

SUGGESTIONS FOR POST SCHOOL OUTCOMES DATA COLLECTION

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and Indicator 14 of the Illinois State Performance Plan (SPP), Part B, require the state to collect post-secondary outcomes data on students with disabilities one (1) year after leaving school (i.e. students who graduate, receive a certificate of completion, dropout, or age out). The Post School Survey, developed by the National Post School Outcomes Center, assesses the outcomes of individuals with disabilities one year after they have exited high school. The Illinois Post-School Survey is a web-based survey process that provides a framework for local districts to collect and analyze the outcomes of exiters, and to identify areas of strength and weakness in preparing students for adult life. Former students are contacted for a brief interview to assess the areas of independent living, participation in postsecondary education, and employment.

The following guidance was developed by the National Post School Outcomes Center. This information, as well as other information about Indicator 14, is currently available on the website of the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) at <http://www.transitionta.org/dataanalysis>.

Suggestions For Interviewers

Send a letter about one month before interviewing begins to remind former students and their families that we will be calling and why. You may need to make several calls before someone answers. Once someone answers, expect that they will likely think you are trying to sell them something and may hang up. Quickly and politely explain who you are and why you are calling. Often your call is an interruption. If necessary, provide a chance to set up an appointment.

In most instances this post school survey data will be gathered by interviewers who contact the former student and/or his or her family member by phone to determine if the student is working and/or continuing in some sort of educational program. It is vital that interviewers gather data in an accurate and uniform manner.

The *accuracy* of the information you collect is dependent on many factors:

- In order for the respondent to give accurate answers, you need to develop rapport and trust with them. Some may need to be reassured from time to time that their answers are confidential and will not be repeated or reported to their parents, staff at school, or anyone else. Respondents may also need reassurance they are not being "graded" and that they should give the most accurate answer possible.
- It is important that you read questions exactly as they appear in the survey. Only rephrase questions, or explain them, to help a respondent who cannot understand them as they are written. Rephrasing must preserve the neutral character of the original question. Unless rephrasing is needed, ask questions exactly as written every time. Asking questions inconsistently results in inconsistent understanding and inconsistent responses. For example, Question 4 in the Employment Section on the Illinois Post-School Survey is "At any time since leaving high school, *have you ever* worked?" If it is sometimes phrased this way and sometimes asked "You have worked since leaving high school, right?" very different

Repeat contact is the most important follow-up strategy to increase response rate. Follow-up serves as a reminder for those who have simply forgotten to return the survey or who were unavailable at previous contact attempts. **Districts must document a minimum of three occasions and methods to contact the former student.** With phone surveys, repeat calls at various times and days. Consider sending a survey via mail with an enclosed, stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Suggestions for Locating Former Students

Because the data for the Illinois Post-School Survey must be collected the year after students leave school some will be hard to find. This may be true especially for youth who dropped out of school. Response rates pose a problem when target respondents cannot be located or are reluctant to respond. Therefore, districts must make every attempt to secure sufficient response rates to ensure the data collected is representative of the target population.

Provide pre-notification. Pre-notification gives youth and their families a "heads up" and encourages them to respond when the survey comes. Many districts notify students and families while they are still in school that the Illinois Post-School Survey will occur. Include information about the surveys in district, school, and parent newsletters. This encourages youth and families to participate and lets them know the schools are interested in their lives after leaving high school.

Before Exiting

- Keep student demographics and contact information up-to-date; include home and cell phone numbers; home, emergency, and email addresses; and the addresses, email, and phone numbers of family members and/or best friends.
- Have students complete an exit survey prior to leaving school.
- Reinforce the importance of the survey at all high school IEP meetings. Every IEP of students 14 ½ and older must contain postsecondary goals. Engage in effective transition planning and inform students and families that they may be contacted after leaving school. Explain to students and families the necessity of collecting post-school outcomes data. Share the post-school outcomes survey during IEP meetings to familiarize the student and family with the survey look and questions.

After Exiting

- Keep local data systems current. Make certain that school personnel enter the most recent student data.
- "Google" students (e.g., students may be found at www.myspace.com and www.classmates.com).
- Ask youth to update their contact information and ask them to stay in touch.