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Summary of Performance

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INTRODUCTION

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was reauthorized in 2004, requires local education agencies (LEAs) to provide a Summary of Performance¹ (SOP) for students with disabilities upon their graduation with a high school diploma or exceeding the age eligibility for FAPE under state law. The SOP includes a summary of a student's academic achievement and functional performance and recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals.

METHODOLOGY

Project Forum surveyed all state education agencies and non-state jurisdictions, hereafter referred to as SEAs, in January 2008 to collect information on SEA efforts to support local education agencies in developing and using the SOP for eligible students with disabilities.² The survey was distributed to state directors of special education with the option to respond via email, fax or Zoomerang, an online survey program.³ As appropriate, state directors of special education forwarded the survey to other State staff to complete the survey. Forty SEAs responded to Project Forum's survey.

¹ See IDEA Regulations 34 C.F.R. §300.305(e)(3) "For a child whose eligibility terminates under circumstances described in paragraph (e)(2) of this section, a public agency must provide the child with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals."

² Project Forum thanks Rebecca Cort, New York State Director of Special Education; the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR); Linda Hames, Alabama Rehabilitation Services; Larry Korterling, National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC); Jim Martin, Zarrow Center; Kim Nickerson, Oklahoma Transition Coordinator; Suzanne Ressa, Helen Keller National Center; Corinne Weidenthal, OSEP; and Kelly Worthington, OSEP for their review and contributions to the survey protocol.

³ Refer to Appendix A for survey questions.

Project Forum at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) conducted this survey and produced this document as part of its collaborative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

FINDINGS

State policy and guidance/procedures

Twenty-five of the 40 respondents indicated their SEA has a policy, four respondents indicated their SEA is currently developing a policy, and 11 respondents indicated the state does not have a policy specific to the use and implementation of the SOP. The policies typically provide guidance/procedures that explain the purpose of the SOP, the information to include in the SOP document, who receives an SOP, when to develop the SOP and a sample SOP form.⁴ The guidance/procedures also explain who should be involved in developing the SOP (19 states); ways to include student input in the SOP (17 states); the need for collaboration between schools, postsecondary education settings, vocational rehabilitation programs, workforce development programs and/or employment settings (15 states); and how to incorporate the SOP into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) (13 states). Guidance/procedures in 10 states also explain the use of various assessment instruments for the completion of the SOP document.

A few respondents provided other descriptions of the guidance/procedures while one respondent (*New Mexico*) indicated its state is currently developing guidance/procedures. For instance, in *Michigan* and *Maryland*, the guidance explains ways, such as braille, large print and audio file, the SOP document can be formatted and made accessible. *Maryland* also provides guidance about a computer program used to generate an exit document. *Oklahoma* provides a sample cover letter for students to use with their SOP and *Georgia* lists post-school agencies and contact information. *Connecticut* provides instructions on how to use the SOP in post-school activities, how to write the SOP using functional language and summarizes input from postsecondary institutions and vocational rehabilitation personnel with regard to useful information they look for in an SOP.

Most states report that the development of SOP state policy, guidance/procedures and/or an SOP form was a collaborative process. More than 20 respondents identified SEA personnel, transition specialists/coordinators and LEA special education staff as involved in their process and more than 16 respondents identified institutes of higher education (IHE) faculty, vocational rehabilitation personnel and parents/guardians as additional collaborators. Other personnel who were part of SOP development activities included representatives from specific disability groups (8 states), workforce program representatives (7 states), independent or community living staff (7 states), students (6 states) and businesses/employers (5 states). Some respondents identified other collaborators such as the Department of Corrections personnel in *Indiana* and the Commissioner's Advisory Panel in *New York*. In addition, *Texas* and *New Mexico* each held a public hearing and comment period on their SOP policy. *New York* further explained that it has

⁴ Refer to the Appendix B for state websites with sample forms and guidance.

Transition Coordination Sites that collaborate with post-secondary education institutions and other community agencies to in order to facilitate the use of the SOP.

SOP Use and Implementation

Respondents from four SEAs (*AR, HI, NM, MD*) indicated that an exit document or form similar to a Summary of Performance (SOP) document was used prior to the inclusion of the requirement in IDEA 2004. *Hawaii* and *Arkansas* continue to use the same form while *Maryland* and *New Mexico* made changes to that form. Thirty SEAs make available an SOP form for LEAs to use but not all require the LEAs to use it. Nine SEAs do not provide a form, and one SEA is currently developing policies and a sample form (*Federated States of Micronesia*).

The SOP is used for students with disabilities who graduate with a regular high school diploma (38 states), who are no longer eligible for special education services and/or age out of services (30 states), who graduate with a certificate of achievement or other alternate certificate/diploma (18 states), who exit as a dropout (8 states) or who elect to terminate special education services (7 states). Respondents for *Georgia* and *Iowa* indicated it is the LEA's option to provide a SOP for students other than those that graduate with a regular high school diploma or are no longer eligible for services. In *Florida*, some LEAs provide a SOP for all exiting students.

The SOP is completed for students at various times, but it is most commonly completed during the student's senior year prior to graduation (28 states) or the year in which the student exits as a dropout, elects to terminate services or ages out of special education services (23 states). In 10 states the SOP is completed a specified amount of time before the student exits special education. *Missouri* specifies that time as "not more than 60 days before or 30 days after a child graduates with a regular diploma or not more than 60 days before or 30 days after the child's 21st birthday or 30 days after the child leaves the educational system after turning 21."

The SOP is completed during an annual review of the IEP in six states (*GA, MD, NE, SC, WI, Palau*) and when the transition plan is developed at age 16 years or when a parent or student requests it in three states (*Nebraska, Wisconsin, Palau*). *Wisconsin* indicated it may also be completed when the transition plan is developed at age 14 years. Respondents for *New Mexico* and *Nevada* indicated the LEAs may decide when to complete the SOP as long as federal regulations are followed, and three respondents indicated the SOP may be an ongoing document beginning at age 14 (*Maryland*), beginning at age 16 (*Connecticut*), or be used as a planning document over time (*Oklahoma*). In addition, *South Dakota* suggests completing the SOP early if the student is being referred to another agency.

SEA Perceptions of the SOP

Although states are not currently collecting outcome data on the use and value of SOPs, most respondents indicated that the SOP is viewed as an informative tool. Respondents perceive the SOP as a tool that enables students to:

- transition seamlessly from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment (37 states);
- be empowered as self-advocates in the postsecondary setting (33 states);
- access disability services and have a record of accommodations to use in postsecondary education settings (32 states);
- be engaged in the process of gathering information about the student's strengths and postsecondary goals (30 states);
- facilitate the development of an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) under vocational rehabilitation services (24 states);
- acquire appropriate employment (18 states); and/or
- reduce the need for a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation to acquire postsecondary disability services (17 states).

Staff

Twenty-three respondents report their SEA has staff with dedicated time to oversee the implementation of the SOP with full time equivalency (FTE) ranging from .01 to 6.0. Fifteen respondents report .5 FTE or less, 4 report more than 1.0 FTE, and 4 indicated they could not measure the FTE. More than 18 of these respondents indicated responsibilities of the staff include:

- responding to inquiries from LEAs and schools;
- planning, coordinating and providing professional development and technical assistance to LEAs and schools regarding the SOP;
- working collaboratively with IHEs, vocational rehabilitation programs and workforce development programs;
- developing an SOP form for LEAs to use;
- developing statewide policies and procedures pertaining to the SOP; and
- developing handbooks, guidelines or other publications for use by local special education administrators, principals and/or teachers regarding the SOP.

Staff in more than 12 states distribute information about the SOP, collect SOP-related data and redesign IEP forms to facilitate SOP development. Staff in eight states ensure students have input for SOP development and/or staff in seven states ensure the SOP is in an accessible format for the students. In *Utah*, staff roles and responsibilities are under development.

Transition specialists are available at the state level (13 states) and state-defined regions (12 states). They are available at some LEAs in 19 states and some public schools in 10 states, but are at all LEAs in five states (*DE, MD, FL, LA, FSM*) and all secondary public schools in three states (*Arkansas, Ohio, Palau*). *Maine* and *Iowa* use a contracted group or consultant to provide transition support and *Illinois* has student case managers.

Professional Development

Thirty-six respondents indicated their state provides training or technical assistance on the use and implementation of the SOP. The LEA special education staff and transition specialists in the majority of those states receive training about the SOP. SEA special education staff, vocational rehabilitation staff, parents, IHE faculty or IHE students and regional training centers receive training in most of those states. Workforce program representatives, independent or community living staff, paraprofessionals, students and general education teachers receive training in fewer than 10 states. Training is open to anyone in *Virginia* and *Maine*.

The training and technical assistance provided by states cover topics such as the purpose of the SOP, who receives an SOP, the information to include in the SOP form and when to develop the SOP. Twenty or more states also provide training on how to incorporate the SOP into the IEP process; who should be involved in developing the SOP; how students can use the SOP upon leaving high school; ways to include the student in SOP development; post-secondary goal setting; and collaboration between schools, postsecondary education settings, vocational rehabilitation programs, workforce development programs, and/or employment settings. Thirteen states provide training on the use of various assessment instruments for completion of the SOP. *Michigan* and *Maryland* provide training on ways the SOP can be formatted and made accessible. *Tennessee* provides training on disability disclosure.

Challenges

The challenges faced by states vary with the most common challenge identified as overseeing the SOP policy and implementation (21 states). Collaborating with other entities and coordinating and providing professional development are challenges in at least 12 states. Collecting outcome data is a challenge in 10 states. Developing policies, procedures, guidelines and/or handbooks are challenges in nine states and managing a computer-based SOP is a challenge in three states. Other challenges identified by individual respondents include:

- responding to inquiries;
- connecting the SOP with the IEP;
- dealing with each LEA developing its own forms and processes;
- using the SOP effectively due to its time of issuance;
- maintaining a balance between best practices and federal requirements; and
- fulfilling another paperwork requirement that some LEAs think is too long and of limited value.

SUMMARY

SEAs are responding to the IDEA 2004 requirement for SOPs, but there is variation among states in established policy and staffing patterns. An SOP policy exists in twenty-five of the responding SEAs. Staff with dedicated time to oversee the policy implementation are employed in 23 SEAs.

Half of the responding SEAs report that overseeing the SOP policy and implementation is a challenge.

SEAs show variability in who receives and when they receive the SOP, but it is most commonly provided for students with disabilities who graduate with a regular high school diploma or age out of special education services and is developed during the senior year or year the student will exit services. Most states also provide general training or technical assistance on the implementation of the SOP primarily for LEA special education staff and transition specialists.

Although a variety of challenges are reported and SOP outcome data is not yet collected by SEAs, most states view the SOP as an informative tool that benefits students as they access postsecondary education and employment.

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Appendix A

State Education Agency Support for Summary of Performance Survey

The purpose of this survey is to identify how state education agencies (SEAs) guide and support local education agencies (LEAs) in developing and using the Summary of Performance (SOP) for eligible students with disabilities. The 2004 Reauthorization of IDEA includes the following provision relating to the summary of performance:

“Summary of Performance.-For a child whose eligibility under this part terminates under circumstances described in clause (i), a local education agency shall provide the child with a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals.” [20 U.S.C. 1412 §614(c)(5)(B)(ii)]

1. Contact Information

Name:

Title:

State:

E-mail address:

Phone number:

2. Did your state use an exit document or form similar to a Summary of Performance (SOP) document to provide a summary of student knowledge and skills before the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA) required the SOP?

Yes

No (skip to # 4)

3. Did that exit document or similar form become your current SOP as required by IDEA 2004?

Yes, without any changes

Yes, with changes

No

4. Does your state have a policy specific to the use and implementation of the Summary of Performance (SOP)?

Yes

No (skip to #7)

Policy is currently being developed

5. The state policy for the SOP provides guidance or procedures that explain (check all that apply)

the purpose of the SOP

- the information to include within the SOP form
- who receives an SOP
- when to develop the SOP
- who should be involved in developing the SOP
- ways to include student input in the development of the SOP
- how to incorporate the SOP into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process
- a specific SOP form developed by the state
- the need for collaboration between schools, postsecondary education settings, vocational rehabilitation programs, workforce development programs and/or employment settings
- the use of various assessment instruments for the completion of the SOP document
- ways that the SOP can be formatted and made accessible (Braille, large print, audio, etc.)
- other: (please describe)

6. Who collaborated to develop your SOP state policy and/or SOP form? (Check all that apply).

- state legislators
- state education agency personnel
- vocational rehabilitation personnel
- institutes of higher education faculty
- independent or community living staff
- workforce program representatives
- business/employers
- LEA special education staff including special education teachers, directors, and related service providers
- transition specialists/coordinators
- representatives from specific disability advocate groups
- parents/guardians
- students
- other (please identify):

7. Does your state have a specific SOP form for local education agencies (LEAs) to use?

- Yes (please provide web-link to the form if available)
- No
- SOP form is currently being developed

8. In our state, the SOP is provided for students with disabilities (check all that apply)

- who graduate with a regular high school diploma
- who graduate with a certificate of achievement or other alternate certificate/diploma
- who are no longer eligible for special education services
- who elect to terminate special education services

_____ who exit as a drop out
 _____ other: (please describe)

9. When is the SOP completed for a student? (check all that apply)

- _____ when the IEP team develops the transition plan at age 14
- _____ when the IEP develops the transition plan at age 16
- _____ during an annual review of the IEP
- _____ when the parent and/or student requests it
- _____ a specified amount of time before the student departs special education services
- _____ in the senior year prior to graduation
- _____ the year in which a student exits as a dropout, elects to terminate services, or ages out of special education services
- _____ other: (please describe)

10. Does your state education agency (SEA) have staff with dedicated time to oversee the policy implementation of the SOP?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No (skip to #13)

11. Approximately how much full-time equivalency does your SEA staff spend on overseeing the implementation of SOPs? (.5 FTE, 1.0 FTE, 2.5 FTE, etc.)_____

12. The roles/responsibilities of the SEA with regard to SOP policy implementation include (check all that apply):

- _____ developing statewide policies and procedures pertaining to the SOP
- _____ developing an SOP form for LEAs to use
- _____ ensuring that the student has input into the development of the SOP
- _____ working collaboratively with institutes of higher education, vocational rehabilitation programs, and workforce development programs
- _____ planning/coordinating/providing professional development and technical assistance to LEAs and schools regarding the SOP
- _____ developing handbooks, guidelines or other publications for use by local special education administrators, principals, and/or teachers regarding the SOP
- _____ responding to inquiries from LEAs and schools
- _____ distributing information about the SOP to post secondary education settings, community agencies and employers
- _____ distributing information about the SOP to students and parents
- _____ ensuring that the SOP is in an accessible format for the students
- _____ redesigning IEP forms to facilitate SOP development
- _____ collecting SOP-related data, including outcome data
- _____ other (please describe):

13. Our state has transition specialists to support and facilitate the SOP requirement (check all that apply)

- only at the state level
- by state-defined regions
- at all local education agencies (LEAs) in the state
- as some LEAs in the state
- at all public schools in the state
- at some public schools in the state
- our state does not have transition specialists
- other: (please describe)

14. Does your state provide training and/or technical assistance on the use and implementation of the SOP?

- Yes
- No (skip to # 17)

15. Who receives training about the SOP use and implementation? (Check all that apply).

- SEA special education staff
- regional training center staff
- vocational rehabilitation staff
- workforce program staff
- independent or community living staff
- institutes of higher education faculty or students
- LEA special education staff, including special education teachers, directors, and related service providers
- transition specialists/coordinators
- paraprofessionals
- general education teachers
- parents/guardians
- students
- other: (please identify)

16. The SOP training and/or technical assistance provided focuses on the following topics: (check all that apply)

- the purpose of the SOP
- who receives an SOP
- the information to include within the SOP form
- ways to include student input in the development of the SOP
- when to develop the SOP
- who should be involved in developing the SOP
- how to incorporate the SOP into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process
- collaboration between schools, postsecondary education settings, vocational rehabilitation programs, workforce development programs and/or employment settings
- the use of various assessment instruments for the completion of the SOP form

- postsecondary goal-setting
- how students can make use of the SOP upon leaving high school
- ways that the SOP can be formatted and made accessible (Braille, large print, audio, etc.)
- other (please explain):

17. Our state views the SOP as an informative tool for students: (check all that apply)
- to access disability services and to have a record of accommodations to use in postsecondary settings
 - to reduce the need for a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation to acquire postsecondary disability services
 - to transition seamlessly from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment
 - to empower the student as a self-advocate in the post-secondary setting
 - to facilitate the development of an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) under Vocational Rehabilitation services
 - to acquire appropriate employment
 - to engage the student and family in the process to gather information about the student's strengths and postsecondary goals
 - other (please identify):

18. Our state collects data regarding the outcomes of using SOPs.
- Yes
 - No (skip to # 20)

19. The outcome data on the use and implementation of SOPs collected by our state includes: (check all that apply)
- students' satisfaction with their transition to post-secondary education settings or work-force settings
 - employers' satisfaction with employees who had SOPs
 - parent satisfaction
 - college and university disability services' satisfaction
 - vocational rehabilitation counselors' satisfaction
 - the number of students who received appropriate accommodations in college
 - the number of students who successfully maintained competitive employment for 90 days or more
 - the number of students who successfully completed a vocational evaluation and identified a vocational goal
 - other: (please describe)

20. What challenges has your state faced regarding the use and implementation of the SOP document?
- collaborating/coordinating with appropriate entities such as LEAs, institutes of higher education, vocational rehabilitation programs, and workforce programs

- _____ planning/coordinating/providing professional development
- _____ developing statewide policies and procedures
- _____ overseeing the SOP policy, use and implementation
- _____ developing specific SOP forms, guidelines, and/or handbooks
- _____ managing a computer-based SOP
- _____ responding to inquiries
- _____ collecting outcome data
- _____ other (please describe):

21. Please provide any additional comments about SOP use and implementation in your state.
(e.g., student involvement in SOP development, SOP website)

Appendix B**Individual State Summary of Performance Websites**

<i>Arizona</i>	www.azed.gov/ess/SpecialProjects/Instructions.pdf
<i>Connecticut</i>	http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/word_docs/DEPS/Special/ED635.doc
<i>Illinois</i>	http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/default.htm
<i>Massachusetts</i>	http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/IDEA2004/spr_meetings
<i>Missouri</i>	http://dese.mo.gov/divspced/Compliance/MOSample_Forms/documents/SOP.doc
<i>Nebraska</i>	http://sites.esu9.org:8000/Frontier/NDEtransition/
<i>New York</i>	http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/idea/sumexit.pdf http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/idea/exitform.doc http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/idea/exitsumm.htm
<i>North Dakota</i>	http://www.dpi.state.nd.us
<i>Oklahoma</i>	http://se.sde.state.ok.us/SES
<i>South Dakota</i>	http://doe.sd.gov/oess/specialed/IEP/docs/TAonSOP.jan.06.doc
<i>Tennessee</i>	http://www.tennessee.gov/education/spced/setransition.shtml
<i>Texas</i>	http://www.esc18.net
<i>West Virginia</i>	http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/SummaryofPerformance050915.pdf