RESOURCES FOR TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: A POWERPOINT AND WEBSITE LINK

A Project

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by

Cherie Marie Ashton

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

RESOURCES FOR TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: A POWERPOINT AND WEBSITE LINK

by

Cherie Marie Ashton

The purpose of this project was to create a PowerPoint presentation and website link that would benefit educators, parents, and transition-age youth with disabilities. The problem this author identified is that transition-age youth with disabilities not only neglect planning for or thinking about post-secondary education or employment while in high school, but they are also unaware of and do not have access to the various organizations, services, and options they have at their disposal. The research sources for the development of this project included peer reviewed journals, books, information from relevant websites, personal communication, and Masters Projects from California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) Vocational Rehabilitation graduate students. A PowerPoint presentation and a website link on the Placer County Network of Care website was developed to help better prepare transition-age youth with disabilities for their lives after high school.

____________________, Committee Chair
Guy Deaner, Ph.D.

____________________

Date
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my wonderful son Leo. You are my compass, and I love you with all of my heart and soul. This project is also dedicated to my Mom, Jean, and Step Dad Tom, for all the support you gave and for all of the sacrifices you made to help me complete this program. I love you!
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Leo

Thank you for inspiring me to complete this project and for inspiring me to be a better person every day. You are such a joy in my life and are the sweetest, funniest, and most amazing little guy in the world! I feel so blessed and thankful to be your Mom.

Mom and Tom

Words truly cannot express how grateful I am for all that you both have done. Thank you for taking Leo and me into your home so that I could complete my education. Thank you for your tireless support and encouragement, and most of all, thank you for your unconditional love. Go Team Leo!

Dad

Thank you so much for having faith in me and for the beautiful support you have given me throughout this process. I appreciate and love you!

To my entire family

For your loving support, thank you!

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Thank you for believing in me and for encouraging me to complete this project.

To all of my girlfriends and the Goddesses in my life

Thank you for being such supportive women in my life. Thank you for touching my heart and helping me to try not to take life so seriously. I love each one of you.
Kathy Shields

Thank you for being there for me when I needed a friend and for teaching me how to play the fiddle again! The music we played together helped me to get through this program.

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Transition-age youth with disabilities are often unaware of, and do not have access to, the various organizations, services, and options they have at their disposal. Additionally, transition-age youth with disabilities often neglect adequately planning for post-secondary education or employment while in high school. The aforementioned issues only exacerbate the fact that many youth with disabilities face additional barriers when transitioning from high school, such as poverty, unemployment, and integration into employment.

The post-secondary education and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities are significantly affected by their lack of access to services and their lack of planning for or thinking about the transition process. In fact, The United States Department of Labor reported that the employment rate for transition-age youth with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 19 is currently at 16.4% compared to 29.4% of peers in the general population (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2013b). In addition, only 2.3% of transition-age youth who applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services in the United States had employment status at the time their case was closed from receiving additional services (Honeycutt, Thompkins, Bardos, & Stern, 2013). According to a study by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, youth with
disabilities both attend post-secondary institutions and complete high school at much lower rates than their peers (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2009).

Wehman and Yasuda (2005) stated that challenges facing youth with disabilities in regard to post-secondary education are due to a variety of factors. These factors include a lack of pertinent information regarding the transition process, an absence of communication and collaboration between local service providers and school systems, and an overall lack of transition-related knowledge with counselors and teachers.

According to a congressional committee report entitled, “Helping California Youths With Disabilities Transition to Work or Post-secondary Education” (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO] 2006), youth with disabilities in California are not receiving adequate vocational preparation training while in high school. Furthermore, it was noted that an insufficient amount of school time is being given to study vocational related topics. The report went on to say they attribute a lack of post-secondary education and employment preparation to the fact that teachers in California are not required to have training in the area of transition preparation in their credential programs.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2013), transition-age youth with disabilities are required to receive an Individualized Education Plan, or IEP. Under IDEA, an IEP is required to include post-secondary goals, which address students’ interests, preferences, and strengths (McGuire, 2010). Although student attendance at IEP meetings has been increasing, Arndt, Conrad,
and Test (2006) argued their involvement in the process of the meetings continues to remain minimal. Test et al. (2004) pointed out that student involvement in their IEP meetings can positively affect their post-secondary education and employment goals. One way IEP meetings can positively affect post-secondary education and employment goals is by enhancing a student’s self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Without active involvement in their own IEP meetings, students may be missing out on important discussions regarding post-school plans.

**Statement of the Problem**

Youth with disabilities face many barriers when transitioning from high school to post-secondary education and employment. Some of these barriers include poverty, unemployment, and integration into employment. Many transition-age youth with disabilities are unaware of, and do not have access to, the various organizations, services, and options they have at their disposal. The author of this project discovered this problem while working as a Case Manager for PRIDE Industries in Roseville, California from February 2007 to August 2012. During that time, this author had many conversations with transition-age youth and their families, Workability Specialists, Alta California Regional Center Coordinators, and Department of Rehabilitation Counselors regarding the topic of post-secondary education and employment. In talking with the aforementioned individuals, this author confirmed that many transition-age youth with disabilities lack awareness and accessibility to the local resources available to them. This
lack of awareness and accessibility creates an additional barrier, putting these youth at risk for having poor post-secondary education and employment outcomes.

On September 19, 2012, this author met with Jennifer Hacker, Student Support Practitioner from the Placer County Office of Education (PCOE), who stated there was a great need for transition-age youth with disabilities to have access to, and knowledge of, the local resources available to them. Mrs. Hacker also stated there was a lack of updated resource directories and guides in the Placer County area specifically designed for transition-age youth with disabilities. The reason for this, she went on to explain, was that resource directories created in the past have all been in print format, which eventually leads to the resources becoming outdated and the contact information possibly being incorrect or needing to be changed.

In researching whether there were resource directories online in the Placer County area geared toward transition-age youth with disabilities, this author discovered the Placer County Network of Care website had approximately 35 categories on its Service Directory. All the categories provided valuable information regarding local resources and agencies to the citizens of Placer County. None of the 35 categories in the Service Directory, however, were aimed at serving transition-age youth with disabilities. One category entitled “Youth” was there, but none of the resources under this category were geared toward transition-age youth with disabilities. This author could not find any other online resource directories or guides for transition-age youth with disabilities in Placer County.
Without an online resource category specifically designed for transition-age youth, many important organizations and local resources may not be utilized. In discussing the option of creating a category for transition-age youth with disabilities on the Network of Care website, Mrs. Hacker stated the importance of this population having access to these resources electronically versus via in-print format. She stated that many transition-age youth have lost the print format of resource directories in the past (J. Hacker, personal communication, September 19, 2012). With so many youth having access to computers both at school and at home, having the resources available electronically would be essential. The fact that a current resource directory geared toward transition-age youth with disabilities does not exist, either in print format or online, and the fact that the Network of Care website does not have a specific category for this population, makes it a valuable online addition for the community.

Upon meeting with Workability Coordinator Barbara Watts from the Roseville Joint Union High School District and Vocational Placement Specialist Laurie Caya from Woodcreek High School, this author discovered a second problem (personal communication, April 8, 2012). Both Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Caya stated that transition-age youth with disabilities often neglect adequately planning for or thinking about post-secondary education or employment while in high school. As a result, they stated that many students are not prepared to make important decisions regarding the transition. Similar to the first problem this author highlighted, the second problem, a lack of preparedness, also creates a barrier for transition-age youth with disabilities.
In discussing the problem with both Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Caya, this author discovered a need for educational tools to help youth with disabilities in the transitioning process. Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Caya stated that although they held “Transition Night” at their schools, educational tools on the subject of transition did not exist at the time of the project. In proposing the idea of a PowerPoint presentation specifically designed to educate youth with disabilities in Placer County on the subject of transition, this author was met with enthusiasm from both Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Caya. They discussed the value of teachers, Workability Specialists, and Vocational Placement Specialists utilizing this tool. Having such a tool would help prepare students for what lies ahead after high school. It would also give them a better understanding of what is expected of them both before and after graduation.

**Definition of Terms**

**Alta California Regional Center**

“Alta California Regional Center creates partnerships to support all eligible individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, children at risk, and their families in choosing services and supports through individual lifelong planning as a means to achieve healthy and productive lives in their own communities.” (Alta California Regional Center, 2013, para. 1)

**Department of Rehabilitation**

“The California Department of Rehabilitation works in partnership with consumers and other stakeholders to provide services and advocacy resulting in
employment, independent living and equality for individuals with disabilities” (California Department of Rehabilitation, 2013, para. 1).

**Integrated Employment**

“Integrated employment refers to jobs held by people with the most significant disabilities in typical workplace settings where the majority of persons employed are not persons with disabilities. In these jobs, the individuals with disabilities earn wages consistent with wages paid to workers without disabilities in the community performing the same or similar work; the individuals earn at least minimum wage, and they are paid directly by the employer” (DOL, 2013a, para. 1).

As used in this project, the term “integrated employment” refers to jobs held by people with disabilities, but not necessarily individuals with the most significant disabilities.

**Job Coach**

Job coach is a term used to describe a person who provides on-the-job training for people with disabilities in the work force. Job coach responsibilities include on-site training related to job tasks, job retention, work-related activities, and any other requirements necessary to maintain successful employment (America’s Heroes At Work, 2013).
**Natural Supports**

Natural Supports is the term used to describe a social relationship found in the workplace or community that helps people with disabilities accomplish things they may not be able to do alone. Natural supports can include co-workers, family members, friends, parents, and neighbors (Department of Developmental Services, 2013).

**Self-advocacy**

Self-advocacy is a term used to refer to people with disabilities who make important decisions about their own lives and who speak up for their own rights, needs, and wishes. Self-advocacy also includes the ability to express goals, request necessary accommodations, and ask for appropriate services when needed (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2013).

**Self-determination**

Self-determination is a term used to describe a person’s ability to take responsibility for his or her own choices in life. It also describes a person’s ability to solve problems, set personal goals, and achieve those desired goals. Additionally, self-determination includes the attitudes and beliefs that motivate a person (PACER Center, Champions for Children with Disabilities, 2013).

**Transition Services**

“Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused
on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a
disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities,
including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment
(including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services,
independent living, or community participation” (National Dissemination Center

Limitations of the Project

Limitations of this project include time, geography, population, and author bias.
The data for both the PowerPoint presentation and website link were compiled in the
Summer and Fall of 2013. If any future changes need to be made, then these two
resources will have to be updated. This project is limited geographically as it focuses on
services primarily found in the Placer County area. Another limitation to this project is
the specific population for which it was created. This project only focuses on transition-
age youth with disabilities. Lastly, this project is also limited due to author bias. This
author has only included resources in both the PowerPoint presentation and website link
that she felt are valuable for transition-age youth with disabilities. Additionally, this
author felt transition-age youth with disabilities can succeed in the areas of post-
secondary education and employment, and the resources in this project will positively
contribute to their success.
Remainder of the Project

The remainder of this project includes the following: Chapter 2 is a review of the literature focusing on the barriers facing transition-age youth with disabilities. Chapter 3 covers the methodology used in the development of this project. Chapter 4 includes a summary of the project and recommendations for future research. Appendix A contains the PowerPoint presentation created for transition-age youth with disabilities in the Placer County area. Appendix B contains a snapshot (screen photo) of the website link for the Placer County Network of Care Resource Directory.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Youth with disabilities face many barriers when transitioning from high school to post-secondary education and employment. This literature review is divided into two sections. The first section provides a detailed overview of the barriers the disabled youth population encounters and is broken down into six subsections: poverty, unemployment, issues with Social Security Disability, parental concerns, inclusion/integration in education, and integration into employment. The second section of the literature review provides information on the strategies used to improve post-secondary education and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities and is broken down into five subsections: vocational training and experience, self-determination and self-advocacy, the need for earlier intervention, parental/family involvement, and the use of natural supports and social networks.

Post-secondary Education and Employment Barriers of Transition Age Youth with Disabilities

Poverty

In a study by Fujiura and Yamaki (2000), it was found that a link between disability and poverty exists. This link, and the negative effects on youth with disabilities of growing up in poverty conditions, has been examined by Hughes and Avoke (2010). Hughes and Avoke explained that youth who grow up in poverty often live in
neighborhoods and attend schools limiting valuable life skills necessary for adulthood. These limitations can affect employment opportunities. Another study on youth with disabilities found that this population was more likely than other youth their age to be living in poverty where the heads of the households were unemployed and participating in benefits programs (Wagner, Cameto, & Newman, 2003).

**Unemployment**

Unemployment is another serious barrier with which youth with disabilities are challenged. According to a survey administered by the United States Census Bureau, 83.6% of youth with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 19 are unemployed compared to 70.6% of youth the same age without disabilities (DOL, 2013b). Additionally, unemployment has been found to be a result of the lack of quality service delivery models and curriculum preparing transition students for the world of work (Brown, Shiraga, & Kessler, 2006). Furthermore, unemployment can affect the optimism, ambition, and aspirations of these youth and their families, resulting in a loss of resolve to alter their situation (Talis & Will, 2006).

**Issues with Social Security Disability**

Burkhauser and Whittenburg’s study (as cited in Brown et al., 2006) stated the odds of transition-age youth being employed were reduced by more than half if they were recipients of Social Security Disability. Results of a study conducted by Schuster, Timmons, and Moloney (2003) showed that both transition-age youth and their parents experienced several obstacles in regard to managing their Social Security Disability. The
obstacles included a limited understanding of the relationship between work and Social Security Disability Income, a lack of awareness surrounding the support services offered by the Social Security Disability Administration, and restrictions on savings accounts placed on the recipient. Eight out of the ten parents involved in the study expressed a lack of understanding regarding the relationship between Social Security Disability Insurance and employment. Assumptions by the parents that work of any kind will result in the loss of health insurance were shown to negatively impact their child’s employment decisions.

**Parental Concerns and Issues**

Parents of transition-age youth with disabilities have been found to lack information regarding the availability, type, and range of support and services their community has to offer in the areas of post-secondary education and employment (Johnson, 2004). Without the information, students’ goals and plans may not receive adequate support, thus creating additional barriers for them (Johnson, 2004).

Parental concerns, including parental anxiety regarding the transition process, can impact transition-age youth in the areas of post-secondary education and employment. In fact, Schuster et al. (2003) identified that parents of transition-age youth were more likely to point out both concerns and work limitations in relation to their child’s disability than were the children themselves. Additional results of their study indicated parents feared both employer misconceptions and social stigma, even for those students whose disability was not apparent. Cameto (2005) stated that parents of youth with disabilities
had lower expectations regarding their child's attendance and graduation from a post-secondary school than did parents of children without disabilities. Additionally, the study reported that only three out of five youth with disabilities were expected to further their education after high school.

Results of a study by Camarena and Sarigiani (2009) regarding the post-secondary educational aspirations of parents and transition-age youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders indicated several parental fears. The authors noted parents were concerned colleges would not have awareness regarding their children’s disability. They feared this deficiency would necessitate educating others regarding their child’s specific abilities and needs. Additionally, parents in this study were also concerned with their children’s social skills and their need for peer support and mentoring opportunities in post-secondary educational settings.

**Inclusion/Integration in Education**

Colley and Jamison (1998) found that students receiving special education services in integrated settings were better prepared for post-educational activities than were those students in segregated settings. Additionally, post-educational opportunities were linked to integration. Results of a study presented by Carter, Swedeen, Walter, and Moss (2012) showed that parents of children with disabilities felt there was a lack of meaningful inclusion both in the educational system and in their communities. Results presented by Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (2000) revealed that, often, the exclusive focus of the curriculum found in secondary education for youth with disabilities can
produce consequences limiting both opportunities and supports for youth with disabilities. These results concluded that the exclusive focus on increasing the rigor of core academic classes, in addition to the pressures educators feel to cover content, does not address the educational needs of youth with disabilities and leaves many of these youth lacking support.

**Integration in Employment**

Integrated employment has historically been opposed by segregationists due to a prediction of harm and failure (Wehman, 2006). This rationale has been shown to be a misconception, and individuals with disabilities have proven that with appropriate support and instruction, they can successfully work in integrated settings. According to Wehman (2006), transition programs for youth with disabilities should be addressing whether or not competitive employment, along with real work for real pay, is the first choice for the students.

Other barriers facing transition-age youth with disabilities in the area of integrated employment include parental fears and low expectations (Johnson, 2004; Tallis & Will, 2006). Parents have been taught to fear integrated employment by those who have opposed the shift of funds from segregated settings to integrated ones (Tallis & Will, 2006). Low expectations regarding the ability of transition-age youth to successfully work in integrated settings continue to exist, despite the contrary evidence (Johnson, 2004).
Results of a study by Brown et al. (2006) on the work histories of 50 individuals with disabilities highlighted the importance and validity of integrated vocational functioning. Furthermore, findings indicate the lack of real work experience in integrated settings for transition-age students with disabilities can result in dependence, frustration, and unemployment. Integrated employment has been found to not only benefit the lives of the workers themselves, but also their fellow co-workers. Co-workers in the Brown et al. study explained they felt their lives were more fulfilled and enhanced due to their experiences of working with individuals with disabilities. Additionally, another benefit of integrated employment is the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to develop social relationships with co-workers without disabilities. Segregated environments do not afford such relationships (Brown et al., 2006).

**Strategies to Improve Post-Secondary Education and Employment Outcomes**

**Vocational Training and Experience**

Paid work experience and occupational skill development have been found to be essential components of transition-focused education (Kohler & Field, 2003). Results presented by Schuster et al. (2003) found that matching job opportunities with the interests of students with disabilities helped students develop necessary skills and gain valuable vocational experience. Furthermore, improved post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities have been associated with both student participation in paid work experience related to their career interests and instruction in the area of vocational education (Benz et al., 2000).
In an effort to produce better outcomes for transition-age youth with disabilities, Brown et al. (2006) discussed what educators could be doing differently. One example included offering instruction and vocational assessment that is authentic. Another suggestion focused on teaching skills that can be applicable to employment settings and public places, such as in break rooms or on public buses.

**Self-determination and Self-advocacy**

Transition-age youth who have gained skills in the areas of self-advocacy and self-determination are more likely to be employed or involved in post-secondary education than those lacking these valuable skills (Johnson, 2004). In fact, Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) identified specific skills needed for students with disabilities to acquire self-determination and self-advocacy. The skills needed for self-determination included monitoring and setting achievement goals, solving and identifying problems, managing and planning one’s use of time, and communicating personal preferences and interests. The skills needed for self-advocacy included learning how to use persuasion and compromise, learning how to be assertive, learning how to be a team member, and learning about responsibilities and rights.

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) found there are specific ways in which educators can teach so students with disabilities can gain self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Self-monitoring, self-instruction, and self-reinforcement procedures all help students gain these skills. In addition, the implementation of role-playing, brainstorming, and metacognitive strategies have also been found to be helpful. Wehmeyer and
Schwartz (1997) also explained that allowing students the opportunity to make choices, express their preferences, and experience the outcomes from their choices are all helpful in encouraging self-determination.

According to Kellems and Morningstar (2010), self-determination and self-advocacy skills are developed through student involvement in the transition process; hence, students are active participants in this process. To become active participants, students are encouraged to lead their own IEP meetings, create their own person-centered plans, and even become involved in peer-mentoring groups.

**Need for Earlier Intervention**

Results presented by Wolf-Branigin, Schuyler, and White (2007) revealed the importance of earlier intervention to prepare transition-age youth with disabilities for adulthood. Earlier intervention is critical as it prevents these youth from falling behind their peers. Additionally, earlier intervention, according to McDonald, Balcazar, and Keys (2005), can help promote positive development. One way positive development can occur is by helping youth see their disability in a positive light before issues with self-esteem arise.

According to Kellems and Morningstar (2010), early intervention is a key factor in the success of the transition process. Suggestions for early intervention include beginning transition work, such as transition interviews, with students as young as 13 years of age. Transition interviews might include questions regarding employability skills, post-secondary employment, and post-secondary education. In addition, early
intervention means transition goals are established by the students in 9th or 10th grade. Suggestions on how to develop transitional goals include the use of a positive student profile, informal interviews, observations, and community-based work evaluations (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010).

**Parental/Family involvement**

Parental and family involvement is an important component to the success of transition-age students with disabilities. Kellems and Morningstar (2010) discussed the critical role families play in the transition process. They explained that families provide support essential in a transition student’s life. Families also play a major role in what is called “transition planning.” One example of transition planning might include having parents meet on a quarterly basis with the teacher to review their child’s progress.

**Natural Supports and Social Networks**

Schuster et al. (2003) stated that building social networks and the use of natural supports can help transition-age youth expand employment opportunities and help in the area of job searching. Unger (1999) defined Natural Supports as “Any type of support that assists individuals in participating in the community and work environment of their choice” (para. 14). A student’s social network, which could include friends and family, should offer encouragement in the areas of careers and career interests. In addition, exposure to actual job sites and job responsibilities are beneficial in the area of employment exploration (Schuster et. al., 2003).
There are a variety of different ways to develop natural supports and social networks for youth with disabilities. Development methods include connecting youth to community members to create a “circle of support,” utilizing special events, support groups or social groups to build on existing supports, developing allies within social groups, discovering supportive neighbors, and including family members if possible (DCPartners, n.d).

Since transition-age youth with disabilities may choose to enter the world of work, it is important to examine the area of natural supports in the workplace. Several investigators found that natural supports and social networks for individuals with disabilities exist within the workplace (Rogan, Banks, & Howard, 2000; Unger, 1999; Wehman & Bricout, n.d.). Fabian, Edelman, and Leedy (as cited in Wehman & Bricout, n.d.) found that natural workplace supports can also refer to support from peers on the job, fellow co-workers, supervisors, and even company sponsored employment programs. Wehman and Bricout (n.d.) explained that providing natural supports for individuals with disabilities can lead to success in areas of work, school, home, and community.

Rogan et al. (2000) discussed the benefits of natural supports through the use of employment consultants and job coaches. The perspectives of employment consultants on natural supports were offered in this study. Some of their perspectives on the ways in which they could provide natural supports to people with disabilities included looking for ways to eliminate barriers, integrating the individual into the workplace, helping to
connect the individual to pre-existing resources, and helping co-workers feel comfortable working with the individuals.

Summary

A review of the literature shows a variety of barriers face transition-age youth with disabilities. The barriers can negatively impact both post-secondary education and employment outcomes. Barriers such as poverty, obstacles with Social Security, the lack of meaningful inclusion in education, and integration in employment hold transition-age youth back from achieving higher education and pursuing employment in integrated settings. Other barriers transition-age youth encounter are unemployment and parental fears and anxieties.

Research shows a variety of positive strategies for helping transition-age youth with disabilities to overcome post-secondary and educational barriers exist. Skills such as self-determination and self-advocacy have been found to improve employment and post-secondary outcomes. In addition, natural supports have been shown to have a positive impact on expanding employment opportunities. Therefore, building natural supports through the use of existing supports, connections with community members, and social groups help produce positive outcomes. Future research on the subject of post-secondary and educational barriers facing transition-age youth with disabilities and the strategies to improve these barriers can provide meaningful insight and necessary change on this subject.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

While working as a Case Manager for PRIDE Industries in Roseville from February 2007 to August 2012, this author became interested in learning more about the barriers facing transition-age youth with disabilities. Having had the opportunity to work firsthand with transition-age youth with developmental disabilities at PRIDE Industries, this author felt inspired to create a project that would help this population on their journey toward post-secondary education and employment.

In an effort to address the first problem, that many transition-age youth with disabilities are unaware of, and do not have access to, the various organizations, services, and options available to them, this author contacted Jennifer Hacker (Student Support Practitioner) from the Placer County Office of Education. This author obtained Mrs. Hacker’s contact information through her work with PRIDE Industries. On September 19, 2012, this author met with Mrs. Hacker. After discussing project ideas, this author suggested a category, also called a “website link,” on the Placer County Network of Care service directory website that would be specifically geared toward transition-age youth with disabilities. Mrs. Hacker supported the proposed idea and recommended this author meet with Robert Bradshaw and Mylan Ton, Community Liaisons for the Placer County Office of Education and the Network of Care, to discuss it further. On October 3, 2012, this author met with Robert Bradshaw and Mylan Ton, and it was decided that this author would begin working on the proposed website link during Summer 2013.
To address the second problem, that transition-age youth with disabilities often neglect adequately planning for or thinking about post-secondary education or employment while in high school, this author contacted Workability Coordinator Barbara Watts from Roseville Joint Union High School District and Vocational Placement Specialist Laurie Caya from Woodcreek High School. This author had obtained Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Caya’s contact information from her previous work experience as a Case Manager at PRIDE Industries. On April 8, 2013, this author met with both Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Caya and proposed a PowerPoint presentation as the second part to this project.

In an attempt to figure out why students neglect to adequately plan for post-secondary education and employment and are not aware of local resources, this author had a conversation with Barbara Watts in October 4, 2013. Mrs. Watts has over 15 years of experience in the field of transitional education. She stated that many students do not plan for life after high school because they are “very much in the here and now.” She went on to say that students do not think they need preparation and do not consider what steps they need to take to pursue post-secondary education or employment. Additionally, Mrs. Watts explained that many students with whom she has worked over the years are often told they are going to attend college after high school by their family and teachers, so they do not even think about alternative options that might be available to them. Mrs. Watts went on to say that many transition-age youth with disabilities are “hand held” throughout high school which causes them to be lacking in the areas of self-advocacy and self-determination. According to Mrs. Watts, other reasons for this problem include a
lack of student participation and ownership in their Individualized Education Plans and a lack of knowledge regarding what their specific disability is. Mrs. Watts explained, “It is hard to advocate for yourself when you don’t even know what your disability is” (B. Watts, personal communication, October 4, 2013).

In Fall 2013, this author had a conversation with Mr. Frayser, Rehabilitation Manager with the Department of Rehabilitation, regarding the two problems addressed in this project (personal communication, November 4, 2013). Upon discussing the issue of youth not knowing what their disability is, Mr. Frayser stated:

The other side of youth not knowing what their disability is, is that there are too many transition-age youth living to their disability and using it as a crutch. Funding is so limited; they may get misdiagnosed and then fall into living into that disability whether it’s real or not. Then once they have that label, they feel entitled. Regardless of entitlement, they are still accountable for their actions.

When asked about the barriers facing transition-age youth with disabilities, Mr. Frayser stated:

A lot of the transition-age youth with disabilities have no idea where they were born, they have no idea where their records are. If they don’t have a Social Security card then they can’t go to work because they can’t get an ID without a Social Security card and they have to have identification to work” (M. Frayser, personal communication, November 4, 2013).
During Summer and Fall 2013, this author worked on both the PowerPoint presentation and website link. In September 2013, this author sent Mrs. Watts the first draft of the presentation for her to review. Upon reviewing the first draft, Mrs. Watts made several recommendations for changes she thought would benefit students. This author agreed with Mrs. Watts’s suggestions and made the appropriate changes. This author then sent Mrs. Watts a second draft of the PowerPoint presentation for review in December 2013. Again, Mrs. Watts made a few suggestions for changes to the presentation with which this author agreed. The final PowerPoint presentation was sent to Mrs. Watts in January 2014. Mrs. Watts will be using the PowerPoint presentation as an educational tool for transition-age youth with disabilities in the Roseville Joint Unified school district.

In May 2013, this author began compiling resources that would be used for the website link on the Placer County Network of Care resource directory. This author chose to include resources in the website that are specifically geared toward helping transition-age youth with disabilities in the areas of post-secondary education and employment. Additional resources this author felt would benefit this population, such as counseling and substance abuse resources, were included in the website link. In June 2013, this author was trained on how to create the website link and develop the “Transition-age Youth with Disabilities” category. Trilogy Integrated Resources conducted the training in which this author participated. Trilogy is an agency that the Placer County Office of Education contracted with to train this author on developing the website link. During the
months of June and July 2013, this author created the website link for transition-age youth with disabilities, which is now a permanent part of the Network of Care resource directory. Due to managerial decisions at the Placer County Office of Education, this author was asked to remove the “with Disabilities” portion of the title, “Transition-age Youth with Disabilities.” The website link title is now officially “Transition-age Youth.”

Beginning in Fall 2012, this author conducted research at the California State University, Sacramento library on the barriers facing transition-age youth with disabilities, including the strategies used to improve post-secondary education and employment outcomes. This author participated in an instructional lecture on how to effectively navigate the electronic databases found on the library website at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). Betty Ronayne, the Educational Reference Librarian, gave the electronic navigation lecture. This author utilized both EBSCO host and Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) while conducting research for this project. Resources used for the development of this project included local service providers websites, personal communications, peer reviewed academic journals, and Master’s Projects in the area of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling from the California State University, Sacramento library.
Chapter 4
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The post-secondary education and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities are significantly affected by their lack of access to services and their lack of planning for or thinking about the transition process. Additionally, youth with disabilities face many barriers when transitioning from high school to post-secondary education and employment. These barriers can negatively impact both post-secondary education and employment outcomes. Barriers such as poverty, obstacles with Social Security Disability, the lack of meaningful inclusion in education, and integration in employment hold transition-age youth with disabilities back from achieving higher education and from pursuing employment.

Positive strategies for helping transition-age youth with disabilities to overcome post-secondary and educational barriers, such as self-determination and self-advocacy, have been found to improve employment and post-secondary outcomes. Additionally, natural supports have been shown to have a positive impact on expanding employment opportunities. Therefore, building natural supports through the use of existing supports, connections with community members, and social groups help produce positive outcomes.

In researching whether there are resource directories online in the Placer County area geared toward transition-age youth with disabilities, this author discovered the
Placer County Network of Care website had approximately 35 categories on its Service Directory. None of the categories in the Service Directory, however, were aimed at serving transition-age youth with disabilities. A program staff member for Placer County Office of Education (PCOE) had indicated a great need for transition-age youth with disabilities to have access to, and knowledge of, the local resources available to them. Program staff stated there was a lack of updated resource directories and guides in the Placer County area specifically designed for transition-age youth with disabilities.

Staff from the Roseville Joint Union High School district stated that transition-age youth with disabilities often neglect adequately planning for or thinking about post-secondary education or employment while in high school. As a result, they stated that many are not prepared to make important decisions regarding transition. Staff indicated that educational tools on the subject of transition did not exist and there was a need for these tools to help youth with disabilities in the transitioning process.

The purpose of this project was to create a PowerPoint presentation and website link that would benefit educators, parents, and transition-age youth with disabilities. Staff at the Roseville Joint Unified High School District will utilize the PowerPoint presentation for their transition-age students with disabilities. The website link will be accessible to the public through the Placer County Office of Education’s Network of Care website. Resources in the website link are specifically geared toward helping transition-age youth with disabilities in the areas of post-secondary education and employment.
Recommendations

If another student were to update this project in the future, there are several recommendations this author makes. This author suggests contacting Mrs. Watts from the Roseville Joint Unified School District to interview her regarding the PowerPoint presentation from this project. Interview questions would pertain to how often Mrs. Watts utilized the PowerPoint presentation, how valuable she felt the presentation was in working with transition-age youth with disabilities, and lastly, what updates she would personally make to the PowerPoint to help make it the most valuable tool possible. This author also recommends that those utilizing the PowerPoint presentation update the resources on a yearly basis. Updating contact information and addresses and verifying that resources still exist will ensure that those viewing the PowerPoint presentation will have current and accurate information.

This author recommends the individuals working for the Placer County Office of Education regularly update the resources within the Transition-age Youth website link found on the Network of Care Resource Directory. This author also recommends consideration be made regarding adding “With Disabilities” to the “Transition-age Youth” website link title. Adding “With Disabilities” to the website link ensures that people searching for specific resources regarding transition-age youth with disabilities can easily find those resources. Additionally, this author recommends adding “With Disabilities” in an effort to honor the population of transition-age youth with disabilities.
Some of the barriers youth with disabilities face when transitioning from high school to post-secondary education and employment were addressed in the project. If this project was conducted again, this author recommends interviewing transition-age youth with disabilities on the subject of barriers to post-secondary employment and education. Interviews would provide a more in-depth account of the post-secondary education and employment barriers that transition-age youth with disabilities feel they face.
APPENDIX A

The Project

Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities PowerPoint
Placer County Transition-Age Youth
By: Cherie Ashton

Master’s Project in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling
Sacramento State University

All information in this presentation verified on 11/23 2013
Author not responsible for future changes
You’re a senior now, congratulations!

• It’s important to start developing your plans for after high school
What are your plans for after high school?

- If you’re not sure, or you’re still working on your plans, start talking to and brainstorming with your parents, teachers, WorkAbility Specialists, counselors, etc.
Think ahead for your future

- Creating a plan for your future will help you get where you want to go
What are your options for after high school?

- College
- Vocational Training
- Employment
- Apprenticeship Programs
- Day Programs
- Military
Colleges in the Placer County area

• Sierra College
  – 5000 Rocklin Road
    Rocklin, Calif. 95677
  – Main Rocklin Number
    (916) 624-3333
  – Disabled Student Services
    (916) 660-7460

Community college which provides degree and certificate programs.
### Colleges in the Sacramento area

- **American River College (ARC)**
  - 4700 College Oak Dr.
    Sacramento, CA 95841
  - Phone Number: (916) 484-8011
  - Disabled Student Programs & Services (DSPS) (916) 484-8382

Community college which provides degree and certificate programs.
California State Universities and Private Colleges

For more information about California State Universities and private colleges, speak with your counselor or visit the career center at your school.
Vocational Training

• 49er Regional Occupational Program
  - Through Placer County Office of Education
  - 360 Nevada Street
    Auburn, Ca. 95603
  - Phone (530) 889-5949

Career and educational opportunities with on-the-job training.
Vocational Training contd.

- Roseville Connections One Stop Career Center
  - 115 Ascot Drive Suite #180
  - Roseville, Ca. 95661
  - Phone (916) 865-2440

Offers job search workshops, vocational exploration assistance, and job training information.
Vocational Training contd.

• Golden Sierra Job Training
  Roseville office
  – 115 Ascot Drive Suite #180
     Roseville, Ca. 95661
  – Phone (916) 746-7722
  – http://goldensierra.com

Self-directed resource center,
focusing on training information,
career assistance and job search.
Vocational Training contd.

• California Conservation Corps
  - 3710 Christian Valley Road
  - Auburn, CA 95602
  - Phone (530) 823-4900

California Conservation Corps offers on the job training, education, scholarships, and “Career Pathways”.

[Image of California Conservation Corps logo]
Vocational Training contd.

- Heald College
  - 7 Sierra Gate Plaza
  - Roseville, Ca. 95678
  - Phone (916) 789-8600

Offers a range of programs in the healthcare, business, legal and technology fields.
Vocational Training contd.

- Carrington College
  - 7301 Greenback Lane, Suite A
    Citrus Heights, CA 95621
  - Phone (916) 585-7769

Offers a range of programs in the medical, dental, administrative and veterinary fields.
Employment in the Placer County area

• PRIDE Industries
  - 10030 Foothills Blvd.
  - Roseville, Ca. 95747
  - Phone (916) 788-2100
  - Youth Services (916) 788-2149

Employment, support, training, and job development for people with disabilities.

Requires referral from Department of Rehabilitation or Alta California Regional Center
Employment in the Placer County area contd.

• Lincoln Training Center
  – 8331 Sierra College Blvd suite 220
  Roseville, Ca. 95661
  – Toll free (800) 949-4582
  Ext. 2540

Providing vocational programming for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Requires referral from Department of Rehabilitation or Alta California Regional Center
Apprenticeship Programs

Apprenticeship Programs are a system of learning while earning, and "learning by doing." They combine training on the job with related and supplemental instruction at school.

For more information see California Department of Industrial Relations Apprenticeship Overview website:
http://www.dir.ca.gov/databases/das/descofappr.html
Day Programs

• CHOICES Transitional Services
  – 6125 King Street, Suite #203
    Loomis, Ca. 95650
  – http://www.cts-choices.org
  – Phone (916) 660-9184
  – Loomis location soon to be relocating to Roseville

Day program classes include; cooking, computer lab, art, and skill development.

Must be Alta California Regional Center Consumer
Day Programs contd.

• Roseville Adult Center
  – 531 Vernon St.
    Roseville, CA 95678
  – Phone (916) 783-5700

Placer ARC invests in the lives of individuals with special needs because every life has value. Offered by Placer ARC.

Must be Alta California Regional Center Consumer
Day Programs contd.

- **Studio 700 Center for the Arts**
  - 700 Douglas Blvd.
    Roseville, Ca. 95678
  - Phone 916-781-6911

Art skills training and development in the areas of; animation, ceramics, classical drawing, decorative art, jewelry, painting, performing art, 3D art, and graphic art.

Offered by Placer ARC.

Must be Alta California Regional Center Consumer
Military Recruitment Offices in Placer County

• US Army Recruiting office Roseville
  - 996 Pleasant Grove Blvd.
    Suite #180 Roseville,
    Ca. 95678
  - Phone (916) 783-0445
Military Recruitment Offices in Placer County

• US Marine Recruiting office Roseville
  – 996 Pleasant Grove Blvd.
    Suite #170 Roseville,
    Ca. 95678
  – Phone (916) 783-3886
Do you know what your disability is?

- Knowing what your disability is can help you in becoming your own advocate.
- If you don’t know what your disability is, have a conversation about it with your parents, teachers, WorkAbility Specialist, or a counselor.
What is self-advocacy?

- Self-advocacy means that
  - You have the right to make decisions about your life
  - You can speak up for yourself
  - You are the expert on your own life, and can be assertive with your needs and wishes
• Self-advocacy also means
  - You know your own rights
  - You take responsibility for your actions
  - You respect yourself and others
  - You know where you can go to get help if you need it
• Self-advocacy can help you
  – Communicate your needs and desires to others
  – Become more confident in your abilities and strengths
  – Have a greater sense of self-respect and self-worth
  – Express your goals and improve your communication skills
What does having follow-through mean?

• To have follow-through means that you have completed something you started. This could be a project, idea, your education, or a plan that you have for yourself.
Why is having follow-through so important?

• Having follow-through in life can help you
  - Feel a sense of accomplishment and pride
  - Achieve your goals and dreams
  - Demonstrate to others that you are responsible
Do you know where all of your important documents are?

Do not give away your original documents, give agencies copies only.
Do you know where all of your important documents are?

• You may need access to the following documents once you transition out of high school
  - Copy of your birth certificate
  - Copy of your school transcripts
  - Copy of your social security card
  - Copy of your California identification card or California drivers license
Do you know where all of your important documents are? contd.

- A sample of a completed job application
- Your resume
- A copy of your IEP (Individualized Education Plan), completed within the last year
- A copy of your psycho-educational assessment, completed within the last three years
Why do you need to know where these documents are?

- The various agencies, colleges and programs that you apply to might ask you to provide them with your information

**Remember:** do not give away your original documents, give agencies copies only.
A few websites to check out that can help you with your transition planning

- National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
  - [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org)
  - Provides information, technical assistance, and national resources regarding transition services and secondary education for youth with disabilities
A few websites to check out that can help you with your transition planning, contd.

- The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability
  - [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)
  - The NCWD helps strengthen and improve transition services provided by organizations for youth with disabilities
A few websites to check out that can help you with your transition planning, contd.

- Disability Benefits 101:
  - [www.ca.db101.org](http://www.ca.db101.org)
  - Offers information on health coverage, benefits, and employment for individuals with disabilities
Services in Placer County that can help you

• Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
  - [www.rehab.cahwnet.gov](http://www.rehab.cahwnet.gov)
  - Roseville branch: (916) 774-4400
  - Auburn branch: (530) 823-4040
  - DOR can help with; interviewing skills, job searching, career training and education, and career counseling and assessment
• Alta California Regional Center
  - [www.altaregional.org](http://www.altaregional.org)
  - Roseville branch: (916) 786-8110
  - Alta offers individualized supports for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Working to connect consumers to existing community programs and services based on their needs.
Services in Placer County that can help you contd.

• Social Security Administration-
  - [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)
  - Roseville branch: (866) 348-7830
  - Applying for disability benefits, checking on the status of benefits, and learning about various benefit information
Take advantage of other opportunities

• It’s important to look into other local resources
  - Transition fairs
  - “Transition Night” at your school
  - Local job fairs
Good Luck!

• And remember, start planning and thinking about your future now
APPENDIX B

Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities Website Link
Wellness and Behavioral Health

Service Directory  Filter By: Placer County

Transition-Age Youth
Results: 12

- Advocacy Resources (2)
- Counseling (11)
- Day Programs (1)
- Disability Resources (10)
- Education Resources (7)
- Employment Resources (6)
- Housing (3)
- Nutrition (7)
- Placer County Resources (17)
- Recreation (5)
- Substance Abuse Resources (3)
- Transportation Resources (10)
REFERENCES


