

**Executive Summary**

**Post-School Status Report**

**2004 Special Education Graduates**

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**The Center for Change in Transition Services  
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## **Executive Summary**

### **Post-School Status Report of the 2004 Special Education Graduates**

Post-school status data were collected in Washington State for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. The 2004 study is the largest to date with 219 school districts participating and contact was made with 2,962 youth that have graduated or turned 21. This study represents over 80% of school districts in Washington State and, for those districts that participated, follow-up contact with 78% of the youth. This is powerful data for program improvement and evaluation, information for training and technical assistance and for community and agency collaboration. Washington State is a leader in the collection and use of post-school outcome data.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. Information is gathered from the transition portion of the final IEP and from the graduate or his or her family six months after graduation. This information is used to determine the relation between the transition plan for the young person and his or her goals for life after high school and if those goals have been reached. School districts can verify if the transition portion of the IEP is complete and if the anticipated outcomes identified on the IEPs are achieved by the youth. School district personnel, regional and state-level educators can then provide training, resources and technical assistance in response to this information. Developing community collaboration and agency connections should also be informed by the outcome data.

#### **Who are the youth in the 2004 post-school outcome study?**

For the 2004 study, graduation is defined as leaving high school with a diploma or aging out of special education services at age 21. Information was collected from 3,818 IEPs in the 219 participating school districts in Washington State. Attempts were made to contact all 3,818 youth. After multiple attempts, 2,962 youth (78%) were contacted. Larger districts had the most difficulty contacting special education graduates. Of the 2,962 youth that were contacted, 94% graduated with a diploma. There were 201 youth or 5% that reached age 21 and “aged out”. There were 19 youth that were identified as leaving high school with something “other” than a diploma or aging out at age 21. There were 26 surveys that did not report exit status. Youth most likely to “age out” or graduate with something “other”

than a high school diploma were students with multiple disabilities (41%) or mental retardation (21%) compared to youth with learning disabilities (less than 1%). There are more males than females in special education overall and the 2004 cohort reflects that information. There are 2,514 males and 1,299 females contacted. The gender for 5 youth was not reported. Of the 2,962 youth contacted, 2,337 youth are white, 609 are youth of color, including those that selected two or more races and 16 did not report ethnicity.

### **What information is gathered from the final IEP?**

Information gathered from the transition portion of the last IEP includes demographic information about the youth including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, and exit status. Information is gathered from the transition portion of the IEP to identify the goals for the student after high school or the “anticipated post-school outcome.” This includes whether the youth wants to 1) attend post-secondary training such as a 4-year, 2-year, vocational/technical or other training program; 2) gain employment (independent or supported); 3) live independently; and/or 4) identifies an adult service agency as a necessary linkage. Information regarding health insurance was gathered for the 2004 graduates for the second time in this study.

For those youth that were contacted, information from the final IEPs indicated that 2,478 (66%) selected post-secondary education as a goal, 2,525 (67%) selected employment and 91 (2%) were left blank or marked “not applicable.”

### **What information is gathered from the youth or his or her family?**

The youth or family member is asked if the graduate is living independently, attending post-secondary education or training, and/or employed. Information is gathered regarding hours worked and wages. Those youth for whom agency linkages are identified on the IEP are asked if contact was made with the agency. The 2004 survey included a question to determine if youth have medical insurance and if so, with whom.

### **How many youth are living independently?**

This information is gathered to determine if young people with disabilities are living independently six months after graduation. It is not to suggest that these youth

necessarily should be living independently but rather provides information about their life after high school. Of the 2,962 youth that were contacted in December of 2004, 2,182 (74%) were living with their families. For the others, 749 reported as living outside the family home and 31 did not provide any information about living arrangements. Military was included in “living independently.” The majority of respondents that were attending college said they were living independently. “Living independently” is defined as not living at home or with parents or guardians, although there may be financial dependence.

### **How many youth had the goal of post-secondary education?**

Of the 2,962 youth with completed surveys, 1,941 youth (66%) identified post-secondary education on their IEPs as an anticipated outcome or goal after high school. For those youth that identified post-secondary training or education as a goal, 773 youth or 40% were attending. Youth with the goal of attending a 2-year community college achieved that goal at a higher rate than those students that identified a 4-year or vocational/technical program.

### **How many youth are attending post-secondary education and/or training programs?**

There are 1,081 special education graduates that are attending post-secondary education and/or training programs. This number includes youth for whom post-secondary education was not identified as a goal as well as those for whom post-secondary education was a goal. This is 37% of the 2,962 youth that were contacted. Of these youth attending post-secondary education, 107 are going to a 4-year university (10%), 556 to a 2-year community college (52%), and 196 to a vocational/technical school (19%). The majority of the youth attended college or training programs in Washington State. There were 199 youth in the military, in apprentice positions, Job Corps and “other” programs.

### **How many youth had the goal of employment?**

Of the youth that were contacted, 1,973 (68%) indicated that they wanted employment after graduation. Of those, 1,145 or 58% were employed six months after leaving high school. The percentage of youth for whom employment is the anticipated post-school outcome has increased over the past three years from 45% in 2002, 57% in 2003, to 68% in 2004. For those youth in the 2002 study with

employment as a goal, 62% were employed 6 months post-graduation. Although more youth want to work after leaving high school, fewer are reaching that goal.

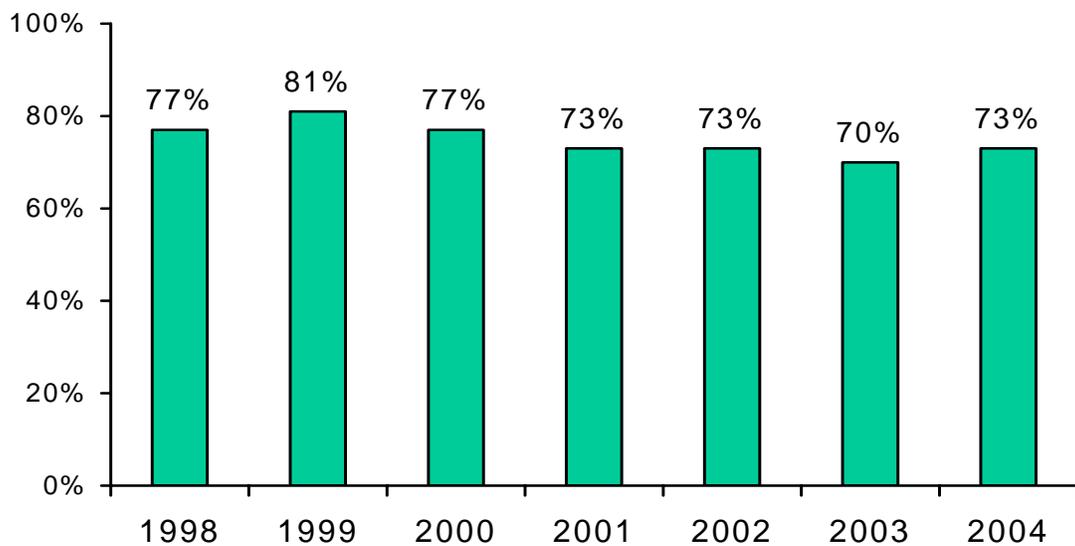
### **How many youth are employed?**

Of the 2,962 youth that were contacted six months after graduation, 1,619 (55%) were employed. This number includes youth for whom employment was not identified as a goal as well as those for whom employment was a goal. This rate has decreased yearly since the 1999 study when 70% of youth were employed. From the high of 70%, 65% were employed in 2000, 59% in 2001, 58% in 2002, 53% in 2003, and 55% for the special education graduates in 2004.

### **How Many of These Students Were Productively Engaged (Working and/or Attending Post-Secondary Education)?**

Of the 2,962 graduates interviewed, 2,165 (73%) were either working and/or attending post-secondary education programs. The rate of engagement by year is presented in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Employed and/or Attending Post-Secondary by Year**



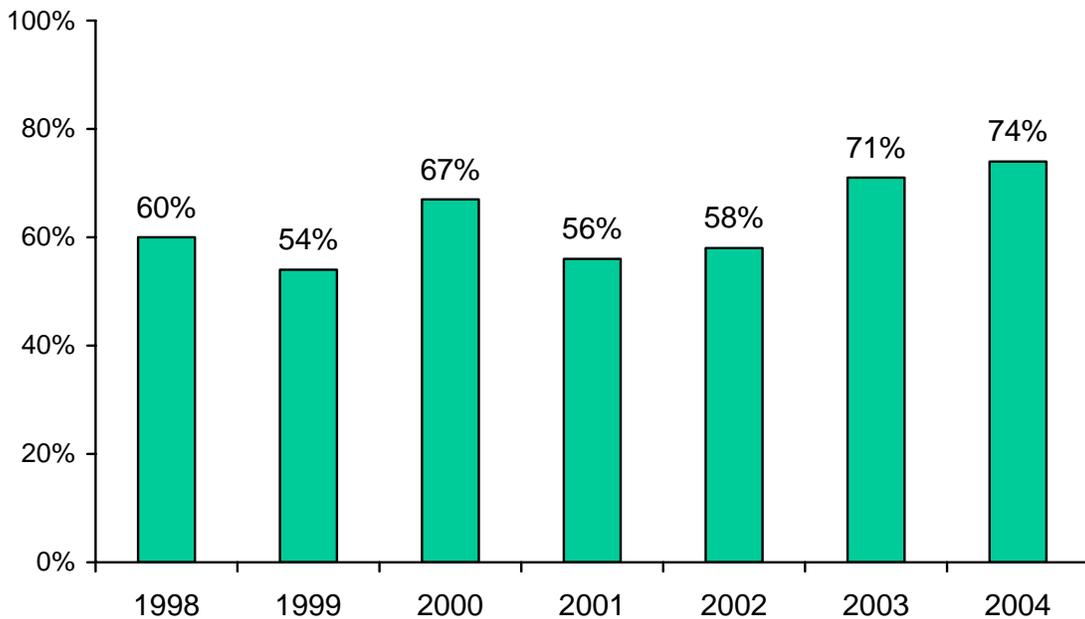
## Agency Linkages

### Agencies Identified on the IEP

Information is gathered from the final IEP to determine the number and type of adult agency linkages that were identified. There were 3,818 IEPs in the post-school data study. Of those IEPs, 2,674 or 73% identified an adult agency.

Of the 3,818 IEPs in this study, 2,962 youth and families were contacted. Of those IEPs, 2,122 or 74% identified an agency on the IEP. There is a positive increase in the number of agencies identified on the IEP. In the 1998 study 60% of the IEPs identified agencies; 1999, 54%; 2000, 67%; 2001, 56%; 2002, 58%; and in the 2003 study 71%. This information is represented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Agency Linkages Identified on the IEP**



### Agency Linkages

Six months after graduation or aging out, youth and families were asked during the telephone survey if a linkage or connection had been made with the agency identified on the IEP. For the 2,122 youth that had an agency identified on the IEP, 969 of those youth (46%) made contact with the agency. This connection with the

agency includes visiting the office and participating in services or classes, initiating or completing the intake paperwork, as well as receiving services. Linkages made with DVR, DDD, DSS and WorkSource are presented below. More than one agency was recommended on many IEPs, therefore the total of “Recommended on the IEP” is more than the 2,122 youth that had an agency linkage identified.

**Table 1: Agencies Recommended on the IEP, Linkages with the Agency**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Recommended on the IEP</b>	<b>Linkage with Agency</b>
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)	1,565 youth (55%)	571 youth (37%)
Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)	467 youth (16%)	255 youth (55%)
Disabled Student Services (DSS)	428 youth (14%)	143 youth (33%)
WorkSource	349 youth (12%)	92 youth (26%)

**How many youth had health insurance?**

Three-quarters of the youth contacted in this study (2,210 or 75%) reported having health insurance. Of those 1,641 have health insurance through their families and 569 have insurance through something other than family. This is an area that is not addressed on the IEP but may be considered during transition planning. This is the second year that this information has been collected.

**Conclusions**

The goal of providing transition services is to help students with disabilities acquire the skills that will empower them to lead productive and independent adult lives. Post-school status data can be used by state and local school systems and lead agencies to determine whether their programs are producing the desired results.

Data were collected from 219 school districts, representing 3,818 special education graduates. Of those youth, 2,962 or 78% were contacted. These districts responded to the LEA Application for Federal Funds for Special Education requiring the applicant to include a plan addressing the post-school performance of special education graduates. The areas addressed include: employment, enrollment in post-secondary education, employment and /or enrollment in post-secondary (engagement), and connection to appropriate adult agencies based on

the 1998 data. The data collected in these 4 areas for the 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 graduates follows:

**Comparison of Four Outcomes for Years 1998-2004**

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Enrolled in Post-Sec Ed</b>	<b>Engaged</b>	<b>Adult Agency Connection</b>
1998	66%	31%	77%	53%
1999	70%	30%	81%	50%
2000	65%	28%	77%	51%
2001	59%	31%	73%	56%
2002	58%	33%	73%	57%
2003	53%	37%	70%	53%
2004	55%	29%	73%	46%

Conclusions are identified in the following areas: 1) outcomes, 2) participation in the study and 3) collection of the data.

**Outcomes:** The number of school districts that participated is steadily increasing. This is a positive result of this study and provides information that can be used for policy, procedures and practices at the state, regional and local level. There are additional outcomes that are positive as well as areas that need improvement.

1. Agency linkages identified on the IEP have increased from 58% in 2002 to 74% in 2004. Teachers are identifying more agencies and more appropriate agencies on the IEP. Agency linkages should be identified on 100% of the IEPs.
2. Agencies in addition to Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Disability Student Services should be identified on the IEP. In addition to the name of the agency, exemplary practices would include specific information regarding location and contact information. This information is found at the website: [www.seattleu.edu/ccts](http://www.seattleu.edu/ccts).
3. Fewer IEPs are left blank or “undecided” than in previous years for the anticipated outcome. School personnel should examine their data to determine if this is true for the IEPs in their district.
4. More youth are attending post-secondary education or training yet the goal of post-secondary education on the IEP does not increase the chances of

- attendance. Special education should collaborate with guidance and counseling in order to align the course of study to the college for the student for whom post-secondary education is a goal.
5. Employment has increased slightly from the 2003 study yet the rate of employment is more positive for white males with learning disabilities. Males are employed at a higher rate than females (58% compared to 50%); white youth are employed at a higher rate than youth of color (56% to 52%). Youth with learning disabilities are employed at the rate of 64% compared to youth with emotional behavioral disorders who are employed at 57%. Youth with mental retardation are employed at the rate of 36%.
  6. There are noteworthy differences in outcomes when analyzed by disability category. Youth with learning disabilities are experiencing better outcomes in post-secondary training and education and employment than youth with emotional/behavior disabilities, youth with mental retardation and youth with multiple disabilities. These outcomes should be discussed and analyzed at the district level.

**Participation:** There is additional work needed in order to enhance this statewide effort. The goal of this project is that every school district in the state with special education graduates participates in this study. Small school districts with one or two graduates are important to the research as are large districts that require extra effort to gather these data. Efforts should be made by local school districts to participate in this study and to increase the rate of contact with special education graduates. Recommendations are included in the full report. Technical assistance for participation in this study is available from the Center for Change in Transition Service ([www.seattleu.edu/ccts/](http://www.seattleu.edu/ccts/)).

The post-school data are available by county and are provided to the community councils in those counties. For the 2004 graduates, the data was disaggregated by high school as well as district and available to districts by request. This report can also be found on the Center for Change in Transition Services web page at: <http://www.seattleu.edu/ccts/> or the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website <http://www.k12.wa.us>.