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INTERAGENCY BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS IN TRANSITION PLANNING
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by

Deanna L. Taylor

A creative project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In

Special Education

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ABSTRACT

Interagency Barriers and Facilitators in Transition Planning
for Students with Disabilities

by

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Utah State University, 2013

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This study examined the barriers and facilitators identified by both vocational rehabilitation counselors and special educators in four states (Florida, Maryland, Oregon and Utah) regarding collaboration in transition planning. Two survey questionnaires were disseminated: one to vocational rehabilitation counselors and one to special educators in that requested information on perceptions of the level of knowledge on transition planning and activities, level of satisfaction, and open-ended questions for suggestions on how to improve collaboration between the two groups. The surveys were nearly identical and were designed to explore barriers that the two disciplines experience working with each other as well as ratings of recommendations to strengthen collaboration. The findings suggest that participation in transition and knowledge and skill level of transition

varies in perception by special educators, with perception generally higher among vocational rehabilitation counselors, and that a number of barriers and facilitators exist to justify these perceptions. Respondents also suggested numerous recommendations for improving collaboration.

(77 pages)

Interagency Barriers and Facilitators in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities

Introduction

Collaboration between key agencies in transition planning, particularly special education and vocational rehabilitation, is a critical element for successful post secondary outcomes of students with disabilities (SWD) (Agran, Cain, & Cavin, 2002; Noonan, Erickson, & Morningstar, 2012; Noonan, Morningstar, & Erickson, 2008; Noyes & Sax, 2004; Trach, 2012). Neubert, Moon, and Grigal (2004) found that transition to postsecondary vocational training was more successful when participants and their families, special education teachers, and vocational rehabilitation counselors worked together.

Legislation lays the foundation for the collaboration in transition planning. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) added the provision for inviting agencies to the individualized education program (IEP) meeting where transition services are planned:

To the extent appropriate, with the consent of the parents or a child who has reached the age of majority, in implementing the requirements of §300.321(b)(1), the public agency must invite a representative of any participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. [34 CFR 300.321(b)(3)]

The Transitioning to Excellence in Achievement and Mobility (TEAM) Education Act of 2011, introduced in House of Representatives in February, 2011 (still in

committee) defines in the purposes of the Act as being consistent with improved collaboration across agencies:

Better define and coordinate specific services related to the effective transition of youth with significant disabilities; Eliminate barriers and promote incentives for multiple stakeholders to collaborate and improve transition opportunities for youth with significant disabilities. [Sec. 2(b)(4 and (5)]

While research supports improved outcomes for SWD as a result of interagency collaboration (Trach, 2012), specific evidence-based practices are not being implemented to improve collaboration (Test et al., 2010) and there is little evidence to support the involvement of rehabilitation counselors in transition planning of secondary students with disabilities (Mazzotti, 2009). The roles of stakeholders are ambiguous at best and research suggests a number of barriers to collaboration between rehabilitation and special education (Agran et al., 2002; Oertle & Trach, 2007). As articulated by Agran et al. (2002), “only when all relevant school personnel and services agency representatives are fully involved can effective services and supports be identified and implemented.” (p. 141).

According to Agran et al. (2002), there had been very little change since early surveys showing poor post-school outcomes (e.g., Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985) with regards to the role of rehabilitation counselors in the transition process. Since then there have been few studies that demonstrate that this relationship has significantly improved (Trach, 2012). The proposed study will systematically replicate the survey conducted by Agran et al. to determine the status of collaboration between special education and

rehabilitation as compared to the original study which was limited to special education personnel and vocational rehabilitation in one state (Utah). The proposed study will expand the original study by gathering data from the same participant groups from three states, which include Florida, Maryland, Utah and Oregon. Limitations outlined in the original study will also be addressed, such as the addition of survey questions addressing the reasons counselors were not invited to meetings, to explain reasons for responses selected, and that will help the researcher ascertain the disability categories being referred to in participant responses.

Literature Review

Multiple sources were searched for articles relating to the barriers in collaboration between special education and vocational rehabilitation in transition planning, including the EBSCO Host database (Education Full Text and ERIC), Google Scholar, articles recommended by committee members, and reference sections from relevant articles. The search terms used were: *interagency collaboration*; *interagency collaboration between special education and rehabilitation*; *relationship between sped and rehabilitation*; and *transition planning*. Based on these searches, 43 articles on interagency collaboration were found. However, only 10 articles related to collaboration specific to special education and vocational rehabilitation and were divided into reviews of the literature base and research studies. Therefore, this literature review was narrowed to four research studies conducted since the original 2002 study (Agran, Cain, & Cavin, 2002; Johnson et al., 2003; Noonan, Morningstar, & Erickson, 2008; Plotner, Trach, & Strauser, 2012; Noonan, Erickson, & Morningstar, 2012).

The purpose of the Agran et al. (2002) study was to identify the role that rehabilitation counselors served in transition planning. A survey, consisting of a 20-item questionnaire, was sent to a sample of certified secondary special educators and a sample of certified rehabilitation counselors in Utah. Secondary special educators were asked questions such as how often rehabilitation counselors were invited to transition team and district-level policy meetings, what functions the counselors served, and whether they were satisfied with the services provided. Rehabilitation counselors were asked questions such as how often they were invited to planning meetings, how many meetings they attended, and in what capacity they served at these meetings. The survey contained sections that covered demographic information, rehabilitation counselors' participation in transition planning and activities and teacher satisfaction with the counselors' involvement. Questions were forced-choice, multiple-response options with open blanks for "other" statements.

The return rate of the surveys in each group was less than 50%, suggesting that results could not be reliably generalized. The findings of the returned surveys revealed that both groups expressed concerns about the roles of stakeholders in transition planning and that, more significantly, there was little change in identifying those roles in the 15 years prior to this study. Furthermore, findings supported previous research that revealed ineffective collaboration between school personnel and rehabilitation counselor. The authors concluded that there was little information on the involvement and expected responsibilities of rehabilitation counselors in transition meetings. Key concerns arising from this research included

- rehabilitation counselor's beliefs that they were not integral members of transition planning teams,
- inadequate information about the student being shared between school and rehabilitation counselors,
- rehabilitation counselor's beliefs that students were being adequately prepared for post-school transition, and
- reports that parents had not been contacted regarding rehabilitation agencies as a resource.

The authors recommended research to include (a) increasing sample size to participants in more than one state, (b) ensuring that respondents answer all questions, (c) creating survey questions that will prevent ambiguity in answers, (d) including better definition of “disability”, and (e) requiring respondents to justify their answers to survey questions.

The authors concluded that there was little information on the involvement and expected responsibilities of rehabilitation counselors in transition meetings. They emphasized the value of vocational rehabilitation in the transition planning of students with disabilities. The authors considered not utilizing the services of this entity disturbing. To paraphrase, they made the point that every effort to collaborate between school and rehabilitation is necessary. “To achieve desired outcomes, vocational rehabilitation should not be an add-on service sought after the student has already left school, but one that is utilized effectively as the student and his or her parents help develop a positive future” (p. 154).

The recommendations of Agran et al. (2002) were consistent with Noonan, Morningstar, and Erickson (2008), who identified 11 key local education agency (LEA) strategies as being critical for interagency collaboration in a study that examined effective practices in high-performing local districts and communities. The 11 strategies included flexible scheduling and staffing, follow-up after transition, administrative support for transition, using a variety of funding sources, state-supported technical assistance, ability to build relationships, agency meetings with students and families, training students and families, joint training of staff, meetings with agency staff and transition councils, and dissemination of information to a broad audience. To identify these key strategies, the study was conducted using the Transition Outcomes Project database (O'Leary, 2003) to select high-performing districts from five states.

Through a systematic process of elimination, 33 districts were identified as high performers. After a profiling process of each of those districts, 29 agreed to participate, with 36 people participating in the six focus groups. Each of the 29 districts had an even distribution of urban, suburban and rural areas. Representation across roles included transition coordinators (the largest group), department chairs, special education teachers, and administrative staff.

The data were collected via telephone focus groups where participants were asked open-ended questions. Additionally, individual telephone interviews were conducted with one SEA representative from each of the five states. The data were then organized, coded and validated. The results of the study determined that the 11 key strategies comprised unique, yet interrelated, categories of collaborative activities deemed critical to

interagency collaboration. The authors cautioned that the results be regarded as a set of tools for collaboration to be implemented by representatives of the districts with the knowledge and vision to carry out such collaboration. The role of the transition coordinator was identified as a key-contributing factor in the strategies identified. The authors suggested that future research is needed to determine if transition coordinators are involved to this level nationally. The authors noted that since the U.S. Department of Education (2003) does not distinguish between transition coordinators and secondary special educators, there is no clear data at a national level on the number of district transition coordinators. Furthermore, additional research is warranted to examine the roles and responsibilities related to interagency collaboration among secondary special educators. Another area of research that is needed is relationship building, given that the results of this study revealed that inter-dependency with community members is a key to successful interagency collaboration. Finally, the authors concluded that the most crucial issue to consider is whether or not low-performing districts can improve their collaborative practices by systematically implementing the 11 key strategies and interventions.

The findings of Noonan et al. (2008) correlated with those of Plotner, Trach, and Strauser (2012) who found common themes with vocational rehabilitation counselor's perceptions of their roles in transition planning across the variables of importance as a team member; transition preparedness; and transition competency frequency. Furthermore, the perceptions of rehabilitation counselors did not necessarily correspond with what was actually being put into practice. The aim of the study was to address what

rehabilitation counselors perceived as the most important transition practices, how frequently counselors provide transition-related services, and how prepared counselors felt about their ability to perform those services.

The instrument used to conduct the study was a survey to examine rehabilitation counselors' perspectives of transition competencies, based on a comprehensive review of the transition literature on special education and vocational rehabilitation. The survey used Likert rating scales with these stems: "How important do you feel the activity is for your position in the service delivery of transition-age youth with disabilities", "how frequently do you perform these activities in your current position", and "how prepared do you feel in performing these activities?" The choices included, on importance, frequency, or preparation (a) *not at all*; (b) *of little*; (c) *moderately*; and (d) *extremely*. The online survey involved 707 vocational rehabilitation counselors across three Midwestern states (Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin). The 291 counselors who indicated they worked with transition-age youth (214 females and 77 males) were selected to participate in the study and represented each geographic area. The authors noted that of all the participants surveyed, only 24% reported having a primary responsibility serving transition-age youth, with 76% considered general counselors with only a portion of their caseloads consisting of transition-age youth. Seven domains were measured in the online survey which included: (a) Provide Career Planning and Counseling, (b) Provide Career Preparation Experiences, (c) Facilitate Allocation of Resources, (d) Build and Maintain Collaborative Partnerships, (e) Promote Nonprofessional Support and Relationships, (f) Promote Access and Opportunity for Student Success, and (g) Coordinate Program

Improvement Activities. Participants ranked each domain in terms of importance, frequency, and preparedness of each area.

The results of the study demonstrated the highest-ranking variable to be importance, and also indicated that counselors viewed all of the seven domains as vital to transition service delivery. The top three domains in the area of importance were career planning and counseling, provide career preparation experiences, and facilitate allocation of resources. The area of preparedness ranked second highest, with the mean rating scores significantly lower than importance. The top three domains were identical to those in the importance area. The lowest ranking area was frequency, with significantly lower scores than any other area. While there were no domains considered extremely frequent, the top three competency domains rated by counselors were identical to importance and preparedness. The authors noted that the low mean scores suggest that counselors are not delivering transition-related services that they consider important, which is a concern and an area that warrants consideration of developing improved training programs to better train counselors with transition skills. A recommendation was made to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) that State VR agencies allocate resources for such training. Another area that could address the skill training would be in preservice opportunities for counselors. The authors also pointed out that the area of facilitating self-determination, a critical transition item, did not enter into a domain, however was important to address and should be further examined. Counselors reported at a moderate level on this item with performing, a high level in terms of the value of this item, and a moderate level in terms of preparedness, which the authors deem promising.

The authors noted that a larger number of states would have been desirable in this study, given that transition competencies vary between states at all levels (schools, districts, rehabilitation). The survey instrument also only addressed transition in general and not necessarily students with specific disabilities, which may have been useful in understanding the perceptions of counselors specific to various disability types.

Furthermore, the research tends to focus, the authors found, on transition competency from a school perspective, with less than 5% of articles reviewed addressing transition services with adult service providers (including vocational rehabilitation and other community providers). Not only is further research needed, but it is essential that all transition specialists familiarize themselves with the roles of all agencies and work collaboratively to develop a continuum of services in transition planning at a multi-disciplinary level.

The implications for practice from Noonan et al. (2008) and Plotner et al. (2012) corresponded with those of a more recent study (Noonan, Erickson, & Morningstar (2012) with regards to building relationships to maintain and sustain a collaborative team. Noonan et al. sought to discover significant changes in indicators of high-quality interagency collaboration as a result of establishing a community transition team and to identify significant differences between school and adult agency staff regarding their change in levels of collaboration. Participants in this study included a total of 73 community transition team members, consisting of 41 educators and 28 adult agency staff members from a geographically diverse Midwestern state. Participants were divided into two cohorts (2009-2010 and 2010-2011) with each receiving 1 year each of training

to develop a total of 16 community transition teams of six, each consisting of a school administrator, secondary special education/transition specialist, a vocational rehabilitation representative and three other members chosen based on individual needs of the community.

Through training that focused on four key stages of collaboration developed by Frey et al. (2006) - information sharing, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration – the community transition teams focused on activities to improve collaboration skills, including goal setting, action planning and education on adult agency services, as well as strategy development to address difficulties experienced in the collaborative process. Teams produced resource guides and presentations for the community and concentrated on improving transition programming. Additionally, teams developed techniques for developing a sustainable model of collaboration focused on community relationships.

The effectiveness of the training was measured through a 15-item transition collaboration survey based on indicators of high-quality collaboration (Noonan et al., 2008), the results of which were compared to a pre-survey of the 73 participants. Results demonstrated that, for all participants combined, every indicator of transition collaboration improved significantly as a result of the community transition team development. When separated into subgroups, school staff results demonstrated significant improvement in every indicator while adult agency staff results demonstrated 13 out of 15 indicators improved significantly. The two areas that showed no significant change for the latter group were (a) support from boss with transition education services

and (b) time necessary to devote to transition planning with other professionals. The authors noted that a major implication from this study was that the community transition team training greatly benefited adult agency staff. Limitations included convenience sampling and self-reported data. The authors suggested that future research should include implementing an observational component to measure collaborative behaviors and incorporating social networking analysis methods to identify collaboration among specific team members.

Although four studies have investigated collaborations between special education and rehabilitation in transition since 2002, researchers have not examined methods that can be implemented to facilitate reduction of barriers. The four studies reviewed demonstrate the need for a sustainable model of collaboration with involvement of all stakeholders in transition planning. Specifically, the barriers that prevent effective and meaningful interagency collaboration to improve post school outcomes of students with disabilities (e.g., lack of established relationships, perceptions of adult agency providers and special education personnel, and lack of resources needed to strengthen performance and collaboration) need to be verified in future research along with recommendations for facilitating change.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to determine the barriers and facilitators identified by both rehabilitation counselors and special educators regarding collaboration in transition planning. The study will represent a systematic replication of Agran et al. (2002).

Research Questions

Given a survey of certified educators and rehabilitation counselors in four states, this study will seek to address four research questions:

1. What barriers are most often identified by special education teachers and by rehabilitation counselors in regards to collaboration on IEPs of youth in transition to adulthood?
2. How do respondents rate recommendations for collaboration found in existing research in terms of importance?
3. How do respondents rate the recommendations for collaboration in terms of likelihood of implementation (from high to low likelihood)?
4. What do respondents offer in terms of next steps to ensuring implementation?

Method

Participants and Settings

This study included two groups of participants: secondary special education teachers and rehabilitation counselors each from the states of Florida, Maryland, Oregon and Utah. Lists were obtained in each state from supervisors and from published lists on the Internet for various schools, districts and agencies. A total of 220 special educators and 78 vocational rehabilitation counselors completed the survey. It was presumed that all participants in both groups were knowledgeable about participation of special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors in the transition planning process.

Special Educators. All participants from the designated states held certifications, degrees, or other credentials that qualified them for working in secondary-level special education with transition age students and served students across disability categories and

instructional settings. Lists of personnel containing email addresses were obtained from state level coordinators and from lists of staff on school and district websites. The lists included 39 from Florida; 336 from Maryland; 301 from Oregon and 311 from Utah resulting in a total of 987 special educators.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. All participants from the designated states held certifications, degrees, or other credentials that qualified them to carry caseloads of transition clients. Lists of personnel containing email addresses were obtained from supervisors and from lists of staff on agency websites. The lists included 77 from Florida; 41 from Maryland; 148 from Oregon (124 vocational rehabilitation Counselors and 44 Human Service Assistant Support Staff) and 26 from Utah resulting in a total of 292 vocational rehabilitation specialists. Two states, Oregon and Utah, required that the survey be sent from within the agency by supervisors. Vocational rehabilitation counselors who participated carried caseloads with at least 20% of cases related to transition-aged students.

Instrument

Two survey questionnaires were developed to identify barriers that exist in the collaboration process on IEP's of youth in transition to adulthood between special education and rehabilitation and to generate suggestions from individual participants in both groups to remove or reduce commonly identified barriers.

Special Educators. The survey for secondary special education teachers contained 22 questions such as how many transition students are in their caseload, primary disability categories served, what setting they deliver services and curriculum,

how often they collaborated with vocational rehabilitation counselors to plan student IEPs, how often they invited vocational rehabilitation counselors to IEP meetings, if they felt that vocational rehabilitation counselors were integral to transition planning and why or why not and what the level of satisfaction is with the services provided. Additionally, participants were asked the rate the importance and feasibility of recommendations and to provide suggestions for next critical steps to improve collaboration in transition planning.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. The survey for vocational rehabilitation counselors included 21 nearly identical questions to the Special Education teacher survey, with some answer choices adjusted for relevance. The question about the setting in which services and curriculum are delivered was not included in the vocational rehabilitation counselor survey.

The final response rate was 36% for special educators (based on 318 responding to the survey) and 35% for vocational rehabilitation counselors (based on 96 responding to the survey). 220 special educators (24.7%) and 78 (28%) vocational rehabilitation counselors completed the survey.

Procedures

Survey development, questions and content. This study was as a systematic replication of Agran et al. (2002). The author received permission from the author of the original study to replicate, however the original questionnaire was no longer available and was re-created based on the data presented in the published study. An Internet-based survey targeted teacher perspectives regarding vocational rehabilitation counselor involvement in the transition planning process.

A similar questionnaire for vocational rehabilitation counselors targeted perspectives regarding their involvement in the transition planning process.

Survey questions for both groups consisted of forced-choice, multiple-response options with open blanks for “other” statements in some items, as well as questions involving ranking and Likert-type scales (See Appendix A for the survey questions).

Educator Recommendations for Improving Collaboration

Respondents rated a list of recommendations from the research in terms of both importance and feasibility (i.e., likelihood of implementation). Recommendations were generated from those described by Benz et al. (1995), Frey et al. (2006), Noonan et al. (2008), Noonan et al. (2012) and Plotner et al. (2012) and included these items:

1. Administrators providing opportunities for collaboration (e.g., flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid summer training, substitutes) so that teachers can work or learn alongside vocational rehabilitation counselors.
2. Providing training for vocational rehabilitation counselors on the transition process including specific information about special education eligibility and planning.
3. Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation.
4. Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together.
5. Providing training to transition teachers on preparing students with key knowledge and skills (self-determination, student involvement, family

involvement, agency involvement, etc.).

6. Implementing a community transition committee in a school district.
7. Placing a transition specialist in each high school or building.
8. Sharing funding between the school districts and vocational rehabilitation.
9. Creating inter-agency collaboration teams to place students in post-school placements (postsecondary education, employment, or other).
10. Using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes.
11. Using transition personnel to facilitate meetings between adult agencies and students/families.
12. Holding regular meetings between agency staff and transition personnel from a school district.
13. Disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc.
14. Coordinated referral and planning including coordination of individualized education programs (IEPs) with VR employment plans.

Respondents were directed to choose the top two items they value the most from the list and expanded by offering narrative responses on the next critical steps for implementing them. A second open-ended item asked for respondents to type narrative responses on what types of action they would like from professionals in other fields.

Field-testing and dissemination. A pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted to ensure the clarity and relevance of items. Links to the questionnaires were

sent to two special education teachers and two rehabilitation counselors via email, asking them to provide feedback. The questionnaire underwent revisions following the period of field testing, based on common themes found among pilot survey participants regarding confusing wording, omitted subject material and other items, and subsequently was prepared for dissemination.

Following the field test, the researcher sent emails to participants in the gathered lists, via the survey software, describing the study and containing a link to the survey. Each participant was randomly assigned a code generated by the survey software. Participants were asked to respond within three weeks. The coding allowed for follow-up to invited participants who did not respond. Respondents who participated from Oregon and Utah vocational rehabilitation counselors did not have unique codes due to the dissemination of one link by vocational rehabilitation supervisors at their request. All responses remained anonymous.

Follow-up. Follow-up emails were sent each week by the author until the end of the response period to invite participants who did not respond to the questionnaire. During the final week of the response period one trained adult volunteer was asked to call participants who did not respond to ask them if they received the email and provide directions on completing the questionnaire. Although two volunteers were trained for this task, only one was needed due to the few phone numbers that were provided for follow up. Both volunteers completed the USU Institutional Review Board (IRB) training and practiced a script via role-play with the author prior to making the calls (See Appendix B for complete text of the script).

Data Analysis

Data were reported descriptively as frequencies and percentages of the total number of respondents who answered each question. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the Likert-scale items. Questions pertaining to research-based recommendations were ranked for degree of importance (1=Very important to 4=Not important at all) and feasibility (1=Highly likely to 4=Not likely at all). The numerical ranking for each response choice was generated by the survey software system, yielding the “helpfulness” of each choice.

Statements identifying barriers and suggestions for improved collaboration.

The researcher copied and pasted statements regarding barriers to collaboration into a file along with tags for (a) whether the statement was made by a special education teacher or rehabilitation counselor, and (b) the state from which the respondent resided. The researcher examined across statements for common themes for both barriers and suggestions.

Participant satisfaction. Special educators ranked their overall satisfaction with rehabilitation counselors, using a 4-point scale, ranging from very satisfied (1) to not satisfied at all (4). Mean and standard deviation were calculated for this item. Vocational rehabilitation counselors ranked their overall satisfaction with special educators using the same scale, with calculations of mean and standard deviation.

Results

Demographic Profiles

Special educators. Of the 889 surveys sent to special educators, 318 (36%)

responded to the invitation with 220 (24.7%) completing the survey, although total responses varied from question to question. Demographic data are shown in in Table 1. The overwhelming majority of the special educator sample was from Utah and worked in suburban locations. Transition teachers made up the majority of special educator respondents with varying amounts of experience.

Teacher certification varied according to state. Many educators held multiple certifications (See Table 2). All states reported the special education classroom as the predominant setting for delivery of services and curriculum. Respondents who reported “other” provided explanations such as “during IEP meetings”, ”working one-on-one with students”, ”within agencies or special schools/programs”, and ”within general education classes”.

Average size of caseload was computed using median instead of mean statistics because of some significant outliers who reported very large caseloads.

The largest age range group served among special educators was the 14-18 year old group. Respondents were permitted to choose more than one age range group.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Special Educators

State	Response (n=220)	%
Florida	9	4%
Maryland	32	15%
Oregon	44	20%
Utah	135	61%
Total	220	100%
Location	Response (n =220)	%
Urban	41	19%
Rural	49	22%
Suburban	130	59%

Total	220	100%
Position	Response (n =220)	%
Transition Teacher	112	51%
Transition Facilitator/Coordinator	28	13%
Special Education Director/Coordinator	21	10%
None of the Above	59	27%
Total	220	100%
Years Experience	Response (n =218)	%
1-5 years	77	35%
5-10 years	54	25%
10-15 years	36	17%
15+ years	51	23%
Total	218	100%
Setting	Response	%
Special education classroom	185	84%
Community-based setting	50	23%
Not applicable given my current position	12	5%
Other	34	15%
Caseload	Median	
Total	25	
Transition	15.5	
Age Range	Response	%
14-18	126	58%
16-18	93	43%
18-22	63	29%

Special Educator certification categories varied widely due to the type of certification unique to each individual state. The majority of participants held certification in General Special Education and Specific Learning Disabilities.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors. Of the 274 surveys sent to vocational rehabilitation counselors, 96 (35%) responded to the invitation with 78 (28%) completing

the survey, although total responses varied from question to question. Demographic data are shown in Table 2.

Respondents who reported as serving in capacities other than those in the choices given on position held, provided explanations such as “technical assistance provider,” and “Living Independently for Empowerment.”

Vocational rehabilitation counselor certification/licensure varied according to state. Many held multiple certifications (see Table 4). Average size of caseload was computed using median instead of mean because of some significant outliers who reported very large caseloads. The largest age range group served was the 18-22 year old. Respondents were permitted to choose more than one age range group.

Table 2

Demographic Information for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

State	Response (n =78)	%
Florida	11	14%
Maryland	31	40%
Oregon	26	33%
Utah	10	13%
Total	78	100%
Location	Response (n =77)	%
Urban	28	36%
Rural	25	32%
Suburban	24	31%
Total	77	100%
Position	Response (n =78)	%
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	69	88%
Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor	5	6%
Other	4	5%
Total	78	100%
Years Experience	Response (n =78)	%
0 years (I don't work in transition)	0	0%
1-5 years	28	36%
5-10 years	26	33%
10-15 years	16	21%
15+ years	8	10%
Total	78	100%
Caseload	Median	
Total	130	
Total Transition	100	
Age Range	Response (n =62)	%
14-18	3	4%
16-18	35	46%
18-22	62	82%

Table 3

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Certifications/Qualifications

	Florida	Maryland	Oregon	Utah
Certified Addiction Counselor	10%	x	x	x
Certified Public Manager	x	x	x	20%
Certified Rehabilitation Counselor	80%	20%	48%	70%
Certified Workforce Specialist	10%	x		x
Certified Workforce Development Professional	x	x	4%	x
Certified Vocational Evaluation Specialist	10%	x	x	x
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	x	x	9%	x
Licensed vocational rehabilitation Counselor Certification	x	x	x	80%
Social Services Worker	x	x	x	10%

Disability Categories Served

The percent of disability categories served (mild and severe) were nearly identical between both special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors (See Table 4).

Table 4

Disability Categories Served

Special Educators	Response	%	Vocational Rehabilitation	Response	%
Mild (e.g., mild intellectual disability, mild brain injury)	150	69%	Mild (e.g., mild intellectual disability, mild brain injury, high functioning autism)	52	68%
Severe disabilities (e.g., autism, several intellectual disability, severe brain injury, visual impairment)	66	31%	Severe disabilities (e.g., low functioning autism, severe intellectual disability, severe brain injury, visual impairment)	24	32%
Total	216	100%	Total	76	100%

Participation of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

Special educators. When asked if vocational rehabilitation counselors were viewed as integral to transition planning, 130 (60%) responded “yes” compared to 86 (40%) who responded “no”. Florida held the most “yes” answers and Oregon had the greatest amount of “no” answers, although very little variability was evident across states (see Table 5). Representative comments illustrate that while vocational rehabilitation is seen as integral to transition planning, there are still barriers that prevent the collaboration and planning from becoming realized, such as lack of sufficient personnel, high turnover rate of vocational rehabilitation counselors, lack of follow through, lack of availability,

and lack of services for some disability categories (see Table 6 in Appendix C).

Table 5.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors viewed by Special Educators as integral to Transition Planning

Florida	Response	%
Yes	6	67%
No	3	33%
Total	9	100%
Maryland	Response	%
Yes	20	63%
No	12	38%
Total	32	100%
Oregon	Response	%
Yes	24	57%
No	18	43%
Total	42	100%
Utah	Response	%
Yes	79	60%
No	53	40%
Total	132	100%

Vocational rehabilitation counselors. Utah vocational rehabilitation counselors had the largest percentage of “yes” answers and Oregon had the largest percentage of “no” answers when asked if they felt that vocational rehabilitation was integral to transition planning (see Table 7). Representative comments have similar sentiments as special educators in that vocational rehabilitation is considered integral to planning, yet many barriers exist to prevent the collaboration from happening, such as lack of time and caseload size (see Table 8 in Appendix C).

Table 7

Vocational Rehabilitation perceived by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as integral part of Transition Planning

Florida	Response	%
Yes	10	91%
No	1	9%
Total	11	100%
Maryland	Response	%
Yes	30	97%
No	1	3%
Total	31	100%
Oregon	Response	%
Yes	23	88%
No	3	12%
Total	26	100%
Utah	Response	%
Yes	10	100%
No	0	0%
Total	10	100%

Involvement of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in Transition Process

The data for these questions skewed higher for Vocational Rehabilitation counselors because they based their responses according to multiple teachers and caseload, whereas Special Educators responded to the survey as individuals.

Special educators. Special educators indicated that they provided student specific transition information to vocational rehabilitation counselors primarily on an annual basis. The same held true for the frequency that vocational rehabilitation

counselors were asked to collaborate in planning student IEPs. However, in the area of involvement in activities other than the IEP meetings (e.g., parent teacher conferences, parent education nights, etc.), a majority of special educators indicated that vocational rehabilitation counselors never participate. The data from Special Educators indicate that 50% are never involved or are unsure. (See Table 9).

The frequency that vocational rehabilitation counselors are invited to IEP meetings is primarily at least annually. Teachers reported they were the primary people to invite vocational rehabilitation counselors to IEP meetings. The “other” field was the next highest percent of people issuing invitations and comments included things such as “technician for our department who schedules IEP meetings”, “transition coordinator”, and “IEP chair” . Parents were the least likely to invite vocational rehabilitation counselors to their student’s IEP meetings, according to special educators.

Table 9

Involvement of Vocational Rehabilitation in Transition Process

Student information provided	SPED Response - n=207	%	VR response - n= 78	%
At Least Weekly	23	11%	25	32%
At Least Monthly	30	14%	21	27%
At Least Every 6 Months	25	12%	13	17%
At Least Annually	59	29%	6	8%
Never	42	20%	6	8%
Unsure	12	6%	4	5%
Other	16	8%	3	4%

Frequency VR asked to collaborate	SPED Response – n=206	%	VR response - n= 78	%
At Least Weekly	28	14%	33	42%
At Least Monthly	46	22%	26	33%
At Least Every 6 Months	27	13%	10	13%
At Least Annually	51	25%	2	3%
Never	35	17%	4	5%
Unsure	5	2%	1	1%
Other	14	7%	2	3%
Frequency VR involvement in other activities	SPED Response – n=207	%	VR Response- n= 76	%
At Least Weekly	3	1%	10	13%
At Least Monthly	23	11%	23	30%
At Least Every 6 months	21	10%	21	28%
At Least Annually	56	27%	7	9%
Never	77	37%	10	13%
Unsure	21	10%	3	4%
Other	6	3%	2	3%
Frequency VR invited to IEP meetings	SPED Response – n=207	%	VR Response- n= 78	%
At Least Weekly	18	9%	25	32%
At Least Monthly	24	12%	17	22%
At Least Every 6 months	14	7%	8	10%
At Least Annually	67	32%	10	13%
Never	40	19%	12	15%
Unsure	20	10%	2	3%
Other	24	12%	4	5%
Person inviting VR to IEP meeting	SPED Response – n=207	%	VR Response – n=75	%
Teacher	103	50%	32	43%
Administrator	11	5%	8	11%
Parent	10	5%	2	3%
Other	70	34%	30	40%
Unsure	13	6%	3	4%

Vocational rehabilitation counselors. Most vocational rehabilitation counselors indicated that special educators asked them for specific transition information at least

weekly and that special educators asked them to collaborate on student IEPs at least weekly. The frequency that vocational rehabilitation counselors participate in other activities is reported as at least monthly.

According to vocational rehabilitation counselors, they are invited to attend IEP meetings primarily at least weekly. The person reported as issuing the invitations to IEP meetings most is teacher, with “other” close in percent. Persons listed in the “other” category included transition coordinator/specialist; IEP chair; school assistant, etc. Parents were the least likely to invite vocational rehabilitation counselors to IEP meetings. (See Table 9).

Satisfaction

Both respondent groups were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation counselors' level of involvement in transition related planning and activities. Responses were based on a 4-point scale, ranging from very satisfied (1) to very dissatisfied (4). Overall, vocational rehabilitation counselors rated their overall satisfaction higher than that of special educators. (See Table 10).

Table 10

Overall Satisfaction

SPED	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total Responses	Mean
Overall Satisfaction	21	84	71	24	200	2.49

VR	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total Responses	Mean
Overall Satisfaction	17	43	15	3	78	2.05

Responses were based on a 4-point scale, ranging from very satisfied (1) to very dissatisfied (4). Respondents clicked on buttons labeled with statements, not numbers.

Recommendations for Improving Collaboration

Both respondent groups were asked to rate the importance and feasibility of 14 recommendations for improving interagency collaboration, based on research.

Responses for importance were based on a 4-point scale, ranging from very important (1) to not important at all (4) for feasibility were based on a 4-point scale, ranging from highly likely (1) to not likely at all (4). Next, both respondent groups were asked to select their top two items, based on their responses on the importance and feasibility of the items they ranked in the prior questions, that they felt would improve collaboration between special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors. Both groups then listed the next critical steps they believed would put their top two items into action. Finally, both groups listed the kinds of actions they would like from professionals in other fields that they felt would improve the collaboration between special education and vocational rehabilitation counselors in the transition process.

Special educators. The area valued most important by special educators, was “providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation.” That same area ranked much lower in feasibility. The lowest ranking area for importance was “using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes.” This area was ranked

somewhat lower in feasibility. The area regarded as most feasible was “disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc.” This same area was ranked even higher in importance. The area regarded most as not likely at all to be feasible was “Administrators providing opportunities for collaboration but was ranked much higher in importance (See Table 11).

Table 11

Item	Question	Mean - SPED		Mean-VR	
		I	F	I	F
1	Administrators providing opportunities for collaboration (e.g., flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid summer training, substitutes) so that teachers can work or learn alongside vocational rehabilitation counselors.	2.12	3.32	1.89	2.92
2	Providing training for vocational rehabilitation counselors on the transition process including specific information about special education eligibility and planning.	1.94	2.95	1.64*	2.12
3	Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation.	1.49*	2.40	1.41*	2.41
4	Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together.	1.76*	3.07	1.69	2.55
5	Providing training to transition teachers on preparing students with key knowledge and skills (self-determination, student involvement, family involvement, agency involvement, etc.).	1.52*	2.45	1.47*	2.33
6	Implementing a community transition committee in a school district.	2.14	2.98	1.96	2.58
7	Placing a transition specialist in each high school or building.	1.87	3.03	1.67*	2.73
8	Sharing funding between the school districts and vocational rehabilitation.	2.28	3.53	2.11	2.78

9	Creating inter-agency collaboration teams to place students in post-school placements (postsecondary education, employment, or other).	1.65*	2.92	1.86	2.46
10	Using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes.	2.48	2.81	2.32	2.66
11	Using transition personnel to facilitate meetings between adult agencies and students/families.	1.87	2.60	1.75	2.22
12	Holding regular meetings between agency staff and transition personnel from a school district.	2.07	2.98	1.77	2.28
13	Disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc.	1.89	2.38	1.85	2.23
14	Coordinated referral and planning including coordination of individualized education programs (IEPs) with VR employment plans.	1.73*	2.72	1.57*	2.21
	Mean values	1.92	2.87	1.78	2.46

*Ratings of Importance (I) and Feasibility (F) of Research-based Recommendations – Special Educators. (1=Very important to 4=Not important at all) and Feasibility (1=Highly likely to 4=Not likely at all). *=Top 5 for both SPED and VR.*

Special educators were asked to choose their top two items that they felt would improve collaboration between special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors. The top item identified by special educators was “Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together,” (item 4) with “Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation” identified as the second highest item (item 3) (See Table 12).

Table 12

*Frequency of Items identified as #1 and 2 in Priority for Collaboration**

Item	Statement	Top Two Items- SPED (%)	Top Two Items- VR (%)
1	Administrators providing opportunities for collaboration (e.g., flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid summer training, substitutes) so that teachers can work or learn alongside vocational rehabilitation counselors.	22	14
2	Providing training for vocational rehabilitation counselors on the transition process including specific information about special education eligibility and planning.	9	8
3	Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation.	29	26
4	Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together.	32	36
5	Providing training to transition teachers on preparing students with key knowledge and skills (self-determination, student involvement, family involvement, agency involvement, etc.).	18	18
6	Implementing a community transition committee in a school district.	5	9
7	Placing a transition specialist in each high school or building.	20	18
8	Sharing funding between the school districts and vocational rehabilitation.	5	8
9	Creating inter-agency collaboration teams to place students in post-school placements (postsecondary education, employment, or other).	23	17
10	Using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes.	2	4
11	Using transition personnel to facilitate	6	1

	meetings between adult agencies and students/families.		
12	Holding regular meetings between agency staff and transition personnel from a school district.	5	13
13	Disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc.	9	6
14	Coordinated referral and planning including coordination of individualized education programs (IEPs) with VR employment plans.	13	18

**Percentages will not add to 100% as participants were allowed to select two priority items.*

Special educators were asked to list the next critical steps to put the items they chose to improve collaboration into action. Six broad categories were generated from the responses (see Table 13 in Appendix C):

1. administrative support (6%)
2. more time for, and better, collaboration (29%)
3. funding (26%)
4. Recruiting, hiring and maintaining additional and better qualified personnel (6%)
5. training for all stakeholders (21%)
6. clear expectations of roles and responsibilities (6%)

The last survey item involved listing the kinds of actions desired from professionals in other fields that would improve the collaboration between special education and vocational rehabilitation counselors in the transition process. Special

educators seemed unclear as to what defined “professional in other fields”, generating numerous recommendations as an extension of the question on next critical steps. Several were hesitant to want involvement from “professional in other fields”, instead expressing the desire to put other actions into place. Five broad categories were generated from the responses that identified actions (see Table 14 in Appendix C):

1. Collaboration (33%)
2. Training (8%)
3. Personnel (8%)
4. Time (8%)
5. Access to other information and resources (7%)

Vocational rehabilitation counselors. The area valued most for importance by vocational rehabilitation counselors was “providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation.” This was also the highest ranked category in importance as that of special educators. Vocational rehabilitation counselors ranked this same area somewhat higher in feasibility. The respondents ranked as the least important area “using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes,” with a slightly lower rank in the area of feasibility. The area ranked as most feasible by respondents was “providing training for vocational rehabilitation counselors on the transition process including specific information about special education eligibility and planning.” Respondents regarded this area as even more important. The area regarded as not likely at all to be feasible, which agreed with special educators' ranking, was “Administrators

providing opportunities for collaboration. However, respondents regarded this area much higher in importance (see Table 11).

Vocational rehabilitation counselors were asked to choose their top two items that they felt would improve collaboration between special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors. The top item identified by respondents was “Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together,” (item 4) with “Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation” identified as the second highest item (item 3) (see Table 12) . These items were identical to the top two items identified by special educators.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors were asked to list the next critical steps to put the items they chose to improve collaboration into action (see Table 17 in Appendix C).

Four broad categories were generated from the responses:

1. administrative support (21%)
2. more time for, and better, collaboration (39%)
3. funding/policy (15%)
4. training for all stakeholders (16%)

The last survey item asked vocational rehabilitation counselors to list the kinds of actions desired from professionals in other fields that would improve the collaboration between special education and vocational rehabilitation counselors in the transition process.

Three broad categories were generated from the responses that identified actions

(see Table 18 in Appendix C):

1. Collaboration (45%)
2. Training (11%)
3. Administrator actions (13%)

Discussion

This study sought to determine the barriers and facilitators identified by both rehabilitation counselors and special educators regarding collaboration in transition planning. Although vocational rehabilitation counselors found themselves to be integral to the transition process, special educators were split. The frequency with which vocational rehabilitation counselors were involved in transition activities ran the gamut from “weekly” to “never”. Differences in the size of caseloads and the way meetings are scheduled may have affected the answers to questions on frequency by participants on both groups. Special educators, for example, are likely to have only one vocational rehabilitation counselor assigned to them and may only contact them once per year to attend meetings of transition students. Vocational rehabilitation counselors, on the other hand, may be working in collaboration with several schools or districts and may be contacted as often as weekly.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors rated their overall satisfaction higher than that of special educators. The area valued most important by special educators was “providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation” but the same area ranked much lower in feasibility. Generally, special educators ranked areas as important but

relatively low on feasibility. The area valued most for importance by vocational rehabilitation counselors was “providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation.” Mean values for ratings of importance of research-based recommendations were similar between special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors. However, mean values for ratings of feasibility were more optimistic for counselors than for special educators. Both special educators and counselors were interested in additional training, including joint training. Both groups seemed to identify the need for additional collaboration.

These results were similar to those reported by Agran et al. (2002). Specific statements of dissatisfaction were numerous. Given themes, it appeared as if special educators and counselors had limited perceptions of each other’s responsibilities, different lexicon, and different training needs. Yet, recommendations for improved collaboration were also numerous. When asked for the top two items from a list of research-based recommendations, both special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors selected “offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together” and “providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation” as the top two items. While ranked as important, however, both groups ranked the feasibility of these items lower than many other items on the list of recommendations. Themes that emerged, when asked for next critical steps, included collaboration, training, administrative support, improved personnel and funding. Given

these themes, it appeared that both special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors would like to see cross-training, team-building, better information sharing on students well prior to meetings, advanced scheduling to accommodate busy case schedules of counselors, more personnel with better qualifications and administrative support, along with increased funding underlying the ability to implement most recommendations. Additionally, many respondents in both groups indicated that more involvement from community stakeholders, such as employers, parents and community organizations, are necessary components in the collaborative process.

Another concern in the area of involvement of vocational rehabilitation counselors in transition planning was that parents were rated as rarely inviting them to IEP meetings. Given that family involvement is a key component of transition, it is concerning that parents are not more active in the process of bringing vocational rehabilitation counselors to the table for transition planning with their student's team.

The issue of feasibility data and their difference in relation to importance warrants further discussion and investigation. The ratings for feasibility of suggestions for improving collaboration presented a bleak picture for the future of collaboration between vocational rehabilitation and special education, especially when compared to the rankings of importance by participants in both groups. One of the highest-ranking suggestions for importance, for example, was "offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together". Yet in terms of feasibility, participants in both groups rated this same highly important item among the highest in terms of not being very feasible. It seems likely, based on the suggestions

offered by participants, that resources needed for implementation of the items viewed as most important must be approved by persons in positions of authority, which may often be a barrier to improving working conditions for collaboration. It appears, then, that efforts should be made to involve key decision-makers, including policy makers, in the process of improving the collaboration that must take place to increase the outcomes of students with disabilities.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that the sample was one of convenience. The sample was not necessarily an accurate representation of the population, which may have skewed the results.

Obtaining lists of personnel was a time-intensive task. When the appropriate people were identified, there were barriers to obtaining lists such as requiring higher administration approval and the requirement to provide the abstract and survey instrument for the study. Some states had no lists to provide, resulting in the researcher to obtain lists from the staff lists on websites of schools in each state. Vocational rehabilitation counselor lists were more difficult to obtain than special educator lists.

The sample size for special educators in one state (Florida) was much lower than anticipated and for vocational rehabilitation counselors was much lower than anticipated in two states (Florida, Utah). Therefore, results may well not be representative of the population in these states. Additionally, the response rate was lower than anticipated, which may mean data are unrepresentative.

While the survey instrument and the technology through which it was delivered

facilitated improvement in responses, many participants did not answer every question and in some cases misinterpreted questions. The researcher received numerous emails from those contacted to clarify issues like what constitutes a transition educator.

Future Implications

Future research should include participants from agencies representing a larger sample size including all geographic areas of U.S. Future research should also involve the consideration of suggestions from respondents to improve and measure the impact of strategies designed to close the gap between stakeholders to effectively improve student outcomes.

Overall, the findings of this research confirm that the role of vocational rehabilitation counselors in transition planning continues to be an area of concern and that collaboration efforts are far from effective. This research supports previous studies indicating the ineffectiveness of collaboration between special education and vocational rehabilitation (Agran et al., 2002; Benz et al, 1995; Plotner, Trach, and Strauser , 2012). Student outcomes will improve only when all stakeholders invest in focusing on improved collaboration based on recommendations in the research. The inherent strength of full team building, administrative support, consistent training efforts, clear expectations, time commitments and measurement of outcomes of interventions will only serve to increase the outcomes for the post secondary life of students with disabilities.

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Appendix A

Survey Items for special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors

Transition Survey - Special Education Teachers

Q34 Thank you for participating in this study. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will need to complete the survey in one sitting. Please proceed to the next page for the abstract.

Q32 INTERAGENCY BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS IN TRANSITION PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ABSTRACT The purpose of this survey is to identify barriers to collaboration in transition planning for students with disabilities reported by both rehabilitation counselors and special educators in four states (Utah, Florida, Maryland, Oregon). The survey is designed to explore barriers that the two disciplines experience working with each other as well as recommendations to strengthen collaboration in transition planning. Please proceed to the next page for the Letter of Information.

Q1 ~~~Please enter the survey using the arrow at the bottom of the page~~~ INTERAGENCY BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS IN TRANSITION PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES LETTER OF INFORMATION Introduction/ Purpose Dr. Robert Morgan in the Department of Special Education and Deanna L. Taylor in the Transition Specialist Masters Program at Utah State University are conducting a research study to find out more about the interagency barriers and facilitators in transition planning. You have been asked to take part because you represent one of the groups involved in the study. There will be approximately 30-40 participants from your state. There will be approximately 90-120 total participants in this research. Procedures If you agree to be in this research study, you will complete a survey that will ask questions about collaboration between special education and vocational rehabilitation in transition planning. The survey will involve a variety of question types, including forced choice, Likert-type scales, and open ended responses. You will be asked to elaborate on the barriers in collaboration and to suggest ways to improve collaboration. Your input will be valuable in determining next steps with interagency collaboration in transition planning. Risks There is a small risk of loss of confidentiality but we will take steps to reduce this risk by making sure that your name is removed from the survey and replaced by a code number. Benefits The results of this study will be shared with you upon completion. A direct benefit of the study may include immediate implementation of some of the recommended suggestions to improve interagency collaboration. Indirect benefits of the study may include (a) examination by agency leaders to determine policy changes in the future in transition planning, (b) further studies to measure the effectiveness of collaboration models, and (c) development of a more clear definition of collaboration. Explanation & offer to answer questions This

letter of information has explained the research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Deanna Taylor at Deanna.taylor@cityacademyslc.org or (801) 403-0121. Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits. Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator will have access to the data, which will be kept, in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer. To protect your privacy, personal, identifiable information will be removed from study documents and replaced with a study identifier code. Identifying information will be stored separately from data and will be kept for a period of 5 years, at which time the information will be destroyed. IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at Utah State University has approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury and would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu to obtain information or to offer input. Investigator Statement “I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered.” ~~~Please do not attempt to go back to a previous page of the survey.~~~Please proceed to the next page for the survey.

Q2 Section A - Demographic Information

Q37 Please indicate the state where you work.

- Florida (1)
- Maryland (2)
- Oregon (3)
- Utah (4)

SPED Q3 Position – Choose the item that best describes your position.

- Transition Teacher (2)
- Transition Facilitator/Coordinator (3)
- Special Education Director/Coordinator (4)
- None of the Above (5)

VR Q3 Position – Choose the item that best describes your position.

- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (1)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor (2)
- Other (3) _____

Q4 Years working in transition (if answer is "0", there is no need for you to proceed with the survey. Thank you for your time.)

- 0 years (I don't work in transition) (1)
- 1-5 years (2)
- 5-10 years (3)
- 10-15 years (4)
- 15+ years (5)

Q5 In the text box below, please list the type(s) of special education certifications you currently hold in your state.

Q6 In what setting do you deliver your transition related curriculum and instruction? (You may select more than one.)

- Special education classroom (1)
- Community-based setting (2)
- Not applicable given my current position (4)
- Other (3) _____

SPED Q7 In the box below, indicate the total number of special education students in your caseload.

VR Q7 In the box below, indicate the total number of clients in your caseload.

SPED Q31 In the box below, indicate the average number of special education transition students in your caseload.

VR Q31 In the box below, indicate the average number of transition students in your caseload.

SPED Q8 Please select the average age range of transition students in your caseload. (You may select more than one.)

- 14-18 (1)
- 16-18 (2)
- 18-22 (3)

VR Q8 Please select the average age range of transition students in your caseload. (You may select more than one.)

- 14-18 (1)
- 16-18 (2)
- 18-22 (3)

Q9 Please indicate the primary location where you work.

- Urban (1)
- Rural (2)
- Suburban (3)

Q10 Section B - Disability Categories Served.

Q11 Please indicate the type of disability category that is primarily served in your caseload.

- Mild (e.g., mild intellectual disability, mild brain injury) (1)
- Severe disabilities (e.g., autism, severe intellectual disability, severe brain injury, visual impairment) (2)

Q12 Section C - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Participation in Transition-related Activities

Q13 Do you feel like vocational rehabilitation counselors are an integral part of transition planning? Please explain your answer.

- Yes (8) _____
- No (9) _____

Q15 Section D - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Involvement in Transition Process

Q16 Please indicate how often you provide student specific transition information to vocational rehabilitation counselors.

- At Least Weekly (7)
- At Least Monthly (1)
- At Least Every 6 Months (2)
- At Least Annually (3)
- Never (4)
- Unsure (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q30 Please indicate how often you actively collaborate (meet in person, conference via telephone) to plan student specific transition-related activities.

- At Least Weekly (7)
- At Least Monthly (1)
- At Least Every 6 Months (2)
- At Least Annually (3)
- Never (4)
- Unsure (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q17 Please indicate how often vocational rehabilitation counselors are involved in activities other than the individual education planning (IEP) meetings (e.g. parent teacher conference; parent education nights, etc.).

- At Least Weekly (1)
- At Least Monthly (2)
- At Least Every 6 months (3)
- At Least Annually (4)
- Never (5)
- Unsure (6)
- Other (7)

Q18 How often are vocational counselors invited to individual education planning (IEP) meetings?

- At Least Weekly (1)
- At Least Monthly (2)
- At Least Every 6 months (3)
- At Least Annually (6)
- Never (7)
- Unsure (5)
- other (4)

Q19 Who typically invites vocational rehabilitation counselors to participate in the individual education planning (IEP) meeting?

- Teacher (1)
- Administrator (2)
- Parent (3)
- Other (4) _____
- Unsure (5)

Q21 Section E - Satisfaction

Q22 Please indicate your overall satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation counselors' level of involvement in transition related planning and activities.

	Very Satisfied (1)	Satisfied (2)	Dissatisfied (3)	Very Dissatisfied (4)
Overall Satisfaction (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>a school district. (12)</p> <p>Disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc. (13)</p>	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<p>Coordinated referral and planning including coordination of individualized education programs (IEPs) with VR employment plans. (14)</p>	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q28 Please select your top two items from the list below, by dragging to the column on the right, that you feel will improve collaboration between special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors. (Note: Please place one item only in each box.)

Item One	Item Two
<p>_____ Administrators providing opportunities for collaboration (e.g., flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid summer training, substitutes) to that teachers can work or learn alongside vocational rehabilitation counselors. (1)</p>	<p>_____ Administrators providing opportunities for collaboration (e.g., flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid summer training, substitutes) to that teachers can work or learn alongside vocational rehabilitation counselors. (1)</p>
<p>_____ Providing training for vocational rehabilitation counselors on the transition process including specific information about special education eligibility and planning. (2)</p>	<p>_____ Providing training for vocational rehabilitation counselors on the transition process including specific information about special education eligibility and planning. (2)</p>

_____ Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation. (3)

_____ Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together. (4)

_____ Providing training to transition teachers on preparing students with key knowledge and skills (self-determination, student involvement, family involvement, agency involvement, etc.). (5)

_____ Implementing a community transition committee in a school district. (6)

_____ Placing a transition specialist in each high school or building. (7)

_____ Sharing funding between the school districts and vocational rehabilitation. (8)

_____ Creating inter-agency collaboration teams to place students in post-school placements (postsecondary education, employment, or other). (9)

_____ Using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes. (10)

_____ Using transition personnel to facilitate meetings between adult agencies and students/families. (11)

_____ Holding regular meetings between agency staff and transition personnel from a school district. (12)

_____ Disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc. (13)

_____ Coordinated referral and planning including coordination of individualized education programs (IEPs) with VR employment plans. (14)

_____ Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation. (3)

_____ Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together. (4)

_____ Providing training to transition teachers on preparing students with key knowledge and skills (self-determination, student involvement, family involvement, agency involvement, etc.). (5)

_____ Implementing a community transition committee in a school district. (6)

_____ Placing a transition specialist in each high school or building. (7)

_____ Sharing funding between the school districts and vocational rehabilitation. (8)

_____ Creating inter-agency collaboration teams to place students in post-school placements (postsecondary education, employment, or other). (9)

_____ Using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes. (10)

_____ Using transition personnel to facilitate meetings between adult agencies and students/families. (11)

_____ Holding regular meetings between agency staff and transition personnel from a school district. (12)

_____ Disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc. (13)

_____ Coordinated referral and planning including coordination of individualized education programs (IEPs) with VR employment plans. (14)

Q26 Given your selections in the previous question, what do you believe are the next critical steps to put these items into action?

Q29 What kinds of actions to improve the collaboration between special education and vocational rehabilitation counselors in the transition process would you like from professionals in other fields?

Appendix B

Complete script of text for follow up contacts

If they answer:

Hello. About two weeks ago, you received an online survey inviting your responses to questions about interagency collaboration. I'm really interested in your responses to the survey. If this is a good time, I'd like to ask you the questions over the phone. Do you have about 15 minutes?

If they say they completed the survey, respond with:

Great - thank you for your time!

If they say they started the survey but couldn't finish because they don't "work in transition", please respond with:

Do you have special ed students in your caseload between ages 14-22?

"No" -*Thank you for your time!*

"Yes"=*Do you write transition goals in their IEPs?*

"No"=*Thank you for your time!*

"Yes" =*It sounds like you qualify to answer the survey questions. Do you have the time to do that now?*

If they say "No" =*I appreciate your time and hope that you will consider completing the survey online. Thank you!*

If they ask for the survey link again, tell them that you will get their name to me and I will resend it.

If they ask for a link to share with other teachers, take their name and I will get it to them.

If they don't answer:

Hello. About two weeks ago, you received an online survey inviting your responses to questions about interagency collaboration. I'm really interested in your responses to the survey. You can call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx to do the survey by phone, or you can click the link in the email you received to complete the survey. If you work with special education students between ages 14-22 and write transition goals in their IEPs, you can participate in the survey.

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C

Tables

Table 6

Representative Comments from Special Educators on Perception of VR as integral to Transition Planning

State	Yes	No
Florida	<p>Due to new guidelines and implementation of MTSS, Florida districts are doing less formal testing for 3-year re-evaluations. For students working toward a standard (or special) diploma, formal assessments may be warranted. VR assists us in assessments and placement support.</p> <p>We have transition counselors who work closely with students, families and teachers, some involved more than others.</p>	<p>It's difficult for the counselors to come to the schools for meetings and my students are low income and can't get to the VR office for meetings.</p> <p>Our VR resources are very limited and there are only two counselors to cover the five schools within our district.</p> <p>Parental consent for referrals is difficult, follow up by rehab counselors is poor.</p>
Maryland	<p>The counselor and I meet regularly to discuss student's referrals and barriers to receiving services once the student graduates from high school.</p> <p>They serve as gatekeepers regarding funding. Their services are important, but there seems to be a disconnect with the importance of following through.</p> <p>The DORS counselor is invited to every Junior/senior IEP meeting. The counselor and I meet regularly to discuss student referrals and barriers to receiving services once</p>	<p>We do a good job of including them in all planning, however I do not feel they do all they can do to support our students. They do an OK job with our students that are seeking a certificate but I wish they were a more integral part of the planning.</p> <p>Although including Voc Rehab is a required and routine process for the diploma bound students I serve, the Voc Rehab counselor rarely attends any school based meetings, services are more often than not affected by financial issues, and the actual vocational training center's programs are appropriate for more severely</p>

	<p>the student graduates from high school.</p> <p>For certain students, but not all, DORS has a specialized VR counselor that works specifically with our students here at MSD. She's trained and works well within the transition area.</p>	<p>disabled people.</p> <p>We have almost no contact with outside agencies. Schools have designated Transition Facilitators and case managers work with them for post-secondary options, but there is little planning for post secondary life beyond the informational stage</p>
Oregon	<p>Vocational rehabilitation sometimes is the initial provider of work-related services upon my students' transition from school services.</p> <p>Yes, however many of the students on my caseload do not qualify for VR services because they do not meet the criteria for being "competitively employable".</p> <p>VR representatives attend meetings and work directly with students in my classroom during the school day.</p> <p>VR is part of the IEP team. In some cases on the job training is provided, with follow-up. Many students don't qualify for disability services. Voc Rehab is one service we can offer to students who don't qualify.</p>	<p>While I have been able to hook my students into voc rehab, they are peripheral. I provide the instruction, opportunities and practice, and invite voc rehab to join with me. I apply for the YTP grant and work with the YTP person to plan for my students. Voc rehab is a passive partner, waiting to be prompted into playing a role.</p> <p>The person keeps changing and they are rarely available for appointments.</p> <p>They attend meetings occasionally. Their attendance is not enough to be useful.</p>
Utah	<p>They help by providing a scaffold for after high school, and in overcoming barriers preventing students from obtaining meaningful work.</p> <p>We have Voc Rehab Counselors assigned to each high school and teachers are encouraged to invite them to IEP's where transition will be a focus.</p> <p>Voc Rehab counselors meet with our students 2-3 times a years with our</p>	<p>She has preferred for us to give the information to the student in the past 2 years. Prior to that, she preferred to come give presentations, get the kids all excited, sign them up, then do nothing to very little with them. We have had Voc Rehab counselors at IEPs for our 17-18 year old students, but with the more severe students they re not very involved and prefer to wait until the student is closer to aging out.</p> <p>My students are in a learning center</p>

	<p>students and are the number one agency our students go to for services after graduation.</p> <p>Voc Rehab can take the training I given my students and turn it into long-term opportunities. Very important so that when they exit the district then they'll be set up with a job that will meet the individual needs.</p> <p>They provide expertise and answers in situations where I have limited information. They provide crucial input for the future. Sadly, our VR is not invoked at all.</p>	<p>(behavior unit) and don't usually have a need for vocational rehabilitation.</p> <p>For many years I was told not to involve Voc Rehab because students would be connected with them during Post High. I do try to involve Voc Rehab for graduating seniors. I have never met a single one. My understanding is that my district assists students to get in contact with voc rehab in the post-high school program.</p> <p>They are never available to come to the IEP meetings and if they do come they don't say much except come register and maybe after graduation we can help you.</p>
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Table 8

Representative Comments from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on perception of VR as integral to Transition Planning

State	Yes	No
Florida	<p>We definitely are an asset for trying to help students exiting school and their families, to prepare for the transition from entitlement to eligibility and to prepare for setting long and short-term goals toward independence and employment.</p> <p>VR needs to be a presence, so when the student graduate or age out, they are</p>	<p>Not involved in meeting and when we were it was only for the purpose of advising family/student about the eligibility of VR services – 10-minute overview.</p>

	<p>familiar with VR and its services.</p> <p>VR visits the schools and coordinates with ESEs. We are able to provide services that enable the students to move forward in life.</p> <p>We try to maintain a close communication and referral stream with the school system and reaching for ESE and 504 students. We also have a transition team that meets every month to discuss with community partners pertinent transition issues and cooperation.</p>	
Maryland	<p>Transition Counselors meeting quarterly to discuss challenges experience by transitioning youth and training or support services needed to meet the needs of Consumers.</p> <p>We pick up where school systems leave students off. We often have to compensate for some skills that should have been previously implemented. We assist those who many times would fall into that “gray area” where they would not receive long-term supports. Those students that need supports and services that would not necessarily receive any if VR didn't exist.</p> <p>I think that vocational</p>	No comment provided

	<p>rehabilitation is a critical piece of the transitioning puzzle. The school should be laying the foundation and then VR comes in to make the planning come to life!</p> <p>Transition counselors meet quarterly to discuss challenges experienced by transitioning youth and training or support services needed to meet the needs of consumers.</p>	
Oregon	<p>We meet with our transition specialist monthly, she comes to intakes and signing of the plan for employment. She returns calls promptly.</p> <p>We provide career exploration support and service. As well as job development, job placement, job coaching and job training. The next step of support after high school.</p> <p>The VRC is able to use counseling to assist the student to see the big picture of possibilities. Their training gives them a clearer understanding of how disabilities will impact employment and possible accommodations.</p> <p>I feel that the introduction of VR while the student is still in school is very</p>	<p>Transition IEP are often started and written prior to any contact or referral to VR. Even when VR is noted as a transition activity. I am occasionally invited to IEP meetings with YTP students already enrolled in VR.</p> <p>I think we have resources that are very important for transition planning, and in working with transition specialists we can help with the overall transition planning process.</p>

	important. Partnership during this short time period is so necessary.	
Utah	<p>In many cases yes, but there are still many barriers with the schools knowing how valuable we can be. Also, counselors are often too busy to give all their energy toward IEP and transition planning.</p> <p>VR counselors can often be a source of referrals and can assist with vocational planning which translates to curricula.</p> <p>Hard question to answer. I have some teachers that are very supportive of VR and include me significantly and others that don't include me at all.</p> <p>Rehabilitation counselors assist students and their parents with available resources that can help students succeed.</p>	No comment provided.

Table 13

Next Critical Steps identified by Special Educators – Representative Statements

Administrative Support
Administrators need to invest in the importance of interagency collaboration with our VR partners, with parents, and with other adult service agencies in the transition process for special needs high school students.
District direct involvement with vocational rehabilitation.

District actually implementing something besides a memo.
Administration finds ways to facilitate trainings and meetings.
Support from administrative bodies in terms of time, resources in order to facilitate collaboration.
Time for collaboration
Create an interagency collaboration team that could facilitate a smoother transition from school to services/life after school.
We need to reach outside of traditional perspectives. How could local Chambers of Commerce or Rotarians assist? What volunteer, not for profit options are available in local service agencies?
The District Special Ed. Leaders and Community Voc Rehab need to meet to merge yearly training schedules before the 2013-14 school year begins.
Required transition meetings and/or planning involving parents, students, school personnel, and vocational rehabilitation counselors.
Coordinating with our school's Voc Rehab representative as well as our LEA to come up with a plan of action. We need to meet quarterly and create goals that can be completed throughout the year.
Funding
It is important that the state recognize the increasingly critical need for funding post secondary services to those who have significant challenges to interact with the community and with furthering post secondary opportunities.
VR and county high schools should collaborate on a grant writing process to fund a year or two of joint training to help all those involved in the transition process understand what can be best done to streamline and fashion the school setting, paperwork, etc., to be helpful to the process when it is time, as well as determine what resources can be shared, and used in conjunction to better effect the use of taxpayer monies.
Providing funding for additional transition facilitators to be placed in each high school and address career awareness activities for the feeder middle schools.
Provide funding for more vocational training programs for those individuals with diverse learning styles and disabilities at the vocational rehabilitation center and partnerships at local community colleges.
State or Federal funding and legislation. Currently both schools and voc rehab are spread too thin to fund more personnel or committees or teams or to provide paid time for collaboration.
Personnel
Hire and keep more Transition Facilitators to cover schools.

Hire employees who stay in the district more than one year.
Recruit transition facilitators.
Voc Rehab needs to allot a transition person to each building.
Finding the best qualified Transition Specialists to hire in each high school is vital.
Training
Training for all parties involved – IEP case managers, Vocational rehabilitation Counselors, parents, and students.
I believe it would invaluable to do a joint training for cross-training purposes so VR understands our IEP process and vice versa. It would then be easier for all of us to talk the same talk and parents of students with disabilities and students with disabilities would receive consistent information. I believe a case study approach in training would be an eye opener for all.
Training Voc Rehab counselors on what they can do to assist students in high school and presenting the information to the high school teams are the next steps.
Teachers need flexibility in order to receive training.
Training for administration regarding the purpose and “best practice” procedures of transition.
All teachers, especially at a high school level, need to be educated as to the importance of transition and be given tools to help their students in this process. Presently I feel that there is not a uniform program or resource available for teachers to truly be successful with their students.
Clear Expectations
Clear direction needs to be given on roles and responsibilities for transition in both schools and VR.
Clear, detailed plans that specifically break down role of participants, a clear goal, and steps to achieve that target.
Requiring Vocational Rehabilitation to participate in the IEP planning process.
While we know somewhat about each other's roles and responsibilities, we don't know them well enough to help the students in the most effective way possible to help them be successful as employed adults. I am only marginally aware of what voc rehab does....the next step might be for the district to invite voc rehab to a dept. meeting.
Establish when Vocational Reh. Gets involved, with which students, at what point.

Table 14

Actions from other Professionals – Representative Statements from Special Educators

Collaboration
Collaboration is good on the interagency basis in our area. We frequently work with DDA, DORS, county Departments of Social Services.
We would benefit from collaboration with outside agencies in documenting disabilities for our special populations within the special population.
Technical training programs and college disability resource centers need to stress the importance of VR for assisting students in funding/accommodations/supports at post secondary level.
I believe it is important to explore any and all options to collaborate with any professional or community groups who would be willing to participate in a community effort toward inclusion for adults with severe disabilities in any way that is feasible. Professionals may even be able to offer training to interested parents and families to develop opportunities.
Establish a way to meet with business owners in the community to set up transition opportunities for students.
I think that involving business owners in the community would be a great asset to our students. Some of this could be done in the city chamber of Commerce meetings.
Involving mental health agencies and those who can assist in teaching social skills would be helpful.
I would like to collaborate with individuals at college student service centers that may provide supports to our students who pursue higher education, as well as someone at our technical colleges who could help with transitions supports to tech campuses.
More programs like the PEERS program (through Easter Seals) that helps bridge the gap that we have with VR and with the social needs of our students.
Training
Short-term training program providers beyond local community college (i.e., trade schools, industry sponsored trainings that aren't necessarily apprenticeship level, etc.).
It would be important for the community at large to become more aware of increasing needs. Professionals may even be able to offer training to interested parents and families to develop opportunities, etc.
Businesses in the community be more willing to train and hire students with disabilities.
Businesses assist with placement of students and adults with disabilities in the work environment and community.
Have VR people train resource teachers on what services are available after

graduation for mild to moderate disabled students.
Coordinating with DMV, UTA, or other agencies for training is important.
Personnel
Both of our counselors are great. Unfortunately the two service eight high schools. We need more counselors.
Hire additional vocational rehab counselors to decrease their caseloads and allow for increased participation in the transition process during the last two years of attendance in high school.
Not enough Rehabilitation counselors to cover the amount of schools. We really need a transition person in our district. This will help build the relationships that are important for students to transition successfully from school to adulthood.
Time
Offer opportunities during the summer months for teachers to collaborate with agencies/professionals.
With a graduation diploma and Federally mandated IEP academic goals being a priority there really is little time to focus on Transition connections. It would make a lot more sense to coordinate with a Voc Rehab Counselor throughout high school and would benefit the student so much.
Access to other information and resources
An easy to follow guide and list to access the different resources.
Description of desired entry-level skill sets for various professions.
Information gathering, help with feelers to the community, a simplified version of how to access each agency for assistance.
Communication on what is actually available, timeline of agencies being involved, chart as to who leads the transitional opportunities.
It would be nice to know what programs are available for students with severe and profound disabilities once they leave the school district.
Job market knowledge.

Table 17

Next Critical Steps - Representative Statements from Vocational Rehabilitation

Counselors

Administrative Support
Support from administrative bodies in terms of time and resources in order to facilitate collaboration.
Changes in the district's ability to allow teachers time out of the classroom.

VR admins talking to school admins to develop an action plan – perhaps over the summer while teachers are out.
We have to have school administrators and VR managers, along with other community partners, meet to develop a plan to start the process of collaboration.
Administrators/managers to start the process for better communication with all staff and more education regarding expectations and how to develop an effective transition plan.
Time
Each school district needs to have a community team.
Coordination of a monthly planning committee with VR and school personnel as well as other adult agencies.
Beyond these global issues I think that every local community needs to develop these local transition teams so they can educate each other and learn how they can best support each other.
Instead of VR staff functioning independently as individuals VR needs to capitalize on the strategies being used by individual counselors in the schools and get the counselors working with each other across the state.
I think the biggest step is to just get everyone together at the same time to have the training as scheduling this sometimes is difficult.
Communicating with school administrators to help with providing flexibility to allow for intercollaboaration between special education staff and VR staff.
Funding/Policy
Funding and information to the school systems and agencies so that more can take place.
Signed intergovernmental agreement between state department of Ed and VR. Increase funding and communication between administrators to facilitate collaboration.
Better funding for rural areas – The schools in our area want to keep the funding by providing their own transition services since our schools are spread over 150 miles.
Fund a Transition person at each school.
Training
The county transition head within the school system could set up training sessions for the transition specialists in their quarterly meetings so that they could identify appropriate referrals for VR services vs. Long Term Supports.
Provide essential training to special education staff and VR counselors on how to ensure that information on the IEP is considered and reflected on the student's IPE.
VR train teachers on services provided.
Vocational Rehabilitation in each state needs to focus youth service training to its staff.

Table 18

Action Steps - Representative Statements from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

Collaboration
After ensuring that interagency teams and meetings are in place, ensuring attendance for special education staff, VR counselors, and other agency personnel.
It would be nice to have transition teachers in our transition council. I would like other professionals to have a realistic view of the amount of time and understanding of the process of services provided and how it is individualized.
Remaining in contact is the key (not just once a year meetings).
More communication from the teachers and assistants who work with the transition students.
Encourage employers to be more active in collaboration.
Coordination with high education and other “adult” services to transition students from high school to adult life.
Training
I think training and opportunities to work together is essential.
More cross-training would help reduce misinformation between programs.
More joint-trainings, conferences, round tables, etc.
More training to learn each other’s roles.
Administrator Actions
Administrators/managers starting the process so that field staff feels supported.
Ensure that there is support from upper management and politicians that support this partnership.
School administrators need to take the responsibility to get the process started.
I would like the department of education to come out with standards and protocol for referral to VR from the schools, as everyone seems to interpret it differently.