

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1125
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Education
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The unemployment rate for adults with disabilities is staggering, and far exceeds the rates for adults without disabilities. United States Census data from 2000 indicates that 80,000 young Texans age 16 through 24 report difficulty working due to disability issues. Yet, only about 10,000 adults per year receive employment supports through the Texas adult service system. Additionally, it is difficult to address these problems in the Texas education system as the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has no clear data on employment supports and outcomes for students with disabilities. While some independent school districts (ISD) do a commendable job of preparing students with disabilities for adult living, compliance with special education requirements are inconsistent throughout Texas school districts. Many ISDs fail to offer meaningful transition services and in many cases, supported employment opportunities do not exist. Moreover, because of the autonomy of ISDs in the Texas educational system, TEA has not used its authority to mandate specific services to be provided by the ISDs.

While many adults with disabilities want to work, the support to find and retain employment frequently is not available. To change this trend, transition-age youth with disabilities need to be prepared for employment. We can accomplish this by providing them with employment/supported employment services that will help them obtain and maintain meaningful employment in integrated settings, as opposed to the current practice of placing them in sheltered workshops and enclaves.

As proposed, S.B. 1125 requires that transition services for students with disabilities start at 14 years of age. The bill requires TEA to develop and distribute a manual of comprehensive transition and employment information for parents and students, and requires the commissioner of education to require school districts to assign a current special education teacher to be the school employment/transition services specialist. The bill also requires TEA to expand sampling for specified data indicators in the State Performance Plan to include all students enrolled in special education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the commissioner of education is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 29.011, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 29.011, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 29.011. TRANSITION PLANNING. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) by rule to adopt procedures for compliance with federal requirements relating to transition services for students who are enrolled in special education programs under this subchapter. Requires that the procedures provide that transition planning begins for a student not later than when the student reaches 14 years of age. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(b) Requires the commissioner to require each school district or shared services arrangement to designate an employee as the school transition and employment services specialist to serve as the district's or shared services arrangement's expert on transition and employment services for students enrolled in special education

programs under this subchapter. Requires an individual designated under this subsection to meet minimum requirements established by the commissioner.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 29, Education Code, by adding Sections 29.0111 and 29.0112, as follows:

Sec. 29.0111. TRANSITION INFORMATION. Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop a Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System indicator regarding the success of students enrolled in special education programs in transitioning to life outside the public school system, including secondary transitions and post-school outcomes.

Sec. 29.0112. TRANSITION AND EMPLOYMENT MANUAL. (a) Requires TEA to develop a comprehensive transition and employment manual for students enrolled in special education programs and their parents to assist in the transition to life outside the public school system. Requires that the manual contain certain information specific to this state.

(b) Requires TEA to update the transition and employment manual at least once every two years.

(c) Requires TEA to post the transition and employment manual on TEA's website in a manner that permits the manual to be easily identified and accessed.

(d) Requires a school district to maintain a copy of the transition and employment manual at each campus in the district; and to provide one copy of the transition and employment manual to each student enrolled in a special education program and the student's parent at the first meeting of the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee at which transition is discussed or the first meeting that occurs after September 1, 2009, if a student has already had an admission, review, and dismissal committee meeting discussion transition.

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2009-2010 school year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.