



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

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

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

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

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

Comprehensive youth workforce development programs include activities that address five developmental areas:

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

5. **Leading** activities and opportunities help youth develop positive civic attitudes, skills, and behaviors. Youth need to contribute to their community, school, and family in order to develop to their full potential.

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

Youth with disabilities also benefit from youth leadership and youth development programs that are specifically targeted to them. Many good models exist which focus on youth with disabilities developing their skills while providing them with intensive support and the opportunity to interact with their peers.

Resources

Learning

The Career Academy Support Network at UC Berkeley

<http://casn.berkeley.edu/>

This website contains resources and tools for academic programs based on Small Learning Communities (SLCs) and Career Academies approaches in high schools.

Jobs for the Future

<http://www.jff.org/>

This organization provides information, resources, tools, and research findings on topics related to youth, including student engagement, small learning communities, project-based learning, and intermediaries.

American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF)

<http://www.aypf.org>

AYPF gives policymakers and their senior aides information and experiences useful in the development of an effective youth education, training, and transition-to-employment system for the United States.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)

<http://www.ncset.org/default.asp>

NCSET coordinates national resources, offers technical assistance, and disseminates information related to secondary education and transition for teens with disabilities in order to create opportunities for them to achieve successful futures.

Family Center on Technology and Disability

<http://www.fctd.info/>

The Center serves organizations and programs that work with families of children and youth with disabilities, and offers a range of information and services on the subject of assistive technology.

Thriving

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.samhsa.gov/>

SAMHSA's website includes information, program activities, resources, and referrals focusing on substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and substance abuse prevention.

YouthInfo

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb/youthinfo/index.htm>

YouthInfo provides information on positive youth development, a calendar of youth-related events, information on funding, and links to other sites for young people and for youth professionals.

Healthy & Ready to Work

<http://www.hrtw.org/>

This website contains information, resources, tools, and connections to health and transition expertise nationwide.

Connecting

Public/Private Ventures (PPV)

<http://www.ppv.org/>

The PPV website contains resources, tools, research, and information on workforce development, including youth workforce development programs.

National Mentoring Center (NMC)

http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/topic_school.html

NMC offers a training curriculum for developing an effective school-based youth mentoring program.

The Beach Center On Disability

<http://www.beachcenter.org/>

The Center provides resources, tip sheets, research, and other links that address issues of connectedness to family, friends, and community.

Working

National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)

<http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/html>

NYEC's PEPNet (Promising & Effective Practices Network) provides information on standards, strategies, and tools for quality programs in youth workforce development.

One Stop for Promising Practices

<http://www.promising-practices.org/>

This organization offers examples of workforce development programs practices, including youth programs.

Leading

National Youth Leadership Network

<http://www.nyln.org/>

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

Do Something

<http://www.dosomething.org/>

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

Social Security Administration's Office of Support Programs for Youth with Disabilities

<http://www.ssa.gov/work/Youth/youth.html>

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

Miscellaneous Sites

The Forum for Youth Investment (the Forum)

<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/>

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

Boys and Girls Clubs of America

<http://www.bgca.org/>

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

National Youth Development Information Center (NYDIC)

<http://www.nydic.org/nydic/>

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

The National 4-H Council

<http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/>

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

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

<http://www.nichcy.org/>

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

Parent Training and Information Centers

<http://www.taalliance.org/PTIs.htm>

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

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

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

NCWD/Youth

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