

# Indicator 14

## Improving Response Rates

A Special Note to Utah Directors of Special Education and Special Education Teachers

**Indicator 14: Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school.** IDEA PL 108-446 (20 U.S.C. 1416(a) (3)(B)).

Each year, states must collect outcomes information on youth who exited school during the prior school year including those who exited with a regular diploma, certificate of attendance, reached maximum age of eligibility for services, dropped out, or were expected to return but did not for the current school year. For youth who cannot be located, it is virtually impossible to collect post-school outcomes data on them. One population of youth who are extremely difficult to locate once they leave school are youth with disabilities who **drop out**. The process of dropping out is not a new phenomenon to school personnel. A large number exit school informally, making it difficult to track their whereabouts and even more difficult to track their post-school outcomes. These students often leave school without completing an exit survey or informing teachers or administrators of their intentions to drop out. This document provides common sense strategies and outcomes resources to assist with improving response rates to get the best data possible.

### What the Research Tells Us about Follow-Up

Using multiple follow-up reminders, whether by mail or phone will significantly increase response rates. 98 studies from the field of education found that although average response rates for initial mailings were 48%, they could be increased to 68% with one mailed follow-up, 80% with two follow-ups, and 90% with three follow-ups. Similarly, response rates could be increased 17% - 22% by using one mailed reminder, and by an additional 18% - 26% with a second reminder. Multiple contacts have been found to be more effective than any other technique for increasing response to surveys by mail.

### What's Involved at the District Level

Between 2006-07 to 2010-2011, each LEA in Utah will annually complete an outcomes survey to comply with State Performance Plan Indicator #14. [www.schools.utah.gov/sars/lawsregs/stateplan.htm](http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/lawsregs/stateplan.htm)  
To view additional instructions and resources, go to the Utah Post High School Outcomes Survey website [www.utahposthighsurvey.org/](http://www.utahposthighsurvey.org/)

#### Indicator #14 is a 2-year process!

#### **Year 1: Preparing for the upcoming survey: Collect Student Contact Information during the Student Exit Year**

- During this year, students are in their final year of school
- Go to S2 of the SIS and enter and save the Student Contact Information for each student. (No change from previous years.)

**Recommended:** Explain the upcoming survey and questions to the parent and exiting student. Give them a copy of the questions for review

#### **Year 2: Completing Indicator 14: One Year After Student Exit Year**

- Submit a Usage Agreement form to receive a Username and Password
- Verify and update former student contact information at [www.utahposthighsurvey.org](http://www.utahposthighsurvey.org)
- Former students are contacted for a telephone interview
- Former student responses are used to fulfill LEA data collection and reporting requirements of Indicator #14

### Additional Resources Available from PSO Center [www.psocenter.org](http://www.psocenter.org)

[Post-School Outcomes Data Collection and Use: Teachers as Partners](#) (.pdf) Prepared by Cinda Johnson, Assistant Professor, Seattle University and NPSO Technical Workgroup member, this paper describes how the State of Washington actively engages teachers in post-school outcome data collection, analysis, reporting and program improvement. Strategies are provided that other states may find useful as they involve teachers in their post-school outcome systems. OSEP approved June 2007.

[Post-School Outcomes Surveys: Coming Soon to a Student Near You!](#) (.pdf) Prepared by Deborah Leuchovious, Project Director of the Technical Assistance about Transition and the Rehabilitation Act Project (TATRA) at PACER Center. This Brief informs the families of students who had IEPs about the post-school surveys and the importance of filling them out or replying to a short phone interview. Sample survey questions are included. OSEP approved June 2007.

[Measuring Transition Success: Focus on Youth & Family Participation](#) (.pdf) prepared by PACER Center in collaboration with the NPSO describes the importance of engaging families, youth, disability advocates and parent centers in the design of state post-school data collection systems. OSEP approved September 2006.

[Collecting Post-School Outcome Data: Strategies for Increasing Response Rates](#) (.pdf) prepared by Sandra Covington Smith and Loujeania Williams Bost at the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD). This brief contains an overview of the requirement to collect post-school outcome data and challenges experienced by states in collecting these data. Recommendations and strategies that states can use to secure sufficient response rates, especially from youth who drop out of school, are provided. OSEP approved June 2007.

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## Increasing Response Rates Strategies for Locating Youth

### Before Exiting (proactive strategies)

#### **Keep students' files current and accurate prior to exiting**

Maintain current contact information and update information biannually, including mailing and physical address. A large number of students exit school informally, making it difficult to track their whereabouts and even more difficult to track their post-school outcomes; make certain you have the most recent and correct information.

#### **Notify students and their families of the expectation to provide postschool outcome data**

Explain to students and families the necessity of collecting post-school outcome data and verbally emphasize the importance of completing the post school survey during high school IEP meetings. Give them a copy of the upcoming Post High School Outcomes Survey questions. ([www.utahposthighsurvey.org/instruments.php](http://www.utahposthighsurvey.org/instruments.php)) Discuss the importance of transition planning and inform students and families that they may be contacted after leaving school. Make youth and families your partners in this process.

#### **Collect student contact information prior to leaving school** (Student Contact form: [www.utahposthighsurvey.org/instruments.php](http://www.utahposthighsurvey.org/instruments.php))

Administer an exit survey to every senior eligible for graduation or to those students who leave school. Provide all students, especially those students at risk for dropping out, with strategies regarding staying in school, which directs students on how to receive assistance if considering leaving school, and how to formally exit school. Establish district-wide, standardized practices for monitoring and responding to student attendance issues.

**Locate and contact LEAs with high response rates to share what they are** doing to locate and track students and collect post-school outcome data.

### After Exiting (reactive strategies)

#### **Update local data systems in January/February** (call phone numbers to verify/report changes)

Make certain that school personnel enter the most recent student data. Make certain that the data are updated at the beginning and end of each academic period.

**Send "heads up" letter to youth and families** to prompt students to respond to the post-school outcomes survey. (District Letter [www.utahposthighsurvey.org/instruments.php](http://www.utahposthighsurvey.org/instruments.php))

**Attempt to locate students** via Department of Motor Vehicles (i.e., search by name, DOB, and gender to locate change of address and phone number).

#### **Go where students are**

Locate students at their favorite places (e.g., mall, basketball court, arcade, skating rink, and high school football, basketball, and baseball games). Ask youth to update their contact information and ask them to stay in touch. Ask students if you can contact them via the Internet.

**Obtained current information at the post office** via the use of an automated vendor file of current postal change-of-address updates, the National Change of Address (NCOA) file. These files are updated as often as every two weeks and maintain a record of previous address updates and, in some cases, telephone numbers. NCOA updates (for both address and telephone number) are far faster and less costly than multiple mailings or telephone numbers contacts.

**Contact the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.** Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors maintain current files on each of their clients. They may be able to provide current information on a particular student or have that student contact school personnel to provide the data needed.

**Consider Aristotle's Nationwide Voter File** ([www.VoterListsOnline.com](http://www.VoterListsOnline.com)) to locate youth who are difficult to find. This service contains comprehensive lists of registered voters across the U.S. Data are collected at the state, county, and municipal level across the country, and integrated and enhanced by data experts.

**"Google" students** (e.g. former students may be found at [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com) and [www.classmates.com](http://www.classmates.com) )

#### Adapted from

"Collecting Post-School Outcome Data: Strategies for Increasing Response Rates". Prepared by Sandra Covington Smith, Ph.D., Loujeania Williams Bost, Ph.D. National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) ([www.ndpc-sd.org](http://www.ndpc-sd.org)).



**Utah Post High School Outcomes Project**

[www.utahposthighsurvey.org](http://www.utahposthighsurvey.org)