

# **Bridging the Gap Through Leadership: The Role of the Rehabilitation Professional in the Transition Process - Transcript**

**February 26, 2008**

**John Trach, Ph.D., CRC**

Project Director, RSA Region V CRP-RCEP and Associate Professor

[jtrach@uiuc.edu](mailto:jtrach@uiuc.edu)

**Kathleen Oertle, CRC**

Program Associate, RSA Region V CRP-RCEP

[oertle@uiuc.edu](mailto:oertle@uiuc.edu)

**Power Point Presentation:** [www.ed.uiuc.edu/illinoisrcep/activities/teleconf.htm](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/illinoisrcep/activities/teleconf.htm)

**Lynda Leach, Facilitator:** I have about 2 o'clock, so let's get started everybody. I am Lynda Leach at the University of Illinois and welcome to the RSA Region V CRP-RCEP monthly teleconference. Today our presenters are just down the hall from me.

John Trach is the Director of the RSA Region V CRP RCEP, and Kat Oertle is a program assistant. Together they have published an article on this very same topic that they are going to talk about today, the role of the rehabilitation professionals in the transition process.

**Kat Oertle:** Okay, thank you very much Lynda! This is Kat Oertle and I am going to go ahead and get started. If you have access to the PowerPoint slides we're going to go ahead and slip past the title page onto slide two, which will give you the overall presentation outline. We're going to talk about transition—what it is, how the law spells it out and how it links both school systems and rehabilitation together. We're going to also talk about the predictors of success that come out of best practice literature and evidence-based research. So we'll talk about how to link those into the work we're doing. We're going to spend a little bit of time on the data, what we know about outcomes at this point as far as transition goes and we're going to focus on education, community, and also career planning which would be our employment piece. Next we're going to focus the last part of our teleconference today on how we build the relationships for collaboration. We're going to specifically look at expectations, roles, and participation. Dr. Trach and I have completed a study following the article that Lynda referenced that looked at expectations and participation and how that plays out in transition. So we're going to reference some of that as well. John, did you have anything to add at this point?

**John Trach:** Not really, except that we have been working in this area for a long time to figure out better ways for it to actually work. I'll let you go from there.

**Kat Oertle:** Okay. So, if we go to slide three, I'm going to continue referencing the slides for all of us since we're doing an auditory presentation here with visual supports...so we're all on the same page. At this point, we're on slide three and you'll see the general definition, it's not word for word out of the laws, but it's what they have in common in IDEA 2004 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1998. We're really talking about coordinated services that have an outcome focus and that move students from high school to some kind of adult situation. Again, around those areas of education, community presence, inclusion, and then also employment. "What is transition?" really implies that change as you can see from the graphics we have—we have them moving along and packed up ready to go, we have the guy going in all different directions—North, South, East, and West. It's this idea that when we're talking about switching from high school into what's next that there are a lot of possibilities. It's about change. It's about planning for change.

Going to slide number four, I had mentioned earlier that we were going to point out some things in the literature and this is based on research (evidence-based practice). There are some primary things that we know that make for success. Again, when we talked about success we talked about those post-high school outcomes. Interagency collaboration is our main focus. It's bringing not only the school systems together with vocational rehabilitation counselors, but it's also including other rehabilitation professionals, community rehab providers, and also the Center for Independent living personnel. We know that if we bring folks together early on and start to talk about how we can work together, we start to identify the resources that are available that could travel from the completion of high school into adult situations.

People are definitely more likely to be successful in achieving their outcomes. Obviously, it makes sense that if we're putting things into place, it needs to be based upon the interest of that individual and their interest in the career planning (job exploration and work-based experiences). It's this idea of building skills, so that it ties to the preparation and training. We need to have meaningful academic experiences for students so that when they are moving on, especially if it's a post-secondary education setting, that they are prepared for that. Having coursework revolve around how you interview for jobs, build a resume, talk to employers – all of that is very important. Also important is how we link with support services at a community college or a university. If that's not an option for that person because of interest, then maybe it's a vocational/technical school, or possibly some other kind of community involvement based on their interest. That's something we definitely need to be very aware of for planning.

If you go to the fourth bulleted item – The supported relationships. This is something that I think on the surface makes sense. Okay, so we have support and we're going to be able to be more successful, but what we're talking about here is just not us as professionals and our roles in supportive relationships with this individual student, but also with each other. Being able to know who the "go to" person is in the school system or in the CIL or in the CRP, or the vocational rehab counselor. It's also the student having support from parents and also other community members including employers and all of us working together. That's what we're talking about when we talk about supportive relationships.

**John Trach:** You should always make sure that you're thinking about the place of employment and the employer and co-workers. Those are all people that if they are not already built into the relationship you want to start developing contacts; before the person leaves school and goes onto work. Even if they do go to work somewhere else, there is still some benefit. Other than that, Kat covered a long list of supportive relationships and there are all those we typically think of and there are those that we may not immediately think of, but are available. That can be anywhere from the person who drives the bus or rides on the bus each day to a fellow student or co-worker.

**Kat Oertle:** Moving on to slide number five, you'll see here we just wanted to point out some of the key changes in the legislation for IDEA 2004. Being in the rehabilitation world as you are, we most often think of this as school legislation. It is a document that puts in place...mandates if you will...recommendations around students with disabilities prior to leaving secondary education settings. The thing is we need to realize that there are definitely some really important pieces that are tied to transition. They've now added a couple of things that are of an interest to us as rehabilitation providers.

The first two indicators, number one and two, are the percentage of students who graduate and the percentage of students who drop out. Two sides of the same coin – looking at those who make it from the school system and then those who leave before completing. Both of these groups of students definitely impact our consumers. If you think about those graduating students we may hopefully have a chance to build relationships while they are still in school. Those in the second group we are meeting later, possibly after they have been in and out of school for a period of time and then end up coming, needing supports, maybe having some job experiences, maybe being employed for short periods of time and not really having references they can share, and may not even have been employed.

So they bring to the table some different aspects that are important. If you look at indicators thirteen and fourteen – thirteen has the direct impacts when you think about IEPs. This is now the percent of people who have transition components in their IEP. The states have to report this, and these would be the individuals who oftentimes the schools are inviting, especially the vocational rehabilitation counselor, to come to participate in the IEP planning. So we may know these students, but in some cases, we haven't been invited and may not actually have been aware of what's going on with their transition component. Then you have indicator fourteen which is, I think, one of the more interesting pieces of the indicators. This is now asking schools to collect data and report on data for students after they've left the school system. This is something schools have not had to do. So it really does start to emphasize even more importantly from the school perspective why rehabilitation is important because we are the connection to the community.

**John Trach:** As Kat said, this is information that schools have not had to collect before. Now they have a federal mandate and they're being monitored to see to what extent they actually can collect this information. In the past it's been once you left school that connection no longer exists. Now what they're saying is that there still is a connection for at least a couple years afterward in which schools need to determine what's happened to their graduates and try to explain it.

Many of the states have school systems website data that you can go and look at to see what's going on because they've started to publish that data or at least make it available. Many of the school systems too have had some form of that to a certain extent for a while. So you can actually see trends over

three or five years. The other piece about these indicators that I've found interesting and kind of exciting is that I haven't seen this amount of energy and interest generated since we had the transition systems change grant and model demonstration grant in the 1980's. So I think now there is really a great opportunity to talk about this with school staff because most of them know about this and are some way involved with collecting this information. The capacity to collect this information is going to depend on the connections of the local districts with each one of those students. So I think there's a heightened awareness of these issues and a certain amount of increased obligation to make something happen.

**Kat Oertle:** We're moving onto slide number six. As John mentioned, the data is starting to come out for those indicators; however, at this point a lot of the states have plans of action for how they're going to collect the data. They've started to set up websites where you can access some of the information. They also have places where school personnel, as well as other folks involved in transition, can enter data. So in the next few years we're going to have quite a bit of information that hopefully will be informative for decision-making.

At this point the data sets we're going to look at come from a different source. The first one we're looking at here on slide number six comes from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS). Some of you may be aware of this study. It was a two-part study that looked at cohorts of students leaving the school system and they followed them over a period of time. With the second round they compared the students from the second cohort to the first cohort – these would be students with disabilities. Then they also compared the students with disabilities to their peer group without disabilities. The data that you're seeing is referenced in that sort of triangulation. So we have had some progress made from the mid 80's. As John mentioned there were some pretty awesome demonstration projects and other kind of monies available. Some of that has continued, but not at the same level. You can see that we had lower high-school dropout rates and also increases in post-secondary enrollment for education, which I think is really, really good. Those things, as we know, link to the last component, and that's the higher rate of gainful employment. So these are some markers we have for progress in these efforts. As the next slide indicates – at number seven – based on the facts that you're going to see as we start to really compare those data sets, we really do need to look at improving outcomes for transition.

If we move onto slide number eight – again this comes from the longitudinal study. You're looking here now at data from two years post-high school completion, and what you have in the first column, the 40%, are peers without disabilities enrolled in college. This is any college level, could be two year or four year. You also have the comparison group which is the students with disabilities at 19%. Not even half the number of youth with disabilities are accessing college. So there's some more work we need to do.

If you go to the next slide, number nine – this comes out of a different database. This is from the Disability Statistics Report for the US in 2005. This is looking at the age group from 21 to 64 years. We're looking across high school, some college, and then also bachelor's degree and higher. The thing that really stands out is that if you look at persons with disabilities, that's the second column, they're much more likely to have a high school degree or equivalent and much less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher of education. So you start to see this pattern. These are two separate databases so

we don't want to jump to too many conclusions, but it does indicate that as people with disabilities age their outcomes are not getting better. They're getting worse than what they were when they first left high school.

So let's look at access to community. The slide on the next one with the young lady from Norway and she is doing "supportive skiing." It shows that if we think outside the box a little bit more about how we use supports, we really can look at ways to include people in all aspects, including recreation and leisure.

If we move onto slide number 11, you'll see that we start to see an increase in negative consequences, 21% increase. Again this is the data set from the longitudinal study. When I say negative consequences, these are folks who have dropped out or have faced behavioral types of situations in school, but they may be drop outs who are now in the criminal system – people who have gotten into different situations where they're either incarcerated now or they're on probation. So that's significant when you think about not having things to do post-high school. You start to think of things you could actually get in trouble with and even prior to leaving high schools, you've already set patterns that seem to continue. Next we look at independence and living. You can see from the Levine-Wagner study (2005) that if you were a student in special education, 11% of those students are living independently.

Again, this is two years post-high school. Another staggering statistic is that when you start to combine all young people in the last 30 years, we've seen a 50% increase in the number of 20 year olds living at home. This obviously increases the parental contribution as far as their living expenses. Some of you may actually be experiencing that now. I have a 19 year old nephew who is living with his mom. I think when we talk about transition, we've got to remember that "yes," we as rehab professionals are focused on people with disabilities, but there is a whole effort looking at transition of students in general from high school to adult situations. Overall when I look at the data, if we're using the markers of people without disabilities as a marker for folks with disabilities, those statistics aren't really powerfully positive to begin with. So I really feel we can shoot higher than that.

Looking at careers –we have a little cartoon in here so you can think about it. For some of us, when we're starting our career process, it's sort of like Bob sitting here in the cartoon where the gentleman (that's the employer in personnel) is looking at his resumé. And it says, "My name is Bob. I need a job." And at the bottom it says, "I must say, Bob, your resumé is concise." You know, for some folks getting that first job is the biggest deal of all and then the career process can happen. I think we always need to keep in mind no matter where we're starting out that it's more than that first job. So the challenges and rewards and quality of life are also a part of the career and the employment process.

If you go to the next slide, we're looking at more data. This is slide 13. Again this is that post-school outcome data two years out, the longitudinal study. When we look at 63% of peers without disabilities employed and then we look at 49% of students with disabilities unemployed, again there is definitely a drastic difference between those who have disabilities and those without. Sixty-three percent of peers with disabilities means a whole lot of people either are not doing anything, not working, not in school, and again, that impacts our communities. Again, looking at our data sets – this, again, is that age group 21-64 years. This compares both full-time, full-year employment to total employment. The first two

columns are totals. This would be part-time, seasonal work included. These are statistics I think a lot of folks see that, generally speaking, we've got a 63% employment rate for people without disabilities and then 49% for people with disabilities. You see that same gap in between the full-time, full-year, and I think it's a reminder that we still have quite a bit to do. John, do you have comments on the statistics because we're going to switch to collaborative relationships?

**John Trach:** The only thing I want to say is that we've presented some information and a lot of this is probably not new to many of you. We need to reorient ourselves to the fact that we don't really have the best outcomes. The hope is for changing current trends of unemployment. Kat will talk about collaboration and partnerships, the whole point of this teleconference. Some of the work that we're working on now will become a little more evident and hopefully we can point to a couple things that we can do to start to address these statistics.

**Kat Oertle:** Also I think we should mention that when you think about free and appropriate education in this country, we're really marking 33 years of having that transition experience with students with disabilities.

So moving on to slide number 15 – some more cartoons. We're talking about building relationships and collaboration success and the first slide is teamwork. There are some individuals who are hooking the tracks together. You've got the right hooked to the left; however, both sets of tracks end up leading to nowhere. In some cases when we think about partnering the school systems with vocational rehabilitation we end up with this same situation. We'll get into more about why we think some of those issues occur. You see the other one with Omar and his friends. It says at the bottom, "I've got it too, Omar. Strange feeling that we've been going in circles." You've got the big guys on one side of the boat and little guys on the other side of the boat paddling away. We're going around and around and around. Some of the things we hope to discuss after this piece of this teleconference is to try to build a means so that we're not going in circles, but rather forming a seamless transition from one system to the next.

**John Trach:** Somehow we need to look at where our strengths lie and how we might be able to support the student better. In reality those systems will produce better outcomes if we could think about what it is that we want to do for these students. Thinking about different things that are available in each system and how we might partner better together to share some of the responsibility for the eventual placement in employment for students with disabilities.

It becomes too easy to let the school do it, or let the CRP do it or the state agency or wherever those connections may be. We have to somehow come together on a local level. The best examples of this that I see are places where the schools and the local CRP, have come together to figure out how they can share their resources to obtain better outcomes.

**Kat Oertle:** The next slide, number 16, shows the different players involved in transition. This doesn't encompass everyone. We want to make a point of that, but we do want to talk about those folks under the IDEA mandates and the Rehabilitation Act. This would be our rehabilitation system. See how this all fits together for transition. [As a side note, for those of you involved in current technical education and the Perkins legislation, tech prep, know that there are transition initiatives through the Office of

Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult Education which aren't covered through the ways that we traditionally think about transition. I mentioned that as a side note – if you're interested in more about that, please e-mail me at oertle@uiuc.edu. I'd love to give you more resources]. For today's conversation, let's take a look at what we have here on the figure. Again, we have transition as the big bullet and then on the left side of your screen is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) which is an entitlement. If you think about it, that mandate covers the school system, which is again on our far left. You find that it requires a IEP plan to begin at age 16. This is federal law. Each of our states may have different interpretations of that, but it is age 16 from the federal point of view. We have transition specialists who, in some states, are funded both through IDEA as well as receive funding through the Rehabilitation Act or the VR system. In some cases there are also vocational rehabilitation counselors who are housed in the school system. In the center you have our vocational rehabilitation system. When you think about counselors through VR they're under the Rehabilitation Act's mandates.

The main focus is employment assistance and training for employment, so this is the idea for accessing employment. We also have Centers for Independent Living (CILs) that are also under the Rehabilitation Act mandate. If you follow the arrow down, you'll see that there are four core mandates that come through the Rehabilitation Act – Information and Referral, Individuals and System Advocacy, Independent Living Skills and Training, and then Peer Counseling. Each one of these four core services are interpreted typically by the CIL at their local level, based on the most important ways to use the CIL dollars. Now in some cases, and Illinois I'll use as an example, we also have vocational rehabilitation contracting with CILs for transition services. You see that small arrow between VR and the Centers for Independent Living – in some cases they're actually receiving some contract dollars in order to do transition. Then we have the community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) on the far right who actually are in the Rehabilitation Act. However, there aren't any mandates or funding that come directly through the Rehabilitation Act to the Center for Independent Living. In those cases most often you have grant dollars. You also have dollars that might be coming through fundraising events. You also have dollars that are coming from the Division of Developmental Disabilities and some other offices that are more specific to certain types of disabilities. We wanted to show this figure so that you think about all the players involved – on the school side and on the rehabilitation side – these are our community-focused individuals who have most of the information about what's going on locally, where the employment is happening, the relationships with the employers, and also the skill sets. Most often these are individuals who have gone to school or attended workshops. These are all of you. There are folks like you interested in transition. One other thing we wanted to point out when we look at this figure is that most often when you look at the literature and even models of transition it focuses specifically on the educator's role and the vocational rehabilitation role. Centers for Independent Living and also the CRPs are often left out of the conversation. We really feel like all of these players can strengthen our transition and our transition outcomes. John, any other comments about that?

**John Trach:** You have transition there and then you have the legislation and then you have the providers or the personnel or whatever else. As Kat pointed out, different providers, different legislation. Even though we've tried to have the wording reflect each other's legislation so that there's a greater investment in transition, it doesn't always happen that way. The other thing too is looking at that CRP connection on the far right – it's not mentioned really in any legislation. They exist and have existed since as long as I can remember – going back to the 30's and 40's when parents started to find

places for their kids to go during the day and whatever else. The problem here is that in reality they probably provide more than half of the services that are going to go for these transitioning students. State agencies buy from these agencies and schools expect it. In many of the IEPs that I've looked at, there's the local CRP that is always listed as a potential connection for people with moderate, severe, even mild intellectual disabilities or mental retardation, leaving the public schools. So it plays a big role except it doesn't really have the necessary connection. The different services that are provided all function to help or assist people with disabilities to transition. I would say that CRPs, many of the ones that I know, provide many of those same services. They may call them different things, but their intent and their eventual outcomes are relatively the same.

**Kat Oertle:** Slide number 17 – we just wanted to take a moment here to talk about the shifting paradigms and how this plays a role and impacts those relationships. From my point of view, it definitely raises expectations and raises the bar as far as what is being expected of our partnerships and the kinds of services we're providing to individuals as they transition from the secondary school system. There's an emphasis on inclusive supports and services. We've had an emphasis on that for quite a while, but as we move along, and as I mentioned earlier, we get brighter about assistive technology. We understand how to work supportive employment in ways that are more productive. We use natural supports and develop those relationships. You actually are seeing experiences broaden and seeing even more inclusive types of situations, which is a real positive. You also see these partnerships with businesses and industry, and one that people are talking about quite a bit now is Project Search. For those of you from Ohio, you are probably very aware of that project. It is based in a Cincinnati hospital and is linked to the bank systems. Business and industry came to rehabilitation support systems and asked to be supported in hiring people with disabilities and doing it in a way where they, actually through the business and industry, are providing the supports, job coach, and training to individuals with the support of the rehabilitation system. So it is a demand-side model, and it's just one example of many. There are quite a few popping up all over, but I think this is one that folks might be familiar with because it's been written up in journals and been talked about quite a bit.

Next you see greater access to post-secondary education. We have some references and resources that we've attached to this presentation. There are some links to *Think College* which is a database about programs that are supportive of individuals, even non-traditional when you think about people with intellectual disabilities and other individuals accessing post-secondary education. So again, a real positive. You're starting to see systems between secondary and post-secondary education starting to look for ways to align the Support Students Movement. Also just to reenergize, as John mentioned – this thinking that all people can learn and all people who want to work can work. I think for most of us on this call we've thought that for quite a while and we've bought into that. We work around that value, we make decisions based on that. You're actually seeing a broader group of individuals outside the rehabilitation system believing these things as well, which I think is outstanding. Comments on the paradigms, John?

**John Trach:** I just wanted to add too that all of these points or these bullets here are critical to success for transitioning students. Thinking about supports – we have gone back and forth calling things natural supports or typical supports or whatever, these are things that are available to transitioning students so that they can not only access community opportunities, but maintain those over time and develop new ones. Nothing stays the same and everything changes. We want to go ahead and make sure that we

grow along with the opportunities and career paths that each student may follow. As far as post-secondary education, people still say if they have an intellectual disability, doesn't that counter their going onto post-secondary education? I don't think it does. I think there are many opportunities for education and there are curriculums being developed to include people so that they can continue to learn.

I did a study a few years back where I interviewed people. One of the areas that I discussed was what would you like to do, what are some dreams that you have, what haven't you done that you'd like to do, and almost every one of the people who I interviewed (these are all people with mild, moderate, severe intellectual disabilities) mentioned that they wanted to continue with some sort of learning, whether it was to learn how to use the computer, how to read, etc.. That's because that's what's available or that's what they see in the community. People have said it over and over again. There's a correlation between educational degree and what people earn – and it's an incredible correlation between the level of education and the types of jobs and eventual salaries that people get. But more so, they want to be involved with what's going on. I think wanting to know how to use the computer is very real. It's just so common now, and the prices have come down so much that it's not going to go away. There's no reason that any of these folks can't use, can't be assisted to figure out how to access whatever programs they want. You're in front of a PC now, you can go onto the control panel, click a little button that says "make my computer more accessible," and it already has a number of built in accommodations. It will start talking to you immediately, asking you what enhancements you want. The possibilities are endless, and to think we can't do many of these things is, we're selling ourselves short and selling the folks we're supporting short.

**Kat Oertle:** It comes down to our vision as well as the people who we're helping support. If we somehow have lower expectations oftentimes our behavior reflects that in the opportunities we provide to individuals. Okay, moving onto slide 18. Basically we want to say that we have models, strategies, and resources. As John mentioned earlier, researchers have been studying transition for 20 or more years. Actually beyond that, if you go back to transitioning from institutions, then we have 40 years of literature. We have quite a bit that tell of the kinds of planning, the pieces that need to be put together, and how to go about doing that. So this next part of our conversation we'd like to talk about some real practical things that can be done to develop relationships surrounding interagency collaboration. You can see from Paula Kohler's model here that the pivotal piece in the planning is the interagency collaboration.

We're looking at slide 19 now. In our research we looked at participation and expectation. There is definitely a relationship between our intensity and participation in transition and our understanding of expectations. This is not just of our own roles as rehabilitation providers, but also of the roles of the other key stakeholders, which would be students, parents, and educators, and other rehab professionals. What we found in our study is that 25% of the people reported sometimes or often not knowing what was expected of them when they were participating in transition planning and services. This is a pretty big number. Not really understanding what it is that's supposed to happen makes it harder to be effective at services. If we look at participation – we found in our study that if there was planned coordinated programming, and oftentimes these were state level programs that were articulated, dollars were shared, and an expectation of collaboration was part of that planning for transition, there was a higher level of participation on the side of rehabilitation professionals. We did find that CRPs, out

of all the groups that we looked at, and those were the folks that were on the figure that you saw earlier, were less likely to be participating at the same level as the other rehabilitation professionals. They were oftentimes in a situation where they saw their role as providing community supports and resources and vocational support and support for goals, but didn't really have a way to link that to the student with the disability.

The next point is that oftentimes the educator was the spokesperson on transition and rehabilitation issues for students. They're most connected to students, they see them everyday in the school system, but even those transition specialists who were housed in the school system still ended up talking through educators to students. We feel like this is an important point to make because we found that there was misinformation delays, and confusion in services because of eligibility when educators were the spokespersons for rehabilitation.

Then we have parents, who are critical. I know sometimes parents can be seen as adversarial or possibly overprotective or not necessarily helpful. We really have to recognize that parents and guardians are those people who will be traveling from one system to the other most with the student. We really need to look at how to have a relationship with parents outside of formal transition meetings and ways to build relationships that they understand.

That leads to the rehabilitation leadership. We found that oftentimes most rehabilitation professionals are waiting for an invitation from educators. If that invitation doesn't occur then we're not participating in transition. Centers for Independent Living did stand out in our study being most involved with the transition planning because the parents or students invited them, which I think is a wonderful thing. However, I would say that it does complicate things in a little bit when we think about our partnering because we need to be aware of is participating. What we found was that sometimes rehabilitation professionals, be it CIL, VR counselor, or CRP, were all invited to participate, yet didn't understand each other's roles.

We want to make a point about initial contact. I mentioned IDEA 2004 mandates transition planning at age 16. We know that each of our states has set up regulations for rehabilitation professionals to initiate contact, but in our study we really did find extremely diverse answers to that question. Students in some cases were not getting involved until age 18 or even after. That's way too late to get involved. We then have confusion, break down in services, and that seamlessness just doesn't occur.

**John Trach:** I want to mention a couple things. One is that from what I can see and from what I can tell in many cases the communication between school and post-school agencies is not the greatest. We need to make sure that there's an opportunity given to players on both sides to have realistic expectations. So where am I going with this? Basically many times the schools may not take into consideration that CRPs may not be getting paid for this or VR counselors may already have a caseload of 200 people. There is not a lot of consideration given to planning or making the time for these meetings to actually occur. I know how hard it is for us around here to get two or three people together without a lot of advanced notice. I think that message needs to get back to the schools and that there needs to be some understanding. I'm working on a project with public schools right now on IEPs. I understand how swamped teachers are and how pressured they currently feel dealing with all these new mandates and regulations. There has to be some respect or understanding of each other's positions that

we all probably have more work than we can possibly get done. It's not going to go away. So I think somewhere there has to be a beginning. Kat talked a little bit about leadership and initial contacts. We need to start that dialogue and make sure that it continues so that we have the opportunities to understand each other.

**Kat Oertle:** If we look at slide 20, it summarizes the points that John was making – we really do need to humanize transition. What we really mean by that is getting to know the people who are working on transition in our own community. Actually getting to know those professionals to build relationships so that when students are on our caseloads we already have ideas of who is involved from the school and rehabilitation. We as rehab professionals really need to be in a leadership role as best we can by initiating contact and following up with those involved in the transition process. I think the real important piece is to talk about expectations and roles right up front.

Finally the two points we have here – formal planning. We found in our study that folks are getting together without agendas and ground rules and that a lot of times rehab professionals are coming to the table without any prior information, no agenda, or idea of what support needs are. So we really believe these are some fundamental things that, as we get to know each other in our communities, we can make a point to request and hopefully set up some kind of a pattern of being prepared.

Finally on slide number 21 – the things that are needed. Joint trainings across systems. How to run a meeting and how to work with parents and guardians are all important trainings. John mentioned the mandates. We have mandates, but it does seem that we need to coordinate things. As researchers, and even those of you out there in the field practicing these skills everyday, it's really important that we further investigate those roles around the CILs and the CRPs. It's really important to understand better how we can work together. Finally on slide number 22 you see a cartoon – you have the little fish and then you have another bigger fish eating that fish. You have the bigger fish eating that fish which is representative of the system. Then you've got all of us at the community level coming together and going after that system we've created. We really do believe that together we can make transition successful. And then finally on slide number 24 you'll see references and the Journal of Rehabilitation article that John and I have written.

**Lynda Leach:** That's great, Kat. We have a few minutes left for any questions. If anyone has a question right now, if you would use the star 6 keys to unmute your lines that would be great. Any questions right now?

**Caller:** I have a question about who represents the disabled population. Is it both physically and cognitively disabled individuals?

**Kat Oertle:** In the data sets?

**Caller:** Correct.

**Kat Oertle:** Yes, it's a combination. You could actually go to the longitudinal study and look at the different populations. They did separate them out, but the data we're reporting to you today is a combination of all.

**Lynda Leach:** Any other questions right now?

**Caller:** Yes, I have one. On slide 13, it says 49% of the youth with disabilities were employed. What's a realistic goal in our country for this employment?

**John Trach:** It would depend on what you say is realistic. From my perspective, realistic would be that they should be employed at the same rate as anybody else. I would say depending on availability of employment or unemployment rate or whatever else, it shouldn't be any higher than what it is for the regular population.

**Kat Oertle:** I think he is referring to the peers without disabilities was at the 63% rate.

**John Trach:** I think we could do better than that for employment, generally speaking. There are many variables that affect employment especially for that age group. We need to connect people with the system. I think a lot of students would benefit from some career planning.

**Kat Oertle:** Yes, and that's definitely the conversation nationally. How do we support all students not just students with disabilities in transition? Because if you really think about it, this is our future workforce. Our government as well as communities are invested in building the skills necessary to maintain our communities and move ahead in the future.

**Lynda Leach:** Any other quick questions? Would you give us your contact information?

**Kat Oertle:** It's actually also on slide one. My contact information is [oertle@uiuc.edu](mailto:oertle@uiuc.edu), and John's is [jtrach@uiuc.edu](mailto:jtrach@uiuc.edu).

**Lynda Leach:** Great. Thanks so much for giving that and also for the big picture of transition and how community rehabilitation providers fit into the picture and how they can also make a difference. Great references too. So thank you for doing this for us. I'd like to thank everybody for being on today. We really appreciate your participation. I would like to remind you that our next monthly teleconference is on March 11, *Ethics and the Community Rehabilitation Providers* with Laura Ritterbush. We hope you can join us. Again, thanks everybody for being on. We'll talk to you next month. Bye bye.