

Parents' Perspectives on Transition and Postsecondary Outcomes for Their Deaf Children

RS
Research
Summarized

Summary of Cawthon et al., "Parents' Perspectives on Transition and Postsecondary Outcomes for Their Children Who Are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing"¹

Why was this work done?

- Parent beliefs and expectations about their children's ability to be successful in postsecondary life are important factors in academic and career outcomes for deaf students.
- Past research has shown that parental roles are especially important during the transition planning process for deaf individuals.
- More research is needed on the different factors that influence postsecondary outcomes for deaf students, especially research that focuses on how family context influences the transition process.

How was this work done?

- The data from this article were part of a national needs assessment survey conducted in 2012 by pepnet2, a large project funded by the U.S. Department of Education.
- The survey was the result of a multistep process in which data were collected from several sources:
 - **Step 1:**
The authors conducted focus group sessions with diverse stakeholders in the field.
 - **Step 2:**
The authors reviewed transition literature in the field and compiled established measures of individuals' perceptions of the transition process.
 - **Step 3:**
After a draft of the compiled measures had been completed, invitations to review the items were sent to more than 100 individuals with a wide range of expertise and experience. Feedback was compiled from more than 50 respondents.
 - **Step 4:**
A parent survey was created based on the compiled measures and respondent feedback with suggestions for revisions. Invitations to participate were sent to about 400 parents.
- The final parent survey contained a section on transition planning, specifically related to their child's Individualized Education Planning (IEP) process, and a section focused on parents' expectations for their child's future education and employment.

¹Cawthon, S. W., & Caemmerer, J. M. (2014). Parents' perspectives on transition and postsecondary outcomes for their children who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing. *American Annals of the Deaf* 159(1), 7–21. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University.



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- Participants included 56 parents from across the United States. Parents were asked to focus on their deaf child who had more recently gone through, or was currently going through, the transition from high school to a postsecondary setting.

What did researchers find?

- **Parents' experience of transition:** The parents of the deaf students in this study generally rated their experiences with the IEP process as positive. Parent and child characteristics influenced parent ratings of the IEP process. For example, higher ratings of the IEP process were associated with parents of deaf children with additional disabilities. Parents' self-identification as deaf was also related to positive ratings of the IEP process.
- **Parents' expectations for education:** Parent respondents reported high expectations for their deaf children's future educational attainment. A large proportion of them expected their children to enroll in postsecondary education, and many expected their children to complete their college degrees and pursue graduate education.
- **Parents' expectations of future employment:** Similar to parents' expectations for postsecondary training, parents' outlook for their children's future employment was overwhelmingly positive. They expected their children to be employed full time, well-prepared for their jobs, and in need of little ongoing support to perform their job once they started working. However, many parents reported that their children would require ongoing support for their communication needs.

What do the results mean for future research and practice?

- Although parents in this study generally rated their experience with the IEP process as positive, many of the parents rated the meetings themselves low in clarity and effectiveness. Further inquiry into both research and practice might focus on what parents view as effective meetings and where points of transparency and purpose can be articulated more clearly through the IEP process.
- For professionals who work with deaf students, it may be important to consider the effect that co-occurring disabilities and parental identity may have on parents' expectations of the transition process.
- The field would also benefit from a closer look at the specific roles that parents play over time throughout the transition process for their deaf children.



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