



# **Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy**

## ***National Online Dialogue and Twitter/X Chats Summary Report***

**July 24 – August 25, 2023  
and September 20, 2023**

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## Table of Contents

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Introduction.....	3
Background .....	3
Online Dialogue Topics.....	4
Outreach Efforts.....	4
ePolicyWorks Email and Social Media Outreach.....	4
Online Dialogue Participant Summary.....	5
Online Dialogue Shared Ideas.....	5
Visitors, Registrants and Participants in the Online Dialogue.....	6
Online Dialogue Registration Questions.....	7
Review and Analysis of Online Dialogue’s Ideas and Comments.....	8
Key Themes and Takeaways.....	8
Integrate Wrap Around Supports and Services into the Transition Process.....	9
Include Transition Information and Support in School (including Tribal School) Curriculums and Resources.....	10
Ensure Higher Education is Accessible and Inclusive of Young Adults with Disabilities .....	11
Improve the Transition from Schools to Adult Services.....	12
Consider Changes and Updates to Social Security.....	14
Focus on Improving Access through Transportation.....	15
Provide Transition Support for the Specific Needs of Disabled Youth in Rural Areas .....	15
Educate Employers.....	16
Encourage the Federal Government to Serve as a Model Employer .....	16
Create and Support Opportunities for Peer Mentoring.....	17
Home Based Services to Include Transition Services .....	18
Provide Transition Services Inclusive of Medically Complex Individuals.....	18
Conclusion .....	19
Appendix A: Resources Shared in the Online Dialogue .....	20
Organizations and Not-for-Profits.....	20
Reports and Resources.....	20
State, National and International Resources.....	20
News Articles, Blogs and Webinars (by date) .....	21
Appendix B: Resources Shared During the Twitter/X Fireside Chats.....	22
Organizations and Not-for-profits.....	22
Reports .....	22
State, National and International Government Links.....	22
Appendix C: Outreach and Promotion.....	24
Appendix D: Top Ideas.....	28
Top Ideas by Vote .....	28
Top Trending Ideas.....	29
Most Popular Ideas by Dialogue Topic.....	31
Appendix E: @ePolicyWorks Twitter/X Fireside Chats .....	36



## Introduction

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From July 24 to August 25, 2023, and on September 20, 2023, the ePolicyWorks national online dialogue, *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy*, gathered ideas from individual participants on ways to improve policies and practices that lead to a smooth transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities. The online event welcomed ideas and experiences from any interested stakeholder, including those with a personal or professional interest in supporting the aspirations of youth and young adults with disabilities to live, work and thrive in their communities. This report summarizes key themes and takeaways gleaned by the U.S.

Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) from the online dialogue, as well as two companion Twitter/X Fireside Chats held on August 17 and September 20.

## Background

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Youth with disabilities face unique challenges that may complicate their educational trajectories as well as their plans for school, training and work. As a result, disabled youth may have poorer adult educational and employment outcomes than their peers without disabilities and may have difficulty achieving maximum independence. To address these disparities the government established the Federal Partners in Transition (FPT) workgroup in 2005. Comprised of representatives from several federal agencies including the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor, and the Social Security Administration, the FPT supports all youth, including youth with disabilities, in successfully transitioning from school to adulthood.

In May 2013, the FPT joined ODEP and other federal agency partners in hosting the first FPT National Online Dialogue. The event invited people to share their ideas and comments about federal legislative and regulatory barriers and transition outcomes for youth with disabilities.

As a follow-up to the initial dialogue and to build on the efforts of the workgroup, ODEP hosted the *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy* dialogue in the summer of 2023. This dialogue sought ideas that would inform policies, practices, strategies and approaches to support the success of disabled youth transitioning to adulthood.

To complement the dialogue, ODEP and the FPT also hosted two interactive Fireside Chats on Twitter/X. All served to engage participants from educational institutions, workforce development organizations, nonprofits, research organizations, service providers and disability and advocacy groups, as well as state and local government representatives, employers, and youth and young adults with disabilities.

The *Our Future Matters* dialogue was visited more than 7,000 times by individuals looking to view, share, comment and vote on ideas in five topic areas related to the transition to adulthood and the systems that support it. Based on the shared input, several key themes and takeaways were identified that will inform policymakers, practitioners and youth as they support

transitioning youth, including those with disabilities and youth from other underrepresented communities.

### Online Dialogue Topics

The online dialogue's four topics related to different areas of interest for the Department of Labor, ODEP and the other federal agencies involved. In addition, the dialogue included a topic area called "Additional Ideas" to capture suggestions not covered in the four topic areas. Each topic included related questions and prompts:

1. **Employment**

What changes need to happen to implement employment services more effectively for youth and young adults with disabilities?

2. **Health and Human Services**

What changes need to happen to implement health and human services more effectively such as access to childcare, transportation and other types of supportive services that support employment for youth and young adults with disabilities?

3. **Education**

What changes need to happen to more effectively implement education services that successfully transition youth with disabilities to postsecondary or employment settings?

4. **Social Security**

What changes need to happen to make social security services more supportive of the employment options for youth and young adults with disabilities?

5. **Additional Ideas**

Do you have any additional ideas about the successful transition of youth and young adults with disabilities to adulthood that do not fit the other topic areas?

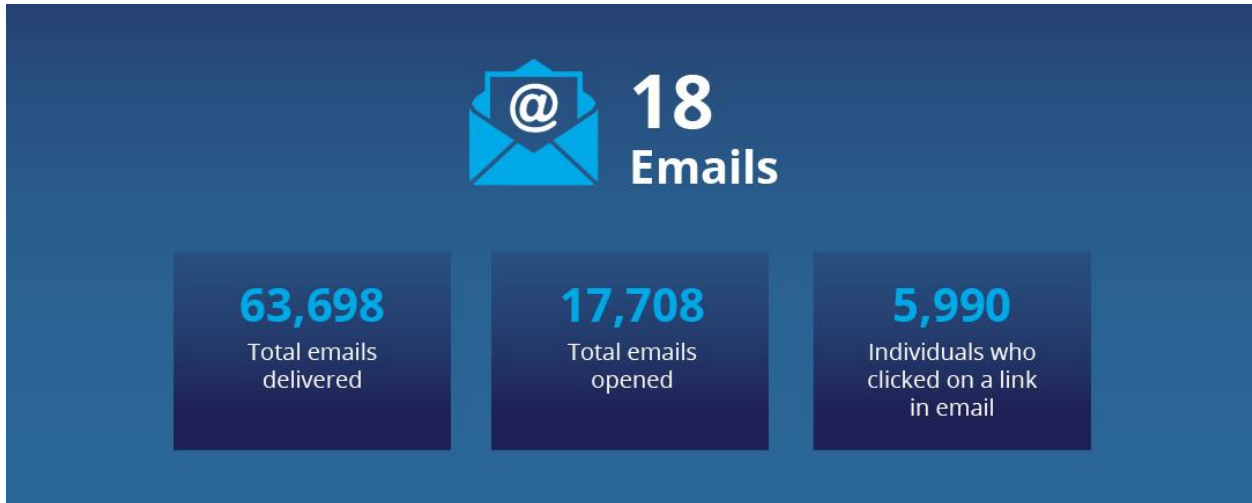
### Outreach Efforts

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To ensure a wide range of online dialogue participants' viewpoints and experiences, DOL, along with the participating agencies, promoted the event through numerous channels and tactics. These included targeted eblasts, announcements in DOL newsletters and social media posts. In addition, ePolicyWorks conducted outreach using several strategies, including through the @ePolicyWorks Twitter/X account and emails to targeted groups. Targeted groups included the following: registrants of previous youth- and transition-focused ePolicyWorks online dialogues, educational institutions, independent living organizations, advocacy groups, state and local government officials, disabled young adults and their families and other key stakeholders including other members of the disability community.

### ePolicyWorks Email and Social Media Outreach

ePolicyWorks conducted 18 email campaigns to promote the online dialogue and the 2 associated Twitter/X Fireside Chats ([Appendix C](#)).



### Online Dialogue Participant Summary

The *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy* online dialogue opened on July 24, 2023, and closed at the end of the day on August 25, 2023. It then opened for the day on September 20, 2023 (in conjunction with the Twitter/X Fireside Chat). Detailed below is information regarding the dialogue, including ideas, comments and votes submitted, along with the number of online dialogue views and registrants, participation rates and registrants' profile information.

### Online Dialogue Shared Ideas





**150**

## Comments in the online dialogue

**41**

Comments in the  
*Employment*  
Topic

**55**

Comments in the  
*Education*  
Topic

**16**

Comments in the *Social*  
*Security*  
Topic

**14**

Comments in the *Health and*  
*Human Services*  
Topic

**24**

Comments in the  
*Additional*  
*Ideas* Topic



**279**

## Votes in the online dialogue

**96**

Votes in the  
*Employment*  
Topic

**84**

Votes in the  
*Education*  
Topic

**33**

Votes in the *Social*  
*Security*  
Topic

**26**

Votes in the *Health and*  
*Human Services*  
Topic

**40**

Votes in the  
*Additional*  
*Ideas* Topic

### Visitors, Registrants and Participants in the Online Dialogue

From July 24 to August 25, 2023, and on September 20, 2023, the dialogue could be viewed by visiting [OurFutureMatters.IdeaScale.com](https://OurFutureMatters.IdeaScale.com). Visitors to the website could access the ideas, comments and votes in the online dialogue, as well as detailed information on each topic concerning how ePolicyWorks dialogues work and more details on the FPT workgroup.

This information was available to anyone who visited the website

[OurFutureMatters.IdeaScale.com](https://OurFutureMatters.IdeaScale.com), but to participate in the dialogue—i.e., add an idea or comment, or vote—individuals had to complete the registration process. This required completing an online form that asked registrants to share the stakeholder group and organization type they represented, as well as their state of residence. All the registration questions were mandatory.

After the form was submitted, for security reasons, registrants had to verify their email to complete the process. Once an individual's email was verified by IdeaScale, they could create a password, log in and add ideas, as well as comment and vote on ideas submitted by others.

For the following dialogue metrics, “visitors” were defined as all individuals who visited the dialogue website, whether they chose to complete the registration process. “Registrants” were those who successfully verified their email and created a password. “Participants” included anyone who submitted an idea or commented or voted on an idea submitted by another.

- Total number of visits to the online dialogue: 7,130 visits
- Total number of times someone logged into the dialogue: 1,044 times
- Average number of times visitors came to the online dialogue: 2.4 sessions
- Average length of time they spent visiting the online dialogue during each session: 5 minutes 29 seconds
- Total number of registrants in the dialogue: 185 individuals
- Total number of registrants who participated by sharing an idea, comment or vote: 95 individuals (51% of registrants)
- Total number of registrants who shared ideas: 64 individuals (35% of registrants)
- Total number of registrants who shared comments: 39 individuals (21% of registrants)
- Total number of registrants who voted: 81 individuals (44% of registrants)
- Total number of states represented by dialogue registrants: 40 states and the District of Columbia

### Online Dialogue Registration Questions

When registering for the *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy* online dialogue, registrants had to share information about the stakeholder groups and organization type they represent. Registrants were given prepopulated choices. For the stakeholder group question, registrants could choose all answers that applied to them including a choice of “Other or None of the Above.” For the organization type field, registrants could only choose one answer including a choice “Other or None of the Above.” Below is a summary of the responses.







## Organization Type\*

**46** registrants selected **Nonprofit or Advocacy Organization**

**36** registrants selected **Federal Government or Federal Technical Assistance Center**

**35** registrants selected **Educational Institution**

**14** registrants selected **State or Local Government**

**43** registrants selected **Other or None of the Above**

**11** registrants **did not answer**

*\*they can only select one*

### Review and Analysis of Online Dialogue's Ideas and Comments

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During the online dialogue, participants from across the U.S. shared thought-provoking and innovative ideas and recommendations on ways DOL can develop appropriate policies and practices and provide the resources and tools needed to ensure a smooth transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities. Importantly, they shared ways to ensure all aspects of employment, education, health care and social security can work together to support the aspirations of youth and young adults with disabilities to live, work and thrive in their communities. The results will inform future policy priorities and funding opportunities. These results will also ensure that federal agencies are working together to strategically address the needs of disabled youth from diverse backgrounds as they transition to adulthood.

The range and depth of the ideas submitted and discussed during the Twitter/X Fireside Chats and online dialogue demonstrate the value of engaging citizens. Employers, service providers, advocates, educational institutions, local government representatives, individuals with disabilities and other stakeholders shared 108 ideas, 150 comments, 279 votes, 35 resources ([Appendix A](#)) and an additional 28 resources in the Twitter/X Fireside Chats ([Appendix B](#)).

#### Key Themes and Takeaways

Based on a preliminary analysis of the 108 ideas and 150 associated comments submitted by the dialogue registrants, the following key themes and takeaways emerged.

1. [Integrate Wrap Around Supports and Services into the Transition Process](#)
2. [Include Transition Information and Support in School \(including Tribal School\) Curriculums and Resources](#)
3. [Ensure Higher Education is Accessible and Inclusive of Young Adults with Disabilities](#)
4. [Improve the Transition from Schools to Adult Services](#)

5. [Consider Changes and Updates to Social Security](#)
6. [Focus on Improving Access Through Transportation](#)
7. [Provide Transition Support for the Specific Needs of Disabled Youth in Rural Areas](#)
8. [Educate Employers](#)
9. [Encourage the Federal Government to Serve as a Model Employer](#)
10. [Create and Support Opportunities for Peer Mentoring](#)
11. [Expand Home Based Services to Include Transition Services](#)
12. [Provide Transition Services Inclusive of Medically Complex Individuals](#)

#### Integrate Wrap Around Supports and Services into the Transition Process

Many of the dialogue submissions focused on the importance of education and support in key areas to guarantee the success of disabled youth transitioning to adulthood. Following are the key areas mentioned for support:

- **Financial Education**  
Young adults with disabilities need to understand the essential aspects of overall financial literacy. This includes the skills, knowledge, tools and actions needed to make individual financial decisions and attain their goals. Financial literacy should include budgeting, money management and asset savings strategies.
- **Work Incentive Planning**  
Educators need to provide accurate information to young adults with disabilities about the ways work will impact cash benefits, health coverage and other benefits that young adults need to live independently. More funding should be made available for work incentive planning for transition-age youth and for work incentive education for school staff who work with students with disabilities. Planning needs to include information on how to leverage work incentives to increase financial independence and self-sufficiency outcomes, such as Ticket to Work information.
- **Health and Mental Health Care**  
To be successful, young adults need to understand and be empowered in all areas of well-being, including preventive health and mental health. Before graduation, students should be offered a curriculum that teaches them about fostering good health.
- **Functional Life Skills and Soft Skills**  
As part of overall education, schools should focus on teaching life skills and soft skills to children with disabilities. These skills are vital for students to be punctual at work, meet expected deadlines, problem solve and more. A young adult transition program for 18– to 22-year-olds that focuses on these skills, as well as independent living skills, would be another way to support the success of young adults with disabilities.
- **Executive Functioning**  
Many young people with a disability need assistance with executive functioning skills. These skills have a direct correlation to success or failure in all areas of life, from appointments to getting to work at the right time/day and knowing what steps to take

to get ready for new experiences. One potential solution included assigning young adults a point person who could act as an "executive assistant" or coach and teach them how to be more self-sufficient, while making sure they don't fail to meet critical steps.

- **Home and Community Based Services**

To live independently in the community and be able to work, young adults need to know how to access home and community-based services and how to leverage them to meet their individual goals and needs. This includes individualized supported affordable housing, in-home care, public transportation, social and leisure opportunities and community access post-school. For some young adults with disabilities, this might mean Centers for Independent Living, which often serve as hubs of disability information, resources, services and advocacy. Many dialogue participants stressed the importance of individuals being able to live in their community.

#### Include Transition Information and Support in School (including Tribal School) Curriculums and Resources

Registrants discussed what schools can do to better support the transition of disabled youth to adulthood. Following are the ideas submitted:

- **Start Early**

Schools should provide needed services to children and young adults with disabilities starting at an early age including speech therapy, occupational therapy and social skill development. Schools should also introduce students to trades so when they graduate high school, they are prepared to either enter the job market or attend higher education.

- **Teach Job Related Skills**

All educators should understand the "job development process," and schools should develop a specific curriculum on the topic. Job related skills should include soft skills, safety, teamwork, communication, job search skills, job lead analysis, online job application, resume writing, seeking references, providing documentation, interview preparation and follow up.

- **Offer Experiences Working with Peers**

Schools should offer a variety of job experiences for those who have disabilities, since students with disabilities need opportunities for career exploration. Schools should support students by allowing them to try a variety of jobs and careers while in high school, including internships and summer job opportunities at local businesses.

- **Ensure that Students are Heard**

Educators need to be "capacity builders" when it comes to student-led Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Teach students to advocate with educators, families and other students, as these skills will support their success in the workplace.

- **Provide Support Services at School**

Occupational therapists, occupational therapist assistants and vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors need to implement programs in schools. These programs can prepare

students with disabilities with community and vocational skills, exploration and assessments. Certified occupational therapy (OT) assistants have the license and education to promote the vocational rehabilitation (VR) plan and can administer assessments that an OT and a certified rehabilitation counselor (CRC) can score and draft reports on. Schools should fund collaborative programming with OT and VR.

- **Create Resources to Share with Parents**

Resources for families of students with disabilities should be created and distributed by teachers. They should include contact information and descriptions of appropriate agencies and programs available to them.

- **Prepare Students (and Their Families/Caregivers) for Transition**

Many participants felt that the process of preparing students for transition should start at the beginning of high school. Schools should have curriculums for independent living skills available, and the Department of Education (ED) may want to explore ways to provide curriculum guidance and webinars for parents, educators and community members. IEP and Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) goals should be developed to support each individual student's transition goals, and school counselors should be trained and available to support each student's transition goals. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) should fund this initiative.

- **Provide After-School Programs**

After-school programs not only provide care coverage for parents but also opportunities to learn life skills and engage with peers and other community members. Many are privately run, so they are not necessarily accessible to students with significant disabilities. One suggested idea: schools may want to consider providing after school programs to students with disabilities.

- **Make Available Culturally Appropriate Programs and Resources**

Provide interpreters who not only speak the same language but also come from the same cultural background as the students they serve. Address language and emotional barriers expressed by the parents. Professionals should respond to parents' cultural preferences and acknowledge their concerns to help them move forward. Do not make assumptions. Listen and remember that trust takes time to build. Establish cultural brokers and parent-to-parent connections.

- **Support Employment First**

An Employment First model for transition from school is needed. Too many students with disabilities are moving into day programs or sheltered workshops with no options to transition into competitive integrated supported employment. ED and DOL should consider working together to develop guidance, fact sheets and webinars for schools, families and communities to establish and create ITP and IEP goals for transition.

### Ensure Higher Education is Accessible and Inclusive of Young Adults with Disabilities

Registrants submitted ideas and comments focused on the role of higher education in the transition process. The following are key themes and takeaways around higher education.

- **Provide Reasonable Accommodations**

Each state and university should ensure implementation of reasonable accommodations

and confirm that they are comparable to accommodations included in a student's high school IEP. Each state and university should deem what are "reasonable" accommodations for students with exceptionalities in colleges and universities, including having an assistant present, if necessary.

- **Learn from Other Universities and Colleges**

There should be more investment in and replication of university programs that successfully train, educate and employ students with disabilities.

- **Integrate Workforce Development into Higher Education**

Learning while earning has proved to have positive outcomes for individuals entering the workplace. DOL and other federal agencies should consider promoting opportunities that enable students to learn while earning money and work on diversifying applicant pools.

- **Support Neurodivergent Students**

There should be more options for degree seeking neurodivergent high school graduates in the university setting to improve student outcomes. There should be more funding allocated to providing supports to these students. Student assistants or paraprofessionals serving in these roles should be trained and compensated when hired to ensure neurodivergent students have a successful path toward graduation and employment.

- **Provide Wrap Around Services as Part of Higher Education**

Often, individuals enroll in post-secondary education without fully understanding or knowing the supports they need to overcome barriers posed by their disability or environment. Wrap around services, including mental health care, educational support and other services, that help individuals with disabilities in the first (and possibly second year) of their post-secondary education would facilitate increased independence.

### Improve the Transition from Schools to Adult Services

Participants felt an opportunity exists for schools to play a role in the transition to adult services for disabled youth. Schools are uniquely positioned to support this important transition. Some of the ideas submitted include:

- **Share Information**

Incorporate ways for schools to share the information obtained about students with disabilities, including strengths and weaknesses and information needed to prove eligibility for "adult" services.

- **Educate Students and Their Families/Caregivers About Medicaid Waivers**

There should be more guidance that comes out jointly from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on how important it is to get information on Medicaid waivers to youth and their families early. It is necessary to include Medicaid waiver case managers and providers in transition planning, and to understand and communicate how they should be involved in transition planning and services.

- **Focus on Employment**

Everyone should have a job after graduation. The most successful employment opportunities occur when employment is a part of the IEP and formalized transition program discussions throughout the school years. This process leads to job exploration in areas of interest, compatible environments, inclusive support, and results in students either already being employed or having a solid employment offer before the last day of public-school services.

- **Learn from National Demonstration Projects**

As highlighted by numerous national demonstration projects, there is recognition of the need for stronger scaffolding to assist youth and families in navigating the transition to employment. Under ODEP's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) solutions initiative, models such as Youth and Family Systems Navigator (YFSN) (Karhan & Golden, 2021) and the Family Empowerment Model (Anderson et al., 2021) offer innovative approaches to consider. These models can extend beyond the SSI population and offer scaffolding of case management supports, systems integration, and services to youth and families to address barriers to employment. This includes racial and ethnic disproportionality in special education (Cruz & Rodl, 2018), issues with access to needed community services and supports, coordinating fragmented services, engaging in VR services, understanding benefits, and meeting basic needs (Anderson & Golden, 2019).

- **Identify Transition Champions**

Finding transition champions in and out of the schools helps to bridge the gap post-graduation. Students need community, and considering a more holistic approach promotes systems of support across their lifespan. Traditional transition with teachers leading the process does not always work, and we can move from the top-down model to students and families being partners through a strengths-based approach. Here is an example of how this could work: <https://transitiondiscoveries.org/>

- **Work with Students with Severe Mental Illness (SMI)**

For students with psychiatric disabilities and serious mental health conditions who are placed in Special Education, Career and Technical Education (CTE) should be provided and encouraged as an option more often. DOL and its federal and state partners should consider implementing a high-profile training program for Special Education Transition Planners, who are often unaware of CTE opportunities for students with psychiatric disabilities. Such a program could deliver funding-related workshops to high school principals and district superintendents who help students access CTE offerings (since some states have financing structures that deter referrals to such programs); and/or offer trainings to youth advocates and peer advocacy organizations so they can also better support youth in accessing such opportunities. The concentration of CTE courses along a career pathway is a strong predictor of high school graduation and of postsecondary employment for students with disabilities, particularly those with emotional disturbance. The guide Translating Evidence to Support Transitions in Career and Technical Education (TEST-CTE) helps special educators and transition specialists to assist students in exploring careers, formulate a career goal in an in-demand industry, develop an IEP with

at least four credits of CTE, obtain work-based learning experiences and mitigate challenges.

- **Integrate Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Programs into School Offerings**  
High School Career Tech Programs should be pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. They should be based on occupations that pay well and that are locally in-demand. They should also be connected to specific employers in the area to allow for work-based learning opportunities and placement in a permanent job. Apprenticeship funding should include funds to help young adults and adults identify open apprenticeship opportunities to enter these programs.

#### Consider Changes and Updates to Social Security

Under the Social Security topic, individuals shared ideas related to the administration of Social Security benefits, particularly when recipients are youth transitioning to adulthood. Here are their ideas:

- **Address Marriage Equity**  
There were several ideas regarding marriage equity. Consider Basing SSDI on the Poverty Level One idea focused on the fact that Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits fall below the federal poverty level and that not all states supplement SSDI. They felt strongly that Social Security should consider raising SSDI to meet the federal poverty level.
- **Allow for In-Kind Support and Maintenance**  
Another frequent discussion centered around allowing friends, family members, neighbors and others to help an SSI recipient pay for shelter and related costs without reducing the SSI payment amount. Young people should not be penalized for living at home and getting support from family members in the same way that young people with disabilities receive support from family members as they transition to adulthood. Simply addressing the issue of food in the In-Kind Support and Maintenance (ISM) rules is not enough. Young people on SSI should have the same transition supports as other young people. Increase the resource limits (currently \$2,000 for an individual and \$3,000 for a couple) that have not changed since 1989 and adjust them annually with the cost-of-living adjustment (OLA). Conduct annual prospective benefit amount determinations and do not change the payment amount until the next annual review to reduce the administrative burden on the agency. Additionally, help recipients budget and plan, and eliminate the constant cycle of underpayments and overpayments. Increase the general income exclusion (\$20 currently) and earned income exclusion (\$65 currently) and adjust them annually.
- **Increase the Age of the SSI Student Earned Income Exclusion**  
Currently students can only use the SSI Student Earned Income Exclusion until they turn 22. Many students need more than four years to complete a bachelor's degree, so increasing the age limit to 25 would allow more students to benefit from this work incentive.
- **Streamline Disability Determination and the Portability of Eligibility from State to State**

The eligibility processes, and portability of eligibility from state to state, can be overwhelming and confusing for many young adults. Social Security should consider working with states to simplify the process.

#### Focus on Improving Access through Transportation

Transportation is a key employment support and was mentioned in many ideas and comments. The following are some of the key points that were made.

- **Increase Funding for Direct Transportation**

Many young adults with disabilities rely on direct transportation. The process for applying for direct transportation should be streamlined. Besides that, funding should increase. If someone has a documented disability, their access to direct home-to-destination and back transportation should be simplified, especially in rural communities where a bus is not a viable mode of transportation. This can be due to long wait times between buses that would leave developmentally disabled people vulnerable to safety and inclement weather concerns in places with extreme heat and cold.

- **Ensure that Transportation Networks Are Available**

Young adults with disabilities cannot access employment, education, health care and recreation without safe, reliable and affordable transportation. In federal grant applications, wherever possible, federal agencies should encourage applicants to address interagency coordination across departments of transportation, education and health. Could the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) encourage State Educational Agencies to identify how they will address the transportation needs of youth with disabilities in their indicator 13 and 14 activities? The Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) is helping states implement coordination at the state level (Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility). Providers of youth transition services should also be required to describe how they will address transportation and mobility needs that students may have. Another idea stressed that many individuals with disabilities do well finding employment, but many cannot afford a car or are unable to drive a car. Local government entities need funds to support reliable transportation, increase the number of routes available, provide free transportation for individuals with disabilities or provide alternative modes of transportation.

#### Provide Transition Support for the Specific Needs of Disabled Youth in Rural Areas

It is clear from dialogue participants that rural schools and small towns have specific needs as it relates to disabled youth transitioning to adulthood. Here are some of the ideas that were submitted around supporting rural youth with disabilities.

- **Focus on Creating Opportunities for Disability Employment in Rural Areas**

Rural areas and small towns often lack employment opportunities. The lack of industry and businesses makes it difficult for disabled youth to receive training or build skills. DOL could consider offering funding to Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to provide skill building and paid job training opportunities for students with disabilities, as they are often staffed by professionals with disabilities. CILs provide services, support,



information, referrals, peer mentoring, transition, independent living skills and advocacy training for individuals and system wide.

- **Ensure Disability Employment Policies and Programs and Recognize the Differences between Urban and Rural Environments**

Whenever people are making decisions on the state and federal level, it is important to note the difference in availability of transportation, types of jobs and wages between urban and rural areas. Each area should have different services and solutions to better accommodate those differences. Take a multi-faceted approach to address the shortage of healthcare providers and therapists in rural areas through mobile platforms and by building medical capacity by partnering with colleges and universities to create clinical and training experiences.

#### Educate Employers

Like schools, employers play a key role in the successful transition to adulthood for disabled youth. Many contributions to the dialogue discussed different ways to educate employers about how they support disabled youth. Following are the key themes that were included in the dialogue:

- **Expand Community Outreach**

Employers need much more awareness and education around building inclusive communities and employment opportunities. This includes free training on types of accommodations and how to implement them, which should be more readily available to employers. Job coaches should be made available to employees with disabilities who need them to help bolster the worker's self-advocacy and ensure expectations are met. Further, more coordinated and systematic efforts are needed to educate employers about the benefits of tapping into the talent pool of job seekers who identify with a disability or as disabled. Many potential workers could work if employers understood job accommodation solutions and that accommodations often are low cost or no cost. For example, employers could be educated on the differences in communication styles that persons who are autistic have (e.g., less social, more direct, literal). The main thing employers could learn is that opening their workforce will make their workplace more diverse, which will in turn improve services to their customers and help address issues around workforce shortages.

- **Utilize Vocational Programs to Reach Employers**

More vocational programs should be available to high school students. School districts should have connections with businesses in their communities and facilitate job placements to help students gain hands-on, marketable skills. In turn, local employers will learn how much students with disabilities have to offer in the workplace.

#### Encourage the Federal Government to Serve as a Model Employer

A group of ideas submitted to the dialogue suggested that the Federal Government should serve as a model employer for individuals with disabilities. Following are the proposed ideas for such an effort:

- **Outreach and Awareness**  
 Conduct a marketing and outreach campaign targeting community disability service providers to educate them about job opportunities in the Federal Government. Since the Federal Government offers jobs in localities nationwide (not just in Washington, D.C.), this campaign could be national in scope.
- **Create On-the-Job Training**  
 The Federal Government should allow young adults with disabilities the opportunity to build expertise through on-the-job training. Federal jobs that offer on-the-job training programs will help with the transition process and ensure employees are set up for success.
- **Assign a Mentor to All New Hires**  
 The Federal Government should provide federal employees with a disability a “safe person,” or mentor, to go to with questions about procedures, norms, social cues/expectations and culture.
- **Provide Common Accommodations**  
 All federal jobs should allow for a flexible schedule, ability to work remotely when needed, ability to take hourly short breaks, human-centered supervision, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aides and supports in plain language. These accommodations should be available to all hires to benefit all workers.
- **Support Employee Resource Groups**  
 All federal locations should offer Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to provide employees with a trusted community they can go to with questions or concerns.
- **Appoint a Sponsor to All Employees with Disabilities**  
 Federal sponsors should be someone who will ensure employees get the training, networking, stretch assignments and other experiences needed to navigate leadership in a federal agency.
- **Promote Individuals with Disabilities into Leadership Roles**  
 The Federal Government should promote individuals with disabilities, especially into leadership roles. This is especially important for programs that impact or support people with disabilities.

Create and Support Opportunities for Peer Mentoring

In the dialogue, there was much discussion about the positive roles peer mentors can play. Following are the submitted ideas around expanding peer mentors:

- **Design Training, Tools and Resources to Build a Workforce of Peer Mentors to Engage Peer Mentees**  
 Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies (SVRA) are able to employ peer mentors to support the engagement of students with disabilities (14-21) in self-advocacy instruction and as a support for all Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). The goal of this idea would be to foster an employment pipeline in which students are mentored and then employed

as a peer mentor. This would be as part of the students' career pathway, modeled as a youth leadership network. Tools and resources available to peer mentoring programs may include self-advocacy media, activity guides and plain language resource guides. On-the-job training and employment opportunities could also expand career opportunities in this new field.

- **Develop Group Peer Mentor Training Summer Programs**

These programs led by state youth leadership organizations would offer youth leaders with disabilities peer mentoring techniques and competencies for effective practice in the field. They would also establish a workforce of "Certified and Trained" peer mentors returning to their communities prepared to be employed or paid to support the transition to independence and employment.

- **Utilize National and State Networks of Advocacy Agencies and Resource Centers**

CILs, American Job Centers, ARC chapters, Post-Secondary Institutions with Disability Services Centers (DSCs), and Community Rehab Providers (CRPs) are available to blend and braid existing resources. They will support the emerging practice of peer mentoring focused on career path growth and employment for people with disabilities.

- **Create Peer Mentoring Programs for Young Adults with Disabilities in High School and College**

One dialogue registrant recommended that students who have done well in peer mentoring programs should be selected to become paid peer mentors in a new class. For example, if they do well in a program, they can be a paid peer mentor trainer and train the next group of peer mentors. This has shown a lot of success by increasing the students' confidence, leadership and advocacy skills. For college students, the peer mentoring program assists students with a disability in navigating the campus, learning about services on campus, joining different social groups, learning about time management, participating in college experiences activities, learning and adjusting to different schedules, communicating with other students and faculty, and practicing and improving social skills.

#### Home Based Services to Include Transition Services

There is a real shortage of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)—a set of services and supports that are essential for individuals with disabilities to live independently in their community. There is a waitlist in many states due to lack of funding and a HCBS infrastructure to provide these services. Medicaid funds most of these services and supports; however, the problem is that those funds are often used for institutions, such as nursing homes. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and The Olmstead decision support the rights of people with disabilities to live and receive services in the most integrated setting possible in the community. The Justice Department and HHS should do more to make sure states comply with these laws.

#### Provide Transition Services Inclusive of Medically Complex Individuals

For young adults who need support from nurses to be in the community, waiver programs should be allowed to pay for nurses and habilitative and social activities. Often, individuals are denied programming due to the need for a nurse. Encourage communities to welcome

medically complex individuals by ensuring that their facilities allow those who need assistance with personal care to get the care they need. There should also be flexible day programming options that allow people to build social networks and help communities adapt activities to make them accessible for all.

## Conclusion

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The ePolicyWorks national online dialogue, *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy*, and its companion Twitter/X Fireside Chats, succeeded in facilitating a rich online discussion about policies and practices that can lead to a smooth transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities. In total, 95 participants posted 108 ideas, shared 150 comments and added 279 votes addressing a range of important topics. These results can help inform future policy priorities and funding opportunities and strengthen federal agencies' efforts to strategically address the needs of disabled youth from diverse backgrounds as they transition to adulthood.

## Appendix A: Resources Shared in the Online Dialogue

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### Organizations and Not-for-Profits

- [American Association of People with Disabilities \(AAPD\)](#)
- [College 2 Career, San Diego Community College District](#)
- [Dinah F.B. Cohen DREAM Fellowship Program, National Disability Mentoring Coalition](#)
- [MENTOR](#)
- [National Disability Mentoring Coalition](#)
- [Transition Discoveries](#)

### Reports and Resources

- [AAP, AACAP, CHA Declare National Emergency in Children's Mental Health, American Academy of Pediatrics, October 19, 2021](#)
- [Advancing Inclusive Mentoring: Building a Peer Mentoring Workforce Supporting Students and Youth with Disabilities, Peer Mentoring Works](#)
- [Customizing Employment, A Do-It-Yourself Toolkit for Families, Forms and Other Information, UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, December 21, 2021](#)
- [Customizing Employment Volume 1, A Do-It-Yourself Toolkit for Families, UCONN Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, 2020-2021](#)
- [Financial Education, Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation](#)
- [Therapy Reimagined, Adaptive Heroes](#)
- [Transition IEP Checklist, Project Launch](#)
- [Youth Advocates for Change, RAISE](#)
- [Youth as Self Advocates, Family Voices](#)
- [Youth & Young Adults, Got Transition](#)

### State, National and International Resources

- [Career and Technical Education for Students with Emotional Disturbance, SSI Youth Solutions, April 30, 2021](#)
- [Determinations of Substantial Gain Activity \(SGA\), Social Security Administration](#)
- [Federal Exchange on Employment & Disability \(FEED\), Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion \(EARN\)](#)
- [H.R. 6405- Marriage Equality for Disabled Adults Act, United States Congress, 2022](#)
- [Neurodiversity in the Workplace, Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion \(EARN\)](#)
- [NJ WorkAbility, New Jersey Division of Disability Services](#)
- [Plan Benefits, CalABLE](#)
- [Plan to Achieve Self-Support \(PASS\), Social Security Administration](#)
- [Policy Considerations for Implementing Youth and Family Case Management Strategies Across Systems, SSI Youth Solutions, April 30, 2021](#)
- [Protecting Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, 2021](#)

- [Schedule A Hiring Authority, Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion \(EARN\)](#)
- [SGA for the Non-Blind Disabled, Social Security Administration](#)
- [The Family Empowerment Model: Improving Employment for Youth Receiving Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\), SSI Youth Solutions, April 30, 2021](#)
- [Ticket to Work, Social Security Administration](#)
- [Treatment of Married Couples in the SSI Program, Social Security Office of Policy, December 2003](#)

News Articles, Blogs and Webinars (by date)

- [Congressional Youth Mentoring Caucus Briefing: Advancing Inclusive Mentoring, MENTOR, July 20, 2021](#)
- [Let's Work! California Trailer, Let's Work CA, July 30, 2020](#)
- [Let's Work! Documentary \(Full Length\), Let's Work CA, October 30, 2020](#)
- [Results of a National Transition Survey of Young Adults with Disabilities by Raise and Impact, EP Magazine, October 2022](#)

## Appendix B: Resources Shared During the Twitter/X Fireside Chats

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### Organizations and Not-for-profits

- [Center for Adult Transition, Mercer County Community College](#)
- [Childhood Agricultural Safety Network, Cultivate Safety](#)
- [Jobs at Corps, The Corps Network](#)
- [National Technical Assistance Center on Transition](#)
- [Project Access, Howard Community College](#)
- [Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program, Institute for Educational Leadership](#)
- [Telling the Story Project](#)
- [Youth Empowerment Stewards \(YES\) Program, Stewards Individual Placements](#)
- [YouthWork Industries, Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan](#)

### Reports

- [2017 Project of the Year: Northwest Youth Corps- ASL Inclusion Young Adult Crew, The Corps Network](#)
- [2021 Impact Report, Covenant House Alaska](#)
- [Agricultural Safety, National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, 2022](#)
- [Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines, Cultivate Safety](#)
- [Expect, Engage and Empower: Successful Transitions for All! Ideas That Work](#)
- [Storytelling, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute](#)

### State, National and International Government Links

- [A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, United States Department of Education, August 2020](#)
- [Career Preparation, CAPE-Youth](#)
- [Competitive Integrated Employment \(CIE\), Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)
- [Federal Partners in Transition, Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)
- [Literature Review of Five Federal Systems Serving Transition Age Youth with Disabilities, Office of Disability Employment Policy, September 16, 2014](#)

- [Neurodiversity in the Workplace, Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion \(EARN\)](#)
- [Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship](#)
- [Policy Guidance: A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities, Individual with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA, August 2020\)](#)
- [Provider Report, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration](#)
- [Resources to Assist Youth with the Transition to a Successful Adulthood, Social Security Administration](#)
- [State Programs—CAPE-Youth](#)
- [Youth Transition Services, Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)



## Appendix C: Outreach and Promotion

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### ePolicyWorks Email and Social Media Outreach

ePolicyWorks conducted 18 distinct email campaigns to promote the online dialogue and the two associated Twitter/X Fireside Chats. In total, 63,698 emails were delivered to ePolicyWorks stakeholders promoting the Twitter/X Fireside Chats and dialogue, with an open rate of more than 28%, which is more than five percentage points better than recent ePolicyWorks dialogue outreach campaigns and 11 percentage points higher than the industry average of 17%. In addition, 34% of individuals who opened an outreach email clicked on at least one link in the email.

- Total emails delivered: 63,698
- Total emails opened: 17,708
- Total number of individuals who clicked on a link in email: 5,990

In addition to email distribution, ePolicyWorks posted 62 tweets to its Twitter account announcing the Twitter/X Fireside Chats and promoting the dialogue. The 62 tweets resulted in 4,884 impressions and 301 engagements (likes, clicks, replies, retweets or quote tweets).

The ePolicyWorks direct email campaigns included the following:

- General Dialogue Launch Announcement (July 25, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 5,786
  - Emails opened: 1,300
  - Clicked: 337
- Community Living Targeted Dialogue Announcement (July 26, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 360
  - Emails opened: 136
  - Clicked: 56
- Criminal Justice Targeted Dialogue Announcement (July 28, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 52
  - Emails opened: 24
  - Clicked: 2
- Past ePolicyWorks Dialogue Registrants Dialogue Announcement (July 31, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 834
  - Emails opened: 335
  - Clicked: 119
- Transition Programs Targeted Dialogue Announcement (August 2, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 721

- Emails opened: 274
- Clicked: 94
  
- AUCD Network Targeted Dialogue Announcement (August 8, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 2,280
  - Emails opened: 1,248
  - Clicked: 1,019
  
- YouthACT Dialogue Registrants Targeted Dialogue Reminder (August 8, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 288
  - Emails opened: 116
  - Clicked: 40
  
- General Dialogue Reminder (August 10, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 5,776
  - Emails opened: 1,234
  - Clicked: 132
  
- General Dialogue Extension Announcement (August 14, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 8,055
  - Emails opened: 1,715
  - Clicked: 284
  
- General Invitation to Twitter/X Fireside Chat (August 16, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 4,894
  - Emails opened: 1,449
  - Clicked: 475
  
- Dialogue Registrants Targeted Invitation to Twitter/X Fireside Chat (August 16, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 112
  - Emails opened: 52
  - Clicked: 10
  
- General "Day of" Reminder Twitter/X Fireside Chat (August 17, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 3,791
  - Emails opened: 1,240
  - Clicked: 318

- General "Last Chance" Dialogue Reminder (August 22, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 8,181
  - Emails opened: 1,660
  - Clicked: 240
- General "Last Day" Dialogue Reminder (August 25, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 4,435
  - Emails opened: 1,547
  - Clicked: 796
- General Invitation to Twitter/X Fireside Chat with CAPE-Youth (September 18, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 5,119
  - Emails opened: 1,875
  - Clicked: 933
- Dialogue Registrants Targeted Invitation to Twitter/X Fireside Chat with CAPE-Youth (September 18, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 136
  - Emails opened: 68
  - Clicked: 12
- General "Day of" Reminder Twitter/X Fireside Chat with CAPE-Youth and Dialogue Open (September 20, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 7,651
  - Emails opened: 1,862
  - Clicked: 435
- General "Starting Shortly" Reminder Twitter/X Fireside Chat with CAPE-Youth (September 20, 2023)
  - Total emails delivered: 5,227
  - Emails opened: 1,655
  - Clicked: 688

#### Independent Promotion

Beyond outreach by ePolicyWorks, DOL, ETA and the other host agencies used their own avenues for promotion to stakeholders, including listservs, GovDelivery, Twitter/X and newsletters. Other public and private organizations and news outlets also promoted the Twitter/X Fireside Chats and online dialogue through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter/X, emails,

blogs, newsletters and action alerts. Below is a sampling of the organizations that disseminated details about the Twitter/X Fireside Chats and online dialogue:

- Partners for Sight
- EARN
- Department of Education
- Rural Institute Transition and Employment Projects
- The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board
- Workforce GPS
- nTIDE
- United States Patent and Trademark Office
- Administration for Community Living
- Center for Disability Resources
- Independent Living Research Utilization
- Peer TA
- SKIL Resource Center

## Appendix D: Top Ideas

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### Top Ideas by Vote

Below are the top four ideas by vote from the *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy* online dialogue.

Please note that the ideas listed in the following section were submitted by participants and may include minor typographical corrections. These corrections have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the original posts.

1. Transition to Adult Life

Topic: Education

7 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 7 Net Votes

Comments: 5

Followers: 1

*Students with disabilities in transition need skill building in independent living in all areas of adult life. This includes health care transition, money management and life skills.*

*Got Transition has great tools on health care transition*

*<https://www.gottransition.org/youth-and-young-adults/>. PATF has financial literacy tools/guides <https://patf.us/what-we-do/financial-education/>. Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation – An important part of our mission is providing financial education to people with disabilities.*

*I think that they can be shared in multiple ways: youth advisory groups such as YAFC through the RAISE Center <https://raisecenter.org/youth-advisory-council/> or YASA through Family Voices national <https://familyvoices.org/yasa/>; students in high school transition programs; students in postsecondary programs like DREAM (Developing Real Expectations for Achieving Mastery) found at <https://thinkcollege.net/>; and the Centers for Independent Living at [www.ncil.org](http://www.ncil.org).*

2. Collaboration Between School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation for Transition

Topic: Education

7 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 7 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 1

*State Departments of Education, State Offices of Departments of Rehabilitation, and local school districts need to collaborate to develop transition resources and curriculums to help students prepare for transition.*

3. Improve the Transition from School to Adult Services

Topic: Employment

5 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Net Votes

Comments: 1  
Followers: 1

*Ensure adult service providers have a full profile of the student's background, interests, strengths, and support needs so they don't need to take a step back and re-do assessments that have already been completed in school.*

4. Expanded Labor Exchange for Job Seekers  
Topic: Employment  
5 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Net Votes  
Comments: 1  
Followers: 1

*Create a comprehensive labor exchange for job seekers integrated with federal, state workforce systems (WIOA), apprenticeships, private sector staffing agencies, social media, state and local Govt/Education career sites. ERP format with AI-modeling job matching, CRM and Customer/consumer modules.*

*Current systems are so varied and complex that employers, job seekers, and job developer specialists are unable to effectively navigate opportunities and make job placements timely.*

### Top Trending Ideas

Below are the top six trending ideas at the end of the *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy* online dialogue. The trending ideas are based on the number of views over the course of the dialogue with more recent views weighted higher. A view is counted when an individual clicks on an idea to see it in its entirety.

Three of the trending ideas, *Collaboration Between School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation for Transition, Transition to Adult Life* and *Expanded Labor Exchange for Job Seekers* were also included on the list of the top ideas by vote above. See the [Top Ideas by Vote](#) section for a full description of these three ideas.

Below are the additional three ideas that were trending at the end of the dialogue.

Like the *Top Ideas by Vote* section, the three ideas listed in the following section include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the original post.

1. In-Program Design and Service Delivery Pre-ETS Should Not Be a Check-off-the-Box Service  
Topic: Employment  
4 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes  
Comments: 1  
Followers: 1

*Youth with disabilities need repetition to gain the knowledge they need to become employable. Pre-ETS should not be a check box service or one-and-done. There is no way of knowing when the light bulb moment is going to come for youth, and they finally understand what is being taught. Some Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies seem to think that if a youth with a disability does not gain an immediate understanding of a pre-ETS service, that means the youth has no capacity to gain that through repetition of that service and needs to be closed off the caseload.*

*Also, there are many ways to teach the five pre-ETS and many underlying parts to each. Just because a youth has had one class of self-advocacy does not mean they may not need more hours of self-advocacy delivered in the same or a different way as there are numerous parts to each of the five required pre-ETS. Just like there are many different parts to math or science. Just because someone has had math does not mean they can do algebra.*

*As each youth is not going to reach the same milestone at the same time, youth without a disability do not reach milestones at the same time. Youth with a disability have more to overcome so it may take them longer, but that does not mean they will not be able to become employable. Instead of finding ways to say "no" to a service, they need to be able to get the services they need to become employed.*

## 2. Skill Building and Paid Training programs

Topic: Education

5 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes

Comments: 1

Followers: 1

*Rural schools in small towns often lack opportunity. The lack of industry and businesses makes it difficult to receive training or build skills. The Department of Labor could offer contracts to Centers for Independent Living (CILS) to provide skill building and paid job training opportunities for students in these areas. The Centers (399) offer people with disabilities a movement, a way of looking at disability in society, focused on equal opportunity, self-determination and self-respect. The centers are nonprofits that are community-based, cross- disability organizations where people with disabilities make their own decisions about their lives. They are staffed and director controlled by a majority of professionals with disabilities. We provide services, supports, information, referrals, peer mentoring, transition, independent living skills, and advocacy training for individuals and system wide.*

*Transition is a major focus and offering opportunities that go to the schools from professionals who were students like them is an effective outreach that produces paid opportunities related to actual achievable jobs. They also can add this experience on their resume when they leave school. Schools welcome programs that benefit their students.*

3. Everyone Transitions to Adulthood, Start on Day 1, Self-Determination & Student Led IEP Mtgs  
Topic: Education  
5 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes  
Comments: 1  
Followers: 1

*The message that "Employment is the end goal of Education," gets lost when you have a student with a disability (SWD). Every student and their family begin school on Day 1 working towards the high expectations that their child is going to be a nurse, teacher, police officer, truck driver or "something." They all have a #StrengthsBased mindset! Each year, the adults (Parents and Teachers) have a responsibility to make the connection of "what I am teaching you today, you are going to use in a career!" #BackwardsPlanning Yet, if you have a SWD, we believe "transition planning" is "something extra" and it all rests on the shoulders of the transition specialist.*

*Educators need to be the capacity builders when it comes to student-led IEP meetings. Pre-ETS counselors in Self-Advocacy and Parents (once informed) could do this too! Your students become the messengers to other educators, families and other students! Who wouldn't want to follow the path of a self-determined self-advocate! With all the confidence and skill building, employment becomes the next step!*

*The "I'm Determined" one-pager is a good start! Every student could use this organization in taking stock of their brand!*

*Predictors of Post-Secondary success must get in front of all adults (Teachers and Parents) starting on Day 1 with a caveat that these Pre-K-12 in-school activities exponentially impact #PostSecondary success! #Freedom – We owe this to every student!*

*I really like the Let's Work California documentary from the California Transition Alliance and the CA DD Council.*

*You have to see what's possible!*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8k7\\_7ui7Jw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8k7_7ui7Jw)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jgl-tfUkhsQ>

#### Most Popular Ideas by Dialogue Topic

Below are the top three most popular ideas from each of the online dialogue's five topic areas. "Most popular" is determined based on the idea's total number of up votes, comments and followers at the conclusion of the dialogue.



The ideas listed in the following section include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the original posts.

#### Most Popular Ideas from the Employment Topic

1. Improve the Transition from School to Adult Services  
(The full description of this idea can be found under [Top Ideas by Vote](#))
2. Expanded Labor Exchange for Job Seekers  
(The full description of this idea can be found under [Top Ideas by Vote](#))
3. Medicaid Waivers a Part of Employment and Transition Planning  
4 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes  
Comments: 1  
Followers: 1

*There should be more guidance that comes out jointly from OSERS and CMS on how important it is to get information on Medicaid waivers to youth/families early, to include Medicaid waiver case managers/providers in transition planning, and how they should be involved in transition planning and services.*

#### Most Popular Ideas from the Education Topic

1. Transition to Adult Life  
(The full description of this idea can be found under [Top Ideas by Vote](#))
2. Collaboration Between School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation for Transition  
(The full description of this idea can be found under [Top Ideas by Vote](#))
3. Transitioning Youth Need Work Incentive Planning  
4 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes  
Comments: 1  
Followers: 1

*Young people need accurate information about how work will impact their cash benefits, health coverage and other benefits that they need to live independently. While WIPA services are available, WIPA funding is inadequate to meet the demands for work incentive planning. More funding should be made available for work incentive planning for transition age youth and work incentive education for school staff who work with students with disabilities.*

#### Most Popular Ideas from the Health and Human Services Topic

1. Transportation  
4 Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes  
Comments: 1  
Followers: 0

*The process for applying for direct transportation needs to be streamlined and funding*

*needs to be increased.*

*If someone has a documented disability it should be made simple for them to access direct home-to-destination and back transportation.*

*Especially in rural communities where a bus is not a viable mode of transportation with long wait times between buses that would leave developmentally disabled people vulnerable to safety concerns as well as inclement weather concerns in places with extreme heat and cold.*

2. National Medicaid Buy In

4 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes

Comments: 1

Followers: 1

*The U.S. should adopt a National Medicaid Medicare Buy In for all. We should eliminate asset limits, earnings caps in all federal programs for the disabled! It's time to put an end to the world where Being Disabled = A Life Sentence of POVERTY*

*Also adopt National Medicare BUY IN FOR ALL*

3. Addressing Student Mental Health

3 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 3 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 1

*According to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), 50% of students with mental illness drop out of school. The AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) declared a children's mental health national emergency*

*<https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/17718> and the Surgeon General issued an advisory <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>. COVID exacerbated mental illness; some children who didn't have it before do now, and others with preexisting mental illness worsened. Along with this issue is appropriately addressing bullying in schools.*

*<https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/17718>*

Most Popular Ideas from the Social Security Topic

1. SSI Pays Less Than Poverty Rate

(the full description of this idea can be found under [Top Ideas by Vote](#))

2. In-Kind Support and Maintenance Should Be Eliminated

4 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes

Comments: 3

Followers: 1

*Friends, family members, neighbors, etc. should be able to help an SSI recipient pay for*

*shelter and related costs without reducing the SSI payment amount. Young people, especially, should not be penalized for living at home and getting support from family members in the same ways that young people with disabilities receive support from family members as they transition to adulthood. Just addressing the issue of food in the ISM rules is not enough. Young people on SSI should have the same transition supports as other young people.*

*Eliminate the marriage penalty. Increase the resource limits (currently \$2,000 for an individual and \$3,000 for a couple) that have not changed since 1989 and adjust them annually with the COLA. Conduct annual prospective benefit amount determinations and do not change the payment amount until the next annual review to reduce the administrative burden on the agency, help recipients to be able to budget and plan, and eliminate the constant cycle of underpayments and overpayments. Increase the general income exclusion (\$20 currently) and earned income exclusion (\$65 currently) and adjust them annually.*

3. SSI Equity Marriage

4 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes

Comments: 1

Followers: 1

*When people with disabilities decide to exercise their civil right to get married, the system punishes them by reducing their checks. This is discrimination and must be addressed immediately.*

[Most Popular Ideas from the Additional Ideas Topic](#)

1. Community Supports for Medically Complex Individuals

4 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes

Comments: 1

Followers: 0

*For young adults who need support from nurses to be in the community, allow waiver programs to pay for nurses and habilitative and social activities. Individuals are often denied programming due to the need for a nurse but are stuck sitting at home with a nurse all day. Encourage communities to welcome medically complex individuals. Provide adult changing tables in public facilities to allow those who need assistance with personal care to get the care they need. Provide flexible day programming options that allow people to build social networks. Help communities adapt activities to make them accessible for all.*

2. Transportation and Mobility

3 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 3 Net Votes

Comments: 4

Followers: 1

*Youth can't access employment, education, health care, recreation, etc. settings without safe, reliable and affordable transportation. In federal grant applications, wherever possible, federal agencies should encourage applicants to address interagency coordination across departments of transportation, education and health. Could OSEP encourage State Educational Agencies (SEAs) to identify how they will address the transportation needs of youth with disabilities in their indicator 13 and 14 activities? FTA is helping states implement coordination at the state level (Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility). Providers of youth transition services should also be required to describe how they will address transportation and mobility needs students may have.*

3. The Fact of the Matter...

3 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 3 Net Votes

Comments: 3

Followers: 1

*Many of us...and when I say many of us, I basically am meaning MOST of us, really have no idea what to do with the disability population because, despite any efforts they MAY make, they'll HOPEFULLY never know what it's like being disabled because they themselves are NOT disabled.*

*So it's up to us, the disabled crowd, to decide what happens to us in life, this world, the community, in every aspect because nobody else is even going to TRY and do it for us!*



*So, where do we go from here?*

*Some say we should get more out of life by trying new things?*

*I think that this is probably a good idea if we take it the right way.*

*We COULD take it and run it straight into the ground, but what would that help? No one if you were to ask me 😏*

*I say that we should grab the bull/goat/whatever else you like to call it by the horns and ride it into submission!*

*What are your thoughts?*

### Twitter/X Fireside Chats Overview

To help DOL and its federal agency partners gather additional ideas on ways to improve policies and practices to facilitate a smooth transition to adulthood for disabled youth, @ePolicyWorks hosted two Twitter/X Fireside Chats on August 17, 2023, and September 20, 2023. The Twitter/X Fireside Chats created a space for stakeholders and subject matter experts to share insights, ideas and resources to inform DOL regarding services for youth with disabilities. Featured guests of the chat included the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD), National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC), Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), The Corps Network and the Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth (CAPE-Youth).

During these one-hour chats, participants took part in real-time, interactive discussions to gather input and ideas on policies, practices, strategies and approaches to support successful transitions for youth with disabilities. The insights gathered during the chats complemented the contributions collected throughout the *Our Future Matters: Informing the Federal Interagency Strategy* online dialogue.

The August 17 chat was held during the last week of the online dialogue and encouraged Twitter/X Fireside Chats participants to continue the conversation by posting additional ideas in the dialogue. Immediately after the chat concluded, the dialogue extension was announced for one additional week. On September 20, CAPE-Youth was the featured guest as we reopened the dialogue for an additional day. Promotions and tweets for this one-day event provided an exclusive opportunity to boost and engage the audiences, and encourage participation, comments and voting on ideas previously submitted.

[Appendix B](#) of this document includes resources shared during the chats.

### Questions Asked During Twitter/X Fireside Chats

1. Can you tell us a little bit about your organization & how you support #disabled youth in seamlessly transitioning into adulthood? #EPWChat
2. How can educational institutions & nonprofit orgs better collaborate with employment support services to facilitate a smooth #transition to adulthood for #disabled #youth? #EPWChat
3. Can you share resources & programs that have proved effective in empowering disabled youth to pursue postsecondary education and/or vocational training? #EPWChat
4. What strategies can organizations employ to foster inclusive workplaces that embrace the talents and contributions of young adults with disabilities entering the workforce? #EPWChat
5. Which initiatives have been successful in promoting holistic support for #disabled youth as they navigate adulthood? #EPWChat

6. How can @USDOL and federal agencies help ensure that vocational training and skill development programs are tailored to the diverse needs of disabled youth? Can you share ideas of partnerships that can help achieve this? #EPWChat
7. Tell us about a time your org was able to help a young adult with a disability address challenges they faced transitioning to adulthood. What were the challenges & what resources or programs were helpful? #EPWChat
8. Any last thoughts or ideas on how to better support the successful transition of youth and young adults with disabilities to adulthood? #EPWChat

### Twitter/X Fireside Chats Metrics

The following metrics reflect engagement and activity in the August 17 and September 20 @ePolicyWorks Twitter/X Fireside Chats:

- Number of tweets posted by @ePolicyWorks during the chats: 55
- Number of impressions received on tweets sent by @ePolicyWorks during the chats (total number of views): 10,951
- Number of engagements received on tweets sent by ePolicyWorks during the chat (clicks anywhere on the tweet, including retweets, replies, follows, likes, links, hashtags, embedded media, username, profile photo or tweet expansion): 630
- Number of active tweeters (participants who posted at least once, including hosts) during chat: 13
- Number of tweets posted with the #EPWChat during the chat: (including tweets from @ePolicyWorks): 184
- Number of resources shared during the chat: 28 (see [Appendix B](#))

### Hashtags Used During the Twitter/X Fireside Chats

In addition to #EPWChat, participants used other hashtags relevant to the discussion. This helped expand the online reach and encourage participation with additional stakeholders. Hashtags used included the following:

Hashtags used:

- #ADA
- #Accommodations
- #ConservationCorps
- #CareerPathways
- #CareerPreparation
- #CommunitySchool
- #DisabledYouth
- #Employment
- #EmploymentFirst
- #FosterCare
- #JuvenileJustice
- #PostSecondary
- #PreETS
- #Transition
- #TransitionCoach
- #TraumaInformedCare

- #WorkBasedLearning

- #Youth