

## USDOL SSI Youth Solutions Initiative

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/individuals/youth/ssi-youth>

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) initiated the SSI Youth Solutions effort in order to identify potential solutions to improve employment outcomes for young adults ages 14 to 24 who apply for or receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

[Mathematica](#) will administer the initiative through a contract with ODEP. Proposals have been selected and subject matter experts are working to provide innovative and evidence-based strategies – including legislative, regulatory and policy changes – that can increase labor force participation and economic success among this population. SSI Youth Solutions builds upon the findings of the [SSI Youth Formative Research Project](#).

---

### Selected Proposals

#### **Building an Apprenticeship Infrastructure for SSI Youth**

This paper will describe the differences between youth apprenticeships (school-based programs supported through partnerships of intermediaries, such as the workforce investment system and state vocational rehabilitation agencies) and registered apprenticeships, to show these differences matter when serving youth with disabilities, and discuss issues expanding and sustaining these programs.

Daniel Kuehn – *Urban Institute*



Daniel Kuehn, Ph.D., is a senior research associate in the Urban Institute's Income and Benefits Policy Center, where he specializes in research on apprenticeships, job training, and employment.

---

#### **Career Technical Education for Students with Emotional Disturbance**

This paper will document how career technical education, as outlined in a piloted guidebook for special educators, can improve the education, employment, and self-efficacy outcomes of high school students with emotional disturbance who are at high risk of receiving SSI.

Colleen McKay, Marsha Ellison – *University of Massachusetts Medical School*



Colleen McKay, M.A., CAGS, is an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School who specializes in recovery, vocational rehabilitation, and health promotion issues for adults and young adults living with severe mental illness.



Marsha Ellison, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School with expertise on interventions that improve education and employment outcomes among youth and young adults with serious mental health conditions.

---

### **Delaying Application of SSI's Substantial Gainful Activity Criterion from Age 18 to 22**

This paper will examine a policy change for the Social Security Administration—delaying use of the substantial gainful activity criterion for adult SSI determinations until age 22—that could smooth the transition to adulthood by allowing youth to maintain access to SSI benefits as they build skills and work history needed to achieve eventual employment.

Sheryl A. Larson and Judy Geyer – *Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota and Abt Associates*

---



Sheryl A. Larson, Ph.D., is a research manager at the University of Minnesota who studies disability policy, Medicaid, and supports for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.



Judy Geyer, Ph.D., is an economist at Abt Associates, where she specializes in policy research and program evaluation related to public benefit programs.

---

### **Demonstrating the Effectiveness of Short-Term Career and Technical Training in a Residential Setting for Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities**

This paper will assess the efficacy and replicability of an educational residential program as a means to improve the employability of transition-age youth with disabilities.

Kevin Hollenbeck - *Independent Consultant*

---



Kevin Hollenbeck, Ph.D., is an independent economic consultant and senior economist emeritus at W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research who specializes in evaluations of education and workforce development policies.

---

## **Employment Empowerment – A Foundational Intervention for Youth with Disabilities to Build Employment Skill**

This initiative provides a tested training curriculum to youth SSI recipients to build their knowledge about the world of work, confidence in their potential, and skills needed for self-advocacy.

Paul Hippolitus - *Independent Consultant*

---



Paul Hippolitus, M.A., who has extensive experience with programs that promote educational and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, is the former director of the employment and disability benefits initiative at the World Institute on Disability.

---

## **Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT): A Research-Based Program for Promoting High Expectations for Employment and Knowledge of Resources**

This paper will document how the Family Employment Awareness Training, a two-part training for youth with disabilities and their families that involves multiple agencies and raises awareness about employment opportunities, can improve the outcomes of youth with disabilities.

Judith Gross, Stephanie Gage, and Grace Francis - *Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, Indiana University-Bloomington, and College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University*

---



Judith Gross, Ph.D., is the director of the Center on Community Living and Careers at Indiana University-Bloomington; her research interests include transition to adulthood, family support, expectations, inclusion, and community participation.



Stephanie Gage, the Benefits Information Network (BIN) project coordinator for the Center on Community Living and Careers at Indiana University-Bloomington, manages the training and certification of approximately 150 BIN liaisons annually.



Grace Francis, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of special education at George Mason University whose research interests focus on improving the quality of life for individuals with significant support needs.

---

## **The Family Empowerment Model: Improving Employment for Youth Receiving Supplemental Security Income**

This paper will develop a three-pronged family empowerment model (consisting of staff with lived disability experience, a team of service providers, and targeted outreach) to engage, empower, and encourage youth SSI recipients in their efforts to obtain long-term employment.

Catherine Anderson, Ellie Hartman, and D.J. Ralston - *University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, and George Washington University*

---



Catherine Anderson, Ph.D., LPC, CRC, serves as a researcher and project director in the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Ellie Hartman, Ph.D., has experience partnering with Wisconsin state agencies on research grants aimed at improving the competitive, integrated employment of people with disabilities and exploring policy changes to incentivize work.



D.J. Ralston, M.A., is a senior research associate at George Washington University with expertise on programs and grants related to the public workforce development system and disability at the local, state, and national levels.

---

## **Improving Youth SSI Recipients' Employment Outcomes through an Integrated Treatment Team Intervention in a Health Care Setting**

This paper examines a proposed intervention to address the needs of youth SSI recipients' ages 14 to 17 who are receiving medical care in specialty health clinics by adding case managers to established integrated treatment teams to coordinate care between medical providers and public programs.

Melanie Honsbruch, Teresa Nguyen, and Aryn Taylor - *Colorado Office of Employment First, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus*

---



Melanie Honsbruch, B.A., CPWIC, a curriculum developer and trainer at the Colorado Office of Employment First, specializes in benefits counseling and works to improve and increase access to such services for Coloradans.



Teresa Nguyen, M.P.H., is a curriculum developer and trainer at the Colorado Office of Employment First who ensures that families and youth with disabilities have opportunities for competitive, integrated employment.



Aryn Taylor, M.A., CRC, is a grant writer, analyst, and evaluator at the Colorado Office of Employment First who focuses on the sustainability and evaluation of Employment First principles and practices in Colorado.

---

### **Policy Considerations for Implementing Youth and Family Case Management Strategies Across Systems**

Building on findings from New York State's PROMISE program, the authors will propose the Youth and Family Systems Navigator as a new resource to help youth SSI recipients and their families manage the multifaceted youth transition process and obtain better employment outcomes.

Thomas Golden and Andrew Karhan - *Yang Tan Institute on Employment Disability, Cornell University*

---



Thomas P. Golden, Ed.D., CRC, the executive director of the Yang Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University, has developed evidence-based practices to increase economic self-sufficiency, informed choice, and employment for youth with disabilities.



Andrew J. Karhan, M.P.A., M.A., is the program director of workforce development at the Yang Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell

University and has experience developing and promoting competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

---

### **Progressive Education: Early Intervention Strategy to Improve Postsecondary Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities**

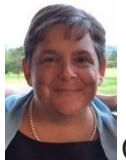
Building on its experience connecting youth with disabilities to postsecondary education, Vermont's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will outline a progressive program to increase postsecondary education and training among these youth through activities such as dual enrollment in high school and college courses, career preparation courses, and apprenticeships.

Tara Howe, Christine McCarthy, James Smith, and Rich Tulikangas - *Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation*

---



Tara Howe, M.A., M.S., is the transition program director at the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, where she collaborates with community partners and supports youth teams to implement effective career readiness and transition services.



Christine McCarthy, B.S., is the executive director of the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation, a statewide nonprofit agency assisting Vermonters in employment.



James Smith, M.A., is deputy to the director for the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and oversees special programs for the agency, including many that have supported the return to work of Social Security disability recipients.



Rich Tulikangas, M.Ed., director of Linking Learning to Careers at the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, focuses on building college and career readiness systems to help youth succeed.

---

### **Prototype Transition to Economic Self-Sufficiency (TESS) Scholarships for Youth and Young Adults with Significant Disabilities**

Drawing on Vermont's experience with building a Transition to Self-Sufficiency system, the author presents a multipronged approach for youth SSI recipients that includes

education, training, and support, with the goal of increasing the economic independence of youth with disabilities by age 30.

David Stapleton - *Tree House Economics, LLC* and contributions from James Smith and Tara Howe (*Progressive Education Authors*) - *Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*

---



David C. Stapleton, Ph.D., a consultant and former director of Mathematica's Center for Studying Disability Policy, has conducted disability policy research for 28 years.

---

### **Secondary Systems Linkages and Transition Tracker: A System Approach to Enhance Post School Employment Outcomes**

Maryland's student-level database combines data from state agencies and programs that serve transition-age youth; it is a model that other states can use to facilitate data sharing, interagency collaborations, and service coordination to improve service and employment outcomes for youth SSI recipients.

Jade Gingerich and Kelli Crane - *Maryland Department of Disabilities and the University of Maryland, College Park*

---



Jade Ann Gingerich, M.S., who is an expert in state-level interagency coordination and collaboration, directs employment policy for the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

---



Kelli Crane, Ph.D., is an assistant research professor at the Center for Transition and Career Innovation at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she specializes in developing, implementing, and evaluating school-to-work transition services systems and practices.