

Reporting and sharing program graduate achievements is a critical part of ensuring the continued success and improvement of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE). This resource provides valuable tips and strategies for staff members at postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disability about how to effectively keep in touch with graduates so we can continue to learn about their experiences after graduation.

The Think College National Coordinating Center hosted an information-sharing session with staff from Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs). These tips for keeping in touch with program graduates were generated by TPSID staff at the sharing session.

### Establishing Expectations

- » Introduce the expectation of program follow-up to students and families early (at orientation, for example), and continue to bring it up regularly at annual kick-offs, open houses, and other events.
- » Explain the relevance and importance of graduates keeping in touch.
- » Let students know you plan to keep in touch with them after they complete the program. Advise graduates when to expect to hear from you after graduation.

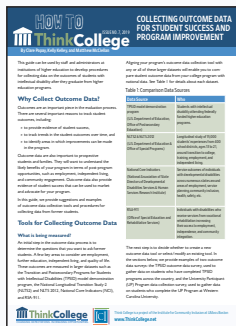
### Collecting and Maintaining Reliable Contact Information

- » Establish contact with parents/guardians/siblings while students are enrolled. Leverage those contacts to follow up if reaching out to graduates does not work.
- » College/university alumni offices may collect and keep graduates' personal email addresses. Try asking your alumni offices if you don't have a current contact.
- » Encourage graduates to let you know when their email addresses or phone numbers change.
- » Consider the best way to reach individual graduates—what works with one person might not work with another.

### Using Technology to Support Follow-Up Data Collection

- » Try Google Voice to avoid sharing a personal phone number with graduates. Google Voice also allows for texting.
- » Leave a voicemail if graduates do not answer.
- » Reach out via text to set up a phone call. Texting may be more effective than email.
- » Reach out using Facebook Messenger if a program has an alumni Facebook group.
- » Try web-based forms and surveys. They may be useful after students graduate, especially if they practice using them while enrolled.
- » Consider using GroupMe. GroupMe is similar to Microsoft Teams. If Teams does not work after students graduate, GroupMe can be a useful alternative.

**Check out How to Think College #7 for more information about collecting outcome data, including sample questions to ask graduates.**



## Using Familiarity to Keep in Touch

- » Build relationships and personal connections while students are enrolled in the program to make staying in touch after graduation easier.
- » Call graduates from a known number, especially if they've saved that contact number in their phones.
- » Appoint staff members with whom graduates are familiar to be the point of contact after graduation. Graduates may be more likely to respond if someone they know reaches out.
- » Make the follow-up call more like a personal conversation—“catching up” instead of “collecting information”.
- » Consider hiring a program graduate to work in your program office. They may be more successful at alumni outreach.
- » Identify students who are especially passionate about staying in touch and keeping their former classmates in the loop. Consider leveraging these students to help maintain contact with others after graduation.

## Creating Opportunities for Contact

- » Invite graduates back to visit. They can share insight with new students and attend campus-wide alumni or social events. This can also be a time to catch up on outcomes.
- » Reach out to graduates frequently to “check in”. Keep communication open.

## Building Follow-Up Contact into Alumni Initiatives

- » Build an alumni community (social media or in-person) to keep in touch with graduates.
- » Host alumni events or encourage graduates to attend existing campus alumni events.
- » Build ties to existing college or university alumni associations and establish program graduates as a formal sub-group.

## SUMMARY

Program personnel shared these suggestions to support personnel at other programs in collecting follow-up data from program graduates. While every suggestion may not be practical for every program, we encourage you to explore any ideas that may be useful to you. By fostering lasting relationships with graduates, we can gain insights into their post-college experiences, assess program impact, and further enhance the inclusivity and success of postsecondary education opportunities for individuals with intellectual disability.

[Visit Think College to find more information about TPSID follow-up data reporting requirements.](http://www.thinkcollege.net)



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