



# OUR LIVES IN HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND

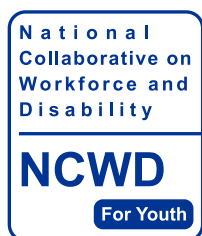
## A YouthACT Policy Brief

*October 2017*

The Youth Action Council on Transition (YouthACT) is a national initiative to get more youth with disabilities and their allies involved as leaders who partner with adults and organizations to improve opportunities for youth to succeed in life. "Transition" is the process and period of change that youth go through to become adults. Transition typically occurs between ages 12 and 25. During transition, youth need a variety of opportunities and supports to learn and develop skills and experience, set and

achieve goals, and make personal decisions about school, work, and life.

Too often, youth don't have a voice when agencies and organizations are deciding what youth services and opportunities to offer. It is important for agencies and organizations to hear from youth about what they need and want during the transition years so they can provide the right opportunities, services, and supports. For this reason, YouthACT aims to increase positive youth-adult partnerships where young people and adults work together, share power, and support and learn



Navigating the Road to Work

from each other to build stronger communities.

In 2016, YouthACT participants moderated the YouthACT Transition Truths National Online Dialogue. Youth with disabilities ages 13-25 and allies of the disability community actively participated in this national online dialogue. Now we, YouthACT, have selected two priority areas that emerged from the conversation to share with you—the policymakers.

## **Priority 1: Learning in High School and Postsecondary Education**

We want you to know that:

- ◆ Transition and transition planning should be a major priority for all school districts, schools, administrators, teachers, and youth-serving professionals.
- ◆ Students need access to a variety of direct service professionals (e.g., school counselor, vocational rehabilitation counselor) in one location who can fully support their unique life circumstances and career aspirations.

We want you to support policies and take the following actions to ensure our time in high school, postsecondary education, and other preparatory experiences suc-

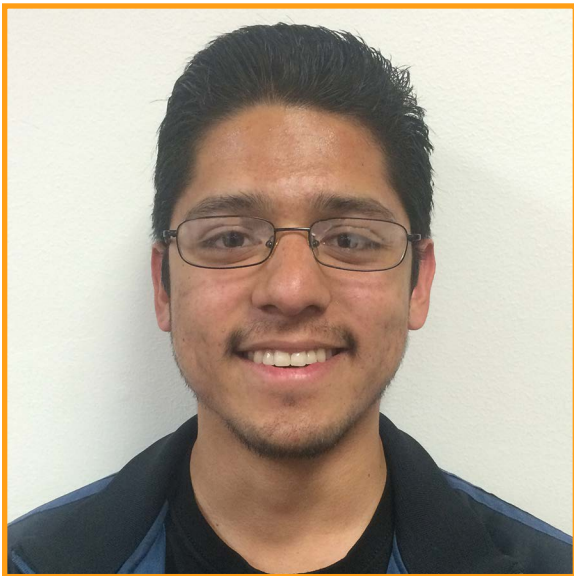
cessfully helps us participate fully in society:

- ◆ Enforce the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires transition planning to begin no later than age 16 (Most state laws mandate planning by age 14).
- ◆ Implement legislation and regulations to integrate principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all classrooms, as well as tools and technology needed to support this approach for all students.
- ◆ Empower teachers and service providers to deliver equitable general education programs that fully prepare all students to access employment, independence, and community engagement.
- ◆ Ensure students with disabilities enjoy full access in multiple learning environments by facilitating all accommodations available to them under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act.
- ◆ Develop solutions for high rates of high school and college students exiting without graduating, and support

persistence in studies, including for students with disabilities.

- ◆ Enhance secondary and postsecondary education to integrate career and technical education coursework across all programs, including through improvements to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

### Branley Acevedo's Story



I was in high school from 2010 to 2014. During IEP [Individualized Education Program] meetings, there was a translator in the meetings, but I did most of the translating. The translators understood Spanish but didn't understand what an IEP was well enough to explain it to my mom while translating. I got tired of the

translators, so I started doing translating for my mom myself.

It was very stressful translating for my mom. My mom is very strict about education. To have to tell her I wasn't doing well in one of my classes while translating and having her give me that motherly look at the same time was hard. I was playing two roles at same time—a student who is also her son and a translator who is not the professional getting paid to provide this service. Later, after the meeting, my mom would bring up my grades and say, "You're the one who told me this." I was frustrated the translator was getting paid for just sitting there while I did all the work and got in trouble with my mom.

I would like policymakers to have an educated person who knows about IEPs to explain to parents exactly what is in them. Translators should know what acronyms mean. For example, OHI [other health impairment], doesn't mean you're dying soon!

### Priority 2: Preparing for the Workforce

We want you to know that:

- ◆ Vocational rehabilitation counselors need to develop stronger relationships with centers for independent living



and other organizations and expand youth resources.

- ◆ Meaningful volunteering opportunities for youth can help lead them to attain good jobs.

We want you to support policies and take the following actions to ensure we can successfully prepare for the workforce:

- ◆ Expand and enhance job clubs and vocational rehabilitation programs in high schools across the U.S. to teach transition and employability skills.
- ◆ Ensure youth, including those with disabilities, and their families are offered information and resources in multi-lingual formats on trade and vocational school certifications, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, and other

meaningful postsecondary opportunities.

- ◆ Increase the number of job shadowing, internship, networking, and mentoring opportunities available for all youth, including those with disabilities, to enhance their career development and social capital.

### Our Vision

We aim for this brief to increase your efforts to involve all youth actively as partners in making decisions that shape and affect our lives. Use this brief to support your work with all youth to foster policy changes promoting successful transitions from school to the workplace.

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development issues. NCWD/Youth is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. NCWD/Youth is charged with assisting state and local workforce development systems to integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies. To obtain this publication in an alternate format, please contact us at 877-871-0744 toll free or email [contact@ncwd-youth.info](mailto:contact@ncwd-youth.info). This Info Brief was written by the YouthACT team and Jennifer Thomas. All NCWD/Youth publications are posted on the NCWD/Youth website at [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info). NCWD/Youth is funded by a grant/contract/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Disability Employment Policy (Number #OD-23804-12-75-4-11). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply the endorsement by the USDOL. Individuals may produce any part of this document. Please credit the source and support of federal funds.

NCWD/Youth, 1-877-871-0744 (toll-free) | 1-877-871-0665 (TTY toll-free) | [contact@ncwd-youth.info](mailto:contact@ncwd-youth.info) | [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)