

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 617
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The unemployment rate for adults with disabilities in Texas is a staggering 38.2 percent, which far exceeds the rates for adults without disabilities. Although many adults with disabilities want to work, the supports to find and retain employment frequently are not available. It is difficult to address these problems because the Texas Education Agency has no clear data on employment supports and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Transition services for children with disabilities include a coordinated set of activities that are focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his or her transition to post-school activities. Current state law requires the commissioner of education to adopt procedures for compliance with federal requirements relating to transition services for students who are enrolled in special education programs. Federal law requires transition services for students with disabilities to be in effect when the child reaches the age of 14 and stipulates that an individualized education plan must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments and services.

H.B. 617 improves transition services for students with disabilities by requiring school districts to assign at least one employee to serve as the special education transition and employment services designee. This employee would provide information about resources and transition planning and coordinate with school staff and other appropriate state agencies. The bill also increases information available to parents and students by requiring schools to make a comprehensive manual of statewide transition and employment information available on the district's website, and update the guide every two years.

H.B. 617 amends current law relating to transition and employment services for public school students enrolled in special education programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

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 and makes no further change to this subsection.

(b) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to require each school district or shared services arrangement to designate at least one employee to serve as the district's or shared services arrangement's designee on transition and employment services for students enrolled in special education programs under this subchapter (Special Education Program). Requires the commissioner to develop minimum training guidelines for a district's or shared services arrangement's designee. Requires an individual designated under this subsection to provide information and resources about effective transition planning and

services and interagency coordination to ensure that local school staff communicate and collaborate with:

- (1) students enrolled in special education programs under this subchapter and the parents of those students; and
- (2) as appropriate, local and regional staff of certain state agencies.

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

Sec. 29.0112. TRANSITION AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDE. (a) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), with assistance from the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), to develop a transition and employment guide for students enrolled in special education programs and their parents to provide information on statewide services and programs that assist in the transition to life outside the public school system. Authorizes TEA to contract with a private entity to prepare the guide.

(b) Requires that the transition and employment guide contain certain information specific to this state.

(c) Requires that the transition and employment guide be produced in an electronic format and posted on TEA's website in a manner that permits the guide to be easily identified and accessed.

(d) Requires TEA to update the transition and employment guide posted on TEA's website at least once every two years.

(e) Requires a school district to:

- (1) post the transition and employment guide on the district's website if the district maintains a website; and
- (2) provide written information and, if necessary, assistance to a parent regarding how to access the electronic version of the guide at certain admission, review, and dismissal committee meetings.

SECTION 3. Requires TEA, with assistance from HHSC, to complete development of the guide required by Section 29.0112, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than September 1, 2014. Requires a school district to comply with Section 29.0112(e), Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning on the date the guide is available.

SECTION 4. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, except as otherwise provided by this Act.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.