CEC's DCDT FAST FACTS: Self-Care and Independent Living Skills
Prepared by the DCDT Publications Committee

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center has identified evidence-based predictors of post-school success for students with disabilities based on a systematic correlational literature review (Test et al., 2009). Findings indicated students with disabilities, who had higher independent living and self-care skills, were more likely to be engaged in post-school education, employment, and independent living (Blackorby et al., 1993; Heal & Rusch, 1994; Roessler et al., 1990). Recently, Rowe et al. (2013) conducted a Delphi study to add specificity to the existing predictor definitions identified by Test et al. (2009) and operationally defined the predictors so local educators understand the components necessary to develop, implement, and evaluate secondary transition programs based on predictor research.

Self-care/independent living skills are operationally defined as "skills necessary for management of one's personal self-care and daily independent living, including the personal management skills needed to interact with others, daily living skills, financial management skills, and the self-management of healthcare/wellness needs." (Rowe et al., 2013).

Self-care/independent living skills should include the following essential program characteristics as identified by Rowe et al., 2013:

- Provide instruction, as needed based on assessment data, in (1) financial planning, (2) self-help, (3) cooking, (4) housekeeping, (5) home maintenance, (6) using transportation, (7) clothing care, (8) accessing community services, (9) time/ organizational management, (10) self-determination, (11) social roles/ citizenship, (12) community/peer relationships, or (10) critical thinking and problem solving.
- Embed self-care/independent living skills instruction into academic coursework to help students connect academic skills to post-school goals.
- Provide instruction in self-care independent living skills in multiple settings including general education, special education, and community.
- Provide individual, small group, or whole class instruction in independent living and self-care skills, as appropriate.
- Provide students multiple opportunities to practice independent living skills throughout the school day in real-life situations using real-life materials and equipment.
  ***Independent living skills may include skills for functioning in an environment that requires interaction with people from different CLD backgrounds.*
- Provide transition services (e.g., completing housing application, obtaining Social Security Disability) for students to accomplish postsecondary independent living goals.
- Conduct ongoing assessment of self-care/independent living skills to identify and evaluate levels of skill attainment, maintenance, and generalized use of skills in other settings where use of skills are required.
- Teach home and community recreation skills that can be done alone or with others in both organized and informal settings.***and in culturally diverse settings*

Application to Teachers

- Evaluate self-care/independent living skills experiences for students to ensure essential program characteristics are included.
- Get familiar with resources on teaching independent living skills. For example, independent living skills lesson plan starters are available at http://www.nsttac.org/content/lesson-plan-starters
- Get familiar with Web-Based Tools and assistive technology available designed to improve functional capabilities and independence and investigate "App" technologies available for independent living skills. For more information see http://www.disabled-world.com/assistivedevices/apps/
- Collaborate with families to understand the cultural and linguistically diverse values that influence independent living skills and self care skills. For example, the norm in Philippine culture, as in Asian culture, is mutual caring and support within the family. Families typically hold to the idea that individuals with disabilities should not live physically and financially apart from their families. Instead, the individuals with disabilities are taught to be a contributing part of the family rather than to live on their own (NTAC, 2001).
- Focus on person-centered planning for independent living skills. For more information see http://transitioncoalition.org/transition/static/minimod/index.php

Application to Administrators

- Use the Predictor Self-Assessment to evaluate self-care/independent living skills located here: http://psocenter.org/content_page_assets/content_page_3/Predictor_Self-Assessment.final_06_24_13.pdf
- Get familiar with provisions of IDEA for independent living skill instruction to ensure that school programs are consistent with these mandates.
- Support the use of independent living transition assessments for use in establishing annual transition goals.
- Encourage and establish links with community agencies and promoting the multidisciplinary approach to the planning process and encourage coordinated activities to teach students independent living skills.
- Offer parent nights at the school to promote and encourage parent involvement in teaching independent living skills as a coordinated activity.

Application to Families

- Find out what resources are available in your district and state in regards to Independent Living Centers (ILC). These centers can provide peer support, advocacy, information/referral, and independent living skills instruction. For a directory of these centers see http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html
- Ask teachers for information of what they are doing to promote independent living skills. For more information see http://www.pacer.org/tatra/resrouces/personal.asp
- Create opportunities at home and in the community for your child to practice and learn independent living skills.

- Ask the IEP team to establish a postsecondary independent living goal and associated annual transition goals based in part on the results of independent living assessments.

Where to go for Additional Information

Websites

Independent Living Lesson Plan Starter

- http://www.nsttac.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdf/42.pdf

Independent Living Practice Descriptions

- http://www.nsttac.org/content/student-development

Casey Life Skills Assessment and Instruction Support Material

- http://caseylifeskills.org

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (2009). *Predictors of Post-School Success*.

- http://www.nsttac.org/ebp/PredictorResources.aspx

Books, Newsletters, and Research Articles

National Technical Assistance Center (2001). *Asian Culture Brief: Philippines*. Retrieved from http://www.ntac.hawaii.edu/downloads/products/briefs/culture/pdf/ACB-Vol2-Iss3-Philippines.pdf

Rowe, D. A., Alverson, C. Y., Unruh, D., Fowler, C., Kellems, R., & Test, D. W. (2013). *Operationalizing evidence-based predictors in secondary transition: A Delphi study*. Manuscript in preparation.

Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L. J., & Kohler, P. H. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, *32*, 160-181. Doi: 10.1177/0885728809346960

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