



FOCUS on Results

Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

March 2011**In FOCUS**

Summary of Performance (SOP) and Postsecondary Transition Planning

The Summary of Performance (SOP) is designed to assist students in achieving positive postsecondary outcomes. The SOP, a requirement of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, can be an effective tool for students if used in conjunction with other best practices for transition planning. Student involvement in creating the SOP helps focus the student on his or her postsecondary goals and also increases the likelihood that the student will know how to self-advocate for his or her needs in post-school life.

This **FOCUS on Results** document includes:

- A sample student scenario illustrating that student involvement in transition planning helps create positive postsecondary outcomes. **Cover Story**
- Guidance on developing a meaningful Summary of Performance (SOP). **Page 4**
- Technical assistance on how to approach writing a Michigan model SOP form. **Page 6**

This **FOCUS on Results** document addresses:

Transition

Planning for Postsecondary Transition With a Summary of Performance

Mollie is a self-assured and vivacious freshman at a large Michigan university. With her gregarious nature and enthusiasm for school, not many suspect her to have a specific learning disability (SLD).

School is not easy for Mollie, but after completing her first semester with a 3.0 average, she is confident that she can reach her goal of earning a degree in social work. Mollie's success thus far is due in part to her early involvement in transition planning, which required her to understand her disability, learn how to self-advocate, and set postsecondary goals long before she finished high school.

Mollie's future did not always look so bright. "As a kid, I was really insecure, and I hated elementary school. I just couldn't understand why reading came so easy to the other kids and I couldn't make heads or tails of it. When I was finally diagnosed in fifth grade with a learning disability in the areas of basic reading, reading comprehension, and written expression, I was actually relieved. There was a logical explanation for my problems, and I didn't have to beat myself up."

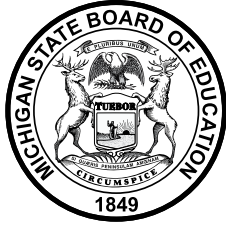
With special education supports and accommodations in place, Mollie was able to keep up with

her class. She transitioned to middle school and started to enjoy school for the first time, joining the student council and the track team. But even when she entered high school at age 14, "college was absolutely not on my radar," she says. "My first job was washing dishes at a pizza place, and I think everyone just assumed I'd stay there because school had always been so hard for me."

Up to that point, Mollie's involvement with her education had been limited at best. "I attended my IEP [Individualized Education Program] meetings, but until tenth grade I was basically a bump on a log. I mean, what did I know about what I could or should be doing? I was just a kid."

Mollie's awakening came her sophomore year. One of Mollie's teachers let her know it was time to get serious about preparing for the future. She needed to have her transition plan in place by the time she turned 16 as is required for students with disabilities by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.

"My special education teacher sat me down and said that I needed to start thinking more about my transition out of high school. I kinda freaked out. I said, 'I'm not



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ready for this! I've still got three more years in school!' But it did get me thinking and turned out to be really helpful."

Mollie's school uses the IDEA required Summary of Performance (SOP) as a tool for involving the student in setting goals for living, learning, and working. The SOP process includes students describing the challenges posed by their disability and indicating which supports and accommodations have been helpful (or not so helpful) in the high school setting.

Mollie's work on the SOP helped her develop a thorough understanding of her disability and its impact on her learning. While she had never been able to closely follow what was being documented at her IEP team meetings previously, the SOP helped frame the discussion in a way she could better understand. "Really looking at my disability and thinking about which supports and accommodations work, and which don't, helped me talk about my disability. I noticed that the better I understand my needs, the better I can express them."

With this new perspective, Mollie was encouraged to take a more active role in her IEP team meetings, particularly when the team explored Mollie's postsecondary vision. As a sophomore, Mollie did not have a specific career goal. However, her involvement in creating her Educational Development Plan (EDP) helped her determine that she wanted to work in some helping profession.

Mollie's increased self-awareness helped motivate her more than ever, and she shifted into high gear during eleventh grade.

When the time came to revisit her IEP, Mollie had a new focus and enthusiasm. Under "Goals," she added "college, live in dorm, earn degree in social work." She pushed to rearrange her schedule to fit in the classes she would need for college. She took the ACT and Michigan Merit Exam (MME) with accommodations; she toured colleges and applied for scholarships. Although her counselors and transition team were supportive, they favored a less ambitious approach.

"The school advised me to start slow, maybe do community college after I had taken some more English classes... but my goals were bigger than that," says Mollie. "I felt that I understood myself as a learner and could handle a four-year program with the right support." In the fall of her senior year, she applied to three colleges and was accepted to all of them.

Mollie selected a school, and in the spring of her senior year attended to the many details involved in transition. At her counselor's advice, she contacted the Office of Disability Services at the university and began making plans for the supports and accommodations she would need in the fall. "The Summary of Performance helped me deal with Disability Services," she says. "Everything they needed to know was right on that form. They said they wished everyone was as well-prepared and organized as I was."

Mollie also connected with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), where she qualified for tuition support to achieve her employment goal. In addition, MRS agreed to install necessary assistive technology (Natural Reader) onto her computer to accommodate her learning

disability so she could listen to books and articles required for her classes.

Mollie's exit interview in June was exciting but also left her feeling nervous as she said goodbye to the counselors and staff who had supported her through high school. "It was transition time. I knew the hand-holding was over, and I'd be on my own from now on," she says. "It was a scary thought, but overall I felt prepared."

As her first college semester approached, Mollie's confidence wavered. "All of a sudden I was petrified!" she laughs. "Even with all my accommodations, high school was hard. I knew college would be that much harder."

"College is harder," Mollie acknowledges. But she is up for the challenge, having paved the way with careful transition planning. She sees what it is like for others who were not so prepared. "I know a girl with a

disability similar to mine who dropped out just six weeks into the semester," she says. "Her high school hadn't taught her anything about fending for herself. She was overwhelmed from the start, and it only got worse."

Mollie contacted the disability services office at the college and found that although she has their support, her success ultimately depends on her ability to self-advocate. "I approach each of my professors with documentation of my disability and explain my accommodations. And I make all the arrangements myself—if I want a test read, I have to request it seven days in advance. If I want my books on CD, I arrange for that, too."

Mollie takes obvious pride in managing her own affairs and is thrilled with her success at college. "I'm so glad I was pushed to think ahead and plan for my future. It's made all the difference."

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)

www.michigan.gov/mrs

The primary role of MRS is to facilitate the transition from high school to employment. Schools and families should consider MRS as a possible resource for students who require support to enter the workforce.

Any agency, including MRS, should be invited to Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meetings when the student is still in school if the agency is potentially going to provide or pay for services or supports for the student. Early involvement with MRS helps provide for a seamless transition for the student.

A student must apply to receive MRS services. Eligibility for MRS is based on the student having a physical/mental impairment resulting in a significant barrier to employment that requires vocational rehabilitation services to achieve an employment outcome.

The MRS and School Relationship

Building relationships between schools and MRS is imperative to creating a seamless transition program. Productive partnerships are based on mutual respect and understanding of the challenges and responsibilities of each respective partner. Like all relationships, partnerships between schools and MRS take effort, communication, and ongoing improvement. Effective collaboration is worth the effort because when schools and MRS work together, students benefit. Schools and MRS both have an equal responsibility to build and renew their partnership.

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Student Engagement Through the Summary of Performance

The student's completion of the student perspective page helps the student better understand the impact of his or her disability in postsecondary settings. The student's input may also help secondary professionals complete the summary. A school may approach the SOP process in various ways.

One way to build toward a successful and efficient SOP with student input is to engage the student in the IEP development process throughout his or her academic career. Student engagement in the IEP process allows the student to become accustomed to discussing the impact of his or her disability, to evaluate what accommodations work best, and to develop goals. This puts the student in a position to help develop the SOP as he or she approaches postsecondary life.

Some students may best benefit from starting the SOP process early in their high school career. Student-friendly questions on the student-perspective page provide an opportunity for a student to reflect on his or her disability's impact on learning, the supports and accommodations that work best, and his or her postsecondary vision. This engagement may assist the IEP process and will help ensure the student is fully invested in creating an effective SOP by the time he or she exits school.



Developing a Meaningful Summary of Performance

From its introduction in 1990, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) has included requirements for secondary transition planning. The most recent reauthorization of the IDEA (2004) and its regulations introduced new requirements related to secondary transition planning. One of the new requirements—the Summary of Performance (SOP)—is meant to assist the student in reaching his or her postsecondary goals.

A local educational agency (LEA) must provide an SOP to a student who will no longer be eligible for special education programs and services as a result of:

1. Graduating with a regular high school diploma.
2. Exceeding the age of eligibility (26 in the state of Michigan).

Because the SOP is a tool for students transitioning to postsecondary life, Michigan recommends providing an SOP to all students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) who exit the school system.

The IDEA describes an SOP as “a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals” [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(5)(B)].

The summary of the student’s academic achievement and functional performance should provide context for how the student will transition into postsecondary settings. Much like the Present Level of Academic

Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) in the IEP, the summary should include information such as student strengths, assessment and evaluation results, and other data. The SOP must also include recommendations for assisting the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals. The recommendations may include potential supports and/or accommodations.

The IDEA and its regulations provide no further criteria for the SOP. According to guidance provided by the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), “State and local officials have the flexibility to determine the appropriate content to be included in a child’s SOP, based on the child’s individual needs and postsecondary goals” (<http://idea.ed.gov>).

Michigan’s Standards for the Summary of Performance

Michigan has not created additional requirements or criteria for the SOP. However, the Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) has created a model form and encourages a comprehensive approach to help ensure that LEAs meet the federal requirements and make the SOP an effective tool for students (see “Tips for Writing the Summary of Performance” on page 6 for guidance on the form).

Much of the information that can be included in the SOP is also documented in the student’s IEP and his or her Educational

Development Plan (EDP). The student's most recent IEP and EDP are valuable resources for creating the SOP.

Since the law requires that the LEA provide the SOP to the student, the LEA is expected to prepare the SOP. However, no specific person or team has been identified to complete the SOP. Ideally, the SOP is completed collaboratively with the student, parents, school personnel, and anyone else who may be appropriate.

The contributors may complete the form together, or the LEA and family may prepare sections separately before developing final recommendations and completing the document. For example, the model form includes a "student perspective" page which should be completed by the student.

The student may complete the form prior to the meeting with school personnel, while the LEA begins to prepare its recommendations. The important point is that input from multiple perspectives leads to meaningful recommendations which can assist the student in reaching his or her postsecondary goals.

The Summary of Performance for Self Advocacy

If the student is directly involved in the SOP process, he or she will become more invested in the document, making the student more likely to use the SOP as an effective tool for self advocacy in postsecondary settings. The student will be more invested and will have a better understanding of what accommodations to ask for and in what settings. Another helpful practice to

assist the student is to include documents that may be useful in establishing eligibility for services from postsecondary providers [such as Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) or an office of disability services at a college]. Understanding what services the student will need based on his or her postsecondary goals will help identify what kinds of documents should be included.

The SOP may be included in a "senior folder" which combines all relevant documents (such as special education evaluation results, transition assessments, and awards to help explain the impact of the student's disability).

When to Develop the Summary of Performance

The SOP should be completed during the final year of a student's education, but the process may begin at any time. There is no standard time frame for developing an SOP. The LEA should begin the process early enough that the student, parents, and LEA have a reasonable amount of time to reflect on what needs to be included in the SOP. Because an effective SOP will include specific information about postsecondary settings, some research may need to be conducted after initial discussions.

The process also should be started early enough to consider when the SOP will need to be available for the student. For example, a student's postsecondary goals may include college. The SOP may be a useful document to assist the student in completing college applications, which are submitted before the student exits his or her secondary education.



Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) Model Summary of Performance (SOP) Form

The Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) model Summary of Performance (SOP) form is located at:

<http://mi-top.cenmi.org/Resources/IEPStudentFocusedAgenda.aspx>

Click on "Summary of Performance" to download the document.

No matter when the student first uses the SOP, the document should still be reviewed as the student exits school to ensure the SOP reflects any recent changes. An opportune time to finalize the SOP for many students is at his or her exit interview. The exit interview also provides a good opportunity for the school to

collect future contact information for tracking postsecondary outcomes, a requirement of the IDEA regulations. In addition to tracking postsecondary outcomes, follow-up contact with a former student provides LEAs with an opportunity to receive feedback on the effectiveness of the SOP and its development process.

Tips for Writing the Summary of Performance

The Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) created a model Summary of Performance (SOP) form to help ensure that LEAs meet the federal requirements and make the SOP an effective tool for students. The form includes six prompts.

1. Summary of academic achievement and functional performance.

This section is required by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(5)(B)], but the information to be included is not specified.

This section is similar to the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). If the PLAAFP is reviewed and updated at every IEP team meeting, this section may be regarded as the final PLAAFP for the student. This section may include:

- How the student's disability has affected the student's academic achievement and functional performance and progress in the general education curriculum.

- Academic and functional strengths.
- Results of vocational and transition assessments.
- Results of the most recent state or district assessments.
- Results of college entrance exams (e.g., SAT, ACT).
- Results of the most recent special education evaluation of the student.
- Honors or special awards.
- Vocational or extracurricular accomplishments of the student.

2. Postsecondary goals.

The student's postsecondary goals for adult living, career or employment, community participation, and postsecondary education or training should already be documented in the student's IEP. Collectively, these goals comprise the student's postsecondary vision. The student's Educational Development Plan (EDP) should also identify the same or similar goals.

These goal statements reflect what the student intends to accomplish after exiting secondary education.



Documentation of these goals may also provide valuable information to anyone (such as adult service providers or colleges) reviewing the SOP.

3-5. Accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology used to achieve success in high school.

For the three sections above, identify the accommodations (section 3), modifications (section 4), and assistive technology (section 5) that allowed the student to make progress in his or her education and access information. List supports and modifications that can possibly be applied to postsecondary life and help the student achieve his or her postsecondary goals.

The Supplementary Aids and Services section of the student's IEP may serve as a resource for identifying the accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology that benefited the student throughout high school.

List these supports in functional and specific terms. Stating "extended time as required" is not as informative for the reader of the SOP as "30 additional minutes provided for exams requiring written responses."

6. Recommendations to meet postsecondary goals (employment, education, and independent living skills).

This section is required by the IDEA [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(5)(B)].

Considering the information documented in the previous sections, write any recommendations for assisting, supporting, and/

or accommodating the student in meeting the student's postsecondary goals. Anticipate the needs of the student in specific settings. Identify what supports will help the student meet those needs.

For example, if the student's postsecondary education goal is to complete a particular program at the local community college, the recommendations should be consistent with the accommodations and modifications readily available.

When needed supports or accommodations are not readily available in that setting, an examination of who might assist in obtaining those supports will be helpful. The student and family can lead the effort to gather this setting-specific information, which will help the student become intimately familiar with his or her future postsecondary setting. The student will also gain experience in self advocacy.

Sample Summary of Performance (SOP) Forms

The following links offer sample SOPs used in Michigan:

Eaton Intermediate School District SOP

www.eatonisd.org/schoolservices/specialed/forms/otherforms

The Academic and Functional Summary of Performance and the Student Perspective page are both available.

St. Joseph County Intermediate School District SOP

<http://sjcisd.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=documents.open&documentID=386>



Michigan's Integrated Improvement Initiatives/Center for Educational Networking (MI3/CEN) is a statewide education information network that produces and disseminates publications and documents related to the education of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

MI3/CEN produces **FOCUS on Results** to offer valuable, up-to-date information for special education stakeholders, including parents, teachers, school administrators, counselors, and others.

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FOCUS Highlights

- The Summary of Performance (SOP) is a requirement of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) to be provided for students who are no longer eligible for special education programs and services as a result of graduating with a regular high school diploma or who are exceeding the age of eligibility [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(5)(B)]. Michigan recommends providing an SOP to all students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) who exit the school system.
- The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Educational Development Plan (EDP) document much of the same information that can be included in the student's Summary of Performance (SOP).
- The Summary of Performance (SOP) should be finalized at the end of the student's academic career but should be started early enough to be developed as a meaningful tool for the student.
- Engagement in a student's own education and transition planning throughout his or her academic career has a great impact on the student's ability to achieve his or her postsecondary goals.

Glossary of Terms

Postsecondary Vision: Postsecondary refers to after high school. "Postsecondary vision" describes the set of postsecondary goals to be considered for the student. The areas of postsecondary goals include employment, adult living, community support, and postsecondary education.

Transition Services: Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student to facilitate a student's movement from school to post-school life (including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and/or community preparation).

Resources

Student Directed Transition Planning Teaching Materials and Lesson Activities

www.ou.edu/zarrow/pilot/lesson8.html

Questions and Answers on Secondary Transition From the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS)

<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/,root,dynamic,QaCorner,10>,

Annotated Bibliography for Summary of Performance

<http://www.nsttac.org/indicator13/sopab.pdf>

Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) Model Summary of Performance (SOP)

<http://mi-top.cenmi.org/Resources/IEPStudentFocusedAgenda.aspx>