

# Transition Comes of Age

National  
Collaborative on  
Workforce and  
Disability

**NCWD**

For Youth



**Navigating the Road to Work**

Making the Connection between  
Youth with Disabilities & Employment

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info>



# NCWD/Youth

- Supported by DOL/ODEP
  - In 11<sup>th</sup> year
- Assists state & local workforce systems integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies.
- Works to:
  - Improve national, state & local policy
  - Strengthen workforce service delivery system
  - Improve knowledge, skills and abilities of youth service professionals

# Who Are Our Partners?

- Institute for Educational Leadership
  - Center for Workforce Development
- Boston University
  - School of Education
- University of Minnesota
  - Institute for Community Integration
- PACER Center
- Natl Assn Workforce Dev Professionals

# What Is Content of Transition?

- First Process
  - No agreement across system on what is meant around transition
  - Then Outcomes
- Now Content and Relevance for Life
  - School-Based Preparatory Experiences
  - Career Exploration & Work-Based Learning
  - Youth Development & Leadership
  - Connecting Activities
  - Family Involvement & Supports

# The Guideposts for Success

An extensive literature review of research, demonstration projects and effective practices covering a wide range of programs and services---including lessons from youth development, quality education, and workforce development programs---has identified core commonalities across the disciplines, programs and institutional settings. The review also points out that no one institution or organization can provide the full range of services; thus, highlighting the interdependence of agencies that requires communities, states, the federal government and multiple organizations at all levels to collaborate with one another in order to help assure quality transitions for all youth.

The applicable literature suggests that all youth need:

- Access to high quality standards-based education regardless of the setting;
- Information about career options and exposure to the world of work; including structured internships;
- Opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills;
- Strong connections to caring adults;
- Access to safe places to interact with their peers; and,
- Support services and specific accommodations to allow them to become independent adults.

There are five categories, called **Guideposts for Success**, which can help steer families, institutions and youth themselves through the transition processes.

# School-Based Preparatory Experiences

## All Youth Need:

- academic programs based on clear state standards;
- career and technical education programs based on professional and industry standards;
- curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work and community-based learning experiences;
- small, safe learning environments, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary;
- supports from highly qualified staff;
- access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures and,
- graduation standards that include options.

# School-Based Preparatory Experiences

## **In addition, youth with disabilities need to:**

- use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling;
- access specific and individualized learning accommodations while they are in school;
- develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations; and,
- be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff that may or may not be school staff.

# School-Based Preparatory Experiences

Because of the complex nature of intellectual, physical, and sensory challenges, youth with significant disabilities require educational environments that are flexible and stable and that provide opportunities to become engaged and empowered. These youth may need additional intensive educational supports and services such as:



# Youth with Significant Disabilities May Need:

- opportunities to learn skills in natural settings (e.g., learn to use an actual bus, not a “pretend” bus in a classroom);
- opportunities and supports to participate in creating, modifying, and integrating their person- centered plans, including their:
  - IEP & TP
  - IHP, IFSP & ILP
  - IPE and/or other individualized planning tools;

# Youth with Significant Disabilities May Need:

- access to education and training in socialization and independent living skills—in natural environments, in public school settings, and in community colleges or other postsecondary schools;
- access to integrated educational and social environments that use positive behavioral interventions and supports for all participants;

# Youth with Significant Disabilities May Need:

- access to appropriate, culturally-sensitive school-based behavioral and physical health interventions and supports;
- exposure to a full range of lifelong learning opportunities, including continuation of secondary education through age 21 and participation in age-appropriate postsecondary programs;

# Youth with Significant Disabilities May Need:

- valid and reliable assessment measures and instruments based on academic and nonacademic functional skills; and
- diploma and degree or certificate options that reflect the individual's true abilities and knowledge.

# Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning

**All youth need information on career options, including:**

- Career assessments to help identify students' school and post-school preferences and interests;
- Structured exposure to post-secondary education and other life-long learning opportunities;
- Exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including information about educational requirements, entry requirements and income potential; and,
- Training designed to improve job-seeking skills and workplace basic skills (sometimes called soft skills).

# Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning

In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including the following:

- Opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities, such as site visits and job shadowing;
- Multiple on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) that are specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit;
- Opportunities to learn and practice their basic workplace skills (“soft skills”); and
- Opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway.

# Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning

## **Youth with Disabilities need to:**

- Understand the relationships between appropriate financial and benefits planning and career choices;
- Access supports and accommodations for work and community living; and
- Learn to communicate their support and accommodation needs to prospective employers and service providers.
- Learn to request, find, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations at work, at home, and in the community.

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

Because youth with significant disabilities may encounter limited employment choices, they need connections to a full range of holistic youth employment programs and services, such as:

- positive behavioral supports;
- graduated (preparatory, emerging awareness, proficient) opportunities to gain and practice their basic workplace skills (“soft skills”) in actual workplace settings integrated into the community;



# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- connections to successfully employed peers and role models;
- ongoing formal and informal assessments of career interests, abilities, strengths, and aptitudes (such as through the Discovery Model, Supports Intensity Scale, etc. and through work-based learning and other experiential activities);

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- youth-driven, focused career exploration, employability skill building, and work-based learning experiences, including paid employment and entrepreneurship opportunities;
- knowledge of and access to a full range of workplace supports and accommodations, such as microenterprise, supported employment, customized employment, job carving, and job coaches; and

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- connections, as early as possible, to programs and services for career exploration (e.g., One-Stop Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation, Community Rehabilitation Programs).

# Youth Development/Leadership

## All Youth Need:

- Mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings;
- Peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities;
- Exposure to role models through a variety of means;
- Training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution
- Exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and,
- Opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership.

# Youth Development/Leadership

## Youth with Disabilities Need to:

- Have mentors and role models who include persons with and without disabilities; and,
- Understand disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities.

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

Because youth with significant disabilities often have limited opportunities to participate in integrated community settings and to gain development and leadership skills, they may need:

- formal and informal connections to significant adult role models, peer mentors, and older youth with significant disabilities;
- additional emphasis on self-empowerment through training in self-advocacy, self-esteem, self-reliance, self-determination, and self-sufficiency;

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- exposure to various forms of decision-making supports, including communication assessments and tools;
- ongoing assessments of personal development (e.g., using the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment, Supports Intensity Scale, etc.);
- programs with built-in activities that highlight “rites of passage” or that specially recognize accomplishments;

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- Independent Living Plans that incorporate cross-organizational support systems to promote youth development and leadership;
- opportunities to participate in advocacy and civic engagement, such as through volunteer and leadership roles;
- connections to services through youth-driven independent living planning meetings that include family members;
- exposure to cultural, ethnic, religious, and gender-specific experiences, as well as culturally-competent mentors, peers, and program staff;



# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- exposure to factors of positive youth development such as nutrition, exercise, recreation and spirituality;
- social skills training and exposure to people, informal situations, and programs that will help them learn to manage their disability with both paid and natural supports;
- safety education that prepares them to stay safe in personal relationships and in community living situations; and
- opportunities to give back and improve the lives of others, such as community service and civic engagement.

# Connecting Activities

## All Youth Need:

- Mental and physical health services;
- Transportation;
- Housing;
- Tutoring;
- Post-program supports through structured arrangements in post-secondary institutions and adult serving agencies; and,
- Connections to other services and/or opportunities (e.g. recreation)

# Connecting Activities

## **Youth with Disabilities may also need:**

- Acquisitions of appropriate assistive technologies;
- Community orientation and mobility training (e.g. accessible transportation, bus routes, housing, health clinics);
- Exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers and other consumer-driven community-based support service agencies;
- Personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, or other such services; and
- Benefits-planning counseling including information regarding the myriad of benefits available and their interrelationships so that they may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency.

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

During the transition years, youth with significant disabilities may regularly enter and leave services systems based on age, income, employment status, residency, and health. Because of this, young people and their supporters need strong connections to a host of programs and services, particularly in the critical areas of physical and mental health, additional education, employment, housing, and income support programs. They are likely also to need:

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- an understanding of how to create, manage, and maintain informal and formal personal support networks;
- experience of natural friendship and common courtesy;
- access to safe, affordable, permanent housing;
- well-paid, permanent support coordinators (e.g., health care, social service, child welfare) who connect and collaborate across systems;
- service providers who are well-trained, empathetic, and take a holistic approach to service delivery;

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- access to a knowledgeable adult(s) and other families who can serve as an adult systems “navigator”;
- opportunities and support to participate in community living and social activities in integrated settings;
- preparation and support to be informed healthcare consumers; and
- preparation, communication support, and other tools to exercise personal authority and maintain legal capacity within a supported decision-making framework.

# Family Involvement & Support

All youth need parents, families and other caring adults who have:

- High expectations which build upon the young person's strengths, interests, and needs and fosters their ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency;
- Been involved in their lives and assisting them toward adulthood;
- Access to information about employment, further education and community resources;
- Taken an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners;
- Access to medical, professional and peer support networks.

# Family Involvement & Support

In addition, youth with disabilities need parents, families and other caring adults who have:

- An understanding of their youth's disability and how it affects his or her education, employment and/or daily living options;
- Knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation;
- Knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports and accommodations available for young people with disabilities; and,
- An understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals and objectives.



# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

Because of the dynamics of families and the impact of having a young person with a significant disability within the home, families need support from programs and systems that recognize these facts and that take into consideration unique cultural issues and practices. These programs and systems need to promote permanency, and to identify and help build a support network of family members, peers, mentors, and other significant adults to be included in all aspects of life planning for the young person. Members of this network (sometimes called a “circle of support” or “person-centered planning team”) should:

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- understand the changing relationships and the lifelong supports needed, such as financial planning, decision support or guardianship, and personal attendant services;
- understand issues faced by individuals without families;
- have connections to benefits counseling;
- have connections to an adult systems “navigator”;

# Youth w/Significant Disabilities Need

- have knowledge of the family's and the young person's rights and responsibilities under social service, transition, and youth- and disability-related legislation;
- understand how individualized plans across systems can support and drive the achievement of educational and employment goals (including the Family Service Plan); and
- have access to their own emotional and social supports and respite care if needed.

# Real Systems Change

- TEAM Act
- National Alliance on Secondary Education & Transition
- ADD Integrated Systems Change Grants
- State Intermediary
- HS/HT State Implementation
- Florida Partners IN Transition Strategic Plan
- Several State SpED Strategic Planning
- South Carolina VR

# NCWD/Youth Resources

**For further information, NCWD/Youth can be contacted at:**

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info>

[Collaborative@iel.org](mailto:Collaborative@iel.org)

**National Alliance on Secondary Education & Transition Framework**

[http://www.ncset.org/teleconferences/transcripts/2005\\_01.asp](http://www.ncset.org/teleconferences/transcripts/2005_01.asp)

The PAACER Center

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