Hi Cathie –

Thank you again for your hospitality at Stormont. I am sorry for the delay in sending some information to you and will continue to look for examples of the public workforce system serving young people with disabilities. Please note that when individuals with disabilities seek services at an American Job Center (or one-stop career center), many do not disclose that they have a disability. Doing so is voluntary.

Here are a few resources on the topic. We hope they prove useful.

1. A success story from New Hampshire that truly embraces what WIOA is about; serving youth most in need, partnership, collaboration, leveraging of funds, and a seamless service delivery system. The person highlighted is still in contact with NH staff and still employed several years later.
2. A policy document from Minnesota that uses the Office of Disability Employment Policy's Guideposts for Success in the Disability Employment Initiative* and other youth serving programs across the state. Among others, there are individual guideposts for serving youth with learning disabilities and mental health needs. This a dense document containing operational information.
3. The Employment and Training Administration's recent Training and Employment Notice 32-14 that releases a report entitled, "Services for Youth with Disabilities Provided under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act: Results from a Survey of Local Workforce Investment Boards". It provides a link to the report.
4. A link to the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth which has information about employment and youth with disabilities. http://www.ncwd-youth.info/

Please let us know if you have additional questions. It is important work that the Committee is undertaking to increase opportunities for young people with disabilities to acquire the skills and tools needed to get a good job and stay employed.

Best, Gerri

*The Disability Employment Initiative was launched in 2010 is intended to improve education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of young people and adults who are unemployed, underemployed, or receiving Social Security disability benefits, by refining and expanding successful workforce strategies. It requires states to implement strategic approaches for providing employment services to youth and adults with disabilities. The

Department has now competitively awarded grants to 26 states that support 37 projects. You can find out more about this initiative at the Department's Office of Disability Employment Policy website – http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/DEI.htm

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO.	32-14
	DATE	June 2, 2015

TO: AFFLILIATE AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS
COMPREHENSIVE AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING REGIONAL
ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA) LIAISONS
STATE WIA ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB) CHAIRS
LOCAL WIB CHAIRS
STATE WIB EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS
LOCAL WIB EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

FROM: PORTIA WU /s/
Assistant Secretary
Employment and Training Administration

JENNIFER SHEEHY /s/
Acting Assistant Secretary
Office of Disability Employment Policy

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of a Report, *"Services for Youth with Disabilities Provided under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act: Results from a Survey of Local Workforce Investment Boards"*

1. **Purpose.** To announce the release and availability of a report, *"Services for Youth with Disabilities Provided under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act: Results from a Survey of Local Workforce Investment Boards;"* and to provide information on recommended strategies and resources for increasing effective service delivery for youth with disabilities.

2. **References.**
   - Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), Pub. L. 113-128, enacted July 22, 2014;
   - Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, as amended 29 U.S.C. 2801, et seq., Title 1, Subtitle B, Chapter 4 – Youth Services;
   - WIA Final Rule, 20 C.F.R. parts 661 and 664, published at 65 FR 49294, Aug. 11, 2000;
   - Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 31-10 *Increasing Enrollment and Improving Services to Youth with Disabilities*;
   - Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 32-12 *Administration of the Survey of Workforce Investment Act Services Provided to Youth with Disabilities for Local Workforce Investment Board Executive Directors*; and
   - TEGL No. 27-09 *Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program Guidance for Program Year (PY) 2010.*

3. **Background.** The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) commissioned a study, *"Services for Youth with Disabilities Provided under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act: Results from a Survey of Local Workforce Investment Boards."* This study explored and examined the extent to which Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) provide services to youth with disabilities in their American Job Centers and network of youth service providers under WIA.

   The final report provides a snapshot of services received by youth with disabilities in the public workforce system at a single point in time, discusses several recent DOL initiatives targeting this population, summarizes a series of literature review findings, and describes the survey of LWIB Executive Directors. The goals of the survey were to address key research questions about current practices related to: 1) LWIB approaches to serving youth with disabilities, 2) identification of and responsiveness to the distinctive needs of youth with disabilities, 3) building staff capacity, 4) expanding services and funding for youth with disabilities, 5) reaching out-of-school youth, and 6) providing employment and community service opportunities to youth with disabilities.

   While the study was commissioned under WIA, these results are also relevant to WIOA, which was enacted in July of 2014, and which supersedes WIA and amends Wagner-Peyser and Vocational Rehabilitation. WIOA continues to provide for the provision of workforce development services such as assessments, basic skills education, career readiness, occupational skills training, and job search assistance for both youth and adults, including individuals with disabilities.

4. **Research Design and Analytical Approach.** The primary source of data for this study is a Web-based survey administered to all 580 LWIBs across the country. Survey instructions encouraged the LWIB Executive Directors to forward the survey link to the person with the most knowledge about services provided for youth with disabilities. Survey responses were collected over an eight-week period with a total of 400 surveys completed or partially completed for an overall completion rate of 69 percent. The analysis is descriptive and results do not support causal relationships. However, results may be used to develop hypotheses about causality that may be used to conduct additional investigative studies. Other limitations are described in the report. The report also includes two appendices that include copies of TEN 32-12, survey instructions and instrument, and the list of experts that supported the development of the study.

5. **Key Findings.** The study recognizes the complexities of providing services in Local Workforce Investment areas through American Job Centers and the network of service providers and provides useful insights about distinct program philosophies, dedicated resources to enhance capacity, and expansion of partnerships to serve youth with disabilities. In terms of distinct programming philosophies, the majority of LWIBs (72 percent) that responded to the survey acknowledge that they view youth with disabilities as a natural component of the larger youth population and distinctions are generally not made when delivering services. Nonetheless, a distinct minority (28 percent) responded that they consider youth with disabilities a unique service population that requires proactive targeting

and customization of program resources. Regardless of service philosophy, the majority of LWIBs have dedicated some level of resources to enhance their capacity to effectively serve youth with disabilities. Examples include appointing constituent advocates to the Workforce Investment Board or Youth Council, hiring staff dedicated to serving those with disabilities, conducting targeted outreach and/or providing specialized staff development or employer training. However, many LWIBs also make proactive efforts to expand their resource and stakeholder base through the formation of partnerships with other organizations. As an example, nearly nine out of 10 LWIBs have partnerships with both vocational rehabilitation (89 percent) and secondary schools and alternative schools (87 percent).

The study further specifies a number of challenges including:

- Resource availability. Limited WIA funding presents a challenge to serving youth with disabilities particularly when faced with the intensive service level this population may require.

- Prevalence of undisclosed disabilities. Survey respondents report a high degree of undisclosed disabilities among the youth population. Strategic commitments to serving this population are compromised if there is uncertainty about the scope of those being targeted.

- Employer perceptions. Despite proactive training efforts, many LWIBs report that employers continue to perceive that hiring of youth with disabilities may entail additional costs and may compromise productivity.

- Out-of-school youth with disabilities. While an individual is enrolled in school there are generally more resources available to identify a disability, assess potential needs, and make appropriate referrals. Once an individual is no longer in school, the planning, identification, and delivery of these services becomes much more challenging.

- Performance measures perceptions. WIA performance measures are seen as a disincentive to providing the type of intensive services that youth with disabilities may need. Additionally, emphasis on different performance measures is perceived as a challenge to the formation of cross-agency partnerships.

- Staff and provider preparedness. While DOL makes investments in WIA staff development to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to serve individuals with disabilities, approximately nine out of 10 LWIBs continue to report the need for additional training.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations for the DOL, states, and LWIBs to consider, such as continuing to closely examine effective and promising practices, seeking greater insight into the size and mix of the youth with disabilities population, sustaining efforts to build staff capacity, adopting a broader perspective on the issue of "access," seeking more work opportunities, in particular with the more "reluctant" employers, and expanding partnerships with the mental health community.

6. **Additional Resources.** To assist state and local workforce boards with addressing the challenges and adopting the recommendations, the Attachment describes the identified strategies and related resources for better service delivery to youth with disabilities.

7. **Inquiries.** To view an abstract of this publication, as well as download the full report, visit the Employment and Training Administration Research Publication Database Website at: http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm.

8. **Attachment.** Strategies and Resources for Serving Youth with Disabilities

POLICY MEMORANDUM

TO: Policy Memo Book Holders

FROM: Arlyce Cucich

RE: Guideposts for Success

CATEGORY OF AGENCY ACTIVITY: Client Service Guidelines

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

EXPIRATION DATE: None

REFERENCE: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) **Guideposts for Success** and the Minnesota Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) pilot project in connection with the Department of Labor Federal DEI and Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

RESCINDS: *PM # 414 dated December 24, 2013*

BACKGROUND: The transition from youth to adulthood is challenging for almost every young person. This is particularly true for young people with disabilities. Yet, it is in those crucial transition-age years that a young person's future can be determined.

An extensive review of research, demonstration projects and effective practice suggests that all youth need:

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

To support positive youth development, NCWD developed the **Guideposts for Success.**

The **Guideposts** provide: (1) a statement of principles, (2) a direction that will lead to better outcomes for all young people, and, (3) a way to organize policy and practice.

The **Guideposts** are based on the import following assumptions:

1. High expectations for all youth, including youth with disabilities;
2. Equality of opportunity for everyone, including nondiscrimination, individualization, inclusion, and integration;
3. Full participation through self-determination, informed choice, and participation in decision making;
4. Independent living, including skills development and long-term supports and services;
5. Competitive employment and economic self-sufficiency, which may include supports; and;
6. Individualized, person-driven, and culturally and linguistically appropriate transition planning.

The five (5) **Guideposts** are:

1. School-Based Preparatory Experiences,
2. Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences,
3. Youth Development and Leadership,
4. Connecting Activities,
5. Family Involvement & Supports.

The **Guideposts** can help steer families, institutions, and youth through the transition processes.

As part of the Youth DEI pilot, Minnesota's service strategies include:

1. Individual Resource Teams;
2. Partnerships and Collaborations; and
3. **Guideposts for Success.**

CHANGES:
1. *Attachment A – Youth Assessment: Added answering questionnaire is voluntary and three (3) contact information options.*

POLICY:

1. All RMCEP field staff will use the new updated Youth Assessment form (**Attachment A**) when meeting with all youth for possible program services including DEI services. This form can also be used for persons aged 22-24 as they may be eligible for DEI services.

2. Youth who are determined to be candidates for DEI service participation will be discussed with the Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) for possible additional services based on their needs. These additional services can be found in the DEI Policy Memo #312 and the Ticket to Work Policy Memo #323.

3. An Individual Service Strategy (ISS) will be created for each participant based on the **Guideposts (Attachment B).**

4. Youth goals will be set for each younger youth based on the **Guideposts.**

5. The **Guideposts (Attachment B)** will be used as the basis for creating Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) whereby each of the **Guideposts** are represented by a person(s) who can assist with strategies and services. These representatives will work together towards a common goal and take ownership of their actions to meet the need of the youth.

6. The following additional **Guideposts for Success** attachments can assist staff in working with youth and families who have specific needs based on their particular situations.

    Attachment C ~ Youth with Learning Disabilities
    Attachment D ~ Youth Foster Care
    Attachment E ~ Youth Involved in the Juvenile Corrections System
    Attachment F ~ Youth with Mental Health Needs
    Attachment G ~ A Framework for Families Preparing Youth for Adulthood
    Attachment H ~ Employer Success

Links for all the **Guideposts for Success** documents as well as specific guide books for each can be found at http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts.

PROCEDURE:

1. Based on the information gathered on the Youth Assessment form, RMCEP staff will develop an ISS for each participant that will address each of the **Guideposts for Success** areas and include activities that youth need to complete as they transition.

2. Youth Services Coordinators will set goals for younger youth based on the activities and steps in the ISS created for each youth. Most goals set should be attainable with a 4-6 month period of time.

3. Youth Services Coordinators will coordinate their ISS and goals with the DRC for any youth who is receiving DEI services.

4. Youth Services Coordinators will participate in IRT meetings with DEI enrolled youth and update their ISS plans to reflect the outcomes of those meetings.

5. During the follow-up time after a youth has been exited from their program services, the Youth Services Coordinators will assist the youth in self advocacy based on these **Guideposts** to obtain connecting services they need for their continued success and transition.

Youth Assessment

RMCEP Staff: **Please read aloud the following statement to the youth completing the Youth Assessment questionnaire: "THE QUESTIONS BELOW ARE VOLUNTARY. YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES SHOULD YOU CHOOSE NOT TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS."**

Name:_____ SSN:_____Date:_____

Address:_____City:_____Zip:_____

Phone:_____ Alternate/Cell Phone:_____ Email:_____

1ST Contact Information Name:_____ Relationship_____

Contact Information Email & Phone:_____

2ND Contact Information Name:_____ Relationship_____

Contact Information Email & Phone:_____

3RD Contact Information Name:_____ Relationship_____

Contact Information Email & Phone:_____

What do you know about the Youth Program?_____

Why do you want to be a part of the Youth Program and what do you want to Learn from it?_____
_____

SCHOOL-BASED PREPARATORY EXPERIENCES:

Attending High School_____ Attending ALC_____ Working on GED_____ Dropped Out_____ Current Grade_____

School_____ When Will You Graduate_____ Are You On Track_____

Have you Passed All Graduation Test Requirements for Reading and Math?_____ If No, Which One(s)_____

Graduated from High School_____ If Yes, Date of Graduation_____ GPA or Average Grades_____

Enrolled in Post-Secondary School_____ Program Enrolled In_____

Name of Post-Secondary School_____ Location_____

CAREER PREPARATION:

What are your Future Plans?_____

Vocational School_____ College_____ Working Full-Time_____ Working Part-Time_____ Military_____ Not Sure_____

Do you know what Career Pathway you prefer?_____ If Yes, What & Why_____

Have you ever taken an Interest Assessment?_____ If Yes, What & When_____

Have you ever taken any Skills Tests that tell you what you are good at?_____ If Yes, What Test_____

What were the Results?_____

Name five (5) things you are good at doing:_____

What was/is your Favorite Class?_____ What is your Dream Job?_____

What do you like to do in your Spare Time?_____

If you plan to attend Post-Secondary Schooling, where would you like to go?_____

What Career do you plan to study for?_____

Have you Toured any Colleges or Post-Secondary Programs?____ If Yes, Where_____

Have you completed any Post-Secondary Applications?____ Have you completed a FAFSA?____ When_____

Approximate Date you plan on Attending Post-Secondary School?(Semester & Year)_____

WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

Have you worked before? __Yes __No If Yes, Was It: ___Full-Time ___Part-Time ___Summer ___Other

1. Name of Employer/Business_____ Name of Supervisor_____
   City_____ State_____ Job Title_____ Wage Per Hour_____
   Start Date_____ End Date_____ Reason for Leaving_____
2. Name of Employer/ Business_____ Name of Supervisor_____
   City_____ State_____ Job Title_____ Wage Per Hour_____
   Start Date_____ End Date_____ Reason for Leaving_____

How do you get along with your Supervisor?_____

What did you like about working?_____

What didn't you like about working?_____

Have you completed any Job Applications?____ If Yes, Where_____ Outcome_____

Have you had any Job Interviews?____ If Yes, Where_____ Outcome_____

Do you feel you need more Work Experience?____ If Yes, Why?_____

What kind of job are you looking for?_____

What Hours are you available for work? Mornings___ Afternoons___ Evenings___ Weekends___ Other_____

Are you registered for the Selective Service?___ or N/A___ If Not Yet, When is your 18th Birthday?_____

Do you have your Paper Social Security Card?___ Do you have a Driver's License or Permit?___ Which_____

Do you have a Vehicle?_____ Other Transportation?_____ How will you Get to Work?_____

Do you have any Legal Issues?____ If Yes, What?_____ Are you part of a Diversion Program____

Are you on Probation?____ For What Offense?_____

Have you had a problem with Alcohol or Drugs?__ If Yes, Did you do Treatment?__ Completed Satisfactorily___

Are you or have you been in Counseling to deal with any issues?___ If Yes, Have those issues been resolved?____

Do you have a Disability?___ If Yes, Do you need an Accommodation & Describe_____

Do you have an IEP?___ Are you working with Rehabilitation Services?___ Do you have a Social Worker?_____

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP:

Do you have an Adult (Mentor) who you go to for Advice or Guidance? ____Yes ____No

If Yes, Name and Relationship_____

How have they helped you?_____

Describe any Community, Church or School Activities you are or have been in?_____

_____

Are you or have you been in a Leadership Position?_____ Explain_____

Have you done Volunteer Work?_____ If Yes, Where_____ Did you choose to do it?_____

What did you Learn and How did you Feel?_____

Have you ever had to "Stand Up For" yourself?____ Explain_____

How do you try to Solve Conflicts between yourself and someone else?_____

_____

Do you have a Role Model?_____ Who and Why?_____

_____

Describe how you Make Decisions?_____

_____

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORTS:

What is your Family Situation? ___One Parent ___Two Parents ___Independent ___Foster Child ___Other

Parent/Guardian's Name(s)_____

Where do they work?_____

How long have you lived at the present Address?_____

If Recent Address Change, Why?_____

Are you the Oldest, Youngest, a Middle Child, an Only Child?_____

What Responsibilities are you expected to do at home?_____

_____

What are your plans related to Schooling, Training, and Employment?_____

_____

What does your family think about you going to work?_____

_____

What Expectations do your Parents have of you Related to Schooling, Training, and Employment?_____

_____

Are your plans different than what your Parent's Think you should do?_____ If So, How_____

_____

Are your Parents Supportive of your needs and plans? ___Yes ___No How or How Not? _____

_____

CONNECTING ACTIVITES:

Which of the following do you see as Challenges to you Becoming Self-Sufficient? Check All That Apply.

____Past or Potential School Dropout	____Low Income	____Pregnant Or Parenting
____Basic Skills Deficient	____Offender	____Lack of Child Care
____Language Barrier	____On Probation	____Lack of Living Skills
____Disability (Mental, Physical, Emotional)	____No Transportation	____No Telephone
____No Work History	____Homeless/Runaway	____Health Concerns
____Lack of Job Skills	____Foster Care	____Chemical Dependency
____Unemployed or Underemployed	____Personal/Family Factors	____Motivation

____Other – Specify_____

AGENCIES/PROVIDERS YOU HAVE WORKED WITH:

_____School IEP Case Manager/Contact Name:_____

_____School Counselor/Contact Name:_____

_____Probation Worker/Contact Name:_____

_____Social Worker/Contact Name:_____

_____Child Support Worker/Contact Name:_____

_____Financial Worker/Contact Name:_____

_____Public Assistance/Contact Name:_____

_____Housing Agency/Contact Name:_____

_____Rehabilitation Services/Contact Name:_____

_____Work Coordinator/Contact Name:_____

_____Adult Basic Education/Contact Name:_____

_____Alternative Learning/Contact Name:_____

_____Social Security/Contact Name:_____

_____ _____/Contact Name:_____

_____ _____/Contact Name:_____

What things cause you Stress or Anxiety (Worry) and Why?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Using a Sentence or Two, how would you Describe Yourself:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name two (2) things about yourself, of which you are most proud (examples: You Help Others A Lot,
You Won an Award, You Have Children, You Get Good Grades in School, etc.): _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What kind of support do you feel you might need as you work towards your Goal(s):

_____School Tuition   _____Uniforms   _____Clothing   _____Utilities   _____Driver's Training

_____Books & Supplies   _____Child Care   _____Housing/Rent   _____Phone   _____Car Insurance

_____Tools   _____Groceries   _____Gas   _____Car Repair

_____Other:_____

Guideposts for Success
For all youth as well as additional needs for persons with disabilities.
****

The National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) has identified **Guideposts for Success** based on what research tells us that all youth need to transition to adulthood successfully. The Guideposts provide:
- A statement of principles;
- A direction that will lead to better outcomes for all young people; and,
- A way to organize policy and practice.

Guidepost 1: School-Based Preparatory Experiences
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 the following:
- Academic programs that are based on clear state standards;
- Career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards;
- Curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work, and community-based learning experiences;
- Learning environments that are small and safe, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary;
- Supports from and by highly qualified staff;
- Access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures; and,
- Graduation standards that include options.

In addition, youth with disabilities need to do the following:
- Use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and use strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling;
- Have access to specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school;
- Develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations; and,
- Be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff that may or may not be school staff.

Guidepost 2: Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences
Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order for youth to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day or through after-school programs, and will require collaborations with other organizations. All youth need information on career options, including the following:
- Career assessments to help identify students' school and post-school preferences and interests;
- Structured exposure to post-secondary education and other life-long learning opportunities;

- Exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including

information about educational requirements, entry requirements, income and benefits potential, and asset accumulation; and,
- Training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills (sometimes called "soft skills").

In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including the following:
- Opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing;
- Multiple on-the-job training experiences (paid or unpaid), including community service, that are specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit;
- Opportunities to learn and practice their work skills (so-called "soft skills"); and,
- Opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway.

In addition, youth with disabilities may need to do one or more of the following:
- Understand the relationships between benefits planning and career choices;
- Learn to communicate their disability-related work support and accommodation needs; and,
- Learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training, and employment settings.

Guidepost 3: Youth Development and Leadership
Youth development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of that process. In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need the following:
- Mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings;
- Peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities;
- Exposure to role models in a variety of contexts;
- Training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution;
- Exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and,
- Opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem.

Youth with disabilities also need the following:
- Mentors and role models including persons with and without disabilities; and,
- An understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities.

Guidepost 4: Connecting Activities
Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. All youth may need one or more of the following:

- Mental and physical health services;
- Transportation;
- Housing;
- Tutoring;
- Financial planning and management;
- Post-program supports through structured arrangements in post-secondary institutions and adult service agencies; and,
- Connection to other services and opportunities (e.g. recreation).

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

Guidepost 5: Family Involvement and Supports
Participation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic and occupational growth of youth, leading to better post-school outcomes. All youth need parents, families, and other caring adults who do the following:
- Have high expectations that build upon the young person's strengths, interests, and needs and that foster each youth's ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency;
- Remain involved in their lives and assist them toward adulthood;
- Have access to information about employment, further education, and community resources;
- Take an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners; and,
- Have access to medical, professional, and peer support networks.

In addition, youth with disabilities need parents, families, and other caring adults who have the following:
- An understanding of the youth's disability and how it may affect his or her education, employment, and daily living options;
- Knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation;
- Knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations available for young people with disabilities; and
- An understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals and objectives.

Guideposts for Success for Youth with Learning Disabilities

The *Guideposts for Success* are a framework to assist the multiple organizations that need to be involved to meet the needs and improve the transition outcomes of all youth including youth with disabilities and to create necessary community webs of support.

The *Guideposts for Success for Youth with Learning Disabilities* provides guidance to caring adults and youth service professionals for improving services and outcomes for youth, ages 14 to 25, with diagnosed and undiagnosed learning disabilities.

Youth and young adults with learning disabilities are over-represented in a wide array of government-supported programs—adult education, vocational rehabilitation, welfare, corrections, and others. Many of these young people may not even be aware that they have a learning disability, although they may know that they have not done as well as many of their peers in traditional classrooms and in work and social settings.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is not an easy one. Making decisions and dealing with challenges in academic, vocational, and social settings are difficult but essential parts of life. Young people need to nurture interpersonal relationships, to find their place in groups, and to establish their identity as adults. Support from caring adults can ease this transition. The *Guideposts* point the way to providing the necessary supports.

The five (5) *Guidepost* areas of focus are:

School-Based Preparatory Experiences

In addition to the school-based preparatory experiences that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with learning disabilities have some specific needs.

Because of the strong correlation between school-based preparatory experiences and positive employment outcomes, youth with learning disabilities benefit from:

- staff and experiences that help them understand how the strategies they use to learn in classroom settings can be applied to the workplace;
- access to individualized assessments for school and work;
- opportunities to practice requesting reasonable accommodations to ease the effects of the environment on their disability; and,
- opportunities to practice incorporating instructional strategies centered on "learning how to learn" outside of the classroom.

Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences

In addition to the Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with learning disabilities have some specific needs.

Because experience gained from career preparation and work-based learning experiences often informs later decisions regarding employment options, youth with learning disabilities need:

- exposure to work-based learning and vocational activities that focus on their individual interests, skills, and aptitudes;

- a clear understanding of how their processing difficulties may impact their career options;

- a clear understanding of how accommodations can minimize many barriers; and,

- a clear understanding of how disclosure of their disability to others can facilitate success in employment.

Youth Development & Leadership

In addition to the Youth Development and Leadership opportunities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with learning disabilities have some specific needs.

Because youth development and leadership opportunities are effective and lead to successful outcomes for youth with disabilities, youth with disabilities need:

- opportunities to learn how to effectively access accommodations needed in the workplace; access to activities that promote self-determination, self-advocacy, and goal setting;

- instruction in and opportunities to practice interpersonal skills and to develop functional work capacities; and,

- opportunities to meet and spend time with successful adults and peers who also have learning disabilities.

Connecting Activities

In addition to the Connecting Activities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with learning disabilities have some specific needs.

Because having access to healthcare, housing, and transportation is fundamental to being a reliable member of the workforce, young people with learning disabilities, in part due to their processing difficulties, may need:

- additional training and support in order to understand how to obtain healthcare, housing, and transportation services;

- a clear understanding that their eligibility to receive certain services may terminate when they exit school or reach a specific age; and,

- assistance in planning to avoid gaps in services as they transition from youth service systems to adult service systems.

Family Involvement & Supports

In addition to the Family Involvement and Supports that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with learning disabilities have some specific needs.

Because youth with learning disabilities need access to educational, vocational, technological, and social supports including accommodations in order to be able to navigate effectively in some environments, they need family members who:

- are aware of and adept at accessing available resources;
- able to share their knowledge of resources with the youth; and,
- demonstrate a great deal of understanding as the youth alternate between wanting a lot of support and wanting virtually no support.

Guideposts for Success for Youth in Foster Care

The *Guideposts for Success* are a framework to assist the multiple organizations that need to be involved to meet the needs and improve the transition outcomes of all youth including youth with disabilities and to create necessary community webs of support.

The *Guideposts for Success for Youth in Foster Care* highlight specific experiences, supports, and services that are relevant to providing comprehensive transition services to all foster care youth, including those with disabilities, within the framework of the *Guideposts for Success*. An increased understanding of the challenges facing this population of young people, combined with an enhanced level of coordination among the education, workforce, post-secondary and child welfare systems, will increase the likelihood of personal and systemic success in the transition from adolescence to productive adulthood and citizenship. This coordination is also a necessary precursor for the leveraging ("blending" or "braiding") of resources among these partners. Finally, the *Guideposts* can support an infrastructure for the measurement of outcomes for foster care youth in transition, especially as it relates to their economic self-sufficiency.

Full implementation of the *Guideposts for Success for Youth in Foster Care* does not yet exist in any known community in its entirety. However, key components are emerging in an array of communities across the country. As more is learned through collaborations among key institutions, and as professionals develop more familiarity and expertise about what different stakeholders can bring to the table, it can be anticipated the full framework will be realized.

The five (5) *Guidepost* areas of focus are:

School-Based Preparatory Experiences

In addition to the school-based preparatory experiences that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth in foster care have some specific needs.

Because of the transient nature of the foster care system, the lack of traditional family supports, and the variance in residential settings, youth in foster care need stable education and learning environments and access to additional educational supports and services. More specifically, youth in foster care may also need:

- to remain in one educational setting or single school system, to the greatest extent possible;
- access to safe, quiet and positive learning environments inside and outside of residential facilities, group homes and foster family homes;
- access to diverse re-enrollment opportunities to complete high school studies;
- additional assistance to assure they master basic skills such as tutoring, after-school programs, and other education preparation services;
- exposure to the full range of lifelong learning opportunities;
- designated staff at the educational setting with primary responsibility for supporting and monitoring their progress toward educational outcomes;

- access to foster care caseworkers trained to support the educational process; and,
- educational records stored in a central location and easily retrievable by those who need to access them.

Youth in foster care who have disabilities need:

- to be engaged in creating, modifying and integrating their Individualized Education Program (IEP), Transition Plan (TP), Independent Living Plan (ILP), Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and/or other individualized planning tools.
- to be aware that they can bring a non-parental adult, friend, or *guardian at litem* (court appointed representative) to their IEP and/or other individualized planning meetings (e.g., TP, ILP, IPE).

Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences

In addition to the [Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need](), youth in foster care have some specific needs.

Because of the significant instability in their lives (e.g., abuse, neglect, abandonment), youth in foster care may not have developed employment expectations, may not have been exposed to employment opportunities, and may have been exposed to a lot of misinformation about employment opportunities. Youth in and preparing to leave foster care need connections to a full range of youth employment programs and services. Youth in and preparing to leave foster care may also need:

- ongoing assessments of career interests, abilities, strengths, weaknesses and aptitudes;
- focused career exploration, employability skills building and work-based learning experiences, including entrepreneurship opportunities;
- permanent and meaningful connections to significant adults as mentors and role models in an employment and training context;
- the development of an understanding of the value of work, a work ethic and how to obtain, retain, and advance in a job, and transition from one job to another;
- Independent Living Plans that incorporate employment and training programs and services in a way that integrates federal Foster Care Independence Act funds (a.k.a. the Chafee program) to leverage other youth employment opportunities;
- employment-based programs that have comprehensive and customized services, including structured work-based learning experiences for transitioning youth, which in turn are likely to require a formal relationship between a private or public child welfare agency and the workforce development system.

Youth Development & Leadership

In addition to the [Youth Development and Leadership opportunities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need](), youth in foster care have some specific needs.

Because the child welfare system generally no longer has responsibility for foster youth by the time they turn 18, a time when realistically they will not likely be prepared to be independent self-sufficient adults, youth in foster care need special attention to the development of personal, social and emotional skills for dealing with the consequences of abuse, neglect, abandonment, and victimization. Youth in foster care are highly likely to need:

- formal and informal connections to significant adult role models, peer mentors and older youth who have transitioned from foster care to independence, including after they have left the child welfare system;

- additional emphasis on self-empowerment through training in self-advocacy, self-esteem, self-reliance, self-determination, and self-sufficiency;

- ongoing assessments of personal development such as through the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment;

- programs with built-in activities that highlight "rites of passage" or that specially recognize accomplishments;

- Independent Living Plans that incorporate cross organizational support systems in promotion of youth development and leadership;

- an understanding of risk-taking behaviors, and their consequences, such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases;

- opportunities to participate in advocacy and civic engagements, such as through volunteer and leadership roles with foster care boards, associations and local youth councils;

- connections to services through youth-driven independent living planning meetings that include family members and/or foster parents;

- connections to lifetime networks of support activities, such as foster care alumni associations; and,

- exposure to cultural, ethnic, religious, and gender-specific experiences, as well as culturally competent mentors, peers and program staff.

Connecting Activities

In addition to the [Connecting Activities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need](#), youth in foster care have some specific needs.

Although typically leaving the child welfare system at age 18 with the expectation that they will be independent self-sufficient adults, youth in and leaving foster care need connections to a host of programs and services, particularly in the critical areas of physical and mental health, additional education, employment, housing and income support programs. Youth in and leaving foster care are likely to also need:

- opportunities to obtain and maintain a valid driver's license, library card, voter registration card, birth certificates, medical and other treatment records, green cards, and other critical personal documents;

- access to a knowledgeable adult(s) who can serve as an adult systems "navigator";

- both transitional and long term housing;

- safety education that prepares them to maintain safety in personal relationships and in independent living situations;

- special accommodations for financial aid for postsecondary education;

- parenting education and child care;

- special efforts so they are prepared to be informed health care consumers;

- connections to municipalities to become responsible, contributing citizens; and,

- state and local foster care caseworkers and managers partnering with community providers and businesses to foster connections within these domains.

Family Involvement & Supports

In addition to the [Family Involvement and Supports that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need](#), youth in foster care have some specific needs.

Family reunification is a difficult challenge that cannot be separated from the young person's desires to go to work, pursue additional education and live independent lives. Because of the diversity of family experiences and living situations, youth in foster care need systems that recognize an expanded definition of "family," which includes grandparents, relative caregivers, other relatives (siblings, aunts, uncles, etc.) and non-relative, caring adults and that take into consideration unique cultural issues and practices. These systems need to promote permanency, and to identify and help build a support network of family member(s), peers, mentors, and/or significant adult(s) to be included in all aspects of life planning for the young person. Youth in foster care may also need birth parents, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, foster families, group home staff, caseworkers, case managers, and/or significant adults who:

- participate in "family" team planning that provides opportunities for collaborations among the service providers and the youth;

- understand the changing relationships and the life-long need for belonging to a "family";

- have connections to an adult(s) systems "navigator";

- can work with the court system (e.g., attorneys, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), and *guardians ad litem* (GAL)) to be aware of, assess and support each young person's needs, desires and planning process for education, employment and independent living options; and,

- have knowledge of their own and the young person's rights and responsibilities under child welfare, transition and youth-related legislation.

Additionally, youth in foster care who have disabilities need birth parents, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, foster families, group home staff, caseworkers, case managers, and/or significant adults who:

- understand and are trained in recognizing, assisting and supporting youth in dealing with the social and emotional consequences of having been abused, neglected and/or abandoned as a direct result of their disability(ies); and,

- know how to access and make connections to and between the child welfare system and various disability programs and services.

Guideposts for Success for Youth Involved
in the Juvenile Corrections System

The *Guideposts for Success* are a framework to assist the multiple organizations that need to be involved to meet the needs and improve the transition outcomes of all youth including youth with disabilities and to create necessary community webs of support.

The *Juvenile Justice Guideposts* highlight specific experiences, supports, and services that are relevant to improving transition outcomes for youth with and without disabilities involved or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system within the framework of the *Guideposts for Success*. An increased understanding of the unique needs of this particular population of young people, combined with an enhanced level of coordination among the court and corrections systems, education, workforce, child welfare systems, and mental health systems can help decrease recidivism and increase the likelihood that these youth will become productive adult members of our society. This coordination is also a necessary precursor for the leveraging ("blending" or "braiding") of resources among these partners.

The five (5) *Guidepost* areas of focus are:

School-Based Preparatory Experiences

In addition to the school-based preparatory experiences that all youth need, youth with and without disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system also need:

- availability of quality educational, vocational, and GED programs;
- access to additional academic and behavioral support that relies on research-based techniques;
- teachers, administrators, and secure care professionals in juvenile correctional facilities that collaborate to promote youth access to a free and appropriate public education;
- conditions in juvenile correctional facilities, and throughout the juvenile justice process that foster enrollment in education, alternative education, special education, vocational, pre-GED and GED programs, and post-secondary education based on youth needs and not on available programs;
- placement in housing units and classrooms that take into consideration youth academic and behavioral needs, as well as placement of youth in classes with similar aged youth;
- opportunity for youth to earn Carnegie units that transfer to public middle and high schools;
- teachers who use content enhancements, strategy instruction, and contextualized learning opportunities to provide access to the general education curriculum;
- juvenile correctional schools that are held accountable for providing a free and appropriate public education, meet Adequate Yearly Progress standards, and have a sufficient number of general and special education teachers who are also highly qualified and compensated at the same level as teachers in the local public schools;

- educational settings that include universal, secondary, and tertiary proactive approaches to promoting positive student behavior, as well as counseling services and social skills training;

- collaboration and planning among teachers, secure care staff, and mental health professionals to ensure that students' emotional and behavioral needs are met and that appropriate strategies are used when addressing behaviors that are a manifestation of a student's disability; and,

- collaboration among general and special educators within the correctional facility, and with public schools concerning the youth's education, behavior, and transition plan implementation.

Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences

In addition to the Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences that all youth need, youth with and without disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system also need:

- participation in comprehensive vocational programming that is consistent with the youth's aptitude and interest and with high growth industries in the community to which they will return, as an approach to prevention and diversion from the juvenile justice system;

- vocational education should include scope and sequence for a variety of courses and how they will be adapted to meet the unique needs of the setting and students. Scope and sequence provide a guide for both what students should learn and the order in which concepts should be presented;

- vocational education should include formal assessment of both student learning and progress toward certification or license requirements in the vocation of study;

- development of career pathways that include a list of courses, work experiences, post-secondary options, and career options;

- access to employment and work-based experiences on and off facility grounds by collaborating with the community and businesses;

- an advocate/job development specialist who can assist in making the youth more employable and provide or assist the youth in obtaining needed training about accessing resources after release, getting records sealed and expunged, and responding to employers' questions about their previous law violations;

- training in behavioral skills that may affect sustaining employment (e.g., anger management, accepting feedback, accepting directions);

- access to a graduated release program that allows the youth to leave the facility during the day to complete supervised work experience; and,

- access to technology to assist in career exploration and job simulation when partial release to work is not a possibility.

Youth Development & Leadership

In addition to the youth development and leadership opportunities that all youth need, youth with and without disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system need additional supports and services including transitional services to assist with reintegration into school, community, and the workforce, such as:

- engagement in service other than community service (e.g., youth court) for youth who are diverted from the juvenile justice system;

- a highly individualized transition plan that begins upon entry to a juvenile correctional facility and is developed with meaningful youth input;

- the availability of a transition support model that considers the unique needs of youth involved in juvenile corrections and includes self-determination skills, competitive job placement, flexible educational opportunities, social skills instruction, and immediate service coordination of wrap-around services;

- clear instruction concerning relevant laws, rights, and consequences throughout the juvenile justice process;

- additional emphasis on self-empowerment through training in self-advocacy, self-esteem, self-reliance, self-determination, and self-sufficiency;

- an understanding of risk-taking behaviors (and the relationship to their disabilities) and their consequences, such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, recidivism; and,

- formal and informal connections to significant adult role models, peer mentors, and older youth who have transitioned from the juvenile justice system.

Connecting Activities

In addition to the connecting activities that all youth need, youth with and without disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system also need:

- appropriate prevention services that include access to mental health and drug abuse treatment;

- access to diversion programs, when appropriate, such as teen court and other community-based options;

- advocates at each stage of the juvenile justice process to ensure that youth understand the processes;

- support from individuals, programs and systems (e.g. mental health, education, vocational rehabilitation, social services) while confined and for at least one year after release;

- alcohol and drug abuse treatment that extends for a minimum of one year post-release and includes family involvement, training in life skills and abstinence, and after care (e.g., self-help, support groups);

- probation and parole officers that have time, knowledge, and resources to assist youth;

- access to transition specialists who can collaborate with relevant professionals across systems (e.g., parole, mental health, child welfare, vocational rehabilitation);

- ongoing contact with and visits from public school and job development/placement professionals to maintain contact and support for re-entry; and,

- a transitional exit program from the juvenile correctional facility (including day passes) that provides progressively increased involvement with public school and/or job placement.

Family Involvement & Supports

In addition to the Family Involvement and Supports that all youth need, youth with and without disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system also need:

- parents who are well-informed and can assist and advocate for them;
- facilities and programs that are committed to engaging parents and families in prevention and rehabilitative services;
- specific, ongoing opportunities for parent, family, and caring adult involvement, participation, and input at each stage in the juvenile justice process;
- family and community involvement as delineated in Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST); and,
- family-focused mental health treatment that also includes individual youth therapy, as well as behavioral and/or cognitive/behavioral interventions.

Guideposts for Success for Youth with Mental Health Needs

The *Guideposts for Success* are a framework to assist the multiple organizations that need to be involved to meet the needs and improve the transition outcomes of all youth including youth with disabilities and to create necessary community webs of support.

The *Guideposts for Success for Youth with Mental Health Needs* are particularly helpful for youth service practitioners serving youth with mental health needs. Youth with mental health needs may not be properly diagnosed, if they are diagnosed at all, especially during the teenage years when it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between (1) a mental health issue; (2) typical anxiety experienced by youth, particularly if those feelings are not behaviorally expressed; and, (3) substance abuse, which may be a secondary issue that many youth with mental health needs may experience. Youth with mental health needs may not have a stable base of support, or any support, which hampers their successful transition from adolescence to adulthood, especially given the stigma associated with mental illness.

The likelihood for economic stability and success is increased for youth with mental health needs if an intentional, integrated, and well-coordinated set of supports is in place, a sort of unconditional safety net. The *Guideposts* point the way to providing those supports.

The five (5) *Guidepost* areas of focus are:

School-Based Preparatory Experiences

In addition to the School-Based Preparatory Experiences that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with mental health needs have some specific needs.

Because of the episodic nature of mental health disabilities, youth with mental health needs require educational environments that are flexible and stable and that provide opportunities to learn responsibilities and become engaged and empowered. These youth may need additional educational supports and services such as:

- comprehensive transition plans (including school-based behavior plans) linked across systems, without stigmatizing language, that identify goals, objectives, strategies, supports, and outcomes that address individual mental health needs in the context of education;

- appropriate, culturally sensitive, behavioral and medical health interventions and supports;

- academically challenging educational programs and general education supports that engage and re-engage youth in learning;

- opportunities to develop self-awareness of behavioral triggers and reasonable accommodations for use in educational and workplace settings; and,

- coordinated support to address social-emotional transition needs from a highly qualified, cross-agency support team (e.g., wraparound team), which includes health, mental health, child welfare, parole/probation professionals, relevant case managers, and natural supports from family, friends, mentors, and others.

Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences

In addition to the Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with mental health needs have some specific needs.

Because some youth with mental health needs may feel their employment choices are limited or may not understand the value of work in recovery, they need connections to a full range of youth employment programs and services such as:

- graduated (preparatory, emerging awareness, proficient) opportunities to gain and practice their work skills ("soft skills") in workplace settings;

- positive behavioral supports in work settings;

- connections to successfully employed peers and role models with mental health needs;

- knowledge of effective methods of stress management to cope with the pressures of the workplace;

- knowledge of and access to a full range of workplace supports and accommodations such as supported employment, customized employment, job carving, and job coaches; and,

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

Youth Development & Leadership

In addition to the Youth Development and Leadership opportunities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with mental health needs have some specific needs.

Some youth with mental health needs may be susceptible to peer pressure, experiment with antisocial behaviors or illegal substances, and/or attempt suicide as a manifestation of their disability and/or expression of independence. To facilitate positive youth development and leadership, these youth need:

- meaningful opportunities to develop, monitor, and self-direct their own treatment, recovery plans, and services;

- opportunities to learn healthy behaviors regarding substance use and avoidance, suicide prevention, and safe sexual practices;

- exposure to factors of positive youth development such as nutrition, exercise, recreation and spirituality;

- an understanding of how disability disclosure can be used pro-actively;

- an understanding of the dimensions of mental health treatment including medication maintenance, outpatient and community-based services and supports;

- an understanding of how mental health stigma can compromise individual health maintenance and appropriate engagement in treatment and recovery;

- continuity of access to and an understanding of the requirements and procedures involved in obtaining mental health services and supports as an independent young adult;

- strategies for addressing the negative stigma and discrimination associated with mental health needs including cultural, racial, social, and gender factors;

- opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with peers, mentors, and role models with similar mental health needs;

- exposure to peer networks and adult consumers of mental health services with positive treatment and recovery outcomes;

- social skills training and exposure to programs that will help them learn to manage their disability/ies; and,

- opportunities to give back and improve the lives of others, such as community service and civic engagement.

Connecting Activities

In addition to the Connecting Activities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with mental health needs have some specific needs.

Some youth with mental health needs may require a safety net accepting of the boundary pushing that is part of identity development and may include additional and more intense connections to information, programs, services, and activities that are critical to a successful transition. These youth may need:

- an understanding of how to locate and maintain appropriate mental health care services, including counseling and medications;

- an understanding of how to create and maintain informal personal support networks;

- access to safe, affordable, permanent housing, including options such as transitional and supported housing;

- access to flexible financial aid options for post-secondary education not tied to full-time enrollment;

- policies and service practices that provide a safety net for fluctuations in a youth's mental health status;

- case managers (e.g., health care, juvenile justice, child welfare) who connect and collaborate across systems; and,

- service providers who are well-trained, empathetic, and take a holistic approach to service delivery.

Family Involvement & Supports

In addition to the Family Involvement and Supports that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, youth with mental health needs have some specific needs.

Youth with mental health needs also need parents, families, and/or other caring adults who:

- understand the cyclical and episodic nature of mental illness;
- offer emotional support;

- know how to recognize and address key warning signs of suicide, the co-occurring relationship between substance abuse and mental health needs, and other risky behaviors;

- monitor youth behavior and anticipate crises without becoming intrusive;

- understand how the individualized plans across systems can support the achievement of educational and employment goals;

- access supports and professionals to help navigate the interwoven systems such as mental health, juvenile justice, and child welfare;

- access supports and resources for youth with mental health needs, including emergency contacts and options for insurance coverage;

- extend guardianship past the age of majority when appropriate; and,

- have access to respite care.

The Guideposts for Success: A Framework for Families Preparing Youth for Adulthood

This InfoBrief examines how the Guideposts for Success can be used as a framework from which families of youth with disabilities can consider the support needs of their youth during the transition planning process. It is based on information presented in the Family Guideposts, a National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) publication that looks at the original Guideposts from the perspective of families. The Family Guideposts highlight proactive roles families can play in the five Guidepost areas and offer examples of how families can become informed, supportive, and engaged in their youth's transition. This information will also be helpful to professionals seeking strategies to effectively partner with families, and to advocates looking to empower families in the transition process.

Transition: Helping Youth Envision Life after High School

Becoming an adult involves much more than reaching a certain age or completing a certain number of high school credits. Youth learn the skills they will need as adults in school, at home, and in the community. It is important for youth to have opportunities for a wide variety of experiences so they can explore their interests, put their skills to practice, and align their abilities to their future goals. Youth need to set goals and plan for life as an adult. This process is often referred to as "transition."

Families play an important role in helping youth envision a future for themselves that is rooted in high expectations and thoughtful planning. All youth need the support of their families and other caring adults as they transition into adulthood. Whether a youth has a disability or not, it is beneficial when all youth dare to dream and set their goals high from an early age. Youth need to be supported as they ask themselves where they want to work, where they want to live, and what they want to do in their spare time.

Families can help ensure that youth are prepared to turn their dreams into reality by participating in transition planning. Whether it is a Career Plan, Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP), or any other transition plan, all youth, with and without disabilities, benefit from a youth-driven, strength-based, individualized planning process that reflects a young person's interests, abilities, and future goals.

The Guideposts for Success

The *Guideposts for Success* developed by NCWD/Youth (www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts) in collaboration with the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor represents a holistic approach to transition planning that can help family members and other caring adults as they help youth plan for the future. Grounded in thirty plus years of research, the *Guideposts for Success* identify practices that help youth successfully transition to adulthood in five (5) critical categories: School-Based Preparatory Experiences; Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences; Youth Development and Leadership; Connecting Activities; and Family Involvement and Supports.

Introducing the Family Guideposts

The transition to adulthood is a critical time during which youth require a great deal of support from their families and other caring adults. Many families wish to assist their youth but are looking for guidance. They may not yet have thought about the full range of supports youth may need as they transition from school to further education, competitive employment, and living independently in their communities. Families may not be familiar with formal planning processes or supports available outside of the educational system, or may not anticipate important questions to ask or the information they need to know before their young adult leaves school or home.

The *Family Guideposts,* a NCWD/Youth publication also developed in collaboration with ODEP, uses the framework of the original *Guideposts for Success* to introduce key questions and highlight proactive roles for families in the five (5) *Guidepost* areas. After considering the support needs of youth within each of these categories, families can decide where to focus their energy and take specific actions to address the priorities of their transition-age youth. Depending on the individual, these priorities might include graduating from high school, going to college, finding a job, building a circle of friends, actively participating in their communities, or connecting to the adult healthcare system.

Both the *Family Guideposts* and this *InfoBrief* provide key questions that would be helpful for families to consider related to each Guidepost category, then suggest "Action Recommendations" that families can utilize so their youth's transition needs are met. Like the *Guideposts* which first identify what all youth need to succeed in a specific area and then additional supports that may be needed by youth with disabilities, recommendations for families first address what families of all youth can do to help youth succeed and then provide recommendations specific to families of youth with disabilities.

Starting with Families and Guidepost 5: Family Involvement and Supports

Families are the first, most knowledgeable, and most consistent influence a youth will have. The contributions that families make are so important to the future success of youth that "Family Involvement and Supports" is one of the five (5) original *Guidepost* areas.

GUIDEPOST 5: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORTS

Participation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth, leading to better post-school outcomes. All youth need parents, families, and other caring adults in their lives.

Families are in a unique position to teach youth needed social skills and work skills and to instill a sense of determination and high expectations that goals can be achieved, whether a disability is present or not. For a youth, "family" may mean a traditional family, households

led by single parents, grandparents, or relatives, being involved in foster care, or living in a group home. Whatever the situation, youth benefit from families who become well informed about education, employment, youth development, and supports available in the community. Informed families are better prepared to help youth understand options and make responsible decisions about their own lives.

Here's a closer look at how families can play a positive role in the youth transition to adulthood.

How can families influence and support their youth as they transition into adulthood?

Action Recommendations for families of ALL youth:

- **Maintain high expectations** that youth will succeed in school, employment, and as members of their community. Convey these expectations to educators, to service providers, and to the youth themselves. Low expectations are often cited as contributing to limited educational and employment outcomes. In contrast, high family expectations are associated with improved achievement in these areas, as well as increased resiliency in youth.

- **Remain involved** in the life of youth, especially during the teenage years. Teens often seek opportunities for independence and peer approval, which may seem to lessen the influence families can play. However, research indicates that if families stay engaged in young people's educational, social, and community activities, those youth are more likely to complete high school and avoid negative choices such as irresponsible sexual involvement, substance abuse, and illegal activity. As youth are developing their own identities and direction, it is important for families to stay connected and engaged with them.

- **Help youth access information** about employment, post-secondary education and training, and community services needed so they can make informed decisions about their own future. Families can guide their youth through the information seeking process, and in doing so, build skills so youth can eventually manage their own needs. This skill is especially important when considering the fast-changing nature of employment career paths and financial rules and regulations.

- **Take an active role in transition planning** so youth can be supported in decision making around academics, career exploration, employment, and post-secondary education. Family members can help youth explore activities such as career interest assessments, field trips to job sites, job shadowing, and internships, recognizing that school guidance counselors may or may not have the capacity to provide individualized support. Families can utilize tools such as Individualized Learning Plans that map a path to achieve post-school goals, college, and careers.

- **Help youth access networks** of personal and professional contacts that they can utilize when needed as adults. Adolescence is the perfect time to begin building these networks since they still have families to support them if needed. Encourage youth to initiate contact with adults in their family and community networks to learn about

their career paths and to seek supportive peer networks that result in lasting friendships.

Action Recommendations for families of youth with disabilities:

- **Understand the impact of disability** and help youth to be able to discuss the lifelong implications of their own disability. Unfortunately, youth often have little information about their disabilities and may have families who think it is better not to speak openly about it. It is much more beneficial for families to share information about a disability as soon as the youth is ready for such conversations. This is an important step towards assisting a youth in taking charge of his/her own healthcare, education, and accommodation decisions.

- **Learn about disability rights and responsibilities** to prepare for the shift in roles when a youth becomes his/her own legal guardian. Under federal special education law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA), youth who reach the Age of Majority (typically age 18) have the right to make their own educational decisions, unless their parents have legal guardianship. Families need to understand this shift in responsibilities and gradually pass responsibilities to youth over a period of time. Doing so will help youth apply their decision making skills while families are available to provide support and encouragement. Youth who have been actively involved in their own IEP from an early age will find this shift easier to handle. It would also benefit families to be aware that adult services for persons with disabilities often come with specific rules on eligibility and are not entitlements. Families who understand adult services and relevant legislation are better positioned to help their youth access services that can help them reach their own employment and independent living goals.

- **Learn how to access services** so youth have the supports and accommodations needed for their own growth and success. Knowing how to access these services is key as youth with disabilities transition from school to employment; in other words, youth move from a world of entitlement (e.g., Section 504 plan and IEP) to eligibility (ADA). There is a wide variety of services and supports available to address needs around employment, post-secondary education, transportation, housing, and other areas. Families can guide their youth through the information seeking process, and in doing so, build skills so youth can eventually manage their own services. Parents can seek help in understanding and connecting to resources by contacting their state's Parent Center (http://www.parentcenternetwork.org), Center for Independent Living (http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html), or a community-based disability advocacy agency.

- **Understand individualized planning tools**, the role they play in transition planning, and how education and adult supports use such tools. Individualization is a fundamental tenant of most education and disability services, and there are many tools used to achieve this goal. For example, youth receiving special education services will have an IEP, which will drive instruction and supports based on individual needs. Adult service agencies may have similar "plans" based on individual assessments, strengths, and needs. It is crucial that families partner with schools and adult service agencies to make sure these planning tools reflect a youth's goals and reflect the knowledge families have about youth and what they need to succeed in adulthood.

These basic strategies provide a critical foundation for parents, family members, and/or other caring adults committed to supporting the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth.

Employer Guideposts for Success

The workforce development system has two (2) primary customers: employers and job seekers. Meeting the needs of both of these consumers continues to challenge many workforce development programs. For more than two decades large and small employers have remained consistent in their expectations. Specifically, businesses want publicly funded providers of education and training services to:

- Understand and respect their needs;

- Provide skilled workers and support in hiring and retaining qualified job seekers; and,

- Coordinate efforts with and through employer led industry sector organizations and general business organizations.

This sounds simple but it is not. A plethora of disconnects exist in the way employers are engaged. One possible solution is emerging—intermediaries. In the simplest of terms, a workforce intermediary is an organization which seeks to assist the two (2) key customers of the workforce system – job seekers and employers – through coordination and collaboration among and between agencies and providers that impact service delivery.

To better address employers' needs, supply side providers of workforce development services will need to restructure their policies, practices, and resource allocation strategies. To assist states, localities, and individual programs in this effort, NCWD/Youth has developed the *Guideposts for Supporting Employers*. These *Guideposts* complement the *Guideposts for Success* that focus on what youth need to succeed in the workplace. The following framework details what the workforce development system can do to address employers' needs with regard to hiring any job applicant, as well as additional needs employers may have in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

The *Guideposts for Supporting Employers* are organized with the explicit purpose of helping workforce development policy makers and program providers reduce identified barriers. There are two (2) categories within the framework. The first focuses on what system designers (state and local) need to do. The second looks at what individual programs which include a wide array of education and training institutions such as community rehabilitation centers, secondary and post-secondary institutions, apprenticeship programs, and One-Stop Career Centers need to do.

Employer Needs	Workforce Systems Obligations
Awareness of their particular industry's needs	- Develop profile of local employers by size, type, and location - Identify and track labor market trends, including projecting skill needs - Develop clearinghouse of skill requirements (standards) used by key industries
Quality skills development programs and	Promote the development of rigorous academic and technical skills training programs

Employer Needs	Workforce Systems Obligations
documentation of competencies	- Promote training programs that include the acquisition of work-readiness (soft skills) - Provide documentation/credentials to employers of education or industry recognized attainment for all referrals - Develop work-based learning tools (assessment of skills development, checklists for use by workplace supervisors, etc.)
Convenient access to programs	- Streamline referrals between employers and programs - Promote the use of One-Stop Career Centers
Coordinated customer support	- Prepare and maintain directory of employer liaisons in all education and training programs in region - Convene the employer liaisons on regular basis - Develop broad-based, business-advised marketing strategies for advocating employer needs and views - Present program information from all providers based on a business perspective - Promote the participation of workforce development professionals in activities that educate them about business and industry (externships, job shadows, etc.)
Access to disability specific information and resources	- Promote universal design of education and training programs - Identify needed accommodations and workplace resources - Develop and provide cross disability awareness training for employees and managers - Identify gaps in products and services and establish common strategies among the providers and employers to fill such gaps
Awareness of recruitment resources	- Connect existing business and employer networks with job referral and placement organizations - Market services through existing community forums (newsletters, job fairs, etc.) - Join business organizations - Build and maintain networks of business and employer contacts through continuous dialogue - Make direct contact with new employers
Convenient access to applicants	- Minimize red tape - Coordinate employer outreach with other professionals - Respond to employer outreach efforts - Provide supports to employers (training, work-based mentorship strategies and other tools) to support job shadowing and short-term internships
Effective applicant screening	- Identify competencies needed for each job and industry - Visit companies to identify needs

Employer Needs	Workforce Systems Obligations
based on technical, academic, and work readiness skills and employers' needs	- Understand and adhere to company screening processes as closely as possible - Know each applicant skills, interests, and aptitudes - Match applicant to employer's position, needs and circumstances - Ensure applicants are enrolled in updated and rigorous skills training programs - Identify and address barriers to accessing training programs - Prepare and support applicant in soft skills (appropriate work behavior, language, dress, etc.) - Ensure applicants have documentation of academic, technical, and work readiness skills
Disability specific supports	- Identify and address job accommodations when needed - Identify and address accessibility issues at workplaces - Provide on-going post-placement follow up with the employer and applicant - Prepare and support applicant in understanding and managing job-related disability issues (disclosure, reasonable accommodation needs, etc.) - Conduct periodic disability and diversity awareness training for supervisors and co-workers
Return on investment of time and resources	- Respect employers' time - Keep meetings short and informative - Ensure that both support services and applicants' presence are benefits, not detriments, to employer operations

Success Story – New Hampshire-Jobs for American Graduates MCC OSY
Eric Woodard

Eric Woodard joined the NH-JAG Out-of-School program at Manchester Community College in March of 2009. He had dropped out of school years earlier and was also unemployed. Eric struggled with depression, had battled suicidal thoughts, and was on SSDI. His mother is also disabled and he spent much of his time caring for her. Eric admitted that returning to a classroom environment after so many years was difficult for him. He was concerned about the time commitment and leaving his mother alone, and the thought of being in a classroom with other students caused anxiety. But Eric knew he had to do something to get himself out of what he felt was a hopeless situation. He then set goals that he wanted to attain.

Aside from the GED, Eric wanted to pursue college courses and a career in the law enforcement field. Although Eric was concerned about his disability and employment, NH-JAG helped him set small goals that could eventually lead to a job in his desired career field. The first step was to match Eric up with an unpaid internship at the Manchester Police Department. Eric worked in the records room as a clerk. This experience taught him some of the skills he would need in the future for a career in that field.

It did not take long for Eric feel comfortable in the classroom. At first, he was tentative, but once he opened up, he made friends quickly. It turned out that Eric was very outgoing and personable. In fact, Eric was elected as Career Association President for his JAG chapter by his peers. He was also nominated to represent the OSY program at Youth Voices, a statewide collaboration of students that spoke directly to the Youth Council. As President, he organized field trips, community service events, and fund raising. As a Youth Council member, he represented our JAG classroom's need for new computers. Through Eric speaking to the Youth Council, our classroom was able to receive three brand new computers donated by the Department of Education.

During his time in the classroom, Eric worked hard to attain his GED. He passed all portions of the test right away with the exception of math. He struggled in that area and retook the test several times. He spent countless extra hours with NH-JAG's tutor reviewing and re-reviewing each section of his math workbook until he was able to pass and attain his GED. Once Eric received his GED, with the assistance of NH-JAG, he began searching for a job and attending college courses. From the skills learned in his Pre-Employment Work Maturity Skills (PEWMS) attainment, Eric followed-up on applications, requested interviews, and actively pursued open jobs. He also attended class and used JAG's tutoring and technology resources to help him with his college courses.

Just before Eric exited our program, he became a full-time employee with Allied Barton as a security guard. He also passed his college courses that semester.

Eric is a true example of a student who takes advantage of opportunities when they are presented. He also sets goals for himself and achieves them. Although returning to the classroom and pursuing employment was a challenge for Eric, he stuck with it. Eric is still employed full-time, no longer receives SSDI, and has advanced in his career. Eric was recently recognized by NH-JAG as the Outstanding Alumnus of 2014 at that annual Leadership Awards. During this event, Eric expressed his gratitude to NH-JAG for "saving his life", and indicated that if it wasn't for NH-JAG he may still be in that hopeless state of depression with no sense of purpose or reason for living. Eric's experience with the NH-JAG Out-of-School program at Manchester Community College has changed his future for the better, and we couldn't be prouder of his growth and accomplishments.