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Setting Higher Employment Expectations for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities

By Alberto Migliore and Daria Domin

Integrated employment is a critical goal because it leads to greater economic self-sufficiency, social inclusion, and personal satisfaction. Unfortunately, high schools do not always include integrated employment as a primary goal in the transition plans of students with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Moreover, in some cases sheltered employment is listed as the primary goal. As Table 1 demonstrates, only 53% of students with intellectual or developmental disabilities had integrated employment listed as a primary goal in their transition plans, and 10% had sheltered employment listed as a primary goal.

Table 1: Primary goals for students with IDD

	#	%
Integrated employment	35,051	53%
Sheltered employment	6,681	10%
No employment	24,135	37%
Total	65,868	100%

Table 2 shows, however, that a substantial number of students who did not have integrated employment as a primary goal transitioned to work after high school (38%; N=9,183). The table also shows that many students did not transition to work after high school despite having had integrated employment as their primary goal (51%; N=17,769).

The relatively high number of students who worked despite not having integrated employment as a primary goal in their transition plans indicates that high schools may underestimate the employment potential of some students. At the same time, setting goals is not enough. The high number of students who did not progress

Table 2: Integrated employment outcomes after high school, by transition goals

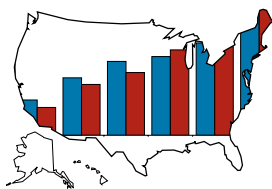
	Worked		Did not work		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Integrated employment goal	17,282	49	17,769	51	35,051	100
Sheltered employment goal	0	0	6,681	100	6,681	100
No employment goal	9,183	38	14,952	62	24,135	100
Total	26,466	40	39,402	60	65,868	100

to work—despite having had integrated employment as their primary goal—indicates that more needs to be done to assist students’ transition to employment. Overall, these data indicate that setting higher expectations in high school, followed by adequate support services, is critical for ensuring that students with intellectual or developmental disabilities achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, social inclusion, and personal satisfaction through employment.

These data are from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS2). The NLTS2 dataset includes a nationally representative sample of students with any disabilities who were between the ages of 13 and 16 in December 2000 and who received special-education services between 2000 and 2007. Work was defined as “Youth worked for pay other than work around the house since leaving high school (if out-of-HS a year or more) and earning at least minimum wage (\$5.15 at the time of data collection).” A primary employment goal included either competitive or supported employment, but not sheltered employment. A primary sheltered-employment goal excluded both competitive and supported employment. General information about NLTS2 is available at www.nlts2.org/

StateData.info

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