

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 10-09
	DATE September 21, 2009

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
 STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
 STATE APPRENTICESHIP AGENCY DIRECTORS
 STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS AND STAFF
 LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS AND STAFF
 OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP FIELD TECHNICIANS
 OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP STATE AND REGIONAL DIRECTORS

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
 Assistant Secretary
 Employment and Training Administration

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 Assistant Secretary
 Office of Disability Employment Policy

SUBJECT: Toolkit and White Paper on Improving Transition Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities through Apprenticeship

1. Purpose. To disseminate a white paper and toolkit which focus on expanding apprenticeship opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities.

2. Background. Developing the talents, skills and capabilities of the workforce has always played an important part in our nation's economic strength. The 21st century economic landscape is rapidly changing as technology and globalization alter the nature of work and the skills and training needed by workers to remain competitive. Ninety percent of the fastest growing jobs in the United States today require post-secondary education. This trend, coupled with the rapidly growing rate of baby boomer retirements, heightens the importance of preparing youth for the skills employers need.

This issue has significant impact on the economic development of communities, states, regional economies, and ultimately that of our nation. The workforce investment system plays a vital role in addressing the need to develop talent pools of young workers who serve as a "youth supply pipeline," which helps to drive economic growth.

More than 950 occupations across all industry clusters nationwide are recognized through Registered Apprenticeship programs, and new occupations are regularly added as employer needs evolve to meet new economic realities. These occupations span a broad range of industry clusters and demonstrate the power of the Registered Apprenticeship model to build a 21st century workforce.

In the United States today, 250,000 separate employers offer Registered Apprenticeship employment and training to almost 450,000 apprentices in such industries as construction, manufacturing, transportation, telecommunications, information technology, biotechnology, retail, health care, the military, utilities, security, and the public sector. By providing on-the-job training, related instruction, and guaranteed wage increases, employers and labor management organizations that sponsor apprentices provide incentives that can help them to attract and retain more highly qualified employees and improve productivity and services. Regions that adopt robust Registered Apprenticeship programs in the context of economic development strategies contribute to the pipeline of skilled workers and flexible career pathways to support current and future workforce demands.

Over the past decade through the School-to-Work Opportunities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Federal Government has stressed the importance of improving transition services nationally for youth with disabilities, and has assumed a strategic role in supporting state and local efforts to improve transition services through the identification of promising practices, delivery strategies, and policy development. Moreover, the 2006 reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act has reenergized efforts to promote the use of career and technical education as a strategy for learning in the context of improved academic achievement for all students. In addition, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 have resulted in reform efforts that focus on high academic and occupational standards; promote the use of state and local standards-based accountability systems; call for broad-based partnerships between schools, employers, post-secondary institutions, and families; support full participation and equal access to the general education curriculum; and emphasize research-based teaching methods.

The Department of Labor released the first official data on the employment status of people with disabilities on February 6, 2009. In January 2009, the employment rate for people with disabilities was 23.1 percent. The unemployment rate for those with disabilities was 13.2 percent (<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm>).¹ The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS)-2 indicates that employment rates vary considerably across disability categories for students with disabilities who were enrolled in special education. Youth with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, other health impairments, or speech impairments are the most likely to be employed in a 1-year period (50 percent to 60 percent). In contrast, youth with significant disabilities have significantly lower employment rates, e.g., 15 percent for youth with autism, 25 percent for youth with multiple disabilities, deaf-blindness, or orthopedic impairments, and 33 percent for youth with mental retardation or visual impairments.

A number of recent studies examining career and technical education programs and the use of structured work-based learning approaches suggest that such approaches are an important aspect of and contribute to better outcomes in-school, i.e., student achievement; knowledge assimilation and retention; motivation and post-school outcomes, i.e., educational continuation and employment success (American Youth Policy Forum, 2003; National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education, 2003). Moreover, when youth with disabilities take career and technical education in their last year of high school or concentrate in a career and technical education content area, research indicates that they have higher rates of high school

¹ After several years of research and testing, the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) sponsored the addition of new disability questions to the Current Population Survey (CPS) to generate data to gauge the employment status of people with disabilities. These data provide, for the first time, an official measure to the labor force situation for people with disabilities.

graduation, competitive employment, post-secondary education attendance, and advances in earnings or wages (Scholl & Mooney, 2003; Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Cobb, et al., 1999; Eisenman, 2000; Harvey, 2002; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Phelps, 1998).

Although limited research has been conducted on the impact of apprenticeship programming on post-secondary and employment outcomes for people with disabilities, an independent study conducted by the Center on Education and Work at the University of Wisconsin for the Wisconsin Governor's Work-Based Learning Board on graduates' experiences with the Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program, suggests a positive link between apprenticeship and employment earnings, retention, and enrollment in post-secondary education (Mickelson, Pereira, Fillingame, 2005). In addition, an earlier study on this same program identified the following factors as enhancing the success of all youth apprentices with and without disabilities:

1. High levels of program organization and coordination;
2. Meaningful and consistent communication between stakeholders;
3. A good "fit" between a young persons' abilities and their chosen youth apprenticeship career field;
4. A quality worksite placement (e.g., adequate rotation through competencies, presence of an experienced mentor); and
5. Rigorous and engaging classroom instruction that integrated technical and academic competencies.

While these factors were central to all youth apprenticeship experiences, they were found to be particularly critical in the apprenticeship experiences of youth with disabilities (Scholl & Mooney, 2003).

Although Federal legislation mandates that youth and young adults with disabilities have equal opportunity to benefit from the full range of career/technical educational programs and services available to their peers without disabilities, research conducted on this issue by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in 2007 revealed that youth and young adults with disabilities rarely participate in apprenticeship programs. To capitalize on the potential that apprenticeship holds for improving employment opportunity and self-sufficiency for youth and young adults with disabilities, and increase the capacity of the Workforce Investment Act system to better address the needs of these young people, ODEP and the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) are collaborating to distribute two technical assistance documents developed as a result of the aforementioned research.

The first attachment, a white paper entitled, *Improving Transition Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities by Increasing Access to Apprenticeship Opportunities*, is geared to policymakers. This paper provides an overview of the Registered Apprenticeship system in the United States, explores current trends in apprenticeship, and examines opportunities for youth, including those with disabilities. In addition, it identifies obstacles to expanding participation of youth with disabilities in apprenticeship programs and provides strategies for addressing these obstacles.

The second attachment, a technical assistance document, *Youth with Disabilities Entering the Workplace Through Apprenticeship*, is a toolkit intended to provide service providers with useful

information about apprenticeship as an employment strategy for youth and young adults with disabilities. It is organized around six topical areas:

1. Understanding Apprenticeship Basics;
2. Preparing Youth and Young Adults for Apprenticeship Programs;
3. Increasing Participation of Young Adults with Disabilities in Apprenticeship Programs;
4. Establishing New Apprenticeship Programs;
5. What Apprenticeship Employers Need to Know About Working with Young Adults with Disabilities; and
6. Looking to Future Opportunities in Apprenticeship.

3. Next Steps. The Department of Labor will continue to develop, and disseminate and publicize information to promote the inclusion of youth with disabilities in Registered Apprenticeship programs.

4. Action Requested. States are requested to disseminate this information to local areas as well as to interested and potentially interested stakeholders.

5. Inquiries. Questions on this Training and Employment Notice (TEN) should be directed to Rachel Dorman of the Office of Disability Employment Policy at (202) 693-7945, or dorman.rachel@dol.gov and Franchella Kendall of the Office of Apprenticeship at (202) 693-3798 or kendall.franchella@dol.gov.

6. Attachments.

A. Improving Transition Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities by Increasing Access to Apprenticeship Opportunities

B. Youth with Disabilities Entering the Workplace Through Apprenticeship