

Practical Considerations for Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE) for Students with Complex Support Needs

An NTACT:C Webinar
Presentation
August 11, 2022

welcome

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Today's Presenters

- **Christy H. Stuart**, Director, Center for Transition and Career Innovation - College of Education University of Maryland, College Park; National Technical Assistance Center on Transition:the Collaborative (NTACT:C)
- **Amy Dwyre D'Agati** , Senior Faculty Specialist, Center for Transition and Career Innovation College of Education University of Maryland, College Park, Director, [TerpsEXCEED](#); National Technical Assistance Center on Transition:the Collaborative (NTACT:C)
- **Michael Stoehr**, Knowledge Development and Technical Assistance Specialist National Technical Assistance Center on Transition:the Collaborative (NTACT:C) UNC Charlotte - Cato College of Education

Agenda



- **Welcome**
- **Work-Based Learning Experiences**
- **Practical Considerations for Students with Complex Support Needs**
- **Wrap-up and next steps**

Universal Truths

NO SILVER BULLETS



- ◉ Work requires specific job skills, work ethic skills - including presence, social and communication skills, at least basic academic skills, teamwork, pride in work, ability to solve problems and to ask for help when needed.
- ◉ Both learned helplessness and independence come from you – (adult supports)
- ◉ There is true dignity in risk but always work to learn from mistakes.
- ◉ Self-determination is a learned behavior, based on experiences, attitudes and opportunities
- ◉ In today's world, individuals with disabilities are working and contributing in employment settings but the demands are high and the competition for each job is fierce.



**“When I was growing up, I always
wanted to be somebody.**

**Now I wish
I had been more specific.”**

~Lily Tomlin

Employment Rates July 2022

→ Labor Force Participation

→ People with disabilities: 37.3%

People without disabilities: 77.8%

→ Unemployment Rate

→ People with disabilities: 7.8%

People without disabilities: 3.6%

We have spent Billions on:

- Raising awareness & advocacy
- Policy initiatives
- Support services

Yet, people with disabilities are still under-represented in the workforce

What are we doing wrong?

“Successful Employment” is a mutually beneficial relationship. It’s a two -way street.

As we assist young adults in finding a job, we must re-frame how we see job seekers and how we approach and partner with businesses .

Value-driven for all involved

Community Employment History

Shift in Services

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
Service	Institution care	Sheltered employment	Supported employment	Person centered employment	Self-directed employment	Professional employment services	Customized employment
Environment	Isolated	Segregated	Integrated	Inclusive	Supportive	Universal Access	Win-win negotiation
Role	Resident	Client	Citizen	Consumer	Individual	Job seeker collaboration	Valued employee
Model	Medical	Developmental	Community	Supports	Person-directed	Self-directed employment first	Business focused
Character	Custody deprived	Get ready, slots	Advocacy, civil rights	Informed choice	Self-determination	Self advocacy/ Natural supports	Discovery and match

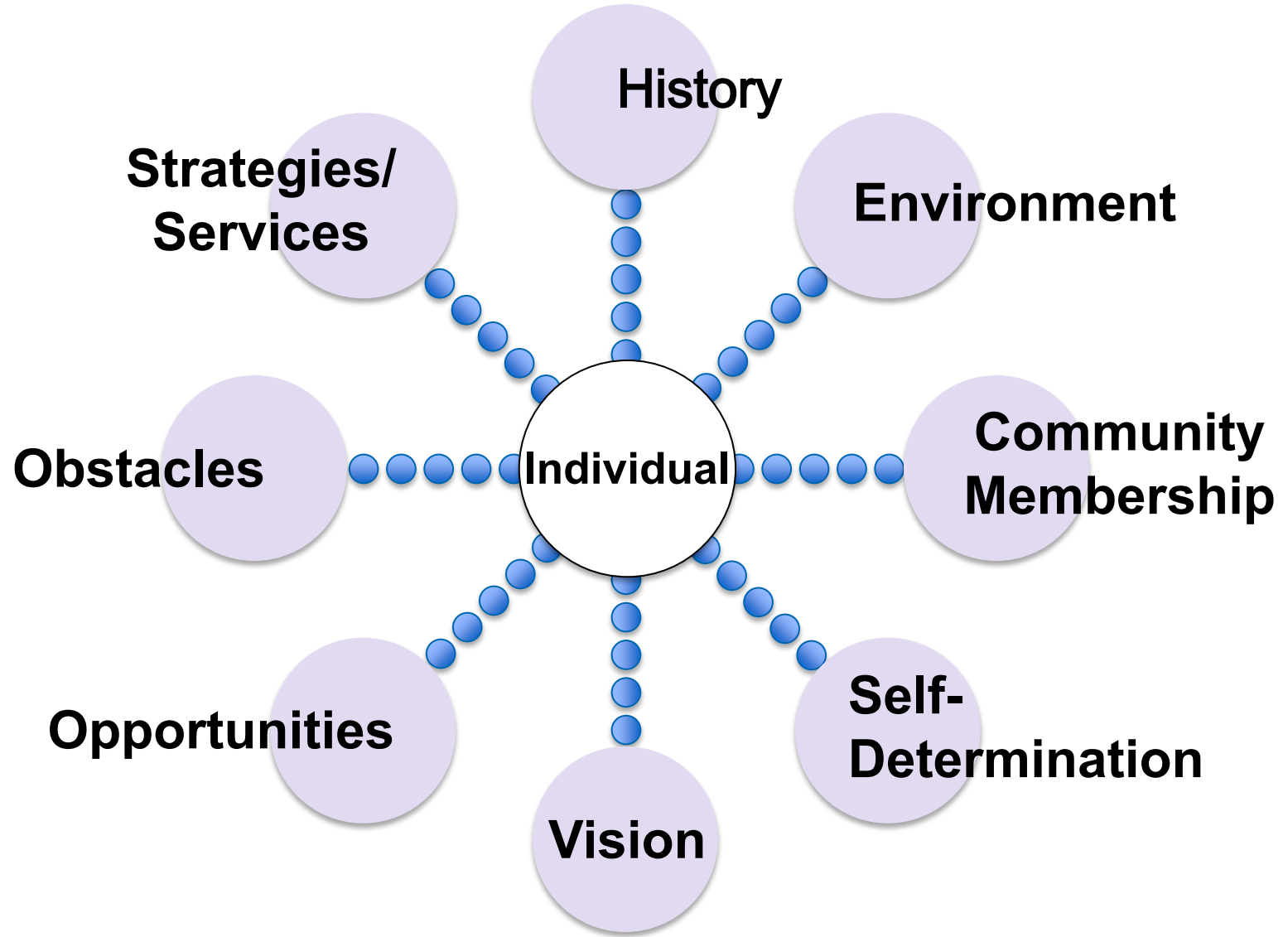
Skills vs. Deficits

- Person-driven planning with a purpose
- Focus on preferences and what a person can do
- Shifts emphasis to adding value
- Targets businesses where job seeker's unique characteristics and skills will be assets

Thinking about your students.....

- What do you consider to be a successful adult life for your students?
- What are critical outcomes for these students?
- What are your students' hopes and dreams for their futures
- What are their parents' hopes and dreams for their sons and daughters?

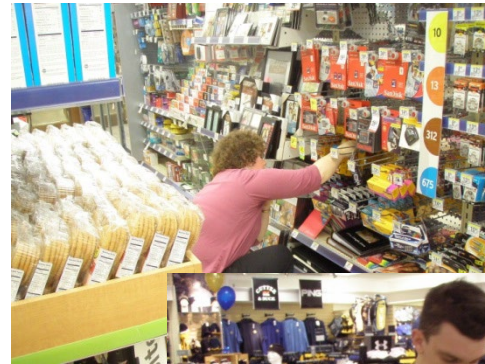
Person -Driven Planning



ongoing
problem-solving
process

For All Students Including Individuals with the Most Complex Support Needs

- Presumption that all students can work
- No more asking “Do you want to work?” but instead “Where do you want to work?”
- Job shadowing, internships, volunteering, community involvement
- After school/weekend & summer employment
- Integrate students into school-to-work opportunities & vocational courses



WBLE and Pre-Employment Transition Services

Work-based learning experiences are one of the five required pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) that must be made available, in collaboration with local education agencies (LEAs), to all students with disabilities who need them, and are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services:

1. Job exploration counseling
2. **Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment in the community to the maximum extent possible**
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
5. Instruction in self-advocacy (including instruction in person-centered planning), which may include peer mentoring (including peer mentoring from individuals with disabilities working in competitive integrated employment)



What is Work -Based Learning in the Educational System?

Three Key Components:

- School-based classroom instruction involving both academic and technical areas
- Engagement in a structured work activity
- Connected to a career development activity

Essential Question

How can the work-based transition activities be incorporated into the school day while balancing the needs of each student?

Work-Based Learning Crosswalk

→ Pre-Employment Transition Services

(Rehabilitation Act, as amended by Title IV of WIOA, 2014)

→ Provided and/or Arranged by VR Personnel

- Facilitate opportunities for students to obtain work-based learning/work experiences within an integrated setting
 - Recruit business mentors
 - Paid or non-paid work experiences
 - Informational Interviews
 - Creating internships
 - On the job training
 - Job shadowing
 - Worksite tours

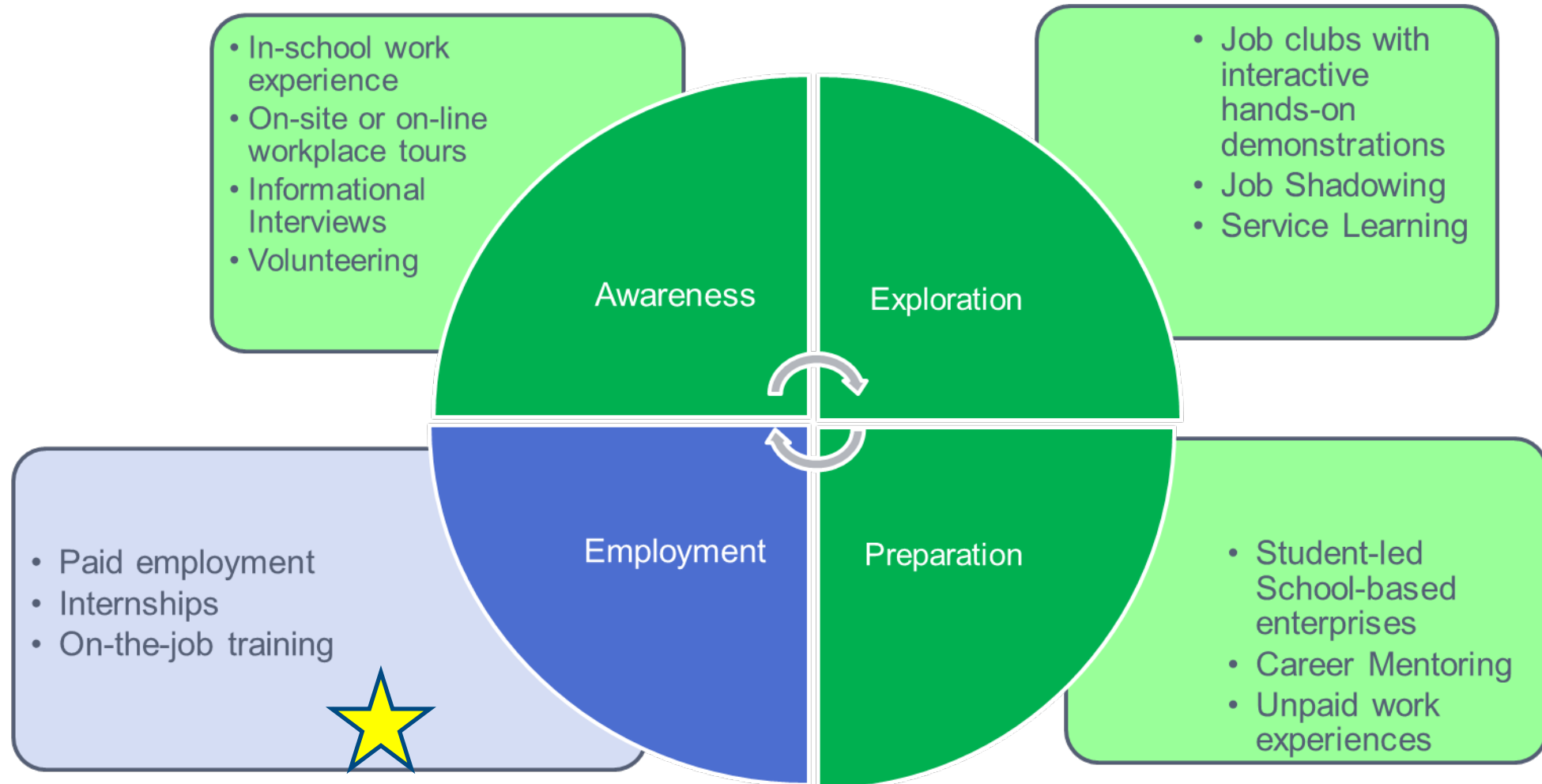
→ School-Level Transition Services

→ (IDEA, 2004)

→ Facilitated by School-Level Practitioners

- Provide job shadowing activities
- Provide work experience rotations
- Provide school-based work preparation (e.g., mock interviews, resume writing, job applications, school-based enterprises)

WBLE Continuum of Services



WBLE Service Delivery

Individual

- Paid or unpaid short-term work experiences
- Internships

Group Setting

- Informational interviews
- Work-site tours
- Job-shadowing
- Career mentoring
- Student-led Enterprises

Virtual

- Job-shadowing
- Informational interviews
- Career mentoring
- Business tours
- Internships if work from home is part of business culture

Often a combination of all three

Best Practices in Work-Based Learning for Students with Complex Support Needs – (1)

Work-Based Learning for Students with High Support Needs

Experiences are individualized and driven by student preferences and needs rather than availability.

Youth are fully involved in choosing and structuring their experiences.

Exposure is provided to wide range of jobs and careers including those outside of “traditional” youth employing industries.

Experiences are “age and stage appropriate”, evolving along a continuum of increased intensity and engagement in the workplace.

Experiences are predominately at workplaces in the community, not school-based.

Best Practices in Work-Based Learning for Students with Complex Support Needs - (2)

Work-Based Learning for Students with High Support Needs

Work site learning is structured and links back to classroom instruction. Strong business partnerships, with employers sharing learning goals of instructors and students.

Opportunities are provided to perform meaningful job tasks in the workplace that build career skills and knowledge.

Periodic assessment and feedback are built in.

Students have the opportunity for regular self-reflection.

Best Practices in Work-Based Learning for Students with Complex Support Needs - (3)

Work-Based Learning for Students with High Support Needs

Results and progress are well documented.

Outcomes are clear and measurable.

Experiences include opportunities for developing student self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

Students build networks and connections for post-secondary career success.

Students develop an understanding of their support needs and how to advocate for and address those needs.

Best Practices in Work-Based Learning for Students with Complex Support Needs - (4)

Work-Based Learning for Students with High Support Needs

- Connecting families with resources/experts (benefits planning).
- Strong employer engagement tied to career pathways with multiple on and off ramps.
- Video resumes showcase talent.
- Reallocate staff positions/hours (instructional aides or paras) from classroom to community
- Paid work experiences in competitive, integrated settings for real work performed.

Perceived Barriers to Work Based Learning Experiences and Competitive Integrated Employment

And

Practical Considerations

A Student with Complex Support Needs to gain Employment may...

- Not be able to go through the typical hiring practice
 - Traditional application
 - Traditional interview
 - Traditional orientation

Practical Consideration

The student will more likely need representation by an Employment Specialist with local employers

A Student with Complex Support Needs to gain Employment may...

- Not be able to do all the tasks on a written traditional job description
 - May be able to do SOME of the tasks
 - May do tasks that help a business but are not listed in a traditional job description

Practical Consideration

Effective labor needs analysis at an employer site by an Employment Specialist will be necessary

A Student with Complex Support Needs to gain Employment may...

- Require additional or extra supports for steps of the hiring process
- Require additional support or training to learn the tasks of the job
- Require accommodations in order to complete the tasks of a job

Practical Consideration

An effective presentation of a provider's follow along support services is a necessary incentive for the employer

A Student with Complex Support Needs to gain Employment may...

- Have to do a job differently than the typical worker to get the same or an acceptable outcome
 - i.e. if someone cannot physically type or is blind, she can enter data on a computer using a speaking device and software
 - i.e. if someone cannot read when gathering materials from the copy room, a color coding system can help him find the correct forms

Practical Consideration

For students who are blind or visually impaired, data can be entered on a computer using a speaking device and software.

For students who cannot read when gathering materials from the copy room, a color-coding system may help locating correct forms.

A Student with Complex Support Needs to gain Employment may...

- Do things in a non-traditional manner

Practical Consideration

Communicate (sign language, speaking device, picture cues, non-verbal expressions, etc.)

Get around/physical movement (wheelchair, walker, cane, adaptive devices, etc.)

Take in information (pictures/non-reader, auditory v. visual, etc.)

Interact socially (picking up on different social cues or spatial cues)

Our Job is to Remove Significant Barriers by:

- Raising the **expectations** of students, their families and employers by demonstrating and documenting the unique abilities and contributions they have to offer in the workplace
- Providing **supports** throughout the job search process
- Developing **accommodations** that sufficiently address these barriers

**What if someone is not on an immediate career path with too many current barriers?
What's next?**

Do they stay in their current situation?

NO!

Continual **Discovery** and **Assessment**

- Growth in interests and skills
- Age-appropriate activities
- MEANINGFUL LIVES

What we know about doing Discovery with a Student with Significant Barriers

- May take longer
 - Need quality time for extra observations if traditional communications is limited
 - Gather insights from many key stakeholders who are knowledgeable in body language and personality of the job seeker
 - Go through history to learn which accommodations have been tried and were successful

What we know about doing Discovery with a Student with Significant Barriers

- Involves more trial and error
 - Transference of skills from one environment to another can be difficult – try more experiences in more places
 - Exposure to more experiences gives you more information (body language, reactions, etc.)

What we know about developing Workplace Supports for a Student with Significant Barriers

→ May take longer!

- Use your customer service and follow-long supports as a selling point
- Expect the unexpected; you will have more face time on the job in the beginning
- Don't overpromise and under deliver: make sure everyone is comfortable, confident and competent before fading out your direct supports

Practical Considerations

Job Developing for a Student with Significant Barriers

- Approach an employer you know OR spend time developing a strong rapport
- Sell YOURSELF; how do YOU add value to the business
- Focus on ASSETS and the VALUE a job seeker adds

Practical Considerations

Job Developing for a Student with Significant Barriers

- Create a customized task list
- Be honest about the needs for extra supports – and sell yourself and your organization as the main support
- Use strong customer service strategies and thorough follow-along; an employer cannot be left to feel she is on her own

Practical Considerations

Job Developing for a Student with Significant Barriers

- Use a paid work experience or on-the-job training contract so both parties can try it first, if possible
- Provide a detailed workplace supports plan so that the employer is clear how the supports will allow this person to be successful

What do Employers WANT to Hear from Us?

We represent...

- Motivated employees who are excited about working
- Candidates with skills sets that add value to their workforce
- Business solutions that improve the company's productivity and/or workflow

Key Take Aways

Interdisciplinary and Interagency
Coordination are Critical

Investing in Work Based Learning Experiences
in Integrated Settings is Essential

Strong Business Partnerships and Open
Communication provide win-win solutions

Young People Must Have Access to
Communication Tools

Non-Traditional solutions and approaches
can lead to effective work experiences

Supports and Resources

Resources – (1)

- [Promising Trends and Challenges in Work-Based Learning: A Market Scan of Organizations and Tools](#)
- [YouthBuild Webinar: How to Develop Quality Work Experiences for Your Participants](#)
- [Youth.gov Youth-Employment](#)
- [Center for Transition and Career Innovation \(CTCI\), University of Maryland](#) - designed to explore issues related to school-to-work transition for youth with disabilities, including how to facilitate work experiences for youth in transition.

Resources – (2)

- [New Ways to Work](#) – includes customizable work based learning toolkits
- Working with Employers, Workplace Success Quick Reference Guide – <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/quick-reference-guide/working-with-employers>
- [Transition to Work: Program Activity Guide](#) - A program guide created for community rehabilitation program providers, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and teachers of students with visual impairments working to improve employment outcomes for teens and young adults who are blind or visually impaired. The lessons included in this guide can be utilized by service providers to implement three of the five required activities for their visually impaired clients: job exploration, work-based learning, and workplace readiness training. The activities are available as electronic braille files in the Unified English Braille Code (UEB)
- Paving the Way to Work: A Guide to Career-Focused Mentoring – <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/paving-the-way-to-work>
- SELN – Unpaid Work Experiences, Volunteering, and Internships: What's Allowed - https://ohioemploymentfirst.org/up_doc/SELN_Unpaid_Work_Volunteer_February_2017.pdf

Resources – (3)

- **Massachusetts** - [ThinkWork!](#)
- **Wisconsin** - [Let's Get To Work - Community Work Experiences](#)
- **National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability (NCWD) for Youth**
 - ✓ [Fostering Inclusive Volunteering and Service Learning](#)
 - ✓ [Use of Social Security Work Incentives to Promote Work-Based Learning in Youth Employment & Training Programs](#)
 - ✓ [Job Analysis: An Important Employment Tool](#)
 - ✓ [Everybody Learns, Everybody Works: Using UDL in Workforce Development Programs](#)
 - ✓ [Road to Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Entrepreneurship](#)
 - ✓ [Engaging Youth in Work Experiences: An Innovative Strategies Practice Brief](#)

Your Feedback is Encouraged

- Watch for an email from Zoom tomorrow and please complete the brief evaluation
- Contact ntact-collab@uncc.edu if further questions or follow-up from today.

Today's PowerPoint is posted at www.transitionta.org under Training or directly @ <https://transitionta.org/trainings/work-based-learning-experiences-practical-considerations/>

THANK YOU
for joining us!

Contact Us:

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