

Preparing for the Post School Outcomes Survey

Indicator 14: Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in effect at the time they left school, and were enrolled in **higher education**, or in some other **postsecondary education or training** program, or competitively employed, or in some other **employment** within one year of leaving high school. (20 U.S.C. 1416 (a)(3)(B))



Improving District PSO Response Rates

Each year, states must collect outcomes information on youth who exited school during the prior school year including those who exited with a regular diploma, certificate of attendance, reached maximum age of eligibility for services, dropped out, or were expected to return but did not for the current school year.

There are groups of youth who are difficult to locate and who are routinely underrepresented in the post school outcomes data. It can be nearly impossible to collect post school outcomes data on these youth. One population of youth who are extremely difficult to locate once they leave school are youth with disabilities who dropped out of school. To better determine the strategies for contacting youth who are difficult to find, the National Post School Outcomes Center conducted focus groups with young adults and their family members. ***This document summarizes that work, and provides common sense strategies and resources to assist districts with improving response rates to get the best possible data for youth in Wisconsin!***

Increasing Response Rates - Strategies for Contacting Difficult to Locate Youth While Students are Still in School

□ **Make Youth and Families Partners in this Process!**

- During the students' senior or final IEP meeting, explain to the student and their family the purpose of collecting post school outcomes data and the importance of their participation.
- Give them a copy of the "[What's Up?](#)" brochure the "[Sample PSO Survey Questions](#)", found at www.wipso.org.
- Let parents and youth know that the survey results are also used by adult agencies to improve the services they provide to young adults the first few years after high school.

□ **Discuss the Post School Outcomes Survey with Students**

- **Make a party of it!** Show the "[What's Up?](#)"  Youth video at a senior popcorn party or other event where other graduation activities are discussed:
 - without subtitles: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebomXDKvNBo>
 - with subtitles: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoPUzlvbQVU>
- Explain to students that by answering the questions on the survey, they are providing the school with valuable information and helping other students like themselves.
- Share survey results from other former students; talk about former students who enrolled in college, went on to work, enlisted in the military services, etc.

□ **Create a District Post School Contact Connection**

- Ask youth to identify one or more persons from their school (e.g. favorite teacher, guidance counselor, coach) they would talk to a year after high school.
- Ask youth who they would want to respond to the survey on their behalf if they cannot be reached.
- Consider sending survey information along with other important information that is sent home to parents during students' junior and senior years (e.g. information on class rings, senior portraits, graduation ceremony).

- **Collect Student Contact Information Prior to Leaving School and Keep Students' Files Current and Accurate**
 - A large number of students exit school informally, making it difficult to track their whereabouts and even more difficult to track their post school outcomes; make certain you have the most recent and correct information. Identify the person who has a relationship with the hardest of the hard-to-find youth and ask that person about possible ways to contact the youth.
 - Maintain a list of family members still in school who may know how to reach the student after school.
 - Maintain current contact information and update information annually, including phone numbers, email and U.S. postal address.
 - Establish and ask students to join a high school Facebook page to maintain contact.
 - Keep local data systems current. Make certain that school personnel enter the most recent student data. Make certain that the data are updated at the beginning and end of each academic period.

After Students have Exited School

- **Consider Conducting Your Own Post High Survey**
 - District Director of Special Education/Pupil Services now have the option to have St. Norbert College Strategic Research Institute (SRI) conduct the former student interviews on behalf of the district for Indicator 14 reporting, or have district staff trained to conduct the survey for the district. Pilot training with districts indicate much higher response rates, and former students and families that are impressed someone from the school called to ask about how things are going.
 - Information on interviewer training can be found on the Wisconsin Transition Improvement Grant Website (www.witig.org). If you call:
 - Be enthusiastic when calling youth and families, and be interested in the answers they provide.
 - Vary the times of the day you call and the weekday; include weekends.
 - Leave a callback number; most youth said they would return a call if they had a phone number.
- **Send "Heads Up" Letter to Youth and Families**
 - To prompt students to respond to the post school outcomes survey, personalize and send the former student a district letter, with the district log, reminding them to participate in the upcoming survey (*District Letter* www.wipso.org/instruments.php).
 - Use established contacts to verify a current, working phone number for the district or SRI to use.
- **Use Private Messages on Facebook**
 - Remind students of the importance participating in the survey and verify contact information privately.
- **Use Available Databases**
 - **National Change of Address** (NCOALink) "is a secure dataset of approximately 160 million permanent change-of-address (COA) records consisting of the names and addresses of individuals, families and businesses who have filed a change-of-address with the USPS".^[1] It is maintained by the [United States Postal Service](http://www.usps.com) and access to it is licensed to service providers and made available to mailers.
 - Contact the **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**. VR Counselors maintain current files on each of their clients. They may be able to provide current information on a particular student or have that student contact school personnel to provide the data needed.
 - Consider **Aristotle's Nationwide Voter File** (www.VoterListsOnline.com) to locate youth who are difficult to find. This service contains comprehensive lists of registered voters across the U.S. Data are collected at the state, county, and municipal level across the country, and integrated and enhanced by data experts.

Adapted from the work of the National Post-school Outcomes Center (NPSO) (www.psocenter.org) document "[Contacting Hard-to-Find Youth: Strategies for the Post-School Survey](#)".