in relationships. Mis-match of expectations, usually foundational to a poor relationship. And we want to look at and think about, when we're talking about parents being involved and we're talking specific to college, and college programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we want to look at that through the lens of what do students expect as far as their parents involvement? What about the program staff? Maybe not paid staff, but peer mentors. Sometimes graduate students who work for the program provide interaction that parents may or may not want to tap into.

Then... the college at large. How are parents to be involved or communicate with professors? Faculty, with resident assistance if this is a residential program.

For our survey, right now, it's a really small number, this might not be an accurate reflection, of those who responded to the surveys so far, about 40% of them reported students living in either housing on campus or off campus. And... the majority actually didn't have the residential component and we do, of course, see some differences about the level of involvement and/or need for communication when residential living is part of that.

So... we're going to talk, today, about these expectations, one thing I will say about student expectations, and... family expectations around communication. There is a difference, again, more-recent difference in that families often communicate with each other, now, like, in realtime. Long gone are the days of, you know, once a week, long distance phone call, you know... during the cheap times.

Now, many families are used to texting each other, you know... multiple times a day, whether their student has a disability or not, they are connected in different ways. And... part of this conversation has to be about respecting what's already in place, when students come to school, but... also, encouraging families around how they might divert some of that communication, if necessary, to other caring and trusting adults.

So... it's just something to recognize that it's probably, for many people, going to be more than what they might be comfortable with, but... we have to look at what does the student want in this? And parents need to look at what does the student need as far as that goes?

The college program staff, by and large, we'll talk about those expectations. One of the hard things for many families of students with disabilities across the board is just this move to being at a place where the professors, the faculty, do not really want to, or do they see it appropriate to interact directly with families. So... this shift to knowing how to support your student in doing the communication and having support from the college or from the college program to do that is a big one for families.

The same with RAs in many and most cases I'm aware of. They're not going to want to be having to field calls directly from parents. Then it becomes an issue of, do families know what to do when they have concerns? We'll take a look at what some of those primary concerns are.

Before we do that, I wanted to mention that as part of the survey, we asked if programs or parents had examples or materials in the way they provide information about these expectations? If they were willing to share it, to send it to me and I did get Claire Rosenbaum, identify need to look at the name of the college, I know I'll get it wrong, but I know she's from Rhode Island and the acronym was CUS. She was generous to

provide information and share their very-thorough parent handbook. One thing she said was that FERPA and family communication issues are addressed at application.

So... rather than waiting until the student's already of a student to find out how this is all going to work, it's part of their application process. And... I think that that's something very positive to pursue if, if that's not the case. I also think parents need to know, and students, when they're visiting prospective schools, to ask up front, how is -- how are these expectations communicated? What are they? What will our role be? One school or another may be a better fit for what your student or you desire and would find helpful.

And that's her school was -- oh, I want to mention one more thing Claire said. They do all sorts of things to communicate this, but... I'm quoting from her. In spite of hearing this multiple times, I think students taking on the responsibility of communication and parents letting it go or guiding the handing off of that to the student, doesn't always become real until it actually happens.

That really resonated with me. I think that's the value of college. You're not just talking to students about these things, they actually get to experience it. Go ahead and go to the next slide and Rebecca, I'm going to take a breath and say "were there any questions at this point that I should address?"

>> None that I saw through but Claire Rosenbaum did clarify where she's from. The Certificate of College and Career Retainment. (?)

>> Great, we'll try to facilitate getting that out to people making changes in the area. We talked about college parents in general and the general expectation, really is at a college level, that students in college are otherwise qualified. They're eligible students and we're really shifting the responsibilities to the student with the parents kind of behind the scenes. And... I think it's important to talk about what's different for those families. While some things might be the same, there are real significant differences. Here it says CTP. I'm using that for comprehensive transition program, but we're talking about any student in a program that's geared to students with intellectual developmental disabilities that would not be otherwise qualified to attend college, for credit and to earn a degree or diploma.

And there's three major things, and I, this is somewhat geared to helping professionals understand why we might need to modify our policies from the regular college, which many of you do already. Beautifully. So... the first thing is, really need to be aware that, students are not the same as any other student. My son's the same in many ways in his hopes and dreams and aspirations and gifts he brings, that's all the same, but... there's a reality to the ability levels, feeling levels and development stage of the student.

Many students going off to college have known they're going off to college and the families have too, and the teachers have expected it all through school. And... you know... where college and career-ready is part of the requirement for high school education.

Unfortunately, for many of the students that are now going into these programs, on the older end, college-ready wasn't part of the deal. Many of the developmental things their peers have already pursued as far as baby-sitting in the community, driving the car, going away for spring break independently, those are not experiences most of these students have had when they're enrolling in college, especially if they're 18, 19, 20.

So... we really have to keep that in mind when we talk about why might families still need to be involved, more like they may have been for someone else in high school.

The second thing is, this whole issue of adult living destinations. What are the options? The number of options? And what are the pathways to get there that are available? And the, the fact is, even though we made so much progress in this college thing, like the greatest thing, there's still too few options.

In Minnesota, I think there are two private school options for college that are residential here. Some states are, they have far more programs, but there are some states with no programs. We are making a lot of progress, the reality is, for these families, unlike, perhaps, a different student who might have lots of different choices for Postsecondary Education there, are fewer options.

So... the family is going to be more-involved with supporting the student in figuring out the pray. I'd venture to say 90% of the students who are in your current programs, it

wasn't the student who found out about the option and pushed to make it happen, it probably was parents, like some of those of you on the call today who searched this all out. It shouldn't be so hard, but it is hard for a lot of families.

So... that's part of the issue about involvement and then, the other piece that's really important about why, when we talk later about self-determination, we're not talking about self-determination that leaves the you know... family out of the picture.

And it has to do with the complexity of service systems, families usually are the case manager, the only case manager across medical care, health care, financial elements of this, if there's Social Security income, medical assistance involved, the employment supports, and of course, goes without saying, transportation. There are all these pieces of the puzzle and the student going to college, with a developmental disability, when they're done in two or four years, it's likely that they're still going to need that support in managing these multiple systems that are not designed for an individual with intellectual disabilities to be able to understand themselves.

So... we don't want to leave parents out of the picture for a few years, and then, have them come back into the picture, rather, I think we need to support families in developing ways to assist their young person in increasingly taking on these responsibilities.

So... go ahead and there we go. Really, I think I just said this, but positive parent involvement is the issue here. Parents are going to be involved. It's whether or not it's a type of involvement that approach really supports the student growing in their ability to make decisions. Make their own choices, initiate, instead of respond to other people's wishes. So... as I said, those parent involvement practices that programs want to implement really can support families in that ongoing development. I had a thought the other day about what we're talking about here.

When, when students going to college, it's a little bit to me like, if you shop at a big box store, here in Minnesota, target is a big store with lots of lanes or big grocery store, now there's usually a couple options. You can go through the, the regular lines where the cashier, you know, will ring you up and if you're lucky, they have baggers and they'll bag it. Some

stores will take it to the car for you. Or, if the lines are long and you're in a big hurry, you could choose to use the self-service aisles and then you can go through that line yourself. But... nobody's going to take it out, put it on the thing, figure out how to put your money in and... I don't know about you, but... about half the time I use them, some glitch occurs and what do you do then? There's usually an attendant who is kind of watching a bunch of these aisles and you raise your hand "I need help." They come over and help you scan the program or whatever it is. You can get their assistance, but you have to ask them for it. I think it's helpful to look at college like the students now are in the self-serve aisle.

When they were in high school, and their transition programs through public school, it was more like they had the cashier there, they had the bagger there, but... now, if they don't know how to say, first of all... if they don't know how to try it and then say "I need some support here." They won't get what they need. It's more like the person that's available but not guiding individually.

So... we have to think about how families can learn about that earlier, so they can prepare students for that and be prepared themselves.

I, as a parent, personally hated when people told me, "you just need to let go." I don't hate it as much now because I feel like maybe I've done some of that, but I really found that for me, there was a better way to approach that. Because... to me, this is what let go brought to my mind and think about what it brings to your. We're big Charles Shultz fans and we have a lot of Peanuts cartoons and things that are part of our household. I don't know if you remember the kite-eating tree. This is what I picture. I'm a parent, my kids are soaring and I'm holding onto the string. I see they're rising and I think "I can let go now." I can't do that because I'm afraid the kite will come crashing down to earth and get stuck in the tree, but what I was able to do, even though I'm that bubble wrap kind of parent was to realize that as long as I could be assured that I had done all that I could to find a place to plant the student where they were reasonably likely to get the nutrients they needed, you know... somebody's going to provide some water and they're going to make sure they get some sun and they're planted in an environment where they're likely to be able to thrive... then I was able to say... okay... now I can let them grow. I

can let him grow for awhile. Then you have to transplant them to a bigger pot and the cycle continues. I encourage staff programs to not be too forceful about this letting go part. Or judgmental about where people are at in the process. I encourage parents, if letting go is difficult for you, perhaps you can reframe it as a letting grow process.

For me, I was so scared the night before the first day of college. And I had to just, I needed like the plan, you know? The transition plan as well as my son. But... I really was able to say to myself, but... you've done everything you can to set it up for the best chance at success and you have some trusted people, you checked it out, now... let it grow. And... it was a total game-changer in our lives. I've seen this with so many students. So... that's my encouragement around how we can really talk about this in ways that is helpful to families.

Let's go ahead to the next slide. And... this is the other piece of this that I think is important, the way that we approach this with families. It's really, sometimes the word independent is overused. I will say with the families that we work with, particularly from diverse cultures, independence is not always a value. A family value or a cultural value, as much as interdependence. And I love this quote from Frederick Schroeder from the National Federation for the Blind. He says beware of the rugged individualism stereotype. None of us really live independently. Family interdependence is the norm. We don't want family overdependence, but we do want to ensure that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, that we don't inadvertently in our desire to increase their self-determination, create scenarios where they might be more isolated and less-connected. We want to respect their need for interdependence. I think about my own job. I know educators with teams and you know, there's very few Lone Ranger people out there in the world. So... I think it's off-putting, sometimes, to families, they share this with me, when they feel like the, the professionals working with them are assuming that their son or daughter will be totally independent some day when in the back of their mind, they're thinking "he's going to need some support" and that's okay.

We want to encourage the social connections. I heard, when Brandon was about two months old, I went to a You are the Expert conference in Virginia and Rod Turnbull and his wife were speakers at that. He said something I remember to this day. He

was talking about, he was talking to parents and that the only real Social Security you're going to ultimately be able to count on is the security that's created by establishing meaningful relationships and community connections for your son or daughter. Government programs and funding can come and go and basically, family and friends, and your network of support, is who you're going to be able to count on at the end of the day.

As we talk and work to increase the independence of youth, we also want to be mindful of the importance of helping them learn how to concurrent and be connected and create connections that will last. I still have friends from college and I'm hopeful that my son will make life-long friends because... that's part of the college experience as well.

So... go ahead.

>> Barb, there's a couple questions that have come in, I don't know know if you saw them. Dana has a question. Is Pacer creating some video or "testimonial" resources from you and other parents who have had students in college? I can see hearing from other parents would be very helpful for our families.

>> No, they probably won't. We don't have anything in the works for that. We do inspiring possibilities. Videos and I do think that sounds like a really good idea. I will take that back to the team and we'll also, we can also run that by Think College. Maybe in light of that too, I can share one comment along that way that a parent made in the survey when we asked the question, what information or guidance do parents and students need to receive while still in K-12 education to be better-prepared for their changing role in college? This was a comment that is related to this topic of maybe hearing from parents.

It says... this person said "I want them to know that it's possible for the student to master the independent living skills to be successful at college with support, of course. It's hard for parents to imagine this, yet it's true." When I read that, I thought, it is hard to imagine. Honestly, it's almost impossible to imagine for some of us. Yes... I think that's a great idea. If you're a parent who would be willing to do a little video, or contribute to that, please e-mail me, we'd love to hear from real people out there. Was there another question.

>> Yes... I'm sorry, the other question was from Shelly Robins, she says: Are there colleges that are known for providing students with support for IEPs or transition programs and what questions should we be asking?

>> Those are great questions, Think College, on their website... and they have a new revamped family section. You can search their website to find out what schools have to offer. I go to the website and find current information. Sometimes it isn't -- they may not be updating all the information. At PACER, we deal with all disabilities. Other students with disabilities going to college and will be receiving services through disability services or access services on the college campus. There are colleges, basically, that provide, what I'd call the base level of services that ensure access to their programming. Then there are some colleges, just regular colleges and universities who have what I call enhanced services and then there's almost like a third tier of some colleges and some of them are private schools. But... some are not. That actually have particular support, enhanced services, as part of their university or college. There are ways to search for those kinds of programs. There's also ways through Think College to find information about the other schools.

And, what I find challenging, like I said earlier, for families is the college needs to be a really good fit. And other students often have a lot of options and so... you know, the environment -- the size of the college is huge for students that don't have transportation. Think College is a really great kind of like checklist of questions to ask when you're investigating colleges. And if you can't find that, you can either e-mail them on their website or you could e-mail me and I could direct you to where that information is.

>> I think that's it for now. Think College also has a new Facebook group, which you have to ask to join and I will put that link in the chat as well. I will also advance the slides and let you know, Barb, there's about ten minutes left.

>> Okay... I'm going to zip, I appreciate that. The way I have the whole view, I couldn't see my clock. Thank you. So... I'm going to move quicker. Supporting high expectations, this is a short slide, but I like this quote. Along with these high expectations for your student and their families to kind of shift their role and for the students to take responsibility for the families to perhaps back off, there needs to be support.

High expectations are a hollow promise if we don't provide the supports that go with them. What are some of the ways that we can provide those supports? I think we provide support to families when we answer some of their frequently-asked parent questions and those are on the next slide, Rebecca. Is the student well-supervised? What is the process if something goes wrong? Who helps with the school? Is no news good news? Is he making friends? Are they anxious or depressed? Is somebody monitoring that? Are they on track? Are they making progress? Those are all questions that parents really want to know the answer to. And... we need to support that in the way that we provide information and make it accessible to students. I think some of the tips around that, as well, for providing supports, includes you know, ongoing assurance about the safety of students. Don't just say we're going to keep them safe, trust us. Demonstrated by periodically reporting out on how that's maintained and what their options are if they have concerns in that area. Who's a specific person to contact and what's that look like? Providing initial bursts of support for new activities and explaining that up front to parents. Sometimes they're imagining you're making them do this all on their own. Usually the first few weeks of school, there'll be enhanced supports. Provide, especially, initially, frequent reports and evidence of student success and growth. We need to know, yeah... my kid's getting it. We may not be there yet, but they're making progress into that and then ask the parents for their input.

Helpful information they can share about accommodations that work well. Reinforcers, motivators, what works for their student. If you show respect for that input and you intentionally ask for it, parents feel less compelled to have to make sure you understand about some of these things and get ahold of you regarding that.

And along with that, is my favorite strategy... next slide. Which is... make sure that you complete the communication loop. So... George Bernard Shaw said this so well. The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place. This is a basic slide, but what I want to get across is that systems and institutions and programs and schools do a pretty good job of sending out messages. You have it on your website, you send an e-mail. You know... you may have a Facebook page like we do. You send out messages, you send the FERPA thing or you give them information and then the receiver

gets. It I guess... my point here is... unless you get a response or some feedback from the receiver, you don't, you haven't communicated, necessarily... if you call my house and leave a message on my land line, there's an 85% chance I will never get it because someone else will listen to it first. They'll forget to tell me, the button will stop beeping.

I've found as an advocate that communication is at the root of 80% of disagreements around these issues. Be intentional about how you can complete those communication loops. Those are important pieces. For program staff, the primary barriers you face in communicating with families. Their top reason, 73% listed was unrealistic parent expectations. I think that's specific to communication and then the top reason for parents, 63% of them cited was the colleges overall philosophy and expectations for student autonomy.

So... communication about that is going to be really critical in making sure that we can really work together effectively. Let's move to FERPA.

So... I know MVP you are probably, those especially educators, this is really kind of a hot topic. I gave you four really good resources and these are good resources for families, but I think professionals, if you're not aware of them, would be interested as well. The first is a link to the Family Policy Compliance Office. They have a lot of good things on their website. One of the ways is to e-mail or call and ask your own specific questions.

Which, I have done around the guardianship issue I'm going to mention. Contacted them, they were really helpful. Then, they have guidance and the primary piece, I think you want to review is the disclosure of information from education records to parents of postsecondary students. Because... everything changes about FERPA, from K-12 when the parents rights are the ones being protected to when they move to college, regardless of their age, and in many cases, regardless of their status. The rights are to protect the privacy of the student and parents have very limited access or none in some cases, unless the student provides that.

And so... we produced a publication in cooperation two with Think College and the link is on our website. We tried to really clarify what FERPA is and can do and I suggest, and this is on our website in the learning center for Postsecondary Ed,

that families view the four-minute video from that FPCO about FERPA for parents and students. It does a great job of showing that difference. Rebecca, do we have time for that survey question?

>> Yes... we just don't have a lot of time, but I'll launch -- put it up, while I talk, if people want to take a stab at that, I think it will help with the content. And can identify, can you move the slide while that's up or not?

>> Maybe.

>> Well... while you're taking a stab at that, I want to say that FERPA really provides an opportunity as Claire shared. Sometimes until you have to do something, you put off a conversation and grappling with it. FERPA necessitates a shift in the family perspective on this and gives an opportunity to have family conversations that you should have anyway, regardless of FERPA or guardianship. At this time in your young adult's life. You want to know what expectations are as far as sharing information about grades and progress and what's going on. Let's look at that survey. Under FERPA colleges must disclose information to parents when... and it gives some scenarios. The answer is none of the above. 37% gave that answer. It's a bit of a trick question. These are all areas that are permissible for the college to share information without expressed student consent. But they are not required.

So... if it said may, it'd be true. This is where there's a lot of confusion. FERPA has some very strict requirements and then there are institutional policies about these areas that are permissible but not required. So... you really need to be clear on both of those aspects.

And so... this is a great opportunity to have a conversation and to help the student understand what their role will be in this.

>> I'm going to the next slide, but it's after 4:00, some people may leave. I don't know if you want to try to zip through the last few slides and people can stay as long as they can or... could I do two minutes and if people need to drop off, I understand and I apologize. I wanted to get at, some people wanted to talk about guardianship. The majority of student programs, they ask if the parent is a guardian. In most cases, it didn't have a great impact on eligibility and other factors, we'll be sharing more information about that, this language on

the slide is just to convey that in general, FERPA doesn't call out a difference around guardianship, per se. Our handout gets at it a little bit more, but it's a complicated thing and we're working with Think College and can take calls and help people find the resources they need to get the answers that apply to their specific situation.

Even with guardianship or not guardianship, there's a directory sharing that schools can do without the student's consent. Then... the other piece is just around the annual notification. Many times it's not very understandable to the student themselves and the point on this slide is that an educational agency or institution needs to effectively notice the student who is disabled. So... programs should take a close look at the need to provide that information in ways that the student and the family can actually access and understand, because that's where I've seen the issue when that wasn't clearly laid out.

Finally the last slide is really around just a compilation of some best practices and strategies from directions for Higher Ed. An article that I thought really summarized really well, how we can approach this in light of high expectations and professional partnerships. Create parent partnerships by building relationships. Provide that parent orientation, programming and again, up front, proactively give parents materials that the students are going to get around schedules and content, can eliminate a lot of questions. Big one is number four... let them know who is in charge of what and how they can contact the person they should contact rather than someone inappropriate.

And then, provide that up front, clear and really adequate information about FERPA. So... those are some of the basics, hopefully there weren't a lot of questions remaining. The last slide is about the survey. If you didn't get an invitation to participate and you'd like to, you can e-mail me. On the next slide, just gives you lots of ways to get ahold of me. If I can help in any way, if PACER can provide resources or support, please get ahold of us. We appreciate you listening in today and... again, I just thank everyone in the audience for taking time because you are changing the world for people with disabilities. Thank you.

>> Barb, thank you so much. And thanks to all the audience who stayed on. I know a few people said they were grateful for

your time and information you were sharing. If you can't find Barb, you can always contact Think College and we can put you in touch with her. I'm going to ask, too, for the folks on here, if you have questions or comments, put them in the chat, but we'd like your feedback on today's webinar. I think there's six questions, you pick a quick answer, it's short, but we'd love to have your feedback so we can continue planning webinars in the future that best suit your needs. Jenna Arnold just asked if you can get a copy of the PowerPoint. Yes, it's on the website right now. I'm going to put that in the chat box for you. The recording will be posted -- I'm out of the office tomorrow, but in the next couple days you can find it. It's on our website on the events page for this webinar which will be moved to past webinars or past events tomorrow, but you can find it there. Darcy Oaks, if you could e-mail me, if anyone needs a certificate of attendance, e-mail me directly. I can e-mail that to you. We don't e-mail them out as a whole to all the attendees, but we can do that.

What else can I tell you? I think that's probably it. You can always e-mail or Barb. You can e-mail Think College. And that's probably all of the different ways you can find us.  
[laughter]

Barb, thanks again for your time today. I know it was a lot to get through in an hour. But it was lots of helpful information, clearing things up for folks, I guess that's it, thanks, everybody for being here today.

>> Thank you.

[Call concluded at 4:06 p.m. ET].

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