

# Tip Sheet for SEAs: Engaging Parents and Family Members in Post-School Outcome Stakeholder Groups

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Involving parents and other family representatives in the Indicator B-14 Post-School Outcomes (PSO) Survey activities can help State Education Agencies (SEAs) develop strategies to increase annual response rates, communicate results to stakeholders, and build support for program improvement and systems change.

Perspectives expressed by families of transition-age youth with disabilities offer valuable information and a unique consumer viewpoint to State data collection efforts. With firsthand experience, parents and youth know how well in-school experiences prepare youth with disabilities for successful PSO (e.g., enrolling in further education, working). Input from family focus groups, parent advocates, parent centers, and family organizations can help states design more user-friendly, accessible survey tools. These groups can also help the State develop (a) approaches for contacting hard-to-reach youth, and (b) marketing strategies to encourage youth and families to take part in the PSO survey.

Parent centers and family organizations can also help SEA personnel organize, disseminate, and use State PSO data with families and other stakeholders at the state and district levels. Parents and family members do not need to be education experts to ask good questions and provide quality input. Informed parents and families can also play a key role as advocates who can identify issues, influence policy decisions, and help improve school programs.

## Questions to Ask Parents

When looking at the graduation, dropout, and PSO data from the State, ask parents to consider the following:

- What patterns can be seen in the State graduation, dropout, and PSO data when you look at the categories of (a) disability type, (b) gender, (c) method of exit, and (d) race/ethnicity?
- What are the trends in State graduation, dropout, and engagement for each disability category?
- Is there a region or geographic area in the State where youth are (a) graduating, (b) dropping out, or (c) engaged at higher rates? What is contributing to the higher rates in this area?
- What State policies and/or procedures might be contributing to graduation, dropout, and engagement outcomes for youth with disabilities?
- What actions can the State take to improve or maintain current outcomes for graduation and engagement rates?
- What can the State do to support districts to decrease dropout rates?

## Sharing Indicator 14 or PSO data with families & community stakeholders

- *Make sure your State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR) are easy to find on the SEA webpage by providing a link to the reports on the main page of the State's special education program website.*
- *Maintain a page on the school district website devoted to Indicator 14 activities and findings.*
  - *Post a one-page summary of the State's process for collecting PSO data. Avoid the use of jargon.*
  - *Post the State's annual post-school outcomes survey questions.*
  - *Present data visually, through charts, such as those featured in NPSO's Data Use Toolkit: Sharing State PSO Data. Graphs can promote interpretation of data and minimize misinterpretation.*
  - *Post "Be A Superstar," a NPSO family-friendly YouTube video explaining the purpose of the state PSO data collection .*
- *Create an e-mail list for communication with parents, staff, and other stakeholders.*
- *Offer to make a presentation on PSO findings to school boards, parent centers, and on local cable TV.*
- *Host annual conference calls to discuss annual survey results with families and other stakeholders.*

## Recruiting Parent and Family Representatives

Strategies to find parent and family representatives interested in serving on SEA committees related to secondary transition and PSO:

- Identify family members of youth with disabilities in direct or indirect contact with your organization that would consider participating in a stakeholder group.
  - Ask your state parent center(s) for recommendations of youth and families.
  - Ask local education agency (LEA) special education transition specialists, SEA and LEA cultural liaisons, and building principals for recommendations of youth and families
- Identify ways to encourage participation.
  - Consider when and where meetings will be held. Participation will grow if potential volunteers do not need to take time off work to attend meetings.
  - Identify ways to provide stipends to cover childcare or transportation expenses.
  - send a personal invitation to potential committee members.

Be prepared to answer questions that parents may have about the volunteer commitment. For many families of youth with disabilities, it can be difficult to take on more responsibility. They may ask:

- What is the purpose of the committee?
- What has the committee previously accomplished?
- What are the member roles and responsibilities?
- Who, besides parents, serves on the committee?
- When, where, and how often are meetings held?
- How long do the meetings last?

Not every person will be able to serve, so be sure to obtain names of others who might make good committee members.

## Retaining Parent/Family Representatives on Committees

Once parents and family members join the committee, be sure to welcome them and provide the tools they need to be effective by

- Creating a mentor program to help parent and youth representatives understand data collection terms and methods.
- Creating an orientation book with the following information:
  - List of committee members and their contact information
  - List of commonly used acronyms for reference during meetings
  - Definition of Indicator 14 Post-School Outcomes
  - One-page summary of the State's process for collecting PSO data
  - Copy of survey questions used in the State's annual PSO survey
  - Definitions of the advisory role and responsibilities

### Create a One-Pager on Your Indicator 14 Program

*Create a one-page summary of your State's process for collecting Indicator B-14 PSO data. Put it on your SEA website to inform community stakeholders, use it to help orient new parent/ family committee members, and distribute it at public meetings. You can include key information such as:*

- *Was a statewide census used or a representative sample?*
- *Who contacted the former students?*
- *How were data obtained? (by phone or mail for example)*
- *When were data collected?*
- *What questions were asked?*
- *Definitions of competitive employment and post-secondary education/school*
- *Glossary of relevant terms*

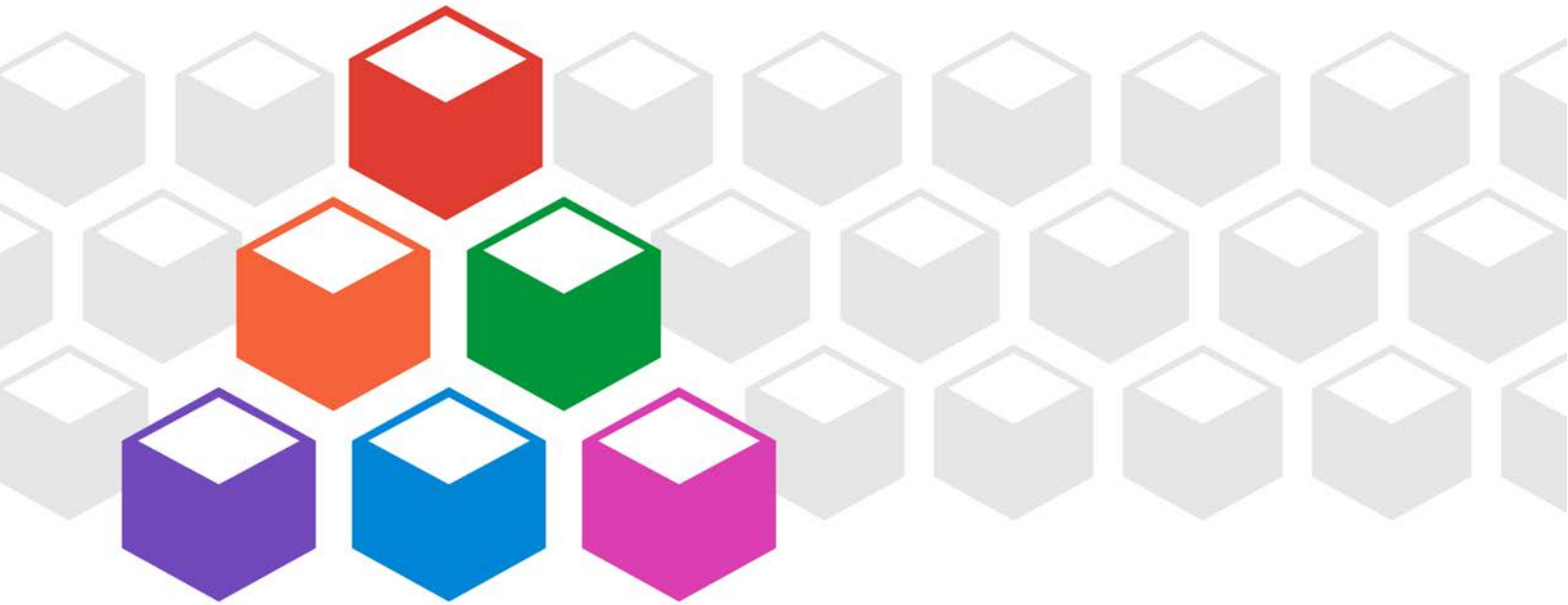


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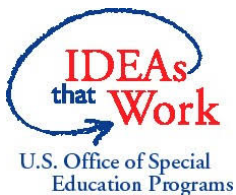
National Technical Assistance Center on Transition



## **Instructions** for the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition **Response Calculator** for Indicator 14-Revised (v3)

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(WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO PRINT THESE INSTRUCTIONS)

## Introduction

These revised *Instructions* accompany the *NTACT Response Calculator (RC)* originally developed by the National Post-School Outcomes Center for use with SPP/APR Part B Indicator 14. That indicator is the:

*Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:*

- A. *Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.*
- B. *Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.*
- C. *Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school". (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(B))*

The audience for these *Instructions* and the *Response Calculator* include state education staff charged with reporting on the post-school outcomes and/or the analyst charged with analyzing post-school data for the state department of education. We also suggest that users read the companion Westat/NPSO paper *Post-School Outcomes: Response Rates and Non-Response Bias*. The interested reader should consult that document to gain a comprehensive perspective on terms, definitions, examples, and interpreting data from a Respondent Group that may differ from the Target Leaver Group. The purpose of the *Response Calculator* is to help states education agencies determine whether response data represent the demographics of youth who are no longer in secondary school and had IEPs in effect at the time they left school.

A critical issue to address as part of a state's post-school data collection relates to how representative the *Respondent Group* (those former students who respond to the survey) are in comparison to the *Target Leaver Group* (a representative sample of a population or a census of the total population) of school leavers who had IEPs. Stated differently, how similar – or different – is the Respondent Group, who *did* participate in the survey, from the Target Leaver Group, who *were to have* participated in the survey?

It should come as no surprise that in virtually all surveys only a portion of potential respondents actually respond to the survey. Since the Respondent Group is a subset of the Target Leaver Group (the participants who respond to survey will represent a part of the total Target Leaver Group), the question becomes one of judging the way in which the Respondent Group is similar – or different – from the Target Leaver Group. This issue is critical. If the Respondent Group is, in fact, different from the Target Leaver Group, the responses they give to the survey questions

may not reflect the responses of the Target Leaver Group. This is termed “non-response bias” (this reality also is called response bias or selection bias).

The *RC* is a tool designed for states to input key demographic data on the Respondent and Target Leaver Groups. The *RC* compares proportions between the two groups on demographic variables and identifies where important differences exist between the two groups on those variables. This information should be reported as part of the State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR) for Part B Indicator 14. The results have relevance for the way in which a state (a) writes the report summarizing and interpreting the results of the post-school data collection, (b) sets targets, and (c) identifies interventions to improve student outcomes.

## **Overview of the Response Calculator**

The *RC* was written in Excel so as to be compatible with virtually all computer systems and to facilitate the relatively easy transfer of post-school data compiled by a state from their respective systems. Data can be easily entered manually or a transfer can be done by exporting relevant data from a state’s current systems to an Excel spreadsheet and copying rows and pasting them into the *RC*. If you choose this method, just make sure your export has the same columns in the same order that they are in on the calculator and when you paste, you’ll want to use the right-click “paste values” option to avoid pasting-formatting issues in Excel. Lastly, it is conceivable anyone familiar enough with Excel could easily examine the formulas doing the work inside the *RC* and implement them directly in their own system.

The *RC* includes demographic variables identified by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the Part B SPP/APR Instruction Sheet for FFY 2016 Submission and corresponding Measurement Table (see <https://osep.grads360.org/#program/spp-apr-resources>). These demographic variables should be available for all special education students from a state’s 618 data. The variables are:

- Specific Learning Disability (LD)
- Emotional Disability (ED)
- Intellectual Disability (ID)
- All Other disability groups (AO) (Because of the low incidence of all other special education disability groups except for LD, ED, and ID, it is necessary to aggregate these groups into one composite group.)
- Total number of School Leavers in a particular year
- Gender – only Females are identified in the *RC* since gender is dichotomous (i.e., male v. female)
- English Language Learners/Limited English Proficiency (ELL)
- Dropouts
- Minority
- Rural (This variable is new for FFY18 reporting. As with gender, geographic location can be dichotomized as rural v. urban therefore, only rural is identified in the *RC*).

We conducted pilot-testing of the *RC* with three states, working directly with each state’s staff person responsible for managing the post-school databases. In each case, we found it took about 2 to 3 hours to secure the necessary data from their respective database and enter those data into the *RC*. Accordingly, we believe that this time frame is a reasonable estimate for the work you will need to do to use the *RC* to calculate the similarities and differences of the Respondent Group to the Target Leaver Group in your state.

An interesting issue was identified in the pilot-testing when a large district (a district of more than 50,000 students) is included in a state-wide calculation. Specifically, that district – by virtue of the number of students it includes – skews the calculations and presents an inaccurate “picture” of the Respondent Group for the state at large. To address this issue, if you have one or more large school districts, we recommend that you treat the district(s) as a separate entity. That is, if you have two large school districts in your state, you should run three separate calculations of representativeness for your state: one on each of the two large districts and a third calculation on the rest of your state that excludes those two large districts.

New in the FFY 2016 submission, States should consider geographic location when determining the extent to which Respondents are representative of the Target Leaver Groups. There are compelling reasons for comparing Respondent and Target Leaver Groups from different regions within a state. For example, in an effort to increase response rates through regional trainings, a state may want to look at the Respondent and Target Leaver Groups in those specific regions and determine the challenges encountered in data collection by region. This information can then be used to tailor the training to the region’s needs. Similarly, geographic data can support decisions about resources allocations or where to create interventions.

We have included an example in each tab of the *RC* to demonstrate its use. Once you use the *RC* to compare the Respondent and Target Leaver Groups, we encourage you to consult the WESTAT/NPSO paper for guidance on how these results should be interpreted.

## **Step-by-Step Instructions**

1. Open the Ind14ResponseCalculator.xls  
*NOTE: If you want to perform the calculations multiple times with different data sets, simply make copies of the original Excel file.*
2. “Save As” to your server or hard-drive  
*The Excel file contains four working tabs:*
  - *Target Leaver Group*
  - *Respondent Group*
  - *Response by Demographic*
  - *Representativeness*

3. *Target Leaver Group Tab*

The Target Leaver Group Tab relates to the total number of school leavers identified to participate in post-school data collection. Starting with cell 7A, enter data by school district. Replace the test data with your school district data. In the example, we identified districts as 1, 2, and 3 – you may choose to enter the actual names of the districts. For each district enter the raw numbers for each demographic variable for the Target Leaver Group. It is critical that these data are paired to the correct district.

4. *Respondent Group Tab*

The Respondent Group tab relates to the total number of school leavers who actually participated in post-school data collection. Starting with cell 7A, enter data by school district. Replace the test data with your school district data. In the example, we identified districts as 1, 2, and 3 – you may choose to enter the actual names of the districts. For each district enter the raw numbers for each of demographic variable for the Respondent Group. It is critical that these data are paired to the correct district.

5. *Response Rate by Demographic Tab*

Once the raw data are entered on the first two tabs for the Target Leaver Group and for the Respondent Group, the RC calculates an overall response rate for each of the demographic variables. In the example on this tab, the RC has calculated a response rate for each of the demographic variables (labeled **Response Rate**). In the example, the overall Response Rate was 62.79%; the response rate for LD participants was 95.45%; etc.

6. *Representativeness Tab*

In this tab, the RC identifies important differences between Respondent and Target Leaver Groups for each demographic variable. As a rule, we have set an “important difference” at + or – 3%. For example, if the proportion of Target Leavers identified as LD was 60% of the Target Leaver Group and 59% of the Respondent Group was LD, the RC would judge the two groups (actually the proportions of LD school leavers in each group) to be reasonably similar on this variable. If, however, the Respondent Group included only 50% LD school leavers, the RC would identify this variable as having an important difference by presenting the percentage difference in **Red** in those cells in the RC.

Note also that a positive difference indicates over-representation between the two groups (e.g., +3%, indicates that the Respondent Group had a 3% higher proportion of respondents on that variable compared to the Target Leaver Group). A negative difference indicates under-representation between the two groups (e.g., - 3%, indicates that the Respondent Group had a 3% lower proportion of respondents on that variable compared to the Target Leaver Group).

7. In your SPP/APR in GRADS360, include your response rate and variables on which there is a difference of + or – 3%. Use caution as you interpret the results where such differences exist. Once again, the reader is encouraged to review the companion Westat/NPSO document *Post-School Outcomes: Response Rates and Non-Response Bias* for suggestions to interpret data from a Respondent Group that may differ from the Target Leaver Group. The table on the Representativeness tab can be copied and pasted into a Word document and uploaded as an Attachment or pasted as a picture directly into GRADS360 under “Provide additional information about this indicator (optional)”. Copy the table by putting your cursor in cell A1, then click and drag down to highlight the entire table. Right click to copy, and right click paste as a picture. Pasting as a picture will allow you to scale the table to the appropriate size.
  
8. As directed in the Measurement Table, if analysis shows that Respondents are not representative of the demographics of the Target Leaver Group, describe the strategies the State will use to ensure that response data are representative of those demographics in the future. The State should consider factors such as how the State collected the data. For strategies to improve representation and response rates, see NPSO/NTACT products: *Collecting Post-School Outcome Data: Strategies for Increasing Response Rates* and *Contacting Hard-to-Find Youth: Strategies for the Post-School Survey*. These and other tools can be found on the NTACT website:  
[www.transitionta.org](http://www.transitionta.org).

## References

- Garrison-Mogren, R. (Sept. 2007). *Post-School Outcomes: Response Rates and Non-Response Bias*. Available at <https://www.transitionta.org/search/google/Post-School%20Outcomes%3A%20Response%20Rates%20and%20Non-Response%20Bias>
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- Smith, S.C. & Bost, L.W. (Jan. 2007). *Collecting Post-School Outcomes data: Strategies for Increasing Response Rates*. Available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED575738.pdf>