Empowering Families to Participate In and Facilitate Career Development

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✓ Minnesota’s Parent Training and Information Center
✓ Home to PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment
✓ Partner in Think College Coordinating Center
Promotes:

• Family involvement in transition
• Building professional capacity to effectively engage and support families
• High expectations

Provides:

• Information, resources and referral
• Direct assistance to families
• Technical Assistance and training
Welcome!
In today’s session we will:

- Identify the power of parents* as partners in youth career development
- Increase understanding of the factors in the families’ willingness and ability to participate
- Learn field-tested strategies to invite, engage and equip families
- Brainstorm ways to put promising strategies into practice in light of current realities
A Look at Employment

People with disabilities are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than people without disabilities.

Work experience in school, postsecondary education or training and involved families help youth succeed.
Family involvement is a greater predictor of successful outcomes for youth than income or social status.

Positive family involvement with youth leads to academic and employment success.

Transitionta.org   ncwd-youth.info/
The Power of High Expectations and the Family & Professional Partnership
The Power of High Expectations

The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and miss it but that is too low and we reach it.

~ Michelangelo

Without support, high expectations are but a hollow promise.

~ Vincent Tinto, Syracuse University
Benefits of Partnering with Families

• Families can help build soft skills
• Tap into their personal networks
• Provide transportation
• Other benefits?

NWCD Info Brief: Tapping Into the Power of Families
Factors in the family’s willingness and ability to actively participate

- “Revolving door” of service providers
- Parents on the team, but don’t have the playbook
- Conflicting goals
- Meeting times often don’t work with busy parent schedules
- Parents don’t always believe they have capacity to be a partner
- Fear of judgment and/or the belief that professionals are the “experts” or authority
Common Barriers to Family Involvement

- Parents overwhelmed: Transition isn’t always on radar
- Parents intimidated by complicated process
- Lack of understanding of complex systems; entitlement versus eligibility
- Mistrust; past history
- Language barriers
- Others?
Challenges We Face Together

- Time, Time, Time
- Requirements and expectations outpacing resources
- Expectations and goals outpacing community resources
- Others?
Field-tested strategies to invite, engage and equip families

• Connect families with successful adults with disabilities
• Connect families to other families and advocacy organizations
• Support families to reinforce soft skills & self-advocacy skills
• Facilitate family career conversations
• Involve related service providers in planning meetings

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

~ George Bernard Shaw
Promising strategies

- Co-train families and professionals together
- Use parents as parent-trainers
- Ask parents for to review your materials, their understanding of the process, etc., use the feedback
- Connect to PTIs and disability-specific advocacy organizations
- Welcome family participation: Specifically invite them with clear instructions on how they can be involved; provide pre-meeting information
Facilitate Family Career Conversations

Talk to Your Child About Employment: A Checklist for Parents

Parent Involvement Strategies for Youth Employment Success

1. Provide family orientation to your services
2. Provide up-front, clear and adequate information
3. Establish a clear chain of communication and a list with contact information
4. Create parent partnerships by building trusting relationships
5. Have a stated process for family involvement with defined roles and responsibilities, timeline and expectations
Engaging Families of Youth from Diverse Cultures in Planning for the Transition to Adulthood
• Invite and expect extended family
• Recognize the importance of community elders, spiritual leaders or healers
• Ask whether written information is desired in English or their primary language
• Be sure to ask if the family or youth wants an interpreter (wants, not needs)
• Check for understanding
• Focus on strengths and interests
• Recognize both traditional and untraditional skills
Take a Person-Centered View of “Independence”

Beware of the rugged individualism stereotype. None of us really live independently. Family interdependence is the norm.

~ Frederic Schroeder, NFB, Former RSA Commissioner
What is different for families of youth with disabilities?

- Ability, skill level and developmental stage of the student
- Adult-living destination and pathway options
- Complexity of service systems requiring family facilitation
What families want most...

• “Professionals who are competent, consistent and compassionate”
• To have their child seen as an individual in the context of the family – not as a “client” or “consumer”
• Be hopeful AND honest about their child’s abilities and potential
• Respect and value parent input
• “Menus and maps” for opportunities, services and supports
Foster Parent and Professional Collaboration

- Help families identify options and make informed choices
- Show flexibility and creativity in problem-solving
- Accept parents as equal partners
- Take a step back to see things from the broader perspective of the whole child and family
- “Hope comes from knowing what to do; when parents know the steps they can take, they feel more hopeful.”
Positive Parent Involvement Can Support Self-Determination

➢ Effective parent involvement practices support families in the ongoing development of the young adult's self-determination and independence.

➢ Encourage parents to “Let grow” rather than “Let go.”
Activity: Ask the Experts (You!)

What’s working?

What’s not?

What’s needed?

“Don’t just think it—ink it!”
Related PACER Resources

*Transition Planning Tips for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Youth with Disabilities:*

*My Action Plan:*

*Inspiring Possibilities: Voices of Experience video series*
Selected PACER Employment Resources

References and Resources

Employment statistics supplied by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy: www.dol.gov/odep

Family involvement studies include the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2: www.nlts2.org, and the 26th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues: The Family as a Critical Partner in the Achievement of a Successful Employment Outcome: http://www.iriforum.org/books.aspx

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