



Promise Lessons Learned Highlights

As Wisconsin Promise comes to an end, we learned several key lessons along the way. Here are some highlights:

Paid Work Experiences while in High School

Results

Based on results from paid youth work experiences, transition services for youth with disabilities must include at least one, preferably two, paid community work experiences before exiting high school.

Data

Promise youth were more likely to engage in employment services and paid work than youth randomly assigned to services as usual.

- **Promise increased DVR service rates.** As of May 2018, 100% of Promise youth in the treatment group had a DVR case (with 80% still open), compared to 32% youth in the control group (with just 51% cases still open).
- **DVR Services were correlated with higher employment rates.** (Kaya et al., 2016; Rumrill et al., 2017).
- **Employment Rates: 60%** of Promise treatment youth had Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance (UI) reported wages from 4/1/14 to 3/31/18 compared to **49%** in the control group.

Recommendations

1. Ensure youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are informed of, and connected to, school-to-work transition services for which they are eligible. Transition services are available through:
 - Schools - Academic Career Plans (ACPs), Individual Education Programs (IEPs), and Post-Secondary Transition Plans (PTPs).
 - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) - Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), available through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
 - Other employment services are available through long-term care, mental health, child welfare, or other community programs.

2. Transition-aged youth receiving SSI can be identified by the Social Security Administration (SSA), and for youth receiving Medicaid because they are on SSI, by the state Medicaid agency:
 - SSA and the state Medicaid agency could send postcards, one-pagers, emails, and/or texts letting youth and their families know about available employment services for youth receiving SSI.
 - SSA and the state Medicaid agency could provide targeted case management services for transition-aged SSI youth to help connect youth to available employment services and supports. Case management should be youth self-directed, using techniques like Motivational Interviewing (motivationalinterviewing.org) and Trauma Informed Care (fosteringfutureswisconsin.org).
3. Once a youth is referred to DVR, implement rapid engagement and motivational interviewing to increase youth interaction with employment services and the likelihood of connecting youth to paid employment.

Work Incentives Benefits Counseling and Financial Planning



Data

- Youth who met with a **Work Incentives Benefit Specialist** had **twice** as many **jobs**.
- Youth who met with a **financial coach** had **twice** the total weekly **earnings**.

Most Promise youth and families preferred benefits consults and financial coaching on an ongoing basis as needed over a full benefits analysis, which provides all of the benefits information at once.



Recommendations

1. Increase funding for Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) (ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html).
2. Integrate financial coaching and planning in Work Incentives Benefits Counseling.
3. Use a consult/coaching model to share information about benefits and financial planning.
4. Train local SSA and Medicaid income maintenance workers:
 - That all youth who want to work **can work**, no matter their disability, given the correct supports.

- On the benefits of work for everyone, including individuals with disabilities.
- How individuals with disabilities can work and still get the services and supports they need. Training should include information about work incentives and health care options like Medicaid Buy-In Programs.
- How to refer SSI transition-aged youth and families to access local employment services (including DVR), Work Incentive Benefits Counseling, and Financial Coaching/Planning.

Supporting the Family of Youth Receiving SSI can Improve Access to Transition Resources and Improved Expectations and Outcomes

Data

- **Increased Expectations:** **91%** of families who completed the **Wisconsin Promise Family Advocacy training** agreed the training elevated their expectations of what is possible for their child after high school.
- **Higher Employment Rates:** Training families on employment possibilities for youth with disabilities, and about how to access needed resources and services, was related to higher youth employment rates.

Recommendation

SSA and Medicaid Targeted Case Management could include resources to help support family members in navigating existing resources and services and provide information on employment possibilities for youth with disabilities. Targeted Case Management would focus on resources and supports that help improve education, employment, and financial self-sufficiency.

Goal Must Extend Beyond Employment to Financial Self-Sufficiency

Data

Promise youth with an **Individual Development Account** (IDA, matched savings account) were more likely to be employed (**85%**) compared to individuals who do not have an IDA (**44%**).

Recommendation

In addition to Work Incentives Benefits Counseling and Financial Planning, youth receiving SSI should be connected to ways to build assets including, but not limited to:

- Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts (ablenrc.org/about/becoming-able-ready)

- IDAs (ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-individual-development.htm)
- SSI Plan for Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS) (ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm)

Youth Training: Engaging Teens with Competing Priorities in Group Trainings can be Tough

Sometimes individualized counseling, coaching, mentoring, and training is best, but holding group trainings provides opportunities for peer interactions and practice that can have a positive impact on youth learning.

Recommendations for Youth Training

1. Hold trainings where youth already are
2. Make multiple contacts to increase attendance
3. Gather basic information about each youth before the training
4. Consider the instructor to student ratio (recommend 6-10 youth/instructor)
5. Remove reading and language barriers
6. Use active teaching strategies and multiple hands-on learning activities
7. Add variety
8. Ensure every activity is inclusive of all youth, no matter their abilities
9. Break difficult concepts into small chunks
10. Relate information to real life examples
11. Let them break the rules, a little
12. Schedule regular breaks
13. Establish cell phone expectations

References

Kaya, C., Chan, F., Rumrill, P., Hartman, E., Wehman, P., Iwanaga, K., Pai, C., & Avellone, L. (2016). Vocational rehabilitation services and competitive employment for transition-age youth with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 45*, 73-83.

Rumrill, P., Merchant, D., Kaya, C., Chan, F., Hartman, E., & Tansey, T. (2017). Demographic and service-related correlates of competitive employment outcomes among state-federal vocational rehabilitation clients with learning disabilities: A purposeful selection logistic regression analysis. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 47*, 123-134.