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What Are We Learning from Successful Adults with Disabilities?

Elisabeth Kutscher

Everyone wants to be successful! However, people may have different ideas about the meaning of success. Some people might be driven to have a good career, while others might feel success means having the money and opportunity to pursue their interests. For many people, the acceptance and appreciation of family, friends, and the community is important for leading a fulfilling life. Unfortunately, some groups of people, including adults with disabilities, may experience barriers impeding their success in various areas of their lives. Therefore, it is especially important to broaden our understanding of “success” as experienced by individuals with disabilities.

In our society, success is often defined through the lens of an individual's career accomplishments. Career success can be defined by objective measures, such as job title, salary, or promotions. Statistically, individuals with disabilities often do not experience the same level of objective career success as their non-disabled peers. For example, the 2012 unemployment rate for adults with disabilities was 20% compared to 8.2% for adults without disabilities (Livermore & Honeycutt, 2015). Adults with disabilities experienced lower average annual wages ($28,114 for people with disabilities compared to $46,266) and were more likely to be living below the federal poverty level (30.3% for people with disabilities compared to 12.0%).

Given the alarming unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities, much research focuses on the problems and barriers that contribute to these outcomes. This is an important focus as we work to improve equity and opportunity for all individuals. However, we also know that many individuals with disabilities experience success in many areas of their lives. In a recent HEATH Newsletter, Tuckwiller (2015) encouraged us to consider how the principles of positive psychology – which emphasize individuals’ positive characteristics and strengths – can inform our understanding of post-secondary transition outcomes. Similarly, the experiences of successful adults with disabilities can provide critical insights into factors that foster these positive outcomes.

The purpose of this newsletter article was to report on a brief review of literature that examined factors related to “success” among adults with disabilities. This review included research involving adults over the age of 21 with disabilities. This included individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders, physical, sensory, or learning disabilities. The questions utilized to identify articles were: (1) How is success defined for individuals with disabilities and who is
defining success? (2) What internal, social, or environmental factors are associated with successful outcomes of adults with disabilities?

Definitions of Success

This brief review of literature identified a number of definitions of “success” of individuals with disabilities. Employment was identified as one defining characteristic of success in all reviewed studies. In other words, individuals employed or those with high-status jobs were considered successful. Some studies utilized a multidimensional definition of success such as job satisfaction, independence, mental health, and/or community involvement (Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, & Herman, 2003; Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, & Herman, 1999; Reiff, Gerber, & Ginsberg, 1997). Still other studies examined how employment was related to factors such as job satisfaction or quality of life (Baldwin, Costley, & Warren, 2014; Lorenz & Heinitz, 2014; Madaus, Zhao, & Ruban, 2008; Renty & Roeyers, 2006).

While researchers focused on employment as an objective measure of success, it is important to learn more about how individuals with disabilities view success. Some studies did not explicitly define success; instead, the adults participating in the study viewed themselves as successful (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Noonan et al., 2004). However, only a few studies asked participants about what it means to be successful in life. These participants reported that success included having a sense of control over their lives. They felt responsible for their own success and emphasized the importance of not only feeling competent, but also being recognized for their achievements (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Noonan et al., 2004; Reiff et al., 1997).

Despite different definitions of success, studies suggested several factors contributed to the experience of success among adults with disabilities, including internal characteristics, behavioral characteristics, social factors, and environmental factors.

Internal Characteristics

Internal characteristics, described by high-achieving adults, referred to the habits of mind contributing to their success. These habits of mind included their mental perspectives regarding their capacity to deal with challenges, their ability accomplish tasks, or the impact of their disability.

Mindset. A person’s theory of intelligence, or mindset, can affect how that person deals with challenges. Individuals with a fixed mindset view intelligence as a stable characteristic, while individuals with a growth mindset believe that it is possible for people to increase their intelligence through effort and learning. Research has shown that individuals with growth mindsets are more likely to choose difficult tasks and less likely to give up in the face of a challenge (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Importantly, these mindsets are not static but can change.
and develop; it is possible for people to cultivate growth mindsets. In fact, interventions
designed to educate students about mindsets have been associated with improved academic
outcomes (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007).

Interviews and other measures suggest individuals with disabilities experiencing
success may display the common internal characteristic of a growth mindset. Adults with
learning disabilities strove to learn from setbacks so that they were better prepared when
similar situations arose in the future (Goldberg et al., 2003; Reiff et al., 1997). Similarly,
individuals with physical or sensory disabilities tried to improve their work performance by
actively seeking honest feedback from their colleagues and supervisors (Kulkarni &
Gopakumar, 2014).

**Self-efficacy.** A second internal characteristic displayed among individuals with
disabilities experiencing success was the characteristic of **self-efficacy**, or people’s belief in
their ability to effectively accomplish a task. Self-efficacy beliefs can affect a person’s
perseverance in the face of challenges (Bandura, 2012; Elliott & Dweck, 1988). Like a person’s
mindset, self-efficacy is not a stable trait; it can be increased in four ways: through mastery
experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, or by reducing emotional influences, such as
anxiety or depression (Bandura, 1977).

Several studies suggested adults with disabilities that experienced success had strong
self-efficacy beliefs. Adults with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities viewed themselves as
able to achieve anything they set out to achieve (Goldberg et al., 2003; Kulkarni & Gopakumar,
2014; Noonan et al., 2004; Reiff et al., 1997). Self-efficacy was related with the job satisfaction
of university graduates with learning disabilities (Madaus et al., 2008). Among adults with
autism, those with higher occupational self-efficacy (i.e., perceived competence regarding
one’s job) were more likely to be employed (Lorenz & Heinitz, 2014). While these studies
suggested self-efficacy may have played a role in the success of adults with disabilities, there is
a need for additional research.

**Reframing.** Research suggested adults with disabilities experiencing success displayed
growth mindsets and high levels of self-efficacy. However, studies also suggested that these
characteristics took time to develop. Through a process of **reframing**, individuals came to
understand the meaning of their disability from a new perspective (Rieff et al., 1997). The
authors identified four stages in the process of reframing, including recognizing the disability,
acceptance, understanding of strengths and weakness, and taking action to promote success.
Three studies reported on the childhood experiences of adults with disabilities, which
described participants’ sense of growth from childhood difficulties to adult success (Noonan et
al., 2004; Raskind et al., 1999; Reiff et al., 1997). Many came to view their disability as critical to
their identity and felt their experiences uniquely contributed to their success.
Behavioral Characteristics

In addition to common internal characteristics, research also suggested adults with disabilities’ successful outcomes were associated with several behavioral characteristics. While individuals’ internal characteristics referred to their habits of mind, **behavioral characteristics** reflected the actions these adults saw as contributing to their success, including persistence, goal setting, and advocacy.

**Persistence.** Research strongly suggested one important behavioral characteristic of adults with disabilities experiencing success was persistence, with over half of the reviewed studies emphasizing the extent to which successful individuals persevered despite overwhelming challenges. The majority of adults with physical or sensory disabilities across two studies described themselves as persistent or tenacious, providing descriptive examples of how they proactively overcame external barriers to success (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Noonan et al., 2004). Similarly, perseverance was found to be a critical component to the success of adults with learning disabilities (Goldberg et al., 2003; Reiff et al., 1997). Specifically, 93% of adults with learning disabilities experiencing success shared evidence of persistence and proactivity, while only 22% of adults not achieving successful outcomes displayed these characteristics (Raskind et al., 1999).

**Goal setting.** A second behavioral characteristic central to the success of adults with disabilities was setting attainable goals. Like persistence, researchers identified goal setting as a key component in the success of adults with learning disabilities (Goldberg et al., 2003; Raskind et al., 1999; Reiff et al., 1997). Individuals with learning disabilities established reasonable, explicit goals for themselves and had plans for attaining those goals. These individuals experiencing success also demonstrated flexibility, modifying their goals and plans as needed, based on feedback and context.

**Advocacy.** In addition to demonstrating persistence and goal setting, adults with disabilities achieving success displayed the behavioral characteristic of advocacy. Many successful individuals with physical or sensory disabilities described taking on an advocacy role (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Noonan et al., 2004). These individuals reported experiencing significant discrimination and ableism (i.e., prejudice against individuals with disabilities) in many aspects of their lives, including employment, and found themselves educating their coworkers and others about disabilities. Many individuals with physical or sensory disabilities networked with others to actively advocate for disability rights both within and outside of their workplaces.

Several studies suggested many adults with disabilities valued the opportunity to contribute to their community. Among employed adults with autism, 65% reported self-actualization, which in this study included “making a difference in the lives of others or in
society,” to be a positive factor of employment (Baldwin et al., 2014, p. 2445). Adults with learning disabilities experiencing success were active members of their community and found satisfaction in their contributions; some had taken on the role of mentoring other individuals with learning disabilities (Goldberg et al., 2003; Reiff et al., 1997). Similarly, adults with physical or sensory disabilities experiencing success strove to mentor and serve as role models for others (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Noonan et al., 2004).

Social Supports

In addition to important internal and behavioral characteristics, studies suggested external contexts influenced success. Studies indicated social supports were critical to successful outcomes among adults with a range of disabilities. Successful adults found a balance by accessing necessary social networks without becoming dependent on them.

Social networks. The importance of social networks to support success was well-documented in the literature. Families and friends provided significant support to individuals across disability categories, with families including both childhood families (e.g., parents and siblings) and adult families (e.g., spouses, partners, or children). Interestingly, perceived social supports available may be more important than the actual level of social support received by adults with disabilities. For example, one study found that perceived social support was strongly positively correlated with quality of life, but the actual amount of support individuals received was not associated with quality of life (Renty & Roeyers, 2006).

Independence. Literature on adults with learning disabilities experiencing success emphasized that while they were able to access the support of their social network, it was important to avoid dependence (Goldberg et al., 2003; Reiff et al., 1997). This is significant because many studies suggested that despite average intelligence and/or high levels of educational attainment, many individuals with disabilities struggled to support themselves, remaining dependent on financial support from family members. Among young adults with autism (mean age 28 years) 18.9% reported living independently or with a partner, 55.2% reported living with parents, and 25.9% reported living in supported living environments (Renty & Roeyers, 2006). Although independence was included in their definition of success, a study reported that 14.3% of interviewed adults experiencing success and 50% of adults who did not experience successful outcomes were still living with their parents at the time of the study (mean age 32 years) (Raskind et al., 1999).

Environmental Contexts

Finally, evidence from the reviewed studies suggested environmental contexts also influenced successful outcomes among individuals with disabilities. One environmental factor was the use of workplace supports. These supports included accommodations, training, or
formal support of a job coach. A second environmental factor was the individual’s ability to find a niche that amplified their unique strengths while minimizing challenges.

**Workplace support.** Several studies addressed the perceptions of individuals with disabilities toward workplace training or accommodations. One study found transition services and supports were critical to post-secondary employment among young adults with learning, emotional or physical disabilities, and additional training played a role in career advancement (Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011). Adults with physical or sensory disabilities experiencing success also reported career-related training supported the advancement of their careers and increased coworkers’ perceptions of competence (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014). Adults with learning disabilities reported a need for ongoing support, including job placement or services when transitioning to a new career (Goldberg et al., 2003).

In addition to training, two studies specifically addressed workplace accommodations. Madaus et al. (2008) found that approximately half (54%) of university graduates with learning disabilities reported their disability to their employer; of those, only 12% requested workplace accommodations. Similarly, only 28% of employed adults with autism reported receiving support or accommodations in their workplace (Baldwin et al., 2014).

**Niche.** While some studies reported on workplace accommodations to address the needs of individuals with disabilities, others emphasized the importance of finding an employment niche that amplified the unique strengths of individuals with disabilities. Interviews of adults with learning disabilities suggested that adults that experienced success were more adept at pursuing careers that allowed them to highlight strengths while minimizing disability-related challenges (Goldberg et al., 2003; Reiff et al., 1997).

Research involving adults with autism also suggested the importance of a good match between an individual’s needs and the environment. Renty and Roeyers (2006) found that the larger the gap between an adult’s met and unmet formal support needs, the lower the adult’s quality of life. This suggested a good fit between an individual’s needs and his or her environmental context may be associated with positive outcomes. The same study found that adults who were employed experienced a higher quality of life than those who were unemployed. Unfortunately, individuals with autism who are employed may not experience a good fit between their skill level and employment level. A study found that 54% of employed adults with autism were overeducated, and most of these individuals were working in low-skill positions (Baldwin et al., 2014). Lorenz and Heinitz (2014) emphasized the importance of matching an individual’s strengths with employment positions. The study found individuals with autism were more interested in employment that involved investigative or conventional skills. However, researchers also cautioned against stereotyping and assuming that all
individuals with autism are better suited or ill-suited to specific careers (Baldwin et al., 2014; Lorenz & Heinitz, 2014).

**Conclusions**

There is a need for more research regarding the experience of “success” for adults with disabilities. The studies reviewed here provided a foundation, but also raise many questions. For example, many transition activities focus on self-determination, which is defined as a student’s ability to take action to achieve his or her own goals (Wehmeyer, 2015). It is important to explore how the factors addressed in these articles, such as persistence and advocacy, promote self-determination. Most of the literature focused on individuals with learning disabilities. Future research should explore success factors of individuals with a range of disabilities. Finally, demographic information from these studies suggested that this research reflected the experience of white adults with disabilities. More research is needed to understand how individuals with disabilities from diverse racial or cultural backgrounds experience success.

This article reflects many common-sense factors relating to the success experienced by adults with disabilities. However, additional research and analysis could provide the field with important information about factors contributing to the success of adults with disabilities such as internal characteristics, behavioral characteristics, social supports, and environmental supports.
A Few Takeaways

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<th>What Research is Telling Us about Individuals with Disabilities Experiencing Success</th>
<th>What We Can Do</th>
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| **Mindsets:** They shared experiences that suggest they have a growth mindset. No one likes to fail, but successful individuals viewed challenges and failures as an opportunity to learn, not a reflection of their ability. | • Learn more about growth and fixed mindsets: [http://www.mindsetonline.com/index.html](http://www.mindsetonline.com/index.html)  
• When facing a challenge, remind yourself that everyone starts as a beginner and that you can improve at anything if you practice. |
| **Self-efficacy:** They showed high levels of self-efficacy. They believed they were able to achieve or effectively accomplish specific tasks. Self-efficacy can be increased in four ways: mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, or by reducing emotional influences, such as depression or anxiety. | Take steps to increase self-efficacy:  
• Break down a task or skill into small steps and take time to master each step.  
• Find other people who have succeeded at the task and look to them as a model.  
• Spend time with people who are encouraging and believe you can accomplish the task (but also help you realistically plan for challenges).  
• Seek help with mental health concerns, including depression or anxiety. |
| **Goal Setting:** They had realistic goals for themselves and had a plan for achieving those goals. However, they were also flexible and modified their goals or plans, when needed. | • Take some time to think about your future and what is important to you. The HEATH Center module “What Do I Want to Be When I Grow Up?” might help, if you are trying to figure this out: [https://heath.gwu.edu/what-do-i-want-be-when-i-grow](https://heath.gwu.edu/what-do-i-want-be-when-i-grow)  
• Think about the skills and knowledge you will need to achieve your goals. What steps will you take to gain those skills and knowledge? What is your “Plan B” if things don’t go as planned? The HEATH Center offers modules that might help with some of those skills: [https://heath.gwu.edu/node/134](https://heath.gwu.edu/node/134) |
| **Niche:** They found careers that emphasized their strengths and found ways to work around areas that were more challenging. | • Understand your own strengths and areas you’re working on.  
• If you are applying for a job, think about how that job will fit with your strengths. If the job will be challenging for you, what accommodations would help you be successful?  
• If you have a job, think about which parts of the job fit best with your strengths. Look for opportunities to continue to grow in these areas. |
### Social Support

**Social Support**: They valued the support of their family and friends. They didn’t always need help, but they knew their friends and families would be there for them.

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|---|---|
| • Everyone wants to be independent, but remember that it’s okay to ask for help. | • Sometimes it’s hard to stay in touch with your family and friends when life gets busy. Try to reach out and spend time together when things are going well. |
| • Look for friends who let you be yourself and will be there for you when you need it. | • Take time to appreciate and celebrate your hard work and successes with friends and family. |

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References


**About the Author**

Elisabeth Kutscher is a second year special education doctoral student at George Washington University and a graduate assistant with the Center for Applied Developmental Science and Neuroeducation. Before moving to DC, she taught as a special education teacher at a school in Harlem. She later became an assistant principal at a public school for students with disabilities in Brooklyn, working with middle school and high school students. An expanded version of this article received the Sylvia Marotta-Walters Emerging Scholar Award for Advanced Research Proposal Paper at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development’s Educational Symposium for Research and Innovation.
New Foster Care Transition Toolkit Offers Tips for Helping Foster Youth Succeed as Adults
*Source: U.S. Department of Education*

The U.S. Department of Education released a new toolkit to inspire and support current and former foster youth pursuing college and career opportunities. The Foster Care Transition Toolkit includes tips and resources intended to help foster youth access and navigate social, emotional, educational and skills barriers as they transition into adulthood.

Work Early, Work Often Video Campaign
*Source: Youth Transitions Collaborative*

The Youth Transitions Collaborative is a powerful community of more than 45 organizations that share a common mission: to empower young people with disabilities as they enter adulthood and the world of work. Bringing together the collective resources of regional and national organizations, the Collaborative focuses on transitions related services, research, best practices and projects to help young people with disabilities build paths to independence. The latest resource from the Collaborative is “Work Early, Work Often,” a video-based campaign that highlights the importance of work and work-based experiences in an individual’s transition to adulthood, particularly for young adults with disabilities. Three storylines, each focusing on a different subject and narrative, reflect perspectives from key audiences that are part of the transition journey. To watch the videos individually or as a series, visit www.thenytc.org or www.youtube.com/thenytc.

Summer Camp and Summer Job Database
*Source: Pacer’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment*

CampChannel.com is an excellent resource to find a summer camp that is a good fit for youth with disabilities and special healthcare needs. It also has a national job board for summer camp jobs. Youth and families can search by state (some Canadian provinces), program emphasis (special needs, music, foreign language, sports, arts, etc.), and camp type (day, residential, travel). Many positions are currently available. To learn more, visit: http://www.campchannel.com/

Research to Practice in the NIDILRR Community
*Source: Transitions RTC, University of Massachusetts*

The Transitions RTC’s Translating Evidence to Support Transitions (TEST) project is one of three project funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) to translate the findings and products of disability and rehabilitation research and development into practice!

The TEST project's goal is to increase the use and adoption of research-based best practices in transition planning services for high school students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders receiving special education services.
In this webcast, Marsha Langer Ellison, the Deputy Director of the Transitions RTC, describes the knowledge translation strategies the TEST Project plans to employ to increase the use of research previously funded by NIDILRR. Researchers from the other two funded projects - Mark Harniss and Lynn Worobey - describe the knowledge translation strategies they plan to employ in their respective studies as well. The Knowledge Translation for Employment Research (KTER) Center works with each of these three projects to share information about their knowledge translation plans. To view the webcast or download the webcast slides please visit the KTER Center website at the following link: http://www.kter.org/ktactivities/webcasts/166.

**NCWD/Youth Hosts Congressional Briefing on ILPs**  
*Source: Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)*

On February 23, 2016, two NCWD/Youth partners, the Institute for Educational Leadership and Boston University, hosted a congressional briefing at the Hart Senate Office Building. This briefing discussed how states, school districts, and schools use Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) to support transition from school to college and careers. School and district leaders and school counselors from Colorado and Wisconsin discussed ILP strategies, related activities, and challenges implementing ILPs. They also emphasized how ILPs can augment, complement, and further the transition goals and priorities of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students with disabilities. School counselors highlighted the impact of ILPs on youth and families and the experiences and challenges faced with whole-school ILP implementation. State leaders shared examples of recommended resources and highlighted their implementation of innovations to support district efforts.

**ED Releases NPRM to Improve Equity in IDEA**  
*Source: Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)*

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to address equity for students with disabilities of color under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The press release for this NPRM indicated that this proposed rule would require states to implement a standard approach to compare racial and ethnic groups for determining disproportionality. The proposed rule outlined thresholds for determining when disparities for students with disabilities among ethnic/racial groups become significant. These thresholds would address disparities across educational placement, disciplinary practices, and identification of disabilities. Once identified as having a significant disproportionality, a school district would set aside 15 percent of IDEA Part B funds for comprehensive, coordinated early intervening services. Further, the policies, practices, and procedures of the district would receive review and, if necessary, be revised to ensure compliance with IDEA.
SSA Publishes Advanced NPRM on Ticket to Work Program
Source: Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)

On February 10, 2016, the Social Security Administration published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to solicit public input on "whether and how we might revise the current Ticket to Work program rules." SSA noted, "We want to explore improving our Ticket to Work program as part of our ongoing effort to help our beneficiaries find and maintain employment that leads to increased independence and enhanced productivity. If we propose specific revisions to our regulations, we will publish a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) in the Federal Register." SSA is requesting comments by April 11, 2016.

EEOC Proposes Section 501 Regulations for the Federal Government's Affirmative Action Obligation for Employment of People with Disabilities
Source: Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)

On February 23, 2016, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act. This NPRM addresses affirmative action obligations of federal agencies in employment for people with disabilities. The proposed rule reaffirms the federal government's commitment to being a model employer of people with disabilities. It would require federal agencies to adopt the goal of achieving a 12% representation rate for individuals with disabilities, and a 2% representation rate for individuals with targeted/severe disabilities. Targeted disabilities are those on which the government has, for several decades, placed a special emphasis in hiring because of the greatest barriers to employment. Members of the public have until April 25, 2016 to submit comments. EEOC has also published a question-and-answer document on the NPRM and a document providing background information and a summary of the NPRM.

Schools and Businesses Celebrate National Career and Technical Education Month
Source: Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)

During February, secondary schools and businesses in the U.S. celebrated the ninth anniversary of national Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month. The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) established CTE Month in 2007 to recognize the achievements of secondary students enrolled in CTE programs. This year, CTE Month promoted the theme of "Opportunities for Career Success" to highlight how CTE has advanced career opportunities and economic success for youth. CTE has particularly opened new options for students with disabilities. Many school districts have enrolled a larger percentage of students with disabilities in regional and vocational high schools than general high schools.
Opportunities

**Jobs and Internships**

Available Disability Rights Clinical Internships (Fall 2016): DREDF offers field placement internships for law students. Academic term internships generally involve a commitment of 8 to 16 hours per week. Internships are unpaid. To learn more, visit: [http://bit.ly/1NDZ7ZL](http://bit.ly/1NDZ7ZL).

AYPF Fall 2016 Internship Opportunity: Internships at AYPF are substantive, and interns are integral members of the team. Interns engage in a variety of activities, including researching and analyzing data, writing fact sheets and summaries, and planning and helping to run forums and briefings on Capitol Hill. This application process is rolling. Please include a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and two professional references. Please feel free to also include a professional portfolio with your application. When applying, please contact gknowles@aypf.org.

**Webinars, Conferences, Forums**

8th Annual 2016 Olmstead Community Integration Conference: Join the DC Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and the DC Office of Disability Rights (ODR) for their 8th Annual Olmstead Community Integration Conference. The conference takes place on Thursday, June 9, 2016, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Kellogg Conference Center at Gallaudet University. To register, go [here](http://bit.ly/1NDZ7ZL).

Register for 11th Annual National PACER Symposium on Children’s Mental Health & Learning Disabilities: Parents, teachers and other education professionals can now register for the 11th Annual PACER National Symposium About Children & Young Adults with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities. It is on Tuesday, Aug. 9, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Minneapolis Convention Center. [Register today!](http://bit.ly/1NDZ7ZL)

RRTC Graduate Certificate Program in Transitioning Youth: Our Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Vocational Rehabilitation and Transitioning Youth is recruiting for the next cohort for their on-line 12-credit Academic Certificate Program leading to a Graduate Professional Studies Certificate in Career Planning & Placement for Youth in Transition through the University of Maryland. The Certificate Program is partially funded by the RRTC grant, with funds from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living & Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). The application deadline is July 1, 2016 for Fall 2016. To learn more, click [here](http://bit.ly/1NDZ7ZL).

Learning Disabilities Association of America: The Learning Disabilities Association of America will hold their 2017 conference in Baltimore, Maryland, **February 16-19, 2017**. For more information, visit: [http://ldaamerica.org/events/annual-conference/](http://ldaamerica.org/events/annual-conference/).
NCWD/Youth & Getting Hired Hold Disability Disclosure Webinar

Source: Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)

On March 24, 2016, NCWD/Youth presented a webinar on disability disclosure in partnership with GettingHired based on NCWD/Youth's The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities. The webinar described the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure in the workplace, the rights of youth with disabilities, and how youth can confidently discuss their disabilities and needed accommodations.

NCWD/Youth Hosts Webinar with CAST on Improving Postsecondary Outcomes with Universal Design for Learning

Source: Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)

On February 17, 2016, NCWD/Youth and CAST hosted a webinar for postsecondary institutions on how to use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to improve retention and graduation rates. The webinar provided an orientation to UDL and explained how postsecondary education professionals use evidence-based UDL practices to facilitate engaged learning for all students. This webinar is part of a series for postsecondary education faculty and staff hosted by NCWD/Youth. The full recording and transcript are available online.

Call for Proposals - 2016 TASH Conference: The Call for Proposals for the 2016 TASH Conference is open now through Tuesday, June 7, 2016. TASH's Call for Proposals (CFP) process is highly competitive. To increase the chance of your proposal being accepted, please visit the form and review all instructions prior to completing and submitting the CFP form.

GettingHired's Events: GettingHired.com is an employment resource specifically for individuals and veterans with disabilities. Facing an unemployment rate that is almost twice the national average, GettingHired seeks to improve employment opportunities for those individuals by connecting them to inclusive employers who are actively looking to diversify their workforce. Below is a listing of their past and upcoming events.

The Journey of a JobSeeker with a Disability Part 1: Job Hunting & the Recruitment Process

In part 1/3, this webinar took a look at the first phase of the search for employment: What exactly are recruiters and hiring managers looking for in attractive candidates? What are the widespread frustrations most job seekers face through the application process? How long is your job search supposed to take? How can you find a job that's really right for you? Watch the recorded webinar here: http://bit.ly/1YVXhUW.
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| **Kick Start Your Career: Inclusive Internships- BroadFutures**  
BroadFutures President, CEO & Co-Founder, Carolyn Jeppsen, discusses how internships and other work-based learning is crucial to today’s graduates. Find out what an internship can do for your career prospects, what employers look for when taking on an intern, what steps you can take to create a successful experience and what internship opportunities you could get involved in. Watch the recorded webinar here: [http://bit.ly/1Uk8YWb](http://bit.ly/1Uk8YWb) |
| **The Journey of a Job Seeker with a Disability Part 2: Managing the Application Process, Disclosing Your Disability & Requesting Accommodation**  
In part 2/3, this webinar discusses the barriers of the application & testing process, requesting accommodation and what you should know about disclosing your disability to employers. Are inaccessible job applications a barrier to you applying? How can you request accommodation to help you through applying, interviewing & once you are hired? When should you disclose your disability to an employer- if at all? You will also find out what government measures can help you get a job. Watch the recorded webinar here: [http://bit.ly/1XXnrGC](http://bit.ly/1XXnrGC) |
| **Grow Your Career with a Mentorship- USBLN**  
Career Link Mentoring Program Manager, Mylene Padolina of the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) shares insights into how invaluable mentorships can be in both personal and professional development. Find out how to find the right mentor for you, what makes a successful mentorship and how you can get involved in the USBLN mentorship program. Watch the recorded webinar here: [http://bit.ly/1SwNynu](http://bit.ly/1SwNynu) |
| **The Journey of a Job Seeker with a Disability- Part 3**  
This is part 3/3 of this webinar series for job seekers, which will walk through how GettingHired can help connect you to employers seeking candidates with disabilities. We'll also look at which companies are actively building an inclusive and diverse workforce and company culture and how they are doing this. Watch the recorded webinar here: [http://bit.ly/1QDGqAc](http://bit.ly/1QDGqAc) |
| **Making Decisions about Disability Disclosure**  
The topic of disclosure is a personal decision for each individual with a disability. Recent changes in the law for federal contractors, has created more incentive for disclosing your disability to employers. In this webinar, Jennifer Thomas from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) discuss the issues around disclosure: the advantages vs disadvantages, your rights, steps you can take to feel more confident in discussing your disability and any accommodations you require in employment, education and social settings. This will be particularly relevant to college students/recent graduates. Watch the recorded webinar here: [http://bit.ly/1NE5sV6](http://bit.ly/1NE5sV6) |
| **How to Succeed at Online Career Fairs**  
Online career fairs are the most convenient way to get yourself in front of multiple employers, and without even leaving your home! But if you're not sure what to expect and don't prepare beforehand, it can be a waste of your time and the employers. Join our preparation webinar to get top tips for getting the most from the event. Find out how to prepare beforehand, make the right impression, ensure you use your time most effectively |
with employers and come away with genuine job prospects. Watch the recorded webinar here: http://bit.ly/1STSx3S

Returning to Work While Maintaining Disability Benefits
Returning to work after taking disability leave can be a daunting prospect for many people who have found themselves unemployed for periods of time. One of the most common concerns if you're receiving SSI or SSDI, is that you could lose your benefits after returning to work. If your employment doesn't last for whatever reason, you'll be left without an income, at least for a period of time. David Mitchell, Project Director of Maryland Work Incentives Network, explains the multiple work incentives designed to prevent this, by allowing you to continue receiving your benefits while re-entering the working world. This will be useful for beneficiaries nationwide. Watch the recorded webinar here: http://bit.ly/1rlVgp

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Rehabmart.com Scholarship Fund For Students With Disabilities, Health Science Students, or Special Needs Education Students: Rehabmart is owned and operated by occupational and physical therapists – and would like to show their gratitude to the health care profession by offering scholarships to students with disabilities, health science students, or anyone majoring in special needs education. They have created a $25,000 scholarship fund for: 1) Students with a Disability (of any major); 2) Health Sciences Students (any medical major); 3) Special Needs Education. For more information, visit: http://www.rehabmart.com/scholarship/.
HEATH Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center (NYTC)

Collaborative Announcements

Ivymount School, Inc

Youth Transition Collaborative Partner Spotlight for May and June 2016

Ivymount School and Programs provides school- and community-based services for children and young adults with special needs from throughout the Washington metropolitan area. The school program serves more than 200 students, ages 4-21, with speech and language impairments, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, health impairments, and autism spectrum disorders. The classrooms are structured to serve students to serve students with a range of academic and cognitive abilities, including, in some cases, those who have the potential to obtain a high school diploma. Learn more about Ivymount School at this link: http://bit.ly/1YgLSiw

The HEATH Resource Center, the official resource website of the National Youth Transitions Center, would like to highlight your organization on their homepage for July and August! This is a national website focusing on issues related to transitioning youth with disabilities. HEATH currently receives over 13,000 visitors a quarter to their website. It is a great opportunity to expose your organization as well as highlight your resources and upcoming events. Please email Jessica Queener, jqueener@cscn.org.

Information Requested for the HEATH Resource Center Directory

The HEATH Resource Center is updating its directory to ensure we have current information that can serve as a resource for parents, students, and practitioners. If you would like to be part of the directory, please provide your information at this link. We appreciate your help in this endeavor!
Follow the National Youth Transitions Center Facebook and Twitter Page!

The National Youth Transitions Center officially has a Facebook page that can be found this link. If you or your organization has a Facebook account, please “Like” the NYTC page. The NYTC also has a Twitter account that be found here. Please check out their information and resources for youth and veterans with disabilities and “Like” and “Follow” their Facebook and Twitter pages.

Follow the HEATH Resource Center at the Facebook and Twitter Page!

The HEATH Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center has a Facebook page that can be found here. We also have a Twitter account that can be found here. Please check out both of our social media sites for the latest updates, resources, and scholarship information for students with disabilities and “Like” our Facebook page and “Follow” us on Twitter!
NCWD/Youth Blog

Frances Vhay, Program Associate at the Institute for Educational Leadership’s Center for Workforce Development, authored a blog on "Health Care Transition: What Do Youth Need to Know?" focused on youth planning and managing their health and wellness as they transition into their careers. The blog highlights a resource recently published by the Youth Transitions Collaborative, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau’s Center for Health Care Transition Improvement (Got Transition), and the Office of Disability Employment Policy, with assistance from NCWD/Youth, The Transition QuickGuide: Take Charge of Planning and Managing Your Own Health and Career Goals.

PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment

From PACER - The road to adulthood for youth with disabilities is filled with opportunity, and parents play a key role. PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment is ready with the information families want, presented in a way that families can use.

PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment provides relevant information and resources to parents, youth, and professionals through a variety of services:

- A new, cutting-edge website that inspires, educates, and engages families around transition.
- Technical assistance and training to professionals on best practices for engaging families, including those who are underserved.
- In-person and online workshops for parents on youth on topics such as assistive technology, postsecondary supports, and finding work in the community.

To learn more about this website, please visit: http://www.pacer.org/transition/

Disability.gov Offers Information Guides on Disability Benefits, Programs, and Services

Disability.gov has developed a series of 14 guides about topics such as disability benefits, housing assistance, job training programs, and financial help for families with low incomes.

Other guides cover services that promote independence for people with disabilities such as home health care, programs for caregivers, assistive technology, and more. Each guide begins with a series of “quick links” that answer many frequently asked questions. Disability.gov’s Guides to Information & Resources also connect you to information about local organizations that offer programs and services that promote the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in their communities. To learn more, visit Disability.gov.
Acknowledgements and Submissions

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Intersection: Navigating the Road to Work, the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)

Submissions

We welcome submissions from transition-related organizations and entities to post resources and information in our quarterly newsletter. Please email us at askheath@gwu.edu to include your submission in our next newsletter.