



## Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

# Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities: Building State and Local Capacity to Link and Align Resources

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presented by:

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**MS. MACK:** I want to welcome everyone to the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) December teleconference call, *Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities: Building State and Local Capacity to Link and Align Resources*.

In September 2003 NCSET sponsored a National Leadership Summit for state teams. One of the critical issues that was identified by these state teams was the issue of aligning resources, or interagency collaboration. How do you link various systems together to help young people with disabilities to successfully transition to post-secondary education, employment, and community living? There are a lot of different efforts and different ways to approach what is now being called “resource mapping”. The Academy for Educational Development has developed a program that trains youth to do a resource map of services in their community. The Search Institute is working with a number of schools and communities throughout the country to help identify and link the resources needed to insure that youth and communities have access to assets that make communities healthy and youth develop into successful adults. At NCSET we have been doing quite a bit of work in this area, as has the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, to insure successful transition for youth with disabilities. Today is the first of a number of conversations that NCSET will offer to help you learn more about resource mapping efforts and how you can link to them.

Our first speaker today is Rhonda Basha from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in the U.S. Department of Labor. Rhoda is going to talk to you about recently funded programs and policy directions that ODEP is taking to promote linking resources.

Our second speaker will be Joan Wills, who is Director of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y) at the Institute on Educational Leadership. Joan is going to talk about NCWD/Y’s technical assistance efforts with ODEP grantees. Finally, Kelli Crane from TransCen is going to talk about what NCSET has been doing to promote resource mapping and interagency collaboration.

**MS. BASHA:** I’m the head of the Youth Policy Team at ODEP. Although I have been in this position a very short while, I have been working under Richard Horne, who previously was the head for several years of both the Office of Disability and Employment Policy and the former Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities. ODEP was created in 2001 to bring a heightened and permanent focus to the goal of increasing employment of persons with disability. We knew that despite numerous mandates that date back over three decades, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities continues to hover around 70 percent. Now at the same time we know that employers with jobs often don’t know how to find and hire qualified workers with disabilities. And our job is kind of to put them together with each other, to make sure that the people have the skills that they need so that they can be qualified workers in the work force in the 21st century. We are the only agency in the Federal Government that deals solely with disability employment policy, and is headed by an assistant secretary.

We seek to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities through policies and technical assistance, which focus on both the supply and demand sides of the labor market. We try to expand access to

training, education, employment supports, assisted technology, integrated employment, entrepreneurial development, small business opportunities, on the supply side. And we build partnerships with employers to increase their awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and to make sure that the workers have the skills that are our employers need on the demand side of the equation.

We are a policy office. We don't regulate. We don't adjudicate. We don't investigate. We fund pilot projects and research and technical assistance efforts which focus specifically on establishing partnerships with employers and assessing and meeting their business needs, making the government a model employer and assuring that qualified individuals with disabilities have the skills they need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace and increasing the capacity of the work force development system to increase positive employment outcomes for both youth and adults with disabilities. We are engaged in a number of activities right now, which focus on increasing successful employment and postsecondary opportunities for youth with disabilities.

Our work in this area is in close partnership with National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth who have done some research over the past two years or so to determine what it is that all young people need to be able to transition successfully. Based on their reviews in various areas including education, vocational rehabilitations, and workforce development, we've determined that all young people need to have access to certain things. They need to have access to high quality standards-based education regardless of the setting, information about career options, and exposure to the world of work and opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills, strong connections to caring adults, access to safe places to interact with their peers, and support services which allow them to become independent adults.

Based on these operating principles, we are working through each of our youth related projects to ensure that certain design features that are important for youth with disabilities to transition successfully are incorporated into their work. These design features are preparatory experiences, connecting activities, work-based experiences, and leadership development.

As we look across the government, we know that we are too often the problem. We know that there are all these systems out there – workforce development, education, health, housing, technology, and transportation systems that need to work together if we are going to be able to effectively serve our young people with disabilities. We know that there is a lot that needs to be coordinated.

One of the ways that we are looking at coordinating these efforts is through the use of intermediary organizations. We have this year awarded eight what we call Innovative State Alignment Grants. These are five-year grants of approximately \$500,000 each to state workforce investment floors or the functional equivalent entities, to allow states to conduct resource mapping so that they can look at their youth service deliveries and structure in light of what we said were the evidence-based transition operating principles and to develop a plan to improve the transition outcomes through the use of local intermediaries. And to figure out what is the best way, conducting local pilot demonstrations to determine how these partnerships can – how intermediaries can best be used to develop the necessary partnerships at the local level.

We also are incorporating the idea of the design features in our High School/High Tech Implementation and Development grants. We awarded seven of these this year. They are approximately \$250,000 each. Two of them are what we call our development grants. They are one-year grants that are to help build the capacity of these state level organizations to be able to ultimately develop High School/High Tech programs statewide. And the implementation grants are five-year grants, which basically are geared toward building the necessary infrastructure that you need to have statewide High School/High Tech programs and to ensure their sustainability once the grant funding ceases.

Finally, this year, we are funding close to \$900,000 in grants that are being used to explore how intermediaries can help build the capacity of community faith-based organizations to better serve the mentoring needs of young people with disabilities.

We also are one of the national sponsors of National Disability Mentoring Day, which we co-sponsor with the American Association of People with Disabilities. Nationally this day takes place each year on the third Wednesday in October. Next year (2004) it will be on October 20th. We urge you all to get involved with that.

In addition, we fund two programs, which provide important information that ultimately feeds into the policy development process. We fund the Job Accommodation Network which many of you maybe familiar with, which works to provide technical assistance to employers and employees on job accommodations. In addition, we also fund something that we call the Employer Assistance Referral Network, which is a network which connects employers with the job placement professionals who have identified qualified candidates with disabilities. Ultimately, these two programs are going to be used much more on a research basis for us to get an idea of

the efficacy of the services that we are providing, and to determine what employers feel needs to be looked at next to adequately meet their demand needs.

We also fund the WorkForce Recruitment Program, which is a summer internship program for college students with disabilities. This past year there were 360 students that were placed in various Federal agencies. The plans for this program are to expand it on a private sector basis to allow more internships. There is also a new internship program that is starting with the Washington Intern Center.

And we fund and manage the DisabilityInfo.gov Web site, which is a comprehensive cross-agency initiative that was started as a result of an executive memorandum which President Bush signed in August of 2002 giving us 60 days to create this massive Web site.

I also wanted to let you know about a couple of other things that are going on in the Department of Labor that you might be interested in. There is a new Web site that has just been developed called Career Voyages, [www.careervoyages.gov](http://www.careervoyages.gov). This is a Web site that provides detailed information about the fastest growth industries and occupations in a format that is very useable for young people, and the education that is required to prepare for these types of jobs, job openings in your particular area, as well as licensing requirements, and the growth rates for these occupations.

**MS. WILLS:** I'm Joan Wills, at the Institute for Educational Leadership and involved with managing the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disabilities for Youth. And since this teleconference is about resource mapping, I thought that – instead of talking all about the Collaborative, I would zero in on an effort that I hope many people who on the call – if you are in a state that has one of the state pilot projects that Rhonda talked about – that you take advantage of becoming familiar with the ODEP project in your state. Also even if you're in a state that didn't win, it should be of value to keep track of what is going on in those states because I think there are some very interesting opportunities. Rhonda mentioned the fact that one of the first things that we did as a Collaborative was to organize the research, the evidence-based research, of what is effective practice. This research captures knowledge that we've gained for the last 10 years and Rhonda spoke of the design features.

We have a wide variety of materials that talk about what the implications of those design features are that are applicable for an individual local program all the way up through a state that can develop some common strategic plans across agencies. It shouldn't come as a surprise to anybody who has been involved in transition

issues that – as Rhonda gently pointed out – sometimes the problems are not really with the youth themselves but the institutions that we've created including the complexity of the institutions that we've created. So it is not surprising collaboration is difficult.

One of the key findings in the research that we did is that no one agency can do it alone. We will never, ever be successful in terms of collaboration for all youth, making effective transitions, and most specifically youth with disabilities unless we find new, different, and more efficient ways to collaborate between the agencies. So what we have done in terms of some technical assistance tools that we have made available to the grantees is to organize resource mapping work that does essentially the following three things.

First of all, it was to make sure that at the state level that people are all using the same information. I know those of you who have been involved in transition activities in the past know how difficult it is across agencies to make sure that you are dealing with the common database and establishing a common agreement about who is disabled, what the characteristics are of the young people who need to be served, etc. So one thing is to begin to grapple in a very serious way – developing a strong profile of the youth based upon common categories and definitions.

The pilot projects need to do that (develop a common profile) now so that at the end of five years, ODEP will be able to say to Congress and to the rest of Federal Government and everyone else – this is what has happened to the youth. So getting a handle on who in terms of young people coming up through the pipeline is an absolutely critical activity.

A second thing that we've done in terms of resource mapping – I use the term content resource mapping for lack of a better word. For example, Rhonda mentioned the High School/High Tech – that is organized around the four design features of what we know about what young people need. In that resource mapping – essentially we are suggesting that the state start by finding out which state agencies and their sub-state agents – and those sub-state agents may be schools, workforce boards, developmental disability organizations, community rehabilitation agencies, etc. The resource mapping process for HS/HT is to determine what is being provided to youth within each of the four design features (e.g. career assessments, work-based learning, benefit planning) and who is it that is providing dollars for the services aligned to the four different features.

Let me take the simplest as an example. Work-based learning – it is not good enough to know that people are promoting opportunities for young people to learn

about the world of work. States need to know, in order to be as strategic as possible, who is providing what types of work-based learning programs, for whom, under what conditions, and what terms. What kind of guidance has gone out to the localities on that topic area? The same is true for what we call connecting activities – or using the parlance of IDEA and vocational rehabilitation – related services. So in a very systematic way, identifying who is providing support to whom so that you end up with a state map organized by the content of the very specific activities that have been identified as what youth need.

For work-based learning we have a particular definition – it must be connected to what occurs in the classroom. It is just not going to work. The research shows that if you have a strong connection in terms of work-based learning, to what occurs in the classroom, three important things happen. One, the student is more likely to stay in school. The second point is they are more likely to go on for postsecondary education. And three, perhaps the most important factor is – in the end they end up normally earning more money. So that's an example from the HS/HT program about what needs to be focus of a resource mapping exercise.

What Rhonda talked about in terms of the intermediaries, the way I talk about this sometimes, and hopefully it will help make a distinction for you – is the intermediary project is focused on what kinds of institution or partnerships do we need to create at the local level to improve the individual direct services level as well at the regional or local planning level – what is missing in terms of meeting the needs for both youth and employers.

Keep in mind – Rhonda said they focused on a demand side as well as supply side. So we have essentially two significant five-year demonstration projects going forward. One focused on a program model (i.e. the HS/HT program), not with the specifics of the program, but organized around what it is that young people need. And that can be delivered in a variety of venues and in a variety of ways.

And then what kinds of tinkering – and I think the word tinkering is important here – with creating new, different kinds of institutional charters. The stubborn statistics that we all know about in terms of youth with disabilities not being successful in the workplace – is inadequate wage earning as well as inadequate participation in postsecondary education.

What is it that we need to do to package more efficiently and effectively the services they need through intermediaries? That is what these pilots are testing. That is a very quick overview. And I will now be quiet so we can hear from Kelli.

**MS. CRANE:** Good afternoon. My name is Kelli Crane and I am with the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition and at TransCen, which is located in Rockville, Maryland. As Mary indicated there are many, many approaches to resource mapping. The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition has been engaged in a number of these approaches. We really see resource mapping -- as Joan and Rhonda mentioned -- as a tool or a process that can be more strategic planning. Basically, bottom line, it's a way for all of us to work smarter. As Mary mentioned, some of the approaches that we have looked at are the individual mapping that youth do in the community. AED has been doing a lot of that. There has also been some individual commitment to doing that, strictly with youth with disabilities – folks at George Washington and at TransCen as well.

We've also been involved in some initiatives to look at better aligning youth services under the WIA system. And we've been out in states working on that approach. So, based on a lot of the experience we've had in different states and aligning ourselves with these different groups, we've looked at resource mapping in a number of different ways. We look at an approach that would best meet the needs of the states that we've worked with.

And again as Mary mentioned, we did have a National Leadership Summit on improving results for youth with disabilities in September. Many of the states that I heard on the call today were at the Summit. One of the priority issues that came out of that Summit – and an issue states continue to struggle with – is how do we really align systems or get better collaboration to improve results for youth with disabilities. More specifically, states said they need technical assistance around really aligning services and doing some resource mapping.

So our approach – and what the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition is looking at in terms of resource mapping, is identifying those services, systems, and delivery strategies that serve youth. The intent is to align these resources in the community into one comprehensive system so that outcomes for youth with disabilities are improved, both secondary education and transition outcomes.

So how can we get more youth employed? How can we get more youth into postsecondary education training programs, living independently? So again, bottom line is – how do we develop systems to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities?

The process that we've been looking at is similar to Joan's approach which was built on the National Center's model. We go out into communities and learn about all their resources. What are the resources? What

are the assets? We don't really like to call this a needs assessment because we like to build on the good things that are happening in the community.

We identify the resources -- what's out there? We don't want to re-invent anything. How can we build on the services, the delivery strategies, the programs that are already available? So we go out there and we identify all this stuff. Also what's important here is -- we don't look at traditional services that serve youth with disabilities. Or I should say, we look at those, but in addition, we look at generic services for youth as well.

Essentially one of the first steps is a broad sweep of a community. What's out there? What can help meet the needs of youth with disabilities? So once we've identified all this resources that are out there, we come back and we get on the same page and develop a vision. What is the vision for developing a comprehensive system? How can we bring these all together?

The National Center's approach maps around developing goals, similar to what Joan has mentioned. A goal might be -- how do we increase the number of youth with disabilities in employment? This is a goal we can map around. Or how do we increase the number of youth with disabilities accessing postsecondary education? We would map around that.

We want to make sure that these goals are measurable. And then we again look at all the stuff that might fit under this goal and we begin to align them. We identify the gaps or duplications and determine how these resources can be aligned. Once this is completed we move to strategic planning. Again, the intent is to align these systems to promote positive possible outcomes for youth with disabilities.

The intermediary piece also fits into some of the work that we've doing in states. In most of these states we have identified an intermediary organization to help manage and organize the mapping process, the intermediary being the convener or a broker that can bring this all together for a community, for a state, for a region. For example in one of the states we have worked they are organized regionally and the regional education service agency serves as the intermediary to pull all these folks together.

I've seen other states that really look at how the interagency transition council can go about and kick off this resource mapping process. Again, it leads to strategic planning. And resource mapping can happen before strategic planning or it can happen if a strategic plan is already developed. You can do resource mapping and build up that strategic plan as well.

So, again, based on what the National Center on

Secondary Education and Transition is learning from the states through the Summit, individual conversations with states, and conferences, resource mapping is something they want more information on and want assistance in doing in their states -- we really understand that it's what states want more of and they need some help doing it. So we are in the process of developing an essential tool on resource mapping. We already have several tools that we do use for states. But we are packaging this into a document that we can share with all the states. This will allow states to go about and do their own resource mapping. We are also looking at developing a Community of Practice around resource mapping, so that we can get states that are interested in this concept together and talk about it.

We've already developed a brief on resource mapping that is available on line. So those are a couple of the things that the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition is doing around resource mapping.

**MS. MACK:** OK. Why don't we just open it up to questions now.

**MS. MONTANNI, MONTGOMERY:** This is Samantha Montanni from Montgomery in Skillman, New Jersey. She was talking about a community of practice just a moment ago. And she mentioned a Web site. Does she have that address?

**MS. CRANE:** I didn't mention a Web site, but you can go to the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Web site, <http://www.ncset.org>.

**MR. CHUNG:** This is Bill Chung from New York City. I was interested in hearing about what strategies have worked in trying to engage employers?

**MS. WILLS:** One of the things that we have prepared, a document titled *Making the Connections: Growing and Supporting New Organizations*. It's not yet on the Web site because I still need to change the last page. Just as we did some research on what works for youth, and what is it that they need, there is a body of research and experience about what it is an employer needs. The information about what employers need has not been validated by longitudinal evaluations but it has been validated by over a decade of working with employers. There is really a common agreement about what it is employers need from public workforce development institutions. This paper provides that information.

Essentially, there are two levels of attention that employers need. I will give you a telephone number and I will send if you are interested in it, a copy of the paper before it gets onto our Web site. It identifies two levels of things employers want from public sector education and training organizations. One is, at what we call the

micro level, the individual contract. But equally important, employers don't think that the public sector side is very user friendly to them. And they need some road maps. And they need some very specific help/supports which have been too long ignored.

So let me give you a telephone number as well as a Web site. The toll free telephone number – and there all you need to do is to ask for a copy of the intermediary paper. That telephone number is 877-871-0744. The Web site is <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>. And Mary, it's probably important for us to advertise in two ways here.

NCSET is a part of the Collaborative and I'm a member of NCSET's working group. So there is a lot of cross-fertilization that is going on between the two national technical assistance centers.

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** This is -- in Maryland. Are you aware of any research that studies the impact of the tying of high school diplomas to standardized assessments and /or then, you know, -- under consideration here in Maryland is the tiered diploma. And what sort of impact that has on transitioning students with disabilities?

**MS. MACK:** The National Center on Educational Outcomes has done numerous studies on standards-based education and its impact on youth with disabilities. The best place to go for the most recent finding is the NCEO website <http://education.umn.edu/nceo/>

**MS. WILLS:** They have also done a specific study that David had sent to me – a national study on graduation requirements and diploma options for youth with disabilities.

**MS. MACK:** Yes that's right. This area of research is changing very rapidly so it is best to check out the most recent findings on a regular basis.

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** Right, right. Yes, I'm very concerned that without appropriate transition planning, so to speak, on the part of the state and the various partners that we have students existing school who are no longer perceived as employable, just because they don't have a standard high school diploma. In spite the fact that they are able to perform the essential functions of the job. Not to mention eligibility for, you know, services, that whole transition piece. So I guess anyway, I'm trying...

**MS. WILLS:** ... this is Joan again. There really is no research on your core questions. No analysis, but one should not be particularly surprised about that. Two more quick points. I think there will be more rigorous graduation requirements for youth with disabilities. There is always a lag time between major public policy shift and new and different – you know, more rigor-

ous educational graduation requirements hasn't in fact caught up with the labor market yet.

And that's not surprising. The real issue I think that you need to pay attention to is not whether or not there are four to five different levels of certificates and et cetera, but the length between whether a young person is able to move into and does move into some form of continued education. That's the issue – I frankly – and this maybe speaking heresy. It's not that I'm not concerned about the certificate issue, because I am. But if you cannot help a young person continue their education in a variety of forms whether it's a community college level or apprenticeship programs, some kind of formal education. Because any career focused job in the United States today, basically does demand post high school education broadly based.

And that, I think, is why we need to keep our eye on that sparrow.

**MS. MALLOY:** This is Joanne Malloy, from the University of New Hampshire with the New Hampshire Intermediary Project. And Joan I just want to echo what you say a million times. And I think that maybe through our strategic mapping at the state level, we maybe able to identify some of the disconnects between, you know, the policies and way schools are being guided. And then what we know is good practice for kids in transition.

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** Does ODEP have any idea whether or not they will be doing a similar RFP next summer around the resource mapping?

**MS. BASHA:** At this time, we don't have any definitive answer to that question. We haven't even gotten our budget yet for this year. And from what we understand, we are going to be pretty much flat lined in terms of the new money. So I would think that we – it is certainly something that we would like to do, but I can't offer any promises either way.

You all have the authority to do today what the pilots are doing – you know, \$500,000 is not insignificant – and the first task is only resource mapping. The real task for those intermediaries will be in thinking through – what is it we want those new institutions to look like? Resource mapping step one – thinking through how it is you are going to meet the needs of the two ultimate customers is...

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** ... this is the fun and exciting part I think. But again, almost any state could pick up on many of the pieces that are currently in there.

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** Going back to New York's question about the employer research – what our agency – both on our research team and our em-

ployer policy team's – have been looking at this issue and have done a literature review and most of the literature that they have located basically dealt with, you know, how do employers feel in terms of attitudes and/or – how do they feel about ADA implementation.

There hasn't been a lot of general research. And that's an area that we are starting to focus in on starting this year. Of you know, what are the things that foster hiring and what are the things that are negative?

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** I believe there is some information on Cornell's Web site:

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/>

**MS. MACK:** One more question and then we will wrap it up.

**MR. VITKUS:** This is Phil Vitkus. And I was just wondering – in terms of intermediaries. At this point, how would you characterize an intermediary that is going to facilitate in continuation of resource mapping? What are some of the best characteristics of the best intermediaries? Kelli, you and I have talked about this some, but I was wondering what just generally what your opinion on that is? And I'll be quiet.

**MS. CRANE:** The best characteristics of an intermediary – I think it needs to be a credible organization that reaches far and wide in a community and knows the community resources. The organization must be able to hold the group together when it needs to be pulled together. In the state of Kentucky, they've done a good job of that.

But as well it needs to be a knowledgeable organization around research practices for youth with disabilities. Again, looking at improving the outcomes of youth with disabilities. So they need to have, I believe some good content knowledge and need to be able to organize and to put this map together. Dedicated staff, as the research mapping process does take time. Therefore, you will need a person who can continue to follow this along and keep it moving so. Some -- staff is also important.

**MS. WILLS:** Can I just pick up and make a quick comment about that. Because one of the things, – and I think Rhonda would agree with me – is we need to be careful how we use the term intermediary. What Kelli just talked about is really what I think of as the trusted neutral agent person, or organization. When ODEP created these demonstrations, they are using the term intermediary in a different way – just to point that out. It is an organization that provides or brokers services to the one or both of the two ultimate customers, youth and/or employers. So we are using the term intermediary with slightly different definitions here.

**MR. VITKUS:** Thank you very much.

**MS. MACK:** All right. I would like to thank you all

for participating in this call. And there will be a transcript of this call on the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Web site in the near future. And everybody have a Happy Holiday Season. Thank you.

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