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Status of Credentialing Structures Related to Secondary Transition: A State-level Policy Analysis

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In Press

Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals

Status of Credentialing Structures Related to Secondary Transition:

A State-level Policy Analysis

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STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Status of Credentialing Structures Related to Secondary Transition:

A State-level Policy Analysis

Since 2008, the number of special education teachers has continued to decline due to decreased enrollment in university personnel preparation programs in special education and low retention rates of special education teachers in the public school system (Aragon, 2016; U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). Notably, the attrition rate of special education teachers is almost twice that of general education teachers (Keigher, 2010). The shortage of special education teachers, along with a continued need for special education services to support children and youth with disabilities, has led to a projected increase of 6% in the employment of special education teachers, including secondary special education teachers, over the next eight years (USDOL, 2017). In light of these employment trends, state (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) encounter mounting pressure to hire special education teachers and retain them over time.

Given the current and future shortages of special education teachers, SEAs/LEAs face a number of challenges relative to hiring and retaining special education teachers. First, insufficient funding is available to support pre-service and in-service personnel preparation of special education teachers in general, and secondary special education teachers in particular (Mazzotti, Rowe, Cameto, Test, & Morningstar, 2013; National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, 2017; Plotner & Simonsen, 2017). Next, a lack of collaboration between SEAs, LEAs, and institutions of higher education (IHE) exists relative to providing credentialing options for special education teachers (Muller, 2010; Morningstar, Kleinhammer-Tramill, Hirano, Roberts-Diehm, & Teo, 2017). Many states have limited credentialing options to (a) support specialization in specific special education areas

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

(e.g., secondary transition), and (b) offer alternative routes to licensure (National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, 2017). In order to increase the number of special education teachers, it is important that SEAs/LEAs work with IHEs to align state educator credentialing structures with professional accreditation standards for educator preparation (National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, 2017). Additionally, an increase in funding at the state and local levels to create new positions through federally funded personnel preparation grants is imperative (Mazzotti et al., 2013; Plotner & Simonsen, 2017).

To support the transition of youth with disabilities from high school into post-school life, there is a need for professionals (e.g., secondary special educators, career technical education [CTE] educators, vocational rehabilitation [VR] personnel) to have specialized knowledge and skills to provide effective secondary transition programs, practices, and services (Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2014; Test & Cease-Cook, 2012). This includes, but is not limited to (a) having specialized knowledge of secondary transition evidence-based practices and predictors of post-school success, (b) transition assessment, (c) developing post-school goals aligned with IEP goals and transition services, (d) facilitating career development and work-based learning opportunities, and (e) providing transition services in collaboration with adult service providers (Mazzotti, Test, & Mustian, 2014; Tilson & Simonsen, 2013).

Direct-service transition professionals (i.e., secondary transition specialists, secondary vocational coordinators, transition-focused rehabilitation counselors) have a unique role in providing transition services across special education, CTE, and VR. However, limited opportunities exist for direct-service transition professionals to earn certification or licensure in the area of secondary transition; thus, impacting the knowledge and skills these individuals have

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

to provide effective transition services and supports to youth with disabilities (Benitez et al., 2009; Kleinhammer-Tramill, Geiger, & Morningstar, 2003; Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016). Benitez et al. (2009) found a statistically significant relationship between teacher preparation relative to providing transition services (e.g., interagency collaboration) and the frequency of implementation. Similarly, Plotner, Mazzotti, Rose, and Carlson-Britting (2015) found knowledge of secondary transition evidence-based practices (EBPs) gained through university preparation programs predicted greater use of these practices by direct-service transition professionals. This suggests that level of preservice preparation, initially impacted by the lack of opportunities for certification or licensure in secondary transition, impacts the quality of transition services provided to youth.

In order to understand the role of transition-related credentialing systems in driving personnel preparation, is it necessary to identify which SEAs, Rehabilitation Services, and CTE agencies are currently providing certification and licensure in the area of secondary transition. In most states, any special educators holding a valid special education credential and working in a secondary school can be responsible for providing transition education and services (Morningstar & Clark, 2003). Given the critical role of secondary special educators and direct-service transition professionals in supporting students with disabilities in obtaining positive post-school outcomes (Tilson & Simonsen, 2013), understanding how states are credentialing and preparing these professionals is important for ensuring educators have the necessary skills to support youth with disabilities as they move through the transition process.

One national effort to ensure states and transition personnel understood the specific competencies needed for transition personnel to effectively provide transition services to youth with disabilities was re-defined by the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Development and Transition (CEC-DCDT) in 2014. The revised CEC-DCDT standards defined the competencies necessary for individuals, who have previously mastered initial special education professional standards, to practice in advanced special education roles focused on the delivery of transition services. These advanced special education professional standards for transition specialists were developed to provide guidance and direction for (a) the credentialing of special educators, (b) developing university personnel preparation programs in secondary transition, and (c) implementing evidence-based transition practices in schools. However, data indicate teachers are not aware of, and are not using, the CEC-DCDT Transition Specialist Competencies to guide instruction (Gothberg & Alverson, 2015).

In 2003, a special issue on secondary transition personnel preparation brought to the forefront current policies, practices, and issues related to secondary transition personnel preparation. In this issue, Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. (2003) conducted an analysis of state personnel preparation policies in special education, CTE, and rehabilitation counseling and identified 12 states with credential systems that included a professional license, certification, or endorsement focused on secondary transition. Additionally, results found 35 states had transition-relevant teaching standards or course requirements for special educators. While these results were promising, Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. suggested that increased national focus on secondary transition policy (e.g., CEC-DCDT Transition Specialist Competencies, Interstate Teaching Assessment and Support Consortium's Model Core Teaching Standards) should ultimately impact state certification and licensure divisions to focus more on secondary transition.

It has been more than a decade since state certification and licensure requirements related to secondary transition have been systematically examined. Therefore, this study was designed to

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

update the work of Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. (2003) by providing a snapshot of the preparation of today's secondary transition special educators, rehabilitation counselors, and CTE personnel to deliver transition education programs, practices, and services to youth with disabilities.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the current state of requirements related to secondary transition in each state's personnel credentialing systems. Through a review of certification and licensure requirements articulated in state credentialing policies, the following research questions were addressed: (a) Do states have a professional license, certificate, or endorsement focused on secondary transition in special education, career-technical education (CTE), and/or rehabilitation counseling?; and (b) Do states have transition-related standards or course requirements for special educators, career-technical educators, and/or vocational rehabilitation counselors?

Method

To understand credentialing structures related to secondary transition across the United States, legislative policies adopted by the 50 states, the District of Columbia (D.C.), and the 5 permanently-inhabited U.S. territories/commonwealths (Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa) were systematically reviewed. The state policy review involved five steps: (a) searching SEA, State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (SVRA), and other legislative websites (e.g., CTE) for relevant licensure policies; (b) categorizing policy statements based on pre-established criteria; (c) communicating directly with SEA and VR directors to verify the information collected; (d) developing a current snapshot of state credentialing policies related to secondary transition; and (e) analyzing changes to policies since the last investigation in 2003. The review included state licensing and certification requirements in special education, CTE, and VR. Through a state-by-state analysis of written licensure

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

policies, a profile of each state's credentialing structures related to secondary transition was developed. Data collection and analysis methods used in this study were similar to those employed by Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. (2003) in their analysis of state transition-related licensure policies.

Data Collection

Data collection included locating information related to secondary transition credentials, standards, and courses across the 50 states, D.C., and 5 U.S. territories. Two types of information were collected. First, credentials (i.e., licenses, certificates, endorsements) focused on secondary transition offered through Special Education, CTE, or VR were identified. For states that had a secondary transition credential, the search included identifying (a) the name of the credential and/or position title of professionals holding the credential; (b) the state agency or program area that offered the credential (Special Education, CTE, or VR); (c) whether the credential was available to all professionals in a field or only to those in specific licensure areas; (d) whether the credential was a requirement for those serving in a secondary transition position; and (e) how many personnel preparation programs were approved by the state to offer coursework aligned with the credential. Second, transition-related professional standards and course requirements for beginning special educators, CTE educators, and VR counselors were identified (e.g., Does a state require all individuals seeking initial licensure in special education to meet specific transition-related professional standards or course requirements?). Distinctions were made between standards and course requirements, as well as between standards or courses required for all professionals in a field (e.g., CTE educators) and standards or courses required for only some professionals in that field (e.g., CTE work-based learning coordinators).

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Website review. To facilitate the identification of state credentialing policies relevant to secondary transition, responsibility for reviewing each state or territory's websites was randomly assigned to one of the three researchers (i.e., authors). Researchers searched each state's SEA, SVR, and legislative websites to identify transition-related credentials, professional standards, and course requirements. Because transition-related credentials, standards, and course requirements for special educators and CTE educators were found through the educator licensure section of SEA websites, it was necessary to search for educator licensure rules in the state administrative code. If CTE was not housed under the SEA, researchers searched specific CTE websites for the given state separately. Because VR programs in many states were not housed within the SEA, researchers also searched SVR websites, Department of Labor websites, and other state agency websites (as needed) for information about transition-related credentials and requirements for VR counselors.

Content coding of policy statements. Following the website review, policy information about transition-related credentials, professional standards, and course requirements identified for each state or territory were entered into an Excel[®] spreadsheet. For each state, data for special education, CTE, and VR were entered separately into the spreadsheet, as were transition-related professional standards and courses. Web addresses for sources of information were also entered into the spreadsheet to facilitate interrater reliability to verify the information collected.

To ensure consistency across researchers relative to the policy information coded, interrater reliability (IOA) was systematically assessed throughout the study. Researchers initially searched for and reviewed transition-relevant licensure policies for 12 states (i.e., researcher one [first author] coded Georgia, Louisiana, Kentucky, Maryland; researcher two [second author] coded Indiana, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee; researcher three [third author]

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

coded Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Oregon). State policies were coded based on review criteria developed by Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. (2003). A second reviewer was then assigned to conduct an independent website review for each of the 12 initial states. Following these two rounds of reviews, the three researchers met to assess interrater reliability to come to consensus about uniformity of data collection and coding procedures. Researchers discussed each coding discrepancy, and instances of disagreement between researchers were resolved through consensus. The search procedures, coding instrument, and inclusion criteria were refined throughout the process. Once procedures had been finalized, data collection and coding proceeded for the remaining states and territories and IOA procedures from initial coding were followed. IOA was calculated by dividing agreements between researchers by the sum of agreements and disagreements and multiplying by 100. IOA for the website review of states and territories was 96.3%. The policy retrieval and review process was completed between January 2015 and May 2016.

Data verification. To verify the data collected from the website searches, a follow-up survey was conducted with SEA secondary transition liaisons. An initial list of secondary transition liaisons for each state, territory, and the District of Columbia was provided by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition. Individuals were sent an email asking them to review and verify the accuracy of the profile of secondary transition credentialing structures developed for their state. To facilitate completion of the survey, the email provided a description of the study purpose, a link to a private website containing the state's profile (including web addresses of policy documents), and a request for the survey contact to offer additions and corrections to the information provided. Profile questions and answers were presented in four sections, including *Secondary Transition Credentials*, *Special Education*, *Career-Technical*

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Education, and Rehabilitation Counseling. Survey contacts were also asked to forward the email to other SEA, CTE, or SVRA representatives who may be better prepared with the knowledge to review one or more survey responses. Individuals with the survey link had the ability to view and update profile information on the survey in real time, which facilitated the data verification process.

If a response was not received from a state contact within one month, a reminder email to complete the follow-up survey was sent. A final email reminder was sent two months following the initial request. At this point, the researchers attempted to identify additional contacts by searching the SEA, CTE (if housed separately from SEA), and SVR websites for the contact information of other representatives in special education, educator licensure, or vocational rehabilitation. If additional information was needed to complete a state profile, researchers followed up with a phone call to the state liaison. This verification phase of data collection occurred between May and September 2016. By the end of this period, 42 states, D.C., and 1 of 5 U.S. territories had reviewed and approved the final version of their policy profile summaries. Of these, seven (16.7%) provided information about minor modifications and/or supplemental information (e.g., transition specific position titles, whether or not a transition credential is required). The data collection spreadsheet was updated with new policy information provided by the secondary transition liaison or other state agency representative of several states.

Data Analysis

Categorization of state credentialing policies. Descriptive analysis was used to assess policies related to credentialing of secondary transition in special education, CTE, and VR. Inclusion criteria were applied consistently across all 50 states, D.C., and 5 U.S. territories. The data were summarized by tallying the number of states in each category. Table 1 presents the

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

criteria used to categorize policies according to the presence or absence of secondary transition credentials, professional standards, and courses.

Identification of trends in state credentialing policies. Next, trends in the adoption of policies related to secondary transition by state special education, CTE, and VR credentialing systems were investigated. This was accomplished by comparing the state-by-state policy data from the present study with the state-by-state policy data available in the Appendix of Kleinhammer-Tramill et al.'s 2003 study.

Results

Overall, analysis of data provided a snapshot of current state credentialing policies related to secondary transition and a clear view of policy changes that have occurred over the last 13 years. Specifically, this analysis enabled the researchers to explore changes to secondary transition certification/licensure policies that have occurred since 2003, as well as identification of recent initiatives to expand collaboration between state special education, CTE, and VR agencies serving transition-age students. Results of the analysis are presented below.

Transition-Related Professional Credentials

Sixteen states have at least one secondary transition credential option for professionals in the area of special education, CTE, and/or VR (i.e., Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia). In most cases, the secondary transition credential is added to an initial license or certification. For example, educators who hold a special education teaching license may complete additional coursework and/or work experience in career-vocational education to earn a credential, which permits them to coordinate work-based learning programs and transition services within their LEAs. Likewise, educators who hold a CTE teaching license

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

may complete additional coursework and/or work experience in special education to earn a credential, which permits them to coordinate career CTE programs and arrange accommodations for students with disabilities served in CTE programs. Two states require applicants for a secondary transition credential to have licensure or teaching experience in both special education and CTE (i.e., Minnesota, Vermont), while other states permit the credential to be added to either a special education license or a CTE license (e.g., Ohio, Virginia) or to a broader range of professional licenses (e.g., Illinois, Massachusetts, South Carolina). Table 2 provides data on state secondary transition credentials and certification/licensure requirements for professionals in special education, CTE, and VR.

Special education. Eight states offer a transition-related through special education (i.e., Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, South Carolina). In their 2003 study, Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. identified only seven states with credentials (i.e., Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio), therefore indicating an increase in 2017 of one additional state that offers a transition-related credential through special education. However, only five states (i.e., Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, and Ohio) that had transition-related credentials in special education in 2003 have maintained those credentials until today.

CTE. The number of states that offer a transition-related credential through CTE has increased from six to nine (i.e., Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Vermont, Virginia) since the Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. (2003) study. Similar to the turnover in transition-related special education credentials, only four states (i.e., Ohio, Missouri, Vermont, Virginia) were identified as having a CTE transition credential in both 2003 and 2017 (see Table 3).

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

VR Counseling. Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. (2003) identified one state, New Mexico, that offered a credentialing option in secondary transition for Rehabilitation Counseling. This licensure option did not require an initial certification in rehabilitation counseling and was provided by the SEA for school-based personnel who implemented career development and employment preparation activities. New Mexico has maintained that licensure option, and two additional states (i.e. Illinois and Massachusetts) have added similar credentialing options for school-based professionals employed by the LEA rather than by the SVRA.

Credential and designated professional title. Titles of secondary transition credentials and titles of credential holders vary across the country. Examples of credential titles are *Transition Specialist Endorsement, Vocational Coordinator Approval, and Licensure in Rehabilitation Counseling (Grades PreK-12)*. Professional titles include *Secondary Transition Specialist, Transition Coordinator, Work Experience Coordinator, CTE Special Needs Coordinator, and CTE Accommodation Specialist for Students with Disabilities*. Of the 16 states that offer a credential option in special education, CTE, or VR, most do not require those serving in transition roles to obtain their respective credential. Instead, obtaining the credential is viewed as one of several paths through which individuals can demonstrate the transition competencies prescribed by the state. One state transition representative explained the rationale for making the secondary transition credential optional this way:

This is an optional licensure endorsement. School districts have great latitude in appointing individuals to work in secondary transition. Philosophically as a state, we believe that transition is everyone's business. We did not want to adopt a policy which would encourage some educators to feel that transition is not their job because it's the transition specialist's job (include personal communication reference here).

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

An exception to this trend is Michigan's Department of Education requirement that all educators are required to obtain the appropriate transition-related credential in order to be granted full approval as a Transition Coordinator. Moreover, most states do not track the percentage of individuals serving in transition roles who have the relevant credentials. No SEA secondary transition liaisons were able to provide data on the percentage of direct-service transition professionals or secondary special educators who hold the transition-related credential.

Requirements for Initial Licensure

Given the fact that most professionals who work with transition-age youth are not required to hold a specific transition credential, it was instructive to analyze state licensure and certification policies to determine if these professionals were required to take coursework or demonstrated professional standards related to secondary transition in their initial personnel preparation programs. Therefore, the researchers examined the transition-related course requirements and professional standards for professionals in special education, CTE, and VR. Table 2 provides a state-by-state summary of this information.

Special education. Compared to CTE teachers and VR counselors, special educators were more likely to have been required to complete transition-related coursework and/or standards for initial licensure; however, the number of states that require transition-related coursework and/or state professional standards decreased from 34 in 2003 (Kleinhammer-Tramill et al., 2003) to 33 in 2017. Only the District of Columbia and Massachusetts have transition-related course requirements for all special educators, while Louisiana, South Dakota, and Utah require transition-related coursework for some certification areas (i.e. Mild-Moderate and Severe Disabilities endorsements in Utah). In addition, 29 states have state transition-related professional standards for one or more special education certification/licensure areas. For

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

example, Iowa has transition-related professional standards for secondary special education certification/licensure. Only eleven states have transition-related professional state standards for all special educators (i.e., Alabama, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia). In addition to the states that include transition-relevant professional standards or indicators in their own state-developed lists of professional standards, the licensure and certification policies from multiple states in 2003 (i.e., Georgia, Idaho, Ohio, and Utah) and in the present study (i.e., Alabama, Arizona, Florida, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming) indicate that they follow CEC Professional Preparation Standards, which include transition content.

CTE. A total of 17 states have disability-related course requirements and/or professional standards for initial CTE licensure in one or more credential areas. More states have disability-related professional standards (N=13; i.e., Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Vermont) than course requirements (N=5; i.e., Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, and Tennessee). Tennessee has course requirements related to students with disabilities for some routes to teacher certification (e.g. business education) but not for others (e.g., occupational education).

In 2003, Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. reported that only three states had CTE professional standards or course requirements related to students with disabilities (i.e., Alabama, California, and Connecticut). By contrast, the present study identified 17 states with disability-related professional standards or course requirements for CTE teachers. This represents an increase from 6% in 2003 to 34% today in terms of states that have initial licensure requirements in CTE that address students with disabilities.

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

VR Counseling. Consistent with the findings from the Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. 2003 study, no transition-related course requirements or state-specific professional standards for VR Counselors were identified through the state website reviews or data verification process.

Territories and Commonwealths

Findings from this study indicated the U.S. territories and commonwealths currently lack transition-related credentialing structures and requirements for professionals who work with transition-age youth. Website reviews found no evidence of any transition-related credential options for special educators, CTE teachers, or VR counselors. There was also no evidence that professionals in the territories and commonwealths have transition-related course requirements or professional standards as part of their respective credentialing structures.

Discussion

Professionals in special education, CTE, and VR need specialized knowledge and skills to effectively support students with disabilities in their transition to adult life. The present study provides a snapshot of the current status of state credential structures related to secondary transition and a side-by-side comparison of state secondary transition certification/licensure policies that were in effect in 2003 and 2017. The findings of this state-level analysis of credentialing policies related to secondary transition indicate that states vary widely in their levels of commitment and approaches to preparing pre-service professionals to meet the transition needs of these youth. Sixteen states have a credential option in special education, CTE, and/or VR available to professionals who complete advanced personnel preparation in secondary transition; however, most of those states do not require individuals, who perform transition roles and responsibilities, to hold the credential. While nearly two-thirds of the states and Washington, D.C. have transition-related professional standards or course requirements for special educators

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

and one-third have disability-related standards or course requirements for career-technical educators, 11 states and the territories have no transition-related credentials, professional standards, or course requirements for professionals in special education, CTE, or VR.

A side-by-side comparison of the 2003 and 2017 data reveals inconsistent trends in states' adoption and maintenance of transition-related certification and licensure policies over time. A particularly striking finding is that, while three states added a secondary transition credential option in special education during this 14-year period (i.e., Iowa, Massachusetts, and South Carolina), two other states discontinued their secondary transition credential option in special education during this same period (i.e. Delaware, New Mexico). In addition, the number of states with transition-related professional standards or course requirements for special educators actually decreased by one during this time period. Results also reveal that few state VR agencies have adopted credentialing structures that prepare rehabilitation counselors to meet the unique needs of transition-age youth. This evidence suggests that, despite both overwhelming evidence that youth with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers without disabilities in terms of postsecondary outcomes (Newman, et al., 2011) and a growing body of evidence-based practices and predictors of postsecondary success (e.g., Mazzotti et al., 2016; Test et al., 2009), states have not uniformly responded by expanding pre-service personnel preparation requirements in secondary transition.

A notable exception to this is the nearly six-fold increase in the number states with CTE licensure requirements related to preparing pre-service teachers to provide appropriate modifications and accommodations to students with disabilities. This trend is especially encouraging given that CTE serves a disproportionate share of students with disabilities

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

(Gordon, 2014). Additionally, nine states, as compared to six in the 2003 study (Kleinhammer-Tramill et al., 2003), have a transition-related CTE credential.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The results should be interpreted with several limitations in mind. First, the information collected and reported in this study relied on the online availability of current state licensure policies and the knowledge of SEA officials about their states' credentialing policies related to secondary transition. The availability, location, and detail of the available credentialing policies were inconsistent across states. Also, despite multiple attempts to contact representatives from each state and territory, verification of final policy profiles unable to be obtained for eight states and four of five territories. Although the state officials were asked to seek clarification from other SEA, CTE, or SVRA representatives about any information they could not verify themselves, it is unknown whether this was done in every case. Therefore, the accuracy of policy profile reviews was limited by respondents' accuracy of recall and access to information. Results of this study do not necessarily align with the findings from Morningstar et al. (2017 in this special issue), indicating that SEAs and IHEs have different information related to the certification and licensure options offered by their states.

Second, because the policy retrieval and review process took place over a period of a year and a half (January 2015-May 2016), state policy changes may have occurred during the data collection window without the researchers' knowledge. Although communication with SEA officials during the data verification phase alerted researchers to several recent or imminent changes to licensure policies not yet available on SEA or state legislative websites, it is possible that policy changes in other states were not discovered.

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Third, in keeping with the identified research purposes, the present study provides a snapshot of the current status of state credential structures related to secondary transition and a side-by-side comparison of state secondary transition certification/licensure policies that were in effect in 2003 and 2017. This analysis stops short of explaining *why* state policies changed over or did not change over time. A particularly striking finding was that, while three states added a secondary transition credential option in special education between 2003 and 2017, two other states discontinued their secondary transition credential option in special education during this same period. Future research that adopts a policy process model could be used to examine how the cycle of problem identification, policy formulation and adoption, policy evaluation, and policy maintenance or change unfolded in individual states.

When considering those states that have secondary transition credentials for special education, CTE, or VR, it is important to further investigate the extent to which transition-age students with disabilities receive transition-related services from educators and VR counselors who hold a secondary transition credential. Only two states (i.e. Maine and Michigan) require transition specialists to hold the secondary transition credential and no state transition liaisons reported being able to track the percentage of professionals who held a license or endorsement in transition.

To further examine the value of credentialing systems for transition specialists, it would be useful to compare the postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities in states that have secondary transition credentials, standards, and/or course requirements with the outcomes of those students in states that do not have such credentialing structures. Given the limited transition-related requirements for pre-service teachers and VR counselors, the field should

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

examine the type and scope of professional development being provided to individuals responsible for implementing transition services across systems (special education, CTE, VR).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The investment of SEAs and SVRAs in transition personnel preparation over the past 15 years has not kept pace with personnel needs and advances in the discovery, evaluation, and dissemination of EBPs in secondary transition. State credentialing systems strongly influence the teacher education and rehabilitation counseling programs offered by IHEs, and a lack of explicit state policies guiding personnel preparation in secondary transition can be expected to lead to gaps in the preparation of direct-service transition professionals. This is a particular concern for the 11 states with no secondary transition credentials, standards, and/or course requirements for professionals. A recent study by Plotner et al. (2015) supports this assertion. These authors found that a majority of secondary transition specialists, secondary vocational coordinators, and transition-focused rehabilitation counselors (i.e., direct-service transition professionals) reported that they did not gain knowledge regarding transition EBPs through their university preparation programs.

Given the critical role transition specialists play in facilitating the transition process for youth with disabilities, SEAs, SVRAs, and IHEs should: (a) review credentialing requirements for transition-related coursework, licensure, and standards to ensure that all secondary special educators, CTE teachers and VR counselors have a core knowledge base related to transition; and (b) investigate options for transition-related certification or endorsement. Given the interagency context of transition planning, collaborative preservice preparation for educators and rehabilitation counselors would provide opportunities for students to learn alongside colleagues from partner organizations (Plotner & Simonsen, 2017; Plotner, Trach, Oertle & Fleming, 2014).

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Recent initiatives have sought to expand collaboration between state agencies serving transition-age students. Survey respondents anecdotally described emerging models of interagency collaboration between SEAs and SVRAs, such as assigning a dedicated VR counselor to each school district in the state. In addition to the three states that offered a Rehabilitation Counseling credential for school-based professionals (i.e. Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Mexico), both Kentucky and Oregon reported that transition specialists are hired jointly by the SEA and the SVRA but are not required to obtain teaching or rehabilitation credentials. In order to ensure that transition professionals have the skills and experiences required to support transition-age youth with disabilities, SEAs, LEAs and SVRAs should continue to emphasize specific transition-related content knowledge and cross-agency collaboration through credentialing structures, preservice preparation and professional development.

States assume a central role in guiding the approach toward and the quality of personnel preparation in transition. Morningstar and Clavenna-Deane (2014) suggest, “Preparation programs are likely to place appropriate emphasis on transition services when led by state certification and licensure requirements” (p. 405). Given the critical role direct-service transition professionals play in facilitating the transition process for youth with disabilities, SEAs and SVRAs should: (a) review licensure requirements for transition-related coursework and professional standards to ensure that all secondary special educators, CTE teachers, and VR counselors have core knowledge and skills related to secondary transition; and (b) investigate credentialing options to provide advanced preparation for transition specialists. By offering a state credential, more colleges and universities will be likely to offer personnel preparation programs in secondary transition, and more educators and VR counselors will be incentivized to invest time and money into an advanced program because of the anticipated professional and/or

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

financial benefits. SEAs that do not currently offer an advanced secondary transition credential should consider developing a credential based on CEC's *Transition Specialist Advanced Specialty Set* and requiring it for special educators who serve in secondary transition roles. The CEC Transition Specialist Standards, updated in 2013, delineate the essential knowledge and skills transition specialists must possess in order to effectively plan and deliver transition services.

In conclusion, this study updated a 2003 study by Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. by examining the current state of credentialing structures related to secondary transition in states' special education, CTE, and VR systems. While some positive trends were noted, challenges remain for states to leverage their credentialing systems to take a lead in ensuring that direct-service transition professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement evidence-based transition practices.

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

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STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Table 1

Coding Scheme for Transition-Related Credentialing Structures

Category	Inclusion Criteria
<i>Secondary Transition Credential</i>	
State has a professional license, certificate, or endorsement focused on secondary transition	Examples: Licensed special educators can earn an endorsement in secondary transition; CTE teachers can become certified as an Accommodation Specialist for Students with Disabilities
If applicable: Is the credential in Special Education, CTE, or Vocational Rehabilitation?	Credentials in CTE were included only if eligibility for the credential requires professional educator standards or coursework related to students with disabilities.
Is the credential a requirement for those serving in a secondary transition position?	Because Kleinhammer-Tramill et al. (2003) found that states may offer a credential even if no personnel currently hold the credential and/or no personnel preparation programs prepare personnel for the position, researchers sought answers to these clarifying questions.
How many personnel preparation programs are approved by the state to offer coursework aligned with the credential?	University programs in secondary transition exist in some states that do have a credential focused on secondary transition. These states were not included.
<i>Special Education</i>	
State has transition-relevant standards for all beginning special educators or for one or more certification/licensure areas but not for all	Professional educator standards include terms such as “secondary transition,” “career preparation,” “post-secondary outcomes,” or similar terms. Includes states in which transition-relevant standards are required for certain licensure areas (e.g., Intellectual Disabilities, Secondary Special Education), but not for others (e.g., Learning Disabilities, Early Childhood Special Education).
If applicable: Did the state develop these standards or did it adopt national CEC standards?	
State has transition-relevant course requirements for all beginning special educators or for one or more certification/licensure areas but not for all?	The course title and/or description are interpreted to reference the preparation of students with disabilities for living, working, and/or being actively involved in their communities following secondary school. Course requirements must address the needs of students with disabilities specifically; thus, states requiring courses such as <i>Adolescent Development</i> or <i>Administration of Secondary Schools</i> were not included.

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Career-Technical Education

State has standards related to students with disabilities for all beginning career-technical educators or for one or more certification/licensure areas but not for all

Professional educator standards include terms such as “disabilities,” “special needs,” or “exceptionalities” and specifically address learning or accommodation needs of students with disabilities. Includes states in which standards related to students with disabilities are required for certain licensure areas (e.g., Career Orientation, Work-based Learning) but not for others (e.g., Marketing, Technology Education)

State has a course related to students with disabilities for all beginning career-technical educators or for one or more certification/licensure areas but not for all

The course title and/or description specifically reference addressing learning or accommodation needs of students with disabilities. Alternately, a state may require a specified number of credit hours of special education coursework.

VR Counseling

State has transition-relevant standards for all beginning VR counselors or for one or more certification/licensure areas but not for all

Professional standards include terms such as “secondary transition,” “students with disabilities,” or similar terms.

State has transition-relevant course requirements for all VR counselors or for one or more certification/licensure areas but not for all

The course title and/or description reference the preparation of students with disabilities for living, working, and/or being actively involved in their communities following secondary school.

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

Table 2

State Secondary Transition Credentials and Certification/Licensure Requirements

State	Secondary transition credential ^a	Requirements for Initial Licensure			
		Special education		Career-technical education	
		Transition-Related Course	Transition-Related Standards	Disability-Related Course	Disability-Related Standards
AL			S		S
AK					
AR			S ^a		S
AZ			S ^a		S
CA			S ^a		S
CO			S ^a		
CT			S		
DC		C			
DE					
FL			S ^a		
GA	SPED		S ^a		S ^a
HI					
ID			S ^a		S
IL	SPED, VR ^b		S		
IN			S		
IA	SPED		S ^a		S
KS	CTE		S ^a		
KY					
LA		C ^a			
ME	CTE			C	
MD			S ^a		
MA	SPED, VR ^b	C	S	C	S
MI	SPED				
MN	CTE		S		
MS					
MO	CTE		S ^a	C	
MT					
NE	SPED, CTE				
NV			S ^a		
NH			S		

STATUS OF CREDENTIALING IN SECONDARY TRANSITION

NJ					
NM	VR ^b		S ^a		
NY			S ^a	C	
NC			S ^a		
ND	CTE				S
OH	SPED, CTE				S ^a
OK			S		
OR			S ^a		S
PA					S ^a
RI					
SC	SPED				
SD		C ^a			
TN			S	C ^a	
TX			S		
UT		C ^a			
VT	CTE		S ^a		S
VA	CTE		S		
WA					
WV					
WI			S ^a		
WY					
Total States	16	5	29	5	13

Note. SPED = special education; CTE = career-technical education; VR = vocational rehabilitation; C = Course requirements; S = Transition-related standards

^a Requirement applies to one or more certification/licensure areas but not to all areas.

^b Rehabilitation Counseling Endorsement/Licensure available for school-based SEA funded personnel

Table 3

Summary of State Secondary Transition Credentials and Certification/Licensure Requirements

	2003		2017	
<u>Special education</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>States</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>States</u>
Secondary transition credential	7	DE, GA, IL, MI, NE, NM, OH	8	GA, IL, IA, MA, MI, NE, OH, SC
Transition-related state standards and/or course requirements for beginning professionals	34	AL, AR, CA, CO, DE, FL, GA, IL, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, MT, NV, NH, NY, NC, ND, OK, PA, RI, TN, TX, VT, VA, WA, WI, WY	33	AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, MD, MA, MN, MO, NV, NH, NM, NY, NC, OK, OR, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WI
<u>Career-technical education</u>				
Secondary transition credential	6	DE, MO, NY, OH, VT, VA	9	KS, ME, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, VA, VT
Disability-related state standards and/or course requirements for beginning professionals	3	AL, CA, CT	17	AL, AR, AZ, CA, GA, ID, IA, ME, MA, MO, NY, ND, OH, OR, PA, TN, VT
<u>Vocational rehabilitation</u>				
Secondary transition credential	1	NM ^a	3	IL ^a , MA ^a , NM ^a
Transition-related state standards and/or course requirements for beginning professionals	0		0	
Total number of states with transition-related credentials, standards, and/or course requirements for beginning professionals in SPED, CTE, and/or VR	37	AL, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, IL, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, MT, NH, NM, NV, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, PA, RI, SD, TX, VT, VA, WA, WI, WY	34	AL, AR, AZ, CA, DC, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, ME, MD, MA, MN, MO, ND, NV, NH, NM, NC, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SD, TN, UT, VT, VA, WY
Total number of states with no secondary transition credentials, standards and/or course requirements for beginning professionals in SPED, CTE, or VR ^b	13		17	

Note. ^aThese Rehabilitation Counseling credentials are available to school-based personnel and are not offered through the SVRA.

^bSome states without state-specific standards for special education certification/licensure indicate that they follow national CEC Professional Preparation Standards (i.e. Georgia, Idaho, Ohio, Utah in 2003; Kleinhammer-Tramill, et al.; Alabama, Arizona, Florida, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming in 2017). Because CEC standards address secondary transition, these states were included in the count of states with *transition-related credentials, standards, and/or course requirements* but were not included in the count of states with *transition-related state standards and/or course requirements*.