

**Executive Summary – Year 1**

**Wisconsin Statewide Post High School Outcomes Survey of  
Individuals with Disabilities**

*A Status Report of Students with Disabilities One Year after Exiting  
High School between December 1999 and December 2000*

Prepared for the

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

Office of the Superintendent

by

**Cooperative Educational Services Agency #11**

Turtle Lake, Wisconsin

In Partnership With

**St. Norbert College Survey Center**

De Pere, Wisconsin

September 2001

This report was prepared by Mary Kampa, Project Coordinator and Carolyn Sorensen,  
Associate Project Coordinator, Cooperative Educational Services Agency #11  
Funded by IDEA Discretionary Grant # 2001-9911-24

## Executive Summary

### **Wisconsin Statewide Post High School Outcomes Survey of Individuals with Disabilities**

#### ***A Status Report of Students with Disabilities Who Exited High School between December 1999 and December 2000***

This report is the first of several planned statewide transition studies, and establishes baseline data of post high school outcomes of individuals with disabilities who received special education and related services and have exited their high school setting. It is the intention of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) that local educational agencies utilize the data to identify strengths and weaknesses in their instructional programs, establish performance standards in the area of post high school outcomes, and improve the transition planning process to enable individuals with disabilities to make successful transitions from high school to adult life.

Between December 1999 and December 2000, 5239 students with disabilities exited high school from local educational agencies in Wisconsin. This report summarizes the post high school outcomes of a representative sample of those students by specifically addressing their participation in postsecondary education, current employment, and several aspects of independent living. Results are analyzed by gender, ethnicity, and disability.

For purposes of this study, *local educational agency (LEA)* includes 426 Wisconsin public schools, three County Children with Disabilities Education Boards, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health and Family Services, the Wisconsin School for the Deaf and the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. *Exit* means the student exited their high school educational setting with a regular diploma, with a certificate of attendance, or reached the maximum age of eligibility (21 years old) for special education and related services.

#### ***Procedures***

A 1% stratified random sample of students was drawn from the population of exited students provided by the DPI in order to conduct a pilot study and refine the study procedures. The final study involved a 20% stratified random sample of students drawn from the remaining population. With the exception of several minor adjustments to questions on the district questionnaire and student interview, sample groups for the pilot and final study received the same information and surveys to complete.

The Wisconsin DPI provided Cooperative Educational Services Agency (CESA) 11 with student data as reported by LEAs on the 2000 December 1 Federal Student Data Report, including the student's name, district of attendance, date of birth, gender, race/ethnicity and primary disability; educational environment; and exit status. The project coordinators, in collaboration with the DPI, determined the questions addressed in this study. St. Norbert College Survey Center was selected to assist with this study based on their extensive work in the educational field, and to ensure consistency in procedures such as interviewing and data analysis.

The director of special education or other LEA representative used the Respondent Information sheet to collect additional student and IEP data for each former student selected for participation, then returned the information sheet directly to St. Norbert College Survey Center. Student IEP data was recorded from the

former student's senior (or last year) of high school of attendance. Multiple attempts were made to contact all the former students identified by LEAs.

### ***Study Participants***

For this study, students with disabilities who successfully exited their high school education between December 1999 and December 2000 were included in the population. Participants represented a 20% stratified random sample (n = 1048) of all available students in the population (N = 5239) provided by the DPI. The random sample was representative of the state population of students identified as exiting high school by percentage of gender, ethnicity, and primary disability. The sample yielded students from 151 LEAs. Results for students selected for participation in the pilot study were not included in the random sample or final data analysis.

For portions of this report, ethnic categories of Asian, American/Pacific Islander, Black/Not Hispanic, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan Native were combined and grouped "Minority". Similarly, the disability areas of hearing impaired (HI), visually impaired (VI), speech and language impaired (S/L), autism (Autism), deaf/blind (D/B), other health impaired (OHI), orthopedically impaired (OI), and traumatic brain injury (TBI), were grouped as "Low Incidence" (LI). This was done because many of the data points had fewer than five responses when analyzed by gender, ethnicity, and disability.

Seventy-two percent (751) of the Respondent Information sheets pertaining to the 1048 students randomly selected for the study were returned to St. Norbert College Survey Center from the LEAs. Following the receipt of the pre-notification letter sent to all potential survey participants, four former students asked not to be contacted for an interview. Attempts were made to contact all 747 possible respondents. Fifty-two percent of the student interviews (389) were successfully completed.

### ***Respondents***

Of the 389 successfully completed interviews, 81% (315) of the respondents were the former students themselves; 16% (64) of the respondents were the parents of the former students, and 3% (10) identified themselves as guardian or other. Of the 74 former students that were unable to respond for themselves, 40.5% (30) were unable to communicate responses, 40.5% (30) were unable to be located, and 19% (14) indicated another reason they could not respond.

### ***Graduation Status***

The database for this study included students who successfully exited their high school education placement. Respondents predominantly exited with diplomas (97%) as opposed to certificates of attendance (2%) or reaching maximum age (1%). Nine (2%) of the 376 students that exited with a diploma received that diploma from an Alternative Educational Setting.

## **INDEPENDENT LIVING**

### ***Living Arrangements***

The majority of young adults with disabilities (76%) in Wisconsin continue to live at home with their parent(s) one year after exiting high school. Another 10% live with a spouse or roommate, 5% are living with another family member, 4% live alone, 3% indicated they live with other residents or patients, and 2% are in the military. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the survey respondents are living with someone other than their parents. Most former students have lived in the same location for more than two years (72%). Sixteen percent (16%) have lived in the same location for less than one year.

### ***Social/Recreation***

Of the 389 respondents, 93% (362) reported getting together socially with friends or family members (other than those they live with), on a regular basis, 4% (17) reported they "sometimes" do, and 2% (9) indicated

they do not (1% did not know the answer to this question). The majority of respondents (69%) had a valid driver's license (another 2% had a suspended license), 15% did not have a license but planned to obtain one, 6% did not have a valid license and did not plan to obtain one, and 8% (31) were medically restricted.

A majority of former students (90%) reported participating in a leisure time activity such as going to a movie, theater, concert or sporting event within the past six months. Twenty-five percent (25%) have attended a community service activity (i.e. Lions, 4-H, Habitat for Humanity), and 48% attend religious activities (i.e. church services/events). Nearly 53% have voted in the past 6 months. Some young adults (15%) indicated getting a ride to a social event is a barrier to their participation.

### ***Contact with Adult Agencies in High School***

Districts report that 44% (170) of the IEPs developed for the former students' senior year indicated a need for involvement from an outside agency. Of those, 51% (86) indicated that the agency attended the student's IEP meeting. Regardless of whether the outside agency attended the IEP meeting, 29% (112) of the former students' IEPs contained a statement of interagency responsibility or needed linkages.

### ***Adult Agency Involvement/Support Services***

To help youth participate in young adult living or leisure activities, 12% (47) of the respondents report utilizing the support of a one-on-one personal care assistant (i.e. aide, service coordinator or manager), and 14% (54) reported working with a counselor or social worker to maintain their independent living arrangement. Over one-fifth (22%) reported that they were receiving services from an adult agency (e.g. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Human Services).

## **POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

Postsecondary education includes any type of formal education program after high school. Former students may be enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year academic college or technical training program. A technical college offers training that leads to specific certification in a field of study. Postsecondary education may also include a formal apprenticeship program or the military. Typically, adult education and job training are not considered formal postsecondary education programs, and generally do not lead to a degree or general employability skill development, but are included in this study as types of postsecondary education.

### ***Participation in Postsecondary Education***

Forty-seven percent (47%) of former students (182) are or have attended some type of postsecondary education program. Only 2% of the former students started in a postsecondary education program then discontinued. Some former students participated in more than one type of program. Technical training programs (28%) and job training programs (24%) were most attended, followed by a two-year college (14%). Of the 182 students participating in postsecondary education, 82% (149) reported they are also employed. Twelve percent (12%) of the former students were neither currently attending postsecondary education nor employed.

### ***Postsecondary Education and Gender, Ethnicity, and Disability***

Participation in postsecondary education is fairly even in relation to gender and ethnicity, with the exception of participation in formal apprenticeship programs and the military. White males participate in formal apprenticeship programs and the military most often. Youth with learning disabilities and youth with low incidence disabilities represent the greatest majority of students participating in all types of postsecondary education.

Youth with learning disabilities, emotional disabilities and cognitive disabilities were most likely to attend a job-training program or a technical program. Youth with low incidence disabilities were most likely to go on

to a 2-year college, or to attend a technical program. Students who spent more than 60% of their day in a special education setting in high school were the least likely to attend two-year college or technical training, and the most likely to attend a job-training program.

### ***Self-Advocacy and Disclosure***

Regardless of type of disability or gender, 60% of young adults identify themselves as having a disability to someone in postsecondary education. Students were most likely to disclose their disability status to counselors/advisors (27%). Teachers (17%) and disability specialists (16%) are equally as likely to be informed by the student of their disability status. Students with low incidence disabilities and learning disabilities were most likely to disclose their disability. Female students were more likely to identify themselves as disabled than were male students, and minority students were much more likely to identify themselves as disabled than were white students.

### ***Accommodations and Assistive Technology***

Of the 182 students attending postsecondary education, 29% reported using some type of accommodation or assistive technology device. Students with low incidence disabilities were most likely to have accommodations or use assistive technology, with the majority of those students having hearing impairments, visually impairments, or orthopedic impairments. Students with other health impairments, speech and language disabilities and traumatic brain injuries request and/or receive very few accommodations or assistive technology.

### ***Goal of Postsecondary Education while in High School***

Of the 182 students participating in postsecondary education, 84% had IEP transition plans indicating it was the student's intention to begin postsecondary education rather than begin employment following graduation from high school. Fewer than 15% of former students attended postsecondary education when it was not part of their transition plan. This indicates the importance of planning for postsecondary education while the student is still in high school.

### ***Vocational and Technical Preparation While in High School***

Trade and industry courses and consumer education courses are taken in high school at nearly the same rate of participation as in postsecondary education (47%). This may indicate that students tend to continue the course of study developed for them at the high school level into postsecondary education.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Two outcomes of employment were considered: (1) whether the former student held a competitive job outside the home for which he or she was paid, and (2) the compensation and benefits the youth received for their work. Employment was identified as working for pay. Underemployment was identified as earning less than \$7.00 per hour and working less than 20 hours per week of paid employment.

### ***Type of Employment***

Of the 389 respondents, 80% (311) reported being employed for pay, with 82% of those working in the community and 5% working in a sheltered workshop. This is comparable to the 4% of survey respondents who were identified as having a severe cognitive disability. The other 13% of respondents work in a family-owned business, are self-employed, or stated "other" as their place of employment. The largest categories of employment were "other" (39%), business/sales (24%), and factory/production (18%).

### ***Employment by Gender, Ethnicity, and Disability***

Male youth and white youth are slightly more likely to be *employed* (82% vs. 81%, respectively) than female youth (76%) or minority youth (74%). Ninety percent (90%) of students with learning disabilities were employed, 66% of students with cognitive disabilities, 68% of students with emotional disabilities, and 70% of students with low incidence disabilities were employed.

The percentage of male youth (63%) and female youth (62%) who have *received a raise in pay* is comparable. Students with learning disabilities (68%), emotional disabilities (61%), and low incidence disabilities (61%) were nearly as likely to receive a raise in pay. Young minority adults (41%) and those with cognitive disabilities (40%) were the least likely groups to receive a raise in pay in their current employment.

The percentage of male youth (56%) who *receive benefits* is higher than female youth (48%). Students with low incidence disabilities (50%) and cognitive disabilities were less likely to receive benefits than students with learning disabilities (59%) or emotional disabilities (58%). Young minority adults (33%) and those with cognitive disabilities (27%) were the least likely groups to receive benefits through their current employment.

### ***Rate of Pay by Gender, Disability, and Ethnicity***

Twenty-three percent (23%) of the respondents did not know or refused to answer questions regarding rate of pay, but of those who did respond, 77% of males and 64% of females report earning between \$7 and \$15 per hour. Seventy-five percent (75%) of young white adults and 50% of young minority adults earn between \$7 and \$15 per hour. A higher percentage of students with cognitive disabilities earn significantly lower salaries than any other disability area. Students with hearing impairments, other health impairments, and speech and language impairments most frequently earn between \$7.00 and \$9.99 per hour.

### ***Underemployment***

Of those former students who are currently employed, 40% have been employed for more than one year, 22% have been employed between 6 and 12 months, and the remaining former students (38%) have been employed one to six months.

The majority of youth (64%) work more than 37 hours per week. Sixteen percent (16%) work 21 to 37 hours per week, and the remaining youth (20%) work less than 21 hours per week.

Twenty percent (20%) of former students earn less than \$7 per hour, 38% earn between \$7 and \$10 per hour, 18% earn between \$10 and \$15 per hour, and 1% earn above \$15 per hour. Twenty-three percent (23%) refused to answer this question. Overall, this indicates that 80% of the former students are working more than half time, and 58% are earning up to \$10 per hour.

### ***Employment Assistance***

Of those employed, 46% found their own jobs, and 37% had help from family or friends. Only 6% had assistance from an adult service agency. While 27% indicated they would talk to a work force center and another 27% indicated they would talk to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) about needed employment, only 4% and 10%, respectively, actually did.

### ***Reasons for Unemployment***

Less than 20% (78) of the young adults in the sample reported that they were currently unemployed. Some respondents (less than 2% of all survey respondents) stated they were not employed because they were a full-time student (6% of those unemployed) or a homemaker (4% of those unemployed). Eighteen percent (18%) of young adults, regardless of gender, disability or ethnicity, reported that the reason they were not working was because they were unable to find work. Males were most likely to be laid off, receiving Social Security (SSI) benefits, or on a medical restriction. Females and minority students were most likely to be in a

correctional, detention or medical facility. Only 1% of the respondents reported not working because they were receiving SSI benefits. Less than 9% of former students were fired from a job.

### ***Employment and Postsecondary Education***

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of former students were currently employed and currently attending postsecondary education. Twelve percent (12%) were neither currently employed nor attending postsecondary education. Of those youth pursuing postsecondary education, 58% work more than 37 hours per week, 23% work between 21 and 37 hours per week, 11% work between 16 and 20 hours per week, and 9% work less than 16 hours per week. This indicates that more than 80% of youth with disabilities work at least half-time while attending postsecondary education.

### ***Employment as Part of Transition Plan***

Students with low incidence disabilities (14%) were the least likely to have the IEP transition goal of beginning employment rather than postsecondary education. Minority students (62%) and students with cognitive disabilities (68%) had the highest percentage of IEPs with the transition goal of beginning employment directly from the high school setting. Although students with cognitive disabilities had the highest intention of working immediately after exiting high school, they had the lowest post high school employment rate.

### ***Participation in High School Work Experiences by Gender, Disability, and Ethnicity***

Of the currently employed respondents, 76% had a paid work experience while in high school. The percentage of youth currently employed (80%) matches the percentage of former students with paid high school experiences (79%). Nineteen percent (19%) of students with disabilities report being employed for less than 6 months during high school, 19% report being employed 6-12 months and 62% report being employed for more than 12 months. Minority students (40%) and those with cognitive disabilities (36%) were the most likely to be employed for less than six months in high school. These two groups, along with students with emotional disabilities, reported the lowest rate of current employment and the lowest rate of paid high school employment.

### ***Types of High School Work Experiences***

The most common types of high school job exploration are (32%) *non-paid in-school* experiences and (31%) *non-paid* job exploration *in the community* (e.g. job shadowing, informational interviewing, site visits, mentoring, service learning and volunteering). One-in-five students had a *paid in-school* work experience, and one-in-four had a *paid community* work experience. Very few students participated in summer employment programs (3%) or sheltered workshop/ work activity centers (4%). Of the different types of work settings available, 50% of students with cognitive disabilities participated in non-paid work exploration.

### ***IEP Participation***

Students with learning disabilities had the highest rate of attendance at their own IEP meetings (86%), the highest rate of high school paid work experience (88%), and the highest rate of current employment for payment (90%). Conversely, students with cognitive disabilities had the lowest rate of attendance (78%) at their own IEP meetings, the lowest rate of high school paid work experience (56%), and the lowest rate of current paid employment (66%).

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Eighty percent (80%) of the students in the study are employed.
- ❖ Sixty-four percent (64%) of employed youth in the study work more than 37 hours per week.
- ❖ Fifty-seven percent (57%) of employed youth in the study earn at least \$7.00 per hour.
- ❖ Forty-seven percent (47%) of the students in the study participate in postsecondary education.
- ❖ Twelve percent (12%) of youth in the study are neither employed nor attend postsecondary education.
- ❖ Seventy-six percent (76%) of the students in the study continue to live at home with their parents.

### *Possible Areas District Staff Might Consider when Reviewing these Data*

- ❖ Since only 51% of agencies attended the students' IEP meetings when transition services from an outside agency were needed, districts may wish to consider additional methods of developing relationships with outside agencies that nurture a transition relationship.
- ❖ Since a very high percentage of students do not disclose their disability status to any one in their place of postsecondary education, districts may wish to consider student self-advocacy and self-determination as an important part of transition instruction.
- ❖ Since few youth (14%) discuss needed employment options with the agencies that can assist them in finding jobs, districts may wish to familiarize students with these agencies as part of the student's transition plan.
- ❖ Since post high school outcomes are not as positive for minority youth and those with cognitive disabilities as for white youth or youth with other disabilities, districts may wish to focus their time and resources on minority youth and youth with cognitive disabilities.