

## Attachment A

### Guidance for Promoting Access to Work Experiences and Employment for Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

The following provides recommendations for service enhancements and increased participation of youth and young adults with IDD into workforce development programs.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>1</sup>

- MassHire Career Centers can ensure that services are inclusive of people with IDD through outreach to local school transition programs and service providers to discuss how the youth and adults they work with can utilize career center services.
- MassHire Career Centers are encouraged to create partnerships between organizations serving youth and young adults with IDD (e.g. school district transition programs, Department of Developmental Services service providers) and providers of workforce development programs that do not focus on IDD or disability (e.g., youth service programs).
  - As one example, staff of the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) transition program has recognized that doing so supports and builds the capacity of non-disability providers to include and serve youth and young adults with IDD. “The more we’re there, by our working together, their folks build up the ability to work with ours.”
- It is important to establish ways of formalizing the inter-organizational partnerships that have developed through relationships to transition youth and young adults to competitive integrated employment.
  - Evolving organizational partnerships are often based on the relationships that are established by individual staff. Standard Operating Procedures that include continual relationship building is important for changes in personnel.
- Staff should be well-informed and are encouraged to ensure program eligibility criteria and procedures are as inclusive as possible of youth and adults with IDD.
  - This includes proactively asking about accommodation and support needs, and working closely with support professionals (educators, IDD provider staff, etc.) regarding assistance available to help individuals qualify for and succeed in programs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Report on MA Workforce Development System and Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities – Institute for Community Inclusion

- It is highly important that youth and young adults with IDD have access to workforce development programs that prioritize at-risk youth and young adults who are not in the high school-to-college-to-employment pipeline
- MassHire Career Centers are encouraged to focus on developing methods for evolving more permanent employment from paid internships.
  - As an example, the WPS transition staff currently invests a great deal of effort in doing this through the piecing together of unpaid and paid internships from several sources. Employers have the opportunity to work with other support staff to train youth and young adults and they and prospective employees have a chance to test the match.

Please refer to resources listed in Attachment B as one strategy to increase access to benefits counseling.

- Employer outreach should include information about the potential benefits of employing youth and young adults with IDD and be inclusive of individuals with IDD in business workforce development initiatives.

MassHire Career Centers are encouraged to taper supports and check-ins and continue to foster growing independence rather than abruptly changing expectations. This will serve to create greater consistency and more of a continuum between systems for youth and young adults and adult services.

- MassHire Career Center staff are encouraged to engage with trained job coaches (from schools and disability service providers) to ensure that they have access to job sites to support individuals with IDD.
- It should be noted that a significant number of individuals with IDD are not able to obtain a high school diploma but leave school with significant work experience and skills. Employers should be encouraged to use alternate methods to assess the portfolio of a person's skills in lieu of a requirement for a high school diploma.