Exploring an Innovative Employment Curriculum for Transition Age Youth and Families

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Today’s Facilitators

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Objectives

- Learn the story behind the training “A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment.”
- Learn six important topics to understand when approaching youth transition to adulthood.
- Learn about resources and how to access this training.
- Get connected to future opportunities to voice your ideas on training and information that can support youth transitioning to adulthood.
Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

- COEF sits under JFK Partners, the State’s University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), a program of the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

- COEF’s work supports Employment First initiatives set forth by the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP) and Colorado providers.

- Increase training and certification capacity and support individuals with disabilities and their families to understand that work IS possible.

- COEF was developed to be “Colorado’s premier training and technical assistance center for Employment First initiatives and evidenced-based practice.”
Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

Our Vision
A culture of inclusive, meaningful, and competitive employment for all people.

Our Mission
Leading Colorado toward equitable employment for all people with disabilities through collaboration, systems innovation, and training excellence.

Collaboration
Promoting work as part of a financially secure, healthy, and fulfilled life.

Systems Innovation
Convening to improve policies, remove barriers, bust myths, and promote technology.

Training Excellence
Elevating evidence-based strategies through training and learning communities.
Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

- COEF is a cross-disability focused organization.
- We are creating a common expectation & confidence about work and that employment leads to a financially secure, healthy and fulfilled life for all people with disabilities and their families.
- We are convening decision makers to improve policies to promote Employment First initiatives.
- Through education and awareness, we are elevating the delivery of effective employment services throughout the state with evidence-based and evidenced-informed training and ongoing learning communities.
Youth Perspective on Employment

Employment is for Everyone

A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment
Purpose/Background of the Training

A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment was funded by the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council.

The purpose of this training is to provide a statewide training curriculum to educate youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their parents and/or guardians about Employment First, about the possibilities, processes, potential services, systems navigation, and strategies for securing work.
What was our Process?

- Determined 6 topics that promote employment conversations in transition.
- Formed a curriculum development team that included key input from a paid Youth Lead and Family Member Lead as well as subject matter experts in each topic area.
- Engaged in listening sessions with Youth and Families for discover what was important to them in each topic area.
- Developed a two-track training, one track for Youth and one track for Families/Caregivers.
- Included an activity for each topic area for users to apply information learned.
- Offer the training on demand for new and past user access.
Six Important Topics for Youth Transitioning to Adulthood

Module 1: What is Employment First?
Module 2: Development of Employment Skills
Module 3: How Employment fits into the Education Process
Module 4: How Managing your Health Impacts Employment
Module 5: Services and Agencies for Obtaining Employment
Module 6: Benefits Counseling
Module 1: What is Employment First?

○ Philosophy- what does Employment First mean?
  ○ Why is it important for youth? Why does it matter to me?
  ○ How should this impact my decision making or how I advocate for services?
  ○ Types of employment (competitive integrated employment, supported employment, customized employment, self-employment)

○ The Importance of High Expectations for Employment
  ○ Early conversations that employment is possible

○ Developing a Vision for Life After High School
  ○ Person-Centered Planning
What is Employment First?

- A belief & **value** that all individuals regardless of level of disability are capable of full inclusion and working in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).
- It is the **first and preferred outcome**, regardless of level of disability in businesses found in the community, with regular compensation, equal advancement and equal interaction with non-disabled co-workers.
- It is critical to **create expectations** that all people can work if they want!
- Systems Change & **Culture Shift** to alleviate fears associated with working and educating employers on how to support a more diverse workforce!
Module 1 Resources

Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)
- [https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/](https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/)

Colorado Association of People Supporting Employment First (COAPSE)
- [https://apse.org/chapter/colorado/](https://apse.org/chapter/colorado/)

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
- [https://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/employment/](https://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/employment/)
Module 2: Development of Employment Skills

- Self-determination and Self-advocacy
- Importance of knowing oneself
  - Knowing one’s strengths, interests, and abilities.
  - Talking with employers, interviewing, applications, and resumes.
- Pre-employment transition services
  - Importance of work based learning and paid employment while in high school.
  - How technology can help one get a job and help while on the job.
Module 2 Resources

My Colorado Journey
- [https://www.mycoloradojourney.com/](https://www.mycoloradojourney.com/)

Soft Skills – Synopsis, Video
- [https://youtu.be/OwPArMTI9i8](https://youtu.be/OwPArMTI9i8)

Transition Discoveries, What is Preparing for Employment, Video
- [https://youtu.be/yur7oMI0Jjk](https://youtu.be/yur7oMI0Jjk)
Module 3: How employment fits into the education process?

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  - Secondary transition services.
    - Individualized Education Program (IEP) process/504.
      - Setting appropriate and measurable IEP goals.
    - Transition planning process.
  - What is transition assessment?
    - Helpful assessments for employment related needs.
  - Employment as a goal (employment/post-secondary training options).

- Agency Connections
  - Colorado’s Sequencing of Services Initiative.
  - Coordinated student led planning.
Module 3 Resources

National Parent Center on Transition and Employment

Colorado Sequencing of Services
- [http://www.cde.state.co.us/sequencingofservices](http://www.cde.state.co.us/sequencingofservices)

Transition Discoveries: What is Transition Planning Video
- [https://youtu.be/XcIT29_xOd0](https://youtu.be/XcIT29_xOd0)
Module 4: How managing your health impacts employment

- Developing health goals – why this is important for future planning and what is the connection between health and employment

- Signs of a healthy workplace and signs of a healthy you
  - People you can talk too, supportive coworkers
  - Working within abilities
  - Strategies that support, exercise, diet, sleep, mental health, health maintenance

- Addressing potential challenges at work related to health
Module 4 Resources

Budget Meal Prep:

Home Workout:
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rl_6l992GrA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rl_6l992GrA)

Healthy Snacks:
- [https://www.easybudgetmeals.com/25-cheap-healthy-snacks/](https://www.easybudgetmeals.com/25-cheap-healthy-snacks/)
Module 5: Services and Agencies for obtaining employment?

- How do these services and agencies support employment
- Specific connections to resources that support employment (i.e. Youth Leadership Forum)
  - Centers for Independent Living (CIL)
  - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
  - Guidance Counselors
  - Community Center Boards (aka: Case Management Agencies)
  - Workforce Centers

- Importance of a support system once employed
  - Charting possible supports to maximize success
Module 5 Resources

Youth Leadership Forum
- https://coloradosilc.org/colorado-youth-leadership-forum/

Colorado Workforce Centers
- https://cdle.colorado.gov/wfc

Charting the LifeCourse Integrating Supports Star
Module 6: Benefits Counseling

- How will employment impact social security benefits?
  - Basics of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

- What is Benefits Counseling and how can a benefits counselor support you to go to work and earn more money?

- Specific guidance about how Benefits Counseling services can be accessed in Colorado

- Highlight on Colorado Disability Benefits 101 website
  - https://co.db101.org/
Module 6 Resources

Social Security Blue Book (the medical definitions to be determined eligible for Social Security administered disability Benefits)
- https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm

A Benefits Counseling Guide
- https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/benefits-counseling/

Social Security Red Book (discusses work incentive programs available for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries)
- https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/
Youth reflection after completing the curriculum
Youth Reflection

Lilly Roberts

A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment
What I Liked

- Descriptions and explanations were easy to understand
- Liked the visuals and videos in the presentation
- Liked the teachers
- You could do from the comfort of your home and without sensory issue concerns
- Didn’t worry about transportation
- Able to ask questions
What I Learned

- I am capable of more than what people believe
- Even with a disability I will and should get paid equally as others doing the same job
- Confidence & Courage matters: don’t allow others to tell you that you can’t or bring you down
- Think about what you want to do in your life then look for it
What’s Next For Me

- PEP Conference (parents encouraging parents) Self-Advocacy and Leadership skills, networking, social time
- Short-term Attending TACT exploring carpentry, electrical, and welding
- Youth Leadership One Week at Colorado State University (through Atlantis Community)
- Apply for Leadership University Special Olympics
- Part-time job
- Volunteering
- Start my own business: Customized Essential Oils Hand Sanitizer
The Importance of High Expectations
High Expectations

- The belief and value that everyone has the right to work regardless of level or significance of disability.
- Expectations can be set by anyone including family, friends, teachers, and service providers; and their expectations can positively or negatively influence a person’s vision for themselves.

Have you ever experienced a situation where someone said something about you, and it has stuck with you forever?
High Expectations

With supports in place, we can promote High Expectations that include:

• Participating in household chores and responsibilities
• Contributing to team projects that include taking specific roles and leadership opportunities
• Becoming a volunteer
• Sharing often about employment dreams and interests
• Encouraging early employment experiences such as job shadowing, informational interviews, internships, etc.
Self-Determination, Confidence, & Independence

Having a job can help develop:

**Self-Determination:**
- Learning about themselves for what they like to do or not
- Making decisions that will better their life

**Confidence:**
- Learning how to advocate for what they want... more hours, a different shift, or requesting a day off or planning a vacation

**Independence:**
- Increasing their skills to do things on their own and with less support
Parent Perspective on Employment

Employment is for Everyone
A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment

Interested? Get Signed Up

Visit: https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/youth-and-families/

Select to Register for:
- YOUTH Training or
- FAMILY Training
- (or Both)

Watch your email for Next Steps
Voice Your Ideas and Input on Youth Transition Topics

Topics of today and topics for tomorrow!

- Share Stories
- What resources and support would be helpful
- Stay up to date on Employment First in Colorado
- Learn what COEF is currently working on
Connect with COEF

Visit our website and sign up for COEF communications!
https://employmentfirstcolorado.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/COETFtalk

Instagram: @coeftalk

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/colorado-office-of-employment-first/

Newsletter & Communications: www.employmentfirstcolorado.org/contact/

Email Us: info@employmentfirstcolorado.org
Questions
Thank you!