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CONNECTING TO INCLUSIVE SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM
WHY YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES SHOULD ENGAGE IN AMERICORPS

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>> Hello, everyone. I wanted to thank you for joining us, and let you know that we will be starting in a few minutes. The audio will go silent again for a moment and then we will be starting closer to 2:00 Eastern time. Thank you. (pause).

>> ERIC CLINE: Hello, everyone. This is Eric Cline again with the Institute for Educational Leadership and the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. Thanks for joining us for or Connecting to Inclusive Service and Volunteerism Webinar. I'm going to give you a quick introduction to the webinar platform that you are looking at. The slides are in the large window in the top left corner, and right below that you will see something that says caption stream pod. That is our live captioning pod. You will be able to read transcripts of what the presenters are saying and also download a copy of the transcript if you would like at the end of the session, or via the recording later on.

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Right beneath that, is a window that says web links. There are two resources that you can download at any point during this webinar (static) or in the recording later on to get access to those resources. Below that is the Q and A pod. If you have questions for the presenters as we are going along, feel free to type questions, and we will answer them out loud on the webinar or personally or to the whole group via the Q and A window.

Thank you very much. I'll turn it over to Nathan, who will start the presentation.

>> NATHAN CUNNINGHAM: Welcome to the webinar, Connecting to Inclusive Service and Volunteerism, Why Youth Should Engage in AmeriCorps. Thank you for joining us. This is hosted by the Office of Disability Employment Policy and Department of Labor and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

My name is Nathan Cunningham, and I'm a policy advisor in the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the U.S. Department of Labor, and I work on the youth policy team. We deal with issues surrounding youth in transition. Also on the webinar we will have Stephanie Enyart, the disability and inclusion advisor at the Corporation for National and Community Service. We will be hearing from Andraea LaVant, inclusion senior specialist at the Girl Scouts nation's capital. She will be sharing experiences having transitioned out of AmeriCorps program.

Before we get into the webinar, my office, Office of Disability Employment Policy, or ODEP, has been partnering with the Corporation for National and Community Service, CNCS. We have been working to increase the inclusion of people with disabilities and including youth with disabilities in national and community service programs. We are doing this because we have research and we know that participating in a service program can help connect youth with disabilities to employment.

Stephanie will be talking about some of this research later on during the webinar. But I will be starting the webinar from the Department of Labor perspective, because we know that there is a connection to employment here. I'll be discussing some of the benefits of inclusive service and volunteerism for youth with disabilities. And I'll be using a lot of information in one of our new resources, the fostering inclusive service and volunteerism guide that you can look at in the link box. I encourage you all to take a look and download that resource if you would like to learn more.

Then Stephanie Enyart will come on to describe how CNCS national service programs like AmeriCorps can be an excellent pathway to career success, and she will be detailing some of the AmeriCorps research findings and outcomes that we have. Finally, we will have Andraea on the presentation to share how her experience with AmeriCorps helps her to transition to employment.

As Eric said, we will be taking questions at the end of the webinar. Please submit them in the chat or the Q and A box, sorry, if you have a question.

Let's start by looking at defining inclusive service and what inclusive service is. It is an umbrella term for different types of service that we have, and the idea behind it is that it is the ideal for service.

It's service that encourages the recruitment and advancing, retaining individuals with disabilities in service programs include welcoming and inclusive, thoughtful policies and practices. It's service that goes beyond the compliance in the way that the program is run, and you might think about the concept of universal design if you are familiar with it. It's service that is designed to include all participants regardless of ability. There are different types of service. I have them on the slide, volunteering, community service and service learning. Volunteering we know is participating in a service program willingly without pay. Community service is different because it may not be volunteering. It may be part of criminal justice sentencing or a school requirement. Service learning is an intensified service program, because it's instructional and teaching, there is a instructional and teaching component to it. So there is more reflection on behalf of the individual participating in the service program, and so hopefully they can have a meaningful experience from that and assess the skills that they learn and apply it to a long-term career path or future success in that way.

The ideal is for all of these programs to be inclusive of all youth including youth with disabilities. Then service learning again is sort of the model for what a work based learning experience would be, and service can be a type of work based learning experience, that encourages participants to think longer term about how their participation in service can help them succeed along their career path.

I mentioned service should be inclusive of all youth including youth with disabilities. I want to take a moment to talk about what that means, from your all's perspective view, maybe you [inaudible] other disconnected youth. It is important to keep in mind if you are working with disconnected youth populations, you are also working with youth with disabilities even if you are not aware, because many people with disabilities do not disclose.

Some of the statistics here, we know that students with disabilities are twice as likely to drop out of school. If you are working with these young people who have dropped out, many may have disabilities. We know that 30 to 40 percent of youth who have involvement in the juvenile justice system have a disability that is categorized under the individualized education program, so one of the disabilities categorized in special education programming.

We also know that 90 percent of youth in foster care have a health condition, 55 percent have two and 25 percent have three or more. In fact, the rate for post traumatic stress disorder is higher for foster care alumni, those who leave foster care

than it is veterans. There is overlap here and it's important to keep in mind with youth that you serve. With youth with disabilities in particular, they are 2.5 to 3 times more likely to be unemployed, ages 16 to 24.

That is why service is an important strategy that we can use to help reconnect, reengage a lot of these young people.

Let's look at some of the benefits of service now and again a lot of this information is in our resource guide. But first of all, service programs can help to maximize personal growth for a youth who participates in them. You can think about the impact externally and internally, or the impact that they have outside of themselves, from connecting to other people, and have positive experiences in that way.

Also, internally, from gaining a sense of self, a sense of purpose, sense of self-determination in how they choose their service program, these types of things can also contribute to their personal growth.

We also know that service helps to develop their work preferences, and the realistic self-concept of who they are. It gives them real world experiences that they may not otherwise have. Research also shows that volunteering can help young people develop personal insight and gain new skills, access new relationships and networks that can be valuable to them over the course of their career or seeking a job in the future.

There is an important concept here with service that is civic efficacy. With civic efficacy, it is the belief that youth have about themselves, about the contributions that they can make, and this is important as you are working with youth with disabilities to shift to this narrative about youth with disabilities only being service recipients, and give them opportunities or work with them to create opportunities for them to also participate in service and gain some of this civic efficacy or community engagement experience.

These are all tied up in the impacting a sense of fulfillment in their community as well. We also know that service has a benefit of improving someone's health and academic success. Those who are involved in service are more likely, volunteering is associated with a lower likelihood of tobacco use and alcohol use, and teenage pregnancy. It can again help to prevent disconnection in some cases as well.

Youth who volunteer are more likely to do well in school, graduate and vote, again, to be more involved in their schools and communities. And oftentimes as in the case of service learning, the service program can be tied to their academic, success can be tied to academic credit which is another option to look at.

We also, for especially disconnected youth, service can

help them to identify and to navigate barriers, which is a important concept to think about. These types of negative stereotypes that some people might have about youth with disabilities or other disconnected youth, that they are going to encounter out in the world, service programs can be a way for them to confront those and deal with them in a service opportunity.

Also discrimination, accessibility, health barriers or lack of transit, shelter or clothing, these can all be barriers that come up as part of participating in a service program. It is a good chance for them to learn how they are going to address them and for you all as you are working with them to help them come up with solutions that will address them, help them to prepare, to learn self-advocacy skills if they need accommodations, or workforce supports, or other workforce supports.

Service also introduces them to new relationships and networks, research shows that volunteering can help people to meet others in interests areas of theirs. This is related to the last point, perhaps the most important point, that is service helps to foster career development and skill building.

In the Office of Disability Employment Policy, we are a big proponent of the career development process, this three phase process, in which young people participate in self-exploration, so they are exploring their interests, skills, values, talents, things that they like. In the next phase they are looking at career exploration, things, how their skills and talents and who they are matches with different career options.

In the final phase, looking at career planning and management, they are actually taking steps, taking action, taking classes, and participating in service opportunities or other work-based learning experiences and preparing to succeed in their careers.

This career development process, service can play a crucial role in helping them to access that. If they are interested in the health care field, they can try to volunteer in that field and meet other people in it. It helps them develop technical or hard skills in that way, if it's related to long term career goals especially. And it can help them develop soft skills too which we know employers value and are those employability skills like communication, problem solving, teamwork and networking that can contribute to their career success.

For the next part of the webinar we know about some of the benefits associated with service, and we want to start thinking about how you all who work with young people with disabilities can help them to engage in service programs. It starts with preparing youth. The first thing, believe it or not, is that many youth say one of the barriers they encounter is never being

asked to participate in service. They have never considered it.

Of course, you have to start with the ask and see if it's something they would be interested in, and throughout the process remembering to empower the youth to drive that process so it's meaningful to them, reflects their interests, and so it can be relevant to their long-term career goals.

Discussing the benefits of service with them can be helpful as well, although benefits that I discussed before and that are in the guide to the right in the link box, and then I wanted to talk more about this identifying and addressing barriers to participation section, because especially for youth with disabilities and other disconnected youth, it can be an important step in that process.

We may encounter logistical barriers, time involved in volunteering, transit to and from volunteering might be a issue, motivation to volunteer. Maybe the young person doesn't believe they have anything valuable to contribute. It's our job to tell them no, that they really do and service could be a great opportunity for them.

We know that they might encounter physical, attitudinal and programmatic barriers to participation, physical barriers being facilities that may not be accessible, attitudinal barriers, negative stereotyping or stigma against youth with disabilities serving, programmatic barriers, like a program that is set up to serve people with disabilities but may not think about including people with disabilities also as those who can serve.

You may need to work directly with the service program sponsors on these issues and with the youth learning to advocate for themselves for their needs to push this inclusive message.

Finally, other types of barriers may come up ad hoc and you listen to the youth concerns, and maybe some of the concerns of their family as well.

As part of engaging youth in the conversation, you have to start looking at some of the different types of service opportunities that are available. They vary by organizational structure. There is formal programs like AmeriCorps which Stephanie Enyart will talk more about later. There is also informal programs that might allow for a little more independence, if that is something that the young person is interested in.

But it may have less support, so if they need more support, maybe not the best option for them. There is different types of time commitments as well. There are episodic commitments that may happen once and they are done. There is continuing commitments. There is alternative breaks like spring or summer breaks in school programs, when youth can go out and serve.

Unpaid internships walk this line of volunteering or

service, that should be applicable to some of their long term goals. Finally, just their participation preferences, if they prefer to participate on their own or in a group with their family, they can participate virtually at times. They can also participate in microvolunteering which is this concept of a volunteering opportunity like relay for life for example that may take place once, or in an episodic fashion.

Now we have some of the, we have nine steps in the guide to engage youth in service. It sounds more daunting than it is. But it is related to the information that I've discussed. I'll go through them sort of quickly and you can take a look or ask questions if you would like to know more about each of them.

But we have the self-exploration part at the beginning, completing assessment activities for the young person completing their own assessment activities, to answer questions like what sort of volunteer opportunity they might want, what they hope to gain from it, why they want to volunteer in the first place, things like that.

Then in step 2, once they have come to conclusions, you can conduct organizational research, looking at different opportunities that are available in your communities, and if they even take volunteers, and even if they don't, maybe asking if they would be interested in taking a volunteer on.

In step 3, disclosure comes up as a big question for youth with disabilities. It can be a question for other youth as well. But if youth with disabilities need to advocate for a specific accommodations, they have to decide what, when and how to disclose their disability. They may want to disclose during the interview or may want to disclose later on. It depends what they need to ask for, what sort of information.

So practicing that process or having a conversation about when that should take place is important. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth that we have linked to in the resource slide is a great resource for this. We have a lot of materials on disclosure that I encourage you all to look at.

Related to that in step 4, if they are identifying accommodations and other work supports that they need, they will have to be implemented. Again you may have to work with the service program sponsor to take care of that. But we also have Job Accommodation Network or JAN, that I encourage you to look at, if you are less familiar or they are less familiar with accommodations. 58 percent of accommodations are no cost. They could be something like, instead of receiving directions orally, someone may prefer receiving them written. That may make more sense to them. It can be something like that, that a young person might need to talk to their volunteer sponsor about.

In the last couple of steps, we have completing the application and resume', related to their career development. If a young person has never completed a resume' before, a volunteer opportunity can be a good way to beef up their resume' and give them experience with that.

They will need to prepare for the interview. Again this could be an opportunity to practice, if they haven't interviewed before. These are all related to components that they will have to consider in careers as well. It is good practice for that.

Finally with the last couple of steps, discussing soft skills is really important with young people, because employers really value those often even more than some of the hard skills. This is again the self-management, communication, problem solving, critical thinking components, that they can practice as part of a volunteer experience, and mark their practice with.

Here at ODEP, we have a resource called skills to pay the bills that I would encourage you to check out. It goes through these accommodations. Sorry, goes through all these soft skills. There are activities for you to do with youth if you are interested.

There is independent living and self-advocacy skills, again if they are less familiar with those. Volunteering may be a big step for them. So talking about or reflecting on the things that they need to practice to be more independent in their volunteer opportunity or to advocate for themselves, is an important step.

Finally, the last step, establishing goals and monitoring their progress. Youth may want to set goals for what they will learn from their volunteer experience, or what they hope to learn from it, especially related to jobs afterwards. They should especially take pride in what they learn. It is not just something that they are going to do but they are actually learning from it.

They should be proud of their accomplishments as part of it.

Again, a lot of the information that I've talked about comes from this guide fostering inclusive volunteering and service learning. The link is here, if you want to take a look. Then I also mentioned the ODEP TA center, National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. The link is there. It has resources on disclosure and among many other things if you want to take a look.

If you have any questions again, we will take questions towards the end of the presentation. But for now, I'm going to turn it over to Stephanie Enyart to take us to a more concrete level and talk about some of the CNCS programs that you can consider engaging youth in.

>> STEPHANIE ENYART: Great, thank you so much, Nathan. Hello, everyone, thank you for calling in today and joining the webinar.

My name is Stephanie Enyart, disability and inclusion advisor at the Corporation for National and Community Service, which we call CNCS. It is a independent federal agency, with the responsibility to engage Americans in service, at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, community and faith based groups through our two programs, AmeriCorps and also senior corps. I'll talk about AmeriCorps programs today though because they are the ones that are for young people and young people with disabilities hopefully.

AmeriCorps is a network of service programs. AmeriCorps members serve in more than 60,000 locations across the country, with thousands of not for profit organizations through three different types of AmeriCorps programs.

Less than 50 percent of those that are serving and are part of the national service program are serving at a full time capacity, so there are part time positions available.

The first program and the broadest is the AmeriCorps state and national program. AmeriCorps state and national, grants are provided to a network of local and national organizations, some examples include Habitat for Humanity, city air, teach for America, and people involved in service in these capacities are committed to national service along six different critical community needs, addressing these six needs. Education, health, disaster relief, economic development, the environment, and programs for veterans and military families.

Some of the types of things that people would do in these service programs would include tutoring children, building homes, providing immediate response after disasters hit. So that is a flavor, although there is a wide variety because there are six different focus areas.

The second program is AmeriCorps VISTA. This provides full time members to nonprofits, faith based and other community organizations, and public agencies, to build the capacity of these organizations, to create and develop programs that bring low income individuals in communities out of poverty. It is a antipoverty focused program.

We are going to hear from an AmeriCorps VISTA alum later on in our webinar today.

The third program is AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, which we call NCCC, a full-time team based residential program, for men and women ages 18 to 24. This is really targeted at young people, and obviously in terms of who we are talking about today, this could be a wonderful option for people.

The mission for NCCC members is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct team-based national and community service, based out of five campuses, these members travel neighboring states, and do service projects in the local areas.

The five campuses are like the home base. The campuses include locations in Baltimore, Maryland, Denver, Colorado, Benton, Iowa, Vicksburg, Mississippi and Sacramento, California. AmeriCorps members receive a modest living allowance for their service. And a educational award that is valued up to \$5,775 which could be used for education or college debt. We will move to the next slide. In terms of the kinds of tangible things we have talked about some of the harder, Nathan addressed many of the things that young people with disabilities can get from service, but the types of benefits that a national service program like AmeriCorps could offer include receiving a modest living allowance, being eligible for that education award at the end of the successful service term, and then members who are on SSI are not impacted at all by getting the living allowance, which makes it possible for them to get a living allowance and also their exercise before and after service. And then VISTA, the AmeriCorps VISTA program is the only one that allows members who are on SSDI to retain that benefit.

There is a distinction, if you are on SSDI and you want no impact to your benefits, you want to continue to get that living allowance, VISTA is the program that you want to be part of.

I have a lot of details in terms of how to apply and frequently asked questions, by young people with disabilities, and prospective members, in a Q and A that was just released. It is in the links box, and also on the slides.

If you want to look at some of those questions and answers or share a resource directly with the young people that you are looking at assisting, this is a wonderful resource because it really truly walks through the main kinds of questions and queries, and all the statistical information that young people want to know about in one place.

That is in the links box and also on the slides.

We will go to the next slide. I'm going to move into the research portion, sharing two different surveys that CNCS has done. The first one is from 2013. It was volunteering as a pathway to employment report. You have a link to this. Both of the research surveys I'm going to share with you, you can go to these links that you can find through the Power Point, and look further at some of the detail. I'm going to give a high level overview of some of the things I feel are key.

So you know, this research was compiled by looking at our entire service group together as one. I'm not giving you only

disability specific information. I'm giving you the entire community, which includes people with disabilities.

This is outcomes from this. This particular report it provides the most compelling empirical research to date, establishing a connection between volunteerism and employment in the United States.

Key findings show several connections between volunteering and employment. Three key figures that I felt were very moving include that volunteers have a 27 percent higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than nonvolunteers do.

Second, volunteers without a high school diploma have a 51 percent higher likelihood of finding employment than nonvolunteers do.

Third, volunteers living in rural areas have a 55 percent higher likelihood of finding employment than nonvolunteers.

For more information about the connections that we are finding between volunteerism and employment, please go and check out this volunteering as a pathway report.

We will go to the next slide. I'm going to share some of our most recent research, exciting research, in October 2015, CNCS put out a alumni survey that tracked many years of data. It is AmeriCorps outcomes survey.

This helps us understand and document the long-term outcomes in four different areas. The development of career oriented soft skills, career pathways, sense of community, and civic engagement so these four areas.

This study compared results for cohorts of AmeriCorps alumni who had completed their service in 2012, in 2009, and in 2004. People who participated in this were either two years out from serving, five years out or ten years out before the survey project begins.

This gives us a range. So some of the findings include that AmeriCorps alumni report having high levels of career oriented soft skills, including cultural competencies, self-efficacies, career specific skills for interacting with others, and other, and skills for self-management.

In each skill area, alumni reported that their skills had increased from before AmeriCorps service, or that AmeriCorps service had helped them build these skills.

In the first area, the career pathways area, while there was some diversity in career pathways, 63 percent of alumni were students prior to AmeriCorps, and those who engaged in service, I mean those who engaged in education six months prior to AmeriCorps, analysis shows that 44 percent were working for the government, or nonprofit sector, six months after AmeriCorps, and 56 percent were working in government or in the nonprofit sector now. That is where alumni were ending up. Other alumni

attended school after AmeriCorps furthering their education goals and when surveyed, more than half of alumni reported working in the nonprofit, 33 percent of them, or the government sector, 25 percent.

So that's heavily tilted towards nonprofit and government.

27 percent obtained a job directly connected to the organization where they served which is fairly high when you think about a brief experience of skill building that people are getting, and then the actual launch into employment afterwards, 27 percent.

15 percent are currently in a position that is connected to the service that they had with AmeriCorps. 80 percent indicated that their service experience was worthwhile in furthering their careers.

More, most alumni reported that AmeriCorps service either aligned with their existing career goals, or directed them towards service, a service related field with 34 percent indicating that their career path turned in the direction of service, following AmeriCorps. This is something that is shaping the career trajectories as well.

We will go to the next slide. The sense of community, so overall, alumni reported having a strong sense of community, with an average of 82 percent of alumni agreeing that they felt a strong personal attachment to the community, were aware of community needs, felt an obligation to contribute to their community, planned or were actively involved in community issues, and voted in elections.

We will go to the next slide. In terms of civic engagement, AmeriCorps alumni reported having high levels of civic engagement and civic self-efficacy and indicated that their AmeriCorps experience influenced their civic engagement, almost 80 percent of alumni indicated that they were definitely, that they definitely or probably had civic self-efficacy which is defined as the ability to deal with community problems by taking a range of actions. Some of the actions include things that are highly connected to that pre-employment skill readiness. They include things like creating a plan to address an issue, getting others involved, organizing or running a meeting, identifying individuals or groups who could help, or creating, or I'm sorry, or contacting an elected official.

With this research, I'm hoping that you can get just a sense of the type of things that AmeriCorps alumni are taking from their service, and really what some of the research-based benefits have looked like for those who have been coming from national service programs like AmeriCorps, and I hope that you can look for further detail at the surveys themselves, and also direct people to the Q and A that is in the links box, that will

help you understand all the logistical parameters in getting involved in getting people to service within the communities that you are serving.

It's my great pleasure at this point to turn it, we can go to the next slide, over to Andraea LaVant, alumni of one of our programs and ready to share her experience.

>> ANDRAEA LAVANT: Hello, everyone. Thanks so much for the opportunity to be on the call today, really excited to be here. I currently work for Girl Scouts over the nation's capital as the inclusion senior specialist here. I am an AmeriCorps VISTA alum, class of, goodness, I was in '06, '07 in the State of Tennessee. I attribute my AmeriCorps terms of service to the success that I'm experiencing today, just in the world of work.

So, just a bit about my experience, or even which relates to the fact that I am a person with a disability. I have a physical disability. I'm a wheelchair user. I grew up in the state of Kentucky, and then went to college and Tennessee. And upon approaching finishing school in Tennessee, I was like most college students, trying to figure out what my next step could be and would be.

One way or another, connected to a local nonprofit in the community that focused on literacy, and so they introduced the concept of AmeriCorps and volunteerism. And although initially of course, when you are coming out of college, you are thinking, okay, I need to be bringing in income and making money, and even as a college student I was a recipient of SSI, which basically, supplementing my income, helping paying my bills, so I wanted to kind of think through and some of the things that were even talked about on this call, how work was going to affect my benefits, the benefits that I was receiving as a person with disability.

Anyway I was introduced to the concept of AmeriCorps. And the program that I ended up being connected with was the Tennessee State Service Commission, which actually administers the AmeriCorps state programs in the state.

It was going to be an opportunity for me to work in an office setting. My degree was in public relations. I was going to have opportunity to basically network and to write and utilize a lot of skills that I had gained in college.

And initially, and then I also just loved the idea of being able to give back to my community, so it was again like all of the things that both Nathan and Stephanie alluded to or said, the fact that I was able to kind of exercise the skills that I had gained through my education, also as often people with disabilities are seen as people that are recipients of service, as opposed to the idea that we can really be contributing

members of society, and so I really even at that age appreciated the opportunity.

So I ended up serving in this role at the state service commission for a year, and that was when I was, because we administered AmeriCorps programs and we also administered the grants for service learning at the time, and things of that nature, it really got me involved in the world of youth work, and from there, again, I was in Tennessee, and so as I was approaching the time for me to finish up my first year, I started looking into employment opportunities, and kind of decided that I wanted to make a move and applied for a job in Washington, D.C.

The job that I ended up taking in Washington, D.C. really was directly correlated with the work that I had done for that one year in AmeriCorps. One of the things that was mentioned earlier, again with regard to benefits, that was a real appeal for me and that I know is a concern for people with disabilities, is the loss of benefits. So I was grateful, because as an AmeriCorps member, I was able to receive the monthly stipend, living stipend that helped with my rent and things like that, but also because I was able to continue to receive my SSI, it served as more of an incentive for me to take on this role in AmeriCorps, because then I kind of had, I had dual, I had multiple streams of income.

So it really, I probably, I know that I was fortunate, because it allowed me probably to have a little bit more income than the average AmeriCorps member without a disability. That is because I was still able to keep my SSI.

So again, great, an incredibly great experience. And the next, the job that I got in Washington, D.C. had to do with youth with service and service learning. One of our funders actually was the Corporation for National and Community Service. So I was able to basically use all of the tools that I gained, all of the skills that I gained in my one year of AmeriCorps service in this office setting, it was the first time that I was, just those soft skills which Nathan mentioned earlier, just time management and, you know, interacting with others and team building, and all those things, this was my first time. I had done an internship in school, but that AmeriCorps term really allowed me to exercise all of those things that I was ready to enter the workforce.

So, that was almost ten years ago, when I finished my term. Again, that is what was the pathway for me to employment, and now I've been in full time work for nine years here in Washington, D.C., and I really credit my AmeriCorps VISTA time to being able to be successful like I am today.

So, that's the brief of my story. If there are any

questions, I'm happy to answer.

>> NATHAN CUNNINGHAM: Great, thank you. This is Nathan again. Thanks for sharing your experiences with AmeriCorps VISTA and how it helped you transition to employment. We have a couple of questions in the Q and A box.

I'm going to go through a couple of them. But if you have any more, please go ahead and type them in.

So, these are all good questions. Someone asked, who or how can financial needs for items such as clothing, classes, clothing and classes be covered? How can we cover some of the clothing and classes that youth might need, just to help them prepare for jobs or participate in service opportunities?

In terms of classes or education or training, things like that, I want to point out the workforce system can be a great source or avenue for you to go to, even with relation to service, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, you can fund leadership development experiences including community service for youth. So in all communities there are American job centers that can fund services for youth, and there is a priority for funding out of school youth or youth who are not already employed in terms of the way the funding is broken down.

So that includes youth with disabilities, if they are out of school. So that could be a great avenue for you to go to help participate in accessing classes or training, and in addition to vocational rehabilitation, that you may be more familiar with. And in terms of the clothing need, I did a quick Google search because I was looking around. There are many different nonprofits that can provide that service.

You have to do a search in your community to find the one that works for you.

We have a question on how do we provide support of self-esteem but not imply that their volunteering is more, quote, special, just due to their disabilities.

With this question, we are trying to get at this concern that we are making youth with disabilities feel, quote-unquote, special, if we are providing too much support for them, or if we are providing support in a way that is not helpful to them. So it's important to keep in mind that when you are engaging young people in service, it's something that they have to be interested in. It's a process that they themselves should be driving, so that it meets their interests and is meaningful to them.

It is important to have high expectations for the young people that we are working with, so that we can hold them, we can help assist them to transition to employment, instead of other opportunities.

We also have a question, how do we ensure that youth and

their families understand that volunteering does not necessarily lead to employment, which is another good question, because there are a lot of great statistics and research for the things that volunteering can do to lead to employment. But it may not in every case be the perfect solution or the perfect fit that will get someone right to a job.

It's important that it's not the only thing that the young person is doing at that time. Volunteering is not a full-time commitment, and is not something that should be occupying all of their time. They should be also exploring different avenues, especially if they are looking for a job, that can help them lead to employment.

Volunteering can be a great opportunity, but it may not or shouldn't be the only opportunity. I think we did get some other questions.

I'm going to take a look. If a person with a disability requires an assistance/aide, is that a cost that is covered by that person or are there programs that will also offer this?

I'm not able to answer that. I don't know if any of the other presenters are able to jump in and answer that. But if not I'll take --

>> STEPHANIE: I can, Nathan. This is Stephanie. The query about accommodations and they gave an example for having a personal assistant or aide, in terms of how accommodations work in our AmeriCorps programs, each of the programs handles them slightly differently, in how the accommodations are 345 administered. But we provide reasonable accommodations and we fund those accommodations to the best of our ability, for any type of disability.

We have had the full range of people with, the full range (pause).

>> Are you still there, Stephanie? We are not able to hear you at the moment.

>> While we are waiting for Stephanie, this is Andraea, I can speak from personal experience because I do utilize personal assistants services, and so things may have changed. I know for me, because I was a Medicaid beneficiary, and received Social Security benefits, that basically paid for my personal assistant services.

So because of my Medicaid provided those services for me, so if a person is already receiving Social Security benefits, then often that is an avenue for personal assistant services, especially because it's going to, and I don't know, unless things have changed, because Stephanie would be able to answer this, obviously the, in essence AmeriCorps would provide or cover the cost for anything that was related to doing the job.

So for example, there were some work trips that I made

during my time, and so they paid for my services then. But if it was outside of, or I don't want to say work, but if it was outside of the scope of my volunteering, so for example, obviously when I'm not, you know, in the office or doing anything related to my service, so if it's at home and it's related to getting up or going to bed or things like that, that was kind of outside of that scope.

(clicking noise).

That was when my Medicaid benefits kicked in.

>> NATHAN CUNNINGHAM: Thanks for jumping in, Andraea, while Stephanie has some technical issues, in answering that question for us. We have another question from someone who is asking my organization recently received a grant to find volunteer opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. Any advice for working with this group specifically?

I'll refer back to a little of what I was talking about during my presentation. When you are trying to find a match that is right for the individual, it is an individualized process. You are looking at what the individual him or herself is interested in doing, and matching them with an opportunity that really meets their skills and abilities and interests, instead of looking at a group of people and trying to match a group of people with a particular opportunity.

But, there is one strategy that may be applicable to this individual or other individuals that are trying to match individuals with significant disabilities, and it's a strategy called customized employment that also comes out of my office, the office of disability employment policy. You can look that up.

It is a strategy that looks at the same idea of matching an individual based on their strengths and interests, with customized position. So you work both sides, the supply and demand side. You work with the individual to come up with a position that works for them or makes sense for them. You also work with the other side, the employer, and in this case you can also work with the sponsored program for example to come up with a volunteer opportunity that makes sense for them.

That is one strategy, customized employment, that you could consider.

>> STEPHANIE ENYART: This is Stephanie. I want to apologize for dropping off mid answer. I'm not sure exactly how far I got into that answer. But we do provide accommodations to the full range of people with disabilities with a full range of accommodation needs. I wanted to put that out there.

You can contact me for more information, as well as look at our Q and A, where this is also addressed. So sorry about that.

>> NATHAN CUNNINGHAM: No problem, Stephanie. Thanks for

finishing with your response. Andraea was able to jump in and explain a little bit which was great. This is Nathan. I don't believe we have any other questions at this point.

That being said, I want to thank everyone for joining us today. If you have any other follow-up questions, you can get in touch with us, my E-mail address is my last name, Cunningham.Nathan @ DOL.gov. We don't have it on the slide, but it's my last name dot first name at DOL.gov. If you have any other questions related to including youth with disabilities in service, we would be happy to answer your questions. Thanks for participating today. Stephanie, do you have any final words?

>> STEPHANIE ENYART: Yes, I'd like to give a address to reach me and give mer information about AmeriCorps programs and disabilities. You can E-mail disability @ cns.gov.

>> NATHAN CUNNINGHAM: Thanks, Stephanie. That is on the slide. Andraea, do you have any final words?

>> No, thank you.

>> NATHAN CUNNINGHAM: Thank you for being on. Thank you, everyone, for participating. This concludes the webinar.

(end of webinar at 1:54 p.m. CST)

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