

**The Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities
Advisory Council's Report on
Access to Higher Education for
Persons with Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities**

Texas Education Code, Section 61.06641

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Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to serve as a resource, partner, and advocate for Texas higher education, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The THECB's core values are:

Accountability: We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

Efficiency: We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

Collaboration: We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

Excellence: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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Executive Summary

The Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 61.06641, authorized through the passage of Senate Bill 1017, 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to periodically review the policies and practices that increase access to higher education opportunities, distribute educational outreach marketing materials, and establish an advisory council on postsecondary education for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). According to the statute, the report should include historic and current higher education data and recommendations for changes to support success and achievement for persons with IDD in accessing higher education (TEC, Section 61.06641(k)). Reports are to be submitted to the governor and members of the Legislature by December 1 of each even-numbered year.

This report was prepared by members of the Members of the Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The information contained in this document was discussed and voted upon at regularly scheduled meetings in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Introduction

[Texas Education Code, Section 61.002\(c\)](#) states “postsecondary education . . . is an important public purpose” and that “. . . [Texas] can achieve its full economic and social potential only if every individual has the opportunity to contribute to the full extent of the individual's capabilities and only when financial barriers to the individual's economic, social, and educational goals are removed.”

Expanding postsecondary education options for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)¹ creates a pathway to meaningful credentials, competitive integrated employment,² and independent living with appropriate supports and services. Students with IDD who attend college are twice as likely to be employed, earn \$400 more per month than a peer who did not attend college, rely less on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and achieve a higher level of independent living (Sannicandro, 2019).

In the Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities' periodic review of policies and practices that increase access to higher education opportunities with intellectual and developmental disabilities, many ideas for improvement emerged. Our vision is to further opportunities, awareness, and inclusion for every person with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Texas who desires to pursue postsecondary education.

The advisory council believes that Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including those with the most severe intellectual and developmental disabilities, are capable of self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life – including postsecondary education. And we recognize that these Texans often require the provision of community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance to reach their goals.

It is important to understand that postsecondary education among students with IDD can take many different forms. Some people with IDD enroll in colleges and universities as full-time, degree-seeking students with little to no noticeable differences in terms of coursework or level of access and integration compared to their nondisabled peers. Others may enroll in postsecondary education programs specifically for students with intellectual disabilities (ID). These programs range in terms of credit (e.g., degree, nondegree, certificate), time to completion, location (e.g., two-year community college, four-year college or university), residential status (e.g., on-campus living opportunities, commuter program), and level of access and integration (i.e. extent to which program is immersed with other campus courses and activities) (Avellone, 2021).

Programs can have distinct coursework designed specifically for students with ID (i.e., substantially separate program), while others are designed to fully integrate students with ID

¹ “IDD” describes a group that includes either people with both intellectual disabilities (ID) and another developmental disability (DD) or a group that includes people with ID or another DD. See [Appendix A](#) for definitions of DD and ID.

² Competitive integrated employment is work that takes place in inclusive, typical work settings and for which employees, with and without disabilities, receive a competitive wage, as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)

into typical college courses with individualized supports to promote success (i.e., inclusive model). Others may offer a combination of both specialized and integrated courses, which is known as a mixed/hybrid model (Avellone, 2021). The form of postsecondary education pursued affects the availability and amount of financial support, community services, individualized supports, and other types of assistance students with IDD can obtain.

The purpose of this report is to aid in the removal of barriers that prevent individuals with IDD from reaching their economic, social, and educational goals. Students with IDD who attend postsecondary education are prepared to enter the workforce and talent pool to meet the needs of businesses in Texas and contribute to statewide economic growth. This report describes the issues and barriers to accessing higher education for persons with IDD and provides recommendations for changes to support higher education success and achievement for persons with IDD.

Report on Access to Higher Education for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Issue 1: Lack of Comprehensive Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs) are designed to support students with intellectual disabilities who want to continue academic, career, and independent living instruction to prepare for gainful employment. CTPs were created by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. The act defined the key requirements that all CTP programs must provide to students, gave a definition of a student with an intellectual disability, and opened up access to federal student aid for students with intellectual disability attending an approved CTP program, even if those students do not have a standard high school diploma or are not matriculating towards a degree (See [Appendix B](#) for program features).

To date, there are only four CTPs approved by the U.S. Department of Education in Texas (Federal Student Aid, n.d.). In a state as large as Texas, having only four CTPs is inadequate. To compare, there are seven in Tennessee, 10 in Ohio, nine in Georgia, and 19 in Florida. These states have pursued legislative approaches designed to increase college options for students with ID and to address affordability and quality.

For example, Senate Bill (SB) 672 (2016), or the Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program (FPCTP) Act, established the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities and provided funding at \$8 million to establish college programs for students with ID throughout the state. This comprehensive act established the FPCTP Scholarship at individual public higher education institutions in Florida, required that higher education institutions establishing CTPs submit formal plans detailing how they will create a fully inclusive environment and engage businesses in providing training and employment opportunities for students with disabilities, and established clear evaluation and accountability standards for comprehensive transition programs in Florida (Jernudd, 2019).

Conversations with stakeholders indicated that some Texas students are seeking CTPs in other nearby states due to limited options in Texas. CTP counts in neighboring states include five in Louisiana, one in New Mexico, three in Oklahoma, and four in Arkansas. But neighboring state legislatures are working to quickly increase their counts.

For example, Louisiana's SB 192 (2022) established a \$1,000,000 fund for the creation of Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSEs) at all public institutions of higher education, technical assistance for new programs, and public information about IPSEs. Oklahoma passed House Resolution 1065, a resolution supporting the development of CTP programs for students with ID, directing institutions of higher education (IHEs) to collaborate with governmental agencies to provide education to students with IDD through CTP programs. These partnerships also include private businesses that provide employment opportunities for the students and other national disability organizations that conduct research to share student outcomes. Increasing eligible institutions in the state will provide students with more financially feasible options for pursuing postsecondary education.

Recommendations to Address Lack of Comprehensive Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities:

- The Texas Legislature should direct Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a program to incentivize and support the creation and approval of additional CTPs within more institutions of higher education across Texas.
- THECB, in consultation with existing CTPs and Think College, an institute for promoting inclusive higher education options for people with IDD, should create training materials instructing IHEs and providing technical assistance on how to apply to become an approved CTP so that students with IDD who have exited high school are eligible to receive federal financial aid.
- Leverage partnerships to provide grants to allow IHEs to develop postsecondary educational programs on their college campuses or training schools that develop supports and services for students with IDD, especially in rural communities.

Issue 2: Lack of Funding Options for Postsecondary Education for Students with IDD

As students and their families look at college options, the question of how to pay for it is top of mind for most. Most students and their families use a combination of personal resources and supports from other funding sources to pay for college. Several funding options exist, including Federal Student Aid, Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, scholarships, veteran's benefits, and ABLE accounts. Yet, financing postsecondary education for students with IDD remains a challenge for many reasons. Lack of financial aid and funding options available for students with IDD prevents many students with IDD from pursuing postsecondary education.

For students with intellectual disabilities, there is essentially only one avenue for receiving federal financial aid: a Comprehensive Transition Program (Federal Student Aid, n.d.). As detailed above, there are only four approved CTPs in Texas. The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is a major funding source, but there is a lack of awareness among students, families, educators, and other stakeholders regarding help available to cover college costs while working to achieve employment goals. Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers can be used to fund a variety of supports and services for students with IDD (Parisi, 2019), but Texas maintains an incredibly lengthy interest list for HCBS waivers, with thousands waiting decades for a waiver to support their community living goals (Texas Health and Human Services, n.d.). It is also unclear what college-related supports and services could be covered through a HCBS waiver in Texas, with a lack of coordination, familiarity, and specificity regarding postsecondary education among Texas' Medicaid agency and IDD service providers.

Students with IDD can access a range of scholarships to help pay for college. However, because college programs for students with IDD are typically nondegree programs and/or full time, eligibility for scholarships can be extremely limited (Bates, 2022). The state of Arkansas passed [SB 58](#) in March 2022, a \$2,000,000 scholarship program through their Department of Education–Division of Higher Education Appropriation. This scholarship program supports students with IDD pursuing higher education. In Minnesota, the Grants for Students with

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities program provides financial assistance to eligible Minnesota resident students with IDD who attend eligible Minnesota postsecondary institutions. The grant program was established in fiscal year 2018 and has received \$800,000 total in state appropriations (Mol Sletten, 2021).

Proposals to Improve Lack of Funding Options for Postsecondary Education for Students with IDD

- Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation should consider ways to improve awareness of postsecondary education funding options with students with IDD, families, educators, and other stakeholders.
- Texas Health and Human Services should consider amending their federal waiver program applications to add a category for Education Support and specify postsecondary education as a covered service. Although amending a waiver is not necessary to add Education Support services, some states have done so to explicitly cover services such as mentors, tuition, and fees. In this way, Texas could be very specific in describing the parameters of the support it will provide. College for people with IDD aligns with public policy goals and delivers the outcomes intended by the HCBS waivers. These outcomes include increased employment, greater participation in the community, relationships with peers, independent living, and a greater sense of dignity and self-reliance.
- The Texas Legislature should direct the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish a scholarship program for students with disabilities to provide financial assistance in the payment of tuition and fees.

Issue 3: Use of Data Shared Between the TEA and THECB

Although both the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the THECB collect and share outcome data for students with IDD, there is an opportunity for collaboration to analyze and use the results to improve practices that directly impact improved outcome data for this population. In public education, kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12), outcome data on participation in higher education and employment can be located on the TEA website, the [Texas Public Education Information Resource](#) (TPEIR). To determine preparation for higher education, TPEIR tracks the number of students who participated in Advance Placement (AP) and dual credit courses. College admissions and enrollment is collected for Texas public school graduates enrolled in Texas public two- and four-year institutions. The data is disaggregated by institution, gender, ethnicity, and economically disadvantaged status.

Another data source in the TPEIR system is a more detailed look at the participation of former students in either college and/or employment. The data is drilled from the state level to the district level. When analyzing the available data on secondary experiences that are pathways to higher education and employment, the TPEIR provides information by state and district regarding students who participated in career and technical education (CTE) and enrolled in higher education and/or obtained employment for the fall semester following graduation. The data shows the percentage of graduates who were employed only, enrolled in college only, were both enrolled and employed, and students the TEA and THECB were unable to locate.

Table. 1. TPEIR Report on Texas Public High School Graduates Admissions and Enrollment in Texas Public Four-Year Colleges

College Admission and Enrollment by High School Graduation Year										
	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
High School Graduates	324,311	100.0%	334,424	100.0%	347,893	100.0%	355,615	100.0%	360,220	100.0%
College Applicants	113,385	35.0%	119,802	35.8%	123,665	35.6%	122,483	34.4%	125,930	35.0%
College Applicants Accepted	96,636	29.8%	104,172	31.2%	107,887	31.0%	107,555	30.2%	111,997	31.1%
College Applicants Accepted and Enrolled	65,866	20.3%	70,237	21.0%	71,226	20.5%	71,096	20.0%	70,096	19.5%
College Applicants Accepted Not Enrolled	30,770	9.5%	33,935	10.2%	36,661	10.5%	36,459	10.3%	41,901	11.6%
College Applicants Not Accepted	16,749	5.2%	15,630	4.7%	15,778	4.5%	14,928	4.2%	13,933	3.9%

Source: TPEIR system

Table 2 is an example of a district report. Local educational agencies (LEAs) track the data to identify postschool outcomes related to the state's previous higher education strategic plan, *60x30TX*, which was designed as a roadmap to assist the state in meeting the need for a skilled workforce by having at least 60% of Texans, ages 25-34, with a certificate or degree by 2030. To assist all Texans, ages 25-64, students with disabilities, including students with IDD, should be in the THECB's current strategic plan, *Building a Talent Strong Texas*, data collection, the TEA data collection for college, career, and military readiness (CCMR), and the CCMR outcome bonuses.

Table. 2. Sample TPEIR District Report of Public Four-Year College Applicants and Enrollment by High School Graduation Year

Texas Public Four-Year College Applicants and Enrollment by High School Graduation Year					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
High School Graduates	932	1,006	1,003	961	1,031
College Applicants	218	211	221	198	205
College Applicants Accepted and Enrolled	120	110	118	111	98
College Applicants Accepted Not Enrolled	63	70	62	44	73
College Applicants Not Accepted	35	31	41	43	34
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
College Applicants	23.4%	21.0%	22.0%	20.6%	19.9%
College Applicants Accepted and Enrolled	12.9%	10.9%	11.8%	11.6%	9.5%
College Applicants Accepted Not Enrolled	6.8%	7.0%	6.2%	4.6%	7.1%
College Applicants Not Accepted	3.8%	3.1%	4.1%	4.5%	3.3%

Note: % Percentage is calculated by number of each category divided the number of high school graduates.

Source: TPEIR system

The reports even show the Texas public colleges and universities where most students from a particular district attended. This is very useful information for both LEAs and IHEs as both plan for marketing, enrollment, and transition services at the LEA level.

Table. 3. Sample TPEIR Report of Enrollments by District High School Graduates

Top Texas Public Colleges and Universities by Fall College Enrollment of District High School Graduates			
Texas Public Colleges and Universities		2018-2019 High School Graduates	
		Number Enrolled	Percent Enrolled
1	Nhmcccd North Harris College	449	35.58%
2	Lone Star College - Houston No	82	6.50%
3	University Of Houston	72	5.71%
4	U. Of Houston-Downtown	66	5.23%
5	Nhmcccd Kingwood College	63	4.99%
6	Lone Star College (Lone Star Csd)	57	4.52%
7	Blinn College	55	4.36%
8	Texas A & M University	55	4.36%
9	Sam Houston State University	44	3.49%
10	U. Of Texas At Austin	42	3.33%
	All Other	277	21.95%
	Total	1,262	100.00%

Source: TPEIR system

In the category of employment, the system provides information regarding the employment of students from the district who are employed in specific industries. Due to lag data, the most recent report on college enrollment and employment outcomes, statewide, was for the year 2018-2019. In each report, the participation rate in college and/or employment was higher for students who participated in CTE.


Table 4 shows an example of longitudinal data collected by graduation type/program by TPEIR. Although the report includes data on students with disabilities served on an individual education program (IEP), the data was not disaggregated by disability. Other reports related to employment, participation in higher education, and participation in CTE for students with IDD or any disability were not included. Because the Texas Public Education Information System (PEIMS) collects information by disability, a data draw specific to graduates with IDD would be possible.

Table 4. TPEIR Report, High School Graduates Longitudinal Analysis

Texas PK-16 Public Education Information Resource

PSL-GR10

High School Graduates Longitudinal Analysis - Statewide



District Type: ISD/CSD

08/16/2022

Graduation Program	School Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Minimum High School Program		489	863	3,407	30,218	34,777	38,052	39,648	45,600	46,796	47,620
Recommended and Advanced High School Program		293	534	2,127	199,535	202,967	201,484	199,706	198,415	191,378	191,929
Distinguished Achievement and Advanced Honors Program		591	435	566	43,890	43,408	42,466	44,376	41,087	38,667	35,496
Individualized Education Program		702	1,030	1,684	5,126	5,757	6,376	6,504	7,123	7,522	7,830
Foundation High School Program		342,267	337,297	325,805	42,731	25,736	14,732	3,519			
Total Number of Graduates		344,342	340,159	333,589	321,500	312,645	303,110	293,753	292,225	284,363	282,875

Source: TPEIR system

TPEIR public reports can also be found on the [TEA Texas Student Data System \(TSDS\)](#).

Additional information on the Texas Public Education Information Resource

The Texas Public Education Information Resource data source is designed to provide information about students from pre-kindergarten (PK) through college and into the workforce. Included in the data set is information about high school graduates enrolled in higher education. The higher education data set is disaggregated by state, district, and campus.

Although the detailed data set includes economically disadvantaged students, emergent bilingual, English language learners, dropouts, ethnicity, and gender, the data in TPEIR does not include data on students with disabilities. Other information about TPEIR data:

- Students with a disability taking the SAT/ACT/TSIA2 are not required to disclose the disability.
- To meet the TSI criteria for accountability, a student must meet the minimum scores in both English language arts/reading (ELAR) and mathematics via the SAT, ACT, TSIA, or by earning credit for a college prep course. The purpose of the activities under CCMR is to facilitate student preparedness for college, the workforce, or the military. The inclusion of students with disabilities in CCMR activities and the CCMR accountability, with a mission to prepare all students for college and the workforce, should result in improved outcomes for all students with disabilities including students with IDD.
- In June 2022, CCMR outcomes for ACT, SAT, and TSIA2, as well as other data were added to the TSDS PEIMS data reporting. Because PEIMS includes disability categories, participation in the ACT, SAT, and TSIA for students with disabilities should be available, including IDD data.
- Although there are tutorials and test preparation activities for students to participate in or improve scores in the ACT, SAT, and TSIA2, it is unknown if specialized tutorials are provided for students with IDD. This would be beneficial since the TSIA2 is required to participate in entry-level college courses without restrictions and certificate programs of one year or less at a public institution. These are referred to as Level One Certificates.
- The Student Information System (SIS), which is kept by the campus and transfers information to the TSDS, contains enrollment, student addresses, disability categories, and other student-specific information systems. The information is then pulled from TSDS for specialized reports.
- Under the College and Career Indicator is a category “Achieving College Readiness,” which is obtained by meeting the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standards and is maintained by the school. In the data software, each student record has a click box to identify if the student is served by special education or 504. This appears to be another data source that could be disaggregated and shared in the TPEIR specific to IDD and pathway data to post-school outcomes.
- Beginning in 2022 accountability ratings, the TSIA2 data is considered in the CCMR credit for 2020-2021 graduates and nongraduating 12th graders.
- On-Point Data is another data software used at the Regional Education Service Center (ESC) level where one person in special education (SPED) works with the PEIMS division

at the ESC to enter and verify special education data. On-Point Data could be used to pull data by disability category, Instructional Arrangement (IA), etc. in SPED software. It could pull any district in the state by campus and by a student, which includes SPED, 504, and CTE enrollment. It is a data warehouse that provides detailed reports. It also includes participation in the ACT by disability category but not SAT or TSIA II.

- The state website, TXSchools.gov, contains interactive accountability reports for 2022 by district, school, and open-enrollment charter schools. The reports for 2022 were published on August 15, 2022.
- TPEIR data can be found on the [Texas Public Education Information Resource website](#).
- In 2019, the 86th Texas Legislative Session passed House Bill 3 (HB 3) permitting the state to reimburse districts the number of fees paid by the district for the administration of college preparation assessment. Eligible students may take one ACT, SAT, or TSIA in the spring of their junior year or during their senior year for free (at state cost). The TEA entered a contract with the College Board to negotiate a state rate. According to the [TEA website](#), both the student and the teacher have an active role in exam preparation. To assist in the preparation, the following tools are available:
 - Students have access to free SAT Daily Practice tools on a mobile app, the Khan Academy tailored practice plan, goals for SAT practice, and eight full-length practice tests.
 - Educators have access to a Coaches Playbook, a teacher implementation guide, e-modules to become familiar with the SAT, and the K-12 Reporting Portal to pinpoint students' strengths and weaknesses that can be used to develop lesson plans and outreach resources.
 - Preparation information for the Texas Success Initiative Assessment2 (TSIA2) can be found in a brochure for students.
 - The preparation and participation in the assessments align with the [TEA](#) and the state's strategic plan, *Building a Talent Strong Texas*, goal for at least 60% of Texans ages 25-64 to have a certificate or degree by 2030. By taking a college preparation assessment, both agencies state Texas students expand the number of postsecondary options available to them.

Recommendations for the Use of Data Shared Between the TEA and THECB

- Include postsecondary outcome data for students with disabilities, including students with IDD in the TPEIR and TSDS reports.
- Identify school districts that offer dual credit/concurrent enrollment opportunities for students with IDD.
- Provide time for the advisory council and the THECB to research how students with IDD and their families can learn about and be encouraged and/or supported in enrolling for credit-earning courses in high school.
- Appoint a strategic planning committee to identify shared data and analyze outcome data to set a baseline for the participation of students with IDD in career and technical

education. There is a correlation between participation in CTE and positive postschool outcomes in higher education and employment.

- The strategic planning committee should identify strengths and needs related to the transition services in K-12 that facilitate the preparation for and participation in college and/or employment for students with IDD.

Issue 4: The State Performance Plan Indicator 14 (SPPI-14)

To monitor special education transition services outcomes, each year, the TEA must conduct a post-school follow-up activity to contact students with disabilities on an IEP who exited in the previous school year, one year out from graduating, dropping out, or aging out of school. The “Post School Outcomes Survey” is conducted by the TEA Student-Centered Transitions Network (SCTN) led by the Garrett Center on Transition and Disability Studies at Sam Houston State University. The survey is based on data collected for the State Performance Plan Indicator 14 (SPPI-14), Post-School Outcomes, which is a statutory requirement under the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004](#).

Contacts are made first to the former student and, if necessary, to the parent or adult who was given as a secondary contact. To reach the students, Texas contacts over 30,000 former students each year using email, text messages, mail such as postcards and paper surveys, and phone calls. A set of survey questions are answered to obtain the post-school outcomes.

The following tables display the type of data available in the state report, as well as a report for each regional Education Service Center and each LEA with a respondent number (n) of 10 or more. In 2022, the “n” was reduced to five respondents to obtain information and provide reports to small districts, which represent almost 600+ districts in Texas. The data in Table 5 is from the most recent report, ["Indicator 14: Texas' Post School Outcomes Survey,"](#) published December 2021.

Table 5. Representatives of Responding Sample, by Disability, SPPI-14 Report, 2021

Characteristic	Population	Responding Sample	Difference (percentage points)
Primary Disability			
Auditory Impairment	1.5%	1.6%	<1 pp
Autism	10.8%	16.2%	+5.4 pp
Deaf-Blind	0.1%	0.1%	–
Emotional Disturbance	9.0%	8.7%	<1 pp
Intellectual Disability	12.3%	13.3%	1.0 pp
Learning Disability	48.6%	40.8%	-7.8%
Orthopedic Impairment	0.7%	0.7%	–
Other Health Impairment	15.2%	16.5%	1.3 pp
Speech Impairment	0.6%	0.6%	–
Traumatic Brain Injury	0.4%	0.6%	<1 pp
Visual Impairment	0.8%	0.9%	< 1 pp

Source: "Indicator 14: Texas' Post School Outcomes Survey"

The following table provides information on the participation rate in three categories, participation in higher education (Part A), participation in competitive employment (Part B), and the combination of participation in A, B, or both A and B (Part C).

Table 6. SPPI-14 Post School Outcomes Survey Participation Results, 2020 and 2021

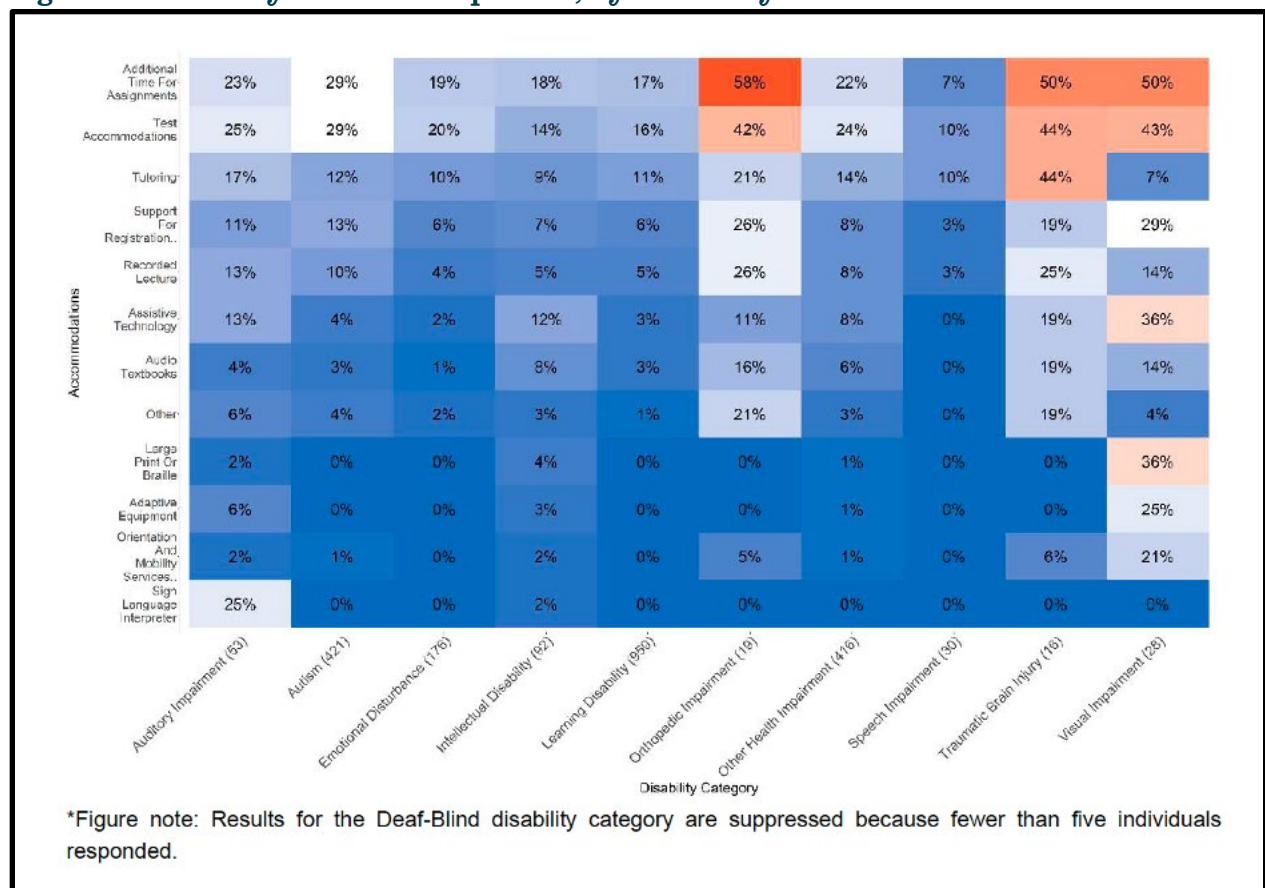
The table below includes the Indicator 14 results from last year (2019-20) and from this year (2020-21).		
	2019-20	2020-21
Number of Responses	6,257	7,222
Part A (Higher Education)	20%	24%
Part B (Competitively Employed + Part A)	51%	53%
Part C (Other Education or Employment + Part A + Part B)	64%	65%

Source: "Indicator 14: Texas' Post School Outcomes Survey"

Of the 2,211 students who attended a university or community college, approximately 841 students contacted the Office of Disability Services (38%). The most requested support from disability services was additional time on assignments (57%), test accommodations (56%), tutoring (32%), support with registration/scheduling, accessing services, and finding a personal assistant (22%). Recorded lectures and other supports represented fewer requests by students. Only 14% requested assistive technology while 10% requested audiobooks.

Figure 1 represents the disability services requested, by disability. Although the percentage tends to mirror other exceptionalities, students with ID had a higher request rate for assistive technology.

Figure 1. Disability Services Requested, by Disability

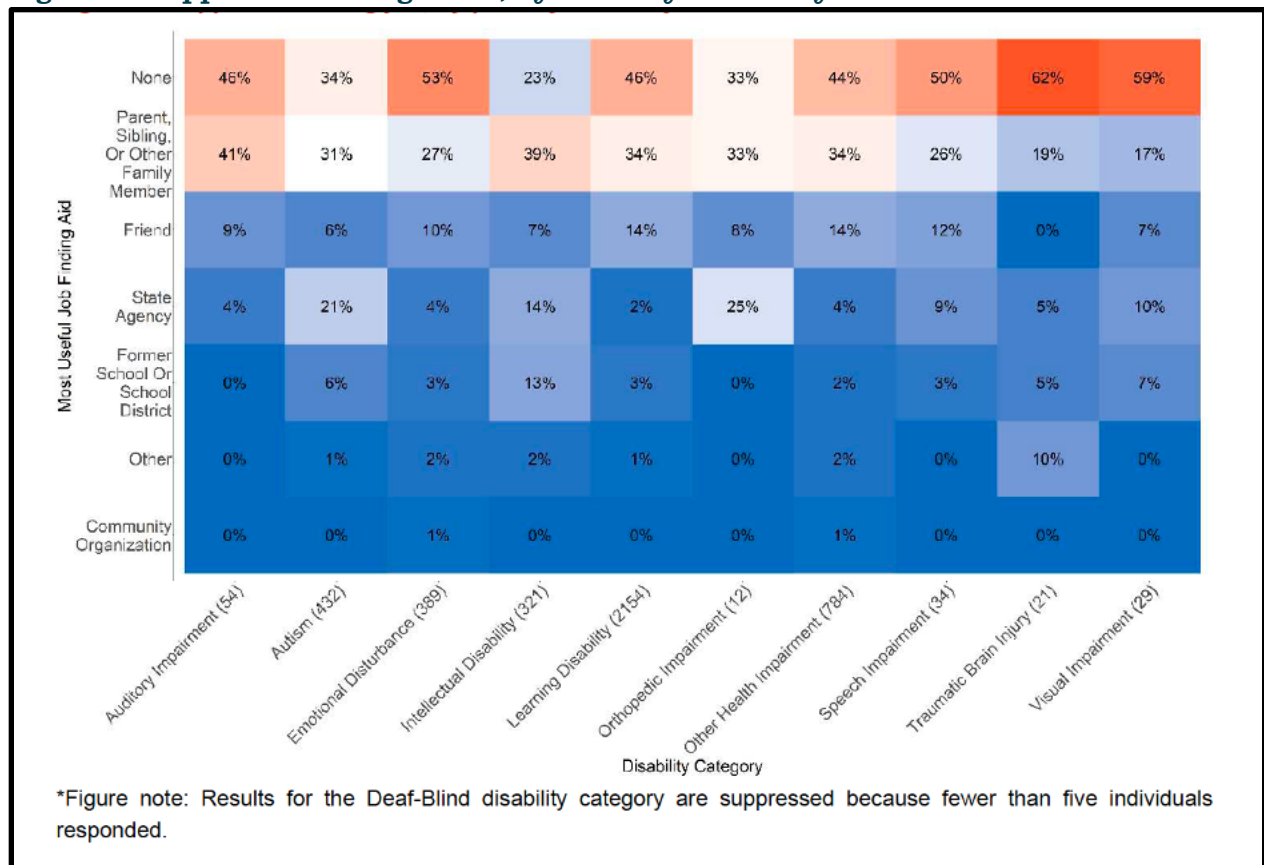


Source: "Indicator 14: Texas' Post School Outcomes Survey"

Regarding employment, 43% of students indicated they did not have support obtaining a job and "I got the job myself," while 33% indicated a parent, sibling, or other family member assisted them in obtaining employment. Only 6% of students said the Texas Workforce Vocational Rehabilitation helped them to find a job. Only 4% indicated the district assisted them in finding employment.

Figure 2 provides information regarding who assisted in the job acquisition by disability category. For students with ID, 23% stated they obtained the job by themselves, while 39% stated they had assistance, 14% indicated TWC-VR assisted in helping them to find employment, and 13% said the school district assisted them to find employment.

Figure 2. Support Obtaining a Job, by Primary Disability



Source: "Indicator 14: Texas' Post School Outcomes Survey"

According to the TPEIR, the total number of students who applied and enrolled in higher education in 2020 was 19.5%. For SPPI-14, the data is self-report, and although the number of students participating in higher education was 24%, it is unknown how many applied.

Recommendations for the Use of SPPI-14 Data by LEAs and IHEs

- It is recommended there be a data collection method that provides improved reliability between the two agency data sets.
- It is also recommended both agencies determine a process for LEAs and IHEs to use the data to improve participation and outcomes for all students with disabilities, including students with IDD, to improve postsecondary preparation activities, support for students with disabilities in higher education, and facilitate improved outcomes on *Building a Talent Strong Texas*.
- Transition services are a state and federal requirement in the IEP for students ages 14 and over, and they begin with a transition assessment. The strengths and needs found in the transition assessment results are used to develop the postsecondary goals for transition services and the annual goals to facilitate transition services. To develop an appropriate IEP designed to facilitate successful participation in postsecondary education, it is recommended that:

- Admissions, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committees consider what accommodations will be available and provided at IHEs and prepare or transition students to using those accommodations while still in high school.
- Educators consider using release tests or practice tests from the PSAT, SAT, ACT, or Texas Success Initiative Assessment 2 (TSIA2) as a transition assessment tool. The TSIA2 is more likely aligned with the postsecondary requirements for students with IDD.
- Educators and middle and high school counselors be familiar with accommodations for college entrance exams. For example, the PSAT must be addressed in middle school due to the timeline requirements of the College Board to approve the use of accommodations by a student taking the PSAT in high school.
- High school counselors should be trained to counsel and support students with disabilities participating in postsecondary education assessments, including students with IDD.
- Counselors in the office for students with disabilities services at IHEs should be trained to support students with IDD, as well as other disabilities.

Issue 5: TWS-VRS and Disability Service Office Coordination on Campuses

Texas Workforce Commission is the state agency charged with overseeing and providing workforce development services to employers and job seekers of Texas. Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) operates under TWC and TWS to support youth and adults with disabilities. TWS-VRS is the state agency with the primary focus to assist people with disabilities in obtaining integrated, competitive employment. TWS-VRS services may include vocational counseling, evaluation and assessment, guidance and assistance with job placement, time-limited job coaching, training programs, technology services, and vehicle and home modifications. According to the [VR Office Locator](#), there are 57 VR locations across Texas that specialize in VR services for students.

The disability services office (DSO) at each college coordinates accommodations for students with permanent and temporary disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. DSOs offer accommodations to help level the playing field and create opportunities for success for students with disabilities. Accommodations to students may include: peer volunteer note-taking, extended test time, alternative test-taking location, readers, scribes, Oral or ASL interpreter services, adaptive equipment, assistive technology, tape recorders for classroom use, alternate format reading material, and/or in-class accommodations.

Staff at DSOs would benefit from greater awareness of the services and counselors available through TWS-VRS for students with IDD. One promising way to increase awareness and coordination is by creating a co-located one-stop shop for students with IDD to secure their postsecondary education supports.

Recommendations for TWS-VRS and Disability Service Office Coordination on Campuses

- TWS-VRS should connect with every public institution of higher education in Texas to increase awareness of their services and counselors for students with IDD among disability service offices.
- THECB, college and/or university campus administration, and the Texas Workforce Commission should consider piloting the creation of a co-located space between TWS-VRS and their disability service office to collect data on potential use and its effect on student outcomes. A formal memorandum of understanding should be considered between partners to implement this strategy.

Issue 6: Lack of IHE IDD Program Outcomes Data or Transparency

Currently, no data collection is in place at the state level to monitor the outcomes of students with IDD attending IHEs. Therefore, the outcomes of students with IDD graduating or completing postsecondary education programs are unknown. For students and families weighing their postsecondary education program options, there is not a centralized hub of information containing metrics to measure the value or potential impact of a postsecondary education. For THECB, TEA, TWC, and the Texas Legislature, there is not a reliable data source to evaluate and assess returns on investments, incentives, or the impact of policy changes. Examining the outcomes and experiences of IDD postsecondary education program alumni would aid in the decision-making process for all.

Proposals to Improve Lack of IHE IDD Program Outcomes Data or Transparency

- IHE IDD programs should adopt a standard survey to examine the outcomes and experiences of their alumni. Survey metrics could include post-graduation success, cost and value, alumni attachment, collegiate experiences, and well-being. This information should be publicly shared and comparable to other IHEs.
- TWC and THECB should jointly require IHEs to conduct a post-school follow-up study and provide a report on outcomes for students with IDD one and three years from graduation or completion of the program. This data should be leveraged and analyzed to support growth in student success and institutional processes.
 - Specific indicators could include the number of students applying for a program, acceptance data, completion of a specific program, an indicator to denote a certificate of completion, and if the certification was an industry-based certification (IBC) for a specific trade or a standard university diploma.
 - Employment outcome data should also be collected to determine if employment is related to the training program or certificate. If a student does not complete the program, collect data to identify barriers to completion, such as the need for attendant care, transportation, costs, etc.

Issue 7: Lack of Postsecondary Education Program Standards

As new postsecondary education programs for students with IDD are established in Texas, it is critical they meet some degree of quality, inclusion, and meaningful education. There are no existing standards for postsecondary education programs for students with IDD in Texas, meaning students and families must proceed with an abundance of caution to ensure a program meets their expectations and delivers. Further, IHEs do not have program standards to create, expand, or enhance high-quality, inclusive postsecondary education to support positive outcomes for Texans with IDD.

Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston has developed standards, quality indicators, and benchmarks for inclusive higher education for comprehensive postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities (Grigal, 2012). There are only four federally designated comprehensive postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities currently approved in Texas and having standards for all programs in Texas would be beneficial for all involved.

Recommendations to Improve the Lack of Program Standards

- THECB should develop program standards using [Think College standards](#) as an example.
- The Texas Legislature should incentivize programs that meet or exceed the program standards developed by THECB.

Issue 8: Lack of Equal Access to Employment Experiences

Many disciplines and college departments are requiring internships as a part of a student's degree plan. This is a significant component for college students to experience working in their field of choice. It also provides opportunities for college students to make connections and network. It is especially critical for students with disabilities to have these types of hands-on experiences and exposure before transitioning to the workforce. College career and employer services programs offer some support in this area, but if they partnered with student disability services offices and the TWS-VRS program, students with disabilities would have not only more opportunities for internships or paid employment opportunities, but also the support to make such opportunities meaningful for bolstering their chances of employment after graduation.

Recommendation to Improve Lack of Equal Access to Employment Experiences

- College career and employer services programs, student disability services offices, and the TWS-VRS program should work together to identify and provide students with IDD the same opportunities that nondisabled college students have for obtaining employment experiences through work study, internships, or other paid employment in college to increase post-graduation employment rates.

Issue 9: Lack of THECB IDD Recruitment Survey Response from IHEs

[THECB](#) reports there are 254 IHEs in Texas. Only 26 IHEs participated in the THECB's IDD recruitment survey, with eight (3%) reporting recruiting activities that target students with IDD (THECB, 2020). Among these eight, three institutions recruited students with IDD into a postsecondary program, and six recruited students with IDD into general academic courses. Responses from all 254 IHEs in Texas are needed for an accurate account of postsecondary recruitment efforts for students with IDD.

Recommendations for Lack of IDD Recruitment Survey Response from IHEs

- Increase survey participation from Texas IHEs to have a more accurate account of efforts to recruit students with IDD. Only 26 institutions participated in 2020.
- THECB should require IHEs to include IDD recruiting data with existing mandatory reporting to THECB.
- THECB should identify the appropriate IHE representative to provide reliable data entry and add that individual to the assurances from an IHE that the mandate will be followed.

Issue 10: Lack of Programs and Services at IHEs to Support Students With IDD

THECB currently reports 34 IHEs (13% of all Texas IHEs) provide postsecondary programs and/or services for students with IDD (THECB, 2020). It is unknown if more programs exist but are not reported to THECB; however, more postsecondary programs and services that support students with IDD are needed across Texas IHEs.

Recommendations for Lack of Programs and Services at IHEs to Support Students with IDD

- Texas Legislature should assure that each Education Service Center Region has a minimum of two postsecondary education programs for students with IDD in each of the 20 ESC Regions.
- THECB should collect information from IHEs to identify the support IHEs need to create postsecondary programs and supports for students with IDD.
- THECB should convene a strategic planning meeting to develop incentives for IHEs to implement and expand postsecondary programs for students with IDD, with the results and recommendations shared with the Texas Legislature, TEA, and the state advocacy community.
- THECB should offer a request for proposals (RFP) to conduct a study that will identify the postsecondary education programs and services for students with IDD, as well as program components, outcome data, and eligibility requirements.

Issue 11: Lack of Partnerships Between Institutions of Higher Education and Local Education Agencies

More collaborations and partnerships are needed between Texas IHEs and local education agencies to support students with IDD, their families, and their educators with the transition to postsecondary education (THECB, 2020).

Recommendations for Lack of Partnerships Between IHEs and LEAs

- THECB should oversee collaborations between IHE and LEAs that will facilitate communication on postsecondary programs and services that support students with IDD, as well as interventions and strategies that have been successful.
- Through dissemination at state conferences (Texas Transition Conference, Texas Association of Vocational Adjustment Coordinators, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education), IHEs should share with LEAs the interventions and strategies that have been successful in supporting students with IDD in postsecondary education.
- Add the interventions and strategies as an activity to develop resource materials for LEAs by the Texas Transition Network to be posted on the Texas Education Agency network website for Texas Transition.
- The TEA should develop a recommendation using the TEA correspondence tool “To the Administrator Addressed,” and the THECB should develop a recommendation communication to the IHE disability services staff, to train support personnel for students with disabilities regarding behavior as a barrier to accessing inclusive environments. In 2018, the THECB funded a grant to train educators and behavior specialists in functional behavior assessment and intervention plan procedures to overcome barriers to future participation in higher education and/or employment. The [free THECB training materials](#) are available at the Region 13 Education Service Center in Austin in the Texas State Leadership Autism Training network.

Issue 12: Inconvenient Timing of IHE Recruitment Activities

Family and prospective students are often unable to attend IHE recruitment activities for postsecondary programs and services that support students with IDD, due to the time of day the recruitment activities are currently offered. This prohibits students with IDD and their families from learning about postsecondary education options for students with IDD.

Recommendations for Inconvenient Timing of IHE Recruitment Activities

- IHEs should provide recruitment activities in partnership with LEAs and ESCs to identify times for recruitment activities that better meet the needs of families in their LEA and ESC regions.
- IHEs should provide online recruitment activities, such as recorded webinars, that can be posted on IHE websites and other media outlets.

Issue 13: Transportation Challenges with Accessing IHE Recruitment Activities

Transportation issues can affect family and prospective student attendance at IHE recruitment activities (THECB, 2020). This prohibits students with IDD and their families from accessing the information on postsecondary education options for students with IDD.

Recommendations for Transportation Challenges with Accessing IHE Recruitment Activities

- IHEs should lead partnerships with LEAs and ESCs to identify locations that meet the needs of the families within their LEA and ESC regions.
- IHEs should provide online recruitment activities, such as recorded webinars, that can be posted on the IHE websites and other media outlets.
- LEAs should invite IHEs with programs and supports for students with IDD to come speak to their families and students.
- LEAs should provide transportation for students with IDD to attend IHE recruiting events.
- IHEs, LEAs, and community organizations, such as centers for independent living, should partner to address travel planning related to transition.

Issue 14: IHE Lack of Time and Staff for Recruitment

IHEs report insufficient time and staff to effectively recruit students with IDD (THECB, 2020). Without time and staff dedicated to recruitment, students with IDD, their families, and their educators lack the knowledge of postsecondary programs and services available.

Recommendations for IHE Lack of Time and Staff for Recruitment

- THECB should support IHEs in identifying funding sources to support recruitment activities.
- THECB should offer an RFP for recruitment activities for postsecondary education programs and services.
- IHEs should use current college recruiters to provide information to LEAs, students, and families about programs and services that support students with IDD.
- LEAs should include information about programs and services that support students with IDD during their college events for students in general education. IHEs can then follow up with more specific information.

Issue 15: Lack of Awareness About Postsecondary Education Programs

Current recruiting activities for students with IDD to postsecondary education do not provide sufficient information about programs and supports that exist for students with IDD. This is a barrier to students with IDD accessing postsecondary education.

Currently, programs and services for students with IDD are listed on the [THECB site](#), but the information is not easily found. For families and students unaware of where to seek that information, navigating the website could prove difficult. Adding components to the webpage could help students and families understand the differences in the types of programs and services available.

Recommendations for Lack of Awareness About Postsecondary Education Programs

- THECB should require IHEs with programs, services, and supports for individuals with IDD to provide information on the IHEs' websites (both private and public IHEs). This will ensure students with IDD and their families will be informed of all options.
- THECB should require IHE recruiters to be informed of programs, services, and supports for individuals with IDD. IHE recruiters should share programs and services that support students with IDD at all recruiting events.
- IHEs should communicate participant requirements and eligibility on the website and other media outlets.
- THECB should place reports (e.g., "Report on the Recruitment of Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at Public Institutions of Higher Education in Texas") in an easier-to-find location on the THECB website.
- THECB should advertise through media outlets when reports (e.g., "Report on the Recruitment of Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at Public Institutions of Higher Education in Texas") become available.
- THECB should offer an RFP to conduct a study of and build a database to provide specific information (e.g., eligibility, length of the program, costs, graduate outcomes) on postsecondary education programs and services for students with IDD in Texas to students, families, educators, and stakeholders. For example, added categories could more effectively organize information in a manner that helps students differentiate services, allowing them to narrow down programs that best fit their individual needs. A suggestion of these services could include the following:
 - Type of Program (Degree Seeking, Certificate Program)
 - Services Provided (Day Program, Weekly Meetings, Wraparound Services, Life Skills Development, Social Skills Development, Mental Health Supports, Modified Housing Services, Social Events, Workshops, Job Skills Training, Tutoring Services, Mentoring)
 - Duration of Program (Semesterly, Annually, Certain Number of Months)
 - Format (On-Campus, Online, Hybrid)
 - Financial Aid Available (Scholarships, State Funding Opportunities, Grant Funded)
- THECB should offer an RFP for the development of state resources that educate students, families, and stakeholders on the difference between rights under the

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Issue 16: Inefficient Application Processes for Admission to Programs

Postsecondary education programs for students with IDD do not use ApplyTexas or any other unified online college submission system (e.g. Common Application, Coalition Application, or Universal College Application) to allow students to complete one application and submit it to multiple IHEs. Therefore, students with IDD and their families must complete multiple applications that often ask for the same information for each school to which they apply. And on the other side of the coin, all IHEs must maintain their own separate systems or methods for collecting applications.

Recommendations for Inefficient Application Processes for Admission to Programs

- THECB should lead a project, in collaboration with existing IDD college programs, to offer a centralized means for both Texans and non-Texas students with IDD to apply to postsecondary education programs available in Texas. ApplyTexas should be considered as an option for the submission system used by all IDD college programs.
- IHEs with postsecondary programs for students with IDD should consider adopting or replicating the Coalition Application created by the [Coalition for Change](#), which allows students to begin building a portfolio about themselves in the 9th grade.

Issue 17: Foster Care Students with IDD Lack Support and Coordination to Pursue Postsecondary Education

In January 2022, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) reported 53% of children in DFPS care have at least one type of disability (TDFPS, 2022). In fact, students in foster care are almost 2.5 times more likely to receive special education services compared to their peers.

Texas students in foster care navigate unique risk factors that impact academic achievement; physical, mental, and emotional well-being; and access to postsecondary opportunities. For instance, students in foster care are more likely to be highly mobile, moving from school to school. These frequent moves disrupt academic and functional skills acquisition and place them at a greater risk of dropping out, with decreased likelihood of pursuing postsecondary opportunities. In 2022, in its “Foster Care & Student Success” guide, The Texas Education Agency reported that in the 2019-20 school year, nearly 20% of all students in foster care made at least one school move. In that same year, 25% of students in foster care dropped out of school (TEA, 2022). The guide states:

“In 2017, DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board exchanged state data for the first time on the outcomes of higher education for students formerly in foster care. The data revealed that out of the 33% of students formerly in foster care who enrolled in higher education within seven years of turning eighteen-years old, 1.5% obtained a Bachelor’s Degree, 0.5% obtained an Associate Degree, and 1.5% earned a certification in a technical field.” (p.15)

All students in foster care are appointed an education decision-maker by DFPS who is responsible for making decisions regarding the education of the minor child or, in some circumstances, where the student is eligible to remain in foster care until the age of 22 (TDFS, n.d.). Additionally, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires local education agencies (LEAs) to involve parents or the person standing in parental relation in Admission, Review, and Dismissal meetings to decide special-education and related services. However, the liaison or appointed surrogate parent may not be well-prepared to advocate for the student's individualized education plan without consistent collaboration with the LEA, DFPS, the student, and others who may be supporting the student during transition.

Beginning at age 16, children in foster care may take a Preparation for Adult Living course to learn about adult living. These courses are offered by various providers across Texas, in person or online, through University of North Texas. However, currently these courses do not cover Texas programs for persons with IDD and students must be assessed to determine appropriateness (TDFS, n.d., *PAL*). Additionally, TEA publications pertaining to foster youth transition to postsecondary opportunities exclude programs specially designed for people with IDD.

Students with IDD in foster care should have the opportunity to benefit from a full array of options and cross-coordination of services and supports to access postsecondary opportunities in the community of their choice. This includes awareness of enrollment and funding for programs, housing options and affordability, classroom accommodations, health care, and job training and employment support; things that are all indicators of success.

Recommendations for Foster Care Students with IDD Lacking Coordination to Pursue Postsecondary Education

- LEAs, TEA, and DFPS should strengthen communication and collaboration with the ARD committee, including the student, beginning at or before 14 years of age, to develop, monitor, and revise as necessary a comprehensive, person-centered postsecondary plan that includes supporting the academic and functional strengths and needs of the student to promote success after graduation from high school.
 - ARD committee members should collaborate in ARD committee meetings to develop and monitor progress on IEPs and engage in IEP transition planning that is coordinated with the Child Protective Services (CPS) personal graduation plans (PGP).
 - TEA should incorporate public college programs for IDD into the Transition Living Resource Guide, the Foster Care and Student Success Chapter 13 Manual, and the Preparation for Adult Living course.
 - TEA should develop a policy to identify and code students in foster care in PIEMS in real time.
 - TEA and DFPS should enhance interagency collaboration to develop a process for highly mobile students in foster care who are transitioning to another campus to ensure that IEP goals, accommodations and modifications, and related services seamlessly follow the student to the receiving school.

- TEA should adopt rules to create an IEP supplement that is considered for all students in foster care, including a checklist for transition-aged youth with an IEP.
- TEA should require LEA Foster Care Liaisons to connect with the college, university, technical school, or vocational program of the student's choice to initiate a supportive transition prior to high school graduation.
- TEA, DFPS, and THECB should add outcome data related to students in foster care with IDD. One critical area of need for data collection is the student population with IDD who are in the state foster care system. Under Texas law, students in foster care may attend postsecondary education funded by the state. It is not known if the foster care system pays for students with IDD who were in foster care to attend postsecondary programs for students with IDD.

Issue 18: Foster Care Students with IDD Face Financial Barriers When Pursuing Postsecondary Education

It is not clear what the foster care system pays for students with IDD who were in foster care to attend an IHE. There are three college programs and resources for DFPS foster youth, adopted youth, and certain youth that exit to a parent or nonparent or enter the PCA program. These include the State College and Tuition Waiver, the Education and Training Voucher program, and the federal Preparation for Adult Living Services program. The number of students with IDD who are or were in foster care and are attending college is unknown, and whether they are using the State College Tuition Waiver is also unknown.

According to the DFPS Transitional Living Services Program, the Education and Training Voucher program can only apply to schools and programs that have been accredited or granted pre-accreditation status by an agency or organization that has been recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education (DFPS Transitional Living Services Program, 2017). Postsecondary education programs for students with IDD may not have this status. In addition, the Education and Training Voucher program requires students to be enrolled in at least six semester hours (or three semester hours for dual credit or summer courses) in an IHE (TDFPS, 2022, *ETV*). This six-hour threshold might be a barrier to using the voucher program when a light course load is needed.

Often, students who age out of foster care do not have stable housing. For example, some students living in dorms may not have any place to live during the long school holidays or summer semester breaks. For students with IDD, this could be even more challenging considering housing accessibility needs. There is inadequate information regarding the availability, use, and cost of housing during semester breaks for students with IDD currently or formerly in foster care and are attending college.

Recommendations for Foster Care Students with IDD Facing Financing Barriers When Pursuing Postsecondary Education

- The Texas Legislature, DFPS, and TEA should identify and eliminate cumbersome financial barriers and fees associated with college programs for students with IDD who are or were in foster care.

- In their implementation of Texas Education Code, Section 61.0909, THECB and DFPS should provide educational outcomes data regarding students with IDD. At minimum, the DFPS report to THECB should identify how many students with IDD who are or were in foster care are attending college and whether they are using the tuition waiver. (These funds can apply toward fees associated with college programs that support students with disabilities who are or were in foster care.)
- The advisory council recommends adjusting semester course load requirements under the Education and Training Voucher program so students with IDD who are or were in foster care can access financial support while enrolled in fewer hours if needed (DFPS Transitional Living Services Program, 2017).
- The advisory council, with support from THECB, DFPS, and Texas Higher Education Foster Care Liaisons, should examine the availability, use, and cost of housing during breaks for current and former students in foster care with IDD pursuing postsecondary opportunities.

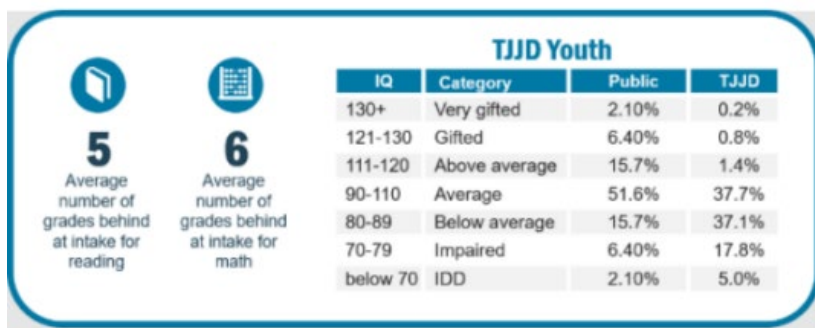
Issue 19: Postsecondary Education is Inaccessible to Incarcerated Youth and Adults with IDD

Persons with IDD are overrepresented in both the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems; however the criminal legal system in Texas does not track data when an individual is diagnosed, so current estimates are conservative. Additionally, we know that many individuals who go undiagnosed and may not be included in those conservative estimates (Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, 2020).

Among the numerous people with lived experience in the criminal justice system, the consensus remains that incarcerated persons with IDD are not considered as capable of or wanting to pursue postsecondary opportunities. This misconception and lack of awareness is reflected in Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) and Texas Department Criminal Justice's (TDCJ) definitions of IDD, which primarily uses an IQ threshold. This does not capture the full spectrum of individuals with IDD and may prevent persons with IDD from accessing accommodations that are guaranteed by federal and state laws.

Figure 3. Texas Juvenile Justice Department Youth, Learning Issues, by IQ

Learning Issues



Source: Texas Juvenile Justice Department "Sunset Self-Evaluation Report"

The TJJD, currently under review by the Texas Sunset Commission, acknowledged in their self-evaluation report that the agency lacks data and awareness about the incarcerated IDD population (Texas Juvenile Justice Department, 2021). The Sunset Commission Staff Report further highlights gaps in access to information and transparency and noted that TJJD does not use respectful person-first language, which influences attitudes toward people with disabilities (Sunset Advisory Commission, 2022).

“The governing statutes for TJJD contain terms that are not consistent with the person-first respectful language initiative. The agency’s Sunset bill should revise the statutes to use person-first respectful language as needed.” (p.70)

To further complicate things, the current crisis in the TJJD with staffing has led to almost complete shutdown of programming (McCullough, 2022). There is also no indication via [TJJD’s website](#) what higher education opportunities exist, much less data on students that are enrolled or encouraged in continuing with higher education once released. Promotion of higher education participation for incarcerated students with IDD is unclear, unless required by [HB 30, 87th Texas Legislature](#), for minors who are receiving special education services at the Windham School District in the TDCJ. However, recent testimony from TDCJ during the House of Representative Committee on Corrections reported that less than 10 individuals were being served (Implementation of HB 30, 2022).

It is important to note that college programming for adults in TDCJ is offered only on designated units, and often people with IDD and or physical disabilities are housed on different units per classification restrictions. Transferring is not an option because of classification restrictions, and transportation for classes can be limited if distance is beyond the scope of what the agency allows. In lieu of physical access to programming, there is no virtual option, access to technology, or provision of reasonable accommodations to access higher education. This becomes increasingly prohibitive for women who may have any type of disability because women’s higher education programming in TDCJ is already extremely limited as compared to programming for incarcerated men (Weissman, 2022) (Nittle, 2022).

“At the Gib Lewis Prison Unit in Woodville, Texas, a male inmate with a disability reported that he was denied participation in higher education because his disability required that he be housed at a unit that did not offer higher education. Transportation or transferring to another unit in order to access postsecondary opportunities was denied” (J. Toon, personal communication, May 23, 2022).

Cost remains a significant barrier to enrollment as well. TDCJ allows for one class to be reimbursed, meaning TDCJ pays the tuition to the college, and the incarcerated student then pays TDCJ back through parole fees upon release. Reimbursement qualifications have become more restrictive over time, and most students hesitate to accumulate postsecondary parole fees since nonpayment upon release could result in a parole violation. Recently released students often struggle with obtaining employment and housing, so these types of repayments are seen as a liability. The student can pay in full directly to the college through their inmate trust fund, but since those in custody of TDCJ are not paid for their labor, the money deposited must come from outside support such as family and friends.

The price of classes also continues to increase while the options for paying for classes are more limited or restrictive. There are currently limited funds for certain populations through the Hazelwood Act, Texas Public Educational Grant, and the Youthful Offender Grant, however those funds are limited to certain eligible populations. Fortunately, beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, available funding will expand with the reinstatement of Pell for incarcerated students (Brink, 2022).

Recommendations for Postsecondary Education is Inaccessible to Incarcerated Youth and Adults with IDD

- The Texas Legislature, TJJD, TDCJ, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) should work collaboratively with people with lived experience and advocates to establish policies and procedures in statute that improve data availability, transparency, and compliance with provisions in existing federal laws to increase the number of incarcerated youth and adults with IDD accessing postsecondary opportunities.
 - The TJJD and TDCJ should collect and report data to the THECB on the number of youth and adults with IDD who are currently incarcerated, the number of persons with an IEP or 504 plan, and the number of those who access postsecondary opportunities.
 - The TDCJ should adopt policies to share postsecondary opportunities with all incarcerated persons with IDD and inform them of their protections and provisions under federal law for accommodations and modifications.
 - The TDCJ should immediately issue guidance on requirements to comply with federal laws to provide accommodations and modifications for inmates with disabilities to be able to access programs that are located at other units.
 - The TJJD, TDECJ, THECB, and the Texas Legislature should examine the cost and feasibility of providing technology to increase access to higher education for all inmates with disabilities.
 - The TJJD should revise language in statute to reflect respectful person-first language.
 - The TJJD and TDCJ should revise their definitions of IDD to be consistent with the accepted definitions of IDD in human services and education agencies and align diagnostic tools with those definitions.

Conclusion

Inclusion is the policy and practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded, such as those with disabilities. Per the Developmental Disabilities Act of 2000, the term “inclusion,” used with respect to individuals with developmental disabilities, means the acceptance and encouragement of the presence and participation of individuals with developmental disabilities by individuals without disabilities in social, educational, work, and community activities. Special attention must be given to ensure meaningful inclusion across all facets of the postsecondary education experience.

The Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities will continue to highlight issues and provide recommendations for ways to promote and strengthen inclusion and access across the postsecondary education continuum in Texas. Collectively, the THECB, the advisory council, and stakeholder organizations will work to improve access to higher education for individuals with IDD.

As this report details, there are many things that the THECB, other state agencies, governmental entities, and stakeholders can do to promote inclusion and access in postsecondary education. We all must continue to work closely together to provide improved access to persons with IDD at public institutions of higher education in Texas.

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Appendix A: Disability Definitions

Developmental Disability

Developmental Disabilities (DD), first defined in 1975 federal legislation, are a group of lifelong conditions that emerge during the developmental period and result in some level of functional limitation in learning, language, communication, cognition, behavior, socialization, or mobility. The most common DD conditions are intellectual disability, Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, fetal alcohol syndrome, and fragile X syndrome.

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) of 2000 (Public Law 106–402, 106th Congress) defines a developmental disability as a severe chronic disability of an individual that:

- is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments;
- is manifested before the individual attains age 22;
- is likely to continue indefinitely;
- results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, or economic self-sufficiency; and
- reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services; individualized supports; or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

An individual from birth to age 9 who has a substantial developmental delay or specific congenital or acquired condition may be considered to have a developmental disability without meeting three or more of the criteria described above if the individual, without services and supports, has a high probability of meeting those criteria later in life.

Intellectual Disability

An intellectual disability is a lifelong condition where significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior emerge during the developmental period (before adulthood).

The Higher Education Opportunity Act, in Section 668.231, defines a student with an intellectual disability as a student:

- (A) with a cognitive impairment, characterized by significant limitations in
 - I. intellectual and cognitive functioning; and
 - II. adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills; and

(B) who is currently, or was formerly, eligible for a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.].

Appendix B: Comprehensive Transition Programs

Becoming a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) is an important step for colleges or universities offering programs for students with IDD. Comprehensive Transition Programs were initially described and defined by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. They are degree, certificate, or nondegree programs for students with intellectual disabilities that:

- are offered by a college or career school and approved by the U.S. Department of Education;
- are designed to support students with intellectual disabilities who want to continue academic, career, and independent living instruction to prepare for gainful employment;
- offer academic advising and a structured curriculum; and
- require students with intellectual disabilities to participate, for at least half of the program in one of four types of integrated settings with students without disabilities. Those settings are:

- 1) regular enrollment in credit-bearing courses;
- 2) auditing or participating in courses for which the student does not receive regular academic credit;
- 3) enrollment in noncredit, non-degree courses; or
- 4) internships or work-based training.

If students with an intellectual disability are attending a CTP, they may qualify to use federal financial aid to help pay the cost of attendance.

Appendix C: Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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