

Spring 4-2-2013

Youth in Transition Services

Margaret K. Henry

Southern Illinois University Carbondale, mkhenry2013@siu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp

Recommended Citation

Henry, Margaret K., "Youth in Transition Services" (2013). *Research Papers*. Paper 354.
http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp/354

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Papers by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

YOUTH IN TRANSITION SERVICES
A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Margaret Henry

Southern Illinois University

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Master of Science

Department of Rehabilitation Counseling
In the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
March 2013

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

YOUTH IN TRANSITION SERVICES

By

Margaret K. Henry

A Literature Review Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Science

In the Field of Rehabilitation Counseling

Approved by:

Dr. Stacia Robertson, Chair

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
April 1, 2013

AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

MARGARET HENRY for the Master of Science degree in REHABILITATION COUNSELING, presented on April 1, 2013, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: YOUTH IN TRANSITION SERVICES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Stacia Robertson

The provision of an in-depth study through a comprehensive review of the literature on transition services for transition-aged-youth with disabilities in secondary school. With an outline of the transition process for transition-aged-youth with disabilities. The importance of the topic as well as its impact on the lives of transition-aged-youth with disabilities is given. An identification of evidence-based predictors, the importance of vocational rehabilitation counselors as well as various barriers to transition services will be covered within this document. Lastly, an interpretation of the literature its implications and recommendations are given.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I..... 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM 1

 Background of the Problem 2

 Purpose and Objectives 5

 Clarification 5

CHAPTER II..... 7

LITERATURE REVIEW 7

 Evidence Based Predictors to Transition Services..... 8

 Transtion Programming 10

 Community Collaboration 12

 Support of Key Members..... 16

 Exposure to Work 19

 Vocational Exposure 22

 Student Readiness 25

 Barriers to Transition 31

 Educational Guidelines 32

 High School Retention Rates 36

 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Involvement..... 39

 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Collaboration 40

 Age of Involvement 48

Limited Capacity.....	48
CHAPTER III	50
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	50
Implications.....	50
Further Research	52
Questions Derived from Research	53
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Competencies	54
Proposed Solution.....	55
REFERENCES.....	59
VITA.....	67

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nationwide vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and counselors are facing serving an increasing number of youth with disabilities as they seek to move from secondary school to postsecondary opportunities. Transition-age-youth are those between the ages of 16-24 who have a qualifying disability. The disabilities include learning and intellectual disabilities, mental health, orthopedic and hearing impairments, substance abuse, visual impairments, traumatic brain injury and other categories (National Council on Disability, 2008). This population is increasing each year. In the 90's TAY represented 17% of all VR consumers. However, by 2004, they represented one fourth of all VR consumers (National Council on Disability, 2008). VR agencies and counselors have the skills and the resources to help link transition-aged-youth with the services they need. VR agencies and counselors are central to any effective transition effort. Evidence from outcomes data indicates that transition-aged-youth are not receiving adequate transition services before exiting secondary school.

It is not clear that the transition services for transition-aged-youth youth with disabilities placement in postsecondary work and educational environments is effective. These youth differ significantly from other VR consumers in age, level of education and prior work experience. Thus, vocational rehabilitation counselors and agencies are struggling to develop appropriate employment service plans. Without a clear idea of the path to postsecondary opportunities for these youth, VR counselors are in the difficult position of determining necessary supports, and because of limited involvement providing career counseling and vocational assessment, and arranging referrals.

According to the National Council on Disability (NCD) promising transition practices do exist, however there is such a variety of approaches that it is necessary to determine which ones are effective, based upon empirical evidence, because, despite the availability of effective evidence-based methods transition-aged-youth are still not receiving adequate transition services.

In order to increase the number of students with disabilities transitioning to postsecondary education and work, we must examine the transition process. Numerous pieces of legislation addresses transition services to students with disabilities. The Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 (The Perkins Act), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its amendments (1992 & 1998). All three mandate transition planning services and interagency coordination of VR and school districts. (Trach, 2012). Additionally the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is a major piece of performance-based legislation that has resulted in school districts altering its services to remain compliant (Johnson, Stout, & Thurlow, 2009)

Background of the Problem

Nationally workers with disabilities are finding themselves in difficult times. The recent economic recession is exacerbating the existing low levels of employment for adults and youth with disabilities (Kaye, 2010). Further students with disabilities lag behind their peers nationally in obtaining jobs and accessing postsecondary education opportunities, in spite of federal legislation and mandates and the available research on effective practice. Kaye (2010) states that traditionally educational attainment is much lower for persons with disabilities. This means that there is a greater demand for, and improvement of transition services in secondary school. The economic and work related benefits from high school to postsecondary education training and work are vital for this population. The transition services during and after secondary school for

transition-aged-youth with disabilities remain inconsistent in both application and effectiveness (Fleming & Fairweather, 2012).

Evidence from general labor force data indicate that increasing levels of education for transition-aged-youth result in higher rates of labor force participation and employment (National Council on Disability, 2008). There are a disproportionate percentage of transition-aged-youth with disabilities that leave high school and neither work nor continue their education, despite having transition goals to the contrary (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). The National Council on Disability states that obtaining higher levels of education have clear positive impacts on employment rates; however, it is at lower rates than individuals without disabilities.

The public cost of child dependence on disability benefits is large. Many youth are at high risk of receiving SSI or Social Security disability benefits if they do not successfully transition to a productive adult life (Fraker & Rangarajan, 2009). Therefore, the costs of not receiving successful and effective transition services include long-term dependency and lifelong poverty on the quality of life for youth with disabilities (Fraker & Rangarajan, 2009). The cost of the Social Security Administration providing benefits to youth with disabilities over their lifetime is about \$150,000, and does not include participation in the Medicaid program (Fraker & Rangarajan, 2009). Many researchers identify the adolescent years as a prime time to intervene before youth become fully entrenched in dependency.

Gender and belonging to a diverse cultural or linguistic background affects the postsecondary opportunities students with disabilities disproportionately. Educational and employment gains have been made for persons with disabilities however, persons from culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds with a disability have not experienced these gains (Hasnain & Balcazar, 2009). Evidence indicates that a culturally and linguistic

background are determinates in the type of transition services that students with disabilities receive. Current special education transition programming may not address poor postsecondary outcomes for this population (Valenzuela & Martin, 2005). Valenzuela (2005) states that there are disproportionate unemployment rates and minimal enrollment in postsecondary education for culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities who recently left secondary school as compared to their peers with and without disabilities. Additionally when examining how males and females enter into special education there are additional differences there as well. Research indicates that minority students labeled with a learning or intellectual disability and emotionally disturbed were more likely to be placed in non-mainstream environments (Baer & Daviso, 2011). Non-mainstream environments are traditionally not adequate for transition-aged-youth with disabilities. They contradict the inclusion stipulations.

All information indicates that a high school diploma has no occupational relevance and the lack of a nationally recognized vocational certification system distances educators from employers (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). Thus, the skill set of transition-aged-youth is limited to the general credentials that they obtained while in secondary school. Additionally specially designed school curriculums may also limit transition-aged-youth with disabilities access to transition resources, and provide fewer opportunities needed to practice the academic and social skills that are vital for postsecondary employment or academic success (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). Postsecondary employment can provide other important resources for transition-aged-youth. Nonmonetary benefits such as sick days, insurance and retirement, as well as the development of a support network (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). All of these effects indicate that the future success of transition-aged-youth with disabilities relies on their ability to obtain some form of postsecondary education or employment opportunity. This means that VR

counselor's/agencies and school personnel that have a vested interest in transition services must know more and be more involved in the path from elementary school, to secondary school, to postsecondary education, training, and work.

Purpose and Objectives

It is this author's opinion that to serve this population a comprehensive plan of action is to take place. The development of specialized programs at the state and local level that work directly with school districts and other community agencies, to facilitate evidence based predictors of transition services to youth with disabilities must be implemented. Additionally the clarification of the role of VR agencies and counselors in the transition process is mandatory. These measures could substantially improve this national problem.

In summary a review of effective transition services for transition-aged-youth with disabilities with an overview of what the transition process is. A better understanding of self-determination and self-advocacy skills as they relate to the transition process, and an identification of major barriers that limit the effectiveness and participation of potential VR consumers will be included. A review of the literature is provided, followed by suggestions for future research as well as implications and conclusions based on the literature.

Clarification

In order for the reader to understand transition services an overview of VR and the transition process is provided. In general, terms the fields of education and VR have adapted the term "transition" to describe the movement of students with disabilities from school to independent productive satisfactory post school environments. (Trach, 2012). During the transition process for eligible transition-age youth three major documents must be created, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the Summary of Performance and the Individualized

Employment Plan (IPE). All activities are directed towards the creation of the three documents must take consideration of the student's strengths, preferences, and interests.

In the first document the IEP, transition services are determined and it must contain transition goals no later than age 16. The IEP is updated annually. Special education personnel, VR personnel, parents and students must consider adult outcomes as they plan for student's school experiences.

Three primary concepts must be addressed in the documents for the planning process to be considered appropriate. First the development of appropriate measurable postsecondary goals, second a course of study, and finally a coordinated set of activities. Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals are based on age-appropriate transition assessments. They are related to training, education, employment and where appropriate independent living skills (National Council on Disability, 2008). This information is used to develop measurable postsecondary goals. These goals are in alignment with what students would like to achieve once they exit school. The course of study involves all courses and educational experiences for students that will prepare students for the transition from school to community. The IEP team members develop an educational program that directly relates to the postsecondary goals developed for a student. The development of a coordinated set of activities is designed to provide the student with a specific set of strategies to assist the student to move from school into the community. In addition, the coordinated set of activities can include: instruction related services, community experiences; employment; postsecondary adult living; daily living; and functional vocational evaluation.

The second document, the Summary of Performance, is completed when students terminate their eligibility for special education because of graduation with a regular diploma or

exceed the age of eligibility. It is clearly not part of the IEP, but it serves to document academic achievement, functional performance, and provides the student with recommendations to assist them in achieving postsecondary goals or opportunities.

Finally, the Individualized plan for employment (IPE) is perhaps the most important document in the VR process. The VR counselor works with eligible youth and the IEP team to develop an IPE. An IPE is required to contain a description of the specific employment outcome that is chosen by the eligible individual, consistent with his/her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interest and informed choice. Any services provided by VR are listed and described in the IPE and must be focused on securing reasonable employment outcomes. VR provides a coordinated set of activities designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to postsecondary activities. The coordinated set of activities in the IPE are a different. They must be based on the individual needs, taking preferences and interest into account and must include instruction, community experience, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

The following section will review the literature as it relates to an effective transition process for transition-aged-youth with disabilities. It provides a discussion of evidence-based predictors as well as identified discrepancies found in current practice. It also discusses the lack of educational guidelines and secondary school retention rates in detail. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the vocational rehabilitation counselor and their vital role in the transition process.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Test & Cease-Cook (2012) state that the way to improve the overall outcomes of transition-aged-youth with disabilities is utilizing evidence based practices. The literature will be reviewed to provide an overview of the transition process and the evidence-based predictors for successful postsecondary outcomes for transition-aged-youth.

Despite efforts to improve the transition process to increase knowledge and awareness of transition, planning there still remains major obstacles or barriers to effective and appropriate transition services. At the foundation of this issue is unclear education guidelines and poor secondary school retention rates for students with disabilities. The literature will be reviewed to determine the barriers that exist for an effective transition process and how these barriers may be removed. Additionally external barriers to the transition process will be reviewed to determine the negative impact on the outcomes of transition-aged-youth.

Finally, a review of the role of the vocation rehabilitation counselor and the challenges that they are facing serving transition-aged-youth is covered. Despite federal mandates to involve VR counselors in the transition process, VR counselors have limited involvement. The lack of VR counselor involvement in the process results in poor collaboration with community resources and services, poor development of appropriate career goals and poor facilitation of work related experience. Evidence indicates that VR counselors are not being utilized effectively in the transition process (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a).

Evidence Based Predictors to Transition Services

Test & Cease-Cook(2012) conducted an overview of evidence-based practices in secondary education. They conducted a comprehensive examination of experimental research studies to provide VR professionals with an overview of evidence based instructional practices and predictors of postsecondary success for transtion-aged-youth. They identified 63 evidence-based

practices for secondary students with disabilities within a five areas called the Taxonomy for Transition programming. This taxonomy includes student focused planning, student development, interagency collaboration, family involvement and program structures.

Not all of the research concerning evidence-based practices included outcome data. So Test & Cease-Cook (2012) identified 16 evidence based predictors of postsecondary success in the three areas of education, employment and/or independent living. The identified predictor items are : career awareness; community experiences; high school diploma status; inclusion in general education; independent living skills; interagency collaboration; occupational courses; paid employment/work experience; parental involvement; program of study; self-determination/self-advocacy; social skills; student support; transition program; vocational education; and work study;.

Test & Cease-Cook (2012) found that of the 16 predictors, four (inclusion in general education, paid employment/work experience, self care/independent living skills, student support) improved outcomes in all three areas(education, employment or independent living services). Additionally they found that seven predictors (career awareness, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, self-advocacy/self-determination, social skills, transition programs, vocational education) were predictors of postsecondary outcomes in two areas education and employment. Lastly the remaining five (community experiences, exit exam requirements/high school diploma status, parental involvement, program of study, work study) were predictors of improved postsecondary outcomes in the area of employment only.

Each predictor is a unique item, however they are all interrelated to each other, and no one is more or less important than another. For the purpose of this study, the predictors will be categorized into six sections for ease of discussion. The six categories are transition

programming, community collaboration, support of key members, exposure to work, vocational exposure, and student readiness. There is one exception; the predictor of exit exam requirements/high school diploma status will be discussed in the barriers to transition section.

Transtion Programming

The first category, transition programming, includes the predictors of inclusion in general education, and transition programming. It is not clear how high school services for youth with disabilities result in effective placement in postsecondary education, or postsecondary work environments. However, according to the National Council on Disability (NCD 2008) transition to postsecondary education was the most commonly provided VR service to youth with disabilities. This indicates that secondary education for many youth with disabilities is the crucial first step to eventual employment.

The evidence-based predictor of incusion in general education is defined as the amount of time students with disabilities spend in courses with their peers without disabilities. Inclusion is an effort to protect the civil rights and equality of students with diabilities (Cook & Rumrill, 2000). Cook & Rumrill (2000) further state that inclusion increases social acceptance, friendship, academic growth, and self esteem. It is thought to improve the probability for successful and postsecondary outcomes by preparing both persons with and without disabilities for working togheter and recognizing each others strenghts and limitations. Baer & Daviso (2011) found that secondary schools continue the practice of tracking students with little or no concern for postsecondary preparation. They further state that a student's gender, ethnicity, disability, and school setting continue to bias the provision of secondary education curriculum track as well as transition services. This tracking practice limits student's preference depending upon the courses and experiences available. This results in some student's postsecondary goals

not aligning with their secondary program and transition services (Baer & Daviso, 2011). Poor alignment between transition goals and post school goals has a dramatic negative lifelong impact.

Test & Cease-Cook (2012a) state that schools have made an attempt at including transition-aged-youth in general education elective courses (physical education, art, music). As a result federal initiatives have been created to place more of a focus on inclusion of students with disabilities in core content areas. Ultimately Baer & Daviso concluded that there is need to renew the mandate for early transition planning related to students course of study and to target training of middle school guidance counselors and IEP coordinators. They further state that transition planning should take effect when the student is 14 and should address courses of study, Exposure to a more challenging curriculum at an earlier age would give them more time to adjust to the demands of traditional education settings and/or revise their postsecondary goals as needed. Otherwise students with significant disabilities may simply be tracked into secondary curriculums that are not related to their postsecondary goals.

School personnel in particular are unsure of what activities provide the information needed and how to incorporate the information into the IEP transition process. The IDEA specified that transition services must be addressed within the IEP of each student 16 years of age and older, younger if it is determined to be appropriate (Powers, et al., 2005). Additionally the 1997 Amendments to the IDEA required IEP teams to describe and implement an educational program that prepares students for adult life (Powers, et al., 2005). This implies that the team should clearly identify the transition service that each student will need and note the responsibilities of adult service agencies in provision of that assistance. Transition planning should be an integral part of the IEP from its development to its implementation. The IDEA

indicates that transition services address the individual student needs with consideration given to the students' preferences and interests. It should include the provision of related services, community services, the development of employment and other post-school living and if appropriate the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Powers et al. (2005) conducted research the quality of transition plans in two large urban school districts from two states, describing the quality of transition plans in general. Contrary to the indicators Powers et al. (2005) found that goals related to adult independence and wellbeing such as post-school living arrangements, homemaking skills, recreation and leisure ability of access to community resources health and medical arrangements and self-determination skills are either inadequate or omitted. Further, this research indicated that the goals were described with minimal detail with an average of only one action step per goal. Ultimately Powers et al. (2005) state that the quality of transition plans must be improved. Writing better goals with more detailed action steps, improving collaboration with community partners and adult service agencies, increasing the access that students with disabilities have to the full range of curriculum and employment opportunities, providing self-determination training and person centered planning are some measures that must be taken to improve transition services.

Community Collaboration

The second category community collaboration includes only the predictor of, interagency collaboration. This concept was included in several articles reviewed. Many different service agencies and individuals are needed to help transition-aged students plan and prepare for successful transitions from school to work or community living. Bullis, Davis, Bull & Johnson (1995) conducted a study of students that were 3-4 years out of secondary school that examined the relationship of multiple independent predictor variables on the school-to-community

transition success of young adults who are deaf. They state that services from VR are a strong determinant of success for persons with disabilities. They found that students receiving services from more than one community-based agency were more likely to be engaged in postsecondary employment and education.

Many students are receiving many different forms of transition services resulting in a myriad of both positive and negative experiences. Trach (2012) explains that the transition process involves the teacher, the IEP team and other individuals as necessary. The IEP team then collectively makes recommendations and decisions for the student. It is the students' and the family's responsibility to keep the team focused on the goals and identifying support services, while developing the plan. Other external members of the team can include invited special education personnel, general education teachers, administrators and transition specialists (Trach, 2012). Trach (2012) states that persons informed about resources and adult services available in the community (VR counselor) and their agency partners are vital in transition planning. The agency partners may include mental health agencies, community rehabilitation providers and centers for independent living. These external members of the team and their partners will typically represent the service system that will replace the school with the provision of postsecondary school activities.

Test et al. (2012) defines interagency as collaboration activities and actions that involves developing relationships with multiple parties including parents, other family members, special educators, general educators, VR counselors, independent living counselors, and/or other adult service providers. However Kochhar-Bryant, Basset & Webb (2009) provide an indepth definition of interagency collaboration. They suggest that schools must develop a seamless system of support to assist the student to make a successful transition to postsecondary life. The

student and family must be engaged in transition planning well before graduation. They emphasize that schools and cooperating agencies must have formal interagency agreements. They further define a coordinated interagency service system as a systemic comprehensive and coordinated system of secondary education and transition for individuals with disabilities, which is provided in their communities in the most integrated settings possible and in a manner, which promotes individual choice and decision-making.

Kochhar-Bryant, Basset & Webb (2009) further indicate that included in the interagency service system are four vital items. The first items are activities, goals and strategies to improve the availability of and access to needed services by individuals and groups. The second vital item is a systematic strategy that is explicitly designed to restructure and improve education or community services. The third item uses both local and statewide system change strategies to assist local education and community-service organizations to develop interagency collaboration. Lastly, this system values student/consumer-centered goal setting that focuses the coordination efforts and on the outcomes expected for the individual and on maximizing the individuals' level of potential and capacity for personal decision-making (self-determination). They define the goals to ensure that students who may need services from both school and community agencies receive the service they need in a timely manner. Several functions of service coordination include, information and referral, identification and preparation, assessment and evaluation, IEP/transition planning and development, service coordination/linking service monitoring and follow along, individual and interagency advocacy, service evaluation and follow-up.

Noonan, Morningstar, & Gaumer-Erickson,(2008) collaborate the research of Kochhar-Bryant-Basset, & Web (2009). They conducted focus groups and individual interviews with

high performing local education districts and state agency personnel from five states. They identified 11 categories of strategies for interagency collaboration. They are as follows:

Flexible scheduling and staffing were mentioned as critical capacities for interagency collaboration to occur. The formalized role of the transition coordinator working closely with multiple agencies to initiate and secure services before transition-aged-youth with disabilities exited high school. Flexibility in work day schedule and work location were vital for this strategy. Follow-up after transition was considered valuable by transition coordinators in high performing districts. The provision of administrative support for transition was also essential for interagency collaboration to occur. Utilizing a variety of funding sources proved invaluable for transition services. The local education agencies and VR programs split costs of summer work programs and mental health for community based work sites. Additionally actively pursuing grant opportunities also was an effective strategy. Districts depended upon technical assistance from state education agencies to effectively collaborate with adult agencies. The ability to build relationships with a variety of adult agencies is essential.

Over 40 types of adult agencies can be identified as potential collaboration targets. Transition coordinators facilitated meetings between adult agencies and students and families. These meetings were above and beyond the annual IEP meetings. Providing training to students and families concerning adult agency services, employment, and secondary education. Many of the trainings were co-sponsored by multiple agencies. Other practices included family weekend training, videotaping agency presentations, coordinating parent visits to agencies and inclusive events for the whole school population. Transition coordinators and other LEA staff often attended and participated in joint training opportunities. Regularly scheduled meetings with agency staff and transition councils were also useful. The final strategy was the dissemination of

information to a broad audience. Information should be provided to parents and students about adult agency contacts, types of available services and strategies for securing services.

In most of the literature, reviewed community collaboration is identified as an essential element of the transition for transition-aged-youth. Additionally, VR personnel are essential for transition-aged-youth to transition to adult life. The absence of collaboration among transition service providers, and VR personnel results in redundancy and omission of vital components of service may occur. Ultimately resulting in the limitation of student potential and wasted resources (Trach, 2012) Furthermore transition has been primarily seen as a school-based program when there must be formal communication between two service systems (VR and education) to be successful. It is an active process not a passive program. (Trach, 2012).

Support of Key Members

The third category of predictors includes the the overall support of key members in transition. The predictors of parental involvement and student support are included in this discussion. The involvement of parents, family, and friends is also vital for transition-age youth with disabilities, and is considered a crucial component to student success. Parent involvement and participation has been a part of the foundation for successful school outcomes since the beginning of special education (Defur, Todd-Allen, & Getzel, 2001). However, with the inception of the IDEA parent involvement is receiving greater emphasis as time goes on.

Parental involvement refers to parents being active contributors during a student's transition years, typically ages 14 to 21 and the IEP and educational process (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Student support can come from a multitude of sources, including friends, coaches, teachers, and others during secondary school (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). These vital support items can greatly improve the outcomes of transition-aged-youth with disabilities. Fourqurean, Meisgeier,

Swank, & Williams,(1991) found that students with one or more parents who participated in more IEP meetings during the 11th and 12th grade year were more likely to be engaged in postsecondary employment. Additionally Doren & Benz (1998) found that students who had the support from self-family-friend network to find a job were more likely to be engaged in postsecondary employment.

The role of the family in influencing career aspirations, providing career related planning activities and shaping postsecondary outcomes for transition-aged-youth with disabilities (Lindstrom, Doren, Metheny, Johnson, & Zane, 2007). Lindstrom, et al. (2007) support this with the research that they conducted. They utilized a multiple method, multiple-case study design to examine the influence of family structure and process variables on career development and postsecondary employment outcomes of 13 transition-aged-youth with disabilities. They found that career development is influenced by two independent family contextual factors, family structure variables (parents education, occupation, and socioeconomic status) and family process variables (family relationships, parental aspirations, family support and advocacy). They further state that family socioeconomic status is related to behavior in two important ways with regard to contribution to the family unit. They either contributed by early involvement in employment or by taking on a caregiving role for other family members (female participants). Growing up in a low socioeconomic home motivated transition-aged-youth with disabilities to obtain steady and stable employment. The low socioeconomic status of the family appears to reinforce vocational identity and career maturity.

They also found family process variables work in combination to create three distinct patterns of family interaction. They were characterized as advocates, protectors and the removed. Participant's from the advocates group were employed in higher wage occupations.

Participants from the protectors group entered lower wage, lower skilled occupations or were unemployed. Participants from removed families seemed to succeed despite the lack of family involvement.

All of the findings mentioned emphasize the support and demands the involvement of the family in transition services. Lindstrom, et al. (2007) recommends that VR counselors and educators should increase their awareness and knowledge of the family structure and the impact of socioeconomic status. Additional recommendations are to educate parents about a variety of career options for transition-aged-youth and lastly reiterated the community collaboration process. This emphasizes the importance of building and strengthening partnerships between parents and transition professionals.

Defur, S.H, Todd-Allen, M. & Getzel E., (2001) formed focus groups sizing from 6-10 in four different locations in the state of Virginia in an effort to develop policy and guidance for professionals working with families of transition-aged-youth. They found that parents believe that they are not listened to as they try to participate in the transition decision-making process. Furthermore, Defur, Todd-Allen & Getzel (2001) found that many secondary school personnel report that many parents are not involved in their child's education and at best are passively involved. Defur et al. (2001) also indicate concerns concerning families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They found that the families expressed the opinion that a lack of acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity continues to be a hidden barrier to parental involvement in their child's education. Defur et al. (2001) further suggest that families of transition-age youth with disabilities desire professionals to engage in relationship building activities on behalf of the future planning for their children. Further the study found that professionals are needed that communicate, collaborate, connect, care and celebrate with

families. These qualities emerge as a means to create environments that can promote active participation in the transition process for transition-aged-youth with disabilities and family members.

Key members of transition-aged-youth lives may act as case managers for their loved one. The more key members of transition-aged-youth participate in the transition process the more likely they are to become a significant support in the future to improve the overall quality of life for transition-aged-youth. Professionals should emphasize the participation of key members in the transition process. They should ultimately try to make the transition environment as welcoming as possible.

Exposure to Work

The fourth category of predictors is significant exposure to work. This category includes the predictors of paid employment, work related experience and work study participation. Secondary school special educators frequently indicate that potential community partners are not willing to hire youth with disabilities and secondary institutions do not have the relationship with community partners to facilitate the need (Carter E. W., et al., 2009b). Carter et al. (2009) state that educators indicate that they have limited time resources, and training to facilitate such an endeavor. Lurking (2008) conducted a literature review and found four major findings from the research. First employers have a limited understanding of the skills and strengths of youth with disabilities. Secondly the limited understanding of the purpose of special education transition programming and services. Third, a limited understanding of the available venues for working with schools to support youth-focused career development activities. Lastly a limited understanding of the resources, and assistance potentially available to them when they hire, or work with youth.

These limitations highlight the necessity of developing stronger linkages between the local business community and secondary schools (Carter E. W., et al., 2009b). Carter, E.W., Trainor, A.A, Cakiroglu, O., Sweeden, B., Ditchman, & Owens, L. (2009) surveyed 122 chambers of commerce and 13 other employer networks to examine the role that chambers of commerce and other local employer networks might play in expanding employment opportunities for transition-aged-youth with and without disabilities in their local communities. They found chambers of commerce are in favor potential partnerships in youth-focused career development projects. Local employer networks also reflect a general willingness to collaborate with local secondary schools and both groups stated that this activity aligned with their mission statements and they were currently involved with secondary districts by inviting guest speakers from the secondary school to talk about the employment needs of youth at one of their meetings.

Paid employment and work experience refers to students with disabilities having a paying job during high school (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Work-related experience is often excluded as a part of student's transition planning due to the lack of understanding on how to create these experiences and the increased focus on academic areas that limit these experiences. The provision of community-based work experience while in high school provides invaluable career exploration to transition-aged-youth to determine their possible career goals. Work study programs are offered by schools where students spend a part of their day taking traditional courses on campus and the remaining part of the day at a job site working for pay or credit hours (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a).

The traditional focus of special education, vocational rehabilitation and adult community services is often driven by services that address identified deficiencies or shortcomings of transition-aged-youth with disabilities (Rogers, Lavin, Tran, Gantenbein, & Sharpe, 2008).

Rogers, Lavin, Tran, Gantenbein & Sharpe, (2008) discuss The Anoka County Transition & Customized Employment (TCE) Project. The TCE project utilized innovative strategies to obtain employment for transition-aged-youth in both areas and obtained successful outcomes. They utilized customized employment, where the relationship between a job seeker/employee and an employer is customized in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individual determination of the interest, strengths and needs of the person with a disability, and is also designed to meet specific economic needs of an employer or the self-employment business selected by the employee. They launched a customized training program that was planned and implemented to accommodate the learning needs of transition-aged-youth with disabilities and the course included hands on work experience with community health care providers. This program resulted in Certified Nurses Assistants with work experience. Additionally they engaged in a partnership with The Builders Association of the Twin Cities (BATC) and Cement Masons Union Local 633 to offer apprenticeships and specialized skills development for transition-aged-youth interested in trade occupations. Employment data indicated that 62% of all transition-aged-youth enrolled at some point throughout the program worked in paid integrated competitive employment. Traditional job placement methods accounted for positive outcomes, for TCE, including enhanced opportunities for many unserved and underrepresented youth with significant disabilities who are unable to benefit from traditional employment approaches.

Carter et al. (2009b) also found that job placement services provided a connection to potential employers that are congruent with their interest strengths and goals for postsecondary school careers. Additionally mentor relationships with a caring adult or local employer who can communicate work related expectations were developed. Carter, E. W., Trainor, A.A., Cakiroglu, O., Sweeden, B., & Owens, L.A. (2010a) also conducted research on the availability

and access to career development activities for transition-aged-youth. They surveyed 34 high school administrator and other personnel. They found that school based enterprises provided work related experience without leaving the high school to be the most beneficial to students with disabilities: These types of agreements eliminate the need to coordinate transportation.

Vocational Exposure

The fifth category is student vocational exposure. This category includes the predictors of programs of study, occupational courses, vocational courses and career awareness. The predictors related to occupational courses independent living skills and social skills are in this group. Career and vocational experiences that equip transition-aged-youth for their future careers are especially important for secondary school. These experiences are vital for youth today entering the work force and even more critical for transition-aged-youth students with disabilities (Carter E. , Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen, & Owens, 2009a).

Carter, et al. (2009a) researched what career development offerings transition-aged-youth had access to during secondary school. They found that secondary schools commonly offer career interest assessments, tours of colleges or technical schools, job shadowing programs, interviewing or resume writing, and speakers brought in from local businesses. They additionally state that the least offered high school career activities were mentorship programs with employers, job placement services for students, school-based enterprises or businesses, and cooperative education programs. Research, however indicates that participation on the myriad of vocational and career-related program offerings at many high schools are described as generally uneven and limited. The least offered activities, school based enterprises, job placement and the mentoring relationship, were considered the most beneficial (Carter E. , Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen, & Owens, 2009a).

Programs of study refer to courses of study available to students based on their postsecondary goals to attend a 4-year college or university, a junior college, technical program or enter the workforce (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Included in the program of study are the essential predictors of vocational education, and career awareness. Vocational education teaches students skills needed for choosing and preparing for career skills in the areas of work habits, interviewing, writing resumes, and completing acceptance application into college or other postsecondary training or the workforce (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Career awareness refers to employment-related skills acquired by students often because of career or vocational education provided during secondary school tailored to prepare students with disabilities for future postsecondary employment (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Career awareness may also include job search skills, interview skills, and job-specific skills (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a).

Solberg, Howard, Gresham, and Carter (2012) hypothesized that transition-aged-youth with disabilities should be involved in learning environments that are specifically designed to provide the experiences needed to promote the development of a range of career, academic, and social-emotional self-determination skills associated with important in-school outcomes. They referred to this as a quality learning environment. They defined a quality learning environment as one that includes school-based preparatory experiences, career preparation, work based learning experiences, youth development and leadership experiences connecting activities, family involvement and support and engagement in individual learning plans. Their study provides empirical evidence that providing students with disabilities meaningful access to compelling and comprehensive high school programs is effective. They further found that students that reported more involvement in these activities had greater confidence in their

abilities to successfully engage in career planning, career exploration and management, career awareness, conducting interviews and networking.

In addition to vocational coursework, the predictor occupational coursework is often part of a modified curriculum or course of study for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). They explained that coursework designed to help students learn functional, independent living and work skills are included in occupational coursework. They identify the adaptive behavior skills independent living instruction and social skills for transition-aged-youth with disabilities as vital.

For all youth with disabilities, independent living instruction is essential (Alwell & Cobb, 2009). Independent living instruction can include but is not limited to leisure skills, social skills, self-care skills and other adaptive behavior skills (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Alwell & Cobb state that there is a significant link between life skills acquisition and quality of life. However very few studies adequately have researched this subject. Alwell & Cob reviewed 50 studies in the area of life skill instruction and concluded that all students with disabilities are able to acquire various functional life skills. However they could not make a determination on the most effective instructional setting, because none of the studies took place in an educational setting.

Acquiring social skills allows students with disabilities to interact successfully with others during school, after graduation and while participating in postsecondary environments (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Murray & Doren (2012) define social skills as socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact effectively with others and avoid socially unacceptable responses. Their research indicated that transition aged youth with disabilities often have deficient social skills (Murray & Doren, 2012). They further explain social skills are predictive of adjustment across a broad developmental spectrum and are linked to grade

promotion and retention, academic achievement, and emotional/behavioral adjustment. They also emphasize that social skills are important transition-related skills, and finding a way to improve these skills is an important educational objective. Social skills allow students with disabilities to interact successfully with others both during school and after graduation. Job related social skills are also vital.

Murray & Doren (2012) utilized the Working at Gaining Employment Skills (WAGES) curriculum to evaluate prevocational and social skills of transition-aged-youth. They recruited 222 students from two larger urban high schools and one in a small city. They assigned students to either an intervention or a control group. The intervention group was administered the WAGES curriculum for four months. They found that transition-aged-youth students exposed to the WAGES curriculum improved job related social skills. In addition, the students had greater empathy, cooperation and assertion skills following the intervention. They further state that VR counselors should recommend this strategy and curriculum to improve transition related experiences of transition-aged-youth.

Student Readiness

The sixth and last major category of evidence-based predictors is student readiness. Student readiness includes the predictors of self-determination and self-advocacy. Test & Cease-Cook (2012a) state that self-determination can include choice-making, problem solving, decision-making, goal-setting and attainment, self-regulation, self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-advocacy (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012a). Throughout the literature, self-determination and self-advocacy are identified as vital and should be utilized in the transition process.

Many students with disabilities have difficulty practicing self-determination and self-advocacy skills without instruction and strategies. Students with disabilities are often denied the

opportunity to take risks and make decisions and may not develop skills of enhanced self-determination (Izzo & Lamb, 2003). They further state that young people transition from high school to college with limited or no skills in this area. This is because school providers and parents have taken responsibility to negotiate and advocate for students' academic and social needs (Izzo & Lamb, 2003). Additionally some providers believe that transition-aged-youth students lack the determination and self-advocacy skills to participate in postsecondary activities as well as the planning process. These skills are critical, because in most postsecondary experiences, youth are expected to take responsibility for their learning needs by requesting needed accommodation's to gain access to academic content (Izzo & Lamb, 2003). Further complicating the request for needed accommodations is the lack of understanding by students with disabilities of their own strengths and limitations well enough to explain how the requested accommodations are reasonable and will not grant them an unfair advantage (Izzo & Lamb, 2003).

Ten years of research has identified self-determination as a widely accepted practice in transition programming. The more self-determination is utilized as the central organizing component throughout transition services, including assessment practices for transition-aged-youth with disabilities the more effective transition services will become (Field & Hoffman, 2007b). Self-determination increases the likelihood that transition-aged-youth will establish and obtain goals related to education and transition. It is also associated with postsecondary school success, increased participation in a variety of community activities, and there is also a link between self-determination in intrinsic motivation. Self-determination skills and knowledge of them are important life-long skills needed to be successful for persons with disabilities.

Field & Hoffman (2002) conducted research to provide transition program guidelines for educational programs. They define self-determination as the ability to identify and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself. Additionally self-determination consists of a set of skills that enable individuals to engage in opportunities and make adjustments to attain desired goals (Valenzuela & Martin, 2005). Valenzuela & Martin (2005) state that embedded within self-determination are other constructs such as self-awareness, decision making self-advocacy, independent performance and adjustment. All of these concepts are embedded in the IEP process but require a process for development. If persons with disabilities are going to have effective opportunities to exercise self-determination it is imperative that schools provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge skills and beliefs that will help them capitalize on and create opportunities to be self-determined (Field & Hoffman, 2002a). Field & Hoffman (2002a) further state that in addition to providing a supportive environment they must teach the knowledge skills and attitudes that lead to increased self-determination.

In addition, central to the student readiness is the preparation of transition-aged-youth to participate in the IEP or transition meeting. Without specific IEP or transition meeting instruction, students attending their meetings do not know what to do, do not understand the purpose or what is said, and feel as if none of the adult participants listen to them when they do provide input (Martin, et al., 2006a). The self-directed IEP utilizes video modeling, student assignments, and role-playing to teach students IEP leadership skills. The self-directed IEP not only teaches students to actively participate in and lead their own IEP meetings, it provides an opportunity to practice self-determination skills. Students demonstrate goal setting, planning, self-evaluation, mediation, public speaking, and self-advocacy skills (Martin, et al., 2006a). The Self-Directed IEP establishes a relationship amongst the self-determination values of self-

awareness, decision-making, self-advocacy, independent performance, and adjustment.

Additionally the Self-Directed IEP is especially beneficial to culturally and linguistically diverse transition-aged-youth with disabilities. The Self-Directed IEP fosters the establishment of individualism, enhances self-perception and self-efficacy. It also provides opportunities for culture sharing.

Martin, et, al., (2006a) conducted a study of 130 middle and high school transition meetings in three rural and two suburban districts in a southwestern state. They utilized randomized group experiments to determine the effectiveness of the Self-Directed IEP. This study yielded six major findings. First, they found that students that received instruction in the self-directed IEP led significantly more during IEP meetings. Students were considered to lead the meetings when they introduced themselves to team members, stated the purpose of the meeting, reviewed past goals and performance, expressed interest, skills, and goals, and closed the proceedings. The second finding was students engaged in more IEP meetings. After being taught the Self-Directed IEP lessons students increased their active participation in IEP meetings and engaged in IEP leadership behaviors, expressed their interest's skills and limits across transition areas, and remembered IEP goals after the meeting ended. The third finding is that students that received instruction had more comprehensive postsecondary transition statements than similar statements of students who did not receive instruction. Fourth, students reported significantly higher post-IEP meeting positive perceptions of their IEP meeting. The fifth finding resulted in students and teachers both reporting significantly higher transition issues ratings. Issues related to that fact that the special education teachers dominated the transition discussions. Lastly, the length of IEP meetings did not significantly differ between self-directed IEP intervention and teacher directed control group IEP meetings.

In addition to the Self-directed IEP, there is the Student-Directed Transition Planning Lessons. The Student-Directed Transition Planning lessons were developed to address the Summary of Performance requirement. Slightly different from the Student Directed IEP, the Student-Directed Transition Planning lessons were developed to teach transition-aged-youth with disabilities self-awareness and awareness of their disabilities. To develop postsecondary goals in employment, education and adult living. In addition, to write a course of study, connect with adult supports and services, and to develop a summary of performance script that they could use at IEP meetings to facilitate involvement in transition discussions. The summary of performance script uses the student-directed format (Woods, Sylvester, & Martin, 2010).

Woods, Sylvester, & Martin (2010) conducted research that determined if the Student-Directed Transition Planning increased student knowledge and self-efficacy skills in the transition planning process. They went into three schools in a southwestern state and randomly assigned 19 students to an intervention group and 10 students to a control group. They found that students did experience a statistically significant knowledge gain, and statistically significant increase in perceive self-efficacy in the transition planning process. This serves as evidence that instruction in the IEP process lead to increased perceptions of the ability to participate in transition planning IEP meeting. In addition, it was revealed that student directed transition-planning lessons appear to provide the opportunity for educators to teach important content so that students believe they can knowledgeably engage in transition planning.

Agran, Storey, & Krupp (2010c) surveyed 144 state employment agency participants and found that the majority of the respondents reported that they were taught to perform a number of self-determination strategies. Either job coaches or parents taught these strategies. Teachers and others were identified by less than one-third of the respondents. Morningstar et al. (2010) found

that school based instruction in self-advocacy skills are an important element of quality school programs and correlates with self-determination among postsecondary students with disabilities. Additionally they found that self-determination appeared to be more important for individuals with intermittent or limited support needs than those with more extensive support needs.

There is a lack of involvement and participation of students with disabilities in their own transition process. Many professionals believe that students with disabilities cannot learn to take an active leadership role in their transition process (Martin, Van Dycke, D'Ottavio, & Nickerson, 2007b). This results in schools not engaging students in the transition assessment and planning process, missing a prime opportunity to increase student involvement and self-determination (Martin, Van Dycke, D'Ottavio, & Nickerson, 2007b). Others believe it's not realistic for students to participate if they are not provided instruction. In the transition process according to the IDEA, students have the option to attend their IEP meetings. Most often students do not attend for a myriad of reasons. The most commonly reported reasons are a lack of understanding in the IEP process and the belief that it has no impact on their lives.

Lack of participation by students in the transition process is a noted obstacle to transition. The IDEA amendments added the requirement that older students should participate in at least some part of their IEP meetings, maintaining that students aged 14 years and older must be invited to attend their IEP meetings if transition services are to be discussed (Barnard-Bark & Lechtenberger, 2010). Furthermore, evidence based predictors leading to effective transition services have been identified, however they are constantly underutilized. Promoting self-determination of transition-aged-youth with disabilities and teaching them to have an active role in their IEP and transition-planning meetings are ongoing initiatives. However, this practice is applied inconsistently. The concept of student directed interest strategies and associated levels

of student engagement differs substantially from the typical secondary teacher directed IEP transition meeting (Martin, Van Dycke, D'Ottavio, & Nickerson, 2007b)

Agran & Hughes (2008) found that many students with IEP's were never taught to read their IEP's or lead their IEP developmental meetings. Additionally they were not able to identify their goals and ultimately were oblivious to the IEP's purpose and importance. Powers et al. (2005) researched the signature on IEP's and found that signatures of school administrators/designees, family members and teachers were present. However Powers et al. (2005) further indicated that 24% of the time students did not sign their IEP, general educators and transition specialists were not present for the majority of the meetings and VR staff attended only 1% of the meetings.

Special education teachers have been found to dominate the process and discussions, leaving them most satisfied with the results, and the students least satisfied with the results. Families and students reported that they felt that they did not meaningfully participate or enjoy the meetings (Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, 2012). Furthermore, quality-learning environments may be a factor. Learning environments for transition youth concerning self-determination and self-advocacy must be specifically designed to provide the experiences to promote skill development (Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, 2012).

Barriers to Transition

When examining the transition processes for transition-aged-youth there are several barriers that are external to the transition process. This means that there are independent variables that the student does not control. Educational guidelines, and high school retention rates and VR counselor involvement are three major barriers to effective transition services for transition-aged-youth with disabilities. The evidence based predictor of high school diploma

status, is directly related to the barriers of educational guidelines and high school retention rates, and will be discussed within these headings.

Educational Guidelines

The evidence-based predictor of high school diploma status indicates that multiple diploma tracks can be offered that align with student's plans for entering post school life. However, this can also be a major barrier to transition services to transition-aged-youth. Unclear guidelines related to the utilization of alternative routes for exiting secondary school completion, the development and implementation of alternative secondary schools and performance-based legislation are all significant factors that distort and prevent a unified solution to transition.

The utilization of exit exams and other certificates of completion is increasing and fluctuates. As of 2003, fewer than 10 of the 50 states have not implemented policies involving high school exit testing or policies regarding diploma options (Johnson, Stout, & Thurlow, 2009). More than half the students receiving special education services receive a high school diploma, and the other half received some sort of alternate form of high school completion (Fleming & Fairweather, 2012). This implies that the student has left high school without completing the requirements for a full high school diploma. Alternative routes to completion consist of special education diplomas, certificates of attendance, certificates of achievement and occupational diplomas (Gaumer Erickson, Kleinhammer-Tramill, & Thurlow, 2007). Consequently, each alternative option is viewed as inferior to a standard diploma, resulting in long-term negative impacts on students, ultimately limiting or eliminating student's postsecondary options.

The intended consequences of requiring students with disabilities to pass an exit examination to receive a standard high school diploma are: more students with disabilities

participate in the general education curriculum; better life preparation and future independence is improved by utilization of postsecondary education and employment; and the differences between general education and special education students are reduced. (Johnson, Stout, & Thurlow, 2009)

The unintended consequences of the exit examination are students may need to remain in school longer. They may have dissatisfaction and conflict with parents. Higher levels of diminished self-esteem by repeated failures on the exit examination. Higher drop out rates and some students with disabilities will never obtain a diploma, forcing states and districts to create alternative diplomas and pathways to ensure that students exit with some form of high school documentation (Johnson, Stout, & Thurlow, 2009)

The intended consequences of a single diploma option for students with disabilities generate higher expectations for all students including those with disabilities. More students with disabilities have the opportunity to earn a standard diploma, which in turn provides a more detailed and concise record of student performance, and creates a general sense of equity.

The unintended consequences of a single option diploma is the number of special education students remaining in school up to 21 years of age may increase, the dropout rate may increase, and fewer students will actually receive the standard diploma. The standard diploma may come to be perceived as too general or weak. The requirements may be lowering their overall standards for general education students (Johnson, Stout, & Thurlow, 2009). Access to postsecondary education programs for students with diplomas other than a standard diploma are limited if the alternative diploma is viewed as watered down in content or has little meaning to postsecondary admissions staff (Johnson, Stout, & Thurlow, 2009)

The intended consequences of multiple diploma options on students with disabilities are the number of students within a state receiving some sort of high school diploma increased; local districts have more flexibility in determining the manner of students exit. It creates options that are viewed as motivating and engaging for students with disabilities and reduces the dropout rate. The ability to recognize students at risk for drop out is increased and a state is better able to maintain high academic standards for its regular or standard diploma when an alternate diploma is available (Johnson, Stout, & Thurlow, 2009)

Unintended consequences of multiple diploma options are viewed as substandard. Communication of different options is difficult to understand. The utilization of multiple diplomas is perceived as developing “Special tracks” for students to follow, and gauging the meaning of different diploma options in terms of student’s skills and abilities is confusing for employers IEP teams fail to hold students accountable to pass an exit examination or expectations are lowered.

Alternative schools have been in existence since the late 1960’s. However, in the past twenty years they have grown at an exponential rate. During that time, the variation of schools has also become very diverse. Alternative schools can be beneficial to transition youth, and in some instances have been found to exceed the needs of transition youth. Some of them have small enrollment, one-on-one interaction between teachers and students, have supportive environments, opportunities and curriculum relevant to student interest, flexibility in structure and an emphasis on student decision making. However, these schools are rare. With the equation of an alternative schools and transition-aged-youth a discussion about the qualifications of staff, operation of these schools in conjunction with state and federal legislation, and the entry routes of s must occur.

The qualification of staff at alternative schools is questionable. Staffing alternative schools presents a challenge for administrators. It is a challenge to find licensed staff to work with transition-aged-youth with disabilities, which places the educational needs of students secondary (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Also serving high-risk youth and transition-aged-youth with disabilities, alternative schools must maintain high educational standards for their students. Lehr (2003) found that because of low performance scores students are pushed out of traditional secondary schools, and the curriculum of alternative schools changed to directly address state standards and are addressing transition-aged-youth to a lesser degree.

The challenges that alternative schools present when serving transition-aged-youth with disabilities are numerous. First, evidence that alternative schools are operating in conjunction with state and federal legislation is missing or not very comprehensive. The statues, codes and regulations of alternative schools vary in terms of completeness and the degree that they include definitions and information on funding, criteria for enrollment or information about the instructional program offered (Lehr & Lange, 2003). The probability of poor quality programs increase when state policies on accountability and reporting are not in place. Lastly, when it comes to outcomes, alternative schools are criticized because of poor evaluation methods. The measurement of academic progress may not be captured because many alternative schools focus on youth development and education across many domains.

When entering an alternative school, there is some question as to whether; transition-aged-youth are choosing this option or being forced out of traditional schools? Ultimately, alternative schools fall into three distinct categories, schools of choice, last chance schools, and schools designed with a remedial focus on academic issues (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Some alternative schools are considered more for students that have had disciplinary problems in traditional

schools (Lehr & Lange, 2003). The large number of at risk students and students with disabilities that attend them indicates evidence of this practice. This directly affects the student's motivation and outcome of their secondary experience.

A significant piece of legislation driving the development of alternative schools is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This act requires that the graduation rate of a school becomes an indicator of adequate yearly progress for school districts. This practice creates a myriad of unintended consequences for students with disabilities. Many states are utilizing alternative routes to completion with the utilization of alternate certificates of completion and the development of alternative schools.

Alternative programs have a the potential to provide successful outcomes for transition-aged-youth with disabilities despite research indicating a small overall positive effect on school performance., attitudes toward school and self-esteem, but little or no effect on delinquency (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Lehr & Lange (2003) identified several areas of concern in their research. This results in a demand for further evidence-based research on the overall effectiveness of alternative schools for transition-aged-youth with disabilities

High School Retention Rates

Transition-aged-youth with disabilities are more likely to drop out of high school than their peers without a disability. Placing them at a significant disadvantage when it comes to finding employment, equal pay, and equal hours. Retention of students with disabilities during secondary education is an enormous challenge for school systems as well as for VR and other partners in the transition process. Thus, students with disabilities that drop out exacerbate the negative effects of not having a diploma. Further influencing the dropout rate is the way dropouts are calculated. Since the NCLB Act, graduation rates of school districts is emphasized.

The reasons why students drop out of school is difficult to determine, however they can be broken down into two different categories: Academic failure and disengagement from the educational environment (Kemp, 2006). However, the concept of exclusionary disciplinary practices is now emerging as a drop out reason.

Academic failure affects both students with disabilities and without. Receiving poor grades or failing a course are reasons why students exited high school early. Receiving poor grades and failing courses directly translates to lowered self-esteem in students with disabilities, resulting in unsatisfactory high school life, and developing feelings of alienation, or negative attitudes towards school.

Disengagement from school and the school environment may be related to academic failure (Kaye, 2010). Disengagement is found to be a progressive process. It is often displayed by frequent absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism is the strongest behavioral antecedent of school dropout (Williams-White & Kelly, 2010). Attendance patterns in the primary grade are predictive of high school dropout. Lack of extracurricular participation is also a sign of disengagement, personal and social skill development. Children with disruptive or aggressive behaviors assessed as early as kindergarten are more likely to drop out of school. Early substance abuse, poor personal and social coping skills, and lack of parent involvement are also reasons why transition-aged-youth drop out of high school dropout. The term dropout typically, refers to youth who drop out of the VR system, not high school. A review of data reveals that some state level VR programs attempt to focus on some drop out students. In spite of that, the needs of these students are not addressed.

The causes of dropout must also take into consideration the number of students who are removed from school due to expulsion. This has recently been thrust into the national spotlight.

Vincent, Sprague & Tobin (2012) discovered that students with disabilities are excluded from the classroom more often and for longer durations than students without a disability. This disproportionality not only was specific to disabilities, but also the cultural and linguistic diverse backgrounds of students with disabilities was a factor. The amendments to the IDEA require that under certain circumstances when students with disabilities are expelled or suspended they must continue to receive services in an interim educational setting. These settings must allow students to continue to receive general education and the modifications and services identified in the IEP as well as address the behavior in question (Lehr & Lange, 2003).

Differences in CLD background and gender also are determinants in successful high school completion. Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to receive a high school diploma, three times more likely to drop out of school and only 20 percent likely to enroll in postsecondary school. Many students from diverse backgrounds are dealing with homelessness, violence, substance abuse and higher arrest rates. Research also has indicated that these families possess differing cultural values and beliefs about desirability, limited English proficiencies and high rates of poverty. Furthermore, it has been found that they have limited access to vocational training and workforce options in their communities. Student's demographic status plays a major role in transition from school to work. In each of the outlined barriers to successful transition females and members of ethnic minority groups, find themselves grossly underserved in transition services.

Test, Fowler, White, Richter, & Walker,(2009) found that evidence based instructional practices for secondary students high school completion includes five evidence based practices in dropout prevention. They are student focused planning, student development, interagency

collaboration, family involvement and program structures, all of which have been previously discussed in within this paper.

The literature has identified a myriad of practices that can lead to successful transition as well as many barriers and obstacles that can hinder transition. The role of the VR counselor in ameliorating these issues is vital.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Involvement

According to Dowdy (1996) VRs, purpose is to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve gainful employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities and capabilities. To provide support transition planning must connect transition-aged-youth with disabilities to postsecondary education through professionals that have expertise with disability issues during school. VR counselors possess the connections and the valuable resources to refer and secure needed services for youth. The VR counselor is in effect the specialist in vocational behavior, making them specialist in the transition process. They possess the knowledge to determine the support needs of students and how they are best delivered (Agran, Cain, & Cavin, 2002(a)). VR counselors' provide career counseling, vocational assessment, work placement, referrals for medical and therapeutic services and referrals for assistive technology aids to accomplish this goal (Agran, Cain, & Cavin, 2002(a)). It currently appears however that they do not possess a significant presence in the transition process.

The lack of involvement of VR counselors in the transition process presents confusion in the role of the VR counselor versus the role of school personnel. This creates a major barrier to receiving adequate transition services for transition-aged-youth. To meet the needs of transition-aged-youth with disabilities VR and school personnel must collaborate. They must develop and understand each other's needs as they relate to the transition process. Many believe that VR

counselors become involved in the transition process to late. Early identification of accommodations and other community services can greatly improve the outcomes of transition-aged-youth. Lastly, the limited capacity of VR agencies to provide services to transition-aged-youth greatly affects their quality of life. Conflicting state and federal mandates results in some less severely disabled youth being placed on waiting lists, resulting in them not receiving services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Collaboration

Both educators and counselors have concerns about each other's role in the transition process. In current legislation the collaboration process is not clearly defined (Trach, 2012). Traditionally the two, educators and VR programs differ in jargon, practices and the emphasis of education vs. employment outcomes (Dowdy, 1996). Agran, Cain, & Gavin (2002) state that VR counselors and schools differ in the eligibility criteria, language, record keeping and assessment materials. In the absence of effective collaboration, there is significant redundancy in individual progression, and the possibility exists that an essential component of service for an individual may be omitted. This cultivates frustration on behalf of the parents and students. Agran, Cain & Gavin (2002) found that rehabilitation counselors reported that school districts never contacted them to provide input on the transition process. Additionally they reported that parents never contacted them as a resource, and finally school districts never contacted them regarding the community adjustment status of students after graduation. Agran, Cain & Calvin (2002) state that parents and students are not informed about the availability and the numerous resources related to VR services

Special educators, school counselors, parents and students have limited information about the VR program. Specific VR services accelerate and other adult services. Comprehensive

transition planning requires substantial input from the VR counselor to transition team members so that students and parents can make informed choices (Bellini & Royce-Davis, 1999). VR counselor may also require information from other transition team members to facilitate a better understanding of the unique needs of students with a disability. Discrepancies between school-based and VR assessment data may limit the usefulness of data for adult service planning & VR eligibility decision making. Resulting in less timely decisions or reduced access to VR Services (Bellini & Royce-Davis, 1999). Better coordination across assessment procedures are needed to assure a smooth progression from school-based to adult agency-based services. Coordinating assessment procedures and sharing assessment data between schools requires an understanding of the different purposes and emphasis of assessment practices in these different settings. School assessment practices are primarily delivered for identifying and addressing students needs concerning graduation requirements.

Field & Hoffman (2007) conducted additional research concerning the importance of self-determination assessment skills. They provide strategies and tools that can be used to utilize and assess student's knowledge, skills and beliefs related to self-determination. Appropriate instructional supports and accommodations can be provided from the results of self-determination assessments. The assessment of self-determination utilizes a variety of assessment methods. The suggested methods of assessment are comprehensive analysis of background information, interviews with students and family members, standardized instruments, curriculum based assessments, performance samples, behavioral observations and situational assessments.

Comprehensive analysis of background information or the student record should be reviewed. This review should take a self-determination approach to the review. This means that the identification of objective observances as well as information concerning the strengths

preferences and interest inventory results, and the necessary accommodations needed.

Documentation of the student's previous involvement in education and transition planning and data about the degree to which a student demonstrates the characteristics related to self-determination.

Interviews with student's family members and other key members are an excellent tool for gathering information about the student's self-determination skills as well as their preferences, interests, goals and experiences. The interview more clearly determines the student's perceptions. Results of interviews from different transition team members can be compared to determine discrepancies.

Standardized instruments can also be utilized, however their primary use is to determine the level of self-determination already acquired. They can be used to compare student performance over time and evaluate effectiveness of interest programming. A few of the instruments are the ARC-Self Determination scale; Self-Determination Assessment and AIR Self-Determination scale.

The ARC-Self-Determination scale developed by Wehmeyer & Kelchner in 1995 is a student self-report measure designed for use by adolescents with disabilities particularly students with mild cognitive and learning disabilities. It is a 72-item scale measuring overall self-determination and the domain areas of autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization. It is utilized to create discussion about the students reaction to the items and compare individual strengths and weaknesses across the self-determination domain areas measured by the instrument (Field & Hoffman, 2007b).

The Self-Determination Assessment Battery developed by Hoffman, Field, & Sawilowsky, in 2004 consist of five instruments that can be used alone or in combination. It

measures cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors related to self-determination from the perspectives of the student, parent, and teacher. It is utilized to inform transition planning. Areas of similarity and discrepancy among these perspectives can be identified potentially providing insight to students regarding how their functioning in different areas of their lives or how they are perceived in different situations (Field & Hoffman, 2007b)

AIR Self-Determination Scale developed by Wolman, Campeau, Dubois, Mithaug & Stolarski, in 1994. It measures individual capacity for and opportunities to practice self-determination. There are educator, student, and parent forms on the scale. The results can be used to develop a profile of the student's level of self-determination and to identify areas of strength and weaknesses, educational goals and objectives, and strategies to increase student capacity to become self-determined (Field & Hoffman, 2007b).

Curriculum-based assessment is the practice of collecting data on student performance related directly to curriculum content. One type that is widely used is the portfolio assessment. The portfolio assessment is used to track students' progress about self-selected goals or self-determination competencies. Portfolio assessments work well with self-determination instructional programs. The portfolio assessment gives students control of the assessment process and acts as a method to design a plan to collect meaningful information on their progress toward achieving their goals on developing self-determination. The utilization of performance samples to collect information concerning students needs strengths, interest and preferences is beneficial. Careful observation for self-determination when students are performing the tasks and by interviewing students about their work samples.

One of the most authentic assessment strategies is behavioral observation. Observations are an opportunity to access applied skills in natural environments. A key factor in utilizing

behavior observation is clearly defining the behaviors that are to be observed. Students should be included in this assessment as well, this increases the self-awareness and commitment.

Situational assessment is an opportunity to expose students to postsecondary settings in multiple areas (employment, recreation, independent living) and to evaluate students skills and interests in response to the demands and benefits of the situation. While utilizing situational assessment it is important to allow students to select the situations, and help them determine why they were interested in those sites. Reaction to the experience and reflections of the experience should be discussed to help them develop and understanding of specific aspects of the situation, they liked or didn't like.

Plotner, Trach, & Strauser, (2012) explains that existing transition models have been developed from the school-based perspective. Current literature lacks the perspective of the VR counselor in order to address this perspective deficiency they developed and disturbed a survey of transition related activities to VR counselor. The Transition Activity inventory (VR-TAI) yielded seven domains. Domain 1 was the provision of career planning and counseling. This domain addresses planning and counseling activities that assist students in achieving the full range of adult outcomes. The second domain is the provision of career preparation activities. This domain represents the facilitation of community-based opportunities to help with the development of employment related skills. Specifically emphasizing community-based work experience. The third domain is to promote access and opportunity for student's success. This domain addressed issues related to accessing the general education curriculum. The third domain included the competencies related to evaluation of services and student outcomes to improve transition services. The fifth domain is to facilitate non-professional support and relationships with individuals who are not part of the transition team. The sixth domain is the

facilitation of allocating resources to transition partners including students and families. More specifically providing connections to agency resources. The last domain is to develop and maintain collaborative partnerships. This consisted of building and maintaining relationships with transition team partners on a local level.

The seven domains are consistent with exiting literature. However, the domains of promoting access and opportunity for student success and facilitation non-traditional supports were important to VR counselors. This is surprising, because these two domains are traditionally considered school-based functions. This means that VR counselors believe that they should play a role in supporting these efforts. The findings concerning non-professional social support indicate that school and community efforts go beyond the transition team and VR counselors. VR counselors may have the skills and perform additional activities that include other important individuals in the transition process.

VR counselors believe that students and families are not prepared for post-school transition. Izzo & Lamb (2003) and Agran, Cain & Cavin find that VR counselors feel that students are not being adequately prepared for postsecondary transition. Students don't have sufficient work or vocational experiences, social skills, career planning, problem solving or functional life skills when they are referred to them for VR Services. Dowdy(1996) found that students with learning disabilities and their parents think that VR services are for persons with intellectual or physical disabilities. Dowdy (1996) states that they may not relate to the term disability. Resulting in them being offended by the VR counselor and not receiving the services that they need.

When VR counselors are involved in transition meetings, they did not have adequate information prior to the meeting (Agran, Cain, & Cavin, 2002(a)). VR counselors must know

that student capacities differ for educators than they do in VR settings. Dowdy (1996) states that teachers definition of limitations differ greatly from the VR definition of limitations. The VR counselor is looking for a description of functional capacity in terms of specific characteristics such as memory, attention, social skills etc. Teaches and VR counselors must communicate to teach each other the precise information that they need or are reporting. Dowdy (1996) recommends that assessment information be available to VR counselors as soon as possible. The sooner they have the information the faster they can begin to plan and identify necessary supports and services.

Izzo & Lamb (2003) report that VR counselor identified four major responsibilities of a youth rehabilitation counselor. The first was to develop a relationship with secondary special educators in charge of transition planning at the high schools in their county. Secondly, they found that it was important to serve as a resource to teachers and students in the areas of career development, career decision making, vocational counseling, and career exploration activities, by providing information on job shadowing, mentoring programs, and paid internships. Third, they found that a major responsibility was to continue to develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills within their youth consumers and assist them in becoming more independent. Lastly, VR counselors should utilize their resources in non-traditional ways to overcome barriers to assist students attaining opportunities for postsecondary education and employment. Non-traditional support included assistance with transportation, dormitory costs, books, tuition and assistive technology to accommodate learning, as well as services such as personal counseling, professional tutoring and job coaches and developers.

Furthermore, in Lams research students reported nine supports provided by or purchased by their VR counselors that they believed were critical for completion of postsecondary

education and subsequent employment. The services were combined into three categories, psychological support, academic support and employment support. Psychological support included a phone call or note recognizing their efforts and acknowledging their success. This proved to be essential for fostering motivation and sustaining them in their college program. The importance of psychological counseling to address disability adjustment was also critical to their success in college. Academic supports that students reported were rehabilitation dollars were utilized to purchase a computer and software programs to accommodate their learning, and providing additional funding for tuition and books. Lamb also found that when RC coordinated postsecondary support the students were successful.

Dowdy (1996) offers several suggestions on facilitating the collaboration process between VR counselors and educators. First students must be prepared. Students must be informed participants in their transition process. They must have the self-determination skills and self-advocacy skills to be active and vocal participants in the transition process. Dowdy (1996) further states that teachers and VR counselors must be well informed about the transition process and the transition services available in the district. VR counselors should provide in-service training for teachers on the VR system of eligibility and service provision. VR counselor's should have a presence in the classroom and meet with students as early as possible before they formally meet to discuss transition services. The VR counselor should teach some transition classes with a focus on career information, particularly careers that do not require a traditional college education. There is added value to the transition planning process when VR professionals contribute their skills, resources, information, community networks, and funding (Oertle & Trach, 2007)

Age of Involvement

VR professionals are underutilized or non-existent until too late in the process (Oertle & Trach, 2007). Lamb (2007) states that VR counselors do not become involved with transition-aged-youth until their senior year of high school. They then have a limited time to get to know the student before they have to write an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Agran, Cain & Cavin (2002) believe that VR counselors should be involved in the transition process as early as possible, considering that, they will be the post 21-age service providers for many. Dowdy (1996) reiterates that VR counselors should become involved with each student as early as possible indicating that this relationship should start at age 15. Implementing this relationship early as possible not only improves the outcomes for student with disabilities, but it also increases the likelihood that students will possess the confidence to utilize VR services later in life (Agran, Cain, & Cavin, 2002(a)). The late involvement of VR counselors leaves counselors trying to determine necessary support providing career counseling, vocational assessments, and providing referrals for services without clear guidance of their paths to post-secondary work or education.

Limited Capacity

Young adults present a challenge to VR agencies because they differ from VR consumers in age, level of education, and prior work experience (Fleming & Fairweather, 2012). Most VR Counselors have a large number of youth to serve. Adding to the challenge the population of students with disabilities ages 16-21 who are eligible for VR Services far exceed the total number of individuals presently being served by VR (Lamb, 2007). VR agencies can adequately serve approximately 10% of youth eligible for transition services. Studies indicate that federal monies for special education have increased 333% between 1996 and 2004 but VR funding has

increased by only 22% (Lamb, 2007). This result in state VR agencies employing an Order of Selection process a service priority system that specifies that individuals with significant disabilities be served first). This means that the majority of transition-age-students will not meet the definition of most significant disability and will be placed on waiting lists for services. The issues of chronic underfunding along with the Order of Selection system means that youth with severe and moderate/mild disabilities are grossly underserved, resulting in chronic underemployment or unemployment (Lamb, 2007). Among federally defined disability groups that qualify for special education services. Students with learning disabilities are the most at risk for not receiving VR services (Bellini & Royce-Davis, 1999). Special educators and VR may perceived learning-disabled students to be less severely disabled than other transition-aged-youth with disabilities, resulting in them not qualifying for needed VR services based on order of selection procedures.

All the listed barriers involve components within the transition process that are impeding the process of effective delivery of transition services for transition-aged-youth with disabilities, ultimately limiting their futures.

CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the literature concerning transition service for youth with disabilities has shown that there are significant disparities in the outcomes for transition-age youth with disabilities. There are effective evidence-based predictors to post school success, however the literature also has shown that there are barriers to obtaining effective transition services. The literature has also provided many implications and suggestions for future research to help improve the problem. Analysis of the literature raised many questions that should guide further areas of research. The literature has also identified competencies for vocational rehabilitation counselors. Lastly, a proposed solution to the issue is explored.

Implications

Transition-aged-youth with disabilities are not receiving adequate transition services. There is confusion with current legislation on its meanings and implementation. Leaving educators and VR personnel scrambling to deliver effective and appropriate transition services. For transition, services to be effective and appropriate VR counselors and VR services are essential for transition-aged-youth with disabilities. The limited involvement and lack of significant influence must be addressed. Despite mandates, for their inclusion and secondary school districts engrained practices an outside intervention in my own opinion is necessary. The order of selection practices for transition-aged youth needs a second look. It is a contradiction practice on behalf of VR policies. To adequately and effectively serve the underserved the allocation of more funds for the education of quality staff must be administered.

A greater emphasis on the concept of self-determination. Self-determination is a teachable concept. Successfully implementing self-determination in the transition process leads to long-term successful completion of goals. Resulting in an increase quality of life for life.

The lack of clear educational guidelines and high retention rates for secondary students are a major barrier to postsecondary goals. The literature has started the discussion of alleviating the problem with the creation of a National Certification of Vocational education. However until this comes to fruition the problem remains. The secondary school retention rates for transition-aged-youth are also presents a barrier for successful postsecondary outcomes. The implementation of prevention programs is very high. Early identification of transition-aged-youth at risk for dropping out, creating school connections to prevent disengagement are essential. Furthermore, the creation of alternative schools is not a bad idea, if they can achieve a quality-learning environment for transition-aged-youth. The contradiction is would that alternative school be inclusive.

Lastly, the VR system and the educational system operate independently. Many elements of this process are not clear. The terminology and services should be merged together to have one unified way of operation. Each agency would benefit transition-aged-youth by collaborating to eliminate two different terminology sets and name of documents. For example, the Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program (IWRP) and transition activities included in the IEP would appear to be the same process, without the vital part of acknowledgement on behalf of the client. The IWRP must include a statement from the individual describing their involvement in choosing the goals, objectives, services, and service providers outlined in the IWRP (Dowdy, 1996). Additionally Dowdy states that the individual or representative must sign and receive a copy of the document, and all parties involved must review the document annually. Considering

that, the mandates driving transition services are not that old. There has not been a considerable amount of time to practice and refine services. Every item discussed in the literature is in need of further research.

Further Research

Much of the research was not comprehensive. The research focused on one particular aspect of transition services. More comprehensive evidence-based research and programs should be conducted/developed based upon the entire process. In addition, the majority of the research included small sample sizes, were specific to geographic regions, and gave a lack of attention to cultural and linguistically diverse needs. Therefore limiting the implications of the research. Larger and more specific populations of research should occur. There are several areas where more in-depth research should occur. More research concerning VR counselor involvement, alternative schools, and the concept of Hope are just three areas of research that stood out.

The literature was lacking with relation to VR counselor involvement. Plotner, Trach, & Strauser (2012) state that most of the transition literature is from the school-based perspective. The literature reviewed found this to be true. This has created a demand for the field of VR conduct research from their perspective. This type of evidence-based research might improve the influence that VR agencies and counselors have in the transition process.

Research concerning alternative schools and transition-aged-youth with disabilities. The unclear admission routes of enrollment in alternative school demands further attention, as well as the exclusionary disciplinary practices. Examination of enrollment criteria at alternative schools is imperative. The literature indicated that high numbers of transition-aged-youth with disabilities attend these schools. Without any clear explanation as to why. The literature indicates that the way a student enters an alternative school has a significant impact on their self-

esteem. Does the student consider the admission in an alternative school a failure, or is it a life choice for the student. The literature states that alternative schools can be great places for transition-aged-youth with disabilities to learn with a modified curriculum in a non-traditional environment. However, they can be quite the opposite. More research is needed concerning all aspects of alternative schools.

The concept of Hope was in the literature review. There was one article with one paragraph related to this concept. This was a pleasant surprise. Hope in this context is defined as goal-directed thinking in which people perceive that they can produce routes to desired goals (pathway thinking) and the requisite motivation to use those routes (agency thinking). Higher hope people have a greater number of goals, have success at achieving their goals, perceive their goals as challenges and have superior coping skills (Henry & Gordon, 2008). Agency thoughts and pathways thoughts are similar elements of self-determination that students with disabilities have been found necessary for success in postsecondary educational settings. The implications for further and more extensive research in this area is significant. Considering that, the Hope scale can be administered to youth as young as 6 years of age. To determine specifically which thought process motivates a young person, and then design strategies to accommodate/alter those thoughts in my opinion would be quite effective, and change the long-term outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Questions Derived from Research

From the literature review, several questions surfaced. Literature concerning VR involvement, VR agency/counselor school collaboration, and educational guidelines

The literature implicated that the involvement of VR counselors in the transition process is sporadic and minimal to say the least. Additionally when VR staff are involved in the process,

they initiate services too late, or did not have the desired information. Once the determination that a transition plan is needed why is the referral for VR services not immediately initiated regardless of age. It would seem necessary for VR professionals to perform a complete assessment of the student to identify if services are need.

All research mentioned the concept of collaboration; however, it was not clear exactly who is responsible for the facilitation of such collaboration. It would appear that the VR counselor has the interagency collaboration network in place; however, VR counselors are not consistently invited to participate in the transition process. Further complicating this issue is how do VR counselors invite community partners to participate when they are invited guests as well

The lack of educational guidelines and low high school retention rates were especially troubling. Without a standard high school curriculum for transition-aged-youth it is not clear how they can trust that what they are working for will result in equal employment or self-sufficiency. The demand for a National Certification of Vocational Education would eliminate the hesitation for employers to hire transition-aged-youth. It would create a set of educational guidelines that would clarify the current misunderstandings held by potential community employers

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Competencies

The literature also indicated limited knowledge of the skills of self-determination and self-advocacy by VR counselors and special educators. This is a significant skills set concerning persons with disabilities. The research states that the level of self-determination is directly related to quality of life.

VR professionals possess the knowledge of disabilities and the supports, strategies, and resources to be a major contributing member of a transition team. Better communication and

education on behalf of educators and VR professionals concerning what each other's perspective roles are. Once this collaboration of professionals occurs they can form a powerful and effective team to enhance the long-term quality of life for transition-aged-youth.

The literature reviewed concerning the self-determination and self-advocacy needs to transition-aged-youth with disabilities further reiterated the need for VR counselors to become involved in the transition process as early as possible. The VR counselor can create opportunities to cultivate these skills through interaction and direct counseling.

Proposed Solution

Many resources, enthusiasm and much attention is given to transition services for pre-school aged youth. However much past the transition into school this excitement and intentionality are lacking it is my opinion that a program that applies an approach similar to Head Start process is needed.

The Head Start program is a federally funded program for low-income children and their families. In the Head Start model of services, each member of the family is a part of the program. Head Start is the leader in parent involvement, interagency collaboration, and the pioneers of providing individualized and multicultural services for each individual child, and is a partner in the educational process. They provide health and nutritional services, dental services, family services, educational services. Head Start is based on a "whole child" model, the Head Start program focuses on "... helping preschoolers develop the early reading and math skills they need to be successful in school. Head Start programs promote school readiness by enhancing the social-emotional and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families. Each program conducts a community needs assessment to determine which options and services best fit the

strengths and needs of the families in the community. They engage parents in their children's learning and help them in making progress toward their educational, literacy and employment goals. Head start has always had an emphasis on special needs children or children with disabilities. Head Start programs work in partnership with other service providers; adjust schedules to meet the needs of the populations served. Respecting and individualizing services for children as needed, based on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These services should be continued for any youth with a disability. These services are vital throughout the education process for any child or youth with a disability.

A vocational transition agency (VTA) (similar to Head Start) would operate independently of VR and school districts. However, they would be active partners with families and school districts. The independent operation would serve to remove the added pressures of graduation rates and VR case closures. Their sole purpose would be to provide transition services to transition-aged-youth and their families. Focusing on high school retention, providing career and vocational education, providing community work experience, community experiences, and all other transition services mentioned in this paper.

This program would facilitate the transition process. They would be the transition specialists leading the coordination of the IEP process, and the transition plan. They would take sole responsibility for teaching transition-aged-youth the self-directed IEP process as well as furthering opportunities for continued development of self-determination. They would become active partners with families working on goals that related to the transition process and the overall health and wellbeing of the family.

Fraker & Rangarajan (2009) state that transition-aged-youth in addition to disparities in educational attainment, work, and postsecondary opportunities, they are facing social isolation

needs, potential loss of benefits, and lack of access to support. Additionally with the concept of inclusion, the literature indicates that some disabled students encounter negative social reactions. A program like VTA could address those needs as well as substance abuse prevention, medication management, dropout prevention; family referrals to services, the possibilities are endless. With the provision of counseling services from VR counselors, each psychosocial issue could be addressed throughout the secondary school years.

A pilot program should be established to determine the feasibility and outcome information concerning the needs of transition-aged-youth. The program would serve as a research center collecting and gathering information regarding outcomes data, services needed by specific disability, and community services needed by the family.

Staffing needs would consist of VR counselors, persons knowledgeable about health and nutrition needs, as well as education staff. VR counselors would provide expertise concerning vocational needs, accommodations and building self-determination skills. Persons knowledgeable about health and nutrition needs would provide services concerning obesity rates, medication and food interactions, regularly scheduled physical examinations and oral health needs. All are disparities when concerning transition-aged-youth with disabilities. An obstacle to the development of this agency would be the source of funds necessary to establish process.

In summary, this chapter provided a conclusion of the research paper, and supplied many areas that should be the focus of further research. This chapter also provided a forum for the author to discuss her opinions about this nationally important topic. This paper can be useful to those in the rehabilitation-counseling field by helping to educate and inform about transition services. This paper can also be useful to those researchers in the rehabilitation counseling profession by providing them a direction for further research.

REFERENCES

- Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (2008(b)). Student's opinions regarding their individualized education program involvement. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* 31,2, 69-76.
- Agran, M., Cain, H. M., & Cavin, M. D. (2002(a)). Enhancing the involvement of rehabilitation counselors in the transition process. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*(25), 141-155. doi:10.1177/088572880202500204
- Agran, M., Storey, K., & Krupp, M. (2010c). Choosing and choice making are not the same: asking "what do you want for lunch?" is not self-determination. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 33, 77-88. doi:10.3233/JVR-2010-0517
- Alwell, M., & Cobb, B. (2009). Functional life skills curricular interventions for youth with disabilities: a systematic review. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32(2), 82-93. doi:10.1177/0885728809336656
- Baer, R. M., & Daviso, A. (2011). Disproportionality in transition services: a descriptive study. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 46(2), 172-185.
Retrieved January 21, 2013
- Barnard-Bark, L., & Lechtenberger, D. (2010). Student IEP participation and academic achievement across time. *Remedial and Special Education* 31, 5, 343-349.
- Bellini, J., & Royce-Davis, J. (1999). Order of selection in vocational rehabilitation: implications for the transition from school to adult outcomes for youths with learning disabilities. *Work*, 13, 3-11.

- Bullis, M., Davis, C., Bull, B., & Johnson, B. (1995). Transition achievement among young adults with deafness: what variables relate to success? *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 39(2), 130-152.
- Carter, E. W., Trainor, A. A., Orhan, C., Cole, O., Swedeen, B., Ditchman, N., & Owens, L. (2009b). Exploring school-employer partnerships to expand career development and early work experiences for youth with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32(3), 145-159. doi:10.1177/0885728809344590
- Carter, E., Trainor, A. A., Cakiroglu, O., Swedeen, B., & Owens, L. A. (2009a). Availability of access to career development activities for transition-age youth with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32-33. doi:10.1177/0885728809344332
- Cook, B. G., & Rumrill, P. D. (2000). Inclusion and transition: partners in progress or policy paradox? *Work*, 14(1), 13-21. Retrieved March 1, 2013
- Defur, S. H., Todd-Allen, M., & Getzel, E. E. (2001). Parent participation in the transition planning process. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 24, 19-36. doi:10.1177/088572880102400103
- Dowdy, C. A. (1996). Vocational rehabilitation and special education: partners in transition for individuals with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29(2), 137-147. Retrieved February 20, 2013
- Field, S., & Hoffman, A. (2002a). Preparing youth to exercise self-determination: quality indicators of school environments that promote the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and beliefs related to self-determination. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 13(2), 113-118. Retrieved March 7, 2013

- Field, S., & Hoffman, A. (2007b). Self-determination in secondary transition assessment. *Assessment for Effective Intervention, 32*(3), 181-190.
doi:10.1177/15345084070320030601
- Fleming, A. R., & Fairweather, J. S. (2012). The role of postsecondary education in the path from high school to work for youth with disabilities. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin 55*(2), 71-81.
- Fourqurean, J. M., Meisgeier, C., Swank, P. R., & Williams, R. E. (1991). Correlates of postsecondary employment outcomes for young adults with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 24*(7), 400-405.
- Fraker, T., & Rangarajan, A. (2009). The social security administration's youth transition demonstration projects. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 30*, 223-240.
doi:10.3233/JVR-2009-0463
- Gaumer Erickson, A. S., Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., & Thurlow, M. L. (2007). An analysis of the relationship between high school exit exams and diploma options and the impact on students with disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies 18* 2, 117-128.
- Hasnain, R., & Balcazar, F. (2009). Predicting community-versus facility-based employment for transition-aged young adults with disabilities: the role of race, ethnicity, and support systems. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 175*-188.
- Henry, P., & Gordon, M. K. (2008). The relationship between hope, career maturity, and GPA for underrepresented minority premedical students: advisement and counseling implications are presented. *The Advisor, 35*--42.

- Izzo, M., & Lamb, P. (2003). Developing self-determination through career development activities: implications for vocational rehabilitation counselors. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 71-78.*
- Johnson, D. R., Stout, K. E., & Thurlow, M. L. (2009). Diploma options and perceived consequences for students with disabilities. *Exceptionality: A Special Education Journal 17:3, 119-134.*
- Kaye, S. H. (2010). The impact of the 2007-09 recession on workers with disabilities. *Monthly Labor Review, 19--30.*
- Kemp, S. E. (2006). Dropout policies and trends for students with and without disabilities. *Adolescence, 41(162), 235-250.*
- Kochhar-Bryant, C., Bassett, D. S., & Webb, K. W. (2009). *Transition to Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities.* Townson Maryland: Corwin Press & Division on Career Development and Transition.
- Lamb, P. (2007). Implications of the summary of performance for vocational rehabilitation counselors. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 30(3), 3-12.*
doi:10.1177/08857288070300010401
- Lehr, C. A., & Lange, C. M. (2003). Alternative schools serving students with and without disabilities: what are the current issues and challenges? *Preventing School Failure, 59-65.*
- Lindstrom, L., Doren, B., Metheny, J., Johnson, P., & Zane, C. (2007). Transition to employment: role of the family in career development. *Exceptional Children, 73(3), 348-366.*
Retrieved March 1, 2013

- Luecking, R. G. (2008). Emerging employer views of people with disabilities and the future of job development. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 29*, 3-13.
- Martin, J. E., Van Dyke, J., D'Ottavio, M., & Nickerson, K. (2007b). The student-directed summary of performance: increasing student and family involvement in the transition planning process. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 30*(1), 13-26.
- Martin, J. E., Van Dyke, J. L., Christensen, R. W., Greene, B. A., Gardner, J. E., & Lovett, D. L. (2006a). Increasing student participation in iep meetings: establishing the self-directed iep as an evidence-based practice. *Exceptional Children, 72*(3), 299-316. Retrieved February 20, 2013
- Morningstar, M. E., Frey, B. B., Noonan, P. M., Ng, J., Clavenna-Deane, B., Graves, P., . . . Williams-Diehm, K. (2010). A preliminary investigation of the relationship of transition preparation and self-determination for students with disabilities in postsecondary educational settings. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 32*(2), 80-94. doi:10.177/0885728809356568
- Murray, C., & Doren, B. (2012). The effects of working at gaining employment skills on the social and vocational skills of adolescents with disabilities: a school based-intervention. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 56*(2), 96-107. doi:10.1177/0034355212452614
- National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. (2007). *Key provisions on transition: IDEA 1997 compared to H.R. 1350*.
- National Council on Disability. (2008). *The rehabilitation act: outcomes for transition-age youth*. Washington, DC.
- Noonan, P. M., Morningstar, M. E., & Gaumer-Erickson, A. (2008). Improving interagency collaboration effective strategies used by high-performing local districts and

- communities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 31(3), 132-143.
doi:10.1177/0885728808327149
- Oertle, K. M., & Trach, J. S. (2007). Interagency collaboration: the importance of rehabilitation professionals' involvement in transition. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 73(3), 36-44.
- Phillips, W. L., Callahan, M., Shumpert, N., Puckett, K., Petrey, R., Summers, K., & Phillips, L. (2009). Customized transitions: discovering the best in us. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 30, 49-55.
- Plotner, A. J., Trach, J. S., & Strauser, D. R. (2012). Vocational rehabilitation counselor's identified transition competencies: perceived importance, frequency and preparedness. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 55(3), 35-43. doi:10.1177/0034355211427950
- Powers, K. M., Gil-Kashiwabara, E., Geenen, S. J., Powers, L. E., Balandran, J., & Palmer, C. (2005). Mandates and effective transition planning practices reflected in IEPs. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*(28), 47-59.
doi:10.1177/08857288050280010701
- Rogers, C., Lavin, D., Tran, T., Gantenbein, T., & Sharpe, M. (2008). Customized employment: changing what it means to be qualified in the workforce for transition-aged youth and young adults. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 28, 191-207. Retrieved February 20, 2013
- Shandra, C. L., & Hogan, D. P. (2008). School-to-work program participation and the post-high school employment of young adults with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 29, 117-130. Retrieved February 20, 2013

- Solberg, S. V., Howard, K., Gresham, S., & Carter, E. (2012). Quality learning experiences, self-determination, and academic success: a path analytic study among youth with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 35(2), 85-96.
- Test, D. W., & Cease-Cook, J. (2012a). Evidence-based secondary transition practices for rehabilitation counselors. *Journal of Rehabilitation* 78 (2), 30-38.
- Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L., & Kohler, P. (2009c). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 160-181. doi:10.1177/0885728809346960
- Test, D., Fowler, C. H., White, J., Richter, S., & Walker, A. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition practices for enhancing school completion. *Exceptionality: A Special Education Journal*, 17, 16-29. doi:10.1080/09362830802590144
- Trach, J. S. (2012). Degree of collaboration for successful transition outcomes. *Journal of Rehabilitation* 78(2), 39-48.
- Valenzuela, R. L., & Martin, J. E. (2005). Self-directed iep: bridging values of diverse cultures and secondary education. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 28(1), 4-14. doi:10.1177/08857288050280010301
- Vincent, C. G., Sprague, J. R., & Tobin, T. J. (2012). Exclusionary discipline practices across student's racial/ethnic backgrounds and disability status: findings from the pacific northwest. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 35(4), 585-601. Retrieved January 25, 2013
- Wehmeyer, M. L. (2008). Self-determination and the empowerment of people with disabilities . *American Disabilities* .

- Wehmeyer, M. L., & Gragoudas, S. (2004). Centers for independent living and transition-age youth: empowerment and self-determination. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 20*, 53-58. Retrieved January 21, 2013
- Williams-Diehm, K., Palmer, S., Youngsun, L., & Schroer, H. (2010). Goal content analysis for middle and high school students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 33*(3), 132-142. doi:10.1177/0885728810380230
- Williams-White, S., & Kelly, D. (2010). The school counselor's role in school dropout prevention. *Journal of Counseling & Development 88*, 227--235.
- Woods, L. L., Sylvester, L., & Martin, J. E. (2010). Student-directed transition planning: increasing student knowledge and self-efficacy in the transition planning process. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 106-114*. doi:10.1177/0885728810368056

VITA
Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Margaret K. Henry

Kimberlycarb@gmail.com

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Bachelor of Science, Workforce Education and Development, May 2001

Research Paper Title:

Youth in Transition Services: A Comprehensive Review of the Literature and its
Implications

Major Professor: Stacia Robertson