

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-502](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

WIOA requires states to reserve at least 15 percent of their total State Vocational Rehabilitation Services program funds to provide pre-employment transition services to help students with disabilities transition from school to work. GAO was asked to review how states were implementing these services.

This report examines (1) steps states reported taking to implement pre-employment transition services, and (2) implementation challenges states reported and how Education has addressed them. GAO reviewed documents and funding data from Education, and federal laws and regulations; surveyed all 79 state VR agencies (74 responded); held discussion groups with representatives of 29 state VR agencies; and interviewed officials from Education and three states (Idaho, Illinois, and Maryland) GAO selected for variety in size and type of agencies, among other factors.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that Education (1) establish timeframes for providing additional information on allowable expenditures, (2) take additional steps to assist states that have not updated and finalized their interagency agreements, and (3) develop a written plan with specific timeframes and activities for identifying and disseminating best practices. Education agreed with the first recommendation and disagreed with the other two. GAO revised the second recommendation and maintains that specific information is needed for the third, as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-18-502](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth H. Curda at (202) 512-7215 or curdae@gao.gov.

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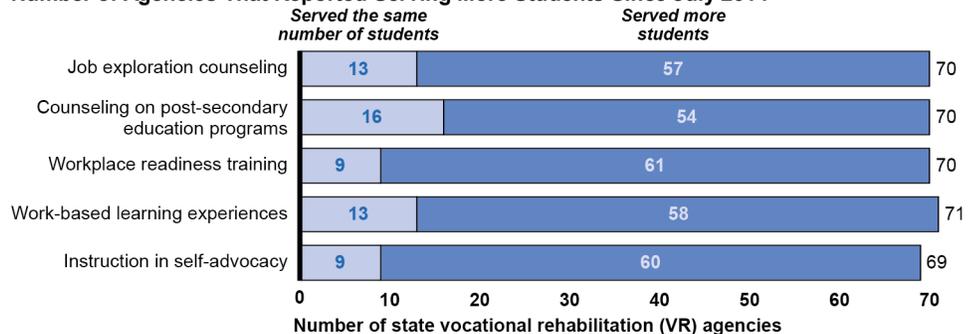
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Additional Information from Education Could Help States Provide Pre-Employment Transition Services

What GAO Found

Of the 74 state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies that responded to GAO's survey, most reported expanding services to help students with disabilities transition from school to work as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), enacted in July 2014. Most state agencies reported serving more students and providing work-based learning experiences and other activities, referred to as pre-employment transition services (see figure).

Number of Agencies That Reported Serving More Students Since July 2014



Source: GAO survey of state VR agencies. | GAO-18-502

Note: There were 74 respondents. Totals do not sum to 74 because for each service one respondent reported decreases in the number of students served and the remainder either did not answer the question or responded "don't know."

State VR agencies reported two key challenges with implementing pre-employment transition services for students as required by WIOA.

Spending reserved funds: States reported spending about \$357 million out of the \$465 million reserved for these services in fiscal year 2016. Education officials said that states had difficulty determining what expenditures were allowable, and some state officials said they would like more detailed information from Education. Education officials said they plan to clarify guidance but have no timeframe for providing further information, which would help states to better plan their use of reserved funds.

Finalizing interagency agreements: Fewer than half the state VR agencies that responded to GAO's survey (34 of 74) reported updating their interagency agreement with their state's educational agency. Interagency agreements can help promote collaboration by, for example, establishing roles and responsibilities of each agency. Although Education offers technical assistance on interagency agreements, without increased efforts to raise awareness about the importance of these agreements and provide assistance to states where needed, Education may miss opportunities to help state VR and educational agencies efficiently and effectively coordinate services.

In addition, WIOA requires Education to highlight best state practices, and most VR agencies responding to GAO's survey (63 of 74) reported this would be useful. Education does not have a written plan or timeframe for identifying and disseminating best practices. As a result, Education may miss opportunities to help more students with disabilities successfully transition from school to work.