

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 617
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Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties contend that the unemployment rate for adults with disabilities is staggering and far exceeds the rate for adults without disabilities. Current law requires the commissioner of education to adopt procedures for compliance with federal requirements relating to employment transition services for students who are enrolled in special education programs. A student's individualized education program must include appropriate, measurable post-secondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments and must include transition services necessary to assist the student in reaching those goals. Providing persons with disabilities with employment services and other resources will allow them to obtain and maintain meaningful employment in integrated settings, which would be an improvement over current conditions. H.B. 617 seeks to ensure the successful transition of individuals with disabilities into the workforce by providing more resources for such students.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 617 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education 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. The bill requires the commissioner to develop minimum training guidelines for such a designee. The bill requires an individual so designated to provide information and resources about effective transition planning and services and interagency coordination to ensure that local school staff communicate and collaborate with students enrolled in special education programs, the parents of those students, and, as appropriate, local and regional staff of the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and of the state agencies under HHSC oversight.

H.B. 617 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), with assistance from 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. The bill authorizes TEA to contract with a private entity to prepare the guide. The bill sets out certain content and format requirements for the guide and requirements for periodic updates and Internet posting of the guide. The bill requires TEA, with assistance from HHSC, to complete development of the guide not later than September 1, 2014.

H.B. 617 requires a school district, beginning on the date the transition and employment guide is available, to post the guide on the district's website if the district maintains a website and to provide written information and, if necessary, assistance to a parent regarding how to access the electronic version of the guide at the first meeting of the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee at which transition is discussed or the first committee meeting that occurs

after the date the guide becomes available if a student has already had a committee meeting discussing transition. The bill's provisions apply beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, except as otherwise provided.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.