Interagency Collaboration

Presented by Lindsey Anderson
Objectives

1. Define interagency collaboration
2. Describe the purposes of interagency collaboration
3. Identify potential barriers and ideas for eliminating them
4. Identify characteristics of effective collaboration
5. Identify how interagency collaboration functions at national, state, and local (including school) levels
Guiding Questions

1. What is interagency collaboration (and how will we know it if we see it)?
2. What are our purposes for collaboration?
3. How will we see and eliminate barriers?
4. What are characteristics of effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?
5. How do interagency teams function at the state, local, and school levels? How do we build them?
Guiding Question 1

What is interagency collaboration (and how will we know it if we see it)?
No Consensus for a Definition

No commonly used definition of interagency collaboration found across multiple research studies between 1982 and 2009

Kester, J. (2012); Test, Mazzotti, Fowler, Kortering, & Kohler.(2009)
How will we know it when we see it?

What does collaboration mean, based upon the ecology and environment of transitioning youth?

This leads us to explore the definition of interagency collaboration...
“Collaboration is generally defined as a process of participation through which people, groups, and organizations form relationships and work together to achieve a set of agreed-upon results.”

Kochhar-Bryant, 2008, p. 7
Defining Interagency Collaboration

• Interagency collaboration involves relationships among people in different roles and disciplines in schools, among schools, with human service agencies, and in communities.

• Collaboration is the “people part,” which goes hand in hand with the organizational level of system coordination.

Kochhar-Bryant, 2008
Defining Collaboration

- Collaboration: process of discovery where relationships and new knowledge are constructed through a synthesis of ideas.

- These are outcomes of social learning that are built upon the trust and cooperation of the group of collaborators.

(Kochhar-Bryant, 2008)
Definition of Collaboration

Processes, activities and relationships of a group that results in the exchange of information, sharing, and pooling of resources for mutual benefit to achieve a common purpose.
What are our purposes for collaboration?
Despite legislation and multiple agency mandates, we continue to have systems fragmentation.

National Council on Disability (2008)
Lower Post-School Outcomes

- General Population of Youth
- Youth with Disabilities

(NLTS-2, 2010; Test, Aspel & Everson, 2006)
Purposes for Engaging in Interagency Collaboration

1. To improve the academic, postsecondary, and life-long success of students.

2. To try new ways of working together to accomplish #1.

3. To be rejuvenated and use our creativity to accomplish #1.

4. To expand the number of people who can help us accomplish #1.

5. To eliminate our feelings of being a lone advocate.
What are challenges or barriers to effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?
Review of Challenges or Barriers

Organizational or System Barriers
- No cooperative processes or agreements
- Incongruent policies
- Separate funding streams with different purposes
- Changes in priorities & legislative shifts
- Inadequate data collection & reporting

Attitudinal Barriers
- Political pressures
- Territorialism
- Staff turnover

Knowledge Barriers
- Lack of understanding of own disciplines, agencies, etc.
- No knowledge of new models for collaboration
Ecological or Environmental Factors

- Complexity of transition system of agencies
- Agency cultural differences
- Different languages
- Change processes
- Legal mandates
The Collaboration Puzzle

Agency
• Mission
• Funding and resources
• Accountability
• Professionals’ job descriptions and roles
• Linkages and formal agreements
• Already formed relationships
What Happens to Supports for Employment of Youth After High School?


Challenges in accessing federally funded programs:

- Difficulty navigating multiple programs that are not always coordinated;
- Possible delays in service as they wait to be served by adult programs;
- Limited access to transition services;
- A lack of adequate information or awareness of available programs that may provide transition services after high school;
- Lack of preparedness for postsecondary education or employment.
### Key Federal Legislation Providing Services to Transitioning Youth

**Figure 1: Key Federal Legislation Providing for Services to Transition-Age Students with Disabilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Examples of services provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistive Technology Act of 1994</td>
<td>Assistive technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000</td>
<td>Activities that support employment and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Act of 1965&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Academic enrichment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</td>
<td>Academic enrichment, assistive technology, transition planning, and vocational assessment and work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation Act of 1973</td>
<td>Assistive technology, employment services, and financial assistance for postsecondary education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Act&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Employment and training services, financial assistance, independent living and assistance, and transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Investment Act of 1998&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Employment and training services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25  
Age

Source: GAO review of agency documentation, including postings and publications.
Figure 2: Students Move from Services Provided through Their High Schools to Services Delivered through Multiple Programs

1. Eligible student entitled to services until graduating or leaving high school.
2. Student must apply and be found eligible for services from individual programs as an adult.

Services supporting students with disabilities in transition:
- Academics
- Assistive technology
- Employment assistance
- Financial assistance
- Independent living skills
- Housing assistance
- Job training
- Transportation

Source: GAO analysis of agency documentation, including postings and publications.
Potential Partnerships: Transition Collaboration

• Student and their families
  • School personnel
    – Administrators
    – Special Education Teachers
    – General Education Teachers
    – Career & Tech. Educators
    – Counselors
    – Related Services

• Post-secondary education & training
  – Trade & technical schools
  – Community college
  – Universities

• Adult Government Services
  – RSA
  – DDA
  – Mental Health

• Community Services providers
  – ARC
  – Goodwill
  – Advocacy Groups
  – Attorney Advocates

• Businesses (including Chamber of Commerce)

• Other community partners
• To improve supports for transitioning youth, the report calls for improved coordination not only at the federal level, but at the state, regional, and local levels, including schools!

This leads us to Guiding Question 4...
Guiding Question 4

What are the characteristics of effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?
Renewed Optimism for Effective Collaboration

• Researchers are showing renewed interest (e.g., Kester, Noonan, Wenger)

• Outcomes of research targeting collaboration for transitioning youth:
  – Communities of Practice (often called Transition Councils at School Levels)
  – Circles (being piloted by OSSE in the District)

• Collaboration does not happen in a vacuum – we need to create a context and deliberate opportunities to develop collaboration to benefit transitioning students
Communities of Practice (CoP)

• CoPs are being implemented at local, district, state and national levels around the issue/topic and problems of transition for students with disabilities.
• OSSE and School Talk facilitate the District’s CoP on Transition
Optimism for Improving Collaboration

There is hope that the challenges of interagency collaboration in secondary transition can be overcome, as reflected by one interviewee in Kester’s research:

“It’s very seldom that you have a group of individuals from so many different backgrounds and perspectives, and yet in my time there I haven’t seen individual agendas. I’ve seen the main agenda of how are we going to help these students be successful.” (Participant 18, interview, January 30, 2012)
Communities of Practice

• Communities of Practice are “vehicles” for social learning (Wenger, 1998)

• They are defined as groups of people who share expertise and passion about a topic and interact on an ongoing basis to further their learning in their domain (Wenger, 2002)
A Context to Grow Transition Practices

No one agency can do it alone...it takes a community!

Communities of practice create an environment where there are strengths in numbers and practices can be developed and implemented through shared work.
Formation of a CoP

- Share a common domain of interest
- Develop a community
- Share practice and resources
What do Communities of Practice Look Like?

- Problem Solving
- Sharing Information
- Coordination & Synergy
- Sharing Assets
- Discussing Developments
- Mapping Knowledge/Resources & Identifying Gaps
Not “owned” by any one organization:

– Agenda set by the group,
– Based upon needs of students,
– Members take on various leadership roles;
– Meets once a month in person (may have smaller meetings virtually or telephonically)
– Some who attended with reluctance are now energized and actively participating
– The process is working
DC Secondary Transition Community of Practice Highlights

• Subcommittees change each year with new priorities (youth engagement, family engagement, etc.)

• Recent Outcomes:
  – White Paper on Self Determination—led to Student-led IEP initiative
  – Transition Process Toolkit
  – Transition Assessment toolkit
  – Secondary Transition Website
  – State Capacity Building Institute
  – Annual Moving Forward with Transition Forum (SchoolTalk)
  – CIRCLES
Guiding Question 5

How do interagency teams function at the state, local, and school levels and how do we build them?
Common Themes of Successful Collaboration

1. Forming new relationships with people
2. Sharing human and other resources
3. Building trust among people working as equals (non-hierarchical) relationships
4. Requiring joint responsibilities for outcomes
5. Involving joint decision-making and actions
6. Aiming for specific, agreed upon results and change

Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010
Levels of Collaborative Teams

• National Level
  – National Transition Community of Practice (sponsored by the IDEA Partnership, www.sharedwork.org)

• DC level
  – DC Transition Community of Practice

• Need to develop collaborative teams at the school level
  – Transition Councils or CoPs

• IEP Teams

Let’s take a look at the CIRCLES model of collaboration...
Rejuvenating and Energizing

• We change the way we work
• We continue to work positive postsecondary outcomes for our students
• We become re-energized and enthusiastic
• We are not alone!
Interagency Transition Teams

**Who** - Comprised of representatives of key stakeholders (including the decision makers)

**How** – Work strategically to develop and implement policy

**What** – Improve adult life outcomes
CIRCLES: Multi-Level Approach to Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities
Community-Level Team

- Discuss policy
- Collaborate for service delivery
- Do NOT work directly with students
- Meet 2-4 times/year
- MOST IMPORTANTLY...
Appoint a Representative to Serve on School-Level Team

Appointed Representative

Community-Level Team

School-Level Team
School-Level Team

Direct Service Providers & School Personnel

- Work DIRECTLY with students/families
- Collaborate to provide services to INDIVIDUAL students
- See students from multiple schools for transition planning
- Meet monthly
- AND...
Submit Pre-planned Transition Goals to IEP Team
Student- Level (IEP) Team

- Prepare students to present at the School-Level Team meeting
- Bring pre-planning from School-Level Team back to the IEP meeting to
- Write transition plan

School and Student-Specific Team Members
Interagency Collaboration = Improved Post School Outcomes

Community Level Team

School Level Team

IEP Team

Improved Post-School Outcomes for Students with Disabilities
CIRCLES in DC Highlights

• Opportunity to develop opportunities for increased self-determination and interagency collaboration

• During it’s first year:
  – 4 schools participated
  – 20 students were served
“We build the road and the road builds us.”
Guiding Questions:
1. What is interagency collaboration (how will we know it if we see it)?
2. What are our purposes for collaboration?
3. What are characteristics of effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?
4. How will we see and eliminate barriers?
5. How do interagency teams function at the state, local, and school levels?
References


