

Data Trends

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From the Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health,
Tampa, Florida...

The National Center of Secondary Education and Transition focuses on "self-determination" in its April, 2003 Research to Practice Brief, 2(1). They indicate that self-determination "is a concept reflecting the belief that all individuals have the right to direct their own lives," and present research to indicate that students who have self-determination skills have a stronger chance of being successful in making the transition to adulthood. One section of the newsletter briefly discusses self-determination and individualized education programs, and indicates that one means of fostering self-determination is to encourage students to lead their own IEP meetings whenever possible. The newsletter includes a list of resources on self-determination, and can be accessed through: <http://www.ncset.org> (Click on "Publications," then "Research to Practice Briefs").

The concept of self-determination is similar to the concept of "choice" in children's mental health. While there has been much talk within systems of care about family-centered practice, there has not been much mention of the importance of processes in which families, working with treatment teams, have choice both of services to be provided, and the providers of those services. Yet, such choice appears to be not only the right thing to do but also to be related to positive outcomes. Some communities around the country have developed extensive provider networks that allow families choice of which provider they would like to use for home-based services, for example, or respite care. Within the Dawn Project in Indianapolis, for example, potential service providers call the family, schedule an appointment, come to the family's home, and are interviewed by the family before a selection is made.

The importance of choice and self-determination, and the steps that must be taken to provide them, merit increased attention in the children's mental health field.

If you missed previous Data Trends publications, visit the main Data Trends page: <http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu/rtcpubs/datatrends/datatrendshp.htm>

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