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Youth with Disabilities Entering the Workplace through Apprenticeship

Preparing Youth and Young Adults for Apprenticeship Programs



An Overview:

Far too many youth, particularly those with disabilities, leave secondary education without a clear plan for post-secondary studies and careers. Youth with disabilities are half as likely as their peers to participate in post-secondary education. Effective transition services are key for young people to make informed choices about their futures. Federal law requires that transition planning for youth with disabilities begin no later than age 16, and the plan must include measurable post-secondary goals. Although apprenticeship programs can create opportunities for both employment and post-secondary education, they are rarely considered as an option for youth with disabilities during transition planning.

What You Need to Know:

Each year approximately 200,000 individuals enter apprenticeship programs. Although apprenticeship jobs cut across a wide-breadth of industries and occupations, there is a concentration within the building and construction trades, the traditional base for apprenticeship. The vast majority of apprentices are at least 18 years old, and apprenticeship programs generally require that individuals have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent to enter apprenticeship programs. Given that apprenticeship is largely an adult program, it should be considered as a post-secondary option.

Certainly not all youth have the interest or aptitude for apprenticeship programs. Career assessment and planning is the key to determining whether a young person should consider apprenticeship as a post-secondary option. The assessment process may begin with less formal methods of assessment, such as discovery or a career interest inventory. Either of these methods can help an individual identify their occupational preferences based on a series of questions around their general interests and aptitudes.

There are many widely available resources that youth, parents, school administrators and service providers can use to facilitate the process. One example is *Career Planning Begins with Assessment: A Guide for Professionals Serving Youth with Educational and Career Challenges*. This guide, tailored to service providers working with youth and young adults with disabilities, contains a comprehensive inventory of various assessment instruments, and information on their purposes, how they are administered, and target groups and costs. **Please see the Where to Go For More Information section to learn more about this resource.**

For youth with disabilities, transition planning is a component of the youth's Individual Education Program (IEP) that is required by federal law. While transition planning is required to be included in the youth's IEP beginning at age 16, many experts feel that the planning should begin earlier, at least by age 14. The first step is assessing a youth's interests, aptitudes and abilities and then planning specific activities and a course of study that is appropriate for the youth.



Vocational programs focus on the skills, knowledge and abilities that prepare youth for the workplace. All youth, particularly those with disabilities, also benefit from including work-based learning opportunities in their career planning and preparation. Work-based learning provides youth with exposure to the workplace through a variety of options, including internships, job shadowing, and summer employment. Many vocational programs include work-based learning components.



In some communities, there are secondary programs that tie directly into apprenticeship. These programs are called pre-apprenticeship, school-to-apprenticeship, or youth apprenticeship programs. They are generally available only in certain states and school districts. Technical education officials in school districts have information about these programs.

For young people who are out of school, there are a number of options available to prepare for apprenticeship programs. Many of these programs also offer high school diplomas or intensive preparation for the General Education Development Diploma (GED). These workforce development programs typically also provide youth with help finding a job and offer some post-placement support. Information on these programs is generally available at One-Stop Career Centers located in communities across the country and through program-sponsored Web site locations.

Pre-apprenticeship programs are sponsored by a variety of organizations, often those that are directly connected to apprenticeship programs, such as the Home Builder's Institute. These programs offer an individual the opportunity to acquire basic skills needed for the occupation. In some instances, individuals that go into registered apprenticeship programs can get credit towards their apprenticeship certification for skills that were acquired in the pre-apprenticeship program. While these programs have traditionally been in the building and construction trades, some communities may have programs for other apprenticeship occupations such as those in health care, culinary arts, and technology.

Two national programs provide opportunities in nearly every state for youth to prepare for apprenticeship.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Job Corps program provides low-income youth, ages 16 to 24, the opportunity to acquire a high school credential and job skills in a wide variety of occupational areas. The 122 Job Corps Centers located in 48 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico provide training in all of the leading apprenticeship occupations, especially those in the building and construction trades. Most, but not all, Job Corps students reside at the Center while completing their programs of study. An important feature of the Job Corps is that during the first 60 days of the program, youth receive assistance in creating a Personnel Career Development Plan, which outlines the student's goals for the program. Assessing students' interests and aptitudes are a part of this career planning.

The second national program is called YouthBuild, and it provides work readiness training, job training in building and construction-related trades, and community service to low-income youth between 16 and 24 years of age. Youth may also work towards their GED or high school diploma. There are approximately 230 YouthBuild programs operating in 44 states, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The U.S. Department of Labor provides funding to many, but not all, YouthBuild sites.

The availability of workforce development programs for out-of-school youth varies greatly from community to community. An employment counselor is the best person to help a young adult determine what programs are available and their entry requirements. Employment counselors can also help youth assess their interests, aptitudes and abilities. One-Stop Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, community rehabilitation providers, and community colleges are the most prominent organizations that have employment counselors available to assist individuals with disabilities.

Where to Go For More Information:

For a directory of **One-Stop Career Centers** across the U.S., visit: <http://www.careeronestop.org/findos/default.aspx>.

DOL sponsors a Web site called **Career Voyages** that discusses a young person's post-secondary options, including apprenticeship: www.careervoyages.gov/apprenticeship-main.cfm.

The **National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth (NCWD/Y)** produced a guide that provides guidance and counseling tools necessary to help youth with disabilities successfully transition into the adult world of work. **Career Planning Begins With Assessment** is available at: www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/assessment.html.

To learn about Job Corps visit: <http://jobcorps.dol.gov/pp>.

For more information on **YouthBuild USA** visit: www.youthbuild.org.

The **Home Builders Institute** develops training materials for the construction trades and sponsors programs for youth and adults in certain states. Learn more about **Project CRAFT**, an apprenticeship focused training program for youth, at: www.hbi.org/page.cfm?pageID=129. **Project HOPE** is specifically for individuals with disabilities, but participants must be at least 18 years of age: www.hbi.org/page.cfm?pageID=132.

In many instances, the related training for apprenticeship programs is provided by community colleges. Some also provide pre-apprenticeship programs. Visit community colleges in your area to find more information. For a directory of community colleges and access to individual community college Web sites, visit the **American Association of Community Colleges** at: www.aacc.nche.edu.

Where to Go For More Information Continued:

The **National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)** works directly with State Education Agencies to enhance transition services and improve post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. This site, funded through the Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, offers abundant resources pertaining to transition planning, and can be accessed at www.nsttac.org.

To locate **Community Rehabilitation Providers** within your community, contact your local Vocational Rehabilitation office. You can search for the office closest to you on America's Service Locator: www.servicelocator.org.

Learn More

1. Understanding Apprenticeship Basics
2. Preparing Youth and Young Adults for Apprenticeship Programs
3. Increasing Participation of Young Adults with Disabilities In Apprenticeship Programs
4. Establishing New Apprenticeship Programs
5. What Apprenticeship Employers Need to Know About Working with Young Adults with Disabilities
6. Looking to Future Opportunities in Apprenticeship



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