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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.

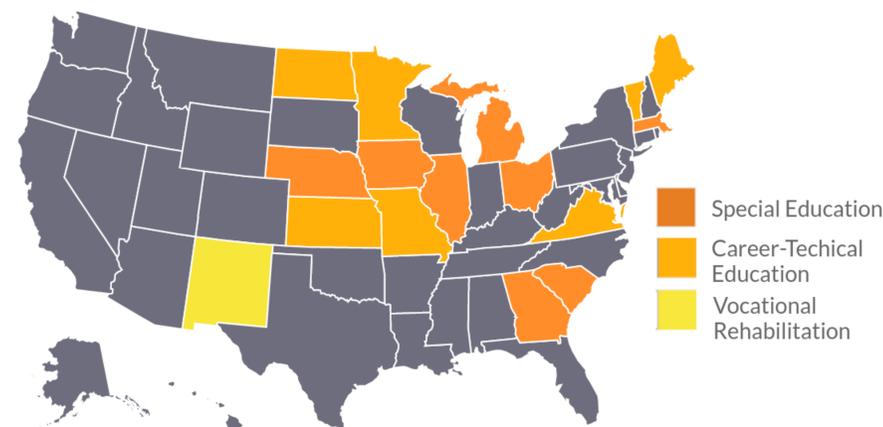
Results

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

States with Secondary Transition Credentials



Trends in State Secondary Transition Certification/Licensure Policies, 2003-2016

State Agency	2003	2016
Special Education		
➤ Secondary transition credential	7	8
➤ Transition-related state standards and/or course requirements	34	33
Career-Technical Education		
➤ Secondary transition credential	6	9
➤ Disability-related state standards and/or course requirements	3	17
Vocational Rehabilitation		
➤ Secondary Transition Credential	1	3
➤ Transition-related state standards and/or course requirements	0	0
Total # of states with transition-related credentials, standards, and/or course requirements	37	34
Total # of states with NO transition-related credentials, standards and/or course requirements	13	17

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.

Investment of state education and VR agencies in transition personnel preparation has not kept pace with personnel needs and advances in the establishment of evidence-based practices in secondary transition.

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

- Kleinhammer-Tramill, P. J., Geiger, W. L., & Morningstar, M. (2003). Policy contexts for transition personnel preparation: An analysis of transition-related credentials, standards, and course requirements in state certification and licensure policies. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 26, 185-206.
- Simonsen, M., Novak, J., & Mazzotti, V. (in press). Status of credentialing structures related to secondary transition: A state-level policy analysis. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*.