



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Executive Summary

### Maryland Resource Mapping Initiative for Youth with Disabilities

Maryland Interagency Transition Council and Maryland Department of Disabilities

Funded by the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant CFDA 93.768

## MD Resource Mapping

### Purpose

To identify gaps and overlaps in transition services for youth with disabilities.

### Areas of Focus

- Employment
- Postsecondary Education

## Resource Mapping Initiative

Maryland's Interagency Transition Council (ITC), in partnership the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD), contracted for a year-long study to identify the state-level services and supports available in Maryland for youth with disabilities that transition from secondary education to employment and postsecondary education. These two areas are vital in measuring post-school outcomes for students with disabilities, and key priorities at both the state and federal level. The resource mapping process was used to: identify available resources, gaps and overlaps in resources; to prepare recommendations based on the study's findings; and to develop a preliminary strategic action plan. This Executive Summary will briefly review the findings from these efforts, identify continuing issues and priority areas for improvement, and summarize strategies for addressing transition issues and needs in the State of Maryland.

An on-line survey of 36 state programs at 17 state agencies was conducted to determine the resources available to Maryland youth with disabilities transitioning to employment and post secondary education. The survey instrument was developed based upon research and a cross-reference of the Maryland Department of Disabilities State Plan, the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) Standards and Quality Indicators and the National Center for Workforce and Development for Youth Guideposts for Success. In total, 26 program representatives at 10 agencies completed and returned the survey. This represented a program return rate of 72.2 percent, and an agency return rate of 58.8 percent. See Figure 1 for a list of respondents and non-respondents. Focus groups were also conducted to solicit input from families and professionals. Thirty-seven individuals participated in the focus groups.

## Survey Findings

### *Available Resources in Maryland*

- All counties in the State have agencies providing some services for transition-age youth with disabilities.
- All disability types have some services available.
- Traditional pre-employment and work-based learning experiences are available to many youth with disabilities.
- Travel training is available through a number of programs.
- Many agencies have connections with postsecondary institutions.
- Information sharing on college program information and connections to local colleges, universities and career schools that is provided to ALL youth is also provided to youth with disabilities.

## Gaps in Resources and Services

### *Demographics*

- ✚ **Ages of Youth Served-** The resources/services for youth with disabilities ages 21-25 are extremely limited in comparison to those available to youth ages 14-20. Five of the 28 agencies responding to the survey actually provided activities/services/supports to youth ages 21-25, as compared with the 15 agencies providing services to youth ages 14-20.
- ✚ **Definition of Terms-** Many differences in definitions were noted across agencies/programs for the terms, “youth” and “transition.” These differences make the comparison of eligibility requirements across agencies much more difficult to understand.
- ✚ **Use of Data-** Use of state agency collected data is limited primarily to address program improvement and funding requests. Data is not currently used for identifying technical assistance needs, measuring and monitoring program performance, or strategic and operational planning.
- ✚ **Funding Sources-** There is heavy use of traditional federal and state funding sources and limited use of private funds (e.g., foundations, employers). Only four of the 28 agencies reported that they tap into private funds to support their activities.

**Figure 1: Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents**

<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Respondents Continued</u>
Baltimore County Office of Employment and Training One-Stop Comprehensive Service Youth Services Division Baltimore City Agency-Mayor's Office of Employment Development Workforce Investment Act Youth Services Department of Disabilities Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Anne Arundel County Department of Health - Prevention Services - Core Service Agency Developmental Disabilities Administration - Governor's Transitioning Youth Initiative Dorchester County Health Department - Drug & Alcohol Health Services (Dorchester County) Family Health Administration Mental Hygiene Administration Department of Housing and Community Development Housing Choice Voucher Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program Workforce Investment (Upper Shore) Workforce Services (Frederick County) Youth Services Economic Development/Workforce Services Youth Program (Employment & Training) (Howard County) Montgomery County DED/Workforce Services Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board	Frederick County Government Howard County Government Governor's Office for Children Transition Aged Youth Leadership in Action Program Maryland State Department of Education Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services Career Technology and Adult Learning Student, Family, and School Support Division of Rehabilitation Services Maryland Youth Leadership Forum

## Gaps in Employment Resources and Services

### *Lack of Individualized Services-*

- ✚ Employment services/supports that require customization, job carving, or individualization occur infrequently in the State, regardless of the severity of a young person's disability.
- ✚ Few agencies/programs provided the following services to youth with disabilities: entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities; supported employment; customized employment; job coaches; ESL classes, and job safety training.

### *Transportation-*

- ✚ Transportation to and from work experiences and jobs is not readily available in all areas of this geographically diverse state.
- ✚ Restricted access to transportation places limits on the number of youth that participate in work experiences, and reduces the number and types of jobs/careers to which youth are exposed.

### *Paid Work Experiences-*

- ✚ Equal numbers of agencies place youth in unpaid and paid employment opportunities.
- ✚ Unpaid work experiences are not usually in competitive environments.
- ✚ Unpaid work experiences do not usually transfer to paid employment.

## Gaps in Post-Secondary Education Resources and Services

### *Individualized Services-*

- ✚ Activities/services that require individualization or one to one presentation are happen infrequently. For example, youth with disabilities may need individualization during diagnostic and academic testing, tutoring, or mentoring experiences, but this is not occurring at this time.
- ✚ The provision of learning accommodations and assistive technology devices to enhance learning at the postsecondary level are services provided by only half of the agencies surveyed.
- ✚ Individualized planning with youth and families for postsecondary education enrollment and participation is very cursory.

### *Purposeful Linkages with Disability Support Services-*

- ✚ Some agencies had connections to postsecondary institutions, but very few had specific affiliation with the postsecondary Disability Support Services (DSS) Offices at these institutions.
- ✚ Agencies do not regularly connect youth and families with personnel at the postsecondary institution that can help them access disability supports and accommodations.
- ✚ Few agencies indicated that they had articulation agreements with postsecondary institutions to provide disability-related services or supports.

## Focus Group Findings



*"Transition Planning is not happening the way it is intended. Schools are not individualizing plans."*

*~ 2006 Transitioning Youth Conference Focus Group Participant*

### Employment

#### *Individualized Planning-*

- ✚ Lack of individualized transition planning.
- ✚ Career preparation and job placements are not based on youths' personal preferences, interests or abilities, but rather on the availability of placements and space at a facility.
- ✚ Often times, youth participate in enclaves regardless of their career plans.

#### *Work Opportunities and Supports-*

- ✚ Limited exposure to the wide spectrum of work opportunities available to youth without disabilities.
- ✚ Employed youth are not given the necessary on-the-job supports (e.g., workplace accommodations) to successfully maintain employment both in school and post school.

#### *Transportation-*

- ✚ Lack of transportation is a barrier to employment for youth living in rural parts of the State.

#### *Transitioning to Adult Services-*

- ✚ School and agency personnel as well as families are not fully aware of the services or options available to youth with (or without) disabilities.
- ✚ There is a need for benefits planning and management training for families to better understand how their child's working can impact his/her SSI and health benefits.

### Postsecondary Education

#### *Understanding Options-*

- ✚ Many youth with disabilities are not adequately prepared, academically or socially, to transition to college or other postsecondary training opportunities.
- ✚ Many youth with disabilities lack basic, fundamental readiness skills (i.e., reading, math and computer skills) and social skills (i.e., work expectation and etiquette) necessary to succeed in a postsecondary education environment.

#### *Understanding the Adult System-*

- ✚ Youth and their families are not fully aware of the differences in the federal laws such as IDEA (2004) and the Americans with Disabilities Act and how their educational entitlements and civil rights change as they transition to postsecondary education settings.
- ✚ Lack of understanding regarding the changes in disability definitions, self-advocacy as an adult, and the need for disability disclosure to receive accommodations.

## Strategic Planning

Five priority themes were defined which cut across the demographic, employment, and postsecondary findings and implications that will guide the development of a strategic action plan.

- ✚ **Priority Theme 1.** To elevate and ensure that transition services and supports for youth with disabilities are a priority in the State.
- ✚ **Priority Theme 2.** To expand the resources available that effectively educate youth, families, professionals, and community members about transition roles, responsibilities, services, and resources.
- ✚ **Priority Theme 3.** To enhance and ensure effective linkages among youth, postsecondary educational institutions, and adult service agencies.
- ✚ **Priority Theme 4.** To regularly share, collect, report, and use data across agencies for fiscal/resource development and program planning and improvement.
- ✚ **Priority Theme 5.** To individualize services and supports for youth with disabilities which result in meaningful employment/careers and independent living.

### Next Steps

The MDOD's and ITC's next step will be to finalize and implement the strategic action plan to address their priority goals and recommendations. The ITC plans to build on this work by completing the following next steps:

1. Finalize a **DRAFT** strategic action plan.
2. Disseminate and solicit input on the **DRAFT** strategic action plan from partners and stakeholders.
3. Review the **DRAFT** strategic plan and incorporate edits/revisions as appropriate.
4. Implement the strategic plan.
5. Extend the mapping process to additional state level domains such as housing and transportation.
6. Engage in the mapping process with local level agencies and organizations.
7. Ensure continuous evaluation of the implementation of the strategic plan.

## For More Information

The final report on the Resource Mapping Initiative, including the survey document and all supporting appendices, are available on the MD Interagency Transition Council website: [www.mdtransition.org](http://www.mdtransition.org).

For more information on the MD Interagency Transition Council go to: [www.mdtransition.org](http://www.mdtransition.org).

For more information on the Maryland Resource Mapping Initiative contact Colleen Gauruder, DDA Statewide Coordinator for Transition and Employment Services at 410-767-5566.

For more information on the Resource Mapping process, contact TransCen, Inc. at 301-424-2002.