

InFOCUS

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Preparing Youth in Special Education for Life After High School

The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) 2012, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, surveys secondary school youth with disabilities and their parents as part of an assessment of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

“Preparing for Life after High School: The Characteristics and Experiences of Youth in Special Education, Volume 3: Comparisons Over Time” presents new information on trends in the characteristics and experiences of youth in special education across the country. The report compares survey data from NLTS studies in 1987, 2003, and 2012 focusing on trends for 15- to 18-year-olds with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) overall and in each of 12 federal disability groups.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Socioeconomic challenges.** Youth with an IEP are more likely than a decade ago to live in households that face economic challenges.
- **School engagement.** In the past decade, youth with an IEP have become more engaged in school and extracurricular activities, but there was little change in grade retention, suspensions, and expulsions.
- **Supports.** Youth with an IEP are more likely than in the past to receive supports at school but less likely to get them at home.
- **Transition activities.** Participation in some key transition activities declined, though not in IEP meetings.
- **Disability groups.** Youth with emotional disturbance and intellectual disability made progress in more ways than did those in other disability groups.

Growth in economic challenges faced by youth with an IEP 2003-2012:

- 17% increase in receipt of SNAP food assistance
- 5% increase in parent with no job

