

Information Brief

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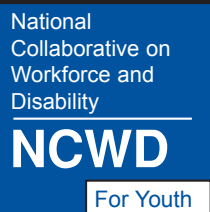
The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth is working to ensure that youth with disabilities are provided full access to high quality services in integrated settings to gain employment and independent living. NCWD/Youth is:

- supporting state and local policies that promote full access to high quality services for youth with disabilities;
- strengthening the services provided by organizations responsible for delivery of workforce development services; and,
- improving the awareness, knowledge, and skills of individuals responsible for providing direct services to youth.

Partners

- Institute for Educational Leadership
- Academy for Educational Development
- InfoUse
- Center for Workforce Preparation, U. S. Chamber of Commerce
- Goodwill Industries International, Inc
- National Association of Workforce Boards
- National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, University of Minnesota
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Youth Employment Coalition
- TransGen, Inc.

This is the first in a series of information briefs and policy briefs to be prepared by the NCWD/Youth. All publications will be posted on the website listed below. Please visit our website to sign up to be notified of future publications.



www.ncwd-youth.info

Introduction to the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

The **National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth** is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment and workforce development issues. *The Collaborative is charged with assisting state and local workforce development systems to integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies.* Our specific partners are listed at left.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in late 2001, the Collaborative is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership. We work closely with the Department of Labor's other disability technical assistance center, the National Center on Workforce & Disability/Adults at the Institute for Community Inclusion in Boston (<http://www.onestops.info>).

WHAT WE DO

The Collaborative strives to ensure that youth with disabilities are provided full access to high quality services in integrated settings in order to maximize their opportunities for employment and independent living.

To accomplish our mission, we have established the following three distinct goals:

1. To improve the development and implementation of state and local policies that promote full access to high quality services for youth with disabilities;
2. To strengthen the provision of services provided by those organizations responsible for delivery of workforce development; and,
3. To improve the awareness, knowledge, and skills of individuals responsible for providing direct services to youth.

While our mission and goals may seem lofty, our methodology to meet these goals is clear and well grounded. A continuous improvement process that identifies effective organizational performance drives our products and services. Our activities are grounded in seven proven categories of high quality criteria, namely the Baldrige Principles of leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, human resource focus, process management, and organizational results. To assure our relevance to the field, we will draw on the expertise of six distinctly organized “Communities of Practice Networks” representing our core stakeholder group.

The substance of our work will be organized in the context of a disability public policy framework and by the proven “best practice” standards for successful youth programs that serve as the foundation of the 10 required elements of a youth program spelled out in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The current youth provisions of WIA recognize that the planning process for serving youth must substantively address different issues than for adults, and engage distinct organizations. It stresses long-term connections between youth and programs as well as year-round services; and recognizes that collaboration among youth-serving agencies is essential. The system must develop critical expertise and linkages across programs in order to provide a competent array of programs and services that create choices for people with disabilities to successfully become employed and live independently in their communities.

WHAT WE OFFER

Over its five year life, the Collaborative will offer a range of services to state and local workforce investment boards, youth councils and other workforce system youth programs, and to ODEP grantees. A few of our products and services will include:

- A fully-accessible, content-rich website;
- A repository of materials generated by the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy grantees;
- A research-based framework for evaluating state and local “best practices”;
- Specialized support to the Department of Labor’s High School/High Tech and Innovative Demonstration grantees;
- Publications tailored to the needs and concerns of the various workforce development stakeholder groups;
- Capacity-building training materials for use by state and local workforce development organizations;
- An information and resource center accessible to the public and to the workforce development system; and,
- Development of materials and specialized training designed to improve the capacity of frontline service providers.

In our first year the Collaborative is collecting, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant information about effective practices for serving youth with disabilities so as to define and even redefine what are commonly called, “Best Practices”.

It is our intent that NCWD/Youth will become the recognized Center for connecting people with the best resources they need to effectively serve youth with disabilities.

WHY WE EXIST

In the first decade of the 21st Century, total employment is projected to increase by 15 percent. Jobs are expected to be created at a slightly slower pace than the phenomenal 17 percent job growth rate of the 1990s. Employment in occupations that generally require a college degree or other postsecondary award is projected to grow much faster than the average across all occupations. Jobs requiring work-related training will still account

for the majority of the new positions. Job creation and economic expansion once again offers Americans wonderful new opportunities and policy leaders and service providers many challenges.

A few short years ago, the need to restructure and recast the workforce development system in the United States was recognized, in part, to help address the challenges of globalization of economies, rapid advances in technology, ill-prepared workers, inefficient employment and training programs, and chronic unemployment of youth and people with disabilities.

Building upon efforts within several states, federal legislative changes to the workforce development system came through the WIA, which: (1) consolidated many workforce development activities; (2) re-aligned existing employment and training programs; (3) placed a new emphasis on youth programs; (4) introduced an emphasis on customer information and choice; (5) established a new emphasis on program accountability; (6) recognized individualized outcomes; (7) allowed for longer periods of time for planning and services; and (8) codified One Stop Career Centers for delivery of services.

The new law also called for the creation of state workforce investment boards, local workforce investment boards, and youth councils to serve as the policy bodies to assist state and local elected policy makers. There are many and diverse challenges facing governors, state and federal legislators, educators, program administrators, and front line service providers in the coming years, particularly around the employment and training of youth with disabilities.

The employment and economic boom of the 1990s eluded people with disabilities. Today, one out of every three disabled adults lives in

poverty. Even when they are employed, disabled Americans earn substantially less than the nondisabled worker; only seven cents to the dollar.

For most people with disabilities, the chronic unemployment and poverty cycle begins at youth. Compared to their nondisabled peers, youth with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and be dependent upon public assistance programs. The Social Security Administration reports that many young people with disabilities who enter the Supplementary Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI) rolls are likely to remain on the programs rolls for their entire lives.

Youth with disabilities, and particularly those with significant disabilities, experience particularly poor education and employment outcomes.

- One third of students with disabilities do not finish high school;
- Only one third of young people with disabilities who need job training receive it;
- Only a quarter of young people who need life skills training, tutoring, interpreting or personal counseling receive these services;
- More than half of all young people with emotional disturbances are arrested at least once within three to five years of exiting school;
- People with disabilities enroll in postsecondary education at half the rate of the general population;
- Only 26 percent of working age adults with disabilities have a job or own their own business.

In response to these challenges, the U.S. Department of Labor has funded two national technical assistance centers designed to assist the workforce development community to overcome the issues affecting the employment of people with disabilities

This Information Brief was written by Curtis Richards and published by the Institute for Educational Leadership for the National Collaborative.

For more information

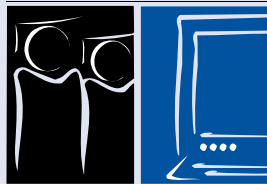
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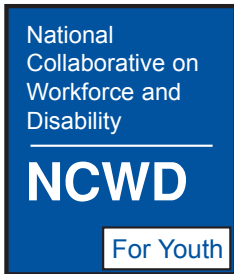
877-871-4748 (for information on High School High Tech sites)
www.highschoolhightech.net

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HIGH SCHOOL • HIGH TECH



The Department also funded a series of demonstration grants designed to test and build a set of “promising practices” models. In 2001, seven local organizations were awarded Innovative Demonstration Grants for Youth with Disabilities for testing various models of youth empowerment and employment development. The Department of Labor also invested in realigning a number of existing High School/High Tech programs with the workforce investment system and starting a handful of new High School/High Tech programs around the country. High School/High Tech programs provide opportunities for students with disabilities to explore careers in science, mathematics, and technology.



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