

Exploration of Transition Services in Arizona
Sonoran UCEDD
June 14, 2019

Introduction

The following activities are proposed to complete a statewide assessment of the current state of transition services in Arizona for the purpose of identifying current exemplary practices, areas of need, and recommendations for improving post-school employment rates for youth with disabilities. This comprehensive approach is designed to gather information from multiple stakeholders involved with transition services that will contribute to data-informed policy and programmatic decision-making. The study will build on the work of the AZ Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (AZDDPC) and Morrison Institute for Public Policy conducted in 2015, to examine current practices and outcomes and combine findings to gain an in-depth understanding from key perspectives of current school-based transition practices and outcomes across the state. The project, implemented in collaboration with the AZDDPC, will utilize multiple methods to insure a representative picture of the “state of the state” in transition services is captured and described in universally designed formats. Several basic assumptions will guide these efforts.

- Services to youth require a team approach engaging schools, community partners, and agencies in a comprehensive, coordinated way.
- Pockets of excellence and good practices are being conducted in local school and adult service communities across the state that are often not identified or well known.
- Work experiences in community businesses are the number one indicator of post-school employment and must be a part of any effective transition program.
- Perspectives of multiple stakeholders are essential for truly understanding the context and programmatic factors related to transition service implementation.
- Transition is an outcome-oriented process that is a critical and essential benchmark for determining quality and effectiveness of service delivery practices.
- Effective transition strategies and other complimentary practices exist in Arizona from which to use in building a menu or “how to” guide of best practices.

Gather information from stakeholder groups in twelve representative school communities across the state using qualitative data collection strategies.

- Tap into contacts provided by AZDDPC to gain their input on study approach and questions.
- Determine selection criteria and identify 12 school districts of varying size and geographic location around the state to participate (* it is important to note that Transition School to Work schools will not be included in the study).
- Recruit 12 participating schools including 3 urban, 3 suburban, 3 rural, and 3 Tribal schools and make logistical arrangements.

- Create a comprehensive open-ended questionnaire to guide individual and focus group data collection (e.g., “How are you preparing youth for transition?”, “How are you providing opportunities to learn soft skills?”, “What community work experiences do you offer for students?”, “What community supports are you using and what strategies have you found to be helpful to engage partners?”).
- Send teams of two project staff to complete individual school/school district two/three-day site visits.
- Conduct interviews with general/special education teachers, transition specialists, school administrators, rehabilitation counselors, case workers, and any other key stakeholders for that location. Spend time observing classroom, vocational, and community work experiences.
- Synthesize interview data and formulate interpretations.
- Complete member checks with a purposeful sample of participants from all sites to confer on the accuracy and conclusions reached by project staff.
- Summarize individual school findings and identify themes across all school communities.
- Write up findings in narrative and infographic formats.

Develop a questionnaire for completion by school and vocational rehabilitation personnel to gain their insights using quantitative data collection strategies.

- Conduct a “kick off” focus group presentation at the AZ transition conference in August, 2019 and gain feedback from session participants for use in survey development.
- Draft a comprehensive survey with open-ended questions (e.g., What is working well in the delivery of transition services?, What do you feel you are doing well in the area of transition?, What challenges interfere with your ability to implement transition services?, What changes would make your role in transition easier?, How effective are transition services at achieving employment outcomes in your community?).
- Have AZDDPC review and finalize survey and pilot with four school and rehabilitation personnel to check for errors and problems.
- Send out survey to all listings of school and rehabilitation counselor personnel from all school districts and regional VR offices requesting their completion of the anonymous questionnaire.
- Post hoc code open-ended questions and complete data analyses of all survey questions.
- Synthesize survey findings across three groups including: 1) school participant responses, 2) vocational rehabilitation participant responses, and 3) all participant responses combined.
- Write up findings in narrative and infographic formats.

The data from both the qualitative and quantitative components will be reviewed and results synthesized. Key themes, findings, and recommendations will be summarized. A report of the study results will be compiled in narrative format and presented in a universally designed format for use by all stakeholders. Project staff will communicate regularly with AZDDPC staff informing them of activities, progress, and issues encountered. A presentation will be provided for the AZDDPC staff and full planning council. The results will be shared with education and vocational rehabilitation agencies and other avenues as approved by AZDDPC. A final report of the study methodology and results will be produced and submitted.

Estimated Timeline

July	finalize school selection and question guide with AZDDPC
August	kick off presentation at the DOE transition conference
September	school recruitment and scheduling logistics
October, November, & December	conduct 6 site visits
January, February, & March	conduct 6 site visits
April	a) analyze qualitative data and discuss preliminary findings with AZDDPC b) draft quantitative survey questionnaire
May	a) complete member checking to confer on accuracy of conclusions/findings b) collect quantitative survey data
June & July	a) finalize qualitative data analysis and synthesize findings, b) analyze quantitative data and synthesize findings
July & August	knowledge translation and product development for dissemination
August	share findings at transition conference, presentation for AZDDPC, and produce final report

Collaborators

Project staff will engage the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities to gain their input and support for completing the study. Teachers and paraprofessionals feedback will be obtained at the DOE transition conference to insure their voice is included in the study approach. AZDDPC contacts including Wes Randall, Theresa Yanan, and Jessica Jones, will be contacted for their insights and suggestions for regarding study design and implementation. Participating schools will be recruited and their staff assist with arranging site visits, observations, and interviews.

Deliverables

- Site visits and interviews completed for 12 school communities.
- Survey developed and completed by school and rehabilitation personnel statewide.
- Analysis and summary of key findings and policy/practice recommendations provided.
- Report, informational product, and infographic illustrating “state of the state” in transition services produced.
- Results disseminated to stakeholder audiences in the state through multiple formats

Budget Request

Personnel (\$62,362)

PI and Project Director @ 5%

Project Coordinator @ 5%

Research Associate @ 45%

Research Assistant @ 45%

Travel (\$4,000)

Focus Group & Member Check Meetings (\$1,800)

Subtotal = \$68,182

Indirects @ 10% = \$6,818

TOTAL = \$75,000

For more information, contact:

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Budget Narrative

Personnel

Wendy Parent-Johnson, PhD, Principle Investigator & Project Director (5% FTE) will be responsible for administrative and fiscal oversight of the proposed project. She will lead hiring of new staff and provide supervision of all project staff. Dr. Parent-Johnson will function as the liaison with school, RSA, and DD personnel and other community stakeholders. She will oversee finalization research design and methodology for the proposed study. Dr. Parent-Johnson will lead the conference kick off, assist with conducting in-person interviews, completing survey development and data collection, leading member checks, analyzing and interpreting results, and summarizing and reporting findings. Total requested = \$8,250.

Susan Voirol, MSW, Project Coordinator (5% FTE) will be responsible for determining selection criteria, recruiting school districts, and identifying participating schools. She will complete logistical arrangements for on-site interviews obtaining permissions and procedures with participating schools, agencies, and stakeholders. She will maintain communication with participating communities and be the contact person for questions and issues as they arise. Ms. Voirol will participate in project meetings and assist with interpreting findings and recommendations. Total requested = \$3,225.

TBH, Research Associate (45% FTE) will be responsible for developing interview questions and protocols, developing survey questions and designing survey, obtaining IRB approval and participant consent, collecting qualitative and quantitative data, and managing data in a secure database. He or she will complete data analyses, participate in member checks, summarize results and findings, and identify themes across synthesized data. He or she will assist with writing project reports and preparing products for dissemination of results. Total requested = \$22,500.

TBH, Research Assistant (45% FTE) will be responsible for collecting on-site interview and observation data. He or she will be responsible for coordinating data collection, completing data entry, assisting with data analyses, and communicating with participants. He or she will assist with project activities, writing results, and developing infographics. Total requested = \$13,500.

Fringe Benefits

Salaries are based on the University of Arizona salary structure, with fringe benefits that are based on the current DHHS rate agreement (31.4% for Full-Benefit Employees; 20% for Ancillary Staff; 11% for Graduate Assistants; and 2% for Student Employees). Total requested = \$14,908.

Travel

Funds are requested to support travel of project staff to make site visits for data collection including school interviews, community stakeholder interviews, and observations. Costs are

estimated at 4,000 miles at \$.445 per mile = \$1,780 and per diem for full day travel @ \$20 X 70 days = \$1,400 and hotel as needed for far-away site visits = \$82 X 10 nights = \$820. Total requested = \$4,000.

Focus Group & Member Checks Travel & Stipends

Funds are requested to conduct a member check with a purposeful sample of participants estimated at 18 to 20 individuals. These will be a broad representation of school and community stakeholders who participated in the interviews at the 12 participating school communities. The purpose of the member check is to share interpretations from the data with the representative group to confer on the accuracy of the conclusions reached by the research team. This will be a one-day event in Phoenix. Costs are estimated at travel and lunch/refreshments for participants at an average of \$90 to \$100 per person for 18 to 20 people. Total requested = \$1,800.

Subtotal = \$68,162

Indirects @ 10% \$6,818

Total Funds Requested = \$75,000