Do States Require Direct-Service Transition Professionals to Have Specialized Knowledge and Skills?

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Do States Require Direct-Service Transition Professionals to Have Specialized Knowledge and Skills? Examining Policy Changes Over Time and Future Directions

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Purpose
Secondary special educators, career-technical educators, and transition-focused rehabilitation counselors play a critical role in supporting youth to obtain positive post-school outcomes. States assume a central role in driving the quality of personnel preparation in transition through the establishment of state certification and licensure requirements. This poster session presents trends in state certification/licensure policies related to secondary transition and explores how states can leverage their credentialing systems to support personnel preparation in transition.

Method
We (Simonsen, Novak, & Mazzotti, in press) systematically reviewed legislative policies related to secondary transition credentialing structures in the 50 states, D.C., and U.S. territories. The review included a search of state education agency (SEA), state vocational rehabilitation agency (SRVA), and legislative websites followed by a data verification survey completed by SEA transition liaisons. Trends in the adoption of policies related to secondary transition were examined by comparing current state data with data from Kleinhammer-Tramill, Geiger, and Morningstar’s 2003 state policy study.

Results
Current Status of State Transition-related Credentialing Systems
States vary widely in their level of commitment and approaches to preparing pre-service professionals to meet the transition needs of youth with disabilities.

- 16 states have a credential option in special education, CTE, and/or VR available to professionals who complete advanced personnel preparation in secondary transition
- 33 states have transition-related professional standards or course requirements for beginning special educators
- 17 states have disability-related standards or course requirements for beginning career-technical educators

<table>
<thead>
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<th>State Agency</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<td>Special Education</td>
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<td>Secondary transition credential</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition-related state standards and/or course requirements</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career-Technical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability-related state standards and/or course requirements</td>
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<td>Vocational Rehabilitation</td>
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<td>Secondary Transition Credential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition-related state standards and/or course requirements</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of states with transition-related credentials, standards, and/or course requirements</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of states with NO transition-related credentials, standards and/or course requirements</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
Findings of this state-level analysis of transition credentialing policies 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.


Study results have implications for policy, practice, and future research directions. SEAs and SVRAs should:

- 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;
- investigate credentialing options to provide advanced preparation for transition specialists; and
- emphasize interdisciplinary knowledge and cross-agency collaboration in pre-service preparation and professional development.

Future research should:

- investigate the extent to which youth with disabilities receive transition services from educators and VR counselors who hold a secondary transition credential and
- compare postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities in states with and without transition-related credentialing structures.

References