

Improving the Outcomes of Transition Age Youth with Psychiatric Disabilities through the Adoption and Use of Best Practice Transition Planning



Improving the educational attainment and outcomes for youth with emotional and behavioral disturbances (EBD) should be a high priority goal for policy makers, school systems, and researchers. Students with EBD drop out of high school more than any other group of students with disabilities.¹⁻² A truncated education is correlated with lower wages, lower employment rates, and poorer health.³⁻⁵ Youth with EBD also participate in postsecondary education less frequently and have lower rates of post-school employment than many other categories of students with disabilities.⁶⁻⁹ Research has shown that the poor outcomes experienced by this vulnerable group are worsened by the lack of best practice transition planning for students with EBD as they move to postsecondary life. Transition planning is where goals and services are outlined for students with EBD enrolled in special education as part of an Individualized Education Program.

Project Goal and Outcomes:

The goal of the newly funded Translating Evidence to Support Transitions (TEST) grant is to increase the use and adoption of research-based best practices in transition planning services for high school students with EBD receiving special education services. TEST outcomes include the development of guides and curricula for practicing and implementing best practices in transition planning. All TEST activities will be built on an implementation science framework to promote the integration of research evidence into transition planning practices.¹⁰⁻¹¹ TEST will be guided by knowledge translation principles to ensure that findings will reach the individuals and organizations that can put the guides and curricula into practice.¹²⁻¹³ Over the five year project timeline, data and feedback will be collected at each step in order to continually improve TEST materials.

Project Activities Include:

1. Developing research-informed materials and procedures for use by transition planning teams that are tailored to students with EBD;
2. Pilot-testing procedures and materials, in partnership with implementation teams, in a South Carolina school district to develop and finalize TEST procedures and materials;
3. Providing implementation support and technical assistance to transition teams in one state, to be determined, which will result in a TEST implementation guide;
4. Presenting TEST best practices and implementation guides and curricula at a national capacity building institute for high school special education transition planning teams; and
5. Disseminating TEST materials nationally.

Project Personnel:

UMMS project personnel include Marsha Ellison, PhD (PI); Kathleen Biebel, PhD (Co-PI); Sloan Huckabee, PhD, Lauren Davis, BS, and Laura Golden, BA. Project partners include the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), and SRI International.

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