

**Outcomes of Approved Special Education
Programs in the Private Sector**

Plans for Exiting Students: 2011-2012

**Report Number 11
NAPSEC Outcomes Project**

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This report is dedicated to the memory of Joseph E. Gorga,
Director of Lord Stirling School, Basking Ridge, NJ ,
a dedicated teacher, administrator, and champion of students with disabilities

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Executive Summary

Studies about special education have often overlooked examining the outcomes for students with the most severe disabilities, those who attend approved private special education centers because their local public school districts could not provide programs to meet their diverse and complex needs. For more than a decade, NAPSEC, a national association of approved private special education centers whose members serve such students in highly specialized therapeutic programs, has examined outcomes for these students in order to address this gap in the knowledge base of special education. These studies have focused on the plans made by students at the time of discharge from a NAPSEC-member's facility due to transfer, graduation, or reaching the legal age limit.

This report also completes a 5-year cycle of tracking results and will set forth an overview of the outcomes for transfer and graduate/aged-out students exiting from NAPSEC-member programs from 2007-2008 through 2011-2012.

Highlights for Transfer Students

Findings support the assertion that the highly specialized therapeutic programs offered by NAPSEC-member schools provide sufficient support, assistance, and remediation to enable students with severe disabilities -to eventually enter or re-enter appropriate educational programs within their local public school districts:

1. 97% of the students who transferred out of a NAPSEC-member program to another education program were enrolled in the NAPSEC-member program for 5 years or less.
2. 60% of students who transferred from a NAPSEC-member program had plans to enroll in an educational program within their local public school district. (23% planned to enter regular education settings, including settings offering supported inclusion; 37% planned to enter other settings within the local district, such as, resource rooms, alternate schools, and self-contained classrooms).

Highlights for Graduates/Aged-Out Students

Findings support the assertion that the highly specialized therapeutic programs offered by NAPSEC-member schools provide sufficient instruction, support, and guidance in the transition from school to adulthood to enable most students with severe disabilities who leave a NAPSEC-member program due to graduation or aging out to participate optimally in their communities according to their individual capabilities and capacities:

1. Over 93% of the graduates/aged-out students left a NAPSEC-member program with plans for entering productive adult roles.
2. About 54% of the graduates/aged-out students had plans to enter a mainstream activity (4-year/2-year college or trade/technical training, competitive employment, or the military).
3. More than 27% had plans to enter a vocational rehabilitation activity (vocational rehabilitation training program, supported or sheltered employment).
4. 12% had plans to enter an appropriate adult program in the community (adult partial care or adult nonvocational day program).
5. Graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs (75%) and Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (72%) were the most likely to make plans to enroll in postsecondary education or obtain a competitive job or enlist in the military.
6. Graduates/aged-out students from Developmental Disorders programs (68%) and Medical Disorders programs (54%) made plans to participate in Vocational Rehabilitation Activities as well as Community-based Programs Activities.
7. 72% of graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, a population associated with poor outcomes, had plans to enroll in a 4-year/2-year college or trade/technical school or to enter the job market or the military.

Introduction

For over a decade, the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC), an organization of about 280 approved private education centers, has issued a report about the discharge plans of the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students with severe disabilities, including the postschool plans for those who graduate or age out. Students with the most severe disabilities represent about 1% of all students who receive special education services in the U.S.A. In short, the students who attend the highly specialized programs offered by NAPSEC members have diverse and complex educational needs.

From 2000-2004 and again from 2007-2011, NAPSEC has initiated an annual examination of the discharge plans of the students who exited from its members' educational programs. This on-going effort has been undertaken because other studies of students with disabilities, including the National Longitudinal Transition Studies (1993, 2004, 2010), have paid little attention to the outcomes for students with the most severe disabilities. The needs of these students often cannot be met through the special education programs available in the public schools.

The present report continues to focus on identifying the educational settings to which the younger students planned to transfer and the adult settings to which the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter upon exiting from a NAPSEC-member school during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, an overview of these plans will be provided for the 5-year period spanning school years 2007-2008 through 2011-2012.

Method

Each NAPSEC-member school was asked to submit discharge information on every student who left a program over the course of the previous academic year. Exiting students were defined as transfer students, students who left the NAPSEC-member program to move on to another educational program, and graduates/aged-out students, those who left a NAPSEC-member school because he/she received a high school diploma, a certificate of completion, and/or aged out. In addition, demographic and programmatic information was collected on the number of students who dropped out of school during the course of the study.

Each participating school was given a definition of 5 specific types of special educational programs offered by NAPSEC-member schools and was asked to place each exiting student into 1 of these 5 specific types. Instructions stated that only one category was to be used for each student. The programs were defined as follows: 1) Preschool Disorders Programs – for students with any disorder identified at the preschool stage; 2) Developmental Disorders Programs– for students with speech/language impairments, intellectual disability, autism, developmental delays; 3) Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Programs – for students with emotional and behavioral disturbances; 4) Medical Disorders Programs – for students with other health impairments, hearing impairments, visual impairments, orthopedic impairments, deaf-blindness, and traumatic brain injury; and 5) Learning Disorders Programs – for students with specific learning disabilities. This data was collected from each participating school and entered in a database for analysis.

The Participating Programs and Student Demographics

During the 2011-2012 school year, 77 NAPSEC-member schools (32% of the membership), which together offered 183 specialized education programs, volunteered to take part in this study. When the programs offered were examined, 143 (78%) were available for day students, 2 (1%) for residential students, and 38 (21%) for both day and residential students. Moreover, 52 programs (28%) offered services to students with Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders, 49 (27%) to students with Developmental Disorders (a category which, for our purpose, includes Autism Spectrum disorders), 34 (19%) to those with Medical Disorders, 32 (17%) to those with Learning Disorders, and 16 (9%) to students with Preschool Disorders. Taken together, the participants reported an enrollment of 10,073 students with 7,431 (74%) males and 2,633 (26%) females.

Participating schools were located in 5 of the federal education regions and 13 states. As Table 1 shows, more than 71% of the schools were located in the Mid-Atlantic region (Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania); 13% were in the Northeast region (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island); more than 6% in the Appalachia region (Virginia, Tennessee); more than 5% in the North Central region (Illinois); and nearly 4% in the Western region (Arizona and California).

Table 1. Participating Schools by Federal Educational Region

N=77

Region/Participating State	#	%
<u>Northeast:</u> ¹		
Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island	10	13.0
<u>MidAtlantic:</u> ²		
Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania	55	71.4
<u>Appalachia:</u> ³		
Virginia, Tennessee	5	6.5
<u>North Central:</u> ^{4,5}		
Illinois	4	5.2
<u>Western:</u> ^{6,7,8}		
Arizona, California	3	3.9
Total	77	100.0

¹ No participants from Maine, Vermont, Puerto Rico, or Virgin Islands

² No participants from the Delaware or Washington, D.C.

³ No participants from Kentucky or West Virginia

⁴ No participants from Minnesota or the Southeast Region

⁵ No participants from Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio or Wisconsin

⁶ No participants from Southwest or MidContinent Regions

⁷ No participants from Nevada or Utah

⁸ No participants from Northwest Region

⁹ No participants from Pacific Region

The Exiting Students

As Table 2 demonstrates, during the study period, 2,961 students exited from a participating school. Outcome information was available for 2,604 (88%) of the exiting students, 1,815 transfer students (61%) and 789 graduates/aged-out students (27%). Drop outs (130 students) and students who left without plans (357 students) account for the remaining 12%.

The exiting students tended to be male (73.4%), White (47.7%), High School students (67.7%) between the ages of 12 and 17 years (45.6%) who attended an Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (54.9%) day program (66.3%), remained at that program from 1-5 years (62.1%) and participated in a subsidized lunch program (56.1%). Transfer students made up 68% of the sample, while graduates/aged-out students made up about 28%. Another 4% was accounted for by students who dropped out.

About 73% of the students who left a NAPSEC-member school were involved in exits that were “planned” as part of the educational program and which had supports in place to enhance the transition. Moreover, more than 77% of the exits were viewed as “positive,” indicating that the exiting students were “ready” to move on to the next setting.

Table 2. Demographic and Other Relevant Information of Exiting NAPSEC Students

n=2,961

Characteristics	#	%
<u>Program Classification</u>		
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	1626	54.9
Developmental Disorders	458	15.5
Preschool Disorders	429	14.5
Medical Disorders	228	7.7
Learning Disorders	220	7.4
<u>Program Type</u>		
Day	1964	66.3
Residential	3	.1
Day & Residential	994	33.6
<u>Reason for Exit</u>		
Transfer	2014	68.0
Graduate/Aged-Out	817	27.6
Dropouts	130	4.4
<u>Grade Level</u>		
Preschool	431	14.6
Elementary School	183	6.2
Middle School	342	11.5
High School	2005	67.7
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
White	1411	47.7
Black	1046	35.3
Hispanic	431	14.6
Asian	54	1.8
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific and American Indian/Alaskan Native Islander	19	.6
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	2174	73.4
Female	787	26.6
<u>Ages at Exit</u>		
3-5 years	423	14.3
6-11 years	207	6.9
12-17 years	1349	45.6
18-21+ years	982	33.2

(Table 2 continued)		
<u>Length of Stay</u>		
< 1 year	497	16.8
1-5 years	1840	62.1
6-10 years	194	6.5
11+ years	73	2.5
Not Available	357	12.1
<u>Subsidized Lunch</u>		
Yes	1660	56.1
No	301	43.9
<u>Status of Planning Information</u>		
Available in Records	2604	87.9
Not Available	357	12.1
<u>Staff Assessment of Exit</u>		
Planned		
Yes	2169	73.3
No	792	26.7
Positive		
Yes	2286	77.2
No	675	22.8

The Transfer Students

Demographics

Overall, 1,815 transfer students left a NAPSEC-member school with a known education plan. Of these, 1,377 students (76%) were male, while 438 (24%) were female. When race/ethnicity was reported, 805 students (44%) were White, 705 (39%) were Black, 269 (15%) were Hispanic, 27 (1.5%) were Asian, and the remaining 9 students (.5%) were American Indian/Alaskan Native (1 student) and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (8 students).

Grade Level

As Table 3 shows, 53% of the exiting transfer students attended High School, about 17% Middle School, more than 8% Elementary School, and over 21% attended Preschool programs.

Table 3. Transfer Students by Grade Level

n= 1,815

	#	%
Preschool	387	21.3
Elementary School	154	8.5
Middle School	310	17.1
High School	964	53.1
Total	1,815	100.0

Length of Stay

Table 4 shows how long the transfer students were enrolled in a NAPSEC-member school.

Table 4. Length of Stay for Transfer Students

n= 1,815

	#	%
< 1 year	463	25.5
1-5 years	1,292	71.2
6-10 years	60	3.3
Total	2,627	100.0

More than 71% of the transfer students attended their special education program from 1 to 5 years. More than 25% were in attendance for less than 1 year. Taken together, about 97% of these students were in a NAPSEC-member program for 5 years or less before planning to transfer to another educational program.

The Educational Plans by Specialized Program

The plans of the students who transferred from a NAPSEC-member program to another educational program during the 2011-12 academic year were examined by the specialized type of NAPSEC-member program in which they were enrolled before they exited. More than 55% (1, 005 students) attended Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs; about 21% (387 students) were enrolled in Preschool Disorders programs; 12.6% (219 students) went to Developmental Disorders programs; about 6.6% (120 Students) attended Medical Disorders programs; and another 4.6% (84 students) attended Learning Disorders programs. Table 5 displays the distribution of these student plans.

Table 5. Educational Plans for Transfer Students by Specialized Program

n=1,815

Education Setting	Preschool n=387		E/BD n=1,005		DD n=219		Medical n=120		Learning n=84		Total n=1,815	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Regular Education, Not Special Education	71	18.3	34	3.4	9	4.1	13	10.8	8	9.5	135	7.4
Regular Education Vocational School	0	0	10	1.0	0	0	0	0	1	1.2	11	.6
Regular Education, Supported Inclusion	127	32.8	97	9.6	21	9.6	12	10.0	12	14.3	269	14.8
Subtotal: Returns to Regular Education	198	51.1	141	14.0	30	13.7	25	20.8	21	25.0	415	22.8
Resource Room	0	0	13	1.3	3	1.3	2	1.7	2	2.4	20	1.1
Alternate School	0	0	110	10.9	10	4.6	12	10.0	8	9.5	140	7.7
Special Education, Self -Contained LEA	164	42.4	268	26.7	49	22.4	22	18.3	10	11.9	513	28.3
Subtotal: Returns to Other In-District Education	164	42.4	391	38.9	62	28.3	36	30.0	20	23.8	673	37.1
Out- of- District Day School Special Education	25	6.5	210	20.9	94	42.9	29	24.2	18	21.4	376	20.7
Residential School	0	0	148	14.7	16	7.3	10	8.3	6	7.1	180	9.9
Home Instruction	0	0	32	3.2	8	3.7	13	10.8	4	4.8	57	3.1
Other	0	0	83	8.3	9	4.1	7	5.8	15	17.9	114	6.3
Total	387	100	1,005	100	219	100	120	100	84	100	1,815	100

Results for Transfer Student Educational Plans

As Table 5 indicates, 60% of the transfer students left school with plans to return to an educational program within the local district. While 23% had plans to return to regular education classes (8% for Regular Education, Not Special Education, including Vocational School; about 15% for Supported Inclusion), 37% planned to return to other programs within the public school district (Resource Room, about 1%; Alternate School, close to 8%; or Self-contained Classroom, over 28%).

Students from Preschool Disorders programs (51%) were the most likely to return to regular education programs. Students from the other disability categories made plans to return to regular educational programs as follows: 25% from Learning Disorders programs; 21 % from Medical Disorders programs; 14% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs; close to 14% from Development Disorders programs. Finally, when plans to enter other educational programs within the local school district, such as Resource Room, Alternate School, and Self-Contained Special Education programs within district, were examined by disability the following emerged. Forty-two per cent of the students who transferred from Preschool Disorders programs, about 39% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, 30% from Medical Disorders programs, 28% from Developmental Disorders programs, and nearly 24% from Learning Disorders programs plans to enter these “other” in-district educational programs.

5 Years of Tracking: Return to In-District Education from 2007-08 to 2011-12

Table 6 summarizes the degree to which the plans of the transfer students reflect a return to an in-district program, including a regular education setting, from 2007-2008 through 2011-2012.

Table 6 5 Years of Tracking Transfer Student Return to In-District Education:
2007-2008 to 2011-2012

	In-District Regular Education ^a		Other In-District Education ^b		Total In-District Education		Out-of- District Education ^c	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2007-2008 (37% participation) n= 2,881	554	19	1,311	46	1,865	65	1,016	35
2008-2009 (38% participation) n=2,575	616	24	1,008	39	1,624	63	951	37
2009-2010 (30% participation) n=1,955	430	22	764	38	1,194	60	761	40
2010-2011 (29% participation) n=2,627	613	23	1,021	39	1,634	62	993	38
2011-2012 (32% participation) n=1,815	415	23	673	37	1,088	60	727	40

^a Regular education, including supported inclusion

^b Resource room, alternate school, self-contained LEA

^c Out-of-district special education day school, residential school, home instruction, other placement (e.g., correctional, psychiatric, medical, or developmental facility)

For the 2011-2012 school year, 1,088 students, 60% of all exiting transfer students, planned to return to in-district programs. Of these, 415 students (23%) planned to return to regular education classrooms, while 673 students (37%) planned to enter “other” in-district programming, such as, resource room, alternate school, or self-contained LEA. Finally, 727 students (40%) were discharged with plans to receive their education outside of the district, such as at an out-of-district special education day school or residential school, or at a correctional, medical, or psychiatric facility.

On average, over this 5-year period, 62% of the students had plans to return to in-district programs (over 22 % to regular education classrooms and nearly 40% to other in-district programs), while 38% were discharged with plans to enter educational programs outside of the district.

Living Arrangements

About 73% of the transfer students (1,319) reported that they planned to continue to live with their parents or legal guardians. About 1.4% (25 students) planned to live independently (15 students) or semi-independently (10 students). About 11% (198 students) had plans to live in a skill development/ foster home (77 students) or group home (121 students). The plans of about 9% (159 students) were to live at a residential treatment facility. Almost 2% planned to go to a developmental (1 student), psychiatric (25 students), or medical (6 students) center. About 4% were to enter a correctional facility (74 students). Finally, the plans of less than 1% (8 students) called for living in another situation, such as, a drug treatment facility.

The Graduates/Aged-Out Students

Demographics

There were 789 graduates/aged-out students with known plans. Of these, 552 students (70%) were male, while 237 students (30%) were female. Moreover, 444 students (56%) were White, 227 (28%) were Black, and 92 (over 11%) were Hispanic. The remaining more than 3% were Asian (19 students), American Indian/Alaskan Native (3 students), and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (4 students). About 45% (358 students) came from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, about 31% (246 students) from Developmental Disorders programs, 14% (107 students) from Learning Disorders programs, and nearly 10% (78 students) from Medical Disorders programs.

Length of Stay

Table 7 shows the length of stay in a NAPSEC-member program for the students who graduated or aged out.

Table 7. Length of Stay for Graduates/Aged-Out Students
n= 789

	#	%
< 1 year	34	4.3
1-5 years	548	69.5
6-10 years	134	17.0
11+ years	73	9.2
Total	789	100.0

As Table 7 demonstrates, about 4% of the graduates/aged-out students were involved in their special education program at a NAPSEC-member school for less than 1 year; close to 70% for 1-5 years; 17% for 6-10 years; and 9% for 11 or more years. About 74% of the graduates/aged-out students were enrolled in their programs for 5 years or less.

The Postschool Plans by Specialized Program

Table 8 presents an analysis of the postschool plans of the graduate/aged-out students according to the specialized educational programs from which they graduated or aged-out.

Table 8. Postschool Plans of Graduates/Aged-Out Students by Specialized Program
n=789

<u>Postschool Setting</u>	E/BD n=358		DD n=246		Learning n=107		Medical n=78		Total N=789	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Four Year College	28	7.8	4	1.6	31	29.0	9	11.5	72	9.1
Two Year College	114	31.8	32	13.0	22	20.6	10	12.8	178	22.6
Trade/Technical School	31	8.7	3	1.2	8	7.5	0	0	42	5.3
Competitive Employment	75	21.0	23	9.3	18	16.8	7	9.0	123	15.6
Military	8	2.2	2	.8	1	.9	0	0	11	1.4
Mainstream Activity^a	256	71.5	64	26.0	80	74.8	26	33.3	426	54.0
Vocational Rehabilitation Training Program	31	8.7	35	14.2	2	1.9	4	5.1	72	9.1
Supported Employment	28	7.8	43	17.5	7	6.5	5	6.4	83	10.5
Sheltered Employment	9	2.5	39	15.9	11	10.3	2	2.6	61	7.8
Vocational Rehabilitation Activity^b	68	19.0	117	47.6	20	18.7	11	14.1	216	27.4
Adult Partial Care	10	2.8	16	6.5	2	1.9	11	14.1	39	4.9
Nonvocational Day Program	0	0	35	14.2	1	.9	20	25.6	56	7.1
Community-Based Program Activity^c	10	2.8	51	20.7	3	2.8	31	39.7	95	12.0
Other	5	1.4	3	1.2	0	0	0	0	8	1.0
No Education/Training, Job or Program	19	5.3	11	4.5	4	3.7	10	12.8	44	5.6
Total	358	100	246	100	107	100	78	100	789	100

^a Mainstream Activity – 4-Yr./2-Yr. College, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment or Military

^b Vocational Rehabilitation Activity – Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programs, Supported or Sheltered Employment

^c Community-Based Programs Activity – Partial Care and Nonvocational Day Programs

Results for Graduate/Aged-Out Student Postschool Plans

As Table 8 shows, 37% (292) of the graduates/aged-out students planned to go on to a 4-year/2-year College or a Trade/Technical School. Nearly 17% (134 graduates/aged-out students) had plans to enter Competitive Employment or the Military. Taken together, 54% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter a Mainstream Activity by participating in postschool education or technical training, seeking competitive employment, or enlisting in the military.

More than 27% (216 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter a Vocational Rehabilitation Activity by participating in a vocational rehabilitation training program (9%) or in supported (10%) or sheltered employment (8%), while 12% (95 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter Community-Based Program Activity by enrolling in an adult partial care (5%) or nonvocational day program (7%). About 1% (8 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter other adult settings, such as psychiatric, drug rehabilitation, or correctional facilities, while 44 graduates/aged-out students (over 5%) were discharged with no plans to enter an educational, vocational, rehabilitative, or supportive program or to obtain a job after completing their secondary program.

Eighty graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs (75%) and 256 from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (72%) made plans to enter Mainstream Activity. They were joined by 26 students (33%) from Medical Disorders programs and 64 from programs for students with Developmental Disorders (26%).

Those from Developmental Disorders programs (48%) were the most likely to plan to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity (about 14% with plans to receive vocational rehabilitation training, 18% to supported employment, and 16% to sheltered employment).

Graduates/aged-out students from Medical Disorders programs (40%) were the most likely to plan to enter Community-Based Program Activity (14% planned to enter adult partial care programs, while 26% planned to enter a nonvocational day program.)

5 Years of Tracking: Postschool Plans from 2007-2008 to 2011-2012

Table 9 shows the postschool plans for graduates/aged-out students for the 5-year tracking period of 2007-08 through 2011-2012.

Table 9. 5 Years of Tracking: Postschool Plans of Graduates/Aged-Out Students by Activity

	Mainstream Activity ^a		Vocational Rehabilitation Activity ^b		Community-Based Program Activity ^c		Total Engagement		Other Engagement/Not Engaged ^d	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2007-2008 (37% participation) n=930	563	61	227	24	75	8	865	93	65	7
2008-2009 (38% participation) n=900	520	58	195	22	87	10	802	90	98	8
2009-2010 (30% participation) n=681	369	54	173	25	73	11	615	90	66	10
2010-2011 (29% participation) n=716	404	56	166	23	83	12	653	91	63	9
2011-2012 (32% participation) n=789	426	54	216	27	95	12	737	93	52	7
^a Mainstream Activity – 4-Yr./2-Yr. College, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment or Military ^b Vocational Rehabilitation Activity – Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programs, Supported or Sheltered Employment ^c Community-Based Programs Activity – Partial Care and Nonvocational Day Programs ^d Engaged in other activities involving, for example, correctional, psychiatric, or medical intervention or not engaged in any activity										

For the 2011-2012 school year, 426 graduates/aged-out students (54%) planned to enter Mainstream Activities; 216 (27%) to Vocational Rehabilitation Activities; and 95 students (12%)

to Community-Based Adult Program Activities. On average, over the 5-year period from 2007-2008 to 2011-2012, 57% of the students who graduated or aged out planned to enter the mainstream; 24% to engage in vocational rehabilitation activity; and 11% to enter supportive community-based programs for adults with disabilities. An additional 8% of these students were discharged with plans to either enter other activities, such as those involving correctional, psychiatric, or medical intervention or were discharged without plans for productive engagement.

Living Arrangements

About 75% of the graduates/aged-out students (587) planned to live with a parent, other relative, or guardian. About 17% (136) made plans to live independently (13%) or semi-independently (5%). Approximately 8% (66) had plans to live in a skill development or foster home (3), group home (37), residential treatment center (15), developmental center (5), correctional facility (2), or another living arrangement, such as, a medical, psychiatric, or drug treatment facility (4).

Discussion

When compared to their peers for who appropriate special education programs are available within the local public school, the students who are enrolled in NAPSEC-member programs present with more severe, and often, multiple disabilities. These students comprise a unique subgroup within the population of students with disabilities and require highly specialized and intensive services. However, this study demonstrates that most of the students with severe disabilities planned, with the support and agreement of the staff at the NAPSEC-member facility, to enter or re-enter an education program within their local district. This finding appears to indicate that when these students are enrolled in highly specialized, individualized programs,

such as those offered by the programs affiliated with NAPSEC, and receive the intensive supports needed to remediate and/or strengthen their skills, most can look toward entering a local public school education program at some time in the future. (Gagnon & McLaughlin, 2004) As this study has shown, 97% of the transfer students were enrolled in NAPSEC-member programs for 5 years or less during the 2011-2012 school year and 60% had plans to return to programs within their home districts when they exited. Moreover, the staff at the NAPSEC-member schools agreed with 73% of the discharge plans and indicated that 77% of the exiting students appeared prepared to move on to the next education setting.

This report's findings about the plans made by the transfer students brings into focus the importance of the partnership between the public and private sectors of special education. The public-private partnership ensures that children with severe disabilities will receive appropriate services along the continuum of special education as described in IDEA. A future study to track these students after their entry (or reentry) into the public school programs could provide valuable information regarding the process and progress of the students whose careers have spanned the public and private systems of special education.

When the results for the graduates/aged-out students are examined, it is encouraging to note that 93% made plans to enter productive adult roles. Overall, 54% planned to become involved in mainstream activities, 27% in vocational rehabilitation activities, and 12% in community-based adult day programs. Without question, the NAPSEC-member were able to assist the majority of the graduates/aged-out students with severe disabilities to develop plans for engaging in productive adult roles according to each individual's capacity and capability.

Perhaps the most promising findings are those that related to the students with emotional and behavioral difficulties. The literature is filled with concern for the poor outcomes for this group

of students. Many studies that have reported outcomes for these students have collected data on the less disabled students with emotional and behavioral disorders who are able to receive their education at programs within the public school (SRI International, 1993; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2001; Wagner & Cameto, 2004; Newman, Wagner, Cameto and Knokey, 2009; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, and Shaver, 2010). The negative outcomes for this group have included low graduation rates, poor work histories, involvement in excessive antisocial behavior and the criminal justice system, and difficulty establishing stable adult roles (Chen, Symons, & Reynolds, 2011; Gagnon & McLaughlin; 2004; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998; Mattison & Spitznagel, 1998; Reddy, 2001; Sample, 1998; SRI International, 1993; Tobin & Sugai, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2001; Wagner, 1995; Wagner & Cameto, 2004).

During the 2011-12 school year, about 72% of the graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs left a NAPSEC-member program with plans to be engaged mainstream adult roles. More than 48% made plans to attend 4-year/2-year colleges or trade/technical schools. Perhaps these students will be able to maintain stability as adults due to the highly individualized and intensive services they received in the NAPSEC-member programs, services that were specifically tailored to their unique educational, behavioral, and emotional needs (Lange & Sletten, 2002). As Wagner et al. (2006) report, these students flounder in large public schools where they are likely to have teachers who feel unprepared to work with them and are unlikely to receive academic or other support services to help them succeed. In addition, Chen, Symons, & Reynolds (2011) demonstrate that efforts to help students with emotional and behavioral difficulties adjust to the classroom help curtail antisocial

behavior. Small school size, small classroom size, individualized programs, teachers who are prepared to work with challenging students, intensive academic and other supports---these are the factors that define NAPSEC-member programs. Future studies should track the graduates/aged-out students with emotional and behavioral difficulties as they transition into adulthood to determine whether they are able to maintain role stability. Few studies focus on the barriers faced by adults with serious disabilities as they move from the supports of youth entitlement programs to the requirements elective of adult programs. Moreover, few studies have focused on the outcomes for adults with severe disabilities.

The approved private (nonpublic) special education facilities with membership in NAPSEC remain dedicated to the success of students with severe disabilities along the continuum of special education. They remain strong and positive partners with the public schools who regularly access their programs for students with severe disabilities. As this report has made clear, the majority of the transfer students in this study had discharge plans that called for them to enter and/or return to attend educational programs within their local public school districts; the majority of the exiting graduates/aged-out students had plans to assume productive roles, according to their capacities and capabilities, as adult in their communities. NAPSEC-member special education programs continue to fill a critical role by providing the intensive, individualized, and highly specialized education and support services that are required to assist students with a wide range of severe disabilities.

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