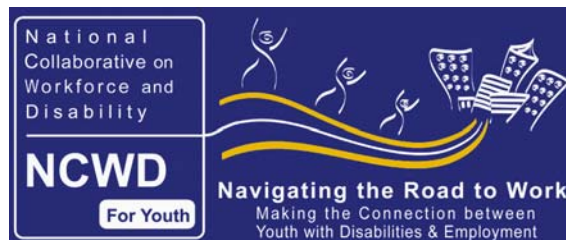


# Making the Connections: Growing and Supporting New Organizations: Intermediaries

PAPER PREPARED BY:  
Joan Wills and Richard Luecking



National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

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The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development issues. NCWD/Youth is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. The Collaborative is charged with assisting state and local workforce development systems to integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies.

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**NCWD/Youth**  
1-877-871-0744 (toll free)  
[www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)  
[Collaborative@iel.org](mailto:Collaborative@iel.org)

# Making the Connections: Growing and Supporting New Organizations: Intermediaries

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the US Department of Labor (DOL), recognizing the need for more effective linkages between the supply and demand sides of workforce development, is testing a new organizational strategy – intermediary organizations. By aligning and brokering multiple services across institutional and funding sources, intermediary organizations can play an important role in improving employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. This paper provides information to assist states and communities that are involved in developing intermediaries to assist them in conducting their work.

ODEP defines an intermediary as an entity that “convenes leadership and brokers relationships with multiple partners across multiple funding streams; brings together workforce development systems, vocational rehabilitation providers, businesses, labor unions, educational institutions, social service organizations, faith based organizations, transportation entities, health providers, and other Federal, State, and community resources which youth with disabilities need to transition to employment successfully.”

## **The Stubborn Dilemma**

There continues to be a stubborn dilemma facing youth with disabilities. That is, in spite of supportive legislation and identified effective practices; these youth continue to experience high unemployment as well as insufficient opportunities to obtain competitive employment with the potential of career growth. This paper explores strategies that policy makers at the state and local level can use to grow and support intermediary organizations – those provider organizations with the skills and resources needed to alter this stubborn dilemma.

Certainly, some youth with disabilities have attained successful careers. Of these, some have benefited from well-delivered special education transition services, while others have received timely and appropriately

delivered youth employment services; many of these successes reflect both circumstances. Yet, these successes are not the norm.

*Consider the following:*

- Special education students are more than twice as likely to drop out of high school as their peers in general education (Harris & Associates, 1998);
- Youth with disabilities are half as likely to participate in post secondary education as compared to same age, non-disabled peers (National Council on Disability, 2000);
- Current special education students can expect to face much higher adult unemployment rates than their same aged, non-disabled peers (Wagner, Cameto & Newman, 2003);

- The adjudication rate of youth with disabilities is four times higher than non-disabled youth (Quinn, Rutherford & Leone, 2001);
- The pregnancy rate for youth with disabilities is much higher than the norm – among females with learning disabilities, for example, 50% will be pregnant within three years of school exit (Shapland, 1999);
- Young adults with disabilities are three times more likely to live in poverty as adults than their peers without disabilities (Harris & Associates, 1998); and
- For those youth with significant disabilities the picture is even more grim: less than one out of 10 will attain integrated employment, five out of 10 will experience indefinitely long waits for post-school employment services, and most of these individuals will earn less than \$2.40/hour in sheltered workshop settings (LaPlante, et al., 1996; General Accounting Office, 2001).

In spite of well-intended legislation (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Rehabilitation Act (RA), the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and their predecessors) to address this situation, the statistics have changed little over the past 25 years. Just as troubling, these facts persist in spite of the existence of educational and career development interventions known to make a positive difference in the lives of youth with disabilities. Work-based learning experiences, preferably connected to curriculum content; student-centered individualized education programs that drive instruction; family involvement in and support of education and career development activities; and linkages to individually determined support services have all been proven, by both practice and research, to lead to the education and employment success of youth with disabilities. This is the case regardless of the nature of the disability or the degree of accommodation and support needed. In other words, we know what is needed and we know how to do it. And yet, post-school employment success and economic independence continue to be exasperatingly elusive for most youth with disabilities.

To what can we attribute this disconnection between, on one hand, legislative intent, stated public policies,

and effective educational and career development practices, and, on the other, relentlessly disappointing educational and employment outcomes?

### **A Partial Answer: A Plethora of Disconnects**

Too many examples of success exist to attribute the lack of progress to any inherent unemployability of youth with disabilities. Further, because these successes have generally been achieved without extraordinary fiscal expense, the lack of progress cannot be attributed to a simple lack of money and resources. Rather, critical disconnections exist between and among community institutions; the goal of improving educational and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities would be better served by focusing on the strategic and coordinated use of the resources currently available within a state's education and workforce development systems.

A commonly agreed upon definition of what is meant by the term "workforce development system" is still evolving. This is not particularly surprising. The term was seldom used until the beginning of the 1990s, prior to the development of WIA. In the late 1980s several states initiated agency consolidations based upon their own assessment of the overlap and duplication among various state and federal government programs. The federal government responded by giving governors broader powers to oversee the growth of the workforce development system within each state.

Yet, today a broad array of entities at the national, state, and local levels exist with diverse responsibilities for planning, funding, administering, and operating programs to assist individuals with and without disabilities to obtain education, training, job placement, and support services. Table I-A illustrates the range of such institutions and organizations that are a part of the workforce development system of which the state government has the responsibility for defining powers and responsibilities as well as key non-profit organizations that are involved in the delivery of workforce programs. Table I-B provides information about federal programs that are a part of the workforce development system.

**TABLE I-A:** Parts of the Workforce Development System:

## A Sampling of Educational, Workforce, and Support Services Organizations Serving Youth Ages 14 to 25

INSTITUTIONS/ORGANIZATIONS/	TYPE OF SERVICES	NATIONAL NUMBER
<i>State Chartered</i>		
High Schools	Secondary education.	21,994 secondary schools 12,197 combined secondary and elementary schools
Comprehensive High Schools	Combined academic and vocational preparation.	15,005
Area Vocational-Technical (Voc-Tech) Centers	Preparation for specific trade and occupational areas.	1,816
Charter and Alternative High Schools	Varies by state law in terms of role and designation of purpose.	Charter High Schools – 2,695 Alternative schools – unknown
Community Colleges	2 year associate degree programs, preparation for 4 year degree programs, specific continuing and adult education.	1,600 (including branch campuses)
Public Four Year Colleges and Universities	Full range of degree granting programs.	612 public institutions, 4 year or higher
Cities, County Government, and Regional Development or Service Organizations sponsored by general units of government or school districts	These local units of government often provide direct services including workforce development.	Numbers of those that are directly involved in providing workforce development services vary by state.
<i>Local Non-Profit Organizations or Private sector-led organizations</i>		
Community Rehabilitation Programs	Employment services for people with disabilities.	8,100
Community Based Organizations/ Faith-based organizations	Employment and/or human service services, such as recreation and youth development activities. These may or may not be a part of a national network (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, National Urban League, Communities in Schools, etc.).	>10,000
Private Sector-led organizations (Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, apprenticeship programs etc.)	Skill training, remediation, apprenticeships, etc.	Some 175-200 chambers and business organizations have been identified as active intermediaries though the number of chambers is much larger and many are involved in building a workforce development system
<i>Federally Mandated Advisory and Governing Bodies</i>		
Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)	WIBs serve as governing bodies for WIA programs, and work on state and local workforce system. Private sector representatives hold the majority seats. Local boards are required to have Youth Councils; state boards have options for youth councils.	52 state 591 local
State Council on Developmental Disabilities	Governor appoints state board, which develops a state plan for services. Consumers and representatives of state agencies responsible for oversight of services make up the Council. The statewide services plan includes workforce preparation activities.	57
State Rehabilitation Council	Appointed by the governor, reviews, analyzes, and advises state rehabilitation agency about goals and priorities, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction. Annual reports to the governor and the Commissioner required.	80
Statewide Independent Living Council	Appointed by the governor to develop, monitor, and evaluate state independent living plans.	55 states and territories

**TABLE I-B:**

**Federally Supported Parts of the Workforce Development System Serving Youth Ages 14 to 25**

*Note: If an \* appears it means the services are a part of the mandated One-Stop system.*

AUTHORING ACT	TYPE OF SERVICES	AGES & ELIGIBILITY	NATIONAL NUMBER
<i>Department of Education</i>			
<i>Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services</i>			
Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title I	<i>*Rehabilitation Agencies</i> State rehabilitation agencies responsible for statewide vocational rehabilitation programs. Services are provided to people with disabilities based on Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Transition services for youth is an allowable activity.	To be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, an individual must: have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment; be able to benefit from receiving vocational rehabilitation services; and require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. Age not specified.	Combined: 32 General: 24 Blind: 24 TOTAL: 80  <b>Note:</b> States have the option to have just one agency responsible for blind as well as all other persons with disabilities or to have two agencies.
Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Title VII, Chapter 1, Part B	<i>Independent Living Centers</i> Independent Living Centers help people with disabilities maximize opportunities to live independently in the community. Centers can provide employment related support to individuals but actual training or education is typically not provided.	Centers set their own age requirements.	388 total ILC's & 301 satellite offices
Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Title VI, Part B	<i>Supported Employment Programs</i> VR state agencies develop collaborative programs to provide supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities.	Individuals with most significant disabilities. Age not specified; for transition services, the regulations encourage agencies to work with students as early as possible.	Most of these programs are managed by non-profit community rehabilitation agencies – the estimated number is 8,100
Assistive Technology Act of 1998, sunseting in fiscal year 2004	<i>Assistive Technology Centers</i> Centers provide information to children and adults with disabilities on increasing their use of standard, assistive, and information technologies and services.	Age not specified.	56
<i>Office of Vocational and Adult Education</i>			
Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act Amendments of 1998, Title I	<i>*Career-Technical Education Programs</i> Funds can be used for a broad range of programs, services, and activities designed to improve career – technical education programs and ensure access to students who are members of populations with special needs.	Individuals in secondary and postsecondary schools. Age not specified but generally geared toward high school and community college students.	Education provided in either comprehensive high schools (15,005) or area voc-tech centers (1,816)
Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act Amendments of 1998, Title II	<i>*Tech-Prep Programs</i> A sequenced program of study that combines at least two years of secondary and two years of postsecondary education. Occupational education or an apprenticeship program of at least two years following secondary instruction.	Beginning as early as the ninth year of school and can extend through two years of postsecondary.	Roughly 47% of the nation's high schools (or 7,400 high schools) offer one or more Tech Prep programs

AUTHORING ACT	TYPE OF SERVICES	AGES & ELIGIBILITY	NATIONAL NUMBER
Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title II	* <i>Adult Literacy Programs</i> Provides basic education instruction through a variety of program settings (e.g., community colleges, high schools, alternative schools, community based organizations, One-Stops, etc.).	Over the age of 16, not currently enrolled in school, who lack a high school diploma or the basic skills to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens.	5,263 Literacy Programs
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997, Part B and Part D, Subpart 1 authorizes Program Improvement grants to states	<i>Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)</i> Guaranteed right to free and appropriate education. IEPs are individualized plans to provide education for a young person including transition from school to positive adult outcomes.	Individuals are eligible for education services up to the age of 18 or through the age of 21 at the discretion of the state. Transitioning planning can begin at age 14 but must occur by age 16.	1,938,000 students between 14 and 21 received IDEA services in 2000-2001 school year
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b>			
<b>Administration for Children and Families</b>			
Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) Title I is Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	* <i>Required Work for Adults</i> Provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states the federal funds and flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs. Work activities can include education and training, work experiences, and job search.	TANF serves needy families; income and asset limitations vary by state; some assistance can only go to families with minor children. TANF regulations define minor child as an individual who has not attained 18 years of age or has not attained 19 years of age and is a full-time student in a secondary school (or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training).	FY 2001, the average monthly number of TANF families was 2,120,500 which included 787,000 child-only cases
Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act 1996	<i>Support to Targeted Population</i> The emphasis of the State Plan is to increase the self-determination, independence, productivity, inclusion and integration into the community of people with developmental disabilities.	Services are for those who have a developmental disability. There is no age limitation on the services provided. Age is a factor in the diagnosis process.	Total number of programs and services centered on workforce preparation and support services unknown
Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 which enacted the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program	<i>Support to Targeted Populations</i> States assist youth in a successful transition to adulthood. Activities and programs include, but are not limited to, help with education, employment, financial management, housing, emotional support and assured connections to caring adults for older youth in foster care as well as youth who have aged out of the foster care. Older youth (18-21) can receive housing assistance if needed.	State can serve youth who are likely to remain in foster care and those who have aged out of foster care up to 21 years of age.	There were 62,000 15-17 year olds in foster care as reported in a March 2002 Census Brief to give a sense of population that is "aging out" of foster care

AUTHORING ACT	TYPE OF SERVICES	AGES & ELIGIBILITY	NATIONAL NUMBER
Community Action Agencies Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended	<p><i>*Multiple Services through Centers</i></p> <p>Community Services Block Grants create, coordinate, and deliver a broad array of programs and services. To assist individuals in securing and maintaining employment, community action agencies provide linkages to job training opportunities, GED preparation courses, and vocational education programs.</p>	Programs and services are to low-income individuals.	State-administered local network composed of over 1,100 local agencies, predominantly community action agencies
<b>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration</b>			
Children's Health Action of 2000 Public Law 106-310; and the Public Health Services Act, as amended; Title V and several sections of that title.	<p><i>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services</i></p> <p>Grants and cooperative agreements for substance abuse treatment and prevention as well as mental health needs of regional and national significance.</p>	For the substance abuse (alcohol and drugs) component, treatment, prevention and support to families and children are included in eligible services. For mental health services the regional and national significance priorities determine eligibility.	Estimated 600 grants awarded in fiscal years 2002 and 2003
Public Health Service Act, Title V, Part E, Section 561, as amended; Public Law 102-321; 42 U.S.C. 290ff.	<p><i>Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances Program</i></p> <p>The program provides grants to states and communities for the improvement and expansion of community-based systems of care for children with serious emotional disturbances and their families.</p> <p>Individualized service plans dictate the range of services and can include non-mental health services including education, vocational counseling and rehabilitation, and protection and advocacy.</p>	Under the age of 22.	Forty-four grants per year. Estimated nationwide 4.5-6.3 million children with serious emotional disturbances and their families
Public Health Service Act, Title XIX, Part B as amended, Public Law 1060310; 42	<p><i>Mental Health Services</i></p> <p>Through block grants to states, a range of services can be provided through qualified community programs. Services include but are not limited to psychosocial rehabilitation programs, mental health peer-support programs and primary consumer-directed programs.</p>	Mental health condition determines eligibility.	59 grants
<b>Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services</b>			
Title XIX of the Social Security Act	<p><i>Insurance</i></p> <p>Provides medical assistance through the Medicaid Program.</p>	Individuals and families with low incomes and resources.	In FY 2003 40.4 million were enrolled, 7.7 million of whom are blind/disabled

AUTHORING ACT	TYPE OF SERVICES	AGES & ELIGIBILITY	NATIONAL NUMBER
Social Security Title XXI, as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997	<i>State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)</i> Gives each state authorization to offer health insurance. Families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid may be able to qualify for SCHIP.	Children up to age 19 who are not already insured.	For FY 2002 there were 5,315,229 children enrolled in SCHIP, including both separate child health programs and Medicaid expansion programs
<b>Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)</b>			
Title V of the Social Security Act	<i>Healthy and Ready to Work</i> Promotes a comprehensive system of family-centered, culturally competent, community-based care for children with special health care needs who are approaching adulthood and may need assistance in making the transition from pediatric to adult health care and to post-secondary education and/or employment.	Mainly covers children up to 18 years but some projects serve youth older than 18.	A range of demonstration grants have been launched since 1996; currently there are five statewide projects being supported
<b>Housing and Urban Development Department</b>			
<b>Office of Community Planning and Development</b>			
National Affordable Housing Act Added through Section 164 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 Title IV Subtitle D	<i>*Youth Build Program</i> Youth Build grants are available to public or private nonprofit agencies, public housing authorities, state and local governments, Indian tribes, or any organization eligible to provide education and employment training.	Non-profit organizations assist high-risk youth between the ages of 16-24 to learn housing construction job skills and to complete their high school education.	78 grants
Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000	<i>Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities</i> Targets tax incentives, performance grants, and loans to designated low-income areas to create jobs, expand business opportunities, and support people looking for work. Local units of governments are the eligible applicants.	EZs and ECs are based on economic characteristics of a geographic area and services are not age specified.	Currently 105 designated urban and rural EZ/EC's
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized January 2002	<i>Emergency Shelter Grant Program</i> Provides homeless persons with basic shelter and essential support. Can assist with the operational costs of the shelter facility. Grants are to eligible jurisdictions, including states, territories, and qualified metropolitan cities and urban counties.	Age not specified.	In FY 2001, there were 366 grantees

AUTHORING ACT	TYPE OF SERVICES	AGES & ELIGIBILITY	NATIONAL NUMBER
<i>Department of Justice</i>			
<b>Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention</b>			
<p>Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-415, 42 U.S.C. 5601 et seq.) and subsequent amendments</p>	<p><i>Services to Adjudicated Youth</i> Grants program funds collaborative, community-based delinquency prevention efforts. Provides communities with funding and a guiding framework for developing and implementing comprehensive juvenile delinquency prevention plans.</p>	<p>States define the ages for adjudication purposes.</p>	<p>Currently 53 funded programs</p>
<i>Department of Labor</i>			
<b>Employment and Training Administration</b>			
<p>Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title I</p>	<p><i>One-Stop Centers</i> A system under which entities responsible for administering separate workforce investment, educational, and other human resource development programs collaborate to create a seamless system of service delivery. Note * for mandated partners of the Centers.</p>	<p>Universal service at One-Stop for job search activities. For more intensive services, including training, older youth ages 18-21 may be co-enrolled as youth and adults. The next section (Youth Service Programs) provides details of eligibility.</p>	<p>1,978 comprehensive One-Stop centers and 7,535 satellite offices</p>
<p>Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title I, B for formula grants and Title IV Subtitle D for nationally managed programs.</p>	<p><i>*Youth Service Programs</i> The formula grant program services are determined by and contracted for by the WIBs. The federal government manages the Youth Opportunity Programs, Migrant &amp; Seasonal Farmworker and Native American programs.</p>	<p>Ages 14-21. Eligible youth are low income and one or more of the following: deficient in basic literacy skills; a high school dropout; homeless; a runaway; or a foster child; pregnant or a parent; an offender; an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment.</p>	<p>The numbers vary by program because local communities make decisions about how many and what type of services will be provided through formula grant funds</p>
<p>Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title I, C</p>	<p><i>*Residentially-based Education and Training Programs</i> Job Corps is a federally administered program that provides academic and occupational training in a residential setting.</p>	<p>Same income and deficit eligibility criteria as for Youth Service Programs but ages range from 14-24 and there is no upper age limit for an otherwise eligible individual with a disability.</p>	<p>118 centers nationwide</p>
<p>The Wagner-Peyser Act as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title III, Subtitle A</p>	<p><i>*Employment Service Offices</i> Has listings of available jobs and provides a range of services to job seekers and employers. Also provides labor market information services.</p>	<p>The Employment Service provides universal service, available to all. Age not specified.</p>	<p>Employment Services are part of all One-Stops but there are additional offices in each state.</p>
<p>American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998, H-1B Technical Skills Training Grants</p>	<p><i>Regional and Local Business Partnerships</i> Designed to help train U.S. workers in the high technology skills that the industry needs thereby reducing the need to import workers from abroad.</p>	<p>Organizations must partner and apply to the Department of Labor. The grants are either issued to a business partnership or to a local workforce investment board and generally are aimed at adults.</p>	<p>89 grants</p>

AUTHORING ACT	TYPE OF SERVICES	AGES & ELIGIBILITY	NATIONAL NUMBER
Social Security Act, Section 403a, as added by Section 5001 of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997	<i>*Welfare-to-Work Services</i> State grants to provide community or work experiences, job creation, on-the-job training, job retention or support services, vocational education or job training for a maximum of 6 months, or contracted services for job readiness, job placement or post employment services.	Welfare recipients who have received benefits for at least 30 months or who are within 12 months of becoming ineligible for benefits due to a durational limit.	189 grants to Workforce Investment Boards and community organizations have been issued in three rounds of competitions.
Trade Act of 1974, Title II, Chapter 2	<i>*Trade Adjustment Assistance</i> Assistance may include re-employment services, job search allowances, relocation allowances, funding for training, or readjustment allowances for eligible workers who have exhausted unemployment insurance or who are in training.	Workers who are significantly harmed by U.S. trade policies, <i>i.e.</i> , by losing their jobs or having less work. Workers must apply for benefits within 12 months after being laid off or within 6 months after completing approved training.	68,568 individuals were served from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003
United States Code, Title 38, Chapter 41	<i>*Disabled Veterans Readjustment Benefits</i> These benefits include job counseling, training and job placement.	Disabled veterans who are entitled to compensation or were released from active duty due to a service-related disability; spouses of persons who were totally disabled or died of a service-connected disability; or spouses of any active duty member of the Armed Forces who is missing in action, captured by hostile forces, or detained by a foreign government in the line of duty.	In Program Year 1999 428,687 veterans registered for service from the local veteran employment representatives stationed at employment service offices and one stops. Of that number, 39,986 were disabled veterans
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>			
National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended, 42 U.S.C. 12571-12595	<i>Service and Conservation Corps</i> State and local programs that engage primarily youth and young adults in full-time community service, training and educational activities.	Youth and young adults ages 16-25; eligibility depends on source of funding and local decisions.	118 Corps operate in multiple communities across 31 states and the District of Columbia; In 2002 over 24,000 enrolled young people provided their communities with 18.3 million hours of service in year-round and summer programs
<b>Social Security Administration</b>			
Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999	<i>Training for Social Security Disability Eligible Individuals</i> Establishes approved providers called Employment Networks (ENs). ENs can fund vocational rehabilitation, employment, or support services to help an individual go to work. The program is being rolled out in three phases across the country with the last phase available in late 2003.	An individual must be receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and must have a disability for which medical improvement is not expected or possible; the individual must live in a state where Tickets are available.	1000 Employment Networks recognized as of October 2003

## **Building and Supporting the Right Type of Organizations: Intermediaries**

Over the past decade a new type of organization has emerged, building on the most promising practices of connecting job seekers and job providers. The American Assembly at Columbia University, with support from several major foundations, conducted an early 2003 Assembly on the issue of building and growing intermediaries. The Assembly identified three key goals of workforce intermediaries:

### **1. To bring workers into the American mainstream.**

Success for these organizations means that workers are employed in jobs that offer the promise of financial stability.

### **2. To increase business efficiency and productivity.**

Organizations are equally concerned with serving employers' needs and helping businesses become increasingly productive. They realize that business and worker success are interdependent.

### **3. To enhance regional competitiveness.** These groups understand that the health of regional economies affects the ability to advance workers and strengthen business.

In addition, the Assembly identified common characteristics of workforce intermediaries. These organizations:

- pursue a dual customer approach by simultaneously serving businesses looking for qualified workers and serving job-seekers and workers interested in advancing their careers;
- organize multiple partners and funding streams around common goals, bringing together business, labor unions, educational institutions, social service agencies, and other providers to design and implement programs and policies to improve labor market outcomes;
- provide or broker labor market services that go beyond recruitment and referral by understanding the special needs — and gaining the trust — of firms and industries;
- reduce turnover and increase economic mobility for workers by assuring continued support and opportunities to upgrade skills;

- achieve results with innovative approaches and solutions to workforce problems;
- improve outcomes for firms and their workers by catalyzing improvements in public systems and business employment practices.

The number of such efforts has risen from a handful in the early 1990s to several hundred today. Although they approach their tasks in different ways, successful intermediary organizations bring together key partners and functions to advance careers for all workers (recognizing the special needs of low-skilled, low-wage workers), increase business productivity, and improve regional competitiveness (The American Assembly, 2003).

An example of an intermediary is the national School to Work Intermediary Network launched in the mid 1990s with membership from several communities around the country. The Intermediary Network recognizes the need to include schools as active partners since so many youth needs are school-based. The Intermediary Network has defined youth-focused intermediaries as "...staffed organizations that connect schools and other youth preparation organizations with workplaces and other community resources so that young people can combine learning with doing and become better prepared for postsecondary learning and careers." The activities of intermediaries, according to the Intermediary Network, fall under four general areas: 1) convening local leadership; 2) brokering and providing services to youth, institutions, and workplace partners; 3) ensuring quality and impact of local efforts, and 4) promoting policies to sustain effective practices (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2001).

## **A Focus on the Needs of the Customers**

Education and workforce development organizations provide services within a variety of settings, including a complex maze of 1) differing institutional missions, each with distinctive funding parameters and fiscal incentives; 2) multiple funding streams with substantial variations in the expected outcomes; 3) traditions, and 4) capacities of the institutions and staff. Ultimately, however, all organizations within the workforce development system have in common the customers of their services: youth and adults seeking employment, and employers seeking capable workers. A substantial body of information documents what each group

needs; with careful study and action, this information can direct efforts in the workforce development field toward organizing and facilitating better linkages between these two customer groups.

### **What do Youth Customers Need?**

Federal investments in research and demonstration initiatives have shown that when given opportunities, knowledgeable staff guidance, and supportive environments, youth with disabilities can and do defy the stubborn statistics noted earlier. In fact, in order to attain career success, youth with disabilities need the same things that all youth need, with attention in individual cases to additional and specialized supports:

- access to high-quality standards-based education, regardless of the setting;
- information about career options;
- exposure to the world of work;
- opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills;
- strong connections to caring adults;
- access to safe places to interact with their peers;
- support services to allow them to become independent adults.

Research and evaluations of effective practice further refine these principles and provide some key guideposts that can be used by individual organizations to design specific programs, as well as by state and local policy bodies and funders to organize grant and contract criteria for providers of youth career development and support services.

As Table II indicates, youth with disabilities need specific but often simple extra supports that can have major consequences if not appropriately provided. Ultimately, youth with disabilities will need assistance to navigate multiple, and often confusing, eligibility requirements and referral mechanisms in order to receive the benefits of programs and services charged to help them.

In addition, families of youth with disabilities need:

- access to information through neutral intermediary organizations to assist in understanding causes and

implications for daily living of the disability of the child;

- access to information and training about effective practices and options for their child's education and transition into post-school life (e.g. individualized education/transition plans, and navigating the adult service delivery system(s);
- access to information and training about the implications of disability-centered legislation, e.g., ADA, medical services and insurance, income support, education and training; and
- support networks that promote asset-based strategies for both youth and family members.

Organizations working with youth with and without disabilities need a services manager responsible for tracking and advocating for each youth to ensure that his or her needs are addressed through different stages of learning and development. An individual service manager need not follow the same youth from age 14 to 25, but a service manager's function should include connection to other organizations to assure that each youth obtains needed services from relevant organizations. Organizations that focus on a specific service (e.g., mentoring) should recognize the great value in ensuring that connections are made with other community organizations in which youth are currently – or might benefit from becoming – involved. Youth need a planned sequence of services that are age and stage appropriate to pursue their own goals. Included in the service mix youth need connections to critical work experiences necessary for their career development; ultimately, they need connections to real jobs. These job and career development opportunities are always contingent on available and willing employers, who are the other customers of the workforce development system. In order to remain willing and ready to hire youth and adults with disabilities, employers must have their needs addressed by workforce investment systems.

### **What do Employer Customers Need?**

According to the Center on Workforce Preparation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the development of a future workforce is a high priority among the nation's businesses. In addition to needing workers with specific, industry-related skills, employers are looking

Table II—Guideposts for Success

GENERAL NEEDS	SPECIFIC NEEDS
<p>Preparatory Experiences</p>	<p>In order to perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations and graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills. These should include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• academic programs that are based on clear state standards;</li> <li>• career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards;</li> <li>• curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work and community-based learning experiences;</li> <li>• learning environments that are small and safe;</li> <li>• supports from and by highly qualified staff;</li> <li>• access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures and,</li> <li>• graduation standards that include options.</li> </ul> <p><i>Youth with disabilities need to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary; include strategies and supports to continue the transition process post-schooling;</li> <li>• access specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school;</li> <li>• develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations; and</li> <li>• be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff who may or may not be school staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Career Preparation &amp; Work-Based Learning Experiences</p>	<p>Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day, through after-school programs and will require collaborations with other organizations. All youth need information on career options, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• career assessments to help identify students’ school and post-school preferences and interests;</li> <li>• structured exposure to post-secondary education and other life-long learning opportunities;</li> <li>• exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including information about educational requirements, entry requirements and income potential; and,</li> <li>• training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills (sometimes called soft skills).</li> </ul> <p>In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing;</li> <li>• multiple on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) that is specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit;</li> <li>• opportunities to learn and practice their work skills (“soft skills”); and,</li> <li>• opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway.</li> </ul> <p><i>In addition, youth with disabilities need to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the relationships between appropriate financial and benefits planning and career choices;</li> <li>• access supports and accommodations for work and community living; and</li> <li>• learn to communicate their support and accommodation needs to prospective employers and service providers.</li> <li>• learn to request, find, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations at work, at home, and in the community.</li> </ul>

Table II—Guideposts for Success

GENERAL NEEDS	SPECIFIC NEEDS
<p>Youth Development &amp; Leadership</p>	<p>In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings and also peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities;</li> <li>• peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities;</li> <li>• exposure to role models in a variety of contexts;</li> <li>• training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution;</li> <li>• exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service;</li> <li>• opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership.</li> </ul> <p><i>Youth with disabilities also need</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentors and role models including persons with and without disabilities;</li> <li>• an understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<p>Connecting Activities</p>	<p>All youth may also need one or more of the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mental and physical health services;</li> <li>• transportation;</li> <li>• tutoring;</li> <li>• post-program supports through structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies;</li> <li>• connection to other services and opportunities (e.g., recreation).</li> <li>• Youth with disabilities may need</li> <li>• acquisition of appropriate assistive technologies;</li> <li>• community orientation and mobility training (e.g. accessible transportation, bus routes, housing, health clinics);</li> <li>• exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers and other consumer-driven community-based support service agencies;</li> <li>• personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, or other such services; and</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

for workers who have such so-called “soft skills” as the ability to work as team members, respond to supervision, follow directions, etc. To find such workers, and to insure a future supply of such workers, employers need awareness of and access to recruitment resources, as well as effective processes for screening applicants. They also need to function in a cost effective manner, i.e., to receive a reasonable return on the investment of time and resources they expend in developing and recruiting their workforce. One avenue for employer investment in human resources is involvement in youth work preparation programs.

Three primary factors emerge from studies addressing reasons employers become involved with any youth work preparation program. First, there is the immediate need for the company to fill positions. Second, particular industry-specific issues (such as worker shortages or specific technical skills requirements) cause some employers to embrace youth programs. Third, many companies feel particularly compelled to bring youth, with and without disabilities, into their workplaces to demonstrate corporate good citizenship and responsiveness to community needs. Employers are attracted to youth work preparation programs that appeal to one or more of these three factors.

However, employers also need support to host youth in the workplace. A recent study conducted by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) surveyed employers who have hosted youth with disabilities in their workplaces about their experience. These employers represented a wide range of industries, including health care, retail, manufacturing, finance, information technology, and others, and provided among them the whole spectrum of work-based learning experiences, including job shadowing, job-site mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment. The study revealed that most employers prefer to follow their internal human resource procedures when bringing youth with disabilities into the workplace, but are willing and able to make extensive accommodations and adaptations to these procedures when they have competent help from trained professionals.

As has been shown in comparable studies, these

employers, regardless of industry and type of work experience provided, voiced nearly identical responses when asked what factors contributed to successful experience with these youth. The primary contributors to their successful experiences were 1) competent, convenient, and targeted assistance in getting youth referrals; 2) matching youth skills and interests to the job tasks; 3) support in training and monitoring the youth while at the worksite; and 4) providing either formal or informal disability awareness and training for the youth’s co-workers.

Although employers’ motivations for participating in transition and workforce development programs are fairly straightforward, employer willingness to offer opportunities in their workplaces to individuals represented by these programs is ultimately influenced by two factors: 1) awareness of these programs (*i.e.*, how well such programs are marketed to them), and 2) availability of competent intermediary entities, such as transition or workforce development programs and professionals, to provide access to young job seekers. Employers’ lack of awareness of youth career development programs, as well as the complications of becoming connected to competent intermediary organizations, has made their participation in youth development initiatives generally sporadic. In youth transition and workforce development programs, a host of organizations already exists with charters to link youth and employers, including school transition programs, disability employment programs, workforce development youth programs, and community rehabilitation programs, among many others. With so many entities vying for employer attention, both within and outside the disability employment arena, employers are likely to remain uninterested or confused, forced to make sense on their own of multiple and disjointed initiatives. Streamlining employer connections to career development activities serving youth is a clear need.

Thus, although there is increasing recognition that intermediary functions are critical to youth success and to employer operations, a key difference remains between intermediaries that connect individual youths to individual employers (the micro level) and those that link various programs and services to each other or to the larger employer community (the macro level).

A clear need exists to refine the concept, definitions, and applications of intermediary activity; there is an even clearer need to improve the availability and effectiveness of intermediary linkages of youth with disabilities to support services and work.

These needs go beyond the mandated tasks of a One-Stop Center to serve youth. One-Stop Centers, mandated through WIA, have the key task of connecting all individuals, regardless of disability, economic, education, or other status, to services they

need to prepare for or obtain employment. Because this is an enormous task for relatively new institutions, most Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) have instructed the contractors who operate One-Stop Centers to focus on establishing the formal structure among the WIA-mandated partners before undertaking programmatic work itself.

However, a larger intent of WIA is for One-Stop Centers to include a wide array of non-mandated partners as well. This is particularly important if youth

**Table III—Guideposts for Individual Programs to Meet Employer Needs  
Micro Level Intermediary**

<b>EMPLOYER NEEDS</b>	<b>WORKFORCE PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS: INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS</b>
Awareness of recruitment resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with existing business and employer networks and job referral and placement organizations;</li> <li>• Market services through existing community forums (e.g., newsletters, job fairs, etc.);</li> <li>• Join business organizations;</li> <li>• Build and maintain networks of business and employer contacts through continuous dialogue;</li> <li>• Make direct contact with new employers.</li> </ul>
Effective applicant screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify competencies needed for each job and industry;</li> <li>• Visit companies to identify needs;</li> <li>• Understand and adhere to typical company screening processes as closely as possible;</li> <li>• Know each youth’s skills, interests, and aptitudes;</li> <li>• Match youth to employer needs and circumstances.</li> </ul>
Applicants with technical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure youth are enrolled in updated and rigorous skills training programs;</li> <li>• Identify and address barriers to accessing training programs;</li> <li>• Match youth skills to job and task assignments.</li> </ul>
Applicants with soft skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage employers to support job shadowing and short-term internships as initial effort to expose youth to the workplace culture;</li> <li>• Prepare and support youth in soft skills (e.g., appropriate work behavior, language, dress, etc.);</li> <li>• Match youth with peer and adult mentors.</li> </ul>
Convenient access to applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize red tape;</li> <li>• Coordinate employer outreach with other professionals;</li> <li>• Respond to employer outreach efforts.</li> </ul>
Support for youth with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and address needed job accommodations;</li> <li>• Identify and address accessibility issues at workplaces;</li> <li>• Provide on-going post-placement follow up with students and employers;</li> <li>• Prepare and support youth with disabilities to understand and manage job-related disability issues (e.g., disclosure, reasonable accommodation needs, etc.);</li> <li>• Conduct periodic disability and diversity awareness training for supervisors and co-workers.</li> </ul>
Return on investment of time and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect employers’ time;</li> <li>• Keep meetings short and informative;</li> <li>• Ensure that both support services and youths’ presence are benefits, not detriments, to employer operations.</li> </ul>

with disabilities are to have full access to One-Stop services, as implied by the universal access provisions of WIA. Currently, many services that youth need in order to make fully informed choices about their future and their careers are not provided through the list of mandated partners. Thus, while the establishment of local One-Stop Centers across the nation is an important step toward coordinating and integrating the many services available to address the career-attainment needs of youth and adults, it is incomplete. Continued and more strategic alignment of services and service delivery is necessary.

Tables III and IV illustrate two levels of employer requirements and their implications for youth programming (micro level) and for community wide strategies (macro level).

Any service provider (e.g., school, community college, community rehabilitation agency, youth service organization) can use these key strategies when working with employers to ensure that the results are satisfying to all concerned.

In order to expand and sustain strong employer participation, additional community-wide supports are

**Table IV—Guideposts for Community-Wide Strategies to Meet Employer Needs  
Macro Level Intermediary**

EMPLOYER NEEDS	WORKFORCE PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS: COMMUNITY-WIDE SYSTEMS & SUPPORT
Community awareness of industry needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop profile of employers by size, type, and location;</li> <li>• Identify employment trends, including projecting skill needs;</li> <li>• Update information periodically;</li> <li>• Develop clearinghouse of skill requirements (standards) used by key local industries.</li> </ul>
Supporting and coordinating work of program providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and maintain directory of employer liaisons in all education and training programs in region;</li> <li>• Convene the employer liaisons on regular basis;</li> <li>• Develop broad-based, business-advised marketing strategies for advocating employer needs and views;</li> <li>• Present program information from all providers based on a business perspective;</li> <li>• Promote the participation of workforce development professionals in activities that educate them about business and industry (e.g., externships, job shadows, etc.).</li> </ul>
Quality skill development programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the development of, and participation of youth in updated and rigorous technical skills training programs;</li> <li>• Encourage the incorporation of soft skills development into youth and technical training programs.</li> </ul>
Products and services that support youth in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In concert with program providers and employers, develop work-based learning tools (e.g., assessment of skills development, checklists for use by workplace supervisors, etc.);</li> <li>• Develop and provide training for employees responsible for working with youth;</li> <li>• Identify any gaps in products and services and establish common strategies among the providers and employers to fill such gaps.</li> </ul>
Convenient access to programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish ways to streamline the referrals between employers and youth programs across the age range;</li> <li>• Promote the use of One-Stop Career Centers.</li> </ul>
Support youth with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote universal access to training programs;</li> <li>• Identify and make accessible to employers community resources on accommodations and workplace supports;</li> <li>• Provide or ensure access to training for employees of businesses regarding different types of disabilities;</li> <li>• Foster a disability-friendly workplace culture across worksites.</li> </ul>
Continuous improvement of youth programs services and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of youth program supports and services for both employers and youth (e.g., customer satisfaction surveys);</li> <li>• Help secure funds for evaluations.</li> </ul>

needed. Table IV addresses this level of needed support for employers.

Currently, only a limited number of individual youth programs and workforce professionals are consciously and strategically related to or integrated with macro level community-wide efforts to meet employer needs. This is largely because there is a lack of regional (macro) intermediaries assigned to carry out the tasks outlined in Table IV. This is in part due to the lack of funding to support these types of activities. States should give early consideration on how to develop and support such intermediaries. These intermediaries can then build the capacity of existing organizations that provide the direct services – the micro intermediaries. Utilizing this macro-micro approach to meeting employer needs can strengthen: 1) the ability of intermediaries to gain the trust of employers and be helpful in meeting their human resource and operational needs, and 2) establish a distinct and cogent link between “grassroots” youth services organizations and the systems and supports that meet community and employer needs. One of the key challenges facing states and localities is how to assist individual organizations in improving the services they offer based upon the lessons learned over the past decade, while simultaneously ensuring connections with the broader needs of the whole community, region, and state. Such improvement of existing organizations is far more desirable than generating a proliferation of new organizations.

### **Where to Begin?**

Establishing new ways of doing business takes time, and none of this work can be successful without active participation of WIA-established state and local workforce policy boards. While they are not the sole source of financing and human capital supporting the work identified in the Tables III and IV, they are the key organizations charged with establishing a real workforce development system; thus, their

involvement in the strategic planning process is necessary from the beginning, and those responsible for developing intermediaries need a solid understanding of plans of both state and local workforce boards.

As noted in the beginning of this paper ODEP is investing funds to promote systems change in state and local communities to improve the employment opportunities of youth with disabilities. The overarching recognized challenge is to help modify and refine current strategies of multiple organizations to center their collective attention on the needs of their common dual customers – the youth and employers.

ODEP’s investments focus on the roles intermediaries can play in bringing about systemic change in the way services are organized and delivered. Projects must emphasize “going to scale” strategies – the numbers of youth with disabilities participating in critical workforce development preparation programs must grow significantly. Moreover, each grantee must act as a convener and honest broker with a wide array of institutions and organizations to ensure the needs of both youth and employers are being met. These efforts should lead to a win-win strategy that will help all involved organizations and agencies meet their own goals and outcomes. Projects must document progress and success in such a way that public policy makers at all levels (local, state, and federal) will have sufficient information to make informed decisions for the next generation of programs. In addition, policy makers should gain information regarding ways to measure success, prepare guidance to the service provider networks, and inform the development of future legislation. Finally, all pilot projects should be built upon the foundation that youth with disabilities can succeed – if provided the opportunity and experiences to make informed choices about their own life goals and career pathways. ♦

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