

Locating Hard to Find Youth for the PSO Survey: Strategies from Youths and Parents

**DCDT Conference
San Diego, CA
December 2013**

Charlotte Y. Alverson, Ph.D.

Purpose of IDEA

To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and *prepare them for further education, employment,* and independent living.

Is this IDEA purpose being fulfilled?

Since 2010, States have been required to determine the *Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:*

1. *Enrolled in “higher education”*
2. *In “competitive employment”*
3. *Enrolled in “some other postsecondary education or training”*
4. *In “some other employment”*

Not engaged – not required for federal reporting

BACKGROUND: How data are collected

- Census versus Representative Sample
 - 33 states attempt census of all leavers
- Method used to collect the data
 - 53 states use some type of survey method
- Data are collected when youth have been out of school for at least one year
- Questions are designed to determine how youth have been engaged since leaving high school

BACKGROUND: Who responds

- Respondents are former student or his/her family member
- Response Rate refers to the number of youth who answered the survey and is one measure of the quality of the survey results

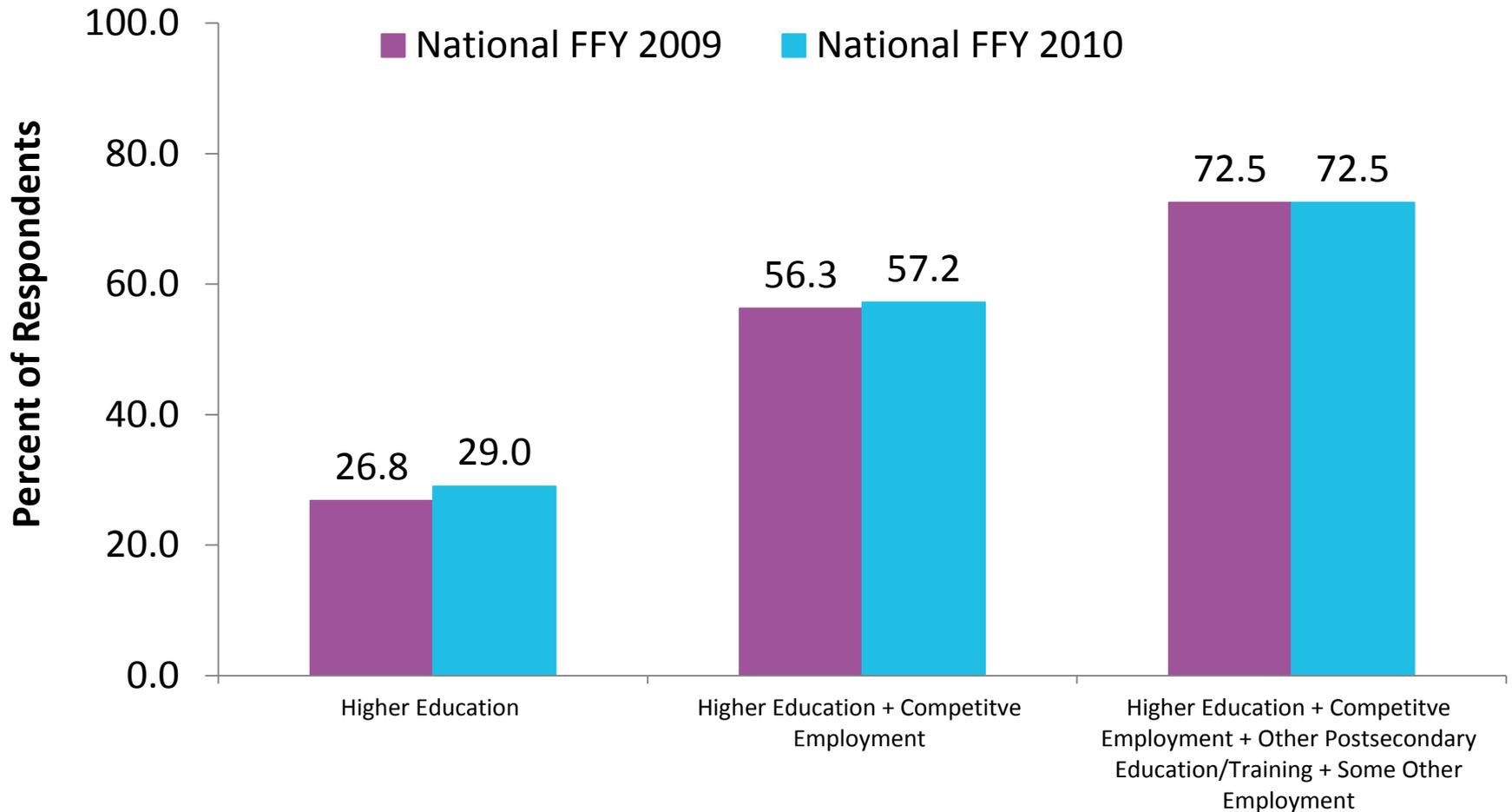
	February 2011 (FFY 2009) 48 states reporting	February 2012 (FFY 2010) 47 states reporting	February 2013 (FFY 2011) 52 states reporting
Range of Response Rates	4.68% to 94.66%	7.25% to 100%* <small>*Fewer than 10 leavers</small>	9% to 100%
Median Response Rate	47.2% (<i>sd</i> = 21.77)	44.50% (<i>sd</i> = 22.37)	49.00% (<i>sd</i> = 23.71)

BACKGROUND: Who responds

- Representativeness, another measure of the quality of survey data, refers to how similar respondents are to all youth who left school that year.
- The more similar respondents are to all leavers the more confidence we can have that the results reflect all students.
- To determine how well the respondent group represents all leavers, we examine five subgroups:
 - Disability category
 - Gender
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Exit status
 - Age

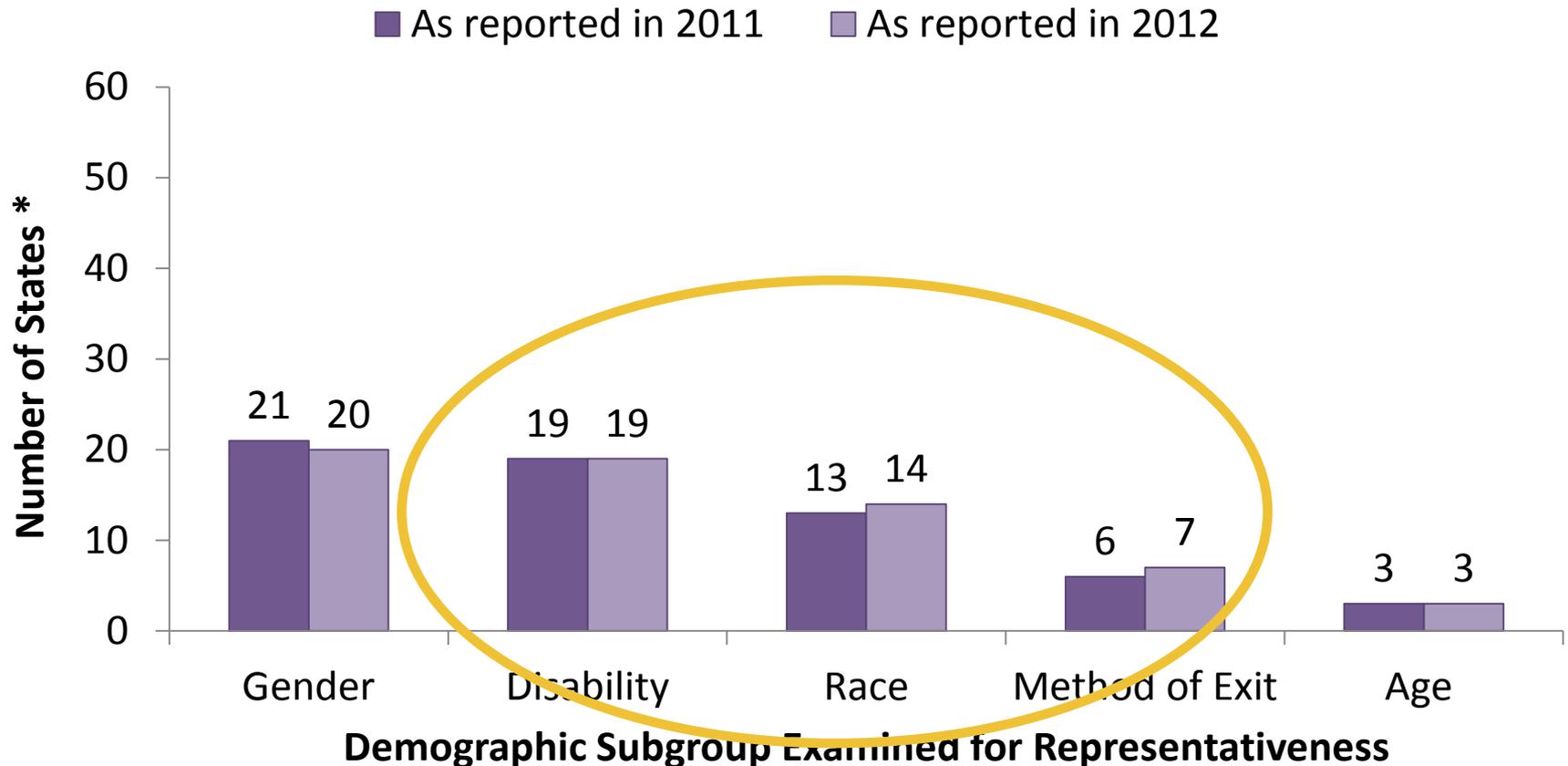
Post-School Outcomes for Student with Disabilities as Measured by Indicator 14

Median Percentage for Each Measure



How well do these data represent all youth with disabilities?

- Representativeness lacking in all categories.



* 60 states includes US jurisdictions and territories

Need

- NPSO charge:
 - To assist states in the development of a rigorous, yet practical data collection system yielding valid and reliable data that facilitate States' use of post-school outcome data to improve in-school programs for children with disabilities.
 - Underrepresentation in key groups of youth:
 - Disability category emotional behavioral disability
 - Minority youth
 - Youth who dropout

Locating Hard to Find

- NPSO conducted 6 focus groups with young adults and their family members in four states:
 - Tennessee
 - Minnesota
 - Arizona
 - South Dakota
- Purpose of the focus groups was to learn strategies for contacting youth one year after they leave high school

Method

- Separate focus groups for parents and youth
- Each lasting about 1 hour
- Focus groups were held at a State Transition Conference or high school
- A semi-structured interview protocol
- Worked with local teacher or community contact to identify youth and parents, targeting minority families, youth at-risk of dropping out of school, and those served for emotional behavior disability
- Youth and Parents were given \$25 gift card for participating

Focused Questions

- How long should the interview take to complete?
- Do you think they would prefer a call from a former H.S. teacher or a professional interviewer?
- What would make them feel comfortable or motivate them to participate?
- What would make you feel this is a valuable use of time?
- Would you prefer to be contacted by email, phone, mailed form, or online?
- Would you like to know the employment and postsecondary education outcomes of students with disabilities in your school district?
- How could you use that information?
- Would it be ok for a parent or other relative close to you answered the questions?

Results

- Demographics of the focus groups
- Themes to individual questions
- Emergent themes

Demographics

- 41 Youth and 22 Parents
- 59% youth reported minority including Hispanic, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native
- 29% youth reported specific learning disability
- 17% youth reported intellectual disability
- 12% youth reported other disability (including VI, autism)
- 7% youth reported multiple disabilities, including emotional behavioral disabilities
- 35% youth reported unknown disability

How long should the interview take to complete?

- Parents and youth generally agreed that 15 to 20 minutes was an appropriate amount of time for the interview.
- A few parents emphasized that for some students it would take longer.
- Youth emphasized a short survey form and short interview.

Would you prefer to talk with a teacher or a professional interviewer?

- Majority of the youth preferred to talk with a former teacher
 - *“Yeah, I would talk to a teacher because I know them” and “I know their names” (MN Males)*
- Only a couple of students preferred to talk with a professional interviewer
 - *“...it’s easier to say things to interviewers that you think you’ll never see again. That it will remain confidential. You can say more things, there’s less restrictions on who or what is being talked about because no one will be offended” (TN Male)*

Pre-Notification

Familiarity

Motivation

Incentive

Interesting

What's the best way to reach you?

- No single best method for contacting youth or their families
 - Email/Internet Questionnaire
 - Phone Interview
 - Social Networking – Facebook, My Space – private message from a teacher
 - Mailed Questionnaire
 - In Person Interview
- Pre-Notification was more important than the method used to make contact
- Youth were skeptical about completing the survey via email or Internet, saying
 - *“I don't usually respond to messages or things that are from the Internet because I don't trust anybody” and “There's like way too much of that ad stuff” [to complete a survey] (AZ Youth)*

Would you like to know the employment and postsecondary education outcomes of former students with disabilities?

- Youth were interested in learning the PSO of former students, saying,
 - *“I guess if it were good, I’d be more motivated to go to school”* and *“to see where I am with them...to see where we match”* and *“I’d like to see where I was at with some other people around my age”* (MN Youth).
 - *“Motivation”. “Cause if you see what someone else is doing, that’ll give you this thought of mind that I can do something similar...”* (TN Youth)
 - *“I would try to like use it; they can do it so can I”* (SD Youth)

How could you use the information?

- Parents and youth wanted know the PSO results of former students.
 - Parents: help students have ‘buy-in’ for completing the survey (AZ Parents)
 - Motivational tool for their child, saying, “*well these kids made it...*” or “to encourage [our child]. Because a lot of times they get in that kind of depression, where they just don’t feel they can do anything”(TN Parents).
 - Saw PSO results of other students as ‘*giving us hope... someone with the same disability can do this, that makes me feel good that she can also do it...We’re not alone in one boat;*’ (TN Parents)
 - Accountability mechanism for school: use the information to help them decide what school to enroll their child in (AZ parents), and to “*put a bug in some administrators’ ears about what we need*”(SD Parent) and to “*...make sure the schools are doing what they’re supposed to be doing*” (TN Parent).

Would it be ok if your parent or a relative answered the questions for you?

- No definitive preference for whether youth were comfortable with a parent or other relative answering questions on their behalf.
 - *“I’d rather do it myself...I guess my parents don’t know exactly what’s going on...It’s just, I’d rather know what you ask.”* (MN Male)
 - *“They already know everything about me.”* (TN Male)

Parents' Strategies for Contacting Youth: How to reach youth one year later?

- **Have someone maintain contact** with youth during the first year out of school.
- **Identify who** will contact youth during the last IEP meeting.
- **Ask youth** who they would like to hear from or who they would talk to a year later (e.g., favorite teacher); should be someone with a personal relationship with the youth (e.g., favorite teacher, principal, or case manager).
- **Include information** about the survey in the senior information and graduation packets along with invitations, announcements, and ordering tapes of the graduation ceremony.

Parents' Strategies for Contacting Youth: How to reach youth one year later?

- **Exit survey** to collect contact information – multiple phone numbers, email addresses, favorite high school teacher
- **Social networking** through private messages
- **Pre-notification letter** to parents and youth – hand written, white envelope, not windowed envelope, with a 1 page information sheet
- **Build relationship** via Internet before they leave school, provide study tips or other incentives; practice the interview before youth leave school
- **Media campaign** to get people interested

Parents' Strategies for Contacting Youth: How to reach youth one year later?

- **Data mining** via public records
- **Contact through other agencies:** Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities, behavioral health authorizes – ask the agency to contact the youth on behalf of the school with a signed release of information
- **Other family in school** – siblings, cousins
- **Contact near significant dates** when youth may have been in touch with family – holidays, their birthday, New Year's Day

Emergent Theme: Hardest of the Hardest to Find

The Allens:

- Not going to respond to email or answer his phone
 - Money -- \$5.00
 - Have a young female call
 - Face to face interview with a teacher
- Be strategic with resources
- Appeal to their desire to help others

Emergent Theme: What Youth Need to Learn about the PSO Survey

- None of the youth (or parents) were familiar with the possibility of being contacted a year after they left school
 - Talk about the survey/interview; develop informational materials
- Several youth didn't understand 'interview' in context of 'to gain information'. "*They'll end up getting the job or something*' (AZ Male)
 - Practice the interview to ensure youth understand the questions and are comfortable answering them; talking with a stranger

Recommendations

- Ask Youth to Identify Who Should Respond
 - Ask youth whether they are comfortable with a parent or family member answering on their behalf and who that person would be
- Conduct an Exit Survey
 - Best and multiple forms of contact
 - Who youth would like to hear from one year later
- Provide Multiple Forms of Pre-Notification
 - In school: share the results from previous years
 - Talk about the survey/interview

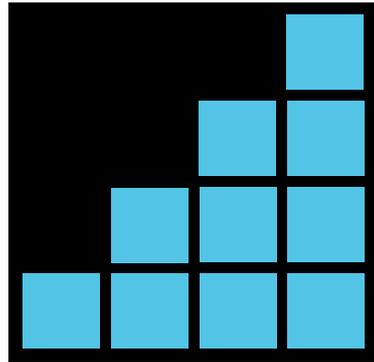
Recommendations

- Provide a “traditional business letter” from the school principal explaining the purpose of the survey/interview, why it is important, and how the information will be used.
- Use email for pre-notification and if using an Internet survey, ensure it is easily distinguished from spam by using the school name or logo
- Leave a message with a call back number to distinguish from telemarketers

Recommendations

- Teach youth about the survey
 - Practice calling them and letting them answer the questions
- Use multiple methods of contact
 - Email/Internet questionnaire, phone interview, paper questionnaire
- Target resources strategically for the hardest of the hard to reach
 - Incentives

For Additional Information



NATIONAL
POST-SCHOOL
OUTCOMES
C E N T E R

Charlotte Y. Alverson

541.346.1390

calverso@uoregon.edu