

**Follow-Up Survey of Year 2002  
Graduate/Exiters of Connecticut High Schools**

**Final Report**

**December 2004**

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**Under Contract with  
Connecticut Department of Education  
Bureau of Special Education**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assistance of Timothy Rogers in tracking and handling incoming surveys, and in completing the second wave of the survey is appreciated. Jiarong Zhao is to be commended and thanked for her excellent work during the data entry and analysis phases of the project.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002, 3935 students with disabilities exited special education in the State of Connecticut. Two years after exit, each individual was mailed a survey by the Connecticut State Department of Education to obtain follow-up information on post-school outcomes. The survey included items in three main areas: *Independent Living/Community Participation/Self-Advocacy*; 2). *Primary Employment: Current Status*; and 3). *Postsecondary Education and Training: Current Status*. Two waves of mailings were conducted, and responses were received from 695 exiters. When the total sample size was adjusted for surveys that were not deliverable due to incorrect or outdated addresses, the response rate was 22%.

Of the 468 exiters who responded to the questions about employment (67% of the total sample), the majority (47%) was employed full-time; Seventy-nine percent indicated that they were earning more than minimum wage (\$7.10 hour). The largest percentage of respondents (50%) reported that they are generally happy with their jobs. Females were less likely than males to be employed full-time (40% to 51%), and they reported earning less money and receiving fewer job benefits than males. Respondents with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Learning Disabilities (LD) reported the highest levels of full-time employment, while respondents with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) reported holding full-time employment at rates much lower than respondents from any other category (17%). Respondents with ID also reported earning less money and receiving fewer benefits than respondents from the other disability categories. Black respondents were more likely than white or Hispanic respondents to be employed less than 21 hours per week, and they more

frequently reported earning the minimum wage than other respondents. Male respondents, and respondents with ADHD and Emotional Disorders (ED), were more likely to report having trouble with the law and with drugs or alcohol.

Nearly 60% of the sample reported being enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program. The most common type of program was a four-year college or university followed by community, technical or two-year colleges. It was more likely for white respondents, and for respondents with cognitive disabilities (e.g., LD, ADHD) to be enrolled in these postsecondary education programs.

## Methodology

### *Survey Development*

The instrument used in this investigation was based upon the survey used by Bruder and Gaynor (2002) in the report "*Follow-Up Survey of Year 2000 Graduates/Exiters of High School.*" The data from that study was used as a baseline upon which to facilitate comparisons to subsequent cohorts of exiters, including those in the current sample.

The instrument was revised by a panel of four content experts with expertise in Special Education and/or in survey methodology. The most significant change was the entire instrument being shortened from 34-items to 24-items. Additional directions were added to assist respondents in skipping non-pertinent items and moving directly to relevant items (e.g., for respondents who were employed versus those in postsecondary education).

A panel of 6 young adults with disabilities reviewed the revised instrument. Information was elicited related to the clarity and readability of each item and of the instructions. The survey was subsequently revised based upon this feedback. The final instrument can be found in Appendix A.

The instrument consisted of 22-items across three main categories: 1). *Independent Living/Community Participation/Self-Advocacy*; 2). *Primary Employment: Current Status*; and 3). *Postsecondary Education and Training: Current Status*. Most items contained a stem and then a list of options from which the respondent could check either the single most appropriate response, or all responses that applied. The final item on the survey was open-ended and offered the respondent an opportunity to provide additional information about life after high school.



A letter explaining the purpose of the survey and inviting participation was created. The letter explained that the completed survey would be sent to the Project Principal Investigator (PI), Dr. Joseph Madaus at the University of Connecticut, for analysis. A consent form that outlined the respondent's rights and protections as a participant in this research was also created. Both the cover letter and the consent form indicated that completion and return of the survey was an expression of consent to participate (Appendix B). The completed instrument, letter of participation, and consent form was submitted to the University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was approved on February 5, 2004.

### *Subjects*

The subjects for this investigation consisted of 3,935 individuals who had exited special education during the year 2002 from one of the 169 Local Education Agencies (LEA) in the State of Connecticut. This data is reported in December of each year to the State Department of Education, Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability, and in turn, the data is compiled and sent to the United States Department of Education. The LEA's assigned each exiter with a unique composite identification code (COMPID) that was based upon the last five letters of the student last name, the first initial, two digit year of birth, and "1" or "2" for gender (1= male, 2 = female). Data was also provided for the student's exceptionality, ethnicity, and reason for exit.

The data was sorted by the State Department of Education by LEA by all students who graduated during the period of January 1 to June 30, 2002 for any of the following reasons:

- Graduated with a regular education diploma;

- Graduated with an IEP diploma;
- Reached maximum age; or
- Dropped out of school

In December, 2003, each of the 169 LEA's in the State of Connecticut was mailed both a letter (Appendix C) and an electronic computer disk that contained the COMPID for each student in the district, and requested relevant contact information (e.g., name, address, telephone number).

The computer discs were returned to the Bureau of Special Education, and a complete database was established. There was a 100% response rate from the LEA's for this request. Mailing labels were generated from this database, and additionally, each survey was coded to identify the LEA and the student's code.

#### *Mailings*

Multiple names ( $n = 65$ ) were removed from the initial database for one of the following reasons: 1). Student address unknown/student moved ( $n = 49$ ); 2). Deceased ( $n = 7$ ); 3). Did not graduate in January to June, 2002 ( $n = 2$ ); 4). Incarcerated ( $n = 2$ ); and, 5). Duplicate Names ( $n = 5$ ).

The initial mailing was conducted by the State Department of Education and consisted of 3,870 surveys. The surveys were mailed in batches of approximately 800 during the first week of May, 2004. The PI received a total of 454 completed surveys from the first wave. A second wave mailing was conducted by the PI and a graduate assistant in July 2004, and yielded an additional 241 responses for a total of 695 responses.

Across the two waves of mailings, a total of 733 surveys were returned as undeliverable because of incorrect or unknown addresses, and 12 names were

deleted from the database because the data duplicated an existing name or was incomplete. Five individuals, or their parents or guardians, contacted either the State Department of Education or the PI and requested that they be removed from the project database. Thus, the final sample for the present analysis is based upon 3,120 individuals ( $n = 3,120$ ), and a response rate of 22%.

### *Data Analysis*

Frequency analyses were conducted on each item for all respondents collectively. Responses were also analyzed according to Gender, Disability, Ethnicity, and Reason for Exit. Appendices D through H contain the specific results for all frequency analyses. Care must be taken in interpreting the observed differences between some of the categories; several of the cell sizes for the respondents are extremely small (e.g., on reason for exit, on disability type) and thus differences may appear that are in fact a result of the small and unequal sizes. Because all collected data was dichotomous (i.e., Yes/No), selected variables that appeared to be of note were analyzed using chi-square analyses. It should be noted that although several of the analyses yielded significant results many had small effect sizes or expected frequencies within cells that are so low as to raise concerns about the validity of the results. Thus, only analyses that displayed effect sizes approaching a medium level and that had sufficient cell sizes are presented in the following results.

## Results

### *Descriptive Information*

The group was overwhelmingly “White” (87%), followed by “Black” (6%), “Hispanic” (6%), and “Other” (1%). Although the respondents ranged in age from 18 ( $n = 4$ , 1%) to 24 ( $n = 20$ , 3%), 81% of the group was in the range of 20 to 21

years. Appendix D contains the frequencies of the total sample on all of the survey questions. There were nearly twice as many males ( $n = 430$ , 62%) as there were females ( $n = 265$ , 38%). Appendix E contains frequency data on all survey items by Gender.

The most common exceptionality was "Learning Disability" (LD; 49%), followed by "Emotional Disturbance" (ED; 13%), "Other Health Impaired" (OHI; 10%), "Intellectual Disability" (ID; 8%), "Speech" (5%) and "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" (ADHD; 5%). Because of the low incidence of other disabilities, the categories were collapsed from 14 to 7. As such, the following categories are reported on for the remainder of this report: ADHD, ED, ID, LD, OHI, Speech, and All Other Disabilities. While white respondents constituted the majority of respondents in all disability categories, this was especially pronounced in the categories of ADHD (97%), OHI (97%), LD (88%), and ED (86%). The lowest incidence within the categories for white students was ID (70%). Black respondents constituted 16% of respondents with ID, 7% of respondents with LD, and 7% of respondents with ED. Hispanic respondents represented 11% of those with ID, and 6% of those with ED. Appendix F contains data related to each survey item by disability type, and Appendix G contains data related to ethnicity for all survey items.

Nearly 90% of the respondents (89.4%) graduated with a diploma, while 4% dropped out, and 3% both graduated with an IEP diploma or aged out. While graduation with a standard diploma was the most common outcome across all disability categories, it was notable that 14% of the sample with ED dropped out. This rate was more than twice that of the next closest disability category who dropped out (Speech; 6%). Sixteen percent of the respondents in the category of

ID reached the maximum age, in comparison to 12% of students in the "All Other Disability Category" and to 1% in the category of ED. Appendix H contains specific data on Reason for Exit on all survey items.

Sixty-two percent of the graduate/exiters completed the survey themselves, while an additional 34% of the surveys were completed by a parent or guardian. In examining the pattern of who completed the survey by exceptionality type, it was notable that in the Intellectual Disability category, a parent or guardian completed 78% of the returned surveys. A Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference in this area ( $\chi^2(6, N = 644) = 77.433$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .35$ ).

#### *Comparison of the Sample to the Population*

As noted, responses were received from 695 individuals who were part of a larger population of 3,935 individuals who exited special education in Connecticut during 2002. Descriptive data was run on the total population ( $n = 3,395$ ) and this was compared to the actual responding sample ( $n = 695$ ). Investigation of this data reveals that the gender distribution was fairly similar (68% male in the population versus 62% of the respondents) and was nearly identical in terms of disability type (Table 2).

However, Whites are over represented in the present sample (75% of the population versus 87% of the respondents), while Black and Hispanic respondents are underrepresented (12% for blacks and 11% for Hispanics in the total population versus 6% for both groups in the present sample). Likewise, those individuals who graduated with a diploma are over represented in the sample (80% of the population versus 90% of the sample), while those who dropped out are under represented (14% of the population versus 4% of the

sample). Therefore, the results related to ethnicity and reason for exit should be considered with some caution.

Table 1  
Comparison of Respondents in Sample versus Total Exiters: Gender

Gender	Respondents		Total Exiters	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Female	265	38.1	1269	32.2
Male	430	61.9	2666	67.8
Total	695	100.0	3935	100.0

#### *Independent Living/Community Participation/Self-Advocacy*

*Living arrangements.* The respondents were asked to indicate where they lived during a majority of the year. The overwhelming majority responded that they live in a "Parent's or Relative's Home" (65%), followed by "On-School Campus Housing" (18%), and a "Rented Apartment" (11%). Correspondingly, most respondents indicated that they live with a "Parent/Guardian" for a majority of the year (64%), followed by "Roommate(s) – Not Related" (21%), and "Alone" (6%).

Regardless of disability type, most respondents lived in their parent's home, with their parents. This is especially true of respondents with Intellectual Disabilities, who live at home in a higher percentage than any other disability type (81% compared to 65% of respondents with ED and 63% of respondents with LD). This trend was also found across all categories of ethnicity. The only significant difference between the ethnic categories was that white respondents

were more likely to live in “On Campus School Housing” than respondents in any other category (20% compared to 7% of respondents in the “Other” ethnicity category and 2% of black respondents).

Table 2  
Comparison of Respondents in Sample versus Total Exiters: Disability Type

Disability Type	Respondents		Total Exiters	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
ADHD	33	4.7	169	4.3
Autism	9	1.3	28	.7
Deaf/Blind	2	0.3	6	.2
ED	90	12.9	670	17.0
Hearing Impairment	14	2.0	46	1.2
Intellectual Disability	57	8.2	267	6.8
Learning Disability	337	48.5	1981	50.3
Multiple Disability	25	3.6	83	2.1
Neurological Impairment	15	2.2	52	1.3
Orthopedic	1	0.1	5	.1
Other Health Impaired	68	9.8	373	9.5
Speech	33	4.7	204	5.2
TBI	3	0.4	9	.2
Visual Impairment	8	1.2	31	.8
Other	0	0.0	11	.3
Total	695	100.0	3935	100.0

Table 3  
Comparison of Respondents in Sample versus Total Exiters: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Respondents		Total Exiters	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	0.6	37	.9
Black	44	6.3	471	12.0
Hispanic	31	4.5	443	11.3
Native American	3	0.4	21	.5
Other	8	1.2	17	.4
White	605	87.1	2946	74.9
Total	695	100.0	3935	100.0

Table 4  
Comparison of Respondents in Sample versus Total Exiters: Exit Reason

Exit Reason	Respondents		Total Exiters	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Graduated with Diploma	621	89.4	3157	80.2
Graduated with Certificate	23	3.3	156	4.0
Dropped Out	30	4.3	557	14.2
Maximum Age	21	3.0	65	1.7
Total	695	100.0	3935	100.0



*Independent living.* The respondents were provided with a list of ten items related to independent living (e.g., driver's license, car, checking account, credit card, computer, internet access) and were asked to select all choices which they had access to. Most respondents reported having, or having access to a telephone or cell phone (90%), a computer (78%), internet access (77%), a driver's license (74%), a savings account (72%), a car (68%), and a checking account (67%). Analysis of these responses across disability type revealed that young adults with ID generally had less access to each of the items than respondents from any other disability category. White respondents reported higher levels of access to each of the items than respondents from any of the other ethnicity categories.

*Community participation.* The respondents were provided with a list of seven items related to Community Participation (e.g., voting, membership in clubs or churches) and were asked to select all items in which they participate. It was most likely for respondents to report having hobbies and regular fun activities (70% each), to have access to transportation (68%), and to attend sporting or cultural outings (59%). Only 48% of the respondents reported voting, and 42% reported belonging to clubs, churches, and other organizations.

*Socialization.* The respondents were asked to select with whom they spend a majority of their free time. There was a good deal of variability in this response, with 25% indicating "Family Members", 24% indicating with a "Girlfriend, Boyfriend, or Fiancée," 22% reporting with "New Friends Since High School" and 17% with "Old Friends from High School." When this item is analyzed by ethnicity, most responses are fairly evenly distributed, with one exception. The most common response for Black respondents was "With Family

Members" (47%), with the second most common response being "With a Girlfriend, Boyfriend, or Fiancée (21%). In comparison, spending time with family members was the second most commonly selected response for Hispanic respondents at 23%, and the third most commonly selected response by White respondents (23%). It was also notable that when the response is analyzed by exceptionality, 74% of the respondents with ID selected "With Family Members." In no other disability category did this response exceed 24%. The majority of the respondents reported that they "Get Together Socially" with people that they do not live with more than one day per week (70%), while 13% reported one day per week, and an additional 13% reported once or twice per month.

*Decision-making.* The respondents expressed strong perceptions of skills in the area of self-advocacy. Fifty-two percent indicated that they made a majority of their own decisions, while 40% indicated that they made decisions with input from others. Only 8% indicated that others, notably Parents or Guardians, make all decisions. However, when this response is broken out by disability type, a clear trend is revealed. Only 14% of respondents with ID described themselves as making the majority of their own decisions, compared to the next two lowest categories (29% of respondents from the "Other" disability category and 56% of respondents with ADHD). The most commonly selected response (50%) for students with ID was that a parent or guardian makes the majority of decisions for them. In comparison, respondents from the "Other Disability" category were the next largest cohort to select this option (16%). A chi-square analysis revealed significant differences for Disability Type versus Perception of Independence ( $\chi^2 (12, N=683)=194.140, p<.001, \text{Cramér's } V=.377$ ).

On a related topic, the respondents were asked to indicate to what degree they “Speak Up For Yourself When Necessary.” Sixty-one percent reported “Most of the Time,” followed by those who selected “Sometimes” (34%). Only 6% selected “Never.” As with the question on Independence, respondents with ID were more likely to indicate that they “Never” speak up for themselves (27%) than respondents in any other disability category, and less likely to indicate that they speak up for themselves “Most of the Time” (36%).

*Social and work difficulties.* The respondents were provided with a list of eight work or social scenarios in which they may have experienced difficulty as a result of their disability and were asked to select all that applied. The most commonly selected response was experiencing “Difficulty Feeling Comfortable in Social Situations with People I Do Not Know Well” (35%). Nineteen percent reported experiencing bullying or harassment, and 18% indicated having difficulty making and keeping friends. When these responses are examined by gender, Males were more likely than females to report having “Problems with Drugs or Alcohol” (14% to 8%) and nearly three times as likely to report having “Trouble with the Law” than females (16% versus 6%). While chi-square analyses were significant for both variables, the resulting effect sizes were low (i.e., .16 for Trouble with the Law and .10 for Trouble with Alcohol and Drugs). Likewise respondents with ADHD and ED responded affirmatively to both of these questions more often than respondents from other categories. For example, 33% of respondents with ADHD selected both items, while 27% of respondents with ED reported having trouble with the law and 22% reported having trouble with drugs or alcohol. In comparison, the next largest group to report having trouble with the law was students with LD at 9%, and to report having trouble with drugs

and alcohol were students with OHI at 16%. Chi-square analyses were significant with effect sizes approaching the medium range for both Disability Type and Having Trouble with the Law ( $\chi^2(6, N = 695) = 46.239, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .26$ ) and for Disability Type and Having Trouble with Drugs and Alcohol ( $\chi^2(6, N = 695) = 45.523, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .26$ ).

*Contact with agencies and services.* The respondents were provided with a list of adult service and community agencies that provide supports to people with disabilities in the State of Connecticut, and were asked to select all of the agencies with which they worked. The most commonly selected response was "No Help from any Adult Service Agencies or Community Agencies, it is not Necessary" (40%), and "Did Not Know that Any Adult Service Agencies or Community Agencies Were Available" (16%). The service most commonly selected was the Department of Social Services (16%), followed by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (12%) and the Department of Mental Retardation (11%).

*Perception of life satisfaction.* The respondents were asked to provide a rating of their perspective on how they feel about their lives. Thirty-one percent indicated "Great," 32% selected "Good," while 34% reported "Sometimes Good, Sometimes Bad." An additional 4% indicated that they felt "Bad" about their lives. Respondents with ED were more likely to select "Sometimes Good, Sometimes Bad (54%) or "Bad" (8%) than respondents from other disability categories.

### *Primary Employment*

The second section of the survey related to those respondents who work full- or part-time throughout the year. Those respondents who only work a summer job were instructed to skip the section. As a result, 468 (67%) to 488

(70%) respondents answered the items related to employment (depending upon the item).

*Level of employment.* The majority of the respondents (47%) were employed full-time (35 hours or more), while the number of respondents working part-time either 21-34 hours or less than 21 hours was nearly identical (26% and 27% respectively). Interesting trends emerged when this data was examined by gender. Males were more likely to be employed full-time (51%) than females (40%), and consequently, more females were employed part-time (60% in the combined part-time categories) than males (49%). Respondents with ADHD reported the highest level of full-time employment (68%), followed by respondents with LD (55%) and ED (50%). Conversely, students with ID reported the lowest level of full-time employment (17%), and the highest levels of part-time employment (83% in the combined categories). A chi-square analysis for Disability Type vs. Employment Level revealed that these differences were significant ( $\chi^2(12, N=468)=53.619, p<.001, \text{Cramér's } V=.24$ ).

Black respondents also reported lower levels of full-time employment (38%) than respondents from other ethnic categories, including Hispanic (41%) and White (48%). Black respondents were also more likely to be working less than 21 hours per week (52%) than respondents from other categories (35% for Hispanic respondents, 25% for White respondents).

*Number of jobs.* There was a range in the number of jobs held since high school exit, from 1 job (33%) to more than 5 jobs (3%). The most commonly indicated number of jobs held since exit was 2 (34%), while 19% reported holding 3 jobs. Students with ID were more likely to report holding only 1 job since high

school exit (66%), compared to respondents with LD (30%) and with OHI and ED (both 24%).

*Type of employment.* The respondents were provided with a list of 13 common job titles and were asked to select the type that best applied. While most respondents selected "Other" (32%), the next most commonly selected responses were "Sales and Related" (21%), "Service Industry" (16%), and "Construction" (8%). Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be employed in "Sales and Related" (26% to 18%). Males were more likely to be employed in "Construction" (12% to 1%), "Technical" (7% to 1%), and in the "Military" (4% to 1%) than females. Respondents with ID most often indicated working in the "Service Industry (34%), while respondents with ED were most likely to indicate employment in "Sales and Related" fields.

*Salary.* The majority of the respondents (79%) indicated that they are earning more than the minimum wage (\$7.10 per hour), while 12% were earning the minimum wage and 9% were earning below this wage. Males were somewhat more likely than females to be earning more than the minimum wage (82% versus 73%). A majority of respondents from the disability categories of LD (87%), ADHD (91%), ED (82%), and OHI (86%) reported earning more than the minimum wage. Conversely, only 20% of respondents with ID reported earning above minimum wage. Respondents with ID more commonly reported earning less than minimum wage than respondents from any other disability category (e.g., 57% compared to 15% of respondents from all "Other" disability categories). White respondents tended to report earning more than the minimum wage (81%), compared to Hispanic (63%) or Black (54%) respondents who earned this rate.

Conversely, Black respondents were more likely to be earning minimum wage (39%) than Hispanic (19%) and White (10%) respondents.

*Job benefits.* The respondents were provided with a list of common job related benefits, and were asked to select all that were received in the current job. The most commonly selected response was “I Receive No Benefits” (35%), followed by “Paid Vacation Time” (23%), and “Health Insurance” (21%). Males were more likely to receive all types of benefits than females.

*Job satisfaction.* The majority of respondents were “Overall, Generally Happy” with their jobs (50%), and 22% selected the descriptor of “Some Days Happy, Some Days Not Happy.” Seventeen percent selected the descriptor “Parts of My Job I Like, Parts I Don’t Like”, while 11% reported “I Wish I Could Get a New Job.” There were no noticeable differences between the perception of job happiness between males and females. Respondents with ID were most likely to indicate they were “Overall Generally Happy” (69%). It is important to remember that 78% of the completed surveys in the ID exceptionality category were completed by parents or guardians; thus this response is largely a second hand perception of the exiter’s life satisfaction.

### *Postsecondary Education and Training*

Four hundred and twelve respondents responded to the section related to postsecondary education and training. This represents 59% of the total sample.

*Type of program attending.* Of those individuals who reported attending a postsecondary program, 41% are enrolled in “Four Year College or University,” followed by those enrolled in “Community, Technical, or Two-Year College” (36%). Thirteen percent indicated that they were participating in program they described as “Other,” while 5% were enrolled in a “Trade School.” Responses

among males and females were nearly evenly distributed. Only three respondents with ID indicated they attended a Four Year College or University or a Community, Technical, or Two-Year College. The majority of respondents with ADHD (53%) and respondents with LD (44%) were enrolled in a four-year institution, while 24% of students with ADHD and 35% of respondents with LD were in two-year institutions. Respondents with ED (40%) and OHI (47%) were most likely to be enrolled in a two-year institution. In general, white respondents were more likely to indicate being enrolled in some type of school or program (61% total) in comparison to Black (45%) or Hispanic (41%) respondents.

*Types of services received.* While enrolled in college or a training program, 16% indicated that they received “Accommodations (e.g., extra time on tests, note takers),” 14% reported accessing both “Disability Services” and “Academic Support Centers.” Additionally, 16% of the respondents selected “No Help Looked for, or Needed to Complete My Coursework.”

#### *Open Ended Question*

The final question on the survey was “Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your life after you have left high school?” Responses were received from 487 members of the sample. The responses clustered into ten major themes. These included: “life is great or better since high school,” “life is not easy,” “life is hard, but not because of the disability,” “I attend college and enjoy it,” “I was discouraged by high school/special education,” and “I want to thank those who have helped.” Appendix I contains each of the major themes and specific examples that summarize each, while Appendix J contains all of the responses in their entirety.



## Discussion

### *Current Sample*

Approximately two-thirds (67% - 70%) of the sample responded to the questions related to being employed. Of these, the majority of the respondents were employed full-time. Seventy-nine percent indicated that they were earning more than minimum wage (\$7.10 hour). The largest percentage of respondents (50%) reported that they are overall generally happy with their jobs. However, some trends within the data should be recognized. Females were less likely than males to be employed full-time (40% to 51%), and reported earning less money and receiving fewer job benefits than males. Respondents with ADHD and LD reported the highest levels of full-time employment, while respondents with Intellectual Disabilities reported holding full-time employment at rates much lower than respondents from any other category (17%). Most likely as a consequence, these respondents reported earning less money and generally receiving fewer benefits than respondents from the other disability categories. Likewise, black respondents were more likely to be employed less than 21 hours per week than white or Hispanic respondents, and more frequently reported earning the minimum wage than other respondents.

For the most part, the respondents reported making most of their own decisions, or making decisions after receiving input from others, and being able to speak up for themselves when necessary. Certainly, such self-determination skills are critical for successful adult life. However, respondents with Intellectual Disabilities were much more likely to have decisions made for them and more likely to report never speaking up for themselves. This trend is more pronounced

when one considers that a parent or guardian completed the survey for 78% of the respondents with ID.

In general, low numbers of respondents reported experiencing a variety of possible social or work related difficulties caused by the disability. It is notable that males and respondents with ADHD and ED were more likely to report having trouble with the law and with drugs or alcohol.

It is encouraging that when the respondents were asked what type of adult service or community agency, the most common response was that no support or services were necessary. However, it is alarming that the third most common response (selected by 108 individuals) was not being aware that such services were available.

Nearly 60% of the sample reported being enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program. The most common type of program was a four-year college or university followed by community, technical or two-year colleges. It was more likely for white respondents, and for respondents with cognitive disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, ADHD) to be enrolled in these postsecondary education programs.

#### *Comparison to 2000 Exiters.*

Several of the changes to the present survey from the 2002 Follow-Up Study (Bruder & Gaynor) restrict direct comparisons on many of the items (e.g., the choice "I am Not Employed Right Now" was removed from the 2002 Exiters survey). However, comparisons can be made on several other items. For example, the gender distribution was quite similar, with males constituting 59% of the 2000 Exiters and 62% of the current sample. In both samples, the vast majority of respondents were White (85% of 2000 Exiters versus 87% of the

2002 Exitters), followed by respondents who were Black (7% of 2000 Exitters versus 6% of the 2002 Exitters). In both samples, the most common disability was LD (56% of the 2000 Exitters and 49% of the 2002 Exitters). The percentage of respondents with ED was nearly identical between the two samples (12% of the 2000 Exitters and 13% of the 2002 Exitters). This was also true of respondents with Speech/Language disorders (5.2% of 2000 sample and 5% of the current sample) and respondents with ID (10% of the 2000 sample and 8% of the current sample).

Of the respondents who reported working, there was a small increase in the percentage of those reporting full-time employment (43% of the 2000 Exitters versus 47% of the 2002 Exitters), and a small increase in the number of respondents earning above minimum wage (73% of the 2000 Exitters versus 79% of the 2002 Exitters). There was a large decrease in the percentage of respondents reporting receiving no job benefits (51% of the 2000 Exitters versus 35% of the 2002 Exitters). However, it is notable that there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents who indicated that they receive Health Insurance (30% of the 2000 Exitters versus 21% of the 2002 Exitters). The most commonly reported areas of employment in both groups were "Sales and Related," "Service Industry," and "Other." Bruder and Gaynor (2002) reported that White respondents reported the highest level of employment, and Black respondents the lowest. In the present sample, White respondents were more likely to report being employed full-time, while Black respondents were the least likely to be employed full-time and the most likely to be employed part-time. Bruder and Gaynor also reported that students with ID had the highest rate of employment. While this is true in the current sample, in that respondents with ID were the least

likely to be attending Postsecondary Training programs and more likely to be working, these individuals were less likely to be employed full-time than respondents with other disability types.

A higher percentage of the 2002 Exiters reported being enrolled in a Four-Year College or University (25% of the 2000 Exiters versus 41% of the 2002 Exiters) and in a Community, Technical, or Two-Year College (16% of the 2000 Exiters versus 36% of the 2002 Exiters). The percentage of respondents reporting attending a Trade School was nearly identical (3% versus 5%).

#### Limitations

The results of the current survey should be viewed with some caution given the overall low response rate of 22%, the under representation of Black and Hispanic exiters, and the under representation of those who dropped out of school. Efforts were made to enhance the response rate, including conducting two-waves of mailings and providing postage paid reply envelopes. The survey instrument was also carefully reviewed to ensure it was properly worded and that the directions were clear for the intended audience. It is unclear if the response rate is a reflection of non-respondent bias or a case of incorrect addresses. Across both waves of mailings, 733 surveys were returned as undeliverable because of incorrect or unknown addresses. If a survey was returned as undeliverable from the first wave, that name was removed from the second mailing. However, there were nearly as many returns as undeliverable in the second wave. Thus, it is not know how accurate or current other addresses may be.

Additionally, caution should be exercised when examining differences in frequency of responses across some of the categories. Especially in the

analyses by reason for exit and ethnicity, some of the cell sizes are extremely small. Thus, what may appear to be a significant difference in percentage size may actually be more reflective of the small number of respondents in a particular cell.

Finally, care must be taken in generalizing the current results. These data represent the characteristics of a sample of exiters with disabilities from the state of Connecticut alone, and may not be similar to exiters with disabilities from other states. Additionally, because comparative data does not exist, the results cannot be compared to students without disabilities who exited Connecticut schools in the 2002.