



Outcomes of Approved Special Education Programs in the Private Sector  
Plans for Exiting Students: 2016-2017; Report Number 16, NAPSEC Outcomes Project

### **Executive Summary**

Over the course of the past 18 years, NAPSEC, the National Association of Private Special Education Centers, an organization of over 200 approved private special education centers and 8 Council of Affiliated State Associations (CASA), has sponsored 16 outcomes studies to report the discharge plans of the students with severe disabilities who were enrolled in the nonpublic special education programs operated by its members. **NAPSEC has undertaken this task because other studies examining the outcomes for students receiving special education services have focused on students with less severe disabilities who could successfully access appropriate programs within the public schools. In contrast, the inquiries sponsored by NAPSEC have focused on the outcomes for students with the most severe disabilities. This group of students within special education is enrolled in the nonpublic programs offered by NAPSEC members because these programs offer the highly individualized, intensive, and specialized services that are legally mandated by the IEP and are not available within the public school.**

Each student in this study has an Individual Education Program (IEP) which was developed by the public school district and the student's family. The IEP comprehensively describes the intensive therapeutic services and curriculum modifications each student requires to succeed. By offering the specialized programs prescribed in the IEP to students with severe disabilities, NAPSEC-member facilities partner with the local public school district and the child's family to implement the IEP. NAPSEC-member facilities, therefore, play a critical role along the continuum of alternative placements in special education. Because of the programs offered by NAPSEC members, students with severe disabilities gain access to the benefits of an education experience that is tailored to their needs so that they can ultimately look forward to leading meaningful and productive lives within their communities.

Below are the highlights of the discharge plans made by students who exited from NAPSEC-member programs during the 2016-17 school year. The exiting students were either transfer students (those of school-age who moved to another educational setting, graduates (those who received a secondary school diploma or certificate of completion), or aged-out students (those who reached the legal age-limit for receiving educational services).

#### **Transfer Students**

Study findings for the 2,417 students who transferred during the 2016-17 school year indicate that the intensive, therapeutic, IEP-prescribed services offered by NAPSEC-member programs

successfully assisted these students to develop, remediate, and/or strengthen their skills. The majority of the transfer students were able to plan to enroll in an appropriate program within the local public school district after leaving the NAPSEC-member facility:

- 61% (1,478) planned to enter or return to an educational program within the local public school district.
- 26% (635) planned to enter or re-enter regular education settings in their local public school district. Of these, 11% (267) planned to do so without supports, while 15% (368) made plans to enter the regular education setting with IEP-prescribed supports.
- 35% (843) planned to enter other educational settings within the local district, such as an alternate school program (6%) or a self-contained classroom (29%).
- Another 39% (939) planned to move to settings outside the local district. These included plans for 27% (642) to enroll in an out-of-district special education day school programs; 5% (130) to enter a residential school; 3% (77) to receive home instruction; and 4% (90) to make other plans, such as discharge to a juvenile justice, drug, medical, or psychiatric treatment facility.
- 94% (2,259) were enrolled in a NAPSEC-member program for 5 years or less and left the nonpublic special education program with plans to enter or return to a program within the local public school (61%).
- Over 5 years, on average, 59 % of the transfer students planned to enroll in programs within their local public school district. While 23% had plans to enroll in-district in regular education programs, 36% planned to enter or reenter “other” in-district programs, such as alternate schools or self-contained LEA programs.

### **Graduates/Aged-Out Students**

Findings for 1,037 students who graduated or aged-out during the 2016-17 school year indicate that programs operated by members of NAPSEC provided the IEP-prescribed educational instruction and support for enrolled older adolescents and young adults with severe disabilities as they made the transition to adulthood with plans to pursue productive and meaningful roles in their communities:

- 88% (911) left a NAPSEC-member program with plans to enter productive and engaged adult roles.
- 41% (423) planned to enter a mainstream activity. This included 28% (280) with plans to enroll in post-secondary 4-year/2-year college or trade/technical school; and 13% (133) with plans to join the competitive employment workforce or enter military service.
- 28% (293) had plans to enter vocational rehabilitation, including vocational rehabilitation training ((10%), supported employment ((8%) or sheltered employment (10%).
- 19% (195) made plans to enter an appropriate adult program in the community, including adult partial care (5%) or nonvocational day programs (14%).

- The graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs (78%) and Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (56%) were the most likely to make plans to enter mainstream activity by enrolling in postsecondary education, obtaining a competitive job, or enlisting in military service.

- It is important to highlight that more than half of the graduates/aged-out students from programs for those with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (56%), a population often associated with poor outcomes, had plans to enroll in a 4-year college/2-year college (24%), trade/technical school (over 4%), or to enter the job market or serve in the military (13%).

- Over 5 years, on average, 89% (859) of the graduates/aged-out students with serious disabilities had plans to be engaged in their communities after leaving secondary school. Over 5 years, on average, 46 % (447) had plans to pursue postsecondary education, competitive employment, or military service; 25% (238) planned to pursue vocational rehabilitation; and 18% (174) had plans to enter community-based programs.