



ADVOCATE • EDUCATE • COLLABORATE

Washington State Independent Living Council
Youth & Young Adult Sub-Committee
Transitions to Post-Secondary Training &
Education Report 2021

Introduction

Who are We?

We are a sub-committee of the Washington State Independent Living Council, WASILC. The WASILC is a Governor appointed council which promotes a statewide network supporting the independent living philosophy for people with disabilities through advocacy, education, planning, and collaboration. We are the Youth and Young Adult sub-Committee (Y&YAC), and are made up of community members, Governor appointed WASILC Members, and WASILC staff members. WASILC's Y&YAC's charter includes raising public awareness of youth and young adult independent living issues, collaborating with other systemic advocacy entities to promote leadership and opportunity for youth and young adults with disabilities across the state, and promoting systemic advocacy about youth and young adult transition, education, and employment issues.

What is This?

The Y&YAC conducted a survey which we distributed to Washington State. The purpose of this survey was to obtain county specific data for youth and young adults transitioning to post-secondary education and training to identify barriers and provide recommendations for improvement and influence policy in Washington State. The intention was to do this on a grassroots, community based level using social media and word of mouth digital marketing to distribute the survey, gather data, analyze the data, and redistribute it back to the community. The concluding efforts did not provide expected outcomes due to the pandemic, unanticipated barriers to accessing our identified population for feedback, and finding the data was statistically significant enough to make our anticipated conclusions.

Survey

Survey Goals

The purpose of this survey was to obtain county specific data for youth and young adults transitioning to post-secondary education and training. The hope was to identify barriers, untapped resources, and gaps in knowledge regarding transition outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities, to provide recommendations for improvement and influence policy in Washington State.

The original intent was to distribute surveys, gather data, analyze the data and put it in a report, and distribute it back to the community of individuals with disabilities, their supporters, and allies. The intention was that our report would include the survey results and recommendations that we could make to provide to schools, service agencies, and other interested resources. Secondly, the goal with this survey and proceeding report was to advocate and influence system policies in regard to the identified need evaluated from the data collected. The intent was that our survey to be open and distributed for 90 days.

Survey Implementation

The survey was distributed through grassroots and community level marketing. Distribution primarily relied on word of mouth and snowball data collection sent via email to various networks of community stakeholders at non-profits, agencies, school districts, colleges, and Centers for Independent Living. Marketing was also established through social media platforms including LinkedIn and Facebook. The target population for the survey was in two parts: youth and young adults in, or soon to be in, transition to post-secondary education or training with a disability voice and allies of those youth and young adults with a relevant perspective.

Survey Outcomes

The survey was launched on March 2, 2020 and was closed it on December 31, 2020, with a significantly longer period of activation than the original 90 days due to limitations faced associated with the pandemic. There were also notable barriers to accessing any existing statewide educational system to disseminate the survey. As we began prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with planning and distribution, we anticipate that the onset of the pandemic hindered our predictions for distribution, community interest, and data collection due to the unforeseen limitations to access. The intent was to garner significantly more survey responses.

Survey Responses.

The survey received 80 survey responses from individuals identifying as Youth & Young Adults and 77 survey responses from individuals identifying as allies. There is evidence in the data to suggest that 15 of the survey responses which identified as Youth & Young Adults were actually completed by allies including teachers, case managers, and parents based on their responses. This adjusts our survey responses from individuals identifying as Youth and Young Adults to include 65 survey respondents and our survey responses from allies to be 92.

Hopes were to gain more data from more areas of Washington State to get a fuller picture of transition barriers and outcomes. The received responses originated from 25 out of the 39 counties in Washington

State. With this difficulty in gathering survey responses and data collection, there was insufficient data for statistical relevance, which means that our original intent of using this data to provide recommendations about post-secondary transitions for youth and young adults does not appear to be appropriate at this time due to our lack of adequate data to evaluate. The goal of using our recommendations to advocate and influence system policies in regard to youth and young adults in post-secondary transition was not met due to the inability to produce current, valid recommendations based on the data shortage.

Data Themes. Though the data did not provide the information we had hoped it would, we were still able to garner some points of interest.

The most common career fields of interest selected by youth and young adult survey respondents on the selectable survey options were that 13.8% of respondents selected art, 10.8% of respondents selected healthcare, and 10.8% of respondents selected self-employment.

The top three skills reported to be “important” and “very important” for transitioning to post-secondary training and education based on a 4-point rated scale include 87.7% reporting job exploration, job shadowing/ training, and competitive employment. 78.5% reporting self-advocacy skills for students to communicate disability status, to access community resources, and the ability to request necessary accommodations, and 78.4% reporting pre-employment training and skills.

The current and anticipated barriers to successfully transitioning to post-secondary education and training as evaluated by the survey questions and options to select, include that 33.8% selected “current” and 32.3% selected “anticipated” in reporting a lack of social accessibility, including attitudes and general social inclusion. 33.8% selected “current” and 33.8% selected “anticipated” in reporting a lack of self-advocacy skills. 26.2% selected “current” and 33.8% selected “anticipated” in reporting a lack of fiscal resources.

Anticipated barriers to successfully transitioning to post-secondary education and training as evaluated by the data include that the above evaluated data appears to suggest that youth and young adults experienced the aforementioned barriers and difficulties at an even higher rate during proceeding transition. Based on an evaluation of the data submitted by survey respondents identifying as allies to youth and young adults with disabilities, their responses parallel that of the data evaluated from survey respondents who identified as youth and young adults with disabilities. Of those survey respondents who rated their level of preparedness versus information received as at differing levels, 63.3% rated that their level of receiving information about accomplishing long term employment goals was higher than how they rated their preparedness for accomplishing their goals, which suggests that preparedness for accomplishing long term employment goals requires more than just receiving information about. Survey respondents report that the sources that they would typically get their information regarding their career goals were: 64.6% of respondents reported from their parents or family members, 47.7% of respondents reported from Google, and 44.6% of respondents reported from their teachers. In comparison, the Allies survey indicated the following as the top 3 information sources: 81.25% of respondents have received or anticipated getting their information from a teacher, 51.08% of respondents have received or anticipated getting their information from a parent or family member, 32.6% of respondents have received or anticipated getting their information from a counselor. While teachers and Parents were still in the top 3, what was most notable was the fact that only 16.3% of respondents indicated that Google was a source of information. Which is significantly lower than the

47.7% indicated by Youth and Young Adults. In general, there was significant difference between information sources indicated by youth and young adults versus their allies. This may be a point of intervention for bridging the gap and making transition smoother.

Improvements

Weaknesses

During the creation of the survey, certain questions were unintentionally excluded toward certain demographics. For example, although in our survey design we worked to include a variety of areas within the disability community, we inadvertently made a bias towards transitioning into postsecondary workforce placement and employee starter careers. In reality, not everyone with a disability will go into the workforce, or even choose to attend college. Our initial questions regarding plans for transition were all focused on job placement and may have skewed the results received in the questions at the end regarding barriers and preparedness, as many responses focused on college or career planning barriers and the barriers and information received regarding these plans. In hindsight, it may have been more beneficial to leave the question regarding transition plans and goals as a fill in text box. In addition, language that identified gender was not optimal or identifiably entirely inclusionary, which could have impacted interest and survey participation.

Recommendations

Moving forward, we need to facilitate more discussion and analysis of survey questions prior to circulation. It would be advisable to look deeper into categories of post-secondary transition that youth and young adults with disabilities may choose to participate in outside of education or traditional workforce training.

Conclusion

The survey was open for almost 10 months due to complications associated with the pandemic. Distribution, survey reach, and responses were likely hindered due to the unexpected limitations of access that came with the pandemic. There were not as many responses as we had predicted or hoped for. An analysis of our data concluded that our data was inadequate to meet our intentions and goals to provide recommendations on or influence systems in regard to post-secondary transitions.

How to Help

If you are interested in helping the WASILC Y&YAC on future surveys and would like to get on our distribution list, have more questions about this survey, would like to get more information about the sub-committee, are interested in joining the WASILC Y&YA sub-committee, or if you are interested in learning more about the WASILC please email WASILC staff at WASILC@dshs.wa.gov.