

Transitions From School to Postsecondary or Community Settings

Chapter 3

Overview

The legislative charge to the Task Force was to examine transitions, including transitions from secondary school to adult life. Thus, the Task Force focused its analysis on school transitions, not issues about the adequacy of elementary and secondary school for children with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD). In general, students need a high school degree to be competitive for work or eligible for postsecondary education. While the goal of the North Carolina public school system is to ensure that every student graduates from high school “globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century,” only 49.4% of students with disabilities graduate from high school with a diploma.^{a,1,2} By this definition, 50% of students with disabilities are not prepared for competitive work or postsecondary education. Even those who do graduate may have trouble transitioning from secondary school to postsecondary education or community settings.

Schools play an important role in helping all youth acquire the skills and knowledge needed to be successful as adults. This is particularly true for individuals with I/DD, who may face additional challenges transitioning from childhood to adulthood. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all students with disabilities are required to have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to help ensure they receive the individualized attention and supports to succeed in school. Even though students with disabilities have IEPs, many still lack the supports necessary to successfully complete high school. Through the adaptation of research-based interventions shown to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, improved professional development, greater use of assistive technologies, and better planning and coordination of transition plans for students with disabilities, North Carolina public schools can help ensure that students with disabilities graduate high school and are prepared for competitive work and postsecondary education.

Individuals with I/DD who graduate or age out of secondary school need linkages to postsecondary schools, vocational rehabilitation, and Local Management Entities (LMEs) to ensure they become active participants in the community. Currently there are very few postsecondary education options designed specifically for individuals with I/DD. North Carolina’s community college and university systems need to improve the current system to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Doing so will ensure that individuals with I/DD have access to the kinds of postsecondary training and education needed to join or advance within a competitive workforce. Transitions from secondary education to the workplace and community are discussed in Chapter 6.



Schools play an important role in helping all youth acquire the skills and knowledge needed to be successful as adults. This is particularly true for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities, who may face additional challenges transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

^a Unless otherwise stated, “children with disabilities” in this chapter refers to all children with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability. The federal government recognizes 13 categories under which a child may qualify for special education including autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disability, hearing impairment, cognitive disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.

Youth with I/DD in the foster care system may face additional barriers to a successful transition into adulthood. These children often do not have the traditional kinds of support—family, caring adults, mentors—that other youth have to help them through periods of transition. If identified early, children with I/DD in the foster care system can be connected to services and supports that can help them successfully transition from foster care into the community. Therefore, it is important to identify children with I/DD in the foster care system early so they receive services while in the system, and appropriate planning can ensure a smooth transition out of foster care.

Elementary and Secondary Schools

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Children ages 3-21 with I/DD are eligible for special education and related services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. IDEA is intended to ensure that all children with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).^b IDEA applies to all children with disabilities, not just those with I/DD. IDEA requires that all states accepting funds for students with disabilities provide “a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.”^c In 2007, nearly six million children, nationally, ages 6-21 received services under IDEA.³

States receiving IDEA funds must meet a number of conditions.^d States must make FAPE available to all children ages 3-21 with disabilities no later than a child’s third birthday and ensure that an IEP is in place by that date.^e IDEA requires that all children with disabilities in elementary and secondary schools have IEPs in place at the beginning of each school year.^f An IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability that details the educational plan that has been designed to meet their educational needs.^g The IEP is created by the IEP Team which includes the parents, at least one regular education teacher (if the child is participating in or will participate in the general curriculum), at least one special education teacher, a representative of the Local Education Agency (LEA), an individual who

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that all children with disabilities in elementary and secondary schools have Individualized Education Programs in place at the beginning of each school year.

b The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted in 1974 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and was renamed IDEA in 1990. IDEA has been amended many times since then, most recently in 2004.

c 34 CFR §300.1(a), 20 U.S.C §1400(d)(1)(A).

d 34 CFR §300.101-300.176.

e 34 CFR §300.101, U.S.C. 1412(a)(1)(A).

f IDEA does not apply to postsecondary education outside of the public school system.

g An Individualized Education Program (IEP) must include statements of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance; measurable, annual educational and functional goals; how progress will be measured and when assessments of progress will be provided; the special education and related services to be provided and the program modifications or supports needed; the extent to which the child will not participate with students without disabilities in the general curriculum and extracurricular activities; any individual accommodations necessary; and the projected date for the beginning of transition services (for youth 16 or older) and the frequency, location, and duration of those services. According to IDEA, states must ensure that children with disabilities including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities are educated with children who are nondisabled. Furthermore, the removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment, such as special classes or separate schooling, is only allowed if education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

can interpret the implications of evaluation results, other individuals at the discretion of the parents or LEA, and, when appropriate, the child with a disability.^h States are also required to ensure that children with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their needs, as determined annually.ⁱ IEPs must also include a plan for transition services, beginning no later than when the child reaches age 16.^{j,k}

Children with Disabilities in North Carolina Schools

During the 2006-2007 school year, there were more than 61,000 children with disabilities ages 14-21 in North Carolina public schools. This figure includes all children with IEPs, including, but not limited to, children with I/DD. The most common disability category was specific learning disability (45.6%) followed by intellectual disability (20.8%), other health impairment (17.9%), and emotional disturbance (7.5%). (See Table 3.1.)

Of the 61,115 students with disabilities in grades 9-12 (2006-2007), more than half were in regular educational settings during 80% or more of their school day, 22.4% were in a resource setting and spent 40-79% of the day with other students without disabilities, and 21.9% were in a separate setting and spent 39% or less of their day with students without disabilities.^{l,4,5} The remaining 4.3% of the students were in more restrictive settings such as public separate and residential schools, private separate and residential schools, and homebound or hospitalized.⁶

Increasing the Number of Students Who Successfully Complete High School

Currently there are five courses of study available to students with disabilities: Career Prep, College Tech Prep, College/University Prep, the Occupational Courses of Study, and the Extended Content Standards.^m The Career, College Tech, and College/University Prep Courses of Study are available to all students and have fairly similar base graduation requirements. The Occupational Course of Study (OCS) is available only to students with disabilities and is designed for students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities who need a modified general curriculum that focuses on post-school employment and independent living.ⁿ The Extended Content

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h 34 CFR §300.320-321, 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A) and (d)(6)

i The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) also requires that states provide a continuum of placement services for children with disabilities including supplemental aids and services within regular classrooms as well as alternative placements such as separate classes for students with disabilities, separate schools, home schooling, or instruction in institutional settings. Additionally, IDEA requires that the child's placement be as close as possible to their home with the child being educated in the school he or she would attend if he or she did not have a disability, unless another arrangement is deemed most appropriate by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team. 34 CFR §300.114-116, 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(5)

j Transition services include those necessary to assist the child in reaching postsecondary education goals such as training, education, employment, and independent living skills—all of which should be a part of the IEP beginning at age 16 or earlier if it is determined to be appropriate.

k 34 CFR §300.320, 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A) and (d)(6)

l Resource setting refers to students receiving instruction outside of the general education classroom. Students typically receive individualized or small group instruction in a resource classroom.

m Beginning in 2009-2010, entering students will choose between the Future Ready and Occupational Courses of Study and the Extended Content Standards. More information is available online at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/graduation/table>.

n Lee FM. Consultant for Intellectual Disabilities, Secondary Education, and Transition Services, Exceptional Children Division, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Oral communication. February 11, 2009.

Students with disabilities generally do not perform well on end-of-course tests, with less than 42% scoring level three (passing) or above.

Table 3.1
Learning Disabilities and Intellectual Disability Are the Most Common Disabilities Among North Carolina Students Ages 14-21

Disability Category	Total	Percent
Specific learning disability	27,857	45.6%
Mental retardation ^o	12,689	20.8%
Other health impairment	10,938	17.9%
Emotional disturbance ^o	4,565	7.5%
Autism	1,976	3.2%
Multiple disabilities	903	1.5%
Hearing impairment	783	1.3%
Speech or language impairment	526	0.9%
Orthopedic impairment	333	0.5%
Traumatic brain injury	269	0.4%
Visual impairment	258	0.4%
Deaf-blindness	18	0.0%
Developmental delay	0	0.0%
Total	61,115	100.0%

Source: North Carolina Institute of Medicine calculations using Office of Special Education Data Analysis System. US Department of Education. *EDFacts: North Carolina Report of Children with Disabilities for Ages 6 through 21 by Age and Disability for SY 2006-2007*. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/ec/data/childcount/december1/07disabilitybyage621.pdf>. Published March 31, 2008. Accessed March 11, 2009.

Standards provide guidance for developing individualized courses of study for students with significant disabilities. The IEP Team makes recommendations as to which course of study is appropriate for each student based on his/her post-school transition needs and goals. The final course of study selection is made by the student and parent.⁷

Career, College Tech, and University Prep Courses of Study: North Carolina students in the Career, College Tech, and College/University Prep Courses of Study must meet certain course and credit requirements, testing standards, and performance requirements in order to receive a high school diploma. Students must earn a passing score on the end-of-course (EOC) tests for core academic areas (Algebra I, Biology, Civics and Economics, English I, and US History) unless exempted by the student’s IEP. Students with disabilities generally do not perform well on these end-of-course tests, with less than 42% scoring level three (passing) or above.⁶ (See Table 3.2.) Many students with disabilities also fail core academic

^o North Carolina no longer uses the terms mental retardation and emotional disturbance except when required to do so by the federal government for reporting purposes. Instead, North Carolina uses the terms intellectual disability and serious emotional disability. Mental retardation, based on the Federal definition of “child with a disability” in section 602(3)(A) of the Act. 20 U.S.C. 1401(3)(A), is the term used by the US Office of Special Education.

Table 3.2
Only One-in-Three Students with Disabilities Perform at or Above Proficient on End-of-Course Tests in Core Academic Areas

	Algebra I (% at or above Level III)	Biology (% at or above Level III)	Civics/ Economics (% at or above Level III)	US History (% at or above Level III)	English I (% at or above Level III)
Students without a Disability (n=125,799)	69.4%	67.6%	68.2%	66.3%	75.9%
Students with a Disability (n=10,166)	33.2%	37.6%	37.4%	41.8%	35.4%

Source: Data from Public Schools of North Carolina, State Board of Education/Department of Public Instruction. Report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee. North Carolina High Schools and Students with Disabilities: A Study of Educational Services and Outcomes. Session Law: 2007, Section 295. GS 115C-17. Report # DPI Chronological Schedule. March 1, 2008. Title in report is "2006-2007 North Carolina State Level Performance Data for Select End-of-Course Multiple Choice Tests."

courses because current State Board of Education policy requires that schools count the EOC tests as 25% of a student’s grade.⁸

Occupational Course of Study (OCS): The OCS is a transition-focused curriculum that includes extensive career preparation. An informal Department of Public Instruction (DPI) survey of high schools in 2004 found that approximately 20% of high school students with disabilities selected to participate in the OCS.^p The OCS is currently being revised for students entering high school in 2009. For students enrolled prior to 2009, the OCS requires:^q

- 15 courses in English, mathematics, science, occupational preparation, and social studies.
- 300 hours of school-based vocational training, 240 hours of community-based vocational training, and 360 hours of paid employment.
- Creating a career portfolio documenting completion of course of study requirements (this is in place of an exit exam).
- Completion of healthful living and electives as needed to complete local graduation requirements.^r

Students in the OCS who complete all requirements receive a high school diploma. If a student has not completed the competitive paid employment, but has completed

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^p Lee FM. Consultant for Intellectual Disabilities, Secondary Education, and Transition Services, Exceptional Children Division, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Oral communication. March 3, 2009

^q In January 2009, the US Department of Education notified the Department of Public Instruction that the testing requirements for the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) were not aligned closely enough with the general curriculum, as required by No Child Left Behind. The OCS is currently being revised to meet the new requirement. Beginning in 2009-2010, entering students enrolled in the OCS will be required to pass algebra to earn a high school diploma.

^r Students in the OCS are not required to pass an exit exam or the computer skills test.

Although 49.4% of students with disabilities graduated high school with a diploma in the state in 2007, graduation rates vary widely by Local Education Agency (LEA). In 19 LEAs, fewer than 45% of high school students graduated with a diploma... 16 LEAs had more than 75%.

all other requirements, he or she currently receives a Certificate of Achievement and future students will receive a Graduation Certificate. Upon completion of the required hours of competitive paid employment, the student can receive his or her high school diploma.^s

The OCS occupational preparation courses, part of the school-based vocational training, cover topics including self-determination, personal management, interpersonal relationship skills, career development, job seeking skills, and job performance.⁹⁻¹¹ Community-based instruction, or functional, hands-on learning in a natural setting, is a critical component of the life skills component of the OCS.^t Instruction is intended to take place in the community and teaches students to use skills that will be needed to live independently, work, and participate in the community.

Extended Content Standards (ECS): The ECS provide guidance in the development of an individual course of study for students with significant cognitive disabilities. IEP Teams and teachers use the ECS to identify ways to provide all students access to the general curriculum, as required by No Child Left Behind. ECS guidance documents detail a continuum of ways for students to learn and demonstrate understanding of course content standards.¹² Students who participate in the ECS receive a Graduation Certificate at high school completion.

Although 49.4% of students with disabilities graduated high school with a diploma in the state in 2007, graduation rates vary widely by LEA and school.^{13,u,v} In 19 LEAs, fewer than 45% of high school students with disabilities graduated with a diploma. In contrast, 16 LEAs had more than 75% of students with disabilities graduate with a diploma.^w North Carolina's target is to have 70% of students with IEPs graduating with regular diplomas by 2011.¹³ Students with disabilities who do not complete the requirements for a high school diploma can get a Graduation Certificate if the student:

- Passed all his or her IEP requirements and completed at least 21 course credits as defined in State Board of Education Policy HSP-L-004 (the core academic courses are not required as part of this policy), or
- Satisfied all state and local graduation requirements other than the proficiency standards as defined in HSP-N-000 (Student Accountability Standards), has been enrolled in the OCS, and has passed all the requirements of the OCS other than the 360 hours of competitive employment.

^s The amount of time a student has to complete the required hours of competitive paid employment varies by Local Education Agency.

^t Community-based instruction might include teaching students how to shop for groceries, go to the health department, or access public transportation.

^u The graduation rate for students with disabilities is the percentage of students with an Individualized Education Program who graduated with a regular high school diploma.

^v The five year cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities was 53.6% for students entering the 9th grade in 2002-2003.

^w Mannan MA. Senior Statistician for Policy, Monitoring and Audit Section, Exceptional Children Division, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Written communication. March 30, 2009.

IDEA requires that states create a Statewide Performance Plan (SPP) that describes how the state will improve implementation of IDEA and submit Annual Performance Reports.^x As part of North Carolina's SPP, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has begun Focused Monitoring in some LEAs to examine the experiences of students with disabilities. The purpose of Focused Monitoring is to find ways to increase achievement, decrease drop-out rates, and improve the provision of comprehensive transition services. Focused Monitoring activities include data analysis, initial on-site visits, follow-up technical assistance visits, student record reviews, and interviews with LEA staff, parents, and students. Focused Monitoring was piloted during the 2006-2007 school year and will be conducted in approximately four different LEAs each year until 2011.¹³ Focused Monitoring findings from the 2006-2007 school year show that:

- For many students with disabilities, a full continuum of special education services was not available or used at the high school level, even when performance data indicated that a student was not experiencing success.
- The transition component of the IEP did not always have measurable postsecondary outcomes goals or the transition services needed to help the child reach those goals.
- Many students' IEPs did not have any documentation of a Career Development Plan.^y
- Students with disabilities often enter high school with weak academic skills, based on end-of-grade performance, and few high schools have comprehensive literacy programs and other services to help students with disabilities.

These in-depth reviews highlight the need for both a larger array of services for students with disabilities and more detailed IEPs.⁶

In 2007, the North Carolina General Assembly asked DPI to review educational and other services provided to students with disabilities in high school. In the final report to the legislature, DPI made several recommendations on how to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. This Task Force supports those recommendations; however, since the focus of this group was on improving transitions, the Task Force recommendations are more narrowly focused.

Many students with disabilities are not graduating from high school with the skills needed to successfully transition to employment or postsecondary schooling. The low graduation rate for students with disabilities illustrates that many high schools are not fulfilling the promise of IDEA for students with disabilities. Therefore the Task Force on Transitions for People with Developmental Disabilities recommends:

Many students with disabilities are not graduating from high school with the skills needed to successfully transition to employment or postsecondary schooling.

x 34 CFR §300.600, 20 U.S.C. 1416(a)

y Career Development Plans (CDPs) outline the accommodations or additional services students with disabilities need to be successful in career/technical classes. This information is required by federal law.

Recommendation 3.1: Improving Educational Outcomes of Children with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities

The State Board of Education should examine existing school policies to improve the educational outcomes for children with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD). Specifically the State Board of Education should:

- a) Develop a policy allowing students in the Occupational Course of Study who graduate with a Graduation Certificate because of not having completed the required hours of competitive paid employment to have four years to complete the work requirements necessary for receiving a high school diploma.
- b) Develop guidelines for using end-of-course assessment data in Individual Education Program development at the beginning of each school year to ensure that children with I/DD are receiving appropriate education to achieve their maximum potential.

Individualized Education Program Transition Component

Individuals with I/DD who graduate or age out of secondary school need linkages to postsecondary schools, vocational rehabilitation, and/or LMEs to obtain postsecondary education, vocational training, workforce assistance, or other services and supports needed to help them become active participants in the community. The transition component of the IEP is supposed to build such links. North Carolina policy requires that the IEP Team begin discussing transitions during the year a child turns 14.^z The transition component of the IEP must include “measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and the transition services (including course of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.”^{aa,bb} The IEP transition services plan should be based on the child’s needs, considering the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests. If multiple agencies are involved in providing transition services, IDEA states that the IEP should include a statement of interagency responsibilities. Under IDEA, the LEA must invite participants from any agency that is responsible for providing transition services to the IEP meeting.^{cc,dd}

z The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that transition services be a part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) beginning with the IEP in effect when the child turns 16.

aa Postsecondary goals may include postsecondary education, vocational education, employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

bb 34 CFR §300.43, 20 U.S.C. 1401(34)

cc The Local Education Agency (LEA) must have the consent of the parents or child who has reached the age of majority before inviting representatives from participating agencies. If representatives from participating agencies do not attend the IEP meeting, the LEA is not required to take further steps to include them in IEP meetings.

dd 34 CFR §300.321, 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(B)-(d)(1)(D)

During the 2006-2007 school year, 72.5% of the sample of students with disabilities age 16 or older had an IEP with transition goals that met IDEA guidelines.^{ee} Although this represents an increase from the 2005-2006 school year, it is well below DPI's goal and the requirements of federal law of 100%. To improve performance on this goal, DPI created Comprehensive Transition Training modules, trained 28 transition coordinators and Exceptional Children staff to become regional and LEA trainers who present the training modules, created a Statewide Transition Leadership Planning Team, and conducted numerous trainings for school administrators and teachers. Additionally, transition services were targeted in LEAs participating in Focused Monitoring. All schools were required to correct noncompliant IEPs within one year, and LEAs and schools without 100% compliance were required to develop a comprehensive training plan.^{ff,13}

In addition to creating a transition component to the IEP, the school must inform the child of the rights provided under Part B of IDEA (which includes transition planning) that will transfer to the child when they reach the age of majority. The child must be informed of this transfer beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority. The rights that transfer are all those that are accorded to parents of minor children, such as the right to participate in placement decisions, examine records, or file a due process complaint. Both the child and the parents must be notified of the transfer of rights when it happens.^{gg}

Under IDEA reporting requirements, states must report the percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in school, and have been "competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school."^{hh,ii} The North Carolina 2007 Post-School Exit Survey found that of those who responded to the survey, 30% had been competitively employed, 25% had been enrolled in postsecondary school, and 20% had been both competitively employed and enrolled in postsecondary school at some point in the last year. Twenty-five percent were neither working nor enrolled in postsecondary school. (See Figure 3.1.) Of the respondents with intellectual disabilities, 58% had been either competitively employed, enrolled in postsecondary school, or both at some point in the past year.¹⁴ Unfortunately, due to response bias, the actual results may be worse than what is presented here. The survey responses overrepresent students with less severe disabilities, those who graduated with a diploma, and white students. Thus, postsecondary performance and competitive workforce engagement may be inflated, especially for those with more significant disabilities.

Students with intellectual disabilities are the least likely to be engaged in competitive employment or postsecondary education in the year after leaving high school, with 50% not in school and not competitively employed.

ee Each Local Education Agency is required to submit the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of 5% of the students with disabilities ages 16 or older (or at least five records). Submitted IEPs are reviewed to see if they meet the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act transition goals requirements.

ff It is too early to see the results of the comprehensive training plans that were developed in 2008.

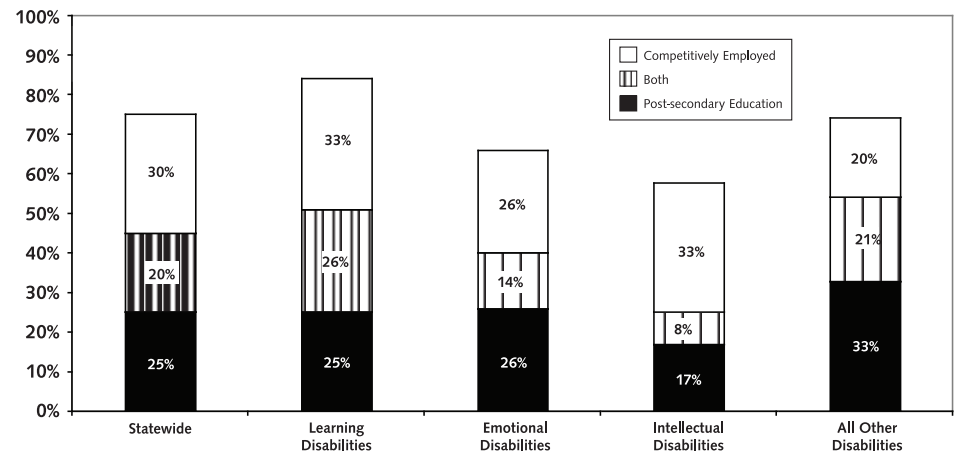
gg 34 CFR §300.320, 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A) and (d)(6), 34 CFR §300.520, 20 U.S.C. 1415(m)

hh Competitive employment is defined work (i) in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting and (ii) for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

ii 20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(B)

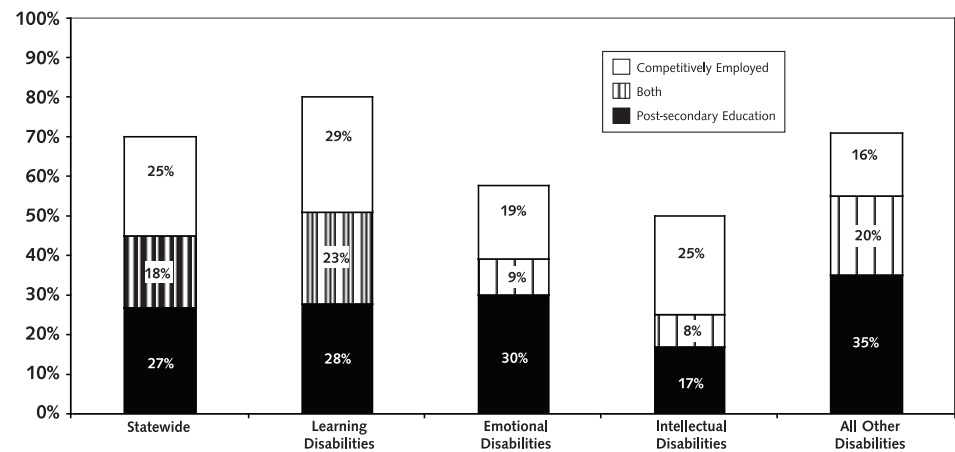
Schools are failing to help 50% of youth with intellectual disabilities gain the skills and knowledge they need to engage in postsecondary school or competitive employment.

Figure 3.1
The Majority of Young Adults with Disabilities are Engaged in Work or School at Some Point During the Year After Leaving High School



Source: Exceptional Children Division, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. North Carolina Part B Annual Performance Report (APR) for 2006-2007. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/ec/plan/2006-07apr.pdf>. Published April 14, 2008. Accessed February 24, 2009.

Figure 3.2
50% of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities are *Not Currently* Engaged in Their Communities



Source: Exceptional Children Division, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. North Carolina Part B Annual Performance Report (APR) for 2006-2007. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/ec/plan/2006-07apr.pdf>. Published April 14, 2008. Accessed February 24, 2009.

Students with intellectual disabilities are the least likely to be engaged in competitive employment or postsecondary education in the year after leaving high school, with 50% not in school and not competitively employed. (See Figure 3.2.) It is unclear what these young adults are doing once they leave high school.

Schools are failing to help 50% of youth with intellectual disabilities gain the skills and knowledge they need to engage in postsecondary school or competitive employment. Further, as previously noted, these survey results may not accurately reflect the experiences of those with more significant disabilities. Schools need to know what kind of skills young adults need to meaningfully engage in their communities and how well schools prepare youth to successfully transition into the community. Additionally, knowing why these students are not engaged in postsecondary education or competitive employment and what they are doing could help LMEs and other support systems reach these youth. Therefore, the Task Force recommends:

Recommendation 3.2: Measuring Outcomes for Students with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) should add additional questions to the school outcome data collection survey for students with disabilities. The survey should include questions to further assess what students are doing in the area of employment (i.e. how many hours of work per week, how many months on the job, and average wages in the last year), what students are doing if not employed or enrolled in postsecondary education, how well students with disabilities feel their needs were met by schools, and what skills could help them meaningfully engage in their communities. DPI should oversample students with severe intellectual and other developmental disabilities. DPI should report survey results to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services and to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than February, 2010.

In order to ensure full implementation of IDEA and to help states build capacity and support for children with disabilities, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC), part of the US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, identifies evidence-based and promising practices in transition. NSTTAC research has found a number of in-school predictors of post-school success in employment, education, and independent living. Students who have access to transition services and supports such as career awareness, paid work experience, social skills, student support, transition programs, self-care/independent living skills, parental involvement, school integration, self-advocacy/self-determination, and occupational courses are more likely to transition successfully to postsecondary education and work. The NSTTAC maintains a list of in-school evidence-based practices that improve post-school success.¹⁵

Teaching students functional life skills outside the classroom, through community-based instruction, is an evidence-based practice that improves students' likelihood of successfully living independently, a goal in many students' IEPs. Functional life skills include skills such as budgeting, banking, mobility, and safety. Community-

based instruction involves taking students out into the community to practice skills learned in the classroom. Skills that are learned in the classroom, such as how to read a bus schedule, are reinforced and practiced when students go out in the community and use the public transportation system. Community-based instruction also provides students an opportunity to apply academic skills, such as reading and mathematics, in real life situations. When a student can successfully apply on their own the life skills they have learned in school, they are more likely to successfully transition into living independently. DPI should work with the North Carolina Community College System, colleges and universities, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to identify the life skills that would facilitate transition from school to postsecondary education or competitive employment. Therefore, the Task Force recommends:

Recommendation 3.3: Improving Transition Outcomes of Children with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities

The North Carolina General Assembly should appropriate \$6 million in recurring funds to the Department of Public Instruction to provide community-based instruction to students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities to help meet the life skills components of students' Individuals Education Programs.

The NSTTAC also identified interagency collaboration as an in-school predictor of post-school success. When there is good interagency collaboration that begins when a child is young, agencies work together to help create the environment and work/community opportunities that are more likely to lead to a child's successful transition into postsecondary work and education.¹⁵ Currently DPI collects data on disabilities using 13 federally-defined disability categories, which are different than the categories used by the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMHDDSAS). DPI and DMHDDSAS should work together to determine the appropriate categories to report to LMEs. Once common categories are agreed upon, schools could help facilitate better collaboration by sharing data on the number of students with disabilities and the types of disabilities they have so that LMEs and other agencies that provide services and supports to people with I/DD can be better prepared. Therefore, the Task Force on Transitions for People with Developmental Disabilities recommends:

Recommendation 3.4: Improving Interagency Coordination for Transitions

The North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) should promote interagency coordination before a child transitions out of secondary school. Specifically, the NCGA should direct the State Board of Education to develop policies to improve transition planning for children with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD), in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services. Transition planning should help

the students with I/DD reach their maximum independence, establish employment goals, and participate in community activities or other forms of civic engagement. In developing the transition component of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), staff with the Local Education Agency (LEA) should:

- a) Encourage the active participation of appropriate agencies in developing the transition component of the IEP once the child reaches age 14, including, but not limited to, postsecondary educational institutions, vocational rehabilitation, Local Management Entities (LMEs), and community providers.
- b) Develop a checklist for students and parents about issues they should consider in developing the transition component of the IEP and include other available resources in the community that may support the student as he or she transitions out of secondary school. This checklist should be provided to the student and his or her family or guardian annually, beginning at age 14.
- c) Share data with LMEs and local community colleges on an annual basis about the unduplicated numbers of students with I/DD in their jurisdiction expected to transition out of the secondary school system. The data should include an unduplicated count and a clear delineation of the services and supports needed.

Assistive Technology

Some students with disabilities benefit from the use of assistive technologies (AT). AT can aid children's learning by augmenting their abilities or by compensating for certain communication, mobility, or other functional barriers that impair their educational achievement. Any item used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with disabilities is considered an AT.^{jj,kk} Modified desks and chairs, large print materials, computer hardware (large keyboards), software programs (to convert spoken words to text), and digital presentation recorders are all examples of AT used in schools. Most students with disabilities are able to be educated in general education classrooms with a few modifications or adaptations. AT can help students and teachers with these adaptations. IDEA requires that students be educated in the least restrictive, most appropriate environment, and AT are sometimes required for that to be possible. IDEA requires that the child's AT needs be considered when creating his or her IEP and that schools must ensure that AT devices, services, or both are available, free of charge, to a child with a disability if required by the child's IEP.^{ll,mm} Additionally, home use of AT purchased by the school is allowable if the use of such technologies at home is necessary for the child to receive FAPE.ⁿⁿ

Assistive technologies can aid children's learning by augmenting their abilities or by compensating for certain communication, mobility, or other functional barriers that impair their educational achievement.

jj Assistive technology as used in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act does not include implanted medical devices.

kk 34 CFR §300.5, 20 U.S.C. 1401(1).

ll 34 CFR §300.324, 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(1), 1412(a)(12)(A)(i), 1414(d)(3), (4)(B), and (7); and 1414(e)

mm Assistive technology service refers to any service that aids a child with disabilities in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology, including the evaluation of the child's functional needs; purchasing, leasing or otherwise providing assistive technology devices; selecting, fitting, and maintaining assistive technology devices; coordinating use of such devices with other therapies, interventions, or services; and training or technical assistance for a child with a disability, his or her family, or his or her service providers. 34 CFR §300.6, 20 U.S.C. 1401(2)

nn 34 CFR §300.105, 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(1), 1412(a)(12)(B)(i)

Although IDEA identifies schools as being responsible for providing AT for students with disabilities, schools may not have the funds to fully meet the needs of students. IDEA funding is limited and AT devices and services can be very costly. This makes it difficult for schools to fulfill IDEA requirements around AT. In 2008, the New Voices Foundation of North Carolina surveyed the public school Programs for Exceptional Children, the LMEs, and five physicians in university pediatric practice in Durham, Chatham, Orange, and Wake counties about the needs of children with disabilities. The survey asked how many children, ages 3-22, had severe communication and mobility problems and could benefit by a comprehensive assessment to determine their need for AT and other specialized services. In that four county area, 244 children were identified as having needs that could potentially benefit from AT.¹⁶ IDEA does not require schools to report on the AT needs of students and how well they are being met, so it is unclear to what degree North Carolina schools are fulfilling this requirement of IDEA.

Access to AT and training to use the devices effectively are critical to ensuring that children with disabilities are able to succeed in their education. Currently North Carolina does not have the information to assess how well students' AT needs are being identified or met. Therefore, the Task Force on Transitions for People with Developmental Disabilities recommends:

Recommendation 3.5: Use of Assistive Technology in the Schools

The North Carolina General Assembly should allocate \$60,000 to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to contract with an independent organization, that has expertise in assistive technology (AT), to conduct a study to determine the extent to which the AT needs of students with disabilities, including intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD), are being met.

- a) The study should assess the needs for AT of a random sample of students with disabilities, including students with I/DD, who could potentially benefit from the use of AT to help them in school. The study should include students with disabilities from rural, low wealth, and urban school systems from across North Carolina.
- b) The study should include a survey of teachers and school administrators to determine their level of understanding of AT and how AT can be appropriately integrated into the school setting. The contractors should also assess how well teachers are integrating AT training into the classroom so that students can effectively use AT.
- c) The study should survey parents of the students included in the study to determine if AT options were discussed as part of the Individualized Education Program and then implemented.

- d) The contractors should report their findings to DPI and to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than October, 2010. The report should include information on how well the schools are meeting the AT needs of students, any barriers which prevent appropriate use of AT, recommendations for how AT can be more appropriately utilized in the school setting, and the costs of statewide implementation of the proposed recommendations.

Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual or Other Developmental Disabilities

Data from DPI's 2007 post-school follow-up survey of students with disabilities show that 45% of respondents had continued their education after leaving high school.^{oo} Students with disabilities who otherwise meet the admissions requirements can enroll in college or university classes or take academic or vocational courses at community colleges. However, the options available for students with I/DD are limited at the community college, college, and university levels. More postsecondary education opportunities need to be provided for students with I/DD. Additionally, those that do exist need to be better integrated into other systems. The linkages between secondary education, postsecondary education, vocational rehabilitation, and LMEs need to be strengthened to increase the likelihood that students finishing high school will be connected to the kinds of postsecondary opportunities that help facilitate successful transitions into adulthood and employment.

Currently, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is the primary provider of postsecondary education for individuals with I/DD. There are a limited number of programs available at the college and university level tailored to students with I/DD. Vocational rehabilitation is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Community Colleges

North Carolina's community colleges offer a free compensatory education program (CED) as part of the Basic Skills Program. The CED program is for individuals with intellectual disabilities who are not prepared to take academic or vocational classes. To be eligible to participate in the CED, individuals must be 17-years-old or older and must either be diagnosed with an intellectual disability or be functioning on a level equivalent to intellectual disability from head injury or brain damage. A diagnosis from a qualified professional (such as a doctor, psychologist, or psychiatrist) is required to enroll in the program.¹⁷ The CED curriculum covers seven domains including language, math, social science, community living, consumer education, health, and pre-employment skills.^{pp} The focus of the curriculum is to teach the skills adults with disabilities need to function as independently as possible. All students are tested at the beginning and end of each year to measure their progress.¹⁷

The options available for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) are limited at the community college, college, and university levels. More postsecondary education opportunities need to be provided for students with I/DD.

^{oo} Survey responses overrepresented students with less severe disabilities, those who graduated with a diploma, and white students. Due to response bias, postsecondary performance may be inflated.

^{pp} The North Carolina Community College System is currently in the process of updating the curriculum.

The community college curriculum program courses can be much more difficult for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) to enroll in... The courses in the curriculum programs have entrance requirements that are often difficult for students with I/DD to meet.

The CED program was developed by the NCCCS in 1983 as a result of a lawsuit brought by The Arc of North Carolina. The lawsuit was in response to the failure of elementary and secondary schools to adequately educate children with intellectual disabilities. The CED's purpose when it was created was to "compensate" adults for the lack of or inadequate education received earlier. The compensatory education program served more than 6,000 students at all 58 community colleges during the 2007-2008 school year. Some community colleges' programs are unable to serve everyone who qualifies due to a lack of funding for the space and instructors needed to meet the need.¹⁷

Adults with I/DD who perform above the compensatory education level or who have progressed through the CED curriculum can enroll at no charge in higher level adult basic education (ABE) courses that are part of the Basic Skills program. The ABE is designed for adults who need to improve their reading, writing, speaking, problem-solving, or computation skills to function effectively in the community or on the job. Courses include instruction in math, reading, writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. Additionally, students may enroll in other Basic Skills classes including General Educational Development (GED), English as a Second Language, or adult high school courses at no charge.¹⁸

The programmatic aspect of both CED and ABE are funded through federal funds and are restricted to providing compensatory education skills, not vocational or work-related skills. Limited state funds are available to help pay for coordination of services for CED. Most colleges use these funds to hire part-time CED coordinators.

In addition to the Basic Skills Program, which includes both CED and ABE, North Carolina Community Colleges offer career and technical education courses. Applicants to these curriculum programs have to meet certain standards or must have taken certain required courses before enrollment. Curriculum programs include those where students follow a specific course of study in order to earn a certificate, diploma, Associate in Applied Science, Associate in Arts, Associate in Fine Arts, Associate in Science, or Associate in General Education.

The community college curriculum program courses can be much more difficult for students with I/DD to enroll in, even if they have a high school diploma after completing the OCS. The courses in the curriculum programs have entrance requirements that are often difficult for students with I/DD to meet. If applicants do not meet the requirements they are placed in developmental education courses which are designed to help students develop the skills necessary to enroll in college-level courses.^{qq,18}

Although there are a variety of opportunities for individuals with I/DD through the NCCCS, few students with I/DD are able to take classes that would prepare

qq Developmental education courses are designed to address academic preparedness, workforce retraining, development of general and discipline-specific learning strategies, and affective barriers to learning. Developmental courses do not earn credit toward a degree, diploma, or certificate.

them for employment. Obtaining employment is a critical step in a successful transition into adulthood for everyone, including individuals with I/DD. While the CED and ABE programs serve some individuals with I/DD, many would benefit from being able to learn the kinds of vocational and technical skills needed for employment. Therefore, the Task Force on Transitions for People with Developmental Disabilities recommends:

Recommendation 3.6: Expanding Educational Opportunities in the Community College System (PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)

- a) The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) should contract for an independent evaluation of NCCCS educational and vocational programs available to people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD). As part of this evaluation, the NCCCS should examine:
 - 1) The number of students with I/DD enrolled in basic skills (including, but not limited to, compensatory education), economic and workforce development, and curriculum programs by specific type of educational program.
 - 2) Information about the level of disability of students with I/DD served through the NCCCS system, including numbers of students with intellectual disabilities, the numbers of students using assistive technologies, and where students are receiving their education.
 - 3) Outcome information including, but not limited to, numbers of students with I/DD who successfully complete coursework, obtain a degree, pursue further postsecondary education, or engage in competitive work in a community-integrated employment setting.
 - 4) Barriers which may prevent students with I/DD from enrolling in vocational or technical training courses which would prepare them for community-integrated employment options.
- b) The independent contractors should examine the experiences in North Carolina and in other states to identify best practices of providing meaningful postsecondary educational opportunities to people with I/DD in an integrated community setting, both in community colleges, colleges, and universities. As part of this study, the independent contractors should identify whether other states have different admissions requirements, enrollment procedures, educational curriculum, vocational or life skills training courses (including assistive technology training), or other student supports that contribute to valued outcomes for people with I/DD. NCCCS should use the information from this study to develop a plan to provide more meaningful educational and vocational opportunities to people with I/DD. NCCCS should pilot test the plan in four community colleges. If successful, NCCCS should implement this statewide.
- c) NCCCS should identify potential funding sources to help support enhanced educational and vocational training opportunities for people with I/DD including, but not limited to, use of existing funding through compensatory education or other educational funds that may be available through the federal Recovery and Reinvestment Act or other federal legislation.

- d) NCCCS should report its findings and plans to expand services to people with I/DD to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Education no later than October, 2010.

Colleges and Universities

In North Carolina there are very few postsecondary educational opportunities geared towards people with I/DD other than the compensatory education program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. One program that is currently being implemented and evaluated is Beyond Academics. Beyond Academics is a model program for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) who have finished their studies in the public school system and need further education to gain the knowledge and skills needed to live independently. Beyond Academics is a non-degree program that provides education and life skills training to adults with ID who are not candidates for admission to college.^{rr} The program is a partnership between The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G), DMHDDSAS, the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities, and a private provider of services for people with intellectual disabilities. Beyond Academics provides a unique opportunity for adults with ID to live and go to school with other students on a college campus. One of the main benefits of Beyond Academics and other similar postsecondary educational inclusion programs is the opportunity that students with ID have to live on or near campus with other students. Although Beyond Academics students are not enrolled in college, they take some of the same classes and live in off-campus housing with other college students. This is a benefit to both the student with ID and for UNC-G students, both of whom learn from each other. Additionally, students take courses in life skills such as personal safety, etiquette, personal finance, meal preparation, and conflict resolution. Students also have the opportunity to participate in internships related to their career interests.

Adults with I/DD can make meaningful progress in learning the skills needed to become contributing citizens of their communities; however, there are very few educational opportunities available that teach these skills. Therefore, the Task Force on Transitions for People with Developmental Disabilities recommends:

Recommendation 3.7: Expanding Postsecondary Education Opportunities in Colleges and Universities

- a) The North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) should appropriate \$400,000 in FY 2010 and 2011 to the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMHDDSAS) to support the expansion of Beyond Academics from a two-year to a four-year curriculum.

^{rr} Beyond Academics serves students with a wide range of intellectual disabilities, including those who meet the Intermediate Care Facility for Persons with Mental Retardation requirements. Beyond Academics is a new program and has developed and enrolled students in the first two years of curriculum. Two additional years of curriculum are being developed. The first cohort is expected to finish the four-year curriculum in 2011. The program is currently being evaluated; however, the outcomes data are not yet available.

- b) NCGA should appropriate \$60,000 in SFY 2010 and 2011 to The University of North Carolina at Greensboro to complete the evaluation of Beyond Academics.
- c) DMHDDSAS and the Division of Medical Assistance should allocate eight Community Alternatives Program for Persons with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities slots for new students in 2010 and 2011 to support students who will enroll in Beyond Academics.
- d) The University of North Carolina System and private colleges and universities should expand inclusive postsecondary education programs for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities based on the results of the Beyond Academics evaluation study, as well as other data on best practices.

Ideally, adults with I/DD should have opportunities for meaningful postsecondary education at both the community college and university levels. While the NCCCS offers compensatory education to people with intellectual disabilities, this curriculum does not provide meaningful vocational or work-related skills. Beyond Academics offers the possibility of combining an integrated living experience with academics on a college campus, but this program is still in the development stages and has not been fully evaluated. The NCCCS and the University of North Carolina System (UNC) should work together to identify collaborative approaches to provide meaningful educational opportunities to these students and also to identify funding options to help subsidize the tuition costs, as well as the services and supports needed to facilitate their educational opportunity.

Recommendation 3.8: Collaboration Between the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System

- a) The University of North Carolina System (UNC) and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) should work together to expand the availability of postsecondary educational opportunities for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in both community college and university settings.
- b) UNC and NCCCS should work with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services and the Division of Medical Assistance to explore federal and other funding sources to support students in postsecondary education.

Foster Care

Youth with I/DD in the foster care system face unique challenges both while in foster care and when they transition to adulthood. Children in the foster care system may not have an adult advocating for them to get access to needed services and supports while they are growing up. Furthermore, youth with I/DD who are not connected to services while in foster care may not have the knowledge or skills to connect to the appropriate support services when they age out of care. The

transition to adulthood is difficult for many foster care youth because they often lack the traditional support systems that other youth have. Surveys of youth aging out of foster care in North Carolina show that 33% do not have sufficient income to live on; 14% do not have safe, stable housing; 26% do not have a diploma or GED; 20% are single parents; and 40% do not have a support network of five caring, supportive adults in their lives.¹⁹ This transition is even more difficult for youth with I/DD because usually they need more services and supports to successfully transition into adulthood.²⁰

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 17% of youth under age 18 have a developmental disability; however, studies have found that 20-60% of youth in the foster care system have developmental disabilities.^{20,21} Data from North Carolina's Division of Social Services show that only 10.8% of foster children in North Carolina have disabilities.¹⁹ It is unlikely that North Carolina's foster care youth have a lower prevalence of disabilities, but rather that North Carolina is not doing a very good job identifying children with I/DD in foster care. Early identification is critical so that children with I/DD are able to receive needed services while in the foster care system and to ensure that they are connected to the appropriate systems so that they continue to receive services and supports as they transition to adulthood. Therefore, the Task Force on Transitions for People with Developmental Disabilities recommends:

Recommendation 3.9: Improving Services and Supports for Children with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities in the Foster Care System

The North Carolina Division of Social Services should work with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services to identify an assessment process to ensure children in foster care receive an appropriate assessment from a trained individual within three months of entering the foster care system to determine if they have any intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities (I/DD) or mental health needs. Children who have been determined to have mental health needs or I/DD should be linked into the Local Management Entity system.

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