

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of Youth Service Practitioners:

The Centerpiece of a Successful Workforce Development System

PAPER PREPARED BY:

Mary McCain

Consultant, Goodwill Industries International, Inc.

Patricia Gill

National Youth Employment Coalition

Joan Wills

NCWD/Youth

Mindy Larson

National Youth Employment Coalition



National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

May 2004

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.

Funded under a grant supported by the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the U. S. Department of Labor, grant # E-9-4-1-0070. The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantee/contractor and do not necessarily reflect those of the U. S. Department of Labor.

NCWD/Youth
1-877-871-0744 (toll free)
www.ncwd-youth.info
Collaborative@iel.org

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of Youth Service Practitioners:

The Centerpiece of a Successful Workforce Development System

I. Purpose, Background, and Approach

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to review the current state of practice within the workforce development system in reference to the competencies – the combined knowledge, skills, and abilities – of youth service practitioners. The paper emphasizes the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to serve all youth, including youth with disabilities, effectively.

This paper provides baseline information for the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) to fulfill its overall mission:

To ensure that youth with disabilities are provided full access to high quality services in integrated settings in order to maximize their opportunity for employment and independent living.

It specifically addresses one of three goals of NCWD/Youth:

To improve the awareness, knowledge, and skills of individuals responsible for providing direct services to youth.

The paper looks at how and by whom: 1) required content is established; 2) training and education based upon that content are provided; and 3) credentials are given. Additionally, the paper outlines some possible action steps to build stronger connections among organizations and workforce development institutions to ensure that skilled staff serves youth and employers, the two ultimate customers of the system.

Background

Today's youth are not faring well in the labor market. According to a 2004 report from Northeastern University, the employment rates of young people continuously declined between 2000 and 2003, and the rate for youth age 16 to 19 has reached its lowest point since World War II. Less educated youth face the most challenges in gaining employment, with only 35% of high school dropouts and 55% of high school graduates employed in a full-time position in 2003, compared to 77% of four-year college graduates (Sum, Khatiwada, Palma, & Peron, 2004). Meanwhile, nearly one-third of all public high school students are failing to graduate (Swanson, 2004).

Youth with disabilities experience particularly poor education and employment outcomes. According to a 2003 study by the Urban Institute, one-third of youth with disabilities do not finish high school and only 38.1% are employed (Loprest & Maag, 2003). According to another study, only 27% of youth with disabilities are likely to enroll in postsecondary education (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

Joblessness among America's youth both with and without disabilities has significant implications for the US economy. When youth fail to enter the labor market, the result is reduced labor input, which leads to reduced production and output of the US economy (Sum, Khatiwada, Palma, & Peron, 2004). A lack of work experience in their youth also means that young

people will be less employable as adults. This will impact their wages negatively. Youth earnings are positive for the US economy because they lead to an increase in consumption among young people, which raises demand throughout the economy, thereby increasing the level of employment for other adult workers. For these reasons, it is important for the US workforce development system to strengthen its capacity to provide effective training and preparation for young people both with and without disabilities to enable them to enter and succeed in the labor market.

The workforce development system in our country is large and complex and is comprised of thousands of organizations with different missions, funding sources, and histories. NCWD/Youth uses the following definition to describe the institutions included in the system:

All national, state, and local level organizations that plan and allocate resources (both public and private), provide administrative oversight, and operate programs in order to assist individuals and employers in obtaining education, training, job placement, and job recruitment.

Among the different organizations involved in the delivery of direct services to consumers (youth) and customers (employers) of the workforce development system there is a wide range of youth service practitioners. NCWD/Youth's definition of youth service practitioners includes the following:

Staff who work directly with youth through the workforce development system, for the purpose of preparing them for work and the workplace, including intake workers, case managers, job developers, job coaches, teachers, trainers, transition coordinators, counselors (in schools, post-secondary institutions, or vocational rehabilitation offices, for example), youth development group leaders, and independent living specialists.

As can be seen through both definitions, the range of settings in which youth receive workforce development service is wide and the responsibilities of the staff serving youth call for both general and specialized knowledge. Youth service practitioners are often the first contact or "face" of the workforce development

system. They play an important role in connecting all youth to workforce preparation opportunities and support. Youth service practitioners must keep pace with constant changes in the labor market, as the nation's economy shifts and new technologies evolve, and also with the evolving needs and culture of today's youth. In order to build and maintain an effective workforce development system, it is essential to establish an effective professional development system for the youth service practitioners who are responsible for shaping the future workers and leaders of this nation's economy. Yet, throughout the field of workforce development, there seems to be little professional training available for youth service practitioners and no formal system for accessing the training that is available.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was passed in 1998 to create a more effective national workforce development system. The legislation established a more comprehensive strategy for youth workforce development that moves beyond focusing exclusively on occupation-specific training and places youth development principles at the heart of services for youth (US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2000). This new strategy requires comprehensive services and support and promotes a systematic, consolidated approach geared towards long-term workforce preparation rather than short-term narrow interventions. WIA authorizes some funding for professional development, which enables the field to strengthen the competencies of the youth service professionals responsible for delivering WIA services for youth (US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 1998).

This paper is a first step toward developing a framework for action to increase the competencies of youth service practitioners. Competencies are defined as the combined knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform a specific job or task. The intent of this work is to build a strong cadre of professional practitioners who share the same set of competencies and have access to specialty positions and career ladders.

Approach

NCWD/Youth has designated the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) as the lead

organization to support the development of a plan of action to strengthen professional development opportunities of youth service practitioners throughout the workforce development system. This assignment fits with one of NYEC's goals, which is to develop and improve the staff, leadership, and organizational capacity and effectiveness of youth-serving organizations to affect youth development through employment, education, and training. This allows NCWD/Youth to build upon and inform the work of this key organization in the youth employment/youth development field. Additionally, in developing this background paper, another member of NCWD/Youth, Goodwill International, was engaged to conduct an initial review of the available resources that identify and build the competencies needed by direct service staff. Goodwill brought to this work well-established experience with programs that address the needs of youth with disabilities.

To create a practical and relevant list of competencies, members of NCWD/Youth examined the current state of professional requirements, desirable competencies, and opportunities for professional development for staff that work directly with youth in the workforce development arena. A literature review of available material from the field was completed, including lists of front line worker competencies, training and apprenticeships, and organizational requirements in both workforce development and the disability field. In total, over 70 different initiatives were examined. A

sampling of relevant initiatives is detailed in Appendix A and Appendix B. These are initiatives that have identified core competencies and/or launched some effort to either train or certify individuals based upon those competencies. Some of the initiatives are led and delivered by national organizations, some by community-based programs, and others by academic institutions. In order to keep the scope manageable, the search did not include pre-service education programs of study in teaching, counseling, or rehabilitation services. However, there is an appreciation that pre-service education and training form the backbone of knowledge and skills that many direct service providers bring to their positions.

While this paper's focus is on youth service practitioners, the required knowledge and skills for working with youth and youth with disabilities are important to program developers and administrators as well. The literature search revealed a number of the recent credentials and certifications in youth workforce development targeted at program management and service. Our overview of available resources would be incomplete if we did not include these programs. Any system of professional development needs to take into account the various levels of professionals (e.g. front-line, management, executive) in the field and provide a menu of training levels and opportunities to meet the needs of professionals with different levels of experience and education.

II. What Youth Need in Preparation for and Transition to Work: Opportunities, Supports, and Services

Recent research and evaluation of youth development and employment programs suggests that the demands of the knowledge economy and the emerging digital economy are causing employers to expect higher levels of skills from youth. These changes require that programs expand the mix of services they provide by: a) increasing academic rigor and improving academic performance; b) teaching SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) skills; c) shifting from process-focused evaluations to outcome accountability; d) expanding the use of effective holistic approaches, such as the integration of academics, vocational education, and

work-based learning and the use of an array of technologies; e) involving employers more intensively in the education system; f) obtaining and applying better information on the skill requirements of particular occupations; and g) strengthening the transition from high school to postsecondary education, especially for students who have not traditionally continued their education after high school (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2002; Goodwill Industries International, Inc., 2002; Pearson, 2001).

Through a literature review of promising practices

focused on the needs of youth age 14 to 25, NCWD/Youth has identified a range of opportunities, supports, and services that all youth need in order to meet the higher level of skills discussed above, including additional opportunities, supports, and services for youth with disabilities. A set of common operating principles was developed based upon what all youth need to transition from adolescence to productive adulthood and citizenship, including making informed choices about what career paths they want to pursue. Youth need all of the following:

- access to participation in high quality standards-based education regardless of the setting;
- preparatory experiences;
- work-based experiences;
- youth development and youth leadership opportunities; and
- connecting activities to support services.

The following content and service guideposts also emerged from the literature review. They are presented based on the needs of all youth followed by the supplemental needs of youth with disabilities.

Access to Participation in High Quality Standards-Based Education Regardless of Setting

In order to perform at optimal levels in education, all youth need the following:

- academic programs that are based on clear state standards;
- career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards;
- curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work, and community-based learning experiences;
- learning environments that are small and safe;
- supports from highly qualified staff;
- access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures; and
- graduation standards that include options.

In addition, youth with disabilities may need the following:

- individual transition plans that drive instruction and academic support; and
- specific and individual learning accommodations.

Preparatory Experiences

In order to make informed choices about careers, all youth need the following:

- career assessment including but not limited to interest inventories and formal and informal vocational assessments;
- information about career opportunities that provide a living wage, including information about education, entry requirements, and income potential;
- training in job-seeking skills; and
- structured exposure to postsecondary education and other lifelong learning opportunities.

In addition, youth with disabilities may need the following:

- information about the relationship between appropriate benefits planning and career choices;
- identification of and access to disability-related supports and accommodations needed for the workplace and community living; and
- instruction and guidance about communicating disability-related support and accommodation needs to prospective employers and service providers.

Work-based Experiences

In order to attain career goals, all youth need the following:

- opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing; and
- multiple on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) that is specifically linked to the content of a program of study.

In addition, youth with disabilities may need the following:

- instruction and guidance about requesting, locating, and securing appropriate supports and accommodation needed at the workplace.

Youth Development and Youth Leadership Opportunities

In order to reach positive outcomes in a range of developmental areas, all youth need the following:

- mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings;
- exposure to role models in a variety of contexts;
- training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution;
- exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and
- opportunities to exercise leadership.

In addition, youth with disabilities may need the following:

- exposure to mentors and role models including persons with and without disabilities; and
- training about disability issues and disability culture.

Connecting Activities to Support Services

All youth need access to the following:

- mental and physical health services;
- transportation;
- tutoring;
- post-program supports through structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies;
- connections to other services and opportunities (e.g. recreation).

In addition, youth with disabilities may need the following:

- appropriate assistive technologies;
- post-program supports such as independent living centers and other community-based support service agencies;

- personal assistance services, including readers and interpreters;
- benefits-planning counseling regarding the benefits available and their interrelationships so that individuals may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency.

Many youth with disabilities have not had the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities to be exposed to the necessary career preparation options. In the past, the career planning process for youth with disabilities often did not reflect the values of choice and self-determination. Many youth with disabilities were relegated to passive roles in their own career planning process, which often resulted in very few options being recommended or offered; options that reflected the low expectations of advisors; options that featured perceived needs for protection and support; and options driven primarily by community availability rather than an individual's choices. As a result, many youth have not had the opportunity to pursue career options that they found motivating and satisfying.

Through online feedback, phone interviews, and face-to-face meetings, NCWD/Youth has learned that youth service practitioners want to connect to youth with disabilities and feel this is a population that should be connected to the workforce development system; however, many youth service practitioners also report that they do not work much with these youth because they had no training and are "afraid of doing something wrong." The additional opportunities, supports, and services for youth with disabilities listed above are not overwhelming; yet, some of them clearly require specialized training (e.g. benefits planning and assistive technology). Consequently, all youth service practitioners need enough information to know when specialized referrals are in order.

III. What are the Common Emerging Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for Youth Service Practitioners?

A review of a wide range of training and education programs for youth service practitioners uncovered the following common approaches and competencies:

1. As in other professions, most professional development programs begin with knowledge of the field and its formal context, such as law, ethics, policy, and system(s) of delivery. (This is a complex task when developing professional competencies for youth service practitioners in the workforce development system because there are many different contexts – within schools (in general curriculum, career and technical education, or special education), second chance programs, youth development programs, and employer sites.)
2. Working with youth requires knowledge of relevant theory and research concerning their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development; peer relations and sexuality; risk and protective factors; and principles of adolescent development.
3. Competencies around communication include not only the methods and purposes of communicating with and engaging youth, but also awareness of the young person's context (including family, culture, and community), diversity, and potential. Communication also involves the ability to build rapport, to act as an appropriate role model, and to maintain boundaries.
4. Assessment and individual planning help youth make informed choices. These competencies focus simultaneously on providing a realistic assessment of the youth's knowledge, skills, and abilities and on helping the young person to recognize his or her potential and make informed choices about his or her own future.
5. Employment preparation competencies include knowledge about local and regional labor markets; building relationships with employers; an understanding of skill requirements; knowledge of education and training providers and other community resources that support job readiness; and understanding career development, workplace preparation

and related issues. For those who work with youth, managing relationships with employers requires an awareness of the reluctance of many employers to hire young people, together with an ability to respond effectively to this concern. Equally, it is important to provide follow-up support and assistance to both employer and employee subsequent to placement.

6. Youth development and leadership skills include counseling and guidance and the ability to connect youth to the support services necessary to enable successful transition into adulthood and the world of work. Staff should be able to promote empowerment and self-advocacy, as these skills are especially important for youth with disabilities.

In part due to the passage of WIA with its renewed recognition that working with youth is different than working with dislocated workers and other adults, the US Department of Labor (DOL) launched the Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship (YDPA) certification in 2000. The youth worker competencies developed under this initiative, which are the foundation of the apprenticeship, are used in this report as an anchor and for the purpose of comparison.

Table I lists the common emerging competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities), using the YDPA categories as a base. (This table has been updated to reflect feedback received during three focus groups with youth service practitioners, managers and administrators, and a meeting of stakeholders held in Fall 2003.)

TABLE 1: SYNTHESIS OF COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH SERVICE PRACTITIONERS

Baseline competencies for all youth service practitioners are listed in the first column. These were synthesized from the work of The John J. Heldrich Center, the YDPA Program, the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP), and others. The second column contains the additional competencies for youth service practitioners working with youth with disabilities. These competencies are a combination of those suggested by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), the Center for Mental Health Services, the Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), and others.

KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively	Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively
Competency Area #1: Knowledge of the Field	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of youth development theory, adolescent and human development • Understanding of youth rights and laws including labor, curfew, and attendance • Knowledge of self as a youth development worker, including professional ethics and boundaries, confidentiality, and professional development needs and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the values and history of the disability field • Understanding of disability laws including 504, ADA, IDEA, and TWWIIA • Knowledge of key concepts and processes including IEP, IPE, transition, due process procedures, parents’ rights, informed choice, self determination, universal access, and reasonable accommodations • Understanding of privacy and confidentiality rights as they relate to disability disclosure
Competency Area #2: Communication with Youth	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect and caring for all youth, including the ability to be open minded and nonjudgmental, develop trusting relationships, and maintain awareness of diversity and youth culture • Ability to recognize and address need for intervention (e.g. drug or alcohol abuse, domestic abuse or violence, and depression) • Ability to advocate for, motivate, recruit, and engage youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of issues and trends affecting youth with disabilities (e.g. low expectations, attitudinal or environmental barriers, need for social integration) • Understanding of disability awareness, sensitivity, and culture • Understanding of how to communicate with youth with various physical, sensory, psychiatric, and cognitive disabilities
Competency Area #3: Assessment and Individualized Planning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to facilitate person-centered planning, including the ability to assess goals, interests, past experience, learning styles, academic skills, assets, independent living skills, and needs (e.g. transportation, etc) • Ability to involve youth in their own planning process by helping youth to set realistic goals and action steps, make informed choices, exercise self-determination, and actively participate in own development (includes financial/benefits planning and educational requirements) • Knowledge of various assessment tools and strategies and ability to administer assessments (or make referrals, as needed) • Ability to track progress and change plans as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to ensure appropriate assessment of young peoples’ disabilities (in-house or through referrals, as necessary) • Understanding how to use information from assessments and records and recognize implications for education and employment, including any potential need for accommodations and assistive technology • Ability to assess independent/community living skills and needs, including accommodations and supports • Understanding of benefits planning, includes Social Security income and health benefits and their relation to working <p>Competency Area #4: Relationship to Family and Community</p>
Competency Area #4: Relationship to Family and Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to engage and build relationships with family members or other significant persons • Ability to connect youth to community institutions, resources, and supportive adults including mentors and role models • Ability to engage youth in community service and leadership activities • Ability to involve families, guardians, and advocates (when appropriate), including connections to disability-specific resources and groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of family advocacy, support and community resources, including disability-specific resources and organizations • Ability to match youth with disabilities with appropriate mentors and role models with and without disabilities

TABLE 1: SYNTHESIS OF COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH SERVICE PRACTITIONERS

Baseline competencies for all youth service practitioners are listed in the first column. These were synthesized from the work of The John J. Heldrich Center, the YDPA Program, the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP), and others. The second column contains the additional competencies for youth service practitioners working with youth with disabilities. These competencies are a combination of those suggested by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), the Center for Mental Health Services, the Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), and others.

<p>KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively</p>	<p>Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively</p>
<p align="center">Competency Area #5: Workforce Preparation</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to facilitate job readiness skill-building and assess employability strengths/barriers • Ability to teach job search skills, including use of technology and the Internet • Ability to coach youth, assist in job maintenance, and provide follow-up support • Ability to match youth with appropriate jobs and careers, including job analysis and skills standards • Ability to involve employers in preparation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to conduct job analysis, matching, customizing, and carving for youth with disabilities, including accommodations, supports, and modifications • Knowledge of support required to place youth in jobs, including what employers need to know about reasonable accommodations, undue burden, assistive technology, funding streams, and tax incentives
<p align="center">Competency Area #6: Career Exploration</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of technology and online search skills • Knowledge of tools and processes for career exploration • Ability to engage employers in career exploration • Knowledge of workplace and labor market trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of workplace and labor market trends, including options for youth with disabilities such as supported employment, customized employment, or self-employment
<p align="center">Competency Area #7: Relationships with Employers & Between Employer and Employee</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to develop relationships with employers • Ability to communicate effectively with employers • Ability to mediate/resolve conflicts • Ability to engage employers in program design and delivery • Ability to train employers in how to work with and support young people • Customer service skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to identify, recruit, and provide support to employers willing to hire youth with disabilities • Ability to advocate for youth with disabilities with employers including negotiating job design, job customization, and job carving • Ability to train employers and their staff in how to work with and support young people, including providing disability awareness training and information about universal access and design, reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and services for youth with disabilities
<p align="center">Competency Area #8: Connection to Resources</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to identify a range of community resources (people, places, things, & money) that can assist youth • Ability to create relationships and network with other community agencies and potential partners • Ability to market own program as a valuable resource to community and a viable partner • Ability to build collaborative relationships and manage partnerships • Knowledge about different funding streams for youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of community intermediary organizations to assist with disability-specific supports and resources

TABLE 1: SYNTHESIS OF COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH SERVICE PRACTITIONERS

Baseline competencies for all youth service practitioners are listed in the first column. These were synthesized from the work of The John J. Heldrich Center, the YDPA Program, the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP), and others. The second column contains the additional competencies for youth service practitioners working with youth with disabilities. These competencies are a combination of those suggested by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), the Center for Mental Health Services, the Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), and others.

<p>KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively</p>	<p>Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively</p>
<p>Competency Area #9: Program Design and Delivery</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of workforce development system, including technology of workforce development (service management, performance measures, and assessment) • Ability to work with groups, foster teamwork, and develop leadership and followership among youth • Ability to manage programs and budgets • Ability to design programs using best practices (considering age, stage, and cultural appropriateness) • Service management skills, including how to set measurable goals with tangible outcomes • Ability to evaluate and adjust programs based on outcome measurement and data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to access resources from special education, vocational rehabilitation, community rehabilitation programs, disability income support work incentives, and other disability-specific programs • Knowledge of universal access and design, reasonable accommodation, auxiliary aids, and services
<p>Competency Area #10: Administrative Skills</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to complete referrals and service summaries using common reporting formats and requirements • Written and verbal communication skills • Time management skills • Strong interpersonal skills/ability to work within a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to complete disability-specific referrals and service summaries, such as IEP, transition plan, IPE, and IWP

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF YOUTH NEEDS AND YOUTH SERVICE PRACTITIONER COMPETENCIES

Table II compares the supports and services that all youth need (identified in Section II) with the competencies as they are currently identified for youth service practitioners.

Youth Needs: Services and Supports	Youth Service Practitioner Competencies
<p>Access to participation in high quality standards-based education regardless of the setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the Field • Assessment and Individualized Planning • Connecting to Resources • Program Design and Delivery
<p>Preparatory experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the Field • Communication with Youth • Assessment and Individualized Planning • Career Exploration • Connecting to Resources • Program Design and Delivery
<p>Work-based experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with Youth • Assessment and Individualized Planning • Workforce Preparation • Relationships with Employers and Between Employer and Employee • Program Design and Delivery
<p>Youth development and youth leadership opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the Field • Assessment and Individualized Planning • Relationship to Family and Community • Program Design and Delivery
<p>Connecting activities to support services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the Field • Communication with Youth • Assessment and Individualized Planning • Relationship to Family and Community • Relationships with Employers and Between Employer and Employee • Connecting to Resources • Program Design and Delivery

IV. Competencies for Working with Youth with Disabilities

Many youth with disabilities may need only a few additional supports to access workforce development opportunities while others will need more depending on the severity of the disability. Their disability may affect how they achieve their goals, and may require accommodations to enable their success, but if the staff is already serving youth effectively, they can serve youth with disabilities as well; this effective service includes knowing when to ask for help from a specialist (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2002). As with other youth, an emphasis should be placed on goals including self-determination – the ability to control one’s own life, achieve self-defined goals, and participate fully in society – and self-advocacy – taking risks and developing independence and problem-solving skills. A 2002 survey of youth with disabilities by the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLNL) identified 18 “Priority Factors in Building a Successful Life.” All but five of the priorities are identical to priorities for all youth (National Youth Leadership Network, 2002).

Of the five disabilities-specific priorities, most, such as learning applicable laws and connecting to community agencies, are applicable to all youth, but would probably be expanded or adapted for youth with disabilities (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2002).

There is widespread agreement that youth with disabilities have the same developmental needs as other youth, and the same desires, expectations, and dreams. There are a number of sources of information about working with individuals with disabilities, but these do not appear to be integrated into the common emerging competencies for youth practitioners. The disability-related focus within the workforce

development system tends to be restricted to compliance with accommodation requirements contained in the ADA and centered on physical access to facilities (National Service Inclusion Project, n. d.; National Center on Workforce and Disability/ Adult; n. d.; National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, n. d.).

Youth service practitioners need all the competencies highlighted in Section III, with an emphasis on the ability to communicate with youth, administer assessments, facilitate individual planning, and connect to families and communities. These practitioners also need a limited, but important, number of additional competencies to serve youth with disabilities effectively. Few curricula or materials have been developed on workforce development competencies for working with youth in general and even fewer have been developed for working with youth with disabilities in this arena. The Council on Rehabilitation Education Accreditation (CREA) has developed an

extensive and detailed curriculum and outcomes (competencies) for working with individuals with disabilities, with the emphasis placed on specialty positions often housed in community rehabilitation centers. CREA competencies can inform the development of a common set of core competencies that all youth service practitioners need; for example, they might help a worker in a One-Stop Center know how to organize community supports for individuals using the universal services of a One-Stop. Several new specialty certifications have also been developed to assist practitioners in acquiring competencies associated with using technology for people with disabilities (see ATACP certification in Section VI).

NYLNL Survey of Youth with Disabilities: Priority Factors in Building a Successful Life

1. Learn how to set goals, be assertive, and self-promote.
2. Have family members who expect the youth to be a successful adult.
3. Have family’s encouragement and assistance.
4. Learn how to stay healthy.
5. Obtain health insurance.
6. Identify accommodations needed and how to ask for them.
7. Get reliable transportation in the community.
8. Take the lead in planning education and future goals in school.
9. Learn about laws like the ADA and IDEA.
10. Get a good doctor who treats adults.
11. Get to know other people with disabilities in the same age group.
12. Work in paid jobs in the career area of their choice.
13. Learn about supports for young people with disabilities.
14. Get work experience during high school.
15. Attend classes with peers who do not have disabilities.
16. Get involved in community service.
17. Take college or vocational school classes.
18. Get services from Vocational Rehabilitation, Centers for Independent Living and other community agencies.

Table III looks at the additional supports and services that youth with disabilities need (as identified in Section II) and the youth service practitioner competencies that have already been identified. In the over 70 programs surveyed, few had specific competencies related to workforce development for youth with disabilities.

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF THE NEEDS OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND YOUTH SERVICE PRACTITIONER COMPETENCIES

Needs of Youth with Disabilities	Youth Service Practitioner Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual transition plans that drive instruction and academic support • Specific and individual learning accommodations • Identification of and access to disability-related support and accommodations for workplace and community living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to facilitate person-centered planning, including the ability to assess goals, interests, past experience, learning styles, academic skills, assets, independent community living skills, and needs (e.g. transportation, etc) • Ability to ensure appropriate assessment of young peoples’ disabilities (in-house or through referrals, as necessary) • Understanding how to use information from assessments and records and recognize implications for education and employment, including any potential need for accommodations and assistive technology • Ability to assess independent/community living skills and needs, including accommodations and supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction and guidance about communicating disability-related support and accommodation needs to prospective employers and service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to access resources from special education, vocational rehabilitation, community rehabilitation programs, disability income support work incentives, and other disability-specific programs • Knowledge of universal access and design, reasonable accommodation, and auxiliary aids and services • Ability to conduct job analysis, matching, customization, and carving for youth with disabilities, including accommodations, supports and modifications • Knowledge of support required to place youth in jobs, including what employers need to know about reasonable accommodations, undue burden, assistive technology, funding streams, and tax incentives • Ability to advocate for youth with disabilities with employers, including negotiating job design, job customization, and job carving • Ability to train employers and their staff in how to work with and support young people, including providing disability awareness training and information about universal access and design, reasonable accommodations, and auxiliary aids and services for youth with disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to mentors and role models including persons with and without disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to involve families, guardians, and advocates (when appropriate) including connections to disability-specific resources and groups • Knowledge of family advocacy, support and community resources, including disability-specific resources and organizations • Ability to match youth with disabilities with appropriate mentors and role models with and without disabilities • Ability to train employers and their staff in how to work with and support young people, including providing information about universal access and design, reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and services for youth with disabilities

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF THE NEEDS OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND YOUTH SERVICE PRACTITIONER COMPETENCIES

Needs of Youth with Disabilities	Youth Service Practitioner Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training about disability issues and disability culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the values and history of the disability field • Understanding of disability laws including ADA, IDEA, and TWWIA • Knowledge of key concepts and processes including IEP, IPE, transition, due process procedures, parents' rights, informed choice, self determination, universal access, and reasonable accommodations • Knowledge of issues and trends affecting youth with disabilities (e.g. low expectations, attitudinal or environmental barriers, need for social integration) • Understanding of disability awareness, sensitivity, and culture • Understanding of how to communicate with youth with various physical, sensory, psychiatric, and cognitive disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-program supports such as independent living centers and other community-based support service agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to assess independent/community living skills and needs, including accommodations and supports • Ability to involve families, guardians, and advocates (when appropriate), including connections to disability-specific resources and groups • Knowledge of family advocacy, support, and community resources, including disability-specific resources and organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the relationship between appropriate benefits planning and career choices • Benefits-planning counseling regarding benefits available and their interrelationship so that individuals may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of benefits planning, includes Social Security income and health benefits and their relation to working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal assistance services, including readers, interpreters, and other services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to ensure appropriate assessment of young peoples' disabilities (in-house or through referrals, as necessary) • Understanding how to use information from assessments and records and recognize implications for education and employment, including any potential need for accommodations and assistive technology • Knowledge of universal access and design, reasonable accommodation, auxiliary aids and services

V. Selected Initiatives Outlining Core Competencies, Offering Training, and/or Awarding Certifications

What follows is a sampling of some of the largest, validated, and most pervasive professional development initiatives, including some led and delivered by national organizations, community-based programs, and academic institutions. Some of these initiatives have outlined core competencies; others offer training in particular areas (e.g. youth development or workforce development); still others offer certification in various specialties (e.g. assistive technology or career specialist). At this time, however, there is no single comprehensive system that: 1) outlines core competencies for working with all youth in the workforce development field, 2) offers trainings and courses, and 3) culminates in certification or a degree. The initiatives below offer promising pieces of what could someday become such a system. (Appendix A and Appendix B compare the main elements of some of the more established initiatives.)

Core Competencies

The **Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship** (YDPA) was introduced by DOL in 2000; two rounds of YDPA grants funded through December 2003 supported initial implementation. The YDPA upgrades the field of youth work by providing one of the most comprehensive, detailed, and exacting competency frameworks of any of the better-known programs in this field. The goals of the YDPA are to:

- provide training standards for the Youth Development Practitioner occupation;
- increase the number of youth service practitioners receiving extensive, quality training;
- increase retention for both youth service practitioners and youth programs;
- provide training and mentoring opportunities;
- provide a career path; and
- provide national recognition for successful completion of a course of study.

In developing this initiative, DOL's Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employment, and Labor Services (OATELS) and Office of Youth Services (OYS)

asked practitioners in the field of youth development to identify the skills needed to perform this occupation. The YDPA competencies encompass the essential concepts, theories, knowledge, skills, and abilities that were most commonly cited for successful youth development work.

The apprenticeship requires a mix of on-the-job training (OJT) and related academic instruction. The OJT component is grouped into the ten categories listed in Table I, for which the apprentice must "apply" or "demonstrate" specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. The related instruction component consists of multiple topics divided into three categories: core skills (28), workforce development skills (16), and administrative skills (7). The program requires 3,000 to 4,000 hours of OJT and 343 hours of related instruction. It is expected that two to three years are necessary to complete the program. There is no academic prerequisite beyond a high school diploma, and the program is geared towards preparation for a first job in the field. Upon successful completion of the program, the apprentices will be eligible for YDPA Certification. From the perspective of working with youth with disabilities, the YDPA's competencies include "youth with special needs" (eight hours of instruction), "training on assisting people with disabilities" (six hours), and "knowledge of the youth legal system" (five hours). The OJT component does not specifically reference youth with disabilities.

The YDPA program does not provide or mandate a particular curriculum for use in training to these competencies; however, a YDPA clearinghouse website (www.ydpaclearinghouse.org), managed by the Sar Levitan Center, is in the process of soliciting exemplary curricula, training providers, and other resources to support the apprenticeship. Any organization that qualifies to offer the YDPA also assumes responsibility for developing and delivering the appropriate curriculum. The OJT component has presented some difficulty, as there is not a large, established cadre of "journeymen" trainers or mentors qualified in youth development work. There is an even smaller cadre of journeymen qualified to address the specific needs of

youth with disabilities. Thirteen national organizations, funded by DOL, have introduced the YDPA in a variety of local sites. The resources and experience that these organizations are developing may help to inform the development of additional programs.

The Fund for the City of New York's Youth

Development Institute has developed a detailed set of "essential competencies necessary to ensure that a high quality professional service meets the needs of young people" (Youth Development Institute, 1998). While the categories here are similar to those of the YDPA, the primary focus is not workforce development, although it is included, but rather advocacy, establishing and using the group process, and recognition of and response to circumstances that require intervention. Youth with disabilities are not specifically addressed in this model.

Competencies that are identified by other organizations, such as the **National Association for Workforce Development Professionals** (NAWDP), are mainly for program managers or instructors with responsibility for training workforce development practitioners. NAWDP lists 12 competencies that a program manager in the workforce development system must have in order to be eligible for their credential. Most of these organizations provide a list of competencies within the context of certification or recognition credentials. (Credentials are addressed in more detail later in the paper.) **WIA's One-Stop Centers website** has a detailed matrix of competencies necessary to run an effective workforce development program (available online at www.workforcetools.org). Neither of these lists of competencies specifically addresses working with youth or individuals with disabilities.

Education and Training

There does not yet exist a sufficient critical mass of education and training opportunities for youth service practitioners. An evaluation of the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work's (NTI) B.E.S.T. Initiative (Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers) conducted in 15 cities documented that youth service practitioners and their programs benefited in a variety of ways from professional development. It also revealed that the field of youth development offers low professional status, a factor in

the relatively low pay and benefits of youth service practitioners. However, the youth service practitioners surveyed "overwhelmingly agreed that courses, certificates, and degrees increased the professional status of youth work" (National Training Institute for Community Youth Work, 2002).

As organizations and governments begin to encourage professional development and recognition for those who work with youth and youth with disabilities, the dearth of qualified or accredited providers of training, standardized assessment, and certification has become apparent. There is little training available for youth workforce development practitioners that is comprehensive and that leads to a recognized, portable certification or degree. Training providers and national, state, and local organizations offer workshops, conferences, and training sessions periodically, but these are not consistent and may or may not qualify for credits towards the existing certifications, such as the YDPA. As the focus on this profession grows, however, organizations have begun to develop curricula and options for training.

As mentioned earlier, DOL funded 13 organizations in 2001 to promote, develop, and assist in implementation of the YDPA program in a variety of local sites and organizations, including Partnership for Greater Philadelphia Federation of Settlements, Goodwill Industries International, Inc. (Maryland), West Fresno Schools Foundation (California), and YouthBuild USA (Massachusetts) (National Clearinghouse for Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Programs, n. d.). The information, experience, and resources that emerge from these initial programs will be of great value as they will inform the field, expand the range of resources, and encourage expansion of programs that offer YDPA and certification.

The Advancing Youth Development (AYD)

curriculum was developed in 1996 by the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research along with the National Network for Youth and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The training curriculum is administered by NTI. The AYD curriculum's seven modules encompass the main issues for youth workforce development practitioners, including a set of competencies that are framed in

Advancing Youth Development Modules

- Introduction to Youth Development Approach
 - Developmental Youth Outcomes
- Cultural Assumptions and Stereotypes about Young People
 - Strategies for Youth Participation
- Opportunities and Supports for Youth Development
 - Core Competencies for Youth Workers
- Review, Practice and Celebration

module six. AYD is a 28-hour course in the basics of youth development and is not intended to provide the level of competencies of the YDPA or other programs. The AYD curriculum is one of the first to focus on youth development practitioners. Under the B.E.S.T. (Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers) Initiative, NTI developed a “train the trainer” system whereby local intermediaries now offer the curriculum to youth service practitioners in their area. In these local communities, AYD provides an easily delivered, accessible, and inexpensive option for initial development for youth service practitioners. The local B.E.S.T. sites include Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Hampton/Newport News, VA; Indianapolis, IN; Jacksonville, FL; Kansas City/Midwest B.E.S.T. (MO, NE, KS, IA, IL); Minneapolis, MN; New Haven, CT; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Pinellas County, FL; Springfield, MA; and Washington, DC. More information about these local initiatives may be found online at www.nti.aed.org/BestSites.html. In 2002, NTI developed **Supervising Youth Development Practice**, an AYD course for supervisors of front-line workers. NTI has also piloted several YDPA programs as part of its B.E.S.T. Initiative.

Other organizations that have begun to offer periodic training that is geared towards youth workforce development practitioners and that also offers some credit towards the YDPA include the **National Partnership for Community Leadership** (NPCL), formerly known as the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership, and the John J. Heldrich Center. NPCL’s National Youth Development Practitioners Institute has been offered several times each year since 2000, and provides a maximum of 270 credit hours toward the YDPA certification.

The John J. Heldrich Center’s Working Ahead: The National Workforce and Career Development Curriculum offers different versions for practitioners who work with adults and youth. The curriculum for workforce development staff that work with youth is competency-based, providing the skills necessary to help youth make informed career decisions, develop career action plans, implement an effective job search, and retain a job.

The **Working Ahead** curriculum does not fully satisfy all of the components of the YDPA competencies; however, it has been approved by the Center for Credentialing and Education as satisfying the educational requirement of the national Career Development Facilitator Credential [see Section IV].

The Heldrich Center has established a **Working Ahead** instructor registry that lists individuals who successfully complete the **Working Ahead Train-the-Instructor Program**. The registry will enable organizations that want staff trained in **Working Ahead** to identify qualified instructors certified to teach the program. The registry will also enable instructors to network with each other as well as provide the Heldrich Center with updates and communication.

The **New Leaders Academy**, a program of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC), was established in 1999 to provide a training opportunity for emerging leaders in the field of youth employment and youth development. It is a competitive year-long professional management and training program specifically designed to equip mid-level youth service professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully manage and lead youth programs. This program targets professionals with a minimum of five years experience in the field and is not intended for front-line staff.

New Leaders participate in two residential training sessions with a curriculum based on current information about practice, policy, and research from the fields of youth employment and youth development. Among other sources, the program of study draws on knowledge of what works from the PEPNet (Promising and Effective Practices Network)

awarded initiatives and broadly covers topics from the PEPNet criteria: Quality Management, Youth Development, Workforce Development, and Evidence of Success. Academy participants also build their knowledge and skills around self-assessment, goal setting, workplace competencies for youth professionals, resource development, communications skills, policy development, program development, current trends, and networking. Graduates of the Academy are eligible to apply for three graduate-level credits from the University of Colorado at Denver.

In 2001, the **Sar Levitan Center** at Johns Hopkins University developed the **Youth Practitioner Institute** in collaboration with the Community College of Baltimore as a professional training system for youth service practitioners employed with the City of Baltimore's Office of Employment Development. The intensive training component includes 27 modules (three hours each) and lasts five weeks. The program provides a mix of interactive classroom sessions with nine days of carefully supervised and assessed work-site internships. After the initial training, participants receive a partial certification as a Youth Practitioner. Following attendance at monthly special topic seminars and satisfactory work performance, they receive full certification after one year on the job.

The University of Illinois at Springfield, College of Health and Human Services, has offered **Workforce Development Online: Career Specialist Studies** since 1998. The program is not specifically focused on youth, but is designed for professionals who provide labor market and career search information, workforce preparation, training, and placement assistance to their clients and students. The program is endorsed by NAWDP. The course content is competency-based. Upon successful completion of the course sequence, students receive a certificate of completion from the University of Illinois at Springfield.

There are many other examples of education and training offered throughout the country by private sector providers, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities. Few of these are youth-focused and fewer are formal degree programs. None of the programs reviewed had a disability-specific session or module.

Training Options in Development

The Wallace-Readers Digest Fund has provided two-year grants to organizations focused on training and support for youth development workers. The outcomes of these projects are not yet available, but they suggest promising partnerships for developing the courses of study and degree programs that will help establish the youth development workforce profession.

- **Children, Youth and Family Council Education Consortium** (Philadelphia, PA) is working in partnership with the Greater Philadelphia Federation of Settlements to offer basic youth development training to youth service practitioners across Philadelphia; provide 70 youth-serving agencies with complementary training for managers and supervisory staff; work with the Community College of Philadelphia to establish an Associate Degree in youth work; and offer mini-grants to five local youth agencies that will serve as field placement sites for Associate of Arts degree candidates.
- **The Fund for the City of New York** has received funding to institutionalize NTI's B.E.S.T. Initiative (see above) by expanding its efforts to include smaller grassroots organizations; establishing a sustainable network of youth development practitioner-trainers; creating a credentialing system for youth service practitioners in New York City in partnership with the City University of New York; and building a broader constituency of parents, teachers, and youth to support the positive youth development agenda.

Degree Programs with Relevance to Practitioners in Workforce Development

The **American Humanics** (AH) program is an interesting model for developing a professional focus and certification within a traditional degree-granting institution. AH provides assistance in developing appropriate courses of study and curricula for students in colleges and universities to enable them to achieve the competencies necessary to become skilled professionals and leaders in youth and human service agencies. Students are required to participate in internships of 300 or more hours, be active in co-curricular activities, and complete 180 contact hours of academic coursework. In addition, they must complete a major field of study as required by the university or college to obtain their baccalaureate degree in a relevant field.

The AH nonprofit management program is offered on more than 85 campuses across the country, and is associated with 18 national nonprofit partners. AH also offers professional networking, professional development seminars, and training for Campus/Executive Directors (CEDs). More than 3,000 college students have been certified in nonprofit management by American Humanics, and more than 2,000 students are enrolled annually in the AH program. The AH program can serve as a useful model as the youth development profession develops, since it provides a link between competencies, instruction, and academic credit and degrees.

The Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)

accredits graduate programs in Rehabilitation Counselor Education (RCE) and has developed detailed outcomes/competencies for graduate programs. As a result of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act's mandate that state VR agency directors implement and manage a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation works with state agencies, CORE, and other organizations to promote hiring of qualified personnel from CORE-accredited educational institutions.

The **Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA)** offers the Assistive Technology Practitioner (ATP) and Assistive Technology Supplier (ATS) certifications. Requirements for RESNA certifications include ratios of postsecondary education degrees and practical experience. Over 20 colleges and universities have degree programs in Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology (*see Appendix B*).

Other colleges and universities that offer coursework or degrees related to youth workforce development include Concordia University (St. Paul, MN) School of Human Services, Master of Arts in Youth Development; University of Northern Iowa, Bachelor of Science in Youth and Human Service; Texas A&M, coursework in Youth Development Organizations and Services; Brandeis University (Waltham, MA) Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Master of Business Administration in Human Services and Master of Management. These programs are designed for

positions in a range of health and human services organizations.

Credentials

The following initiatives provide a variety of credentials for professionals who work either in the field of workforce development, with youth in the workforce development system, with youth in general, or with individuals with disabilities.

The Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) credential designates individuals working in a variety of career development settings, such as career group facilitator, job search trainer, career resource center coordinator, career development case manager, intake interviewer, occupational and labor market information resource person, or workforce development staff person. The GCDF credential is managed by the Center for Credentialing and Education, Inc. (CCE), and rests on 13 competencies that fall within the categories identified in Table I.

The GCDF requires 120 hours of instruction. The CCE approves training providers and the curriculum that supports the credential. Providers such as the Heldrich Center, National Career Development Association, and Workforce Development Professionals Network offer curricula in a variety of settings and frameworks (e.g. workshops and summer courses), and may link the program to other credentials. The Heldrich Center is developing agreements with various colleges and community colleges to enable its **Working Ahead** instructor curriculum to be eligible for college credit.

NAWDP established the **Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP)** program in 1999 to recognize the training, experience, and expertise of professionals who facilitate the process by which individuals identify, prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment, careers, and self-sufficiency; and by which businesses, other employing organizations, and communities develop, access and retain a workforce that enables them to maintain and improve their economic competitiveness. The certification requires a combination of education and experience, a self-assessment, and the assessment by two peers of the individual's competency in 12 areas. As a national professional association, NAWDP certifies that CWDPs

meet national standards for workforce development professionals. The CWDP program only recognizes training and expertise — it does not provide training or grant credit towards an associate or bachelor degree.

DOL's announcement of the **Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship (YDPA) Program** stated that "the vision of occupation recognition and apprenticeship for youth service practitioners is to maximize our investment in young people, youth programming and the workforce development system through quality training opportunities for youth service practitioners who deliver comprehensive services to young people" (US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2000). The apprenticeship program awards a credential upon completion.

The Association for Child and Youth Care Practice has recently proposed a more advanced and rigorous certification for practitioners in child and youth development. The Association's **North American Certification Project (NACP)** developed detailed competencies for Professional Child and Youth Care Work Personnel. The field focuses on infants, children, and adolescents, including those with special needs, "within the context of the family, the community and the life span" (Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, Inc, 2002).

The NACP anticipates a multi-level certification, with the 2001 competencies as the first level. The minimum requirement to begin this certification process is a baccalaureate degree from a college or university. Although the NACP encompasses a far wider field and focus than preparing youth for work, it offers a number of important distinctions from the perspective of youth and youth with disabilities, including an emphasis on the importance of environment and context and of the role of the individual in developing his or her own path.

In the emerging field of assistive technology, several new specialty certifications describe the competencies associated with using technology for people with disabilities. Assistive technology includes, but is not limited to augmentative and alternative communication; environmental controls; seating and

positioning; mobility devices; ergonomics; computer access technology; and technology for people with learning, physical, cognitive, or sensory disabilities. The field is fairly new and the tools and applications change rapidly. Individuals who work in this profession require specific knowledge and skills, such as familiarity with universal design, device production, and assessment and application. The emphasis of these certifications is on knowledge of the technologies available; assessments in the context of using technology to improve education, vocation, and independent living; and determining appropriate home, school, and work options and modifications. For example, the **Center on Disabilities at California State University, Northridge** has developed competencies and curriculum for its Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program (ATACP). The ATACP certification specifies 52 hours of online instruction, 40 hours of live training, and an eight-hour project. **RESNA** (see entry above) offers a similar credential, the Assistive Technology Practitioner, that recognizes education and work experience in this field.

The initiatives described above can serve as a foundation for a comprehensive system of professional training for youth service practitioners working with all youth in the workforce development field. The competencies identified in these different initiatives — some of which focus on the field of workforce development, some on youth in the workforce development system, some on youth in general, and some on individuals with disabilities — show overlap and similar focus and could be combined to create the framework for a professional development system for youth service practitioners. There are also several initiatives that are currently offering training in the various competency areas. These courses could be combined or used as a model to create courses that align with the competencies identified in Table I. Finally, the last few initiatives mentioned could constitute the beginning of or model for a certification or degree-awarding body in the practice of workforce development for all youth.

VI. Conclusion and Next Steps

Much of the work to: 1) identify and develop competencies; 2) create accompanying education and training opportunities; and 3) identify some form of credentialing for youth service practitioners or program management staff within the workforce development system is recent. Clearly, there is an array of specialty education programs, such as for vocational rehabilitation counselors and assistive technology specialists. However, we are a long way from fitting all of the pieces of the puzzle together to meet the needs of all youth and most certainly youth with disabilities. Currently, the state of practice requires that an organization that wants to ensure that its staff members are competent would have to rely upon combining competencies from one or more organizations, curricula from others, and assessments or credentials from a third. There has to be a more efficient and effective way.

The encouraging news, based on our review of competencies for workforce development for youth and for adults, is that there is little difference among the general categories identified by the various initiatives. They do vary significantly, however, in terms of the level of detail and in what is required for assessment and certification. At this point, the existing certifications, credentials, degrees, and licenses all require different combinations of course work, experiential components, and assessments. In addition, existing sets of competencies for youth service practitioners in workforce development address requirements for working with youth with disabilities only superficially, if at all. Competencies for these youth can be derived from other sources, such as the Council on Rehabilitation Education, the Service and Inclusion Project, or advocacy organizations.

Despite the relatively small number of options for training, recognition, and ongoing support for youth workforce development practitioners, availability has expanded in recent years and shows signs of continuing to grow. While there is no formal training system for this field, the elements are there that can serve as a platform. The general agreement concerning the competencies required for a workforce

development professional is an excellent start. Several recent initiatives call for exploring “professionalization” of youth development. Contemporary youth employment programs are merging the fields of workforce development and youth development.

A recent report on youth development policy, sponsored by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, recommends a series of actions necessary to achieve professionalization for the field of practitioners in youth development. These actions constitute developing a new infrastructure that includes the following:

- licensing, credentials, and a state-by-state system of accreditation;
- basic training in financial controls, organizational development, human resources, planning and development to improve programs’ chances of affecting youth outcomes;
- in-service training programs that are accessible in communities where youth practitioners are employed;
- partnerships with higher education to train the next generation of youth development managers and direct service practitioners;
- marketing and communications campaigns to generate interest in youth work centers
- among young people.

The report also recommends establishing one or more mechanisms to enable communication and continuing education for youth service practitioners — such as affinity groups, organizational renewal projects, peer-to-peer networks, and information networks and clearinghouses — that might come together under an umbrella association (Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2001). The National Training Institute for Community Youth Work has “started a conversation” about a professional association and is soliciting comments on their web site (National Training Institute for Community for Youth Work, n. d.).

Many of these steps could involve the workforce development field as well, especially those focused on training, partnerships, and networks. Integrating competencies for working with youth with disabilities into the youth workforce development practitioner competencies and developing curriculum to support them is a critical next step. There is an immediate need for training modules and informational materials for youth service practitioners. This would probably be the first and most readily achievable strategy. A second and more complicated step might be to look at credentials and certifications for youth service practitioners. The process of credible assessment and certification requires agreement about what must be learned and what must be provided through information, instruction, experience, mentoring, and peer exchange.

NCWD/Youth has already taken steps to speed the development of a cost effective and efficient professional development system for youth service practitioners employed within the workforce development system. To date, NCWD/Youth has done the following:

1. **Completed the background paper on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of youth service practitioners:** Throughout 2003, NCWD/Youth reviewed the current state of practice within the workforce development system in reference to the competencies of youth service practitioners including those required to serve youth with disabilities effectively. This paper is a first step toward developing a framework for action to increase the competencies of youth service practitioners.
2. **Surveyed youth service practitioners and administrators in the field:** In November 2003, the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) conducted three focus groups to validate the initial list of competencies and to identify the resources necessary for youth service practitioners to gain them. The focus groups consisted of one roundtable discussion with a mix of practitioners and program administrators and two conference calls, one with practitioners and one with program administrators. Participants on the conference calls were asked about what their jobs comprised and what competencies they felt they needed in order to do those jobs; what training they were currently accessing and what additional train-

ing they felt to be important; and what type of professional development would be relevant and useful for them (including characteristics such as length, format, and venue). Overall, participants agreed that the competencies identified by NCWD/Youth are essential to practitioners' jobs, and that professional development opportunities to train practitioners in these competencies are needed. Managers said they would support the participation of the practitioners they supervise in training and education in these competencies if available. They also stressed that some of the competencies identified as important for working with youth with disabilities – such as adolescent and human development, professional ethics, person-centered planning, and self-determination and active participation – are also relevant to and should be included under competencies for working with all youth.

3. **Convened stakeholders:** On December 5, 2003, NYEC convened a meeting of key workforce and youth development organizations involved in training, credentialing, and certification to review and discuss current and future strategies for preparing youth service practitioners to serve all youth, including youth with disabilities, effectively. Meeting participants were asked to read and comment on this background paper and the initial list of competencies for youth service practitioners. At the meeting, participants were asked to share their feedback on the validity of the information gathered thus far and to discuss next steps for connecting youth service practitioners to the resources needed to acquire those competencies. Participants suggested the following next steps:
 - 1) Establish validated competencies;
 - 2) Identify program partners;
 - 3) Create buy-in and ownership;
 - 4) Create a delivery system; and
 - 5) Conduct education, outreach, and marketing.

Participants in the stakeholders' meeting included representatives of national nonprofit organizations, local organizations, and DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy and Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer, and Labor Services. All partici-

pants expressed interest in continuing to be involved in the effort and collaborating to make resources available. This meeting was a first step toward developing a network of collaborating organizations to promote the development of an array of front-line professional development materials based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the workforce preparation of all youth and including materials specifically focused on youth with disabilities.

The suggestions from the stakeholders' meeting confirm the steps already taken by NCWD/Youth such as establishing validated competencies through the development of the background paper and review by focus groups and identifying program partners by convening the stakeholders' meeting. The stakeholders' suggestions also align well with the following additional steps that NCWD/Youth plans to take next:

1. Develop, integrate, and test training strategies:

This is a part of creating buy-in and ownership among others in the field. Training materials are being developed through an array of organizations focused on integration of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to meet the needs of youth with disabilities in the workforce development system. Through the stakeholders' meeting and other efforts, NCWD/Youth has begun contacting organizations currently involved in creating training materials and delivering training for youth service practitioners to explore strategies for connecting more youth service practitioners to available resources and training. In addition, NCWD/Youth has begun to develop training modules in disability-related basics, assessment, universal access, and other competency areas for which there is little training currently available. These materials need to be incorporated into the programs identified through the development of this background paper.

2. Disseminate materials and information through national networks: Organizations such as NAWDP and RESNA could serve as vehicles to inform the training modules and spread the word about the available materials. As the number of organizations working in the youth services area grows, their willingness to discuss good practice and principles, deliver training and provide certification will help to strengthen the field. Training on effective practices and principles in working with youth with disabilities for youth service practitioners is an important first step in better connecting youth with disabilities to the workforce development system. To date, NCWD/Youth has presented disability training and the competencies list at several conferences, including NAWDP's annual conference, a national YDPA conference, and NYEC's PEPNet Institute.

3. Develop a clearinghouse of information: A web-based system that coherently and comprehensively links the current array of resources would assist youth service practitioners in locating professional development information and opportunities. Such a system would be grounded in competencies and would link to the relevant training, professional development opportunities, and degrees, certifications, or other credentials that can be obtained.

The many promising initiatives and respected organizations identified in this paper can serve as catalysts to move this work forward. When all these efforts and resources are combined, we will have a comprehensive system that ensures that all youth service practitioners have access to the resources for strengthening competencies needed to connect all youth, including youth with disabilities, to the workforce development system. For this vision to become a reality, all areas of the workforce development system must be connected and involved. NCWD/Youth welcomes all persons and organizations interested in the professional development of youth service practitioners and expanding programs and opportunities for all youth to join in this effort. Please contact NCWD/Youth online at www.ncwd-youth.info with comments or suggestions.

References

- Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, Inc. (2002). *The North American Certification Project: Competencies for professional child and youth care work personnel*. Milwaukee, WI: Association for Child and Youth Care Practice. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.acycp.org/cyc%20competencies%20.pdf.
- Blackorby, J. & Wagner, W. (1996). Longitudinal post school outcomes of youth with disabilities: Findings from the national longitudinal transition survey. *Exceptional Children*, 62(5), 399-413.
- Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. (2001). *Youth development policy: What American foundations can do*. Waltham, MA: Andrew Hahn.
- Goodwill Industries International, Inc. (2002). *Strategies for developing a 21st century youth services initiative*. Bethesda, MD: Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
- Loprest, P. & Maag, E. (2003). *The relationship between early disability onset and education and employment*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved March 2, 2004 from www.dri.uiuc.edu/research/p03-05c/default.htm.
- National Center on Workforce and Disability/ Adult. (2002). *Tips for one-stop staff to assist customers in managing social security disability benefits*. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.onestops.info/article.php?article_id=5&subcat_id=8.
- National Center on Workforce and Disability/ Adult. (n. d.). *Guidelines*. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.onestops.info/.
- National Clearinghouse for Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Programs. (n. d.). *Lessons learned*. Baltimore, MD: Sar Levitan Center, Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.ydpaclearinghouse.org/Lessons Learned.htm.
- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (2002). *Literature review: Frontline worker. What's missing?* Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/literature_Reviews/frontline_worker_summary.pdf.
- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (2002). *Administrator: Introduction to workforce development – Q & A, no 1 & no. 4*. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.ncwd-youth.info/who_Are_You/administrator/workforce_Development/qanda_01.html.
- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (n. d.). *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.ncwd-youth.info/FAQ/index.html.
- National Service Inclusion Project. (n. d.). *Frequently asked questions: Etiquette*. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.serviceandinclusion.org/web.php?page=etiquette.
- National Training Institute for Community Youth Work. (2002). *B.E.S.T. strengthens youth worker practice: An evaluation of B.E.S.T.* Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from <http://nti.aed.org/Impact Study.html>.
- National Training Institute for Community for Youth Work (n. d.). *On-line registration form*. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from <http://nti.aed.org/Registration/>.
- National Youth Leadership Network. (2002). *Survey of youth with disabilities: Priority factors in building a successful life*. Report presented at Capital Hill Forum on "What youth with disabilities say is important for building a successful adult life." Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.aypf.org/subcats/ydlist.htm.

- Pearson, S. (2001). *Preparing youth with disabilities for an increasingly technical work place*. Briefing from Capital Hill Forum, January 26, 2001. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.aypf.org/subcats/ydlist.htm.
- Sum, A. and Khatiwada, I. with Palma, S. and Peron, S. (2004). *Still young, restless and jobless: The growing employment malaise among U.S. teens and young adults*. Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. Retrieved March 2, 2004 from www.nyec.org/CLS&JAG_report.pdf.
- Swanson, C. B. (2004). *Who graduates? Who doesn't? A statistical portrait of public high school graduation, Class of 2001*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved March 2, 2004 from www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934.
- US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. (2000). *Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship* (Training and Employment Information Notice No. 8-00). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved November 25, 2003 from www.doleta.gov/youth_services/pdf/yatein.pdf.
- US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. (1998). *Overview of the Workforce Investment Act (Public Law 105-220)*. Washington, DC. Retrieved March 4, 2004 from www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/Runningtext2.htm.
- Youth Development Institute. (1998). *Core Competencies of Youth Work*. New York, NY: Fund for the City of New York. Retrieved on March 18, 2004 from www.fcny.org/html/youth/core/Competencies/content.html.

Explanation of Acronyms

504	Section 504, Civil Rights Law, Protects from Discrimination
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AH	American Humanics
APSE	Association for Persons in Supported Employment
ATACP	Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program
ATP	Assistive Technology Practitioner
ATS	Assistive Technology Supplier
AYD	Advancing Youth Development
B.E.S.T.	Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers
CCE	Center for Credentialing and Education, Inc.
CED	Campus/Executive Directors
CORE	Council on Rehabilitation Education
CREA	Council on Rehabilitation Education Accreditation
CSPD	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
CWDP	Certified Workforce Development Professional
DOL	Department of Labor
GCDF	Global Career Development Facilitator
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
IWP	Individual Work Plan
NACP	North American Certification Project
NAWDP	National Association of Workforce Development Professionals
NCWD/Youth	National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth
NPCL	National Partnership for Community Leadership
NTI	National Training Institute for Community Youth Work
NYEC	National Youth Employment Coalition
NYLN	National Youth Leadership Network
OATELS	Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employment, and Labor Services
OJT	On-the-job training
OYS	Office of Youth Services
PEPNet	Promising and Effective Practices Network
RCE	Rehabilitation Counselor Education
RESNA	Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
SCANS	Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills
TWIIA	Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
YDPA	Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship

APPENDIX A – MATRIX OF COMPETENCIES FOR PRACTITIONERS SERVING YOUTH

as defined by national certification programs

John J. Heidrich Center: Working Ahead	Center for Credentialing and Education	National Association of Workforce Development Professionals	Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship	Academy for Educational Development: National Training Institute for Community Youth Work	Fund for the City of New York: Youth Development Institute	American Humanities
Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF)	Global Career Development Facilitator	Certified Workforce Development Professional	YDPA Certification	Advancing Youth Development (AYD) Curriculum	Core Competencies for Youth Work	Foundation and Professional Development Competencies
<p>Helping Skills</p> <p>Labor Market Information and Resources</p> <p>Assessment</p> <p>Diverse Populations</p> <p>Ethical and Legal Issues</p> <p>Career Development Models</p> <p>Employability Skills</p> <p>Training Peers and Clients</p> <p>Program Management and Implementation</p> <p>Promotion and Public Relations</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Consultation</p>	<p>Helping Skills</p> <p>Labor Market Information and Resources</p> <p>Working with Diverse Populations</p> <p>Technology and Career Development</p> <p>Ethical and Legal Issues</p> <p>Employability Skills</p> <p>Consultation and Supervision</p> <p>Training Clients and Peers</p> <p>Career Development Theories and Models</p> <p>Program Management and Implementation</p> <p>Assessment</p> <p>Promotion and Public Relations</p>	<p>12 Competency Areas:</p> <p>1. History and Structure of the Workforce</p> <p>2. Career Development Process</p> <p>3. Labor Market Information (LMI)</p> <p>4. Diversity</p> <p>5. Customer Service</p> <p>6. Program Management</p> <p>7. Interpersonal Relations</p> <p>8. Technology</p> <p>9. General "Helping" Skills</p> <p>10. Job-Search Skills</p> <p>11. Job-Keeping Skills</p> <p>12. Job-Preparation Skills</p>	<p>OJT Outline:</p> <p>Communicate Professional Knowledge</p> <p>Communicate with Youth Directly and Through the Expression of Attitude</p> <p>Assessment and Individual Planning</p> <p>Program Design and Delivery</p> <p>Relationship to Community</p> <p>Administrative Skills</p> <p>Workforce Preparation</p> <p>Career Exploration</p> <p>Employee Relations</p> <p>Resource Development</p> <p>Related Instruction</p> <p>Core Skills</p> <p>Workforce Development Skills</p> <p>Administrative Skills</p>	<p>1) Youth Development Workers as Supports for Youth, Families and Colleagues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate awareness of self as a Youth Development Worker • Demonstrate caring for youth and families • Demonstrate respect for diversity and differences among youth, families and communities <p>2) Youth Development Workers as Resources to Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of youth development and of specific youth • Demonstrate capacity to sustain relations that facilitate youth empowerment • Demonstrate capacity to develop group cohesion and collaborative participation <p>3) Youth development Workers as Resources to Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate capacity to plan and implement events consistent with needs of youth and in context of available resources • Demonstrate capacity to be a colleague to staff and volunteers in the organization <p>4) Youth Workers as Resources to Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate capacity to work with community leaders, groups and citizens on behalf of youth • Demonstrate capacity to collaborate with other community agencies and youth-serving organizations 	<p>Program Development</p> <p>Knowledge of Youth Development Framework</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Ability to Develop and Maintain a Relationship of Trust With Young People</p> <p>Implementation</p> <p>Advocacy and Networking</p> <p>Assessment</p> <p>Ability to Reflect on One's Practice and Performance</p> <p>Community & Family Engagement</p> <p>Intervention</p>	<p>Foundation Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Development and Exploration • Communication Skills • Employability Skills • Personal Attributes • Historical and Philosophical Foundations • Youth and Adult Development <p>Professional Development Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and Committee Development • Fundraising Principles and Practices • Human Resource Development and Supervision • General Nonprofit Management • Nonprofit Accounting and Financial Management • Nonprofit Marketing • Nonprofit Program Planning • Nonprofit Risk Management • Personal Attributes • Historical and Philosophical Foundations • Youth and Adult Development

APPENDIX B – MATRIX OF COMPETENCIES FOR PRACTITIONERS SERVING YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

as defined by national certification programs

Organization	Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE)	Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) Revised for Youth	Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)	Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)	Common Competencies
Position	Supported Employment Personnel	Individuals who work with youth with severe emotional disturbance	Disability and Rehabilitation Curriculum	Rehabilitation Counselor Education Courses	Youth Service Practitioner working with youth with disabilities Competencies
Competencies	<p>Introduction to Supported Employment (SE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SE vs. traditional vocation services Values, History & definition of SE Informed choice, self-determination, active participation Rights & responsibilities of individuals in SE Roles of managers & administrators Law: ADA, WIA, IDEA, Rehabilitation Act, EEOC Funding options, i.e.: VR, MH¹, DD², and Medicaid <p>Assessment and Career Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational Evaluation including people with significant disabilities Person-centered planning process Career profile development Referrals <p>Marketing and Job Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted employer plans Networking Job matching Negotiating job designs i.e. wages, hours, tasks, supports Work incentive provisions for employers <p>OJT and Supports, Job Acquisition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Social Security Benefits First day preparation <p>Job Analysis and Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify duties, skills, and modifications <p>Worker Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation, training, job site introduction <p>Workplace Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural supports, mentors, strategies, task analysis & prompts <p>Job Site Adaptations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate Social Behavior Managing Benefits Self Employment 	<p>Issues faced by persons with disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitivity and understanding Rehabilitation techniques for persons with disabilities Physical and environmental adaptations <p>Rehabilitation delivery system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of human service agencies Issues and laws Workforce demographics <p>VR outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual needs Community resources Assessment info Collaboration and coordination of services Evaluation <p>Interpersonal communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with individuals, families, and related professionals Personal and group change processes Ethics Cultural sensitivity <p>Consumer involvement and self-management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem-solving Writing Consumer advocacy Case management Technology Career awareness Consumer consultation and inclusion Information and assistance on legal and civil rights Identify and prioritize client goals <p>Ethics and professionalism</p>	<p>Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VR history and philosophy VR system structure Laws and ethics Issues & trends Informed choice and personal responsibility <p>Counseling services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human development Individual, group, and family counseling Diversity issues Environmental and attitudinal barriers Services for varied populations Family, guardian, and advocate involvement <p>Case management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process Independent living and VR services planning Community resources Technology <p>Vocational and career development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational aspects of disability Labor market info and trends <p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical aspects and functional capacities Psycho-social aspects Evaluation approaches and resources <p>Job development and placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job analysis and modification Job development and placement <p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of VR research and related fields Application to practice Research methods to evaluate practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Values and history of disabilities field 2. Law and ethics 3. Structure of system 4. Respect for youth with disabilities, families, and communities 5. Involvement of families, guardians, and advocates 6. Adolescent and human development 7. Informed-choice, self determination, and active participation 8. Person-centered planning 9. Cultural competency and diversity 10. Issues and trends for youth with disabilities (e.g. barriers, belonging) 11. Assessment 12. Community resources, collaboration, referrals 13. Workplace and labor market trends 14. Job analysis and job matching (including supports and modifications) 15. Benefits and funding options 16. Technology 17. Evaluation of programs 18. Current research and application 	

¹ Mental Health State Programs

² Developmental Disability Councils