



# SSI Youth Solutions Conference

Day 3 - Disability Employment Curricula and  
Connecting to Postsecondary Education

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy

Mathematica

June 11, 2021

# Tools and Resources

## • Questions

- Submit questions using the **Q&A** panel found in the lower right corner of your screen
- Select **All Panelists** in the **Ask:** field
- For technical assistance, send the **Host** a message with **Chat** or **Q&A**

## • Closed Captioning

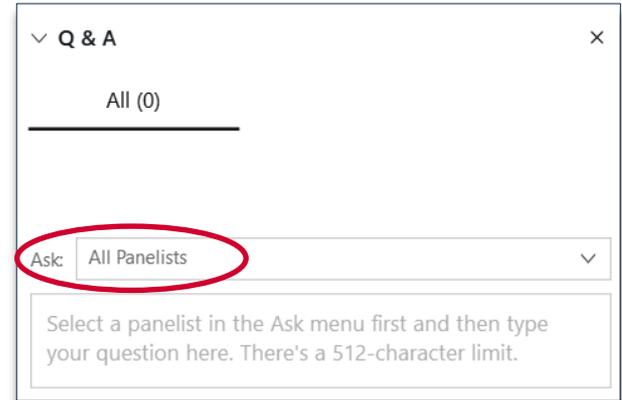
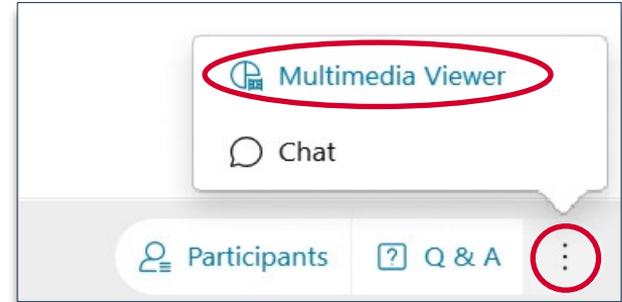
- Open the **Multimedia Viewer** panel found in the lower right corner of your screen

## • Meeting Materials

- <https://www.mathematica.org/features/ssi-youth-solutions-conference>

## • Meet & Greet with Authors – Day 3

- <https://mathematica.webex.com/mathematica/j.php?MTID=m03e104562182cc58d29cc97c9e5874e1>



# Welcome

**Kirk Lew, Office of Disability Employment Policy,  
U.S. Department of Labor**

# Agenda

---

- **Welcome**
- **Current Landscape and Challenges**
- **Proposal Presentations**
- **Response to the Proposals**
- **Questions & Answers**
- **Meet & Greet with the Authors**

# Discussion of Current Landscape and Challenges

**Andrew Langan, Mathematica**

# Why focus on youth receiving SSI?

---

- **Almost 1 million youth ages 14 to 24 receive SSI annually**
- **More than 200,000 youth ages 14 to 24 apply for SSI annually**
- **They have significant health conditions affecting functioning and live in households with low income and assets**
- **Two-thirds of youth who receive SSI as children go on to receive SSI as adults**

# **Youth receiving SSI face unique challenges in transitioning from childhood to young adulthood**

---

- **Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment**
- **Uncoordinated service system**
- **Lack of information and awareness**
- **Limited or delayed access to services**
- **Limited use of evidence-based practices**

# Youth receiving SSI experience poor outcomes in their transition to adulthood

---

- **Low high school completion and employment rates**
- **Low access to postsecondary education**
- **Difficulty meeting basic needs**
- **High reliance on public programs**
- **High rates of social challenges (such as poverty, incarceration, and unintended pregnancies)**

# SSI Youth Solutions project

---

- **The Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, funded 12 papers by subject matter experts exploring potential interventions that advance employment and other outcomes for youth receiving SSI**
  - Novel, untested ideas
  - Enhancements or extensions of existing practices
- **Selected through a competitive process**
- **Papers are available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/individuals/youth/ssi-youth>**

# Proposed interventions address important considerations

---

- **What gap or limitation in the existing system will the intervention address—that is, why do we need it?**
- **What agency could sponsor and implement the intervention?**
- **What existing evidence supports the theory of change?**
- **What are the potential costs, and who bears them?**
- **How does the intervention consider replicability, scalability, and sustainability?**

# Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) considerations

---

- **Establishing culturally appropriate and inclusive service models**
- **Person-centered planning and services**
- **Increased DEI into program infrastructure and delivery**
- **Ensuring DEI in evaluation efforts**

# Today's presentations on disability employment curricula and connecting to postsecondary education

- **Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT): A Research-Based Program for Promoting High Expectations for Employment and Knowledge of Resources**
  - *Judith Gross, Stephanie Gage, and Grace Francis – Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, Indiana University-Bloomington, Virginia Commonwealth University National Training and Data Center, and George Mason University*
- **Employment Empowerment: A Foundational Intervention for Youth with Disabilities to Build Employment Skills**
  - *Paul Hippolitus – Independent Consultant*
- **Progressive Education: Early Intervention Strategy to Improve Postsecondary Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities**
  - *Tara Howe, Christine McCarthy, James Smith, and Rich Tulikangas – Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation*
- **Career and Technical Education for Students with Emotional Disturbance**
  - *Colleen McKay and Marsha Ellison – University of Massachusetts Medical School*

# Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT)

Family  
Employment  
Awareness  
Training

Judith M.S. Gross, Indiana University

Grace L. Francis, George Mason University

Stephanie Gage, Virginia Commonwealth University

# Overview and Target Population

- FEAT is a family-focused intervention targeting youth with disabilities and their families (and others who support them) to increase their expectations for employment and improve their knowledge of supports and services to bolster their integrated, competitive employment goals



Expectations



Knowledge



Support/TA

# Intervention Rationale

---

- **Lack of knowledge and misinformation about the impact of work on benefits and availability of services to support employment interfere with achievement of employment goals**
- **Lack of high expectations results in no or low interest in work for people with disabilities**
- **Raising expectations and improving knowledge of supports and services will increase employment among adults with disabilities**

# Key Features of FEAT

---

- **Dispels myths related to ability to work**
- **Dispels myths about benefits**
- **Targets youth in transition before they graduate from high school to promote integrated, supported, competitive employment**
- **Supports youth and families by focusing on a multitude of resources and addressing questions of access and eligibility**

## Key Features of FEAT continued

---

- **Promotes greater interagency coordination and collaboration**
- **Uses a train-the-trainer model focused on implementation by a community organization**
- **Provides support through a university–community organization partnership**

## Key Features of FEAT continued

---

- **Provides evidence-based curriculum and evaluation components to states adopting FEAT**
- **Focuses on integrative, competitive employment, consistent with current policies and best practices**

# Strengths and Limitations

---

- **Strengths**

- Community/family-led intervention
- Adapted for each state and community in which it is implemented
- Dispels myths about work and benefits
- Supports person-centered competitive employment goals
- Applicable across disabilities and support needs

- **Limitations**

- Adapting to each state takes notable time, for which the community organization being trained needs funding to support its work
- Requires coordination and collaboration within the state
- Needs a clear program leader
- Requires ongoing effort

# Conclusion

---

- **FEAT is currently being implemented across 5 states: Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Rhode Island**
- **FEAT is flexible enough to allow implementation across states with different cultures**
- **FEAT's challenges are also its strengths**
- **FEAT is aligned with current policies, regulations, and best practices**

# Thank you!

---

Family Employment Awareness Training  
(FEAT)

<https://beachcenter.lsi.ku.edu/beach-family-employment-awareness-training-feat>

Grace L. Francis, Ph.D.  
George Mason University  
[gfranci4@gmu.edu](mailto:gfranci4@gmu.edu)

Judith M.S. Gross, Ph.D.  
Indiana University  
[jmsgross@iu.edu](mailto:jmsgross@iu.edu)

Stephanie Gage, B.A.  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
[gagesn@vcu.edu](mailto:gagesn@vcu.edu)



# **Employment Empowerment: A Foundational Intervention for Youth with Disabilities to Build Competitive Employment Skills**

Paul Hippolitus, Consultant

# History of the Proposal and What's Missing

---

- **History of the proposal**

- My story (Paul Hippolitus)
- Our story (disability field)

- **What's missing?**

- More complete “employment empowerment” instruction
- A national initiative

# Proposal Overview

---

- **Three components**

- National initiative to orient toward employment empowerment in disability programming
- Federal cross-agency working group to promote employment empowerment ideas
- Ready-made, free curriculum for organizations

- **Youth included in the proposal**

- Youth with disabilities who have self-doubts about their employment potential
- Supporting professionals
- Family members

# The Program and Early Results

---

- **The program**

- Research and literature on this subject
- “Course for Career Success”  
[www.employempower.net](http://www.employempower.net)

- **Early results**

- Pre- and post-course survey
- Student outcomes (Kessler grant)
- Student feedback
- Instructor findings

# Next Steps

---

- **Research**
- **Refine**
- **Tailor**
- **Demonstrate**
- **Champion**
- **Train**
- **Sustain (ongoing leadership, funding, technical assistance, etc.)**

**“Where there’s a will, there’s a way.”**

**[www.employempower.net](http://www.employempower.net)**

# Contact Information

---

**Paul Hippolitus, M.A.**

**Consultant**

**[hippolitus@berkeley.edu](mailto:hippolitus@berkeley.edu)**

# Progressive Education: An Early Intervention Strategy to Improve Postsecondary Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

Tara Howe, Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Rich Tulikangas, Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

James Smith, Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Christine McCarthy, Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation

# Overview of the Progressive Education Intervention

---

- **Eligible population**

- Students and young adults with disabilities who are VR eligible, including youth receiving SSI
- Students eligible for VR pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), including students receiving SSI

- **Progressive education (PEd) intervention**

- PEd is a VR-based intervention to increase the proportion of youth with disabilities entering postsecondary education and training programs
- PEd assumes every student is ready for some type of experience
- PEd offers students early exposure to real postsecondary experiences while in high school
- PEd includes a graduated series of experiences to provide an on-ramp to postsecondary programs

# Rationale for the PEd Intervention

---

- **The challenge**

- Students and youth with disabilities are much less likely than their peers without disabilities to attend postsecondary programs
- Students with disabilities are often excluded from preparatory activities in high school
- Most career pathways require some type of postsecondary credential

- **The opportunity**

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) radically changed the VR mandate
- VR agencies are required to spend 15% of federal funds serving high school students as young as 14
- VR agencies are now measured on credential attainment and long-term career outcomes
- VR cannot achieve WIOA goals without a radical change in practice
- PEd offers a practice framework for VR agencies to meet the WIOA mandate of improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities

# Key Features of the PEd Design

---

- **PEd employs two basic principles:**

- Every student is ready for some type of experience, even students with the most significant disabilities
- Students are more likely to engage in PSE and Training if they are offered a graduated series of experiential options to try it out

- **Every student is considered for exploratory PSE activities**

- The VR transition counselor's role is redesigned to provide students with a variety of graduated PSE and training experiences while in high school, including:
  - Campus tours, informational interviews, and class audits
  - VR contracted college and career prep classes with Community College of Vermont
  - Pre-apprenticeship experiences for students to explore technical careers
  - Work-based learning experiences linked to specific credentials
  - Co-enrollment in career and technical education centers

# Key Features of PEd Design

---

- **PEd offers substantial supportive services to provide a gradual on-ramp to postsecondary programs, including:**
  - Job coaching for work study and paid and unpaid internships
  - Academic tutoring
  - Assistive technology assessment and services to support learning and academics
  - Student peer mentoring
- **Benefits planning and assistance are critical for students receiving SSI**
  - Families are sometimes reluctant to support postsecondary training and especially paid internships for fear of losing benefits
  - Benefits counselors can reassure families and help them take advantage of work incentives, such as the Student Earned Income Exclusion

# Strengths and Limitations of PEd Design

---

- **Strengths**

- PEd offers an inclusive approach to increasing postsecondary training and education outcomes for youth with disabilities
- PEd does not require new funding or policy; it aligns directly with the WIOA mandate for VR agencies
- PEd offers VR agencies a practice model for pre-ETS programming and VR transition services

- **Limitations**

- PEd does not address all barriers, such as the high cost and transportation challenges experienced in rural communities
- Requires strong partnerships with locally controlled supervisory unions, and school programs may not always support PEd activities and philosophy

# Contact Information

---

**Tara Howe, M.A., M.S.**

**Vermont Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation**

[tara.howe@vermont.gov](mailto:tara.howe@vermont.gov)

**Christine McCarthy, B.S.**

**Vermont Association for Business,  
Industry, and Rehabilitation**

[cmccarthy@vabir.org](mailto:cmccarthy@vabir.org)

**James Smith, M.A.**

**Vermont Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation**

[james.smith@vermont.gov](mailto:james.smith@vermont.gov)

**Rich Tulikangas, M. Ed.**

**Vermont Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation**

[rich.tulikangas@vermont.gov](mailto:rich.tulikangas@vermont.gov)

# Career and Technical Education for Students with Emotional Disturbance

Colleen E. McKay, University of Massachusetts  
Medical School

Marsha Langer Ellison, University of Massachusetts  
Medical School



# Overview of TEST-CTE

---

- **A demonstration of career and technical education (CTE) for students with emotional disturbance (ED) using an evidenced-informed guide for educators:**
  - [Translating Evidence to Support Transitions in Career and Technical Education \(TEST-CTE\)](#)
- **Youth included in this proposal:**
  - Students with ED
  - Students with related disabilities (e.g., autism, learning disabilities, other health impairments)
  - Students receiving special education transition services with these disabilities
  - Students with these disabilities who have an individualized learning plan
- **Student-level outcomes:**
  - A defined career goal, in a career cluster and pathway
  - “Employability” skills
  - CTE credits in an in-demand industry and related credentialing in career pathway
  - Postsecondary employment, education, or training

# Motivation and Rationale for TEST-CTE

---

- **The problem:**

- Youth with ED lag other students with disabilities in high school completion and postsecondary education and employment; rely heavily on disability benefits

- **The research and motivation:**

- Students with ED in special education taking a concentration of CTE more likely to obtain competitive employment
- Students with ED taking general CTE courses also more likely to obtain competitive employment post high school
- CTE improves employment outcomes for students with other disabilities

- **The opportunity:**

- CTE is federally supported through Perkins V legislation
- CTE is widely available in over 90% of high schools
- States required to assure equity for special populations, including those with disabilities, in their Perkins V plans
- TEST-CTE would help states and districts satisfy their obligations under federal laws (e.g., IDEA, WIOA)

# Key Components of TEST-CTE

---

1. **Conducting assessment and career exploration activities**
2. **Developing an individualized learning plan or formulating SMART postsecondary education/training and employment goals**
3. **Specifying a progression of CTE courses along a career pathway in high-demand industries**
4. **Developing individualized education program (IEP) supports, accommodations, and other activities to reinforce CTE learning**
5. **Reassessing career goals and CTE course progression as needed**

# Key Features of TEST-CTE

- Rooted in social cognitive career theory
- Guide is developed with extensive educator input and piloted in two states
- Activities of TEST-CTE align with existing federal policy
- Guidance for special educators on supports and accommodations unique and relevant to students with ED to ensure their success:
  - Outside-the-box accommodations
  - Interpersonal skill building
  - Challenges in developing a vocational identity
  - Managing anxiety
  - Stigma associated with CTE learners
  - Historic discouragement of work for people with psychiatric disabilities
- Describes CTE pathways for different exits from high school
- Includes tip sheet for students

**TEST**  
Translating Evidence to Support Transitions

School that Makes Sense Cent\$  
Taking CTE Courses

By David W. Henderson  
Henderson is a National Career for Research  
September 2016

Career and Technical Education (or CTE) classes are a great way to learn skills for your future career. CTE is the product of exciting career paths to students. A concentration of CTE courses is a classes that lead up to prepare you for a particular career. If you take a concentration of CTE courses, you can graduate with special certifications that make you eligible to work in certain jobs, for example as a Certified Hearing Assistant or Auto Detail Technician. These certifications can help you get a head start on your college or career.

Which CTE focus is right for me?

Choosing a focus that matches your interests is important. Your school guidance counselor or transition planner can do activities with you to help you choose a concentration.

- 1 Tell you about all of the different career paths and what types of classes you would take
- 2 Complete a "career interest inventory" or other survey to think about careers that are a good fit for you  
<https://www.rock42.org/multi/NV0100556/Connectivity/Domain/4458/Career/2016InterestSurvey.pdf>
- 3 Be sure that your career goal and the courses you will need get listed in your Graduation Plan, Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP)

It's okay if you change your mind!

It's okay if you learn that the first concentration you try is not the direction you want to go with your career. For example, you may have thought you wanted to go into fashion design but, during the first course of sewing realize this concentration is not for you. That's okay. You have learned something about yourself and can check that career off your list.

# Key Features of TEST-CTE: Demonstration

---

- **Hybrid and phased model of implementation and efficacy research**
- **Initial trial to examine:**
  - Training and coaching procedures
  - Implementation challenges and solutions
  - Data collection procedures (such as student IEPs, transcripts, teacher fidelity assessments)
  - Costs
  - Fidelity
  - Preliminary student outcome data
- **A fully powered, multi-site clinical efficacy trial for student outcomes**
- **New research to widen applicability of TEST-CTE to other special populations and diverse communities**

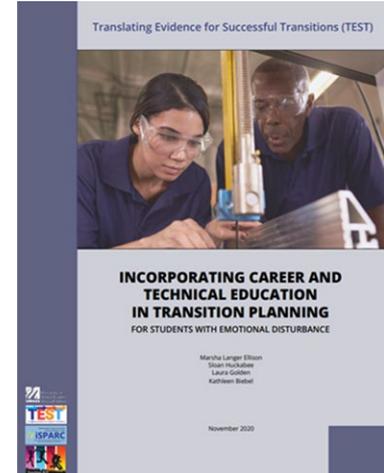
# Strengths and Limitations of TEST-CTE

## • Strengths

- Addresses a population with poor outcomes and high use of disability benefits
- Built on theory and extensive end-user input and piloting
- Designed to help students secure employment or access higher education
- Encourages special education students to acquire CTE credits in a career cluster in an in-demand industry
- Consistent with the priorities of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy
- Leverages widely available CTE infrastructure

## • Limitations

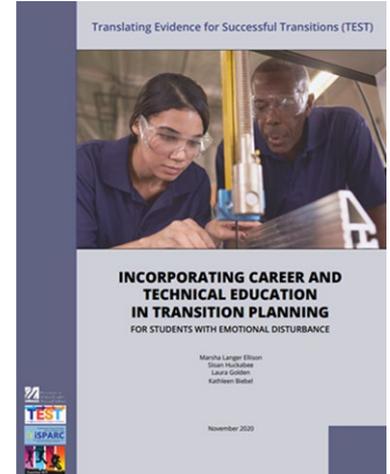
- Unknown impact of TEST-CTE
- Lack of common indicators and disaggregated data for students in different disability populations who participate in CTE



# Conclusion

- **TEST-CTE:**

- Capitalizes on CTE to improve postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities
- Meets the unique needs of students with ED
  - Applicable to other disability groups
- Designed to increase equity and access
- Is embedded within the federally mandated IEP transition planning process
- Meets other federal legislative requirements
- Demonstration is needed to examine implementation best practices
- Multi-site efficacy trial is needed to confirm impact



# Contact Information

---

**Colleen E. McKay, M.A., CAGS**

**University of Massachusetts Medical  
School**

**[Colleen.McKay@umassmed.edu](mailto:Colleen.McKay@umassmed.edu)**

**Marsha Langer Ellison, Ph.D.**

**University of Massachusetts Medical  
School**

**[Marsha.Ellison@umassmed.edu](mailto:Marsha.Ellison@umassmed.edu)**

# Response to Proposals

**Christopher McLaren, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor**

**David Rosenblum, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor**

# Q&A

# Meet and Greet with Authors

Join the authors for an informal discussion of their proposals at:  
<https://mathematica.webex.com/mathematica/j.php?MTID=m03e104562182cc58d29cc97c9e5874e1>