



2017

Disability Mentoring Day Youth Transitions Pipeline Toolkit

Presented by:

American Association of People with Disabilities

National Council on Independent Living

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living

Ability360

Summit Independent Living Center

Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living

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Thank You!



The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), and all of our partners on this grant are grateful to the [Walmart Foundation](#) for supporting this initiative and for their broader commitment to increasing the employment of people with disabilities.

Disability Mentoring Day Youth Transitions Pipeline Overview

The Disability Mentoring Day Youth Transitions Pipeline (Pipeline) aimed to increase positive employment outcomes for youth with disabilities as they transitioned out of high school. The goal of the Pipeline was to provide students with disabilities with the skills, resources, and networks necessary to successfully transition from high school to the workforce. Employment opportunity means economic self-sufficiency and independence for people with disabilities.

The labor participation rate for people with disabilities is less than one-third the rate for people without disabilities (20.4% versus 68.7%, US DOL), which creates significant barriers to living independently and engaging fully in society. To change these staggering statistics, youth with disabilities must experience positive exposure to independent living skills and career opportunities at an early age. Unfortunately, we currently do not provide adequate support for youth with disabilities transitioning from school to the workforce. The real problem is not a lack of strategies to support youth with disabilities in this transition, but rather a lack of capacity to implement these strategies across the country uniformly and on a long-term basis.

The Disability Mentoring Day Youth Transitions Pipeline worked to change this. The program supported CILs to engage students through resource outreach, youth-led programming, skills-building workshops, mentoring, job shadowing, and internships.

This one-year initiative, funded by the Walmart Foundation, builds on the ideals of Disability Mentoring Day, a national day of job-shadowing and mentoring held each October, to support youth with disabilities as they transition out of high school and into the workforce or post-secondary education.

The Pipeline was active from May 2016 through April 2017 in three communities across the United States, where it worked closely with a center for independent living (CIL) in each community. The DMD Youth Transitions Pipeline is a multi-tier program that will reach high school students with disabilities through community resources, skill building workshops, peer-to-peer programming, mentoring, job shadowing, internships, and more.

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) jointly administered this initiative in partnership with the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) and three centers for independent living - Ability360 in Phoenix, AZ; Summit Independent Living Center (Summit) in Missoula, MT; and Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living (TRIPIL) in Washington, PA (Tri-

Country Patriots for Independent Living has since changed their name to Transitional Paths to Independent Living).

This Toolkit is meant to aid in the scaling and replication of this project at other centers for independent living across the country. The Toolkit includes best practices, common challenges and solutions, and additional information for engaging with transition-age youth through resource dissemination, youth-led programming, skills-building workshops, mentoring, job shadowing, and internships. Each of these areas play a role in supporting youth with disabilities to achieve positive employment outcomes.

The information contained in this Toolkit is free for anyone to use and modify as they work to support transition-age youth with disabilities in their communities. For questions, comments, or concerns please contact dmd@aapd.com.

Resource Outreach

Goal

The primary purpose of this engagement is to connect students with disabilities – as well as their parents, teachers, and counselors – to information and resources in their community to assist with the transition out of high school. The resource outreach conducted by the center for independent living is a means to reach a wide range of high school students within the center’s catchment area. It also serves as a way for students with disabilities to become familiar with the services and supports offered by the center as well as other resources in the community. Resource outreach can take the form of sending pamphlets and brochures to a school’s guidance counselor to having a center staff member present to a class of students to everything in between.

Best Practices

- Utilize existing information from the CIL, vocational rehabilitation, other disability organizations, etc.
- Participate in school resource fairs and expos.
- It is easier to engage with high school personnel when school is in session.
- When giving presentations to students, utilize presenters who can openly talk about their experience as a person with a disability.
- Encourage active student participation as part of presentations or workshops.
- Establish a relationship with schools to provide introductory information presentations at the beginning of the year so new students can learn about resources available and returning students are reminded.
- Send a letter or emails to all schools in the catchment area to introduce the CIL and the services it provides to transition-age youth; follow-up regularly and establish a contact person at each school.
- Be persistent and make networking a priority with the schools point of contact via phone, email, or in-person meetings. Confirm dates and times of the classes and determine which center staff and youth facilitators will work together at each school.
- Send each school an electronic copy of the curriculum as well as pre-/post-tests so that they can make copies for the students ahead of time (if you are unable to bring your own copies). Send schools a copy of the training topics covered in each class so that they can plan for the number of sessions ahead of time.

- Co-facilitators should prepare together for each class topic before each school date so that they know who is responsible for each part of the presentation. Leave 15 minutes on either side of class time to meet with the lead teacher to discuss the class needs and or progress of students or class as a whole.
- Participating in local Transition Council meetings is a productive way to connect with multiple schools all at once. Schools send staff (Special Education Directors, Transition Coordinators, Local Educational Agencies, etc.) who collaborate and share information between educators, parents, and agencies serving school districts and private schools in the area.

Common Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Building a relationship with a high school and finding the most appropriate contact.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a process that takes time. But engaging students and having school officials see their enthusiasm helps sell the benefits of engaging with the CIL. • Consistent connection with a lead teacher or faculty is key. • Some schools are not initially interested in receiving training services and may be overwhelmed with youth transition services. Some schools haven't signed contracts with vocational rehabilitation and need more information and time to make their individual school transition program plan. • It is more efficient to connect with Transition Specialists instead of Guidance Counselors when conducting outreach to schools. Special education teachers are typically too bogged down in day-to-day responsibilities and superintendents are not readily available. • Make a solid connection with at least two or more people within the school district to maintain consistent contact regardless of staff turnover.

Challenge	Developing an effective workshop or presentation to high school students.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some schools have a preference for inclusive student participation. When developing presentations or events it is important to plan for activities that can involve the entire student body - both students with and without disabilities. • Actively engaging students in the presentation by promoting discussion, critical thinking and teamwork are options for a diverse and immersive presentation. • 10-12 students per class are optimal for a quality learning experience. • If there are co-presenters – it is best to pair seasoned presenters with newly trained presenters. It is also important that the co-presenters debrief with each other after each lesson to identify what worked well and what needs to be improved.

Financial Considerations

- Accommodations
- Printing materials
- Transportation
- Tools or materials used to promote student and youth engagement and advertise CIL resources

Additional Resources, Information, and Examples

[Disability Benefits 101](#)

This resource provides tools and information on employment, health coverage, and benefits. Available for Alaska, Arizona, California, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, and Ohio

[Summit Youth Services Flyer](#)

Advertising youth transition services provided by the CIL.

Summit Youth Transition Services Description

- [Ages 14-18](#)
- [Ages 18-24](#)

[TRIPIL Brochure](#)

Brochure advertising TRIPIL’s services for people with disabilities.

Youth-Led Programming

Goal

The primary purpose of this engagement is to provide transition-age youth with disabilities the opportunity to develop their leadership skills and build community with their peers.

Engaging youth to lead in the creation and delivery of programming helps develop these personal and professional skills. Some programs may want to consider partnering with area college students with disabilities to serve as peer mentors. Youth-led spaces are important because youth rely on their peers to affirm their own identity and experiences. Recognizing and engaging diverse identities that intersect with disability are encouraged for this component as well as in all youth transitions programming. Successful youth-led programming will allow for numerous students to take on a leadership role among their peers.

Best Practices

- Engage with other partners, such as the statewide independent living council, the state Youth Leadership Forum, Vocational Rehabilitation, and local colleges/universities to build-on existing efforts or identify young leaders with disabilities.
- Connect transition-age high school students with disabilities to college students with disabilities for peer-to-peer mentoring.
- Offering accessible transportation for students can be integral to getting participation, especially in more rural areas.
- Establish a blog or communications platform (such as a Facebook group) dedicated to and run by youth. Consider pairing youth with mentors to help create content.
- Teacher recommendations for individual students are helpful. A student who is involved in state or national youth-transition leadership training also has potential.
- Connect with the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) or Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC) in your state to reach the parents of students with disabilities. Visit: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>.

Common Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Identifying youth who want to participate and take on a leadership role.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with existing student-led groups within a school• Do you have some youth already engaged in your CIL that would be interested in taking on a leadership role?

Challenge	Getting youth to attend planned events.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some cases, this challenge is a result of transportation issues. This can be resolved by hosting events at the school or by providing transportation. • Engage parents about planned activities and events allow them to become a potential transportation option

Challenge	Having youth leaders who are confident in themselves and in the materials they are presenting
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide youth leaders with training on delivering presentations and engaging participants • Offer to participate in a test run of the presentation before the youth leader delivers it to their peers

Financial Considerations

- Transportation costs
- Event costs (food, venue, etc.)
- Materials
- Accommodations

Additional Resources, Information, and Examples

[Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy \(YODA\)](#)

This program from Summit Independent Living Center is a youth-led advocacy group that helps young people with disabilities navigate barriers or transition issues.

Advanced Building Advocacy and Learning Leadership Skills (BALLS) Facilitator Training

Summit offers trainings to youth with disabilities that are interested in becoming facilitators for Summit’s Building Advocacy and Learning Leadership Skills workshop (see the Skills-Building Workshop section for more information about the BALLS workshop). The youth facilitators have the opportunity to demonstrate and lead key BALLS activities in high schools where Summit is implementing the workshop.

[APRIL Youth Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program](#)

Establishing a Youth Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program where we send young leaders out to help other CILS start, improve, or begin the planning process of including youth into their programs or creating a youth focused program.

Self-Determination/Self- Advocacy: Your Choice/Your Voice

Ability360 youth-led workshop. Participants completed their Personal Disability Snapshots, identified their Likes/Dislikes, Strengths/Skills, and Doubts/Concerns about their future. In addition, they identified where in their lives they could make more choices, and where in their lives they could use their voices more. The final activity was a goal-setting exercise where they identified their “Leading My Life Goal,” and corresponding objectives.

Personal and Professional Development: Skills You Need To Succeed

Ability360 youth-led workshop. This workshop covered communication skills (and the difference between personal and professional communication), the 3 P’s (Prepare, Practice, and Pull Yourself Together) related to personal interaction and employment soft skills, and Winning Attitudes. This workshop also featured many activities, and included mock job interviews.

Skills-Building Workshops

Goal

The primary purpose of this engagement is to assist transition-age youth with disabilities in developing a holistic set of personal and professional skills. Potential topics could include: communication, collaboration, problem solving, conflict resolution, critical observation, healthy eating, resume writing, interview practice, and more. Before selecting specific topics, it is recommended that the program will conduct a needs assessment of the students and available resources in the community to determine which topics will be most beneficial to participants. The final selection of topics may also depend on the interests of the program participants and the need to be inclusive of diverse identities.

Best Practices

- Structure each class or workshop to offer students the option individually and collectively to learn more about preparing for their transition to adult goals. These classes offer informed choice and a foundation to build on as they advocate for themselves during their individual transition planning process.
- A student who understands what goals are important to their personal life, the community resources and services that will support them, and who actively engages more independently in the community of their choice is more likely to gain experience and confidence throughout their youth transition years.
- As youth transition into adult life, they will bring improved problem-solving, decision-making, and goal-setting skills to their community.

Common Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Getting youth to attend planned events.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In some cases, this challenge is a result of transportation issues. This can be resolved by hosting events at the school or by providing transportation.• Creating events that are not only informational, but fun, and include perks such as food or relevant activities that incorporate learning

Challenge	Engaging students in topics that are relevant to them.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking students to be a part of what topics are discussed and how the material is presented/talked about is a great way to make youth feel like their voices are being heard immediately • Designing interactive workshops that allow for youth participation

Financial Considerations

- Transportation
- Accommodations
- Office supplies and printing
- Food
- Participation incentives

Additional Resources, Information, and Examples

MYTransitions

Transition program in Montana to improve transition services and increase the number of youth with disabilities who achieve their desired post-school outcomes.

Building Advocacy and Learning Leadership Skills (BALLS)

This program from Summit Independent Living Center helps students understand disability history, culture, rights, and responsibilities in order to become self-advocates.

- [Sample BALLS training schedule and topics](#)

“Independent Skills Training on Local Transportation”

This workshop from TRIPIL takes students to the Freedom Transit center where Transit staff give a presentation to describe their services They also explain fixed route public bus service and paratransit services. Lastly, the youth take a round-trip bus ride to and from a nearby destination. This workshop is designed to increase awareness about access to local transportation options in the community. This region of Pennsylvania has been discussing transportation for decades because public transit between rural locales and to/from urban centers is limited. It is important for youth with disabilities to be well informed about transportation options for work and for other life management reasons.

Soft Skills Training Agenda

List of topics covered in Summit’s soft skills training classes.

[Disability Awareness Presentation](#)

TRIPIL presentation as an introduction to the disability community. Disability Awareness helps to create an understanding that people with disabilities are people first who happen to have a disability.

[Self-Advocacy Presentation](#)

TRIPIL presentation about self-advocacy as people with disabilities. Self-Advocacy is a skills-building necessity for youth with disabilities. Advocating for oneself through systems (medical, benefits, accommodations, etc.) will be a life-long venture.

Self-Introduction Workshop

In this workshop from Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living, youth identify their strengths, weaknesses, and individual needs. They then answer a series of questions to help identify their likes and dislikes, and use this information to create an introductory statement to use when speaking with an employer or service provider. The ability to offer a personal introduction and initiate a conversation with service providers, prospective employers, and others builds communication skills that will serve youth now and throughout their lives. This TRIPIL workshop helped develop self-awareness by having students answer a series of questions to identify their likes and dislikes. They also built communication skills to create an introductory statement to use when speaking with an employer or service provider.

- [Elevator Introduction Questions](#)
- [Elevator Speech Form](#)

[Ability360 Empowering Youth Flyer](#)

A flyer detailing Ability360's skills-building workshops for youth with disabilities.

Mentoring

Goal

The primary purpose of this engagement is to build relationships between youth with disabilities and mentors from the community who can provide guidance on work, school, and/or the transition out of high school. Mentoring is a supported alternative employment model that can influence career opportunities and employment, and thus the independence of students with disabilities. Mentors do not need to be connected to a specific place of employment, and can provide mentoring that is either (or both) professional and personal. Mentoring has the potential to increase independent living skills, enhance self-esteem and motivation, increase interest and ability in continuing education, and increase interest and ability in having a job. Mentoring can take many shapes and forms – such as one-on-one mentoring and group mentoring – but in general, it involves continual engagement and relationship building between two or more individuals.

Best Practices

- Participate in [Disability Mentoring Day](#) (DMD) – it is a great way to begin engagement with businesses and also allows you to take advantage of national recognition for DMD and National Disability Employment Awareness Month, both in October.
- Engage local business associations, such as the [local chamber of commerce](#) or the local [Business Leadership Network](#), to reach a broad range of businesses to gauge initial interest.
- Students can be matched with mentors who are retirees in career fields of interest to the student.
- Build off mentoring that the CIL already does as part of their core service requirements - Community Integration independent living skills service, peer mentoring, and self-advocacy groups.
- Create events where students and mentors can interact organically, such as hosting events related to their field of interest or relevant activities (tour of facility, networking event, resume review, informational interview, etc.)

Common Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Developing relationships with businesses and mentors in the community.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is something that takes time. It is helpful to have a consistent staff member reaching out to build relationships. • If you have a strong relationship with one business, they can help vouch for you and introduce you to others. • To reach out and connect with the community, you have to be part of the community: make sure you are engaged in local events and activities to build relationships and name recognition. • In some cases, small business owners were more open to connecting with the mentoring concept for youth than larger businesses connected to a state or a nationally franchised business.

Challenge	Identifying businesses that align with student interests.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider job clusters – you may not find the exact job, but you can find something close that shares similar skills or types of work. • Reach out to your current consumers to see if they or someone they know has expertise or a position in that field can also be helpful.

Challenge	Obtaining permission from parents for their child to participate in a mentoring program.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underscore the benefits of having a mentor, especially as a person with a disability. • Connect the parent to other parents that have children with disabilities who participate in mentoring programs. • Establish a relationship with the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) or Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC) in your state to engage parents individually. • Reach out using a variety of networks, including school forms and newsletters, and use alternative formats like emailed permission slips and e-signatures

Challenge	Arranging accessible transportation, especially in rural areas.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible for the CIL to provide transportation? • Meet the students where they are – have mentors connect with students through school, at home, or in local venues like YMCA or community center.

Financial Considerations

- Accommodations
- Transportation
- Job tools

Additional Resources, Information, and Examples

Partners for Youth with Disabilities

- [One-on-One Mentoring](#)
- [Group Mentoring](#)
- [Online Mentoring](#)

[2017 Disability Mentoring Day Toolkit](#)

This Toolkit includes information on how to get started with hosting a DMD event, ideas to consider, and sample documents.

Job Shadowing

Goal

The primary purpose of this engagement is to provide transition-age youth with disabilities with more information about what it is like to work in a professional environment. Job shadowing allows youth to experience first-hand what a job is like - the daily tasks and challenges, workplace environment, and the skills and knowledge needed to do the job. It can take many forms – from an office tour, to a staff meeting, to a full day of shadowing, and more – and can be done in a one-on-one or group setting. Job shadowing helps students with disabilities begin thinking about potential careers as they prepare to transition out of high school in addition to introducing employers to potential employees with disabilities as a way to combat fear and stigma.

Best Practices

- Participate in [Disability Mentoring Day](#) (DMD) – it is a great way to begin engagement with businesses and also allows you to take advantage of national recognition for DMD and National Disability Employment Awareness Month, both in October.
- Engage local business associations, such as the [local chamber of commerce](#) or the local [Business Leadership Network](#), to reach a broad range of businesses to gauge initial interest
- After a local business participates in a job shadow opportunity, follow-up with an informal interview to learn how the business felt about offering that experience. If it was a positive experience, ask if that business would like to offer additional long-term internship experience.
- Talk to businesses that have an interest but may have concerns regarding the job shadowing as it relates to the student's disability. These topics might include accountability, safety concerns, self-care for the students, and other disability related questions. This meeting could be a great way to allay fears and set expectations for the companies and organizations participating in the event.
- During the job shadow experience, allow the mentee to meet other employees and participate in meetings to provide them with a holistic understanding of the organization.

Common Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Developing relationships with businesses in the community.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is something that takes time. It is helpful to have a consistent staff member reaching out to build relationships. • If you have a strong relationship with one business, they can help vouch for you and introduce you to others. • To reach out and connect with the community, you have to be part of the community: make sure you are engaged in local events and activities to build relationships and name recognition.

Challenge	Identifying businesses that align with student interests.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider job clusters – you may not find the exact job, but you can find something close that shares similar skills or types of work. • Reach out to your current consumers to see if they or someone they know has expertise or a position in that field can also be helpful.

Challenge	Obtaining permission from parents for their child to participate in a job shadowing program.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underscore the benefits of having a mentor, especially as a person with a disability. • Connect the parent to other parents that have children with disabilities who participate in mentoring programs. • Establish a relationship with the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) or Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC) in your state to engage parents individually. • Reach out using a variety of networks, including school forms and newsletters, and use alternative formats like emailed permission slips and e-signatures

Challenge	Arranging accessible transportation, especially in rural areas.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible for the CIL to provide transportation? • Meet the students where they are – have mentors connect with students through school, at home, or in local venues like YMCA or community center.

Financial Considerations

- Transportation
- Accommodations
- Breakfast or Lunch during workday
- Materials needed to complete the job shadow (appropriate clothes, equipment, tools, materials, etc.)

Additional Resources, Information, and Examples

[MYT Job Shadowing Opportunities Flyer](#)

Montana Youth Transitions overview of the benefits of job shadowing for youth with disabilities.

[2017 Disability Mentoring Day Toolkit](#)

This Toolkit includes information on how to get started with hosting a DMD event, ideas to consider, and sample documents.

Internships

Goal

The primary purpose of this engagement is to provide transition-age youth with disabilities with first-hand employment experience. Internships also provide the hosting employer with insight into how to work with and support people with disabilities. Internships can vary with regard to total duration, frequency, and assigned duties, but in general, a successful internship consists of a recurring engagement between a student and a host employer for a predetermined duration.

Best Practices

- Engage local business associations, such as the [local chamber of commerce](#) or the local [Business Leadership Network](#), to reach a broad range of businesses to gauge initial interest
- After a local business participates in a job shadow opportunity, follow-up with an informal interview to learn how the business felt about offering that experience. If it was a positive experience, ask if that business would like to offer additional long-term internship experience.
- The CIL itself can be an internship placement for students that are interested in the independent living movement.
- When trying to engage businesses/organizations to take on students as interns show how the students with disabilities are interested and excited about the opportunity, and underscore their commitment to learning a new skill or craft.

Common Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Developing relationships with businesses in the community.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is something that takes time. It is helpful to have a consistent staff member reaching out to build relationships.• If you have a strong relationship with one business, they can help vouch for you and introduce you to others.• To reach out and connect with the community, you have to be part of the community: make sure you are engaged in local events and activities to build relationships and name recognition.

Challenge	Identifying businesses that align with student interests.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider job clusters – you may not find the exact job, but you can find something close that shares similar skills or types of work. • Reach out to your current consumers to see if they or someone they know has expertise or a position in that field can also be helpful.

Challenge	Obtaining permission from parents for their child to participate in an internship program.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underscore the benefits of having a mentor, especially as a person with a disability. • Connect the parent to other parents that have children with disabilities who participate in mentoring programs. • Establish a relationship with the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) or Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC) in your state to engage parents individually. • Reach out using a variety of networks, including school forms and newsletters, and use alternative formats like emailed permission slips and e-signatures

Challenge	Arranging accessible transportation, especially in rural areas.
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible for the CIL to provide transportation? • Meet the students where they are – have mentors connect with students through school, at home, or in local venues like YMCA or community center.

Challenge	Students have trouble balancing internship, school, and personal life
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the student to develop a schedule that works for them, starting off small and then increasing hours if needed/wanted. • Offer to have them telecommute if possible, and be flexible with hours/days if possible.

Financial Considerations

- Transportation
- Accommodations
- Breakfast or Lunch during workday
- Materials needed to complete job shadow safely; equipment, tools, materials, etc.

Additional Resources, Information, and Examples

[School to Work Transition Toolkit](#)

This Toolkit from PolicyWorks helps transition-aged youth with disabilities to navigate potential career paths.

[Internships: The On-Ramp to Employment](#)

The National Consortium on Leadership and Disability/Youth (NCLD-Youth) developed a guide for students with disabilities to getting and making the most of an internship.

Conclusion

Thank you for reviewing the Disability Mentoring Day Youth Transitions Pipeline Toolkit. This document is meant to serve as a tool to aid centers for independent living in provide transition services to youth with disabilities. The information contained in this Toolkit is free for anyone to use and modify as they work to support transition-age youth with disabilities in their communities. For questions, comments, or concerns please contact dmd@aapd.com.