



fast fact

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Characteristics of Students that Attended Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSIDs) by VR Partnership Status

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The National Coordinating Center (NCC) at Think College, funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education, US Department of Education, provides support, coordination, training, and evaluation for Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) model demonstration project grantees. These TPSID grantees were tasked with creating, expanding, or enhancing high-quality, inclusive postsecondary education (PSE) programs to support positive outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) (e.g., educational attainment, employment, and community inclusion). The NCC has collected data on student demographics, experiences, and outcomes as well as TPSID program attributes, including partnerships with external organizations such as vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies.

In 2014–2015, TPSID projects were implemented at 52 institutions of higher education and enrolled 734 students with intellectual disability and/or autism in post-secondary education. Collaboration with external agencies was a critical component in these programs. Seventy-seven percent (40/52) of these TPSIDs partnered with VR agencies, and 83% of the 734 students attending programs were at campuses that partnered with VR. Partnership roles of the VR agency varied but were most often directed at providing career development and employment services or serving on project advisory committee; however, not all students attending the programs were VR clients (Grigal & Smith, 2016).

This Fast Fact describes students enrolled in TPSIDs in 2014–2015, and shares differences in demographics based on whether or not their TPSID program partnered with a state VR agency.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Student characteristics by TPSID VR partnership status is provided in Table 1. TPSIDs that partnered with VR had higher percentages of students from racial and ethnic minority groups. Almost 30% of students at programs that partnered with VR were non-white, compared to 17.2% of students at programs that did not partner with VR. In this respect, the student profile of programs that partnered with VR were similar to VR clients overall who exited VR programs in 2014. Thirty percent of individuals with ID and/or autism who exited VR in FY 2014 were non-white (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 2015).

The percent of black or African-American students with ID and Autism served by TPSIDs (15%) was similar to the percent (14%) of all undergraduate students nationally in 2014 that were black or African-American (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), but lower than the 27% of the individuals who exited VR programs in 2014, who were between the ages of 16 and 26, and had ID and/or autism and were black or African-American (RSA, 2015). There were twice as many black or African-American students, twice as many Asian students, and over four times as many Hispanic students at TPSID programs that partnered with VR than at programs that did not partner with VR.

Dual Enrollment Status

There were more dually enrolled students, i.e., students simultaneously enrolled in high school and college, at programs that partnered with VR than at programs that did not (23.2% versus 13.6%). Although these data were collected before the final regulations of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) were published in 2016, this may indicate that VR programs were already collaborating with local education agencies and colleges to support students with ID and/or autism between the ages of 18-21 to access higher education as part of their overall strategy to prepare students for the workforce.

WIOA mandates state VR agencies to set aside at least 15% of their federal VR program funds to provide Pre-ETS to assist students with disabilities to make the transition from secondary school (U.S. DOE, 2014). The higher number of dually enrolled students in programs that partnered with VR may also indicate that college-based transition programs could provide an effective context for pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS).

Funding

Students at programs that partnered with VR were 4 times more likely to have used VR funds to pay for both tuition and other non-tuition expenses. Non-tuition expenses include books and other school supplies, curriculum fees, room, board, and campus meal plans. Nearly one quarter of students at programs that partnered with VR used VR funds to pay for tuition, and over 30% used VR funds to pay non-tuition expenses. Therefore, partnerships with VR in some cases help students with ID cover a portion of the costs of higher education. According to Plotner and Marshall (2015), providing financial supports for students in higher education programs appears, thus far, to be the only clearly defined role of state VR agencies. However, other types of partnership are emerging (Grigal & Smith, 2016) and will likely continue to grow.

Disability

For this analysis, the students in the sample include students with ID, students with autism, and students with both ID and autism. Students with ID made up the vast majority of the 734 students attending the TPSID programs (86.2% across both types of programs, which includes some individuals who also have autism). Both VR- and non-partnered programs enrolled a similar percentage of students with ID only (71.3% and 69.5% respectively). However, non-partnered programs enrolled more students with autism only (20.3% versus 12.4%). VR partner programs enrolled more students who had both ID and autism (16.3% versus 10.2%).

Conclusion

As the numbers of college going students with ID and autism rise, so too will the need for colleges and universities serving these students to cultivate partnerships with their local and state VR agencies. The expertise of VR professionals can help these postsecondary programs to better meet the employment needs of both transitioning youth via PreETS and adults students no longer receiving education services under IDEA. These partnerships must ensure that these potential college students, regardless of age, race, or disability are provided access to higher learning opportunities that advance their capacity to seek and retain competitive integrated employment.

Table 1

Student characteristics in 2014–2015 by TPSID -VR partnership status

		Program partners with VR (n=606 students on 40 campuses)	Program does not partner with VR (n=128 students on 12 campuses)	All students (N=734 students on 52 campuses)
Age	Mean age on October 1, 2014	21.0	22.4	21.3
Disability	ID (no autism)	71.3%	69.5%	71.0%
	Autism (no ID)	12.4%	20.3%	13.8%
	ID and autism	16.3%	10.2%	15.3%
Enrollment status	Dually enrolled students	23.2%	13.6%	21.7%
	Adult students	76.8%	86.4%	78.3%
Gender	Male	58.6%	53.1%	57.6%
	Female	41.4%	46.9%	42.4%
Race/ethnicity	Hispanic	11.0%	2.5%	9.6%
	White	70.6%	82.8%	72.8%
	Black or African American	16.8%	7.8%	15.35%
	Asian	6.4%	3.1%	5.9%
Tuition and fee payment	Student used VR funds to pay for tuition	24.1%	6.3%	21.0%
	Student used VR funds to pay other expenses	31.2%	7.8%	27.1

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Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion at University of Massachusetts Boston serves as the National Coordinating Center (NCC) for the TPSID projects. The NCC provides training and technical assistance and conducts evaluation of the TPSID projects.

Think College is a national organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving research and practice in inclusive higher education for people with intellectual disability. By generating and sharing knowledge, guiding institutional change, informing public policy, and engaging with students, professionals, and families, Think College seeks to expand inclusive higher education options and improve employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability.

For more information about the National Coordinating Center at Think College visit www.thinkcollege.net



College Options for Students with Intellectual Disability

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