

**Outcomes of Approval Special Education
Programs in the Private Sector:**

Results of a Statewide Survey

Plans for Exiting Students: 2011-2012

Report Number 13 of the ASAH Outcomes Project

May, 2013



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This report is dedicated to the memory of Joseph E. Gorga,
Director of Lord Stirling School, Basking Ridge, NJ ,
a devoted teacher, administrator, and champion of students with disabilities

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Executive Summary

Generally examinations of the outcomes of special education have not looked at the outcomes for the students with severe disabilities who are enrolled in private, approved special education facilities. However, ASAH, an association of the private approved special education centers in New Jersey, has tracked the discharge plans of the students exiting their members' schools for over a decade.

The special education programming within private approved facilities for students with severe disabilities, such as that offered by ASAH's members, is consistent with the continuum of special education services described in IDEA. When the needs of students with the most severe disabilities cannot be met within the public sector, local school districts seek partners to deliver the specialized education programs and supports described the Individual Education Program (IEP) of students with severe disabilities. The local districts, therefore, turn to private approved facilities to provide these students with the highly specialized, intensive programs they require. A sizeable proportion of the younger students are ultimately able to enter programs within the local public school district once their skills have been strengthened and their needs have been met; a high proportion of the older students are, upon graduation, able to engage in productive adult careers that are consistent with their abilities and capacities.

Below is a summary of the results for students who left an approved nonpublic special education center with membership in ASAH during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Highlights for Transfer Students

- 95% of the transfer students attended the approved private ASAH-member facility for 5 years or less.
- 57% of these students left their approved private special education school with plans to attend an educational program in their local, home district (19% had plans to enter regular education programs, while 38% returned to other programs within their local district).
- The special needs of the transfer students appear to be reflected in their living plans. Although 76% of these minors plan to live with their parents or legal guardians, the other 24% require specialized treatment, care, or rehabilitation in skill development/foster homes, group homes, residential treatment centers, medical, psychiatric, drug treatment or correctional facilities.

Highlights for Graduates

- About 74% of the graduates were enrolled in an ASAH-affiliated private approved school for students with disabilities for 5 years or less.
- Nearly 60% of the graduates planned to enter the mainstream (2-year/4-year college or trade/technical training, competitive employment, or the military).
- Graduates from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (79%) and Learning Disorders programs (77%) were the most likely to make plans to enter the mainstream.
- 21% of the graduates planned to enter a vocational rehabilitation activity (vocational rehabilitation training program, supported or sheltered employment). More than 35% of the graduates with these plans came from ASAH-member programs serving those with developmental disabilities.
- 15% of the graduates made plans to enter a community-based adult program (adult partial care or adult nonvocational day program). More than 56% of the graduates who had these plans came from ASAH-member programs serving those with severe medical disabilities.
- 96% of the graduates had plans to be engaged in a productive adult activity (mainstream, vocational rehabilitation, or community-based support program).
- The plans for productive mainstream activity reported by the graduates from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders program are noteworthy, since most experts agree that these students are most likely to experience poor outcomes as adults.

Introduction

The outcome studies in special education tend to focus on the student whose special needs can be met within the public school setting. Outcomes for the students with the most severe disabilities, those who require the most specialized and intensive educational programs have largely been ignored. However, historically, when local public schools cannot accommodate the unique and complex needs of this subpopulation of special education students with severe disability, they have entered into a partnership with the private sector of special education by placing these students in approved nonpublic special education facilities in order to best meet the specific therapeutic goals of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in the most appropriate, least restrictive environment. This partnership has long supported the concept of the continuum of special education that is defined in IDEA.

For over a decade, ASAH (formerly the Association of Schools and Agencies for the Handicapped), a not-for-profit association of 94 approved nonpublic facilities serving individuals with special needs and their families, has taken on the task of examining the exit plans of the special education students with severe disabilities who are served by their members' programs in order to address this gap in the knowledge base of special education.

Previous Studies Authorized by ASAH

For 5 years, beginning with the 1999-2000 academic year and continuing through 2003-2004, ASAH members participated in a series of exit studies to document the plans of transfer and graduating students at the point of discharge. Results showed that after leaving an ASAH-member program about 44% of the transfer students planned to enter an in-district program and about 48% of the graduates planned to enter a mainstream

adult role (postsecondary education, trade/technical school, and competitive employment). The exit studies were reinitiated in 2006-2007 with a plan to carry them out once more over 5 school years. Thus, Report #12, in addition to delineating the findings for the 2011-12 academic year, also examined the outcomes over 5 years from 2006-2007 through 2011-2012. These results showed that after leaving an ASAH-member program about 49% of the transfer students planned to enter an in-district program and about 61% of the graduates planned to enter a mainstream adult role (postsecondary education, trade/technical school, and competitive employment).¹

ASAH-members also participated in a study to track the graduates of the Class of 2000. Results showed that 5 years after leaving an ASAH-affiliated program, 91% of the alumni were productively involved in a mainstream, vocational rehabilitation, or community-based adult activity. When former students with emotional/behavioral disabilities (E/BD) were compared to their special education peers from public school E/BD programs, as reported in the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS), the results were encouraging (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). The alumni from ASAH-member E/BD programs, presumably a group with more severe disabilities, were found to be doing at least as well as, if not better than, the public school special education students for involvement in postsecondary education (52% vs. 47%), competitive employment (42% vs. 40%), and independent living (52% vs. 47%).

The Present Study

The present survey, which begins a new 5-year tracking cycle, will focus on documenting the educational settings to which transfer students planned to move as well

¹ Copies of the *Outcomes of Private School Special Education*, Reports 3-12 can be obtained from ASAH, Lexington Square, 2125 Route 33, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690 (e-mail: info@asah.org).

as the plans made by the graduates who left an ASAH-member program in the 2012-2013 school year.

Method

Each ASAH-member school was asked to supply information on every student who exited from a program over the course of the previous academic year. Exiting students were defined as transfer students, students who left the ASAH-member program to move to another education program, and graduates, those who left an ASAH-affiliated school because they received a high school diploma. Demographic and program information were collected on the students who dropped out of school during the course of the study. Dropouts, however, were excluded from the study because their plans were not available.

The exiting students were further identified as attending one of five specific special education programs. The participants were given a definition for each program category and were asked to classify the program from which each student exited by using one predominant program category. The programs were defined as follows: 1) Preschool Disorders Programs – for students with any disorder identified at the Preschool stage; 2) Developmental Disorders Programs – for students with speech/language impairments, intellectual disabilities, autism, and developmental delays; 3) Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Programs – for students with emotional and behavioral disturbances; 4) Medical Disorders Programs – for students with other health impairments hearing impairments, visual impairments orthopedic impairments, deaf-blindness, and traumatic brain injury; and 5) Learning Disorders Programs – for students with specific learning disabilities. This data was collected from each participating school and entered in a database for analysis.

The Participating Programs and Student Demographics

Overall, 42 ASAH-member schools (45% of the membership) with 95 educational programs volunteered to participate in the study. While 85 (89%) of these were day programs, 10 (11%) offered both day and residential programming to their students. In total, 26 (27%) of the 95 programs in the study served students with Developmental Disorders; 24 (25%) were for those with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders; 18 (19%) were for students with Medical Disorders; 17 (18%) served students with Learning Disorders; and 10 (11%) were for students with Preschool Learning Disorders. Taken together, 4,476 students, 3,101 males (69%) and 1,375 females (31%) were enrolled in these programs.

Participating schools were located in 15 of New Jersey's 21 counties. Table 1 shows how their location was distributed among New Jersey's 21 counties.

Table 1. Participating Schools by New Jersey County*
N=42

	#	%
Bergen	7	16.6
Burlington	1	2.4
Camden	4	9.5
Essex	6	14.3
Gloucester	1	2.4
Mercer	1	2.4
Middlesex	4	9.5
Monmouth	4	9.5
Morris	4	9.5
Ocean	3	7.1
Passaic	1	2.4
Somerset	2	4.8
Sussex	1	2.4
Union	2	4.8
Warren	1	2.4
Total	42	100.0

*Schools are listed by main campus. Several schools have programs in more than one county.

The approved private schools in the study were most likely to be found in Bergen (7 facilities; over 16%) and Essex (6 facilities; over 14%) counties. Camden, Middlesex, Monmouth and Morris counties each had 4 facilities (9.5% each). Ocean had 3 facilities in the study (7.1%) and Somerset and Union counties each had 2 facilities (4.8%). Finally, 1 participating facility (2.4% each) was located in Burlington, Mercer, Passaic, Sussex, and Warren counties.

The Exiting Students

During the study period, 1,223 students exited from an ASAH-member private approved school for students with severe disabilities. The exiting students were primarily White (43%) or Black (39%), male (70%), in High School students (67%), between the ages of 12 and 17 years (52%), and enrolled in an Emotional/Behavioral Disorders program (57%) from 1 year to 5 years (54%). Over 39% of the exiting students received subsidized lunch. Transfer students accounted for 64% of the exiting students; graduates were 34%; and dropouts were nearly 2%.² According to school staff, 70% of the exiting students experienced a “planned exit.” In short, student, family/guardian, ASAH-member school staff, and local district staff agreed that the student was ready to move to a different educational program. School staff also rated the exits as “positive” in 75% of the cases.

Planning information was available for 1,095 students, nearly 90% of the exiting students. Of the 1,095 students whose plans were known and available, 691 were transfer students and 404 were graduates.

The characteristics of all exiting students and the programs in which they were enrolled before they exited are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Exiting Students and Their Programs (n=1,223)

Characteristics	#	%
<u>Program Classifications</u>		
Preschool Disorders	58	4.7
Learning Disorders	146	11.9
Medical Disorders	134	11.0
Development Disorders	191	15.6
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	694	56.8
<u>Reason for Exit</u>		
Transfer Student	784	64.1
Graduate	416	34.0
Dropout	23	1.9
<u>Grade Level</u>		
Preschool	58	4.7
Elementary School	149	12.2
Middle School	173	14.1
High School	843	68.9
<u>Race Ethnicity</u>		
White	523	42.8
Black	476	38.9
Hispanic	192	15.7
Asian	29	2.4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	.2
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	859	70.2
Female	364	29.8
<u>Ages at Exit</u>		
3-5 years	58	4.7
6-11 years	93	7.6
12-17 years	631	51.6
18-21+ years	441	36.1
<u>Length of Stay</u>		
Less than 1 year	79	6.4
1-5 years	664	54.3
6-10 years	209	17.1
11+ years	143	11.7
Not Available	128	10.5
<u>Subsidized Lunch</u>		
Yes	482	39.4
No	741	60.6
<u>Status of Planning Information</u>		
Available in Records	1,095	89.5
Not Available	128	10.5
<u>Staff Assessment of Exit</u>		
Planned		
Yes	858	70.2
No	365	29.8

² In total, 23 students dropped out (16 males, 7 females; 17 were White, 4 were Black, and 2 were Hispanic).

Staff Assessment of Exit (Cont'd)

Positive		
Yes	919	75.1
No	304	24.9

The Transfer Students**Demographics**

The discharge plans for 691 transfer students were available for this study. Of these, 76% (524) were male, while 24% (167) were female. When race/ethnicity was examined, 43% (299) were White, 42.5% (294) were Black, 12% (84) were Hispanic, 2% (11) were Asian, and about .5% (3) was Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander.

Grade Level

Approximately 63% (438) attended High School, about 18% (122) Middle School, over 11% (79) Elementary School, and more than 7% (52) Preschool before exiting the private approved special education program. See Table 3

Table 3. Transfer Students by Grade Level n=691

	#	%
Preschool	52	7.5
Elementary School	79	11.4
Middle School	122	17.7
High School	438	63.4
Total	691	100

Length of Stay

Table 4 presents the length of stay for the transfer students.

Table 4. Length of Stay for Transfer Students**n=691**

	#	%
< 1 year	210	30.4
1-5 years	443	64.1
6-10 years	38	5.5
Total	691	100

More than 30% (210) of the transfer students were enrolled for less than a year. The majority of these students, 64% (443) were enrolled from 1 to 5 years. Close to 6% (38) were enrolled for 6-10 years. Overall, 95% (653) of these exiters were students at an ASAH-member school for 5 years or less.

Educational Plans By Program

When the transfer students were examined according to the programs in which they were enrolled, the following emerges. About 63% (435) attended Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, 14% (94) Developmental Disorders programs, more than 10% (71) Medical Disorders programs, 5.5% (39) Learning Disorders programs, and about 7.5% (52) were enrolled in Preschool Disorders programs.

See Table 5 for the distribution of the educational plans of the students as reported at the point of discharge as they transferred from an ASAH-member school to another facility.

Table 5. Educational Plans for Transfer Students**n =691**

Education Setting	Preschool n = 52		Learning n = 39		Medical n =71		DD n = 94		E/BD n = 435		Total n =691	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>In-District Education</i>												
Regular Education, Not Special Education	10	19.2	6	15.4	9	12.7	4	4.3	13	3.0	42	6.1
Regular Education, Vocational School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	2.1	9	1.3
Regular Education, Supported Inclusion	24	46.2	5	12.8	9	12.7	11	11.7	30	6.9	79	11.4
Subtotal: Returns to Regular Education	34	65.4	11	28.2	18	25.4	15	16.0	52	12.0	130	18.8
Resource Room	0	0	2	5.1	2	2.8	3	3.2	9	2.1	16	2.3
Alternate School	0	0	5	12.8	7	9.9	4	4.3	33	7.6	49	7.1
Special Education, Self Contained LEA	8	15.4	2	5.1	15	21.1	18	19.1	156	35.9	199	28.8
Subtotal: Returns to Other In-district Programs	8	15.4	9	23.0	24	33.8	25	26.6	198	45.6	264	38.2
Subtotal: All Returns To In-district Programs	42	80.8	20	51.2	42	59.2	40	42.6	250	57.6	394	57.0
<i>Outside District Education</i>												
Out of District Special Education Day Program	10	19.2	3	7.7	16	22.5	40	42.6	99	22.6	168	24.3
Residential	0	0	2	5.1	5	7.0	7	7.4	44	10.1	58	8.4
Home Instruction	0	0	3	7.7	5	7.0	3	3.2	25	5.7	36	5.2
Other	0	0	11	28.2	3	4.2	4	4.3	17	3.9	35	5.1
Total	52	100	39	100	71	100	94	100	435	100	691	100.0

Results for Transfer Student Educational Plans

The students who transferred from an approved ASAH-member school program to another educational program tended to be White (44%) or Black (39%), male (71%), High School students (56%) who were enrolled in programs for students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (60%) from between 1 and 5 years (67%).

As Table 5 indicates, 57% of the transfer students (394 students) exited with plans to return to an educational program within their local public school district. While about 19% (130 students) had plans to return to regular education classes, including vocational school and supported inclusion, an additional 38% (264 students) planned to return to other in-district placements that offered a range of support to accommodate their special needs (resource room, 2%; alternate school, 7%; self-contained classroom, 29%). About 81% (42 students) of those who transferred from Preschool Disorders programs, 51% (20 students) from Learning Disorders programs, 59% (42 students) from Medical Disorders programs, 43% (40 students) from Developmental Disorders programs, and 58% (250 students) from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs planned to enter educational programs within their local districts.

When in-district returns to regular education programs alone are examined the following emerges from each category: 65% of the students from Preschool Disorders programs, 28% of the students from Learning Disorder programs, 25% of the students from Medical Disorders programs, 16% of the students from Developmental Disorders programs, and 12% of the students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs had planned, upon discharge from a private approved school, to enroll in regular education classrooms within their local school district.

Return to In-District Education

Table 6 summarizes the degree to which the plans of the transfer students reflect a return to an in-district program, including a return to a regular education setting, for the 2011-2012 school year.

Table 6 Transfer Student Return to In-District Education: 2011-2012

	In-District Regular Education ^a		Other In-District Education ^b		Total In-District Education		Outside District Education ^c	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2011-2012 (45% participation) n= 691	130	19	264	38	394	57	297	43

^a Regular education, including supported inclusion

^b Resource room, alternate school, self-contained LEA

^c Out-of-district special education day program, residential program, home instruction, other placement (e.g., correctional, psychiatric, medical, or developmental facility)

For the 2011-2012 school year, 394 students (57%) planned to return to in-district programs. Of these, 130 (19%) planned to return to regular education classrooms, while 264 (38%) planned to enter “other” in-district programming, such as, resource room, alternate school, or self-contained LEA. Finally, 297 students (43%) left with plans to enter other education programs outside of their local district, such as, a special education day program, a residential program, home instruction, some other placement (e.g., correctional, psychiatric, medical, or developmental facility).

Living Arrangements

At discharge, 76% of the transfer students (523) planned to live with a parent, other relative, or guardian. About 12% (86 students) had plans to live in a skill development home, foster home, or group home. About 10% (68 students) planned to enter a

residential, psychiatric, medical, or drug treatment facility. Approximately 2% (14 students) of the discharge plans called for entry into a correctional facility.

The Graduates

There were 404 graduates with known plans. Of these, 65% (264 students) were male, while 35% (140 students) were female. Close to 63% (252 students) were White, 21% (86 students) were Black, 14% (57 students) were Hispanic, and about 2% (9 students) were Asian. Almost 157 of the graduates (39%) came from Emotional Behavioral Disorders programs, 28% (115) from Developmental Disorders programs, 23% (93) from Learning Disorders programs, and about 10% (39) from Medical Disorders programs.

Length of Stay

Table 7 shows the length of stay in an ASAH-member program for the graduates.

Table 7. Length of Stay for Graduates

n= 404

Length of Stay	Graduates	
	#	%
< 1 year	5	1.2
1-5 years	294	72.8
6-10 years	57	14.1
11+ years	48	11.9
Total	404	100.0

As Table 7 demonstrates, about 1% of the graduates were in a their ASAH-member program for less than 1 year; about 73% for 1-5 years; 14% for 6-10 years; and nearly 12% for 11 years or more. Taken together, 74% (299 graduates) were enrolled in an approved nonpublic special education program for 5 years or less.

The Postschool Plans of the Graduates by Specialized Program

Table 8 presents an analysis of the graduates' postschool plans by the education program in which they were enrolled to meet their special needs.

Table. 8 Postschool Plans of Graduates by Education Program**n = 404**

Postschool Plans	E/BD n = 157		DD n = 115		Learning n = 93		Medical n = 39		Total n = 404	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Engagement										
Four Year College	20	12.7	0	0	31	33.3	4	10.2	55	13.6
Two Year College	52	33.1	11	9.6	19	20.4	8	20.5	90	22.3
Trade/Technical School	17	10.8	2	1.7	8	8.6	0	0	27	6.7
Competitive Employment	31	19.7	18	15.6	14	15.1	2	5.1	65	16.1
Military	4	2.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1.0
Mainstream Activity^a	124	78.9	31	26.9	72	77.4	14	35.8	241	59.7
Voc Rehab Training Program	12	7.6	14	12.2	2	2.1	1	2.6	29	7.2
Supported Employment	11	7.0	14	12.2	5	5.4	0	0	30	7.4
Sheltered Employment	3	1.9	12	10.4	9	9.7	0	0	24	5.9
Vocational Rehabilitation Activity^b	26	16.5	40	34.8	16	17.2	1	2.6	83	20.5
Adult Partial Care	3	1.9	12	10.4	2	2.1	11	28.2	28	6.9
Nonvocational Day Program	0	0	22	19.1	0	0	11	28.2	33	8.2
Community-Based Program Activity^c	3	1.9	34	29.5	2	2.1	22	56.4	61	15.1
Other Engagement	2	1.3	2	1.7	0	0	0	0	4	1.0
No Engagement: No Education/Training, Job or Program	2	1.3	8	7.0	3	3.2	2	5.1	15	3.7
Total	157	100	115	100	93	100	39	100.0	404	100

a Mainstream Activity – 4-Yr./2-Yr. College, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment or Military

b Vocational Rehabilitation Activity – Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programs, Supported or Sheltered Employment

c Community-Based Program Activity – Partial Care and Nonvocational Day Programs

d Engaged in other activities involving, for example, correctional, psychiatric, or medical intervention or not engaged in any productive activity

Results for the Postschool Plans of the Graduates

The graduates tended to be White (63%) males (65%) who were enrolled in programs serving students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (39%) for 1-5 years (73%).

As Table 8 shows, 43% of the graduates (172) planned to go on to a 4-year/2-year College (36%, 145 students) or a Trade/Technical School (7%, 27 students). About 17% (69 students) had plans to enter Competitive Employment (16%) or the Military (1%). Taken together, nearly 60% of the graduates planned to enter a Mainstream Activity by participating in postschool education or technical training, seeking competitive employment, or enlisting in the military. Moreover, about 20% (83 students) planned to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity by participating in a vocational rehabilitation training program (7%) or in supported or sheltered employment (13%). About 15% planned to enter Community-Based Program Activity by enrolling in an adult partial care (7%) or nonvocational day program (8%). About 2% had other plans, such as, entering a drug, psychiatric, or medical treatment or correctional facility. About 4% reported they had no plans to enter educational, vocational, rehabilitative, or supportive programs or to seek work after completing their secondary program.

Graduates from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (79%) and Learning Disorders programs (77%) were the most likely to make plans to enter Mainstream Activity. Graduates from Developmental programs (35%) were the most likely to plan to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity. Finally, graduates from Medical Disorders

programs (56%) were most likely to make plans to enter Community-Based Program Activity.

Plans of the Graduates

Table 9 summarizes the postschool plans for the graduates for the 2011-2012 school year.

Table 9. Postschool Plans of Graduates by Activity: 2011-2012

	Mainstream Activity ^a		Vocational Rehabilitation Activity ^b		Community-Based Program Activity ^c		Total Engagement		Other Engagement/ Not Engaged ^d	
2011-2012 (45% participation) n=404	241	60	83	20	61	15	385	95	19	5
^a Mainstream Activity – 4-Yr./2-Yr. College, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment or Military ^b Vocational Rehabilitation Activity – Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programs, Supported or Sheltered Employment ^c Community-Based Programs Activity – Partial Care and Nonvocational Day Programs ^d Engaged in other activities involving, for example, correctional, psychiatric, or medical intervention or not engaged in any productive activity										

For the 2011-2012 schools year, 60% of the graduates planned to enter the mainstream; about 20% to engage in some type of vocational rehabilitation activity; and 15% to enter supportive community-based programs for adults with disabilities. In total, 95% of the graduates (385 students) left ASAH-member programs with plans to enter a productive adult role. Of the remaining 5% (19 students), the plans of 4 graduates (1%) indicated the need for a further treatment or correctional intervention, while 15 graduates (close to 4%) left the ASAH-affiliated program without plans for engagement in education, training, competitive employment, or a program.

Plans for Living Arrangements of the Graduates

About 78% of the graduates (316) had plans to live with a parent, other relative, or guardian, while about 19% (75 students) planned to live independently (60 students) or semi-independently (15 students). About 3% had plans to live in other settings, such as skill development homes, foster homes, group homes, residential treatment centers, or medical, correctional, or drug treatment facilities.

Discussion

The students who attend ASAH-member private approved special education programs in New Jersey present with more severe disabilities than their special education peers who receive services within the local school district. Since the students in ASAH-member schools are more likely to have chronic, complex, and multiple disabilities that require highly specialized and intensive supports and educational services, they constitute a unique subgroup within the population of students with disabilities. However, despite these serious disabilities, most of these students are able to return to in-district programs. According to the present study, about 95% of the transfer students were enrolled in their ASAH-member programs for 5 years or less during the 2011-2012 school year, a finding that demonstrates that the majority of the placements in these private approved programs are temporary in nature. Most of the students enrolled in ASAH-member special education programs attend these highly specialized placements until they have acquired or strengthened the skills they need to succeed in an in-district program. That 57% of these students left an ASAH-member school with plans to return to programs within their home districts, with 19% planning to enter the less restrictive educational environment of a regular classroom, underscores this point, one that is consistent with results reported by Gagnon & McLaughlin (2004). Because ASAH-member schools function as partners with the local school district in implementing each student's Individualized Education

Program (IEP), they fulfill an important role on the continuum of special education. In fact, the positive relationship between the public and private sectors of special education, one that supports the needs of the most disabled students, has long ensured that children with severe disabilities receive appropriate services along the continuum of special education as described in IDEA. Future studies to track the careers of students with serious disabilities after their exit from the more protective setting of the nonpublic facility and entry to the special education programming of the public school could prove informative to program development and policy for persons with disabilities.

Several national studies of the postschool outcomes for students receiving special education services have been conducted. These studies have focused on the larger group of students receiving special education services in the public schools and have not placed on emphasis on identifying the outcomes for students with severe disabilities (SRI International, 1993; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2001; Wagner & Cameto, 2004; Newman, Wagner, Cameto and Knokey, 2009; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, and Shaver, 2010). Such studies have not looked at the benefits students with severe disabilities might receive from attending the highly individualized and intensive programs offered by the private approved special education sector (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

That 95% of the graduates in this study made plans to engage in productive adult roles after leaving secondary school is a further promising finding of our study. This appears to indicate that the private approved special education facilities assist each graduate to develop an appropriate transitional plan. Overall, 60% of the graduates planned to enter mainstream roles (43% planned to pursue postsecondary education and

17% planned to enter competitive employment or military service). Another 20% planned to pursue vocational rehabilitation activities, while 15%, those with the most severe disabilities, made plans to enter an appropriate community-based adult day program.

More than any other group of students, the academic success of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities continues to challenge all educators (Kaufman et al., 2007; Wagner et al. 2006). As Wagner et al. (2006) report, these students flounder in large public schools where they are likely to have teachers who feel unprepared to work with them and are unlikely to receive academic or other support services to help them succeed. The studies that have focused on the outcomes for this specific population have examined the less disabled students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, those who attend programs in the public schools (SRI International, 1993; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2001; Wagner & Cameto, 2004; Newman, Wagner, Cameto and Knokey, 2009; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, and Shaver, 2010). Overall, findings for these students have included low graduation rates, poor work histories, involvement in excessive antisocial behavior and the criminal justice system, and difficulty establishing stable adult roles (Chen, Symons, & Reynolds, 2011; Gagnon & McLaughlin; 2004; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998; Mattison & Spitznagel, 1998; Reddy, 2001; Sample, 1998; SRI International, 1993; Tobin & Sugai, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2001; Wagner, 1995; Wagner & Cameto, 2004). It is, therefore, encouraging that during the 2011-12 school year, 79% of the graduates from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs left an ASAH-member program with plans to pursue adult roles in the mainstream (close to 57% with plans for attending college or trade/technical school and 22% with plans to enter a

competitive job or the military). Perhaps as adults these students will be able to maintain emotional and behavioral stability as well as stability in interpersonal relationships because of the highly individualized and intensive support services they received while enrolled in an ASAH-member program, services that were specifically tailored to their unique educational needs (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Newly emerging evidence suggests that helping students with emotional and behavioral difficulties make a positive adjustment to the classroom helps to curtail antisocial behavior (Chen, Symons, & Reynolds, 2011). The small classroom size and individualized programs available in the private approved sector fosters a school climate that makes it possible to extend such help to these students. Future studies should track the graduates with emotional and behavioral difficulties as they transition to adulthood to determine whether they are able to maintain stable, prosocial adult roles.

The private approved special education programs with membership in ASAH remain dedicated to providing students with the most severe disabilities an education. These schools continue to play a vital role in providing the intensive, individualized, highly specialized services and supports that are needed to educate students with a wide range of severe disabilities along the continuum of special education.

Given the severity of the disabilities of the graduates in this study, it is promising that, taken together, 92% of them made plans to enter productive adult roles reflective of their respective optimal capacities to function. Thus, 58% planned to enroll in postsecondary education, competitive employment, or the military; 21% planned to enter a vocational rehabilitation training program, supported employment, or a sheltered workshop; and 14% had plans to participate in an adult partial care or nonvocational day program in their community.

Much attention has been placed on the outcomes of special education students in public schools with emotional and behavioral difficulties because of their low graduation rates, poor work histories, involvement in the criminal justice system, and difficulty establishing stable adult roles (Reddy, 2001; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998; Mattison & Spitznagel, 1998; Sample, 1998; SRI International, 1993; Tobin & Sugai, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2001; Wagner, 1995; Wagner & Cameto, 2004; Gagnon & McLaughlin, 2004). As Wagner et al. (2006) report, these students flounder in large public schools where they are likely to have teachers who feel unprepared to work with them and are unlikely to receive academic or other support services to help them succeed. It is encouraging, therefore, that during the 2009-10 school year, 84% of the graduates from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs left an ASAH-member program with transitional plans that call for the pursuit of adult roles in the mainstream (59% with plans for 4 year/2 year college or trade or technical school and 25% with plans for competitive employment or military service).

Approved nonpublic special education schools, such as those which constitute ASAH, appear to help graduates make transition plans that lead to their entering the adult roles that are the most appropriate and productive, given the range of disabilities they face.

The approved nonpublic special education facilities that are members of ASAH remain focused on assuring success along the continuum of special education for students with the most severe disabilities and complex special needs. The majority of the exiting transfer students were able to subsequently plan to enter educational programs within their local public school districts. The majority of the exiting graduates were able to plan to enter appropriate, relatively speaking, adult roles. The approved nonpublic special education sector continues to play a vital role in assisting public school districts to educate students with a wide range of severe disabilities.

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