BLAZING THE TRAIL:

A NEW DIRECTION FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP

SUMMIT REPORT

National
Collaborative on
Workforce and
Disability

NCWD
For Youth

Navigating the Road to Work
Making the Connection between
Youth with Disabilities & Employment

NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ON WORKFORCE AND DISABILITY FOR YOUTH

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Suggested citation for this report:

Hare, R., & Richards, C. (2007). Blazing the Trail: A New Direction in Youth
Development & Leadership. Washington, DC: National Collaborative on
Workforce and Disability for Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership.

Blazing The Trail:
A New Direction for Youth Development & Leadership

A NEW DIRECTION FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP

SUMMIT REPORT

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability

NCWD For Youth

Navigating the Road to Work
Making the Connection between
Youth with Disabilities & Employment

NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ON WORKFORCE AND DISABILITY FOR YOUTH

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

No longer are young Americans content to sit idly by and watch the passing scene from the grandstand. They want to be down on the field. They have made it abundantly clear that they intend to participate in the game. No longer should older Americans be content to leave this vigorous and exciting force on the sidelines. This force, this energy, is going to continue to build and grow.

—Senator Birch Bayh

Research supports the premise that both youth development and youth leadership programs positively shape the growth of young people with and without disabilities. Youth leadership programs build on solid youth development principles, with an emphasis on those development and program components that support youth leadership. Research also 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 positively transition through adolescence to adulthood. Youth with disabilities, however, have often been isolated from mainstream youth development programs.

Beginning in the Fall of 2006, through the Federal National Partnership for the Transformation of Children's Mental Health, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) took the lead in planning and organizing a national summit to address issues around youth development and leadership. On August 16-17, 2007, *Blazing the Trail: A New Direction in Youth Development & Leadership,* was conducted in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area representing a collaborative effort between multiple Federal departments and agencies, foundations, and national youth development organizations. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth), a national technical assistance center supported by ODEP and housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership, served as the convener of the summit.

Together, ODEP and SAMHSA built an amazing collection of partners from the Federal government, private foundations and national organizations to plan, support and conduct the *Blazing the Trail* summit. A complete list of sponsors, co-sponsors and partners appears in Appendix A of this report.

PURPOSE

The overall purpose of the summit was to provide a forum for a national dialogue on what needs to be done to improve policy and practice in the youth development and leadership field generally, and to ensure that youth with disabilities (including those with mental health "challenges"), are included in opportunities available to all other youth. In addition, youth direction in policymaking was another area of inquiry. Invitees included leaders in the youth development/leadership field; national, state and local youth development and leadership programs; researchers; public and private funders; representatives of Federal and state government; family members; and, most importantly, youth both with and without disabilities/mental health "challenges."

The impetus for convening the summit derived from the following:

• Evidenced-based research shows it is essential for all youth, including youth with disabilities, to have opportunities for the access to and participation in a range of positive youth development activities, together with acquisition of leadership skills, in order to become contributing members of society;

• The Federal government has explicitly recognized that services and policies for youth with disabilities and their families should be youth driven and family centered. To be able to do this effectively, youth need to gain self-esteem by learning specific leadership skills such as self-determination, self-advocacy, and self-efficacy, to be better able to become self-sufficient;

• At the present time many youth with disabilities, including those with mental health "challenges," lack access to youth development and leadership opportunities in their communities;

• There are multiple Federal agencies which support youth development and leadership as part of their mission, but the work being done is stove-piped and uncoordinated;

• Many mainstream/generic leadership development programs are not inclusive of people with disabilities, including youth with mental health "challenges;"

• Better coordination and collaboration between Federal agencies, state and local governments, civic organizations and foundations can foster the development of strategic partnerships to expand positive youth development and leadership opportunities for all youth, including youth with disabilities.

With that in mind, the planners established the following goals for the summit:

• Increase knowledge and awareness of the value of youth development and leadership across multiple constituencies, systems, and sectors;

- Develop strategic partnerships between governmental agencies and non-governmental entities such as foundations and community-based organizations to support youth development and leadership activities;

- Increase access to and support for the growth of youth development and leadership opportunities for all youth, including youth with disabilities;

- Foster greater inclusion of youth with disabilities, including youth with mental health "challenges," in mainstream youth development and leadership programs; and,

- Increase "youth voice" in the policy-making affecting them.

COMMON DEFINITIONS

A major challenge in the field of youth development and youth leadership is the lack of consensus around common definitions of just what is meant by youth development and leadership. Often, and mistakenly, the terms "youth development" and

"youth leadership" are used interchangeably. In discussion with the summit planning committee, it was decided to use the following definitions around which to organize the summit:

Youth Development is a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models that focus solely on youth problems;

Youth Leadership is (1) "The ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinion and behavior of other people, and show the way by going in advance" (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998); and (2) "The ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem to carry them out. It includes the ability to identify community resources and use them, not only to live independently, but also to establish support networks to participate in community life and to affect positive social change" (Adolescent Employment Readiness Center, Children's Hospital, n.d.).

Using these definitions, one can begin to distinguish youth leadership from youth development. Youth development, while including youth leadership competencies, encompasses a broader, more holistic process of developmental growth that occurs during adolescence, one that will determine both adolescent and adult behavior.

SETTING THE STAGE

I see youth developers, giving back to these youth who genuinely care, who contribute day in and day out. I see people investing their lives in this generation. These people don't just talk about our generation, they give to our generation. They're developing leaders by talking to them on the phone, developing programs where youth really are the center and the focus, I see youth developers talking and finding out what youth want and what they really need.

—Michael Murray, youth keynote speaker

The selection of participants to be invited to the summit was an ample demonstration of just how far the networks of the various partners reached and how significant a spread of people were represented in those networks. Many participants remarked that it was the first time that they had been at such a diverse meeting, and interacted with individuals from the broad-based disability community, the substance abuse and mental health community, and the juvenile justice, foster care, Native American, and the mainstream youth development/leadership fields (Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H, Scouts, etc.).

The sponsors of the summit decided to create a working meeting, where breakouts would be given specific topics to discuss and tasks to be performed, rather than one that was packed with presentations. Accordingly, they targeted 200 individuals from the 350 potential invitees identified through the planning committee to participate in the summit. In keeping with the goal of putting together a youth-focused summit, 25 percent of the available spaces were set aside for youth and young adults. Spaces were also reserved for parents and family members, and included parental and family-led organizations. Many slots were set aside for community-based organizations. Additional spaces were allocated for individuals representing national youth development and leadership organizations as well as representatives from foundations that focus on funding youth development and leadership programs. Due to the need for Federal, state, and local government support for youth development and leadership initiatives a series of slots were also held for representatives from these constituencies.

To ensure that participants were prepared to do the work of the actual summit, materials were posted on a website to provide clarity on concepts common in the field of youth development/ leadership, including but not limited to, publications on youth voice, the ladder of youth involvement, and common definitions of frequently

used terminology to facilitate the dialogue that would occur there.

In the spirit of the summit, planners reached out to a number of youth organizations, such as the National Youth Leadership Network, state-level youth leadership networks, the Foster Club, and Youth Motivating Others through the Voices of Experience, to include them in the planning process. The youth leaders decided that they wanted to operate as a subcommittee of the planning committee, and met nearly every month to offer advice and guidance to the summit planners.

PRE-SUMMIT ACTIVITIES

A *Blazing the Trail* website was established to serve as the primary means of communicating with summit participants. Pre-summit materials were developed and posted for participants to be grounded in the goals, focus, and content of the summit. Pre-summit materials included goals and objectives, common definitions, and background papers.

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

The Youth Advisory Group felt it was important to assemble a pre-conference session, specifically for youth participants. Since so many youth from different backgrounds were coming together, it was crucial for them to meet, network, and prepare for this working-style meeting. Although 30 youth registered to attend the youth-only pre-conference session, hosted by young professionals from ODEP, IEL, and SAMHSA, around 50 actually attended. Participants were walked through the summit agenda, discussed the purpose and goals of the summit, and participated in activities based on the youth development and leadership framework adopted as the basis of the summit. The youth-focused pre-conference session provided an opportunity for the youth to get up, move around, and talk with each other. An activity on core values was facilitated as a means of showing how youth from a variety of different walks of life could have complimentary, or even the same core values. In addition there was a facilitated discussion on the

challenges in creating, implementing, and changing public policy at the Federal level.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SUMMIT

The youth development and leadership summit was organized over a two-day period, with a series of four breakout and four plenary sessions. These were designed to get participants prepared to strategically discuss changes needed to improve youth development and leadership policy and practice, both generally and for youth with disabilities particularly.

The four plenary sessions offered opportunities to hear directly from experts in the field. The first was designed to welcome participants, and Karen Pittman from the Forum for Youth Investment presented on the State of Youth Development and Leadership in the United States. The second plenary grouping provided an opportunity for three young leaders attending the summit to share their experiences and talk about the importance of working with youth to improve the youth development and leadership field. The third focused on the importance of creating and sustaining partnerships to improve policy and practices around youth development and leadership, with a local program emphasis.

Prior to the summit, participants signed up to be placed in breakout groups according to the five areas of youth development and leadership (learning, connecting, thriving, working, and leading) based on the area with which the participants had the most experience and/or interest. Each of the breakout groups included 25-35 people, a content expert with a strong knowledge base in the field, an adult facilitator and one to two youth facilitator(s) (working collaboratively), and a note taker. The dialogue which occurred during the breakouts focused on the following:

> **Breakout #1:** In the first small group session, the content experts offered a brief overview of the subject area, learning, connecting, thriving,

working, and leading; participants were asked to begin identifying perceived barriers and needed improvements, and to prioritize issues within their given areas.

Breakout #2: This breakout group was focused on issues around effective youth development and leadership program strategies within the designated area. To stimulate dialogue, facilitators used the following questions:

• What do you see as the top five program strategies for helping youth reach the outcomes identified as most important in this area? What is working? What is not working?

• What barriers need to be overcome so that these program strategies are more widely implemented and made available to all?

• What do you see as the most effective program strategy to ensure that youth are meaningfully involved in program implementation? What needs to be done so that this program strategy is more widely implemented and available?

• What do you see as the most effective program strategy for including youth with disabilities/mental health "challenges" in YD/YL programming?

• What professional development strategies would help strengthen youth development and leadership programming?

• Who are the critical partners needed to strengthen youth development and leadership programming?

Breakout #3: This breakout group was focused on changes needed in youth development and leadership policies and at the Federal, state, and local levels within the designated area. To stimulate dialogue, facilitators used the following questions:

• What policies are most helpful in supporting youth in achieving the designated area of youth

development and leadership? How should they be promoted?

• What policies are least helpful in supporting youth in achieving the designated area of youth development and leadership? How should they be overcome?

• What policy change(s) do you think would be most helpful in promoting youth-guided/youth directed policy making?

• What policy change(s) do you think would be most helpful in supporting the inclusion of youth with disabilities/mental health "challenges" in youth development and leadership programming?

• What policies need to be put in place or removed to promote professional development for youth service professionals?

• What policies need to be put in place or removed to promote partnership development to support youth in achieving desired outcomes?

Breakout #4: On the second day, the final breakout group session was used to tie together any loose ends, address issues that had not yet come up, and identify priorities for the final report out from each of the working groups to the larger group.

The fourth and final plenary provided an opportunity for all of the participants to learn about the dialogue, priorities, and recommendations identified which emerged over the two-day period in the smaller breakout groups described above.

INTERACTIVE AUDIENCE RESPONSE SYSTEM

Each breakout group identified the top three to five actions they felt were needed to begin to address the particular questions posed in that session. In the plenary session, an interactive audience response system was supplied to give all participants the opportunity to provide individual input on the priorities identified by the other breakout groups.
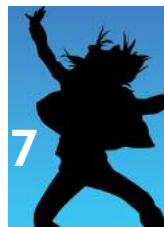
Some common competencies and desirable outcomes emerge from a review of youth development and youth leadership research. The competencies and outcomes are best articulated in a framework created by the Forum for Youth Investment that organizes the range of youth development outcomes into five developmental areas: **learning, connecting, thriving, working,** and leading. Youth development programs strive to provide supports, services, and opportunities that help youth, including youth with disabilities, achieve positive outcomes in all five of these areas. While youth leadership programs also help youth achieve positive outcomes in all five areas, they place more emphasis on developing competencies in the areas of **leading** and **connecting.**

Using the Forum for Youth Investment's framework, summit planners outlined intended outcomes and examples of program activities for each of the five areas and used them to define the

work to be addressed in the summit breakout groups:

Learning: Positive, basic, and applied academic attitudes, skills, and behaviors characterize the area of development known as **learning** (Ferber, Pittman, & Marshall, 2002). Often, this is as simple as giving young people the opportunity to use the skills they have acquired in school or other training programs in a different context. Youth should be encouraged to develop not only a higher aptitude for academic achievement, but also the ability to approach learning with a strategy for achieving success.

Thriving: Attitudes, skills, and behaviors that are demonstrated by maintaining optimal physical and emotional wellbeing characterize the area of development known as **thriving** (Ferber, Pittman, & Marshall, 2002). Not only must a young person have intellectual and social competencies to achieve success in adulthood, but he or she must also have

the wherewithal to maintain his or her physical and emotional health at its highest level. This includes having the social and intellectual competencies to identify environments and situations that would potentially compromise one's physical health; however, the core of this area of development is the ability to identify and access those situations that enhance one's physical and mental health. Thriving is the optimal relationship between physical and emotional wellbeing, as determined by each youth's particular circumstances and range of abilities.

Outcomes for this area of development range from obvious to obscure. Of the five areas of development, thriving may require the most individualized attention for youth in order for them to achieve successful outcomes. Since each youth brings different experiences to the program, his or her reactions to situational factors will vary. In addition, each youth will have different physical and emotional abilities and needs.

Connecting: **Connecting** refers to the development of positive social behaviors, skills, and attitudes (Ferber, Pittman, & Marshall, 2002). Relationships with elders, peers, supervisors, family, and other community members commonly influence these behaviors, skills, and attitudes. The level to which a young person has developed in this area will also dictate how he or she continues to build varied relationships later on in life. Further, maintaining these relationships in a way that will positively benefit the young person is the goal of this area of development.

Working: Positive attitudes, skills, and behaviors around vocational direction characterize the area of development known as **working** (Ferber, Pittman, & Marshall, 2002). Young people should be actively involved in activities that will expose them to and offer the opportunity to practice not only the actual skills needed for a particular career, but also the work-readiness skills needed to find and maintain employment.

Leading: **Leading** is the area of development that centers on positive skills, attitudes, and behaviors

around civic involvement and personal goal setting (Ferber, Pittman, & Marshall, 2002). Youth who are civically engaged in a positive manner, willing to participate in public activity, and able to navigate the civic arena are likely to become adults who participate in civic upkeep. In this case, the term "civic" can refer to an entire city, a neighborhood, a community, and anything else that implies public environs. Similarly, a youth who develops the inner strength and vision to set and meet goals will benefit not only himself or herself, but also his or her workplace as well as society as a whole. It is important to note that a young person is capable of showing leadership even without a "followership." Showing responsibility for oneself and demonstrating the ability to make personal change is often as critical as leading a group of individuals or altering the larger community.

Appendix B offers a more complete set of strategies and desired outcomes by each youth development and leadership framing area, adapted from an NCWD/Youth Info Brief and put in "youth-friendly" language.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROGRAM COMPONENTS: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Activities that foster positive youth development have become the basis for most youth serving programs. Even programs that do not view themselves as "youth development" programs may include components that foster a variety of aspects of identity and a range of abilities in young people. A component is a practice or characteristic of an organization or program — it can be a staff philosophy (e.g. youth are partners), it can be a standard operating procedure (e.g. let youth have a voice in their own development plan), or it can refer to the type of activities being carried out (e.g. hands-on, youth-led). NCWD/Youth found that programs focused on youth development and youth leadership share many of the same components, while youth leadership programs place an additional emphasis on particular components central to leadership development. The key components of youth development and youth leadership programs can be divided into two levels:
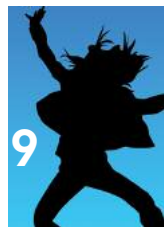
organizational and programmatic. *Organizational components* are the practices and characteristics of the organization as a whole that are necessary to providing effective youth programs. *Programmatic components* are the practices and characteristics of a specific program that make it effective for young people.

On the **organizational** level, both youth development and youth leadership programs should be supported by an organization with a clear mission, vision, and goals related to the development of young people (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996; National Collaboration for Youth, n.d.; Search Institute, 1995). All staff should be trained in youth development principles and practices, conduct themselves professionally, support each other and the mission of the program, and relate to all young people in a manner that is welcoming and caring. Youth development and youth leadership programs provide youth with a safe and structured environment in which they feel comfortable, cared for, and challenged to reach their potential (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996). Further, both should have obvious connections to the community at large and relationships with other youth-serving organizations. While both value youth involvement, youth development programs may not necessarily involve youth at all levels of organizational operations. Youth leadership programs, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of youth involvement in every facet of the organization as a means of practicing leadership skills. In other words, those programs that emphasize youth leadership as a goal and a desired outcome will tend to involve youth in every level of the organizational structure.

On the **programmatic** level, youth development and youth leadership programs often include the following components (Astroth, Brown, Poore, & Timm, 2002; Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996; Youth Development Block Grant, 1995):

• Focus on each young person's individual needs, assets, and interests;

• Varied hands-on and experiential activities;

• Opportunities for youth to succeed;

• Opportunities for youth to take on various roles in the program (leader, organizer, speaker, evaluator, etc.);

• Youth involvement in developing and implementing the program activities;

• Responsibility on the part of the youth to the program;

• Family involvement;

• Opportunities to interact with a mentor or role model; and,

• Opportunities to develop self-awareness, personal identity, and values.

While both youth development and youth leadership programs involve active participation by youth, youth leadership programs place a particular emphasis on the role of the youth participant. Just as they involve youth in all levels of organizational operations, youth leadership programs tend to involve youth heavily in every aspect of program delivery by providing youth with the following experiences (Urban Think Tank Institute, 2002; PEPNet Index of Effective Practices, n.d.):

• Multiple opportunities to observe, practice, and develop leadership skills;

• Progressive roles of leadership ranging from leading a small group to planning an event;

• Education on the history and values of the community and program; and,

• Assessment of each individual's own strengths and weaknesses.

When thinking about youth leadership as a component throughout the organization of a program it is important to take note of the three different models available (National Youth Employment Coalition "Youth Notes", March-April 2004):

- **The "For Youth" program:** In this model, youth are served by a program designed, run, evaluated, and driven by adults. Youth participate in the services, but the opinions of youth are rarely, if ever, solicited. These are often well-established programs with a set organizational structure and programs that have been running the same way (and with some success) for years. The program structure exists as a solid core that is not penetrated by the values, opinions, creativity, and talent of the youth that participate from year to year. The model is very paternalistic in the sense that youth are "taken care of" by the program and may not be seen as capable of providing meaningful direction to the programs that serve them. These models may often have recruitment and retention problems, because adults may not understand how to make the program attractive to today's youth. While these models can have positive outcomes in terms of employment and work-related skill building, they do little to truly support the leadership potential or the full development of the participating youth. They also miss out on many creative program developments that often come from having youth more engaged in the program itself.

- **The "With Youth" Program:** In this model, youth not only participate in the program services but their voices are also sought as a way to get a perspective on the program. This model is adult driven, but the adults are conscious of the need to listen to youth and use their input to influence the program design and services. The mechanisms for getting the voice of youth are largely informal and may not be done on a consistent basis. In this model, youth may be hired as staff, but they are generally not given supervisory or leadership roles. A hallmark of this model is that there are elements of the program that have been influenced to some degree by the voice of youth. However, while the culture of this model may draw on the opinions of youth, providing a consistent way of making this happen could strengthen the structure. The program is influenced by youth, but youth do not necessarily develop leadership skills as an intentional component of the program.

- **The "Youth-Driven" Program:** This model may or may not actually be run by youth; when adults run these models, though, the voice of youth is so strong that it is often the dominant force over the influence of adults. For example, in the adult-run versions of this model, adults may go along with something that they are not sure would work because the young people make a strong enough case to justify the risk. In this model, there are frequent structured opportunities for youth to evaluate the program through survey-type evaluations, focus groups, peer-to-peer interviews, and other formats. Youth are frequently not only hired as staff, but become supervisors and managers; they are involved in the hiring and evaluation of peer and adult staff; youth representatives can be found on the board, involved in fund raising, and serving on committees. There are many aspects of the program that can be identified as having been shaped by youth: there is a formal leadership development process using adult and peer mentors designed to create young leaders within the program and community; strategic planning is conducted with the full involvement of youth; economic development through youth self-employment and business creation is valued; the youth involved in this program model experience a culture that promotes and demonstrates a high degree of youth ownership of the program.

Although some success can be achieved with each of the three models, the youth-driven model yields the most comprehensive results. The move toward youth-driven models is challenging, time consuming, and does not guarantee automatic success of the program. However, the more a model is youth-driven, the more potential it provides for youth to develop not only as program participants, but also as empowered leaders learning how to change the institutions that serve them. This experience can carry over into many other aspects of their lives, including employment, and will create a new level of youth engagement in our communities.

DISABILITY FOCUS

In addition to its review of youth development and youth leadership, NCWD/Youth also researched leadership development programs that specifically target youth with disabilities in order to identify additional components of such programs and to examine how such programs should be structured.

NCWD/Youth found that the essential elements of any youth development or youth leadership program are applicable to all youth, both with and without disabilities or other "challenges." Developmental milestones are consistent for all, even though some youth may demonstrate them in different ways and reach them at different ages and stages. Youth development and youth leadership programs for youth with disabilities vary only slightly from programs designed for the general population. Therefore, NCWD/Youth includes disability issues as an additional focus for youth development and leadership programs.

In addition to the components described in the previous section, some additional organizational and programmatic components should be included in both youth development and youth leadership programs that serve youth with disabilities,

including those with mental health "challenges." On the organizational level, youth programs must ensure that they are both physically and programmatically accessible to youth with disabilities. This means that the physical space as well as the programs and services offered should be designed in a way that allows a young person with a disability to participate in and benefit from them fully, regardless of disability. Staff members must be aware of how to accommodate youth with disabilities, including those with mental health "challenges," and be willing, prepared, and encouraged to make such accommodations. The organization's staff must also be knowledgeable about both national and community resources for youth with disabilities, and should seek out partnerships and collaborations with other agencies that serve youth with disabilities.

On the programmatic level, youth programs seeking to serve youth with disabilities effectively should include the following components:

• Role-modeling and mentoring by peers and adults with disabilities;

• Self-advocacy skill building;

• Disability history, law, culture, policies, and practices; and,

• Independent living information and assessment.

While important for all youth, initial and ongoing assessments for independent living that center on careers and employment, training and education, transportation, recreation and leisure, community resources, life skills, and financial independence and benefits planning are especially critical in effective programming for youth with disabilities.

Basic principles for youth development and youth leadership programs are essentially the same for

youth with and without disabilities or other "challenges." Yet, few programs for youth with disabilities include all components necessary for youth to participate fully in all aspects of their lives and society. In order to fully include youth with disabilities and utilize universal design principles the additional disability-related components described above should be incorporated into all youth development and youth leadership programs (see Chart B in Appendix C).

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

The White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth was assigned to assess Federal youth policy and develop recommendations to strengthen the Federal response to the needs of children and youth, with a focus on coordination and accountability. This task force developed two reports and was dissolved after the completion of its work. Its primary finding was that Federal youth policy, administered across 12 different Federal agencies and inside of multiple departments, lacked coordination and focus. It often resulted in overlap, redundancy, and inconsistency across agencies having a direct impact on the lives of youth (including, but not limited to, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the U.S. Department of Justice).

As a result, the Tom Osborne Federal Youth Coordination Act (2006) (P.L. 109-365) was drafted in partnership with the member organizations of the National Collaboration for Youth, and its language proposed the development of a Federal Youth Development Council. Signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 17, 2006, but yet to receive any funding, this cross-agency Council is intended to have responsibility for ensuring communication among Federal agencies serving youth; assessing youth needs and the quantity and quality of Federal supports to help meet these needs; setting quantifiable goals/objectives for Federal youth programs and developing a plan to reach these goals; developing demonstration projects to focus on special populations of youth; and conducting research and identifying and

replicating model programs. An annual report would be submitted to the President and the U.S. Congress to report on any findings.

On February 7th, as this report was being finalized, President Bush issued an Executive Order establishing the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, a coalition of Federal agencies that will help support communities and organizations working to help our Nation's youth. This Executive Order builds on the success of the *Helping America's Youth Initiative,* a three-year interagency initiative announced by President Bush in his 2005 State of the Union address. The Executive Order further supports communities and youth-serving organizations by

• Extending and expanding the work of the current Interagency Working Group on Helping America's Youth;

• Enhancing collaboration among government organizations at the Federal, State, and local levels and families, schools, and communities, including faith-based and other community organizations; and

• Developing a Federal website on youth.

In addition, the Executive Order directs the Working Group to encourage rigorous program assessments to determine best practices and promote initiatives that offer cost-effective solutions for achieving better results for at-risk youth, such as mentoring.

The need for such cross-agency communication and collaboration and the opportunity to provide it in a national venue focusing on the needs of all youth was a major incentive for hosting the *Blazing the Trail* Summit. Although FYCA has yet to be implemented and the Working Group has yet to be named, the Summit can be viewed as an important step toward improving communication and coordination across different Federal agencies and establishing youth developing and leadership as an interagency Federal priority.

PRIORITY ACTIONS IDENTIFIED BY SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

T his section details the dialogue and important action steps identified by the Summit participants as necessary to improve policy and practice in the youth development and leadership field, and to ensure the inclusion of youth with disabilities, including those with mental health needs. Although the breakout groups were organized around the five framing areas (learning, connecting, thriving, working, and leading), the Summit findings have been organized around the topical areas discussed in each breakout session because of the significant overlap in what each of the groups identified as important.

PRIORITY AREA ONE:
HELPING YOUTH ACHIEVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

Mentoring:

• There is need for a nationwide push for every young person to have a mentor;

• Different mentoring programs and systems should be created on different levels and within different silos;

• A suggestions was made that regulations be implemented that require all mentoring programs receiving Federal dollars to serve all kids.

Cultural and Linguistic Competence:

• Youth development and leadership programs need to become culturally and linguistically competent and tools and resources need to be developed that respect and support a young person's cultural beliefs and background.

Increase National Focus on Youth Development and Leadership:

• The U.S. Departments of Education and Labor should implement appropriate incentives to increase funding opportunities for youth development and leadership programs (e.g.; youth community centers). This practice should be replicated on the state and local levels as well;

- There is a need to prioritize increased funding for after-school programs including youth development and leadership opportunities as well as civic engagement initiatives;

- Best practices and lessons learned should be gathered and standards developed for youth development and leadership programming.

Planning Documents:

- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) should be available for all students;

- Others suggested the creation of a universal service plan so that youth being served in multiple systems could be the driver of a single document coordinating all their services.

PRIORITY AREA TWO:
PROMOTING YOUTH GUIDED/YOUTH DIRECTED POLICY

Prepare and Educate Youth to Impact Policy:

- Many youth with and without disabilities would benefit from training and added support in becoming policy or systems advocates, which could include training and employing youth as grant makers, grant writers and reviewers, and subcontractors;

- Policy documents should be provided in accessible and understandable language and multiple formats without jargon or acronyms;

- When youth are engaged by organizations or agencies to serve as experts, they should be paid for their time;

- Research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of different approaches to youth involvement in policy change to give added support to this work.

Increase State Level Opportunities:

- States should develop a state-level leadership forum for youth from a variety of backgrounds;

- Voting positions should be made available for youth to serve on certain boards, such as

workforce investment boards (WIBs), state education boards, state rehabilitation councils and independent living councils;

- Scholarships should be made available to support youth participation on boards and commissions;

- Prior to and while holding board positions, youth should receive coordinated preparation and mentoring from individuals with more experience;

- Job opportunities for youth should be increased within State agencies.

Increase Federal Opportunities:

- On the Federal level, a Youth Caucus should be developed in Congress that would include members dedicated to improving youth development and leadership policies, programs and funding priorities;

- More voting positions should be set aside for youth on Federally-funded boards creating, directing, or implementing policy on youth programs;

- A non-discrimination policy based on age should be implemented, in reference to board membership, political appointments or voting rights/privileges — for any public, private or nonprofit entity receiving Federal funding. Such entities should be required to have a minimum number of voting seats designated for youth in order to maintain Federal funding.

PRIORITY AREA THREE:
INCLUSION OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Education:

- Youth with disabilities need to learn about their rights and responsibilities regarding disability disclosure in high school;

- In writing their Individualized Education Programs (IEP), students should be supported in contacting advocacy groups to assist them in driving their IEP process;

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) should be changed so that transition starts from Pre-K to Kindergarten, and that youth with disabilities (including youth with mental health needs) are supported in being involved (and eventually leading) their IEP process starting in kindergarten;

- Diplomas and certificates should be tied to standards and more effective assessment tools need to be developed, driven by the needs of youth, not by the needs of policy;

- There is a need for greater education, enforcement and accountability for policies already in place regarding inclusion of youth with disabilities.

Youth Development & Leadership Programming:

- Federally-funded systems (e.g., education, workforce development, child welfare, substance abuse, mental health, etc.) need to formally recognize and fund youth development and leadership opportunities and programs in their program mix, including for youth with disabilities;

- Existing Federally-funded programs serving youth need to have specific language that includes recruiting youth with disabilities as participants;

- State and local commissions should be required to seek the perspective and participation of youth with disabilities (including youth with mental health "challenges"), including in the creation of policy that affects these youth;

- Youth development and leadership programs should develop a strategic plan that utilizes cultural competency (including disability) to engage stakeholders in the conversation and ensure that youth in the programs have oversight as to program development;

- Data collection and accountability systems used for youth development and leadership programs need more flexibility when determining outcome measures for youth with disabilities;

- Evidence-based promising practices around inclusion of youth with disabilities in youth development and leadership programming need to be tied to data;

- A balance needs to be struck between purely quantitative data collection and qualitative data collection.

The World of Work:

- Businesses should be encouraged, including through appropriate incentives, to hire and support youth with disabilities and youth with diagnosed mental health "challenges;"

- There is a need for increasing disability awareness and sensitivity training for all employers and individuals working with youth;

- There is a need for more internship programs serving youth with disabilities in private, public, and government employment.

Work Disincentives:

• Oftentimes youth with disabilities (including those with mental health "challenges") want to work and have the same life goals as youth without disabilities — a job, a home, a family, etc. However, the complicated benefits system often discourages these youth from getting jobs and planning careers because they don't want to risk losing health coverage;

• As a result, many youth with disabilities don't engage in programs such as AmeriCorps, or other job training and placement programs and therefore don't get exposure to the world of work and the "adult" world;

• Financial policies should not promote out-of-home placement rather than home-based care;

• Programs should be youth centered and youth should not have to choose between a career and their health;

• Youth should be able to maintain Medicaid or Social Security benefits while working.

PRIORITY AREA FOUR: PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Language:

• Agencies need to come to an agreement around common language regarding several key terms, including "disability", "successful youth outcomes," "youth," and "inclusion";

• A universal vocabulary should be used by agencies serving youth and the programs they fund.

Funding:

• Encouraged by the number of different public and private funders present at the Summit, it was suggested that agencies work to increase blending and braiding of resources to support youth development and leadership and target common issues.

Federal Collaboration for Youth Policy:

• It was proposed that a "Federal collaboration for youth" policy be created to bring together representatives from every Federal department and agency that has an impact on youth as a means of improving collaboration around policies, programs and funding;

• Such collaborative efforts should serve as a model for authentic partnerships to be replicated on the state and local level to improve services for youth.

PRIORITY AREA FIVE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Standards:

• A study should be conducted to examine core competencies for youth service professionals and the results used to inform professional development policies, funding and strategies;

• Based on research, professional development standards need to be established for youth service professionals.

Federal Role:

• Federal departments and agencies should require youth development and leadership training as part of professional/paraprofessional development training, including implementation strategies for ongoing program practices;

• More funding should be procured and dedicated to professional development across systems based on best practices related to serving youth from a variety of backgrounds.

Youth Involvement:

• Youth and their families should be involved in the training of youth service professionals; and,

• Youth should participate in youth development and leadership program hiring and evaluation of program staff.

CHALLENGES & NEXT STEPS

Ten years from now, I see a generation that will lead us into a new era. I see doctors, I see lawyers, I see civil servants, nurses, I see designers, I see video game writers, I see restaurant owners ,I see presidents and even more than that, I see people who stand up and say, 'I am a leader, even though I'm not the president, because I take charge of my own destiny.'

I see people who are not just ready to step into the shoes of their fathers, not just ready to take lead of this society, but ready to lead it to the next step, stand on their father's shoulder and with their fists in the air saying, 'I want to see change!'

—Michael Murray

As can be expected from any convocation this large and diverse, there were a number of issues and challenges as well as a strong desire to keep the momentum alive.

Summit participants discovered that leadership is not easy. All participants could have benefited from training on youth and adult partnerships and how to make them work. A challenge was the need for more in-depth training for those individuals working on the issue about how adults and youth can work together, coming from a place where both assume the other comes to the table with the best intent. Any work that focuses on bringing people together — especially people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and opinions — requires patience, time and the development of a set of skills to work together. This is most certainly true when bridging generations, cultures, and comfort zones across the programs (e.g. foster care, mental health, education, etc.) represented at the Summit.

"Youth involvement is only meaningful when it is paired with a willingness to look critically at adult/youth power dynamics, a willingness to be open to new perspectives, and a willingness to abandon paternalistic patterns of hierarchical behavior and decision making," one summit speaker explained. "It's not just about bringing young people to the table but, metaphorically, it's letting them help decide how that table will be arranged."

One of the major successes of this Summit was the bringing together of such a diversity of individuals and organizations from such a wide array of programs and systems. One of the unquantifiable outcomes of the Summit was the blending of a diverse set of knowledge, experiences and backgrounds of participants. Regardless of their preconceptions, participants gained a deeper understanding of the attitudes, culture and perspectives of a diverse group of youth leaders. Even though Summit planners developed "common

language" materials, challenges still arose around terminology and a baseline understanding of systems and issues.

Many of the youth-development organizations represented were not familiar with terms of art from the disability community, including mental health issues. Likewise, youth and adults from the disability world had much to learn about the broader youth development and leadership world. There were even divergent differences and preferences within the "disability community," in the use of particular words, phrases or identifiers, such as youth with mental health "needs" or mental health "challenges".

Even broader than terms specific to certain fields, issues came up regarding very basic parameters of the conversation, such as how "youth" was defined, and related outcomes expectations, and measurements. As the keynote speaker pointed out, there is a need to agree on a common set of outcomes that all youth need to achieve, such as those that appear in the Appendix. A clearer understanding of who fits into which category and what's expected of them was a strong theme that emerged during the Summit.

Participants from *Blazing the Trail: A New Direction in Youth Development and Leadership* were brought together to increase knowledge and awareness, develop strategic partnerships between governmental agencies and non-governmental entities, increase access to and support the growth of youth development and leadership for all youth, including youth with disabilities; and foster greater inclusion of youth with disabilities, including those with mental health needs.

The breakout groups provided an opportunity for participants to discuss priorities in the field and what is truly needed to make youth development and leadership a national priority for all youth. In addition, participants were able to make connections and network across sectors while beginning to recognize the need for more

consistency in language, practice, and policy across the field. *Blazing the Trail* also provided young people an opportunity to have frank discussions with funders, policymakers, and others who have a direct impact on the programs they participate in their communities.

Because of the diversity of the Summit, many attendees had opportunities to meet and make connections with other individuals from other sectors, systems, and walks of life. Although much remains to be done, the summit successfully laid out a foundation for change. Change was not limited to the youth though, as one funder from the business sector remarked, "This Summit opened my eyes to a number of different things that are going to make me change the way I do business after I leave here!"

Building a cohesive youth development and leadership agenda in this country will require extensive coordination and collaboration across a wide variety of stakeholders. *Blazing the Trail* was an important step. ODEP and its many the Federal Partners, NCWD/Youth and many of the Summit planners and participants are committed to work together and build on the momentum created by the Summit until this is achieved.

SUMMIT SPONSORS, CO-SPONSORS & PARTNERS

FEDERAL PARTNERS

- Corporation for National & Community Service:
    - ~ Learn & Serve;

- National Council on Disability;

- Social Security Administration;

- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services:
    - ~ Office of Special Education Programs; and,
    - ~ Rehabilitation Services Administration;

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services:
    - ~ Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration;
    - ~ Office of Disability Policy;
    - ~ Administration on Children and Families; and,
    - ~ Administration on Developmental Disabilities;

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development;

- U.S. Department of Labor:
    - ~ Employment & Training Administration; and,
    - ~ Office of Disability Employment Policy;

- U.S. Department of Transportation:
    - ~ Federal Transit Administration;

With their vast networks of programs, research and technical assistance centers, and state and local partners, these Federal agencies engaged the following organizations in the planning, agenda shaping, participant recruitment, and summit execution processes:

- American Institute for Research;
- American Youth Policy Forum;
- Coalition for Community Schools;
- Easter Seals Project ACTION;
- Forum for Youth Investment;
- Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development
- National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health;
- Institute for Educational Leadership;
- Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation
- National 4-H;
- National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth;
- National Collaboration for Youth;
- National Consortium on Leadership & Disability for Youth;
- National Governor's Association;
- National Human Services Assembly;
- National Youth Employment Coalition;
- The Corps Network;
- The Innovation Center; and,
- The HSC Foundation.

CHART A:
BLAZING THE TRAIL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP
MODIFIED "YOUTH FRIENDLY" OUTCOMES

	ORIGINAL OUTCOMES	MODIFIED "YOUTH FRIENDLY" OUTCOMES
LEARNING	• Basic aptitude in math and reading • Rational problem solving • Ability to think critically toward a positive outcome • Logical reasoning based on personal experience • Ability to determine one's own skills and areas of academic weakness or need for further education and training • Sense of creativity • Appreciation of and the foundation for lifelong learning, including a desire for further training and education, the knowledge of needed resources for said training, and willingness for further planning	• Learning to read and do math well • Being able to solve problems • Being able to think clearly and deeply, and compare options before making a positive decision • Knowing how to make a sensible decision based on my experiences • Knowing my strengths and weaknesses in school and the more I need to learn • Being creative • Always wanting to learn and seek out ways to learn more
CONNECTING	• Quality relationships with adults and peers • Interpersonal skills, such as ability to build trust, handle conflict, value differences, listen actively, and communicate effectively • Sense of belonging and membership (such as valuing and being valued by others, being a part of a group or greater whole) • Ability to empathize with others • Sense of one's own identity both apart from and in relation to others • Knowledge of and ability to seek out resources in the community • Ability to network to develop personal and professional relationships	• Positive relationships with adults and peers • Having the skills to talk with people, build trust, handle conflict, value differences, and listen actively. • Feeling like I am an important part of a group, or a larger community • Ability to feel for others and step into their shoes • Knowing who I am on my own and with other people • Knowing and finding people, places and things in my community • Being able to talk to people so that I can have personal and work relationships

CHART A:
BLAZING THE TRAIL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP MODIFIED "YOUTH FRIENDLY" OUTCOMES

	ORIGINAL OUTCOMES	MODIFIED "YOUTH FRIENDLY" OUTCOMES
THRIVING	• Understanding of growth and development as both an objective and a personal indicator of physical and emotional maturation • Knowledge and practice of good nutrition and hygiene • Developmentally appropriate exercise (will vary depending on age, maturity, and range of physical abilities) • Ability to identify situations of safety and make safe choices on a daily basis • Ability to assess situations and environments independently • Capacity to identify and avoid unduly risky conditions and activities • Ability to learn from adverse situations and avoid them in the future • Confidence and sense of self-worth in relation to their own physical and mental status	• Understanding my physical and emotional growth • Knowing and having good nutrition and hygiene • Exercising the way that's best for me • Knowing how to make choices that will keep me safe • Knowing how to deal on my own with different situations • Knowing when something is too risky and avoiding it • Learning from bad situations and staying away from them in the future • Feeling good about myself, how I think and what I look like
WORKING	• Meaningful engagement in own career development process • Demonstrated skill in work readiness • Awareness of options for future employment, careers, and professional development • Completion of educational requirements or involvement in training that culminates in a specific vocation or opportunity for career advancement • Established involvement in meaningful work that offers advancement, satisfaction, and self-sufficiency • Positive attitude about one's ability and future in working in a particular industry or the opportunities to grow into another	• Being able to make decisions about my job and/or career • Having the skills I need to be ready to work • Knowing what kinds of jobs are out there and what I can do with my future • Finishing school and training so that I can get a job and go further in the career I want • Having a job that I like, where I can learn, be successful and live independently • Feeling good about my abilities to do my current job and to grow in my future career

CHART A:
BLAZING THE TRAIL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP MODIFIED "YOUTH FRIENDLY" OUTCOMES

	ORIGINAL OUTCOMES	MODIFIED "YOUTH FRIENDLY" OUTCOMES
LEADING	• Ability to articulate personal values • Awareness of how personal actions impact the larger communities • Ability to engage in the community in a positive manner • Respect and caring for oneself and others • Sense of responsibility to self and others • Integrity • Awareness of cultural differences among peers and the larger community • High expectations for self and community • Sense of purpose in goals and activities • Ability to follow the lead of others when appropriate	• Being able to say what's important to me • Knowing what my actions do to the people around me. • Being an active part of my community to make it a better place. • Respecting and caring for myself and others. • Knowing I am responsible to myself and to people around me. • Being true to what I think is important • Understanding and having respect for others who may not be like me (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, culture, religion, sexuality, disability) • Setting high goals for myself and my community • Having goals and doing activities that matter • Following others when need to

APPENDIX C

CHART B: ORGANIZATIONAL & PROGRAM COMPONENTS

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL		
COMPONENTS OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS	**ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS**	**ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS FOR DISABILITY FOCUS**
• Clear mission and goals • Staff are trained, professional, supportive, committed, and youth-friendly • Safe and structured environment	• Youth involvement at all levels including administration and the Board of Directors	• Physically and programmatically accessible • Staff are aware, willing, prepared, and supported to make accommodations
• Connections to community and other youth-serving organizations		• Knowledge of resources (national and community-specific) for youth with disabilities • Partnerships and collaboration with other agencies serving or assisting youth with disabilities
PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL		
COMPONENTS OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS	**ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS**	**ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS FOR DISABILITY FOCUS**
• Focus on each young person's individual needs, assets, and interests		
• Hands-on experiential and varied activities • Youth involvement in developing and implementing activities	• Hands-on involvement at all programmatic levels such as planning, budgeting, implementing, and evaluating programs	
• Opportunities for success • Opportunities to try new roles • Youth leadership	• Multiple opportunities to develop and practice leadership skills • Varied, progressive leadership roles for youth: small group, large group, event, program	
• Mentoring/role models		• Ensure peer and adult role models and mentors include people with disabilities
• Personal responsibility		• Self-advocacy skills building • Independent living information and assessment (career, employment, training, education, transportation, recreation, community resources, life skills, financial, benefits planning)
• Family involvement and support		
• Opportunities for youth to develop self-awareness, identity, and values	• Education on community & program values and history	• Disability history, law, culture, policies, and practices

24 Blazing the Trail: A New Direction for Youth Development & Leadership

REFERENCES

Adolescent Employment Readiness Center, Children's Hospital. (n.d.). D.C. Youth Leadership Forum. Washington, DC. Author

Astroth, K. A., Brown, D., Poore, J., & Timm, D. (2002). Avenues to adulthood or avenues to civic anemia. CYD Anthology 2002. Sudbury, MA: Institute for Just Communities.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989). Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century. New York, N.Y.: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Center for Youth Development and Policy Research. (1996). Advancing youth development: A curriculum for training youth workers. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. (1990). Developing leadership in gifted youth. Retrieved January 21, 2004 from http://ericec.org/digests/e485.html.

Ferber, T. & Pittman, K., with Marshall, T. (2002). State youth policy: Helping all youth to grow up fully prepared and fully engaged. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment.

Forum for Youth Investment. (2001). Aligning Youth Agendas: A Rationale for the Forum for Youth Investment. Takoma Park, MD: International Youth Foundation. HI: Publisher.

Gambone, M. A., Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2002). Finding out what matters for youth: Testing key links in a community action framework for youth development. Philadelphia, PA: Youth Development Strategies and Institute for Research and Reform in Education.

Karnes, F.A. & Bean, S. M. (1997). Leading the way in leadership. Parenting for High Potential. Washington, DC: National Association for Gifted Children. Retrieved January 21, 2003 from http://www.nagc.org/Publications/Parenting/leader.htm .

National Collaboration for Youth. (n.d.). Definitions of youth development. Retrieved December 2003 from http://www.nydic.org/nydic/devdef.html .

National Collaboration for Youth. (n.d.). What works: Essential elements of effective youth development programs. Retrieved December 12, 2003 from http://www.nydic.org/nydic/elements.html .

National Collaboration for Youth (2006) Federal Youth Coordination Act, Retrieved August 1, 2007 from http://www.youthcoordinationact.org

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2002). Community programs to promote youth development. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

National Youth Employment Coalition. (1994). Toward A national youth development system: How we can better serve youth at risk. A report to the US Secretary of Labor. Washington, DC: National Youth Employment Coalition.

National Youth Employment Coalition. (n.d.). PEPNet index of effective practices: Youth development. Retrieved December 12, 2003 from http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/youthdev.htm

Rutgers Cooperative Extension. (2003). Teens take the lead in the New Jersey 4-H Teen Leadership project. Retrieved January 21, 2004 from http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/4h/fs617.pdf

Search Institute. (1996). Youth development programs and outcomes: Final report for the YMCA of the USA. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

Sipe, C. L., Ma, P., & Gambone, M. A. (1998). Support for youth: A profile of three communities. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

Steele, Claude (2007) Making School a Place Where Everyone Succeeds: Belonging is Necessary for Learning, Jacqueline P. Danzberger Memorial Lecture, Retrieved from http://www.iel.org/pubs/2007_jd_steele.pdf

Urban Think Tank Institute. (2002). Public Allies: Developing new leaders. Retrieved January 21, 2004 from http://www.urbanthinktank.org/publicallies.cfm .

US Department of Heath and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (1996). Reconnecting youth & community: A youth development approach. Retrieved December 12, 2003 from http://www.ncfy.com/Reconnec.htm .

Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities: Basic skills for successful transition. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Youth Development Community Block Grant (YDCBG) Act: S. 673, Acts of the 104th Congress, introduced April 4, 1995.

Youth Leadership Support Network. (n.d.). About the Youth Leadership Support Network. Retrieved December 12, 2003 from http://www.worldyouth.org