



CONNECTICUT – Partnering to Support Transition-Aged Youth

The Challenge: For youth with disabilities, transitioning into adulthood requires more careful planning. While there are many resources and opportunities available for youth with disabilities to learn about different career paths and employment opportunities, it can sometimes be difficult for a young person to know where and how to begin.

The Strategy: The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grantee in Connecticut (CT) sought to develop more effective partnerships between Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I (Youth Programs), WIOA Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation), and the local public school systems. This collaborative effort had a two-fold goal: 1) increase participation in employment-related programming available to youth, and 2) increase co-enrollments between Title I and Title IV. To achieve this dual goal, the systems would jointly develop an orientation to the American Job Center (AJC) and a separate two-day pre-employment training effort for those students needing additional assistance with their employment goals.

The Plan: Ms. Amy Huysman, a Youth-focused Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor serving the eastern region of CT, does VR outreach by meeting with students with disabilities at different local high schools. During these visits, she facilitates the enrollment process of students with disabilities in WIOA Title IV services. Amy also informs the students about the numerous services available at the local AJC to help them achieve their employment goals. In coordination with the school, Amy invites the students to go on a field trip to visit their local AJC to see for themselves the services that are available. Approximately every two months, a group of 7-10 students with disabilities participate in this orientation at their local AJC in Uncasville, CT.

At the AJC, Amy introduces the students to the DEI's Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC), Ms. Nancy Gartley. Nancy begins with a one-hour orientation on all the available resources and services provided within the AJC. This includes assistance with online research about available career opportunities in the local area, upcoming job fairs and recruitment events, and other resources. Thereafter, students practice registering for services and undergo resume and interview assistance training.

For those needing more intensive assistance, Nancy coordinates with a VR counselor co-located within the AJC to facilitate a two-day pre-employment workshop. Nancy describes these sessions as an opportunity to "evaluate the abilities of job seekers with the goal of enhancing employment opportunities". The focus is on pre-employment training activities that help students gain the necessary skills to enter the workforce. For example, this includes addressing soft skills in learning the importance of giving a good first impression to prospective employers. In addition, for those students receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, guidance is provided on work incentives through the Ticket to Work Program.

System/Workforce/WIOA Outcomes: Since being launched in November 2018, the first two orientations resulted in 16 students being co-enrolled between Title I and Title IV programs. The coordination of the on-site AJC orientations and two-day workshops have also resulted in increasing staff communication between WIOA Title I and Title IV programs. This increased communication helps facilitate the implementation of the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach to support co-enrollments and the sharing of costs across programs.

Overall, it's a win-win scenario. For youth with disabilities, they are given the chance to learn about different programs available to them under one roof at an AJC. For WIOA programs, they are learning to evolve by applying their systems to track and follow through with students for a more seamless start. The DRC, Nancy Gartley, credits "the shared interest across WIOA programs for establishing a strong foundation for our students" as one reason why this initiative has been successful.

Key Career Pathway Elements:

- Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles
- Design education and training programs
- Align policies and programs

Additional Resources on this Topic:

- [WorkforceGPS Disability and Employment Community](#): An online resource destination for the American Job Center network, people with disabilities, and employers. In addition, this is a resource for all key stakeholders who partner with the workforce system to provide services and programs to people with disabilities and other barriers to employment.
- [Integrated Resource Team \(IRT\) Information and Resources](#) – This page provides information on what an IRT is, their many benefits, and how to form one with a job seeker.
- [Youth with Disabilities](#): Check out the resources to support workforce professionals and others to help ensure that youth with disabilities and their families have access to services that can facilitate a seamless transition during the formative years of development.
- [National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth \(NCWD/Youth\)](#): NCWD/Youth assists state and local workforce development systems to better serve all youth, including youth with disabilities and other disconnected youth. It serves as a source for information, strategies and solutions around transition and workforce development for youth with disabilities.
- [Integration of VR into the Workforce Development System](#): Under WIOA, partner programs and entities that are jointly responsible for workforce and economic development, educational, and other human resource programs collaborate to create a seamless customer-focused one-stop delivery system that integrates service delivery across all programs and enhances access to the programs' services. The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) provides resources in the form of guidance, literature, and practice in this area.