Youth who participate in YD/YL experiences are more likely to do well in school, be involved in their community, and transition positively through adolescence to adulthood.

Effective workforce development programs have youth development and youth leadership (YD/YL) components at their core. Research shows that youth who participate in youth development and youth leadership experiences are more likely to do well in school, be involved in their community, and transition positively through adolescence to adulthood.

Historically, youth with disabilities have been isolated from mainstream youth leadership and youth development programs. Their inclusion will result in increased self-esteem, development of life skills, and decreased involvement in risky behaviors. It will also result in making the workforce development system more inclusive of all youth.

• **Youth Development** is a process that prepares all young people, including youth with disabilities, to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood by building on their capabilities and strengths and by addressing a full range of developmental needs.

• **Youth Leadership** activities build skills relevant to young people’s personal development, as well as their role within a group. On a personal level, youth who participate in these experiences gain insight into themselves. This helps them analyze their strengths and weaknesses and set personal and vocational goals. On a group level, youth develop the ability to work with others to create a shared vision and to draw on the talents, skills, and energy of others.

• **Comprehensive workforce development programs** include activities that address five developmental areas:
  - **Learning** includes developing both basic and applied academic competencies and skills. Research indicates that youth learn best when they are involved in authentic learning environments with opportunities to explore and with real world application.
  - **Thriving** relates to physical and mental health and overall well-being. Effective youth development programs prepare, support, and assist youth in making healthy choices in all phases of their lives.
  - **Connecting** relates to the development of positive social attitudes, skills, and behaviors so that youth feel a part of programs and their community. Mentoring is an example of the type of activity that can contribute to the feeling of connectedness.
  - **Working** relates to occupational and career skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are needed for success in the workplace. Employment and work-based activities help youth to validate their self-worth, as well as to explore their abilities and interests.
  - **Leading** activities and opportunities help youth develop positive civic attitudes, skills, and behaviors. Youth need to contribute to their community, school, and family in order to develop their full potential.

To serve youth with disabilities effectively, generic workforce development programs also need to include information on self-awareness related to having a disability as well as information on disability history, law, and social policies. Further, these youth need services connecting them to resources within their communities if they are to reach their maximum potential.

Youth with disabilities also benefit from youth leadership and youth development programs that are specifically targeted to them. Many good models exist which relates to occupational and career skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are needed for success in the workplace. Employment and work-based activities help youth to validate their self-worth, as well as to explore their abilities and interests.

### Resources

**LEARNING**

- **The Career Academy Support Network at UC Berkeley** (http://casn.berkeley.edu/)
- **Jobs for the Future** (http://www.jff.org/)
- **American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF)** (http://www.aypf.org)
- **National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)** (http://www.ncset.org/default.asp)

**THRIVING**

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**, US Department of Health and Human Services (http://www.samhsa.gov)
- **YouthInfo** (http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fyab/youthinfo/index.html)

**CONNECTING**

- **National Mentoring Center (NMC)** (http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/topic_school.html)
- **The Beach Center On Disability** (http://www.beachcenter.org/)

**WORKING**

- **National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)** (http://www.nyec.org/programs/fyab/index.htm/)
- **One-Stop for Promising Practices** (http://www.promising-practices.org/)

- **Family Center on Technology and Disability** (http://www.fcdi.info/)
- **Healthy & Ready to Work** (http://www.hrw.org/)

*Continued on other side*
### RESOURCES

#### LEADING


This organization is a youth-led network of youth leaders with disabilities. It is a group of approximately 300 youth leaders with diverse disabilities from across the US and its territories (e.g. Guam and Puerto Rico).


Do Something's website contains resources and information on community projects to help youth turn ideas into action.

**Social Security Administration’s Office of Support Programs for Youth with Disabilities** ([http://www.ssa.gov/work/YouthYouth.shtml](http://www.ssa.gov/work/YouthYouth.shtml))

This office provides information helpful to youth with disabilities, their families, their teachers, and others by providing information on youth leadership and development activities, transition, and other related information and links.

#### MISCELLANEOUS SITES


The Forum promotes a “big picture” approach to planning, research, advocacy, and policy development among the broad range of organizations that help constituents and communities invest in children, youth, and families.

**Boys and Girls Clubs of America** ([http://www.bgca.org/](http://www.bgca.org/))

This website contains program descriptions of services to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls up to age 18.

**National Youth Development Information Center (NYDIC)** ([http://www.nydic.org/nydic/](http://www.nydic.org/nydic/))

NYDIC's website contains information on youth development in the areas of funding, research, program development, career development, evaluation, policy, and more. It is a project of the National Collaboration for Youth.

**The National 4-H Council** ([http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/](http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/))

This website contains information on youth leadership and youth development programs for youth with and without disabilities.


This national information and referral center provides information on disabilities and disability-related issues for families, educators, and other professionals.

**Parent Training and Information Centers** ([http://www.taalliance.org/PTIs.htm](http://www.taalliance.org/PTIs.htm))

Located in each state, these centers provide training and information to parents of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and to professionals who work with children.

---

Funded under a grant supported by the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the US Department of Labor, grant # E-9-4-1-0070. The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantee/contractor and do not necessarily reflect those of the US Department of Labor. Individuals may produce any part of this document. Please credit the source and support of federal funds.

To obtain this publication in an alternate format contact the Collaborative.

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.

At the time of printing, every possible effort was made to compile accurate and up-to-date website information. Internet information changes frequently.

NCWD/Youth

phone: 877-871-0744 (toll free) • 877-871-0665 (TTY toll free)

website: [http://www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)

e-mail: contact@ncwd-youth.info