REPORT

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Potential Strategies to Improve the Employment Outcomes of Youth SSI Recipients

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Disability Employment Policy and its federal partners seek to build the evidence base for promising strategies to improve the employment outcomes for youth ages 14 to 24 who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This report documents promising strategies to promote sustained, gainful employment for youth SSI recipients. An important challenge is that there is no single way to identify the most promising of the reviewed strategies. Testing strategies for youth SSI recipients could range from smaller interventions to large-scale demonstration projects. Smaller intervention tests could involve current innovations in evaluation techniques, such as behavioral nudges, rapid-cycle evaluations, and technical assistance integrated with strategies, that encourage specific practices or outcomes. Larger demonstration projects might build from existing large Social Security Administration demonstrations targeted to youth SSI recipients, which would provide evidence on a larger set of interventions at a much higher cost.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of the Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), along with many other stakeholders, is working to improve outcomes for youth ages 14 to 24 who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Under the SSI Youth Recipient and Employment Transition Formative Research project, Mathematica will contribute to this effort by identifying (1) promising programs and policies for youth SSI recipients, including research questions for further follow-up and (2) testable strategies or strategy models for assisting young SSI recipients with their transition to sustained, gainful employment. This report, the first to emerge from this project, seeks to document promising strategies and to serve as a useful resource for potential programs, demonstration projects, and policy innovations that promote sustained, gainful employment for youth SSI recipients.

Transition considerations facing youth SSI recipients

To identify promising options to serve youth SSI recipients, it is important to address how SSI benefits affect their transition to adulthood, especially employment. Three considerations can affect the participation and outcomes of youth SSI recipients. First, the strict medical, income, and asset criteria for SSI eligibility have strong roles in influencing youth SSI recipients' transition experiences. Second, the demographic, family, health, and housing characteristics of youth SSI recipients indicate a need for a variety of supports. Third, states have substantial variation in SSI participation and service availability, which implies that strategies developed for youth SSI recipients might need to be adjusted in accordance with geography.

Findings that inform promising strategies for youth SSI recipients

Frameworks to guide strategy development and assessment. Best practices for the employment of youth with disabilities are documented by two transition frameworks that can inform efforts to promote positive outcomes for youth SSI recipients. Guideposts for Success was developed by the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASET 2005) and National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y 2009), and the effective transition practices and predictors matrix is maintained by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (2018). Both frameworks summarize evidence to guide services offered by practitioners (such as staff from local education agencies, vocational rehabilitation [VR] agencies, or community rehabilitation providers), as well as the services that youth and families choose. The two frameworks have many similarities, particularly for strategies around work, connecting activities and interagency collaboration, and service customization to improve youth autonomy. However, three important aspects of these frameworks limit their potential for informing strategies for youth SSI recipients: (1) many of the strategies are supported only by descriptive or anecdotal evidence; (2) the majority of evidence reflects the experiences of varied populations of youth with disabilities and, hence, might not represent the specific circumstances of youth SSI recipients; and (3) benefits counseling and financial education are not well identified.

Evidence on promising strategies. We draw from two sources to identify strategies to help youth SSI recipients with employment: (1) two major Social Security Administration demonstration projects that target the population exclusively and (2) a larger base of studies in

which youth SSI recipients are possibly a subset of a larger population. Table ES.1 provides an overview of strategies and providers, sorted by level of evidence and target population.

This review of strategies reveals three key findings.

1. The Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD) evaluation provides the most comprehensive information about promising strategies to improve the employment outcomes of youth SSI recipients and points to the potential for employment services to influence outcomes for this population.

2. Random assignment evaluations of federal demonstrations for individuals receiving adult SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance show the positive impacts of case management, health plans, supported employment, work incentives, and other supports.

3. Various strategies targeted to youth and young adults with disabilities show consistent promising evidence on employment outcomes, though much of this evidence is based primarily on descriptive or non-experimental studies, and a larger number have involved transition programs that provide participants with employment services coupled with other services.

Given the lack of evidence for youth SSI recipients, any implemented strategy would do well to include a pilot period to assess the feasibility of implementation on a small scale.

Federal and state programs that could influence transition outcomes. Modifications of existing federal and state program rules, either on their own or in conjunction with other strategies, could be made to promote the employment of youth SSI recipients (Table ES.2). Youth SSI recipients might also access services from the state VR agency or workforce development agency or be able to take advantage of systems change efforts seeking to improve the service environment for youth with disabilities.

Conclusion and next steps

The lack of strong evidence on effective practices for youth with disabilities generally—and youth SSI recipients specifically—underscores the need for better data and information. Transition frameworks such as the Guideposts for Success can be used as a starting point to assess strategies using existing frameworks and evidence from the field, although they might not be sufficient to promote positive outcomes for youth SSI recipients. There is no single way to identify the most promising of the reviewed strategies specifically for youth SSI recipients, in part because tests conducted thus far for this population have been limited. Testing strategies for youth SSI recipients could range from small pilot tests to large demonstration projects.

Table ES.1. Strategies that could promote the employment of youth SSI recipients

Strategy (responsible federal organization)	Provider
Strategies (targeted to youth SSI recipients) that have or will have experimental evidence	
Youth Transition Demonstration random assignment projects (SSA)	CRPs, LEAs, postsecondary institutions
Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI (ED, SSA, DOL, HHS)*	State education, LEAs, VR, workforce development agencies
Strategies (targeted to adults with SSI and/or SSDI benefits) that have or will have experimental evidence	
Accelerated Benefits (SSA)	SSA
Benefit Offset National Demonstration (SSA)	SSA, WIPA
Mental Health Treatment Study (SSA)	SSA, community mental health agencies
Promoting Opportunity Demonstration (SSA)*	SSA
Supported Employment Demonstration (SSA)*	SSA, community mental health agencies
Strategies (targeted to other youth or adults with disabilities) that have or will have experimental evidence	
Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment (HHS)	State departments of health, a health policy authority and health insurance organization, and a Medicaid agency
Employment Intervention Demonstration Program (SAMSHA)	Academic, public, and private entities provided clinical and VR services and supports
Job Corps (DOL)[a]	DOL, workforce development agencies
Project SEARCH	LEAs, VR, employers
Transition Work-Based Learning Models in Maryland and Vermont (Rehabilitation Services Administration, or RSA)*	VR, CRPs, LEAs (in Maryland)
Strategies (targeted to youth SSI recipients) with nonexperimental evidence	
Benefits counseling (SSA)	WIPAs, varied organizations
Youth Transition Demonstration nonexperimental projects (SSA)	Each project was led by a varying combination of state agencies
Strategies (targeted to other youth or adults with disabilities) that have or will have nonexperimental evidence	
Back on Track to Success Mentoring Program	Community organizations
Marriott Foundation Bridges from School to Work Program	Nonprofit community organization
Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative	LEAs, VR, state education, state department of disabilities
Project SEARCH	LEAs, VR, employers
Supported employment	Nonprofit, multiservice organizations
Think College*	Institutions of higher education, along with community partners such as VR agencies, LEAs, and employers
Transition Work-Based Learning Models in California, Maine, and Massachusetts (RSA)*	VR, CRPs
Utah Pathways to Careers*	CRP
Strategies (targeted to other youth or adults with disabilities) without any evidence	
Individualized Career Planning model (ED)	LEAs
Guided Group Discovery pilots* (Labor)	Led by a national collaborative of organizations focused on disability, workforce, and economic support, in partnership with local job centers, VR agencies
Partners for Youth with Disabilities*	Private organization

[a] Job Corps is not targeted to youth with disabilities, but the program does serve this population.

* Currently in the field.

CRP = community rehabilitation providers; DOL= U.S. Department of Labor; ED = U.S. Department of Education; HHS = U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; LEA = local education agencies; SAMSHA = Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; SSA = Social Security Administration; VR = vocational rehabilitation; WIPA = Work Incentives Planning and Assistance

Table ES.2. Summary of federal and state programs and systems change efforts for youth SSI recipients

Strategy (responsible federal organization)	Provider
Federal and state programs accessed by youth SSI recipients	
ABLE Act	State agencies and financial institutions
Disability Employment Initiative (DOL)	DOL, workforce development agencies
Employment First	DOL, workforce development agencies
Pre-employment transition services (RSA)	VR agencies, LEAs, CRPs
Special education services	DOE, state and local education agencies
SSA work supports (SSA)	SSA
Ticket to Work program (SSA)	SSA
Vocational rehabilitation (RSA)	RSA, VR agencies
Workforce development programs (such as YouthBuild, Youth Corps, apprenticeships)	DOL, workforce development agencies
WIPA (SSA)	SSA
Systems change efforts	
Age 18 redetermination counseling	SSA, VR agencies, school districts
Age 18 redetermination changes/work reporting changes	SSA
CareerACCESS	World Institute on Disability, the National Council on Independent Living, and PolicyWorks
Partnerships in Employment Systems Change projects	Stakeholder consortia involved state and community agencies and organizations
Tennessee Medicaid 115 waiver program (TennCare Employment and Community First CHOICES)	State Medicaid agency and state disabilities department

CRP = community rehabilitation provider; DOL = U.S. Department of Labor; DOE = Department of Education; LEA = local education agencies; RSA = Rehabilitation Services Administration; SSA = Social Security Administration; VR = vocational rehabilitation; WIPA = Work Incentive Planning and Assistance

I.   INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of the Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), along with many other stakeholders, is working to improve outcomes for youth ages 14 to 24 who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits (hereafter called youth SSI recipients). To successfully continue this work, ODEP seeks a thorough understanding of two barriers youth with disabilities might face in achieving employment outcomes as adults. The first is the fragmented support system for youth SSI recipients, which makes it challenging for them to navigate among supports that could help them secure economic success as adults (Wittenburg 2011). The second barrier is the growth in the number of youth SSI recipients—particularly children under age 18—which peaked during the Great Recession of 2007–2009.This growth indicates that many youth may be moving toward a pathway with few prospects for long-term employment (SSA 2018; Wittenburg et al. 2015b). Because the disabilities and other characteristics of youth SSI recipients present significant employment barriers, strategies to address these concerns must be thoughtful and comprehensive. To be convincing to a broad audience, such strategies must have a rigorous evidence base to support their further development.

A. Project and report background

ODEP and its federal partners seek to build the evidence base for promising strategies that can improve employment and other adult outcomes for youth SSI recipients. Under the SSI Youth Recipient and Employment Transition Formative Research project, Mathematica will contribute to this effort by identifying (1) promising programs and policies for youth SSI recipients, including research questions for further follow-up; and (2) strategies or strategy models that could be tested for assisting young SSI recipients with the transition to sustained, gainful employment. Key findings, research questions, policy recommendations, and resources developed for this project are informed by a Community of Practice (CoP) comprising more than 70 practitioners, policymakers, researchers, employers, and advocates in the fields of employment, education, health, and financial literacy.

This report, the first to emerge from the project, documents promising strategies to promote *sustained, gainful employment* for youth SSI recipients for policymakers to consider in developing potential programs, demonstration projects, and policy innovations.[1] The report can also be a resource to the Federal Partners in Transition, a work group of representatives from several federal agencies who support and coordinate transition services for youth with disabilities.

ODEP staff and CoP members will provide feedback on promising strategies presented in this report. That feedback will be incorporated in two subsequent reports that will identify the most promising target populations and propose evaluation options for select strategies. The first

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[1] Although other outcomes, such as independence and educational attainment, are also important for youth SSI recipients, this project focuses on employment as the primary outcome. We interpret sustained, gainful employment as equivalent to the WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) definition of competitive, integrated employment: employment that is at or above minimum wage, the wage is equivalent to the rate employers pay for similar work performed by individuals without disabilities, the employee has opportunities to interact with other employees without disabilities, and the employee has opportunities for advancement.

will identify target populations of youth SSI recipients (or youth at risk of becoming SSI recipients) who might benefit from the identified strategies. The second subsequent report will identify approaches to evaluating strategies that will provide policymakers with compelling information for assessing the efficacy of promising strategies and the likelihood of their implementation at a broader scale.

B. Methodological approach to identifying promising strategies

To support ODEP's overarching objective of identifying promising strategies to improve the employment of youth SSI recipients, we begin with an overview of the challenges that youth SSI recipients face in making transitions to adulthood (Chapter II). As part of this overview, we review SSI program rules and the characteristics of youth under age 18 and young adults (ages 18 to 24) who receive SSI. This summary provides important context for consideration in identifying strategies that could influence youth outcomes, as well as context for factors that may have influenced previous demonstrations involving youth SSI recipients.

We then review findings from the literature that could inform future strategy options, which we divide into three parts (Chapter III). First, we present existing transition frameworks and literature reviews on effective practices for youth with disabilities. This review identifies strategies that could be ingredients for future interventions. Second, we summarize findings from a literature scan, focusing on publications since 2005, to identify demonstrations and strategies serving youth SSI recipients and other youth with disabilities. As part of this summary, we highlight the level of evidence supporting each strategy as a tool to assess promising future strategies. We also present proposed strategy options and system changes that may lack an evidence base but are nonetheless promising for consideration. Third, we review the federal and state programs that youth with disabilities access, which might prove relevant in designing future implementation. For example, some system options might indicate a need for program waivers to facilitate a future intervention. The summary tables in Chapter III are of particular note because they provide a quick reference to strategies and previous findings, and identify any not on the list. In future project reports, we will present updates to this report's tables as we encounter additional potential strategies.

This report also includes a supplemental appendix for each of the strategies identified in Chapter III (Appendices A, B, and C). Appendix A describes the characteristics of existing transition frameworks for youth with disabilities, Appendix B lists strategies targeted to youth SSI recipients and youth with disabilities, and Appendix C presents strategies related to federal and state programs that youth SSI recipients might access.

We conclude with a summary and next steps for consideration (Chapter IV). The ideas in this chapter build on the strategies presented, their level of supporting evidence, and thoughts for selecting among options in ways that can promote the knowledge base to improve employment outcomes for youth SSI recipients.

II. TRANSITION CHALLENGES FACING YOUTH SSI RECIPIENTS

An important issue in identifying promising options to serve youth SSI recipients is helping them overcome existing barriers to their transition to adulthood. The most promising strategies will address the challenges that impede youth's long-term adult outcomes, especially employment. In this chapter, we review issues that could affect the participation and outcomes of youth SSI recipients: eligibility rules, diversity in recipient characteristics and outcomes, and regional variation in participation. These issues will be important considerations in narrowing promising strategies for further implementation.

A. SSI eligibility rules can influence youth transition decisions, especially related to employment

Eligibility rules for SSI—which can have major effects on a youth's employment decisions—are a fundamental consideration in identifying promising strategies to serve youth SSI recipients. The strict medical, income, and asset criteria for SSI eligibility have strong roles in influencing youth SSI recipients' transition experiences. To qualify for SSI, a child under age 18 must have "a medically determinable physical or mental impairment, which results in marked and severe functional limitations, and which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months" (42 U.S.C. § 1382c[C][i]). The eligibility and payment calculations account for parental income and assets, which are "deemed" to the child (that is, treated as the child's own). These income restrictions mean that youth SSI recipients most likely face substantial resource constraints in addition to their disabilities, which could affect long-term adult outcomes.

An especially important feature of the SSI eligibility rules for youth of transition age is the age-18 redetermination. The Social Security Administration (SSA) reassesses the eligibility of child SSI recipients under the adult SSI criteria at age 18. This process often creates substantial uncertainty for families, which is significant, given that the SSI benefit check often makes up nearly half of the family's income (Davies et al. 2009). According to Hemmeter and Gilby (2009), about 42 percent of former child SSI recipients are initially ineligible under the adult SSI medical eligibility criteria, a percentage that has risen in recent years (SSA 2017). Because SSI eligibility may be the only way that young adults without children can become eligible for Medicaid in many states, youth SSI recipients and their parents in these states risk the loss of health benefits in addition to cash benefits if they fail to become eligible for SSI under the adult criteria. An additional factor related to the age-18 redetermination process is that some youth with significant disabilities who were not eligible for SSI before age 18 solely because of deemed income may become eligible at age 18, when parents' resources no longer factor into the youth's eligibility determination.

Depending on their age, SSI recipients are eligible for certain types of work incentives, although the U.S. Government Accountability Office (US GAO) concluded that the use of these incentives is either unknown or low (US GAO 2017). The incentives include features to encourage earnings (such as the earned income and student earned income exclusions) and savings (such as the Plan to Achieve Self-Support). SSA also provides access to training through vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and (for adult SSI recipients) Ticket to Work (SSA 2017), for example. We have evidence on effectiveness for three of SSA's incentives and

supports. The Ticket to Work program has resulted in a modest uptake in service use, but not benefit cessation due to work (Stapleton et al. 2013). The student earned-income exclusion can be used by students under age 22; less than 2 percent of the eligible SSI population uses this work support, and evidence about its effectiveness is limited (US GAO 2017). Finally, Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) programs disseminate information on how employment can affect benefit receipt (Livermore et al. 2011; Schimmel et al. 2011). One large-scale federally supported research project, Promoting Readiness for Minors in SSI (PROMISE), has leveraged these programs; descriptive evidence suggests a positive association with employment for those using WIPA services, but such a link cannot be considered causal. One challenge to the broader use of these incentives is that SSI families may be concerned that work and pursuit of a career could jeopardize their children's current SSI eligibility or future eligibility after age 18.

B. Youth SSI recipients have multiple service needs based on their characteristics, services, and outcomes after age 18

A second important factor in identifying promising strategies for youth SSI recipients is understanding the service needs of youth SSI recipients based on their characteristics, service connections, and outcomes. The demographic, family, health, and housing characteristics of youth SSI recipients indicate a need for a variety of supports. According to SSA administrative data, most child SSI recipients are male, who, in addition to mental impairment such as developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, or autism, have a range of other types of conditions requiring different types of supports, accommodations, and assistive technologies (SSA 2017). Many child SSI recipients also receive unearned income, including financial support from absent parents; for those residing with their parents, fewer than half have parents with any earned income. In 2000, the last year for which there was a national survey of SSI children, 71 percent lived in single-parent families, and almost half of all recipient families included another family member with a disability (Wittenburg 2011).

Aside from the complexities of the SSI rules, youth SSI recipients and their families must navigate a highly fragmented service delivery system to obtain other supports such as schooling, health, and accommodations (Currie and Kahn 2012). Multiple service agencies—each with different eligibility requirements and funding streams—make up this fragmented system. Families must be sophisticated in managing the complex network of services required for the care of their child. The U.S. GAO (2017) notes, for instance, that SSA does not have a systematic way to connect transition-age youth on SSI to state VR agencies that provide training and employment services.

Many individuals who received SSI as children but not as adults have poor transition experiences after age 18, particularly relative to their peers without SSI. Wittenburg (2011) found that 57 percent of former SSI children between the ages of 19 to 23 were not enrolled in education programs, receiving VR services, or employed. They also had high secondary school dropout rates (39 percent) and low employment rates (22 percent). Similarly, Deshpande and Dizon-Ross (2016) studied SSI children and observed that they have low incomes as young adults, regardless of whether they are determined eligible for SSI at age 18. However, the main difference between those who are and are not found eligible for adult benefits is that those removed from SSI at age 18 face substantially greater income volatility as adults than those who

remain on SSI. Although many are employed, few earn at or above the SSI benefit amounts that they received as children, and one-fourth of these beneficiaries eventually apply for adult SSI benefits.

C. State differences in SSI participation and resources indicate geographic variation in service delivery and needs

Promising strategies for youth SSI recipients must also address the substantial variation in SSI participation in different states. This variation implies that strategies developed for youth SSI recipients may need to be adjusted in accordance with geography. For example, Wittenburg and colleagues (2015b) showed evidence of clustering of SSI caseloads by state and by county, with higher rates of participation in northeastern and southern states and lower rates in western states. Hemmeter and colleagues (2017) also found substantial variation in programmatic outcomes across state lines, with age-18 cessation rates ranging from 20 to 47 percent and large cross-state differences in eventual long-term SSI and employment outcomes. These patterns reflect, in part, geographic variation in income and poverty levels—areas with low income and high poverty rates also have high rates of youth SSI recipients.

An additional consideration for geographic variation is differences in transition resources between and within states. Although states broadly provide similar education, labor, and vocational rehabilitation services to assist with transition, differences can occur based on resources available at a given time, service quality, and the amount of collaborations and connections occurring at the state and local levels around transition. For example, state VR agencies historically vary in when they first began working with high school youth (that is, before or at high school graduation) and school districts are not consistent in the types of transition and employment-related supports that they offer (Honeycutt et al. 2015a, 2015b; U.S. GAO 2017).

D. Implications for intervention design options

Each issue discussed above affects the strategies chosen to serve youth SSI recipients, given their heterogeneous demographic, impairment, and geographic characteristics. As we describe in more detail in Chapter III and Appendix B, SSA has developed its major demonstration projects involving youth SSI recipients in ways that attempt to address these issues, including the Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD) and the ongoing PROMISE demonstration. For example, YTD included (1) individualized employment services to meet the needs of individual youths; (2) individual sites with variations in the target population, service providers, and some services; and (3) SSI program waivers, including incentives that allowed participants to keep more of their earnings than under current rules. Hence, ODEP and other policymakers could follow SSA's example by implementing strategies in ways that address some of the unique factors of this population.

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III. FINDINGS THAT INFORM PROMISING STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH SSI RECIPIENTS

In this chapter, we summarize findings from the literature on transition frameworks and intervention strategies to identify promising strategies to overcome the issues identified in Chapter II. We first identify strategy frameworks proposed to help all transitioning youth with disabilities, then focus more directly on strategies for youth SSI recipients. We conclude with a summary of federal and state programs that are accessed by youth SSI recipients, which could factor into the development of interventions. As noted in Chapter I, each of the subsections below is supplemented by a corresponding appendix.

A. Frameworks to guide strategy development and assessment

Best practices for the employment of youth with disabilities are documented by two transition frameworks that can inform efforts to promote positive outcomes of youth SSI recipients. "Guideposts for Success" was developed by the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASET 2005) and National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y 2009), and the effective transition practices and predictors matrix is maintained by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) (2018). Both summarize evidence to guide services offered by practitioners (such as staff from local education agencies [LEAs], VR agencies, or community rehabilitation providers [CRPs]), as well as the services that youth and families choose.

The two frameworks have many similarities, particularly for strategies around work, connecting activities and interagency collaboration, and service customization to improve youth autonomy. Guideposts for Success places strategies into five overarching categories in accordance with strategy type: (1) school-based preparatory experiences, (2) career preparation and work-based learning experiences, (3) youth development and leadership, (4) connecting activities, and (5) family involvement. The NTACT matrix framework organizes its strategies in three categories: (1) secondary school practices, (2) vocational rehabilitation practices, and (3) predictors of postsecondary outcomes. The first two categories correspond to the organization responsible for the strategy, while the latter is a catchall for strategies with largely correlational evidence about their effectiveness with postsecondary outcomes. These categories for the frameworks are particularly important in considering strategies for youth SSI recipients, and Appendix A offers more details about the similarities and differences of the frameworks.

The importance of the strategies in each framework was recently emphasized by a wide-reaching examination of competitive integrated employment policy and practices undertaken by the Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities and mandated by WIOA (ODEP 2016). The report recommended specific approaches for youth, including expanded work experiences before leaving high school, improved coordination across agencies and opportunities for braided funding, and more rigorous evaluations to document effective models of transition.

However, three important aspects of these frameworks limit their potential for informing strategies for youth SSI recipients. First, many of the strategies are supported only by descriptive or anecdotal evidence, which creates challenges for including strategies in any one intervention

model. Specifically, few strategies have been rigorously tested independently, although some have been tested in combination with others. Second, the majority of evidence reflects the experiences of varied populations of youth with disabilities and, hence, may not represent the specific circumstances of youth SSI recipients who might have additional challenges (such as relatively more severe impairments and living in low-income families). Third, benefits counseling and financial education—which, given the eligibility rules outlined in Chapter II, could be important supports for youth SSI recipients—are not well identified across the frameworks.

Despite these limitations, the frameworks offer important guidance that could help identify promising strategies. For example, one approach is to assess whether each proposed intervention touches on the categories in the Guideposts and NTACT frameworks. If an intervention is missing a key category, it will be important to note why this category is missing and how, if at all, it may influence outcomes. In this way, the frameworks can help pinpoint promising ingredients for final proposed strategies, particularly if there is a lack of rigorous evidence on the approach. An important caveat, however, is that these models provide guiding principles, yet many strategies—particularly those outside of early work-based experiences—have a limited evidence base.

B. Evidence on promising strategies

We can draw from two sources to identify strategies for new initiatives to help youth SSI recipients with employment.[2] The first source includes two major SSA demonstration projects that target this population exclusively. The second source includes a larger base of studies in which youth SSI recipients are possibly a subset of a larger population. These studies include demonstrations targeted to adults (including young adults) with SSI and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), as well as those targeted to youth and young adults with disabilities (with or without SSI).

Below and in Table III.1, we provide a brief overview of findings from previous research, sorted by level of evidence and target population. Within these categories, we list the names of the strategies and providers. Appendix B provides a more in-depth review of these strategies, including the providers, target population, evaluation approach, and findings. This additional information might be useful to readers who want to know details such as the size of impact estimates.

1. Evidence from demonstrations targeting youth SSI recipients

The YTD evaluation provides the most comprehensive information about promising strategies to improve the employment outcomes of youth SSI recipients, based on six projects implemented at different sites across the country. The YTD projects sought to help youth SSI recipients and at-risk youth with disabilities maximize their economic self-sufficiency as they transitioned to adulthood, using the Guideposts for Success framework to develop intervention

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[2] As noted in Appendix B, this evidence is partly based on two sources: (1) larger reviews from a report of the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR 2015) about employment programs and demonstration projects involving SSI or SSDI beneficiaries and (2) our own literature review about the challenges of implementing employment programs for people with disabilities (Wittenburg et al. 2013).

services. Programs offered services for case management, employment, and benefits counseling, among others, and program participants also had access to SSA waivers of certain program rules to enhance work incentives (such as extending the age at which the student earned income exclusion was applicable). Specifically, all YTD projects included work-based experiences (such as job training and volunteer experiences), empowerment activities (such as self-advocacy training), family involvement, and system linkages (connecting youth to other providers) (Luecking and Wittenburg 2009). However, the target population and the service delivery emphases varied substantially.

An important lesson from YTD is the potential for employment services to improve outcomes: three of the six projects increased paid employment by about 7 percentage points during the third year after the youth enrolled in the evaluation (Fraker et al. 2015). The experiences of an early set of YTD projects (some of which were later involved in the random assignment evaluation) point to important qualitative information on implementation issues for projects targeting youth SSI recipients, particularly on the need for tracking services and outcomes and the difficulties of pursuing systems change.

The design of YTD does not allow us to assess how specific service components within Guideposts affected the outcomes. Each YTD project implemented a model that followed Guideposts, but it did not set up the design to enable rigorous evaluation of each component.

However, there does appear to be a correlation between employment impacts and employment services, underscoring the findings from the frameworks described above. First, projects that delivered more hours of employment-focused services to higher proportions of treatment group youth had the largest impacts. Second, youth SSI recipients who had early work experiences had a higher probability of paid employment two years later (Mamun et al. 2017). We also found some evidence outside of YTD for benefits counseling as a stand-alone support.

Further evidence about serving youth SSI recipients will emerge from the evaluation of PROMISE. As with YTD, PROMISE includes a sharp focus on providing youth SSI recipients with paid work experiences, and its evaluation includes a rigorous random-assignment evaluation design. However, PROMISE differs from YTD in three ways: (1) PROMISE programs have a stronger focus on coordination with state social service agencies, whereas YTD projects were offered by universities and private, nonprofit service providers; (2) PROMISE programs deliver services to both youth and families; and (3) PROMISE emphasizes collaboration among state and local agencies and organizations serving youth with disabilities. Results from the evaluation are not yet available, but implementation evaluations of the programs are producing preliminary information about successes and challenges in providing services to youth SSI recipients.

2. Evidence from studies targeting adults and youth with disabilities

Evidence from several types of studies involving adults and youth with disabilities could provide insights into promising strategies for youth SSI recipients (see Table III.1 and Appendix B). These include federal experimental demonstration projects targeting adults with SSA benefits and a range of studies (with varying levels of evidence, as discussed below) involving youth with disabilities.

Random assignment evaluations of federal demonstrations for individuals receiving adult SSI and SSDI offer some important insights. These demonstrations show the positive impacts of case management, health plans, supported employment, work incentives, and other supports. In particular, they indicate that supports that were more customized to the individual's needs had stronger employment effects than strategies with less customization (Wittenburg et al. 2013), and supported employment strategies based on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model consistently led to improved employment for adults with psychiatric impairments (Bond et al. 2008; Drake et al. 2009). This latter finding is particularly notable, given that the supported employment model has not been tested rigorously among youth.

Aside from federal demonstration projects, various strategies targeted to youth and young adults with disabilities show consistent promising evidence on employment outcomes. Much of this evidence is based primarily on descriptive or nonexperimental studies, and a larger number of studies have involved transition programs that, like YTD, provide participants with employment services coupled with other services. For example, promising programs that appear to improve employment rates for youth with disabilities include the Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative Program, Utah Pathways to Careers, and Marriott Foundation Bridges, all of which targeted specific groups of youth and young adults and provided them with long-term, comprehensive transition supports. However, we cannot say whether the transition programs alone influenced the positive outcomes because they have not been rigorously evaluated against a credible comparison group to assess the efficacy of the strategies. Other strategies with potentially positive outcomes are supported employment and Think College. Supported employment, a systematic approach for employment, health, and case management supports, advances competitive employment for individuals with severe mental illness. It can be offered by VR agencies as a specific service, with vendors adhering to various requirements, training, and standards, although agencies might differ in its implementation (Wehman et al. 2014). Think College promotes postsecondary education opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism (Grigal et al. 2017a, 2017b).

Among these studies are evaluations of the Job Corps and Project Search projects for youth with disabilities. Hock and associates (2017) found promising impacts on employment for youth with medical conditions who used Job Corps services in the 1990s. This is the only study to show a decline in reliance on SSI. Similarly, Project Search includes several descriptive projects along with a small study that highlights promising employment outcomes (Wehman et al. 2014b). Both projects have limitations in terms of applying the lessons to youth with disabilities because of the cohorts they studied and sizes of the target populations. Nonetheless, the compelling evidence from both suggests that they may offer worthwhile strategies, particularly given the prominence of Job Corps and Project Search in delivering employment supports to many subgroups of youth across states.

Our literature scan also identified three strategies (individualized career planning, guided group discovery, and partners for youth with disabilities) that lacked supporting evidence for their effectiveness. We anticipate identifying other strategies that are not yet supported by evidence through input from the CoP.

In summary, examples of strategies for informing future options to promote the employment of youth SSI recipients are numerous, with the caveat that rigorous evidence specific to these

youth is limited to that from YTD. Given the lack of evidence for youth SSI recipients, any implemented strategy would do well to include a pilot period to assess the feasibility of implementation on a small scale. As outlined in Wittenburg and colleagues (2014), pilot tests can be especially valuable for assessing strategies before they reach full scale by identifying implementation challenges (for example, can providers deliver services?), data needs, and other evaluation issues (such as meeting sample targets).

Table III.1. Strategies that could promote the employment of youth SSI recipients

Strategy (responsible federal organization)	Provider
Strategies (targeted to youth SSI recipients) that have or will have experimental evidence	
Youth Transition Demonstration random assignment projects (SSA)	CRPs, LEAs, postsecondary institutions
Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI (ED, SSA, DOL, HHS)*	State education, LEAs, VR, workforce development agencies
Strategies (targeted to adults with SSI and/or SSDI benefits) that have or will have experimental evidence	
Accelerated Benefits (SSA)	SSA
Benefit Offset National Demonstration (SSA)	SSA, WIPA
Mental Health Treatment Study (SSA)	SSA, community mental health agencies
Promoting Opportunity Demonstration (SSA)*	SSA
Supported Employment Demonstration (SSA)*	SSA, community mental health agencies
Strategies (targeted to other youth or adults with disabilities) that have or will have experimental evidence	
Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment (HHS)	State departments of health, a health policy authority and health insurance organization, and a Medicaid agency
Employment Intervention Demonstration Program (SAMSHA)	Academic, public, and private entities provided clinical and VR services and supports
Job Corps (DOL)[a]	DOL, workforce development agencies
Project SEARCH	LEAs, VR, employers
Transition Work-Based Learning Models in Maryland and Vermont (Rehabilitation Services Administration, or RSA)*	VR, CRPs, LEAs (in Maryland)
Strategies (targeted to youth SSI recipients) with nonexperimental evidence	
Benefits counseling (SSA)	WIPAs, varied organizations
YTD nonexperimental projects (SSA)	Each project was led by a varying combination of state agencies
Strategies (targeted to other youth or adults with disabilities) that have or will have nonexperimental evidence	
Back on Track to Success Mentoring Program	Community organizations
Marriott Foundation Bridges from School to Work Program	Nonprofit community organization
Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative	LEAs, VR, state education, state department of disabilities
Project SEARCH	LEAs, VR, employers
Supported employment	Nonprofit, multiservice organizations
Think College*	Institutions of higher education, along with community partners such as VR agencies, LEAs, and employers.
Transition Work-Based Learning Models in California, Maine, and Massachusetts (RSA)*	VR, CRPs
Utah Pathways to Careers*	CRP
Strategies (targeted to other youth or adults with disabilities) without any evidence	
Individualized Career Planning model (ED)	LEAs
Guided Group Discovery pilots* (Labor)	Led by a national collaborative of organizations focused on disability, workforce, and economic support, in partnership with local job centers, VR agencies
Partners for Youth with Disabilities*	Private organization

[a] Job Corps is not targeted to youth with disabilities, but the program does serve this population.

* Currently in the field.

ED = U.S. Department of Education; HHS = U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; SAMSHA = Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

C. Federal and state programs that could influence transition outcomes

In addition to the specific strategies described in the previous section, modifications of existing federal and state program rules, either on their own or in conjunction with other strategies, could be made to promote the employment of youth SSI recipients (Table III.2 and Appendix C). Youth SSI recipients might also access services from the state VR agency or workforce development agency or be able to take advantage of systems change efforts seeking to improve the service environment for youth with disabilities.

As outlined in Chapter II, SSA offers work incentives, supports, and programs for youth SSI recipients, although most current recipients do not use these offerings. Other than descriptive information about use, we have evaluation findings on just three (Ticket to Work, student earned income exclusions, and WIPA), with mixed evidence on their effectiveness. The limited use of work incentives reflects the complicated design of SSI and those incentives, along with lack of information on the part of youth and families and fears that cash benefits will be lost. Strategies that promote knowledge and simplify the rules could result in greater earnings and thus a lower need for benefits among youth SSI recipients. However, no SSA demonstration study to date has resulted in program exits from SSI or SSDI in part because any earnings gains were not sufficient to disqualify participants for SSA disability benefits. Another factor in this finding is that the supports provided by some demonstration studies were not intended to result in program exits because that was not a goal of the demonstration.

Outside of SSA incentives, a new incentive called the ABLE account could be an important way to support employment in future demonstrations (ABLE National Resource Center 2018). An ABLE account allows youth to apply tax-free savings to education and employment supports, among other types of support. These savings are notable because the amounts are excluded from the calculation of benefits, including SSI, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicaid. This may give youth SSI recipients and their families a new opportunity to save money without the fear of losing benefits because their resources exceed the asset limits.

In terms of obtaining services, state VR agencies represent a major source of support given that about one-third of their clients are transition-age youth, and about one in five youth eligible for VR services receive SSI or SSDI (Honeycutt et al. 2016). This latter number represents about 4 percent of all transition-age youth who are SSI recipients or SSDI beneficiaries. Thus, state VR agencies can be critical partners for interventions serving this population.

The need to develop a more rigorous evidence base for VR services can be an important design consideration. For example, despite a sizable body of evidence on service provision and outcomes for youth involved with VR (for example, on the positive employment outcomes of youth receiving specific work-related services through VR), this evidence typically has been descriptive, and few studies have applied more rigorous analytical approaches to identifying the effects of VR services for youth relative to other—or no—services. Among exceptions that have documented an association between VR and positive employment outcomes are supported employment services (Wehman et al. 2014a) and VR services provided in tandem with other services through the Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative (Luecking et al. 2017). Moreover, although many VR agencies offer a range of programs for youth, few studies document the details of program operation or the outcomes of the youth involved. Given changes

resulting from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the number of youth a VR agency serves might increase and the types of transition services delivered might change as agencies provide more pre-employment transition services and customized employment services. As a result, VR agencies may wish to know both whether these changes lead to better outcomes and which services are most effective.

Workforce development agencies provide an additional set of programs that youth with disabilities can access, such as the summer youth employment and apprenticeship programs. Though the programs are not targeted exclusively to youth with disabilities, that population represents one of the groups eligible for services, should they meet age and other requirements. As noted earlier, we identify the positive effects of Job Corps for youth with health conditions, which underscores the possibility that youth with disabilities or youth SSI recipients could use that program. Initial results from DOL's Disability Employment Initiative, still being fielded, point to qualitative successes but also to challenges in improving employment services and outcomes for individuals receiving SSI or SSDI.

Finally, systems change efforts are an alternative, top-down strategy to improving and expanding transition supports. Such efforts include greater collaboration and connections between agencies serving youth SSI recipients, such as LEAs, VR agencies, workforce development agencies, and Medicaid programs. Some of these changes are already occurring through WIOA (for example, with VR agencies working more with LEAs to provide pre-employment transition services [NCD 2017]) or through specific Medicaid waiver programs. Other systems change efforts have been proposed, but not tested, to assist youth SSI recipients. CareerACCESS, for example, has a theoretical framework through which to modify SSA work incentives and provide counseling, employment, and other services.

Table III.2. Summary of federal and state programs and systems change efforts for youth SSI recipients

Strategy (responsible federal organization)	Provider
Federal and state programs accessed by youth SSI recipients	
ABLE Act	State agencies and financial institutions
Disability Employment Initiative (DOL)	DOL, workforce development agencies
Employment First	DOL, workforce development agencies
Pre-employment transition services (RSA)	VR agencies, LEAs, CRPs
Special education services	DOE, state and local education agencies
SSA work supports (SSA)	SSA
Ticket to Work program (SSA)	SSA
Vocational rehabilitation (RSA)	RSA, VR agencies
Workforce development programs (such as YouthBuild, Youth Corps, apprenticeships)	DOL, workforce development agencies
WIPA (SSA)	SSA
Systems change efforts	
Age 18 redetermination counseling	SSA, VR agencies, school districts
Age 18 redetermination changes/work reporting changes	SSA
CareerACCESS	World Institute on Disability, the National Council on Independent Living, and PolicyWorks
Partnerships in Employment Systems Change projects	Stakeholder consortia involved state and community agencies and organizations
Tennessee Medicaid 115 waiver program (TennCare Employment and Community First CHOICES)	State Medicaid agency and state disabilities department

CRP = community rehabilitation provider; DOL = U.S. Department of Labor; DOE = Department of Education; LEA = local education agencies; RSA = Rehabilitation Services Administration; SSA = Social Security Administration; VR = vocational rehabilitation; WIPA = Work Incentive Planning and Assistance

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IV. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This chapter presents conclusions from the information presented in Chapters II and III and the appendices regarding strategies to improve the employment outcomes of youth SSI recipients. It also suggests next steps for policymakers interested in promoting interventions for this population.

The lack of strong evidence on effective practices for youth with disabilities generally—and youth SSI recipients specifically—underscores the need for better data and information. The services that workforce development agencies, state VR agencies, LEAs, and other community providers offer need better documentation of service delivery and outcome tracking to allow appropriate comparisons among groups of youth. Such information will lead to a better understanding of effective practices. WIOA data reporting requirements will further these types of efforts for youth with disabilities, but policymakers can require even more information to add to the evidence base for youth SSI recipients. An additional but related data issue is that LEAs and other providers at the state and local levels need consistent data from SSA to identify youth SSI recipients and to assist with evaluation activities. Importantly, few studies identified in this review have included SSA benefit receipt as an outcome, which is a relevant consideration for the population of interest.

Transition frameworks such as the Guideposts for Success can be used as a starting point to assess strategies using existing frameworks and evidence from the field, although they may not be sufficient to promote positive outcomes for youth SSI recipients. A major challenge in applying these frameworks is that the population of youth SSI recipients has potentially heterogeneous service needs (see Chapter II). This finding suggests that strategies will most likely need to be customized to the youth and the environments in which they live, especially because of the large geographic variation in SSI participation. Chapter III identified the multiple options that exist for serving youth SSI recipients. The most promising strategies—the ones with the strongest and most consistent evidence—involve early work-based strategies and comprehensive transition programs that provide an array of services (such as YTD and MSTC); other strategies have yet to be fully tested.

There is no single way to identify the most promising of the reviewed strategies specifically for youth SSI recipients, in part because tests conducted thus far for this population have been limited. This constitutes an important challenge for those who want to improve the employment outcomes of youth SSI recipients. A corollary to this challenge is that ODEP and others interested in the successful transition of youth SSI recipients have ample opportunities to fill the knowledge gap. That is, any strategy applied to this population, if it is rigorously tested, can add to the knowledge base on the effectiveness of a strategy.

Testing strategies for youth SSI recipients could range from small pilot tests to large demonstration projects. Funding pilot tests could be a cost-effective and timely investment for evaluating many strategies, if those strategies can be applied with intensity and at a small scale. Such tests could integrate current innovations in evaluation techniques, such as behavioral nudges, rapid cycle evaluations, and technical assistance, with strategies to encourage specific practices or outcomes. Larger demonstration projects might be necessary for examining strategies with higher resource costs and multiple organizational players.

In summary, this report identified several strategies from the field that provide a starting point for consideration in improving the employment outcomes of youth SSI recipients, and they can serve as a foundation for the project's future reports. Multiple options can be used to narrow the list, which in part depends on the subset of youth SSI recipients to be targeted (such as child SSI recipients or new young adult SSI recipients) and on evaluation options that will be covered in future reports. For example, while some strategies in this text may be promising because they reflect aspects of the transition frameworks on best practices (such as the Guideposts for Success), the ultimate value of a strategy may depend on its ability to scale to a broader population. One especially promising avenue for gathering information on strategies will be the CoP, which might provide information on the strategy's potential for implementation, evaluation, and, ultimately, scalability.

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APPENDIX A

**CHARACTERISTICS OF AND GAPS IN TRANSITION SERVICE FRAMEWORKS
FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES**

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As a starting point for identifying strategies to improve employment of youth SSI recipients, we present information from two commonly used frameworks for the transition of youth with disabilities. For each, we identify strengths and weaknesses in consideration of this study's target population.

Stakeholders can use frameworks to synthesize existing literature findings and expert knowledge in ways that help them identify and use practices that promote outcomes of interest. Two such frameworks exist for transition services: (1) Guideposts for Success, developed by the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASET 2005) and the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y 2009), and (2) the effective transition practices and predictors matrix maintained by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition. Each is intended to guide policymakers, administrators, service providers, and youth and families on choices regarding transition services. SSA incorporated Guideposts for Success in the completed Youth Transition Demonstration.

Before describing these two frameworks in detail, we first identify commonalities, themes, limitations, and gaps that emerge across them regarding transition services.

- **The two frameworks have important commonalities and differences.** Common strategies include early work-based experiences, teaming among practitioners working with a youth, interagency collaboration, and youth autonomy. Benefits counseling and financial education, an important support for youth SSI recipients, are not well identified across the frameworks. Although it is mentioned in Guideposts for Success, this service is listed in NTACT as a VR practice rather than a broader practice outside VR agencies.

- **Evidence is often descriptive and relies on information beyond youth SSI recipients.** The strategies identified in each framework often are supported on the basis of descriptive evidence, in part because it is challenging to identify each strategy separately. Additionally, the evidence supporting the strategies is based primarily on studies of youth with disabilities, youth with specific conditions (such as intellectual or developmental disabilities), or youth with relatively severe conditions, as opposed to youth SSI recipients who may have other needs. Hence, an important role for a future project might be to provide rigorous evidence on one or more strategies from these frameworks, specifically for youth SSI recipients.

- **Benefits counseling and financial education, youth development, self-advocacy and self-determination, mentoring, and mobility supports (such as assistive technology and travel training) require more evidence.** A comparison of Guidepost practices with NTACT's practices and predictors matrix suggests that several strategies listed in Guideposts for Success do not yet have a high level of evidence to support their stated relationships to employment outcomes. Most noteworthy among these gaps are benefits counseling, youth development, self-advocacy and self-determination, mentoring, and mobility supports (such as assistive technology and travel training). Strategies around employment services and around interagency collaboration have the most evidence. Perhaps not surprisingly, the largest number of strategies for transition-age youth with strong evidence has focused on developing human capital, particularly in promoting employment.

A. Guideposts for Success

Guideposts for Success is a collection of high quality, effective transition practices compiled by experts through a consensus-building process (NCWD/Y 2009). Its recommendations stem from an extensive review of practice and research evidence on the factors that help youth succeed. The level of evidence supporting the Guideposts ranges from rigorous evaluations and correlational research to anecdotal evidence and expert opinion.

Guideposts for Success practices are organized around five key themes for the development of programs and activities to improve the postsecondary education and employment outcomes for students (Appendix Table A.1). It includes practices that all youth need for their transition to adulthood and employment, with additional practices identified for youth with disabilities.

Several public and private entities have implemented strategies based on those included in the Guideposts for Success framework, providing insights on how to best serve different populations of youth with disabilities. For example: SSA used the model to inform its YTD projects (Rangarajan et al. 2009); Guideposts factored into the development of the Federal Partners in Transition outcome goals (Federal Partners in Transition Workgroup 2015); and U.S. DOL relies on the model for interventions such as the Disability Employment Initiative (US DOL 2018) and Pathways to Careers: Community Colleges for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities Demonstration Project.

Appendix Table A.1. Guideposts for Success policies and practices

Guidepost	Policies and practices
School-based preparatory experiences, including access to high-quality, standards-based education for all students	To perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options based on meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills. These should include the following: • Academic programs that are based on clear state standards • Career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards • Curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work, and community-based learning experiences • Learning environments that are small and safe, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary • Supports from and by highly qualified staff • Access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures • Graduation standards that include options In addition, youth with disabilities need to do the following: • Use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and use strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling • Have access to specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school • Develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations • Be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff who may or may not be school staff

Guidepost	Policies and practices
Career preparation and work-based learning experiences, including classroom and community-based experiences as well as information about career options	Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order for youth to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day or through after-school programs, and will require collaborations with other organizations. All youth need information on career options, including the following: • Career assessments to help identify students' school and post-school preferences and interests • Structured exposure to postsecondary education and other lifelong learning opportunities • Exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including information about educational requirements, entry requirements, income and benefits potential, and asset accumulation • Training designed to improve job-seeking skills and workplace basic skills (sometimes called "soft skills") To identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including the following: • Opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities, such as site visits and job shadowing • Multiple on-the-job training experiences (paid or unpaid), including community service, that are specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit • Opportunities to learn and practice their work skills (so-called "soft skills") • Opportunities to learn firsthand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway In addition, youth with disabilities may need to do one or more of the following: • Understand the relationships between benefits planning and career choices • Learn to communicate their disability-related work support and accommodation needs • Learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training, and employment settings
Youth development and leadership through mentoring and other engagement opportunities	Youth development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences that help them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of that process. To control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need the following: • Mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings • Peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities • Exposure to role models in a variety of contexts • Training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution • Exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service • Opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem Youth with disabilities also need the following: • Mentors and role models, including persons with and without disabilities • An understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities

Guidepost	Policies and practices
Connecting activities to both informal and formal service systems	Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. All youth may need one or more of the following: • Mental and physical health services • Transportation • Housing • Tutoring • Financial planning and management • Post-program supports through structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies • Connection to other services and opportunities (e.g., recreation) Youth with disabilities may need one or more of the following: • Acquisition of appropriate assistive technologies • Community orientation and mobility/travel training (e.g., accessible transportation, bus routes, housing, health clinics) • Exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers and other consumer-driven, community-based support service agencies • Personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, or other such services • Benefits-planning counseling, including information regarding the myriad of benefits available and their interrelationships so that youth may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency
Encouraging family involvement and supports	Participation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic and occupational growth of youth, leading to better post-school outcomes. All youth need parents, families, and other caring adults who do the following: • Have high expectations that build upon the young person's strengths, interests, and needs and that foster each youth's ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency • Remain involved in their lives and assist them toward adulthood • Have access to information about employment, further education, and community resources • Take an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners • Have access to medical, professional, and peer support networks In addition, youth with disabilities need parents, families, and other caring adults who have the following: • An understanding of the youth's disability and how it may affect his or her education, employment, and daily living options • Knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation • Knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations available for young people with disabilities • An understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals and objectives

Source: NCWD/Y (2009) as presented in Honeycutt et al. (forthcoming).

B. NTACT's effective transition practices and predictors matrix

NTACT systematically evaluates transition practices according to their effectiveness. Its work, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, extends the process used by Guideposts for Success to actively track strategies that emerge in the literature; unlike that framework, however, it does so without a theoretical foundation. That is, it presents strategies and their level of evidence without further consideration other than by the outcome and the strategy type (NTACT 2018). The included strategies and their evidence level are continually updated as new findings emerge in the literature, with results presented to the field (for example, Haber et al. 2016; Mazzotti et al. 2012). NTACT also provides technical assistance to state stakeholders using the

strategies identified in this review process, thereby promoting the use of practices deemed to be effective.

NTACT maintains web-based lists of effective practices and predictors related to three postsecondary outcomes: education, employment, and independent living. These lists are updated as research evidence emerges. For each practice or predictor, NTACT describes its characteristics, cites relevant sources for more information, and assesses its level of evidence. The practices and predictors are organized around three areas: (1) secondary school practices (student-focused planning practices, student development, and school completion); (2) VR practices (such as collaboration, employment, and service delivery); and (3) predictors of postsecondary outcomes based on correlational studies.

In Appendix Table A.2, we list the strategies related to postsecondary employment outcomes that are listed under each type of practice, sorted by the level of evidence (as of January 2018).

Appendix Table A.2. NTACT effective practices and predictors for postsecondary employment outcomes, as of January 2018

Level of evidence	Practice
Employment outcomes	
Evidence-based practices and predictors	**Secondary school student-focused planning practices** - Published curricula to teach student involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) **Secondary school student development practices** - Self-determined learning model of instruction to teach goal attainment
Research-based practices and predictors	**Secondary school student-focused planning practices** - Self-advocacy strategy to teach student involvement in the IEP meeting - Self-directed IEP to teach student involvement in the IEP meeting **Secondary school student development practices** - Response prompting to teach employment skills - Self-management instruction to teach specific job skills - Simulation to teach social skills - Whose Future Is It? to teach self-determination skills **Vocational rehabilitation collaborative practices** - Counseling and a working alliance between the counselor and the consumer - Interagency collaboration **Vocational rehabilitation employment practices** - Supported employment **Vocational rehabilitation professional training practices** - Impact of counselor education and consumer outcomes **Vocational rehabilitation service delivery practices** - Services to a target group **Predictors of postsecondary outcomes** - Inclusion in general education - Occupational courses - Paid employment/work experience - Vocation education - Work study

Level of evidence	Practice
Promising practices and predictors	**Secondary school student-focused planning practices** - Check and connect to promote student participation in the IEP meeting - Computer-assisted instruction to teach participation in the IEP process - Whose Future Is It? to teach student knowledge of transition planning **Secondary school student development practices** - Community-based instruction to teach employment skills - Computer-assisted instruction to teach specific job skills - Constant time delay to teach specific job skills - Extended career planning services to teach finance skills - Mnemonics to teach completing a job application - System of least-to-most prompts to teach communication skills - System of least-to-most prompts to teach job-specific skills **Vocational rehabilitation organizational practices** - Data driven - Employer relations - Excellent Service, Every Consumer, Every Time (E-3) - Incubator units - Organizational skills enhancement - Rapid response and internal service specialized coordinators, counselors, and caseloads - Share point - Strong business model **Vocational rehabilitation service delivery practices** - Acquired brain injury program - Career exploration services - Choose to Work - Community Rehabilitation Program certification - DARSforce - Embedded training programs - Essential elements of service delivery - Individual placement and support - Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative - Soft skills training - Utah Defendant Offender Workforce Development Taskforce - Valforce - Work incentive planning and benefits counseling **Vocational rehabilitation environmental and cultural factors** - Organizational culture - Increasing visibility and communication/constituent relations - Agency leadership - Partnerships - Rehabilitation counselor and unit autonomy - Resources - Return on investment - Service integration and business model - Staff training and development - Support for innovative and promising practices - Working alliance and client-centered services **Other vocational rehabilitation promising practices** - Empowerment and customer self-concept **Predictors of postsecondary outcomes** - Career awareness - Community experiences - Exit exam requirements/high school diploma status - Interagency collaboration - Parent expectations - Parental involvement - Program of study - Self-advocacy/self-determination - Self-care/independent living - Social skills - Student support - Transition programs - Travel skills - Youth autonomy/decision making

Source: NTACT (2018) as presented in Honeycutt et al. (forthcoming).

Note: Evidence-based practices are the highest level of evidence for NTACT. The assessment is based on research that used a rigorous research design, demonstrated a strong record of success for improving outcomes, underwent a systematic review process, and adhered to quality indicators related to a specific research design.

Research-based practices are derived from research that used a rigorous research design, demonstrated a sufficient record of success for improving outcomes, may or may not have undergone a systematic review process, and may or may not adhere to quality indicators related to a specific research design.

Promising practices are based on research that demonstrates limited success for improving outcomes, may or may not have undergone a systematic review process, and may or may not adhere to quality indicators related to a specific research design.

APPENDIX B

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING STRATEGIES INTENDED TO PROMOTE THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

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This appendix presents specific evidence on strategies that have been applied, at least in part, to youth SSI recipients. We start with recent summaries of evaluations of employment programs, with an emphasis on those targeted to SSA disability benefit recipients. We next identify strategies that have—or will have—experimental evidence, which is the highest level of evidence in determining whether a strategy has an impact on employment outcomes. We then turn to those strategies that have some descriptive or quasi-experimental evidence to support them, and we conclude with strategies that have been proposed for youth SSI recipients but not yet tested. A caveat to the discussion below is that we do not present information on the relationship of strategy costs to strategy benefits. This aspect is often omitted from existing studies because the studies either are not positioned to provide a true measure of benefits to costs or (in the case of SSA demonstration programs) they did not observe any reduction in SSA cash benefits. In other cases, the benefits that accrue to a youth likely do not outweigh the cost of delivering services, at least monetarily. Selection of strategies might involve a benefit-cost calculation, especially when the cost of delivering a strategy is particularly large.

A. Summaries of employment programs for people with disabilities

Two recent summary papers provide overviews of findings relevant for youth SSI recipients. The first paper is a report from the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research, or CLEAR, on employment programs and demonstration projects that involved individuals receiving SSI or SSDI benefits (CLEAR 2015). The second paper describes the challenges of implementing employment programs for people with disabilities (Wittenburg et al. 2013). Both papers reviewed a comprehensive set of studies that took place within a specified period. Although drawn from many studies since 1985 that include working-age adults as well as youth, the themes that these papers identify continue to be relevant in considering strategies for youth SSI recipients.

The findings from demonstrations for individuals receiving SSA benefits underscore the difficulties in providing supports that lead to long-term independence, improved earnings, and decreased benefit levels for our population of interest. Themes relevant to strategies for youth SSI recipients include the following:

- The most effective strategies provided intensive, individualized supports and services around job training, placement, and retention to narrowly defined target populations. Because of their intensity and required customization, the most effective programs had high per-person costs relative to other programs. Conversely, strategies that provided uniform incentives to broad beneficiary populations with a range of disabilities were unsuccessful in improving employment and benefit receipt outcomes.

- There is no evidence of SSI or SSDI caseload reductions across SSA demonstrations, even when strategies improved employment or earnings. A few programs were successful in that participants experienced a modest increase in earnings. However, the higher earnings were insufficient to allow participants to be financially independent or to disqualify them for SSI or SSDI benefits. (There is promising evidence from a subgroup of Job Corps participants with medical limitations that the program reduced reliance on SSI participation [Hock et al. 2017], but the findings for the subgroup are from a cohort in the 1990s.)

- Work incentives and supports can be difficult to implement in the context of SSA's work incentives, creating possible confusion for beneficiaries and program staff. The new work strategies tested were placed largely within SSI and SSDI work supports, which are complex and deeply embedded in SSA's administrative processes. As a result, some demonstrations had difficulty implementing needed changes in a way that created well-informed participants, knowledgeable staff and counselors, and efficient modified administrative processes.

- The fragmentation of the disability support system impedes the ability to implement and evaluate employment strategies. Because of this fragmentation, many tested strategies required modification of program rules within only a single program or agency. Thus, when tested, strategies were not as strong as they might have been had other program rules been modified. More recent demonstrations rely on interagency cooperation to test strategies that need to overcome program fragmentation and require modification of rules across programs.

B. Strategies supported by experimental evidence

As noted in the reviews of Guideposts for Success and the NTACT matrix, few studies have used experimental evidence to identify the impacts of transition services targeted to youth with disabilities, much less youth SSI recipients. Appendix Table B.1 lists six studies that used randomized control trials (RCT) targeted to youth with disabilities or health conditions that emerged in our literature search. Because they used an RCT for their evaluations, these studies are among those with the highest level of evidence. These studies have typically involved intensive, customized, integrated services and supports to youth. Only one completed study, SSA's Youth Transition Demonstration, targeted youth SSI recipients, although another demonstration serving that population (PROMISE) is currently in the field.

1. Completed evaluations involving youth SSI recipients

The six YTD experimental projects had a strong focus on employment and vocational supports for youth. The projects that participated in the random-assignment evaluation developed service strategies, combined with SSA waivers of certain program rules to enhance work incentives, which were intended to help youth with disabilities maximize their economic self-sufficiency as they transitioned to adulthood. At the time, YTD was the largest effort to test strategies that had adopted aspects of the Guideposts to Success framework. Although YTD is based on that framework, the evaluation does not provide an evidence basis for all of the framework's strategies, as each YTD project developed services unique to its environment.

The impacts of the YTD were positive though inconsistent across projects. Three of the six YTD projects had positive impacts of approximately 7 percentage points on paid employment during the third year after the youth enrolled in the evaluation (Fraker et al. 2015). The largest impacts were concentrated in the projects that delivered more hours of employment-focused services to higher proportions of treatment group youth, underscoring both the importance of work-focused services and the need for greater intensity of such services. Also, the demonstration's SSA waivers resulted in higher SSI retention for those in the treatment group.

2.   Other evaluations involving adults and youth with disabilities

Other evaluations offer experimental evidence that is relevant to developing activities for this project, given their focus on younger adults or SSI recipients. These evaluations include random-assignment demonstrations sponsored by SSA or other federal agencies and two studies involving youth and young adults.

The Accelerated Benefits Demonstration, the Benefits Offset National Demonstration, and the Mental Health Treatment Study are examples of SSA demonstrations for adults that included SSI recipients (along with SSDI beneficiaries). Each demonstration provides evidence of more service usage and stronger positive effects among younger adults (generally under age 39). Targeted supports, health plans, and work incentives in these demonstrations are possible ingredients of interventions for youth SSI recipients. However, any of the strategies from these demonstrations would most likely have to be modified substantially to produce substantive impacts on employment, as they (1) were tailored for adult populations and (2) generally had limited effects, at least in comparison with YTD.

The Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment and the Employment Intervention Demonstration Program (EIDP) are non-SSA-funded demonstrations that targeted narrower populations of adults with specific impairments with a specified set of services that included employment. Only one, EIDP (which provided supported employment supports for individuals with psychiatric conditions), had positive impacts on employment outcomes.

The experimental findings from two other projects suggest additional strategies to improve the employment of youth. The first, Project Search, emphasizes work-based experiences for youth and young adults. The evaluation relied on a small sample of youth ($N = 40$) with autism spectrum disorder, but indicated a positive employment impact. Its findings complement other descriptive evidence on the value of Project Search, described later, and Mamun et al. (2017) present options for a more comprehensive evaluation. The second, Job Corps, is a DOL-funded career preparation program for youth and young adults. Secondary analyses of findings from an earlier RCT point to employment impacts for youth with health conditions that are greater than those for youth without health conditions. These findings suggest the potential for a large evaluation to test the impacts of Job Corps for youth with disabilities more broadly.

3.   Current evaluations

Three sets of demonstration projects currently in the field will enhance our knowledge of service impacts for youth with disabilities. Two sets involve youth and the third set targets adults with disabilities.

PROMISE, a demonstration project involving the U.S. Department of Education, SSA, DOL, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, funds six sites in 11 states. Similar to YTD, PROMISE includes a sharp focus on providing youth with paid work experiences and a rigorous random assignment evaluation design. However, PROMISE and YTD differ regarding service providers, the focus of services, and scale of activities. As Fraker and colleagues (2014) note, PROMISE programs focus strongly on coordination with state social service agencies, whereas YTD projects resided in universities and private, nonprofit service providers. Additionally, the PROMISE programs deliver services to both youth and families,

whereas YTD served only youth. Finally, PROMISE is a larger intervention that delivers services to over 6,000 youth; the YTD projects served a total of approximately 2,600 youth. PROMISE program and evaluation data could be useful for understanding the characteristics of youth SSI recipients that are associated with service receipt and outcomes, as well as document types and intensity of service provision (particularly around work-based learning experiences [WBLE]).

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is sponsoring WBLE demonstration projects at five state VR agencies, two of which (in Maryland and Vermont) will involve RCT evaluations. Each of the projects targets high school students with disabilities, with the evaluations focused on implementation issues around WBLE service delivery, along with eventual postsecondary education and employment outcomes. These RSA-sponsored demonstrations could be leveraged, depending on sample sizes, to identify outcomes of youth SSI recipients as a subset of the larger population or, with SSA cooperation, to identify the impact of these programs on federal disability benefit outcomes for youth with and without benefits.

Two SSA demonstrations (Promoting Opportunity Demonstration and Supported Employment Demonstration) currently fielded might provide additional opportunities to understand service provision for SSI recipients. The Promoting Opportunity Demonstration offers simplified benefits strategies; the other demonstration delivers comprehensive supported employment supports to adults with psychiatric conditions. Evaluation findings from both could point to levers in improving employment outcomes that could apply to youth SSI recipients.

Appendix Table B.1. Strategies with experimental evidence

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Strategies targeted to youth SSI recipients							
Youth Transition Demonstration random assignment projects	Youth ages 14 through 25 at enrollment who were receiving or at risk of receiving SSI, with six programs in five states (Colorado, Florida, Maryland, New York, and West Virginia). Additional target population characteristics varied by site. All but one of the evaluated sites (Maryland) enrolled SSI recipients exclusively. Implemented from 2006 to 2012.	Provided youth with (1) employment-related services (based on the Guideposts for Success framework) that varied by site and (2) waivers of certain SSI and SSDI program rules.	SSA; private institutions and public organizations.	By Year 3, employment rate increased at three programs, and earnings increased at two programs. Total income (that is, earnings plus benefits) increased at five programs. YTD impact reports reviewed by CLEAR were given the highest evidence rating.	Study purposes: to determine effective service strategies for assisting youth with disabilities improve their economic self-sufficiency in their transition to adulthood, and to determine the impact of early work experience on employment outcomes of youth with disabilities. The research aimed to determine whether the YTD projects provided youth with services that would promote employment, and whether the YTD projects improved employment and other transition outcomes for those youth as compared to their outcomes without YTD project participation. RCT across six sites (treatment = 2,756; control = 2,347).	Youth with disabilities are more likely to receive employment-promoting services participating in YTD projects. Increases in provided service hours correlated with stronger employment outcomes.	Fraker et al. 2014, 2016; Hemmeter 2014; Mamun et al. 2017
Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI	SSI recipients ages 14 to 16 in six programs across 11 states (Arkansas, California, Maryland, New York, Wisconsin, and a consortium of six states [Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah]). Implemented from 2013 to 2018.	Core strategies: formal agency-level partnerships; case management; benefits counseling and financial literacy training; career and work-based learning experiences; and parent training and information.	ED, SSA, DOL, and HHS; state agencies (disability, education, mental health, or VR).	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: to document program implementation, differences in service receipt and changes in educational attainment, employment credentials and outcomes, SSI payments, public benefits, and total household income. RCT; from about 2,000 to 3,330 enrollees per site (half in the treatment group and half in the control group).	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet)	Fraker et al. 2014; Honeycutt et al. forthcoming

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Strategies targeted to young adults with SSI and/or SSDI benefits							
Accelerated Benefits Demonstration	New SSDI beneficiaries without insurance ages 18 to 54. Implemented from 2007 to 2011.	Provided health benefits before Medicare eligibility to otherwise uninsured beneficiaries. A subset of participants received telephone-based employment and benefits services.	SSA; 53 metropolitan areas were included in the study.	No impacts on employment.	Study purpose: to determine the effectiveness of health care benefits provided through the demonstration for SSDI beneficiaries without insurance. RCT; about 2,000 new SSDI beneficiaries (assigned to one of two treatment groups or to a control group).	Participants used health benefits and had reduced unmet health care needs.	Michalopoulos et al. 2011
Mental Health Treatment Study	SSDI beneficiaries with a primary impairment of schizophrenia or an affective disorder. Implemented from 2006 to 2010.	Participants in 23 study sites received access to health and supported employment services for a 24-month period. The study included SSA benefits waivers (continuing disability review suspension for three years).	SSA; services delivered primarily by community mental health agencies.	Employment at 24 months was significantly different for the treatment and control groups (61 percent and 40 percent, respectively). Earnings, wages, hours worked, and months employed were also different for the two groups.	Study purpose: to determine whether SSDI beneficiaries with schizophrenia or an affective disorder would be supported in returning to work via supported employment and systematic medication management services. RCT; 2,238 SSDI beneficiaries.	Supported employment can be implemented with fidelity to this population of SSDI beneficiaries. Fourteen percent of those eligible enrolled in the study.	Frey et al. 2011
Benefit Offset National Demonstration	SSDI beneficiaries. Implementation occurred from 2011 through 2012.	Participants offered a $1 for $2 benefit offset for earnings, with some provided enhanced work incentives counseling. Implemented in 10 sites.	SSA; incentives counseling services provided by WIPA projects.	No long-term impacts on earnings.	Study purpose: to highlight estimated impacts of the demonstration on benefits paid to SSDI beneficiaries. RCT; 968,713 and 12,744 beneficiaries across the two-stage design.	The intervention led to an increase in benefit amounts. Enhanced work incentives counseling had no detectable incremental effect above traditional work incentives counseling.	Wittenburg et al. 2015a
Promoting Opportunity Demonstration	SSDI beneficiaries. Implementation to occur from 2018 through 2021.	Demonstration will test simplified benefits offsets and work incentives and will offer benefits counseling; projects planned for eight sites.	SSA.	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: to test a simplified work incentives and a benefit offset for SSDI beneficiaries to determine its effect on earnings, employment, and benefit payments. RCT; 15,000 individuals assigned to one of two treatment groups or to a control group.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet)	None

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Supported Employment Demonstration	Individuals ages 18 to 50 who have applied for SSDI or SSI and are interested in working. Implementation to occur from 2017 through 2022	The demonstration will test the provision of integrated vocational, medical, and behavioral health services using an IPS model to enrollees for 36 months; to be implemented in 30 sites.	SSA; services provided by community mental health agencies.	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: to assess whether offering evidence-based interventions of integrated vocational, medical, and behavioral health services to individuals with behavioral health conditions can increase employment outcomes and reduce the demand for disability benefits. RCT; 3,000 individuals assigned to one of two treatment groups or to a control group.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	None
Strategies targeted to other youth or adults with disabilities							
Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment	Workers with potentially disabling health conditions. Implemented from 2006 through 2009.	Four sites (Hawaii, Kansas, Minnesota, and Texas) offered wrap-around health services, employment supports, and case management.	The programs were led by two state departments of health, a health policy authority and health insurance organization, and a Medicaid agency.	None of the programs had earnings impacts	Study purpose: to determine the impact of the demonstration on participant employment outcomes, use of federal disability benefits, health status, and earnings. RCT; programs ranged from 190 to 1,793 enrollees.	Positive effects in some programs on functional limitations and SSA benefit receipt.	Whalen et al. 2014
Employment Intervention Demonstration Program	Individuals ages 18 and older with psychiatric disabilities in seven states. Implemented from 1996 to 2001.	Supported employment program with clinical and VR services and supports that varied across the programs.	SAMSHA; academic, public, and private entities.	Participants ages 25 to 30, but not those ages 18 to 24, had better employment outcomes than those over the age of 30.	Study purpose: to determine the impact of supported employment on employment outcomes for youth and youth adults compared to older adults. RCT. N = 1,272 participants; 47 percent of those age 18–24 (n = 81) were SSI recipients and 50 percent of those age 25–30 (n = 168) were SSI recipients.	Younger individuals with mental health issues had an advantage in seeking employment over those who were older. Duration of supported employment programs was correlated with positive work outcomes.	Burke-Miller et al. 2012

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Job Corps	Job Corps participants with medical limitations. Study data were taken from the original National Job Corps Study undertaken in the 1990s. Analysis for those with medical limitations was conducted in 2017.	Provides youth and young adults with employment and educational services, training, and support in a residential setting.	DOL; workforce development agencies.	Youth with medical limitations in Job Corps worked an average of 21 more weeks and 998 more hours than those not in the program. Job Corps participation for these youth also increased earnings by $9,708 over a four-year period, a 29 percent increase relative to those not in the program.	Study purpose: to determine the impact of the program on employment outcomes and reliance on disability benefits for youth with limitations from medical conditions. RCT; N = 472 youths with medical limitations (271 in the treatment group and 201 in the control group). SSI receipt not identified at baseline.	Job Corps could help meet policy goals for improving work outcomes for youth with disabilities and reducing their dependence on disability benefits. The participating youth with medical limitations observed a collective 52 percent reduction of total SSI received.	Hock et al. 2017
Project SEARCH	Youth with autism ages 18 to 21. The study was conducted over a three-year period.	Project SEARCH is a high school work-to-transition program for youth with disabilities; it integrates employers and businesses with other educational and community rehabilitation service providers to engage youth with disabilities in paid work experiences.	LEAs, VR agencies, workforce development agencies, and employers.	21 individuals with autism were hired into competitive employment jobs, compared with one individual in the control group.	Study purpose: to determine the impact of the program with supports for autism spectrum disorder on employment outcomes and work support requirements for youth with autism. RCT. N = 40 (24 in the treatment group and 16 in the control group).	Participants were significantly more likely to be employed than those not in the program.	Wehman et al. 2014b
Transition Work-Based Learning Model (Maryland: Way2Work Maryland)	High school students with an IEP or 504 Plan. Implemented from 2017 to 2022.	Incorporates four empirically supported strategies associated with post-school success for students and youth with disabilities.	University, VR agency, and LEAs.	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: to document program implementation and assess differences between the treatment and control group students in service receipt, employment outcomes, and postsecondary education enrollment. RCT. Enrollment goal is 400 students equally divided between treatment and control groups.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	None

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Transition Work-Based Learning Model (Vermont: Linking Learning to Careers)	High school students who are VR clients. Implemented from 2017 to 2022.	Provides work-based learning experiences in integrated settings under the VR program to improve students' post-school outcomes.	VR agency and community college system.	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: to document program implementation and assess differences between the treatment and control group students in service receipt, employment outcomes, and post-secondary education enrollment. RCT. Enrollment goal is 800 students equally divided between treatment and control groups.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	None

C. Strategies supported by nonexperimental evidence

We identified studies related to 12 strategies with nonexperimental evidence on outcomes for youth with disabilities (Appendix Table B.2). The largely consistent positive evidence on employment is tempered by the lack of methods involving random assignment; therefore, these are strategies for which investments in a demonstration project with strong evaluation designs could provide insight as to their effectiveness. These studies include quasi-experimental evaluations that take advantage of natural experiments or a matched comparison group, along with descriptive studies that present pre-intervention and post-intervention statistics, with or without a valid comparison group, and often with a small number of participants. Most of these studies have samples of youth with disabilities rather than of youth SSI recipients. When SSI has been included as a control variable, the results typically indicate that youth SSI recipients have poorer outcomes than do youth without benefits, suggesting that such youth face additional barriers.

Only two of the strategies involve individuals receiving SSA benefits, the nonexperimental YTD studies and benefits counseling. The nonexperimental YTD studies provide important qualitative information on implementation issues for programs targeting youth SSI recipients. These programs chose not to participate in the random assignment evaluation, but they did provide services to many young SSI recipients. The implementation of these programs demonstrated the difficulty of pursuing large systems change efforts, the primacy of employment services to be offered alongside other supports, and the need to clearly define—and measure— both the service model and the outcomes of interest. We identified only one study featuring benefits counseling, which showed a positive association between benefits counseling receipt and modest employment outcomes (Delin et al. 2012). (We present additional information for benefits counseling under SSA's WIPA program in Appendix C.1, below.)

The supported employment studies in our review that have included youth and young adults have been small in scale and used a pre-post methodology to document their positive employment outcomes. Though these studies have been descriptive, without the use of valid comparison groups, they should be considered in the context of a much richer and rigorous set of studies documenting the effectiveness of the IPS supported employment model (such as Bond et al. 2008 and Drake et al. 2009), along with the results from EIDP.

Other targeted employment programs identified in the literature scan involved transition programs. These programs, which provide a package of services that emphasize employment, are the Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative, Project Search, Utah Pathways to Careers, and Marriott Foundation Bridges. These studies used a range of methodologies for their evaluations; they have tended to show consistent and positive employment outcomes for the youth with disabilities who received services in these programs.

Think College is the only strategy included in the literature scan that promotes the involvement of youth in postsecondary educational opportunities. It is pursuing two projects, one to promote the participation of youth with intellectual disabilities or autism in inclusive postsecondary programs and the other to explore a model of transition services connecting students to secondary education, postsecondary education, and transition services that lead to paid employment (Grigal et al. 2017b).

Three other RSA transition WBLE demonstrations not using a random assignment evaluation design are currently in the field. Evidence from these studies (in California, Maine, and Massachusetts) could provide additional evidence on WBLE models and best practices, implementation challenges, and positive outcomes for those receiving WBLE.

Appendix Table B.2. Strategies with nonexperimental evidence

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Strategies targeted to youth SSI recipients							
Benefits counseling	Individuals receiving Social Security disability benefits.	SSA-funded return-to-work projects: Wisconsin Pathways to Independence and Wisconsin SSDI Employment Pilot. The projects focused on developing employment support service programs to create job opportunities for individuals with disabilities, improve community resources, and decrease reliance on SSDI and SSI.	SSA; jointly led by state Department of Independence and Employment along with the state Department of Health Services	Across the two projects, benefits counseling led participants to earnings gains of $34 and income increases of $37 in each quarter of a two-year period. The employment rate increased 1.1 percent each quarter.	Study purpose: to determine the impact of a program's benefits counseling on SSDI beneficiaries' employment outcomes. Descriptive analysis with a comparison group. Analysis sample of 911 people across the two studies. One hundred twenty-three individuals received SSI and 788 received SSDI.	Service intensity was highly correlated to strong employment outcomes.	Delin et al. 2012
YTD nonexperimental projects	Youth ages 14 through 25 at enrollment who were receiving or at risk of receiving SSI. Additional target population characteristics varied by program. Two of the seven programs operated for the full five-year period from 2003 to 2009, two projects ended services early, and three participated in the random assignment evaluation.	Provided youth with (1) employment-related and other services such as benefits counseling (based on Guideposts for Success) that varied by site and (2) waivers of certain SSI and SSDI program rules.	SSA; each project was led by a varying combination of state agencies such as VR and education, local agencies such as education boards and school districts, and private organizations.	The evaluation did not include results on employment.	Study purpose: to highlight the design and implementation lessons learned from the seven original YTD projects supporting employment-focused interventions for youth with disabilities. Mixed-method process evaluation.	Strong partnerships between vocational and educational service providers are important for youth transition programs. Bold initiatives to address systems change are difficult to implement. Small programs can be scaled to operate in multiple sites and with a larger population. Intervention strategies should be clearly defined and linked to outcomes, and both should be measured. Delivering support services (such as case management and benefits counseling) without employment services is not likely to result in positive employment outcomes.	Martinez et al. 2010

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Strategies targeted to other youth with disabilities							
Back on Track to Success Mentoring Program	Young adults ages 16 to 26 years with a recently acquired disability (such as traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and other neurological disorders) in 17 California counties. The study focused on program data from 2005 to 2010.	Mentees were matched with a community-based mentor who facilitated check-ins and follow up assessments to track progress on goals.	Community agencies	Of the 79 participants, 29 returned to school and 13 worked.	Study purpose: to determine the impact of the mentoring program on the number of youth and young adults with disabilities accessing educational or employment opportunities and to highlight increases in community integration between program enrollment and exit. Pre-post, no comparison group of N = 131 young adults.	For individuals with traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries and other neurological disorders, mentoring can yield positive results for achieving educational and vocational goals, as well as community integration and independence.	Kolakowsky-Hayner et al. 2012
Maine Transition Work-Based Learning Model Demonstration	Transition-age youth within two years of high school graduation. Implemented from 2017 to 2022.	Expanding a Progressive Employment model and extending programs and services provided by Jobs for Maine's Graduates to five new schools.	RSA, VR agency, local rehabilitation providers, LEAs, and employers.	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: not yet identified. Matched comparison evaluation design.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	None

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Marriott Foundation Bridges from School to Work Program	Youth with disabilities participating in the Bridges programs.	The program enhances employment opportunities for youth with disabilities by developing permanent, competitive placements and incorporating individual career development plans with the potential for quantifiable vocational advancement.	Nonprofit community organization	Approximately 75 percent of Bridges participants had earnings by the age of 30. Fifty percent of youth receiving SSI on enrollment had earnings by age 30, and less than half still received SSI (compared with 34 percent of the comparison group).	Study purpose: to determine if participation in the program led to positive short- and long-term outcomes for employment, earnings, and receipt of SSI and SSDI benefits for youth participants under 30, and to determine the characteristics that may predict whether a Bridges participant would gain competitive employment and the extent to which certain characteristics can predict Bridges job placement rates. Descriptive studies, one with a comparison group. Fifteen to 18 percent of participants were SSI recipients.	Bridges participation was correlated with increased earnings capacity for participants.	Hemmeter et al. 2015; Fabian 2007; Gold et al. 2013; Dong et al. 2016

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative	High school students eligible for VR services and receiving special education or 504 services. Services began in the 10th grade. Each site was able to tailor its target population. Implemented from 2007 to 2012 in 11 Maryland school districts.	The model delivered transition services during the final three years of a student's secondary education. A VR counselor was actively involved throughout services. The intervention included aspects of the Guideposts for Success framework (NCWD/Y 2009).	State VR agency, state education agency, department of disabilities, and 11 school districts.	Of 124 students included, 26 percent achieved individualized, paid inclusive employment, 23 percent were enrolled in postsecondary education, and 14 percent were employed. Follow-up quasi-experimental study found that 42 percent of 377 students exited from VR with employment, compared with 23 percent of a matched comparison group. Youth in the program worked slightly fewer hours and earned less per week at closure than those in the comparison group.	Study purpose: to describe the implementation of the model and how youth ultimately transitioned from public education to post-secondary education or employment. Descriptive study and quasi-experimental study. Quasi-experimental study included 377 youth (24 percent of whom received SSI); the matched comparison group had 6,111 youth (24 percent who had SSI after weighting).	Model participants experienced a shorter time from eligibility to development of the Individual Plan for Employment, but longer open cases; received more job-related services and less assessment and diagnostic services; and cost less to serve. Program intervention promotes the early involvement of VR, which may allow for more rapid information sharing between students and families. The information sharing may allow for better coordination of resources between schools and community partners, resulting in cost savings of VR funds.	Luecking et al. 2015, 2017
Project SEARCH	High school students and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.	Project SEARCH is a high school work-to-transition program for youth with disabilities; it integrates employers and businesses with other educational and community rehabilitation service providers to engage youth with disabilities in paid work experiences.	LEAs, VR agencies, workforce development agencies, employers.	Six out of 10 participants were offered permanent jobs within three months of program conclusion. Participants' scores in their entry-level job skills and workplace behavior increased. Project SEARCH program data for the 2013–2014 school year indicates that 67 percent of participants engaged in paid employment after completing the program.	Study purpose: to determine the impact of the program on rates of job readiness and employment for 10 young adults with disabilities. Descriptive study with quantitative and qualitative data. Sample included ten young adults with disabilities ages 17 to 24. Evaluability assessment outlines impact evaluation design options.	Participation in Project SEARCH may contribute to improving participants' job readiness and employment prospects.	Müller et al. 2014; Mamun et al. 2016; Project SEARCH website (www.ProjectSEARCH.us/)

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Supported employment	Individuals ages 17 to 24 with serious mental health conditions; individuals with autism spectrum disorder; youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities ages 16 to 25 who received public VR services.	Supported employment program adapted for young adults with specific conditions; supported employment delivered by VR agencies.	Nonprofit, multiservice organizations; specialized residential treatment programs; state VR agencies.	Participants involved in the model were more likely to work (relative to a comparison group) during the study period. For the VR study, supported employment was associated with a 12.5 percent higher employment rate, with more positive effects observed for youth receiving Social Security benefits.	Study purpose: to determine the vocational and educational impacts of an adapted supported employment model for participants with psychiatric conditions. Descriptive analyses, with the samples for some studies not exceeding 36 people (some of whom received SSI). Case-control study of VR youth (N = 23,298), of whom 43 percent received SSI or SSDI.	While variations in policies and programs can create obstacles to service, the model can be adapted for people with certain conditions. Supported employment can be used to support VR outcomes of youth.	Ellison et al. 2014; Ferguson et al. 2012; Wehman et al. 2012, 2014a
Transition Pathways Services Work-Based Learning Model Demonstration (Massachusetts)	VR-eligible high school students with disabilities living in Massachusetts. Implemented from 2017 to 2022.	Students participate in customized work-based learning activities that encourage employment or postsecondary education after high school. Services include mentoring, job placement, assistive technology, benefits counseling, and related supports.	RSA, VR agency, job centers, and educational programs.	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: not yet identified. Service description; 651 students will be served over the five-year project.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	ExploreVR 2018
Transition Work-Based Learning Model (California)	Serving approximately 800 California students with disabilities. Implemented from 2017 to 2022.	Volunteer and paid work-based learning experiences to prepare students for successful employment and postsecondary education.	RSA, VR agency, university, LEAs, community organizations, and local employers.	Currently in the field.	Study purpose: not yet identified. Matched comparison evaluation design.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	California Department of Rehabilitation 2016

Strategy	Target population	Strategy description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Think College	Individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism. Implemented beginning in 2010.	The Transition and Postsecondary Education Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) model demonstration programs provide coordination, training, and evaluation services to promote high-quality, inclusive postsecondary education options for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Think College also supports the Think College Transition (TCT) project, a model for developing inclusive college-based transition services for students with intellectual disabilities ages 18 to 22.	Institutions of higher education, along with community partners such as VR agencies, LEAs, and employers.	For TPSID, in Year 5 (2015), 888 students participated in 52 programs. Of the 324 students who exited the program in Year 5, 110 worked in a paid job and an additional 121 participated in unpaid career development activities. TCT is still in the data collection phase.	Study purpose: to describe the program in terms of institutions that received grants, participant characteristics, employment and educational outcomes, and program sustainability and evaluation. Descriptive studies with quantitative and qualitative data.	Employment is positively related to longer length of time in the program and enrollment in more academically inclusive programs. Eighty percent of program exiters earned one or more credentials.	Grigal et al. 2017a, 2017b
Utah Pathways to Careers	Individuals ages 18 and older with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in Davis County, Utah. Implemented beginning in 2012. Expanded to three other sites (Maryland, Michigan, and Virginia) in 2015.	Program helps youth and adults secure employment opportunities in their communities. Services include assessments, paid internships lasting 8 to 12 weeks, employment and post-employment supports, and a payroll tax adjustment for employers.	Community organization.	In the first four years of implementation, 130 internships were completed by 67 participants. Forty-six of the internships resulted in job offers, and 32 participants accepted offers. Participation in the Pathways program is associated with increased employment rates and earnings.	Study purpose: to describe the approach, services, costs, and impacts of the program. Descriptive analysis of participants enrolled through 2016 ($N = 91$).	The employment and earnings results reduced disability benefits collected by Pathways participants by $162 and $178, on average, at post-intake follow-ups at the one-year and two-year marks, respectively.	Mathematica Policy Research 2017

D. Strategies without evidence

Three strategies identified in the literature scan that have been implemented have no documented evidence on their effectiveness (Appendix Table B.3).[3] Each represents a different model of service provision—a systematic employment and transition service model (Individualized Career Planning), mentoring supports through groups (Guided Group Discovery), and a student job readiness program—and presents additional strategies that could be tested to promote the employment outcomes of youth SSI recipients.

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[3] We anticipate identifying additional strategies through the CoP.

Appendix Table B.3. Strategies without evidence

Strategy	Target population	Description	Primary organizations involved	Study purpose and key findings	Source
Individualized Career Planning model	Students ages 14 (or younger, if appropriate) through age 21 or high school graduation. Implemented from 2001 to at least 2008.	The model incorporates the Discovery process and a Vocational Profile to be used as a resource for guiding the employment process; a Customized Employment Planning Meeting in which the student, family, school staff, VR staff, and employers meet to develop a tailored employment plan; and a final Representational Portfolio that presents all of the information gathered in the preceding phases into a marketing tool.	The model was conceptualized, implemented, and field-tested in nine Montana schools. The work was supported by two U.S. Department of Education grants. Services varied slightly between schools.	Study purpose: to provide an overview of the model and its components, and detail how the model supported students with vocational goals and in making use of Social Security work incentives over the course of program implementation in Montana schools. The authors claim the strategies are effective and well received by individuals with disabilities, their families, adult services, and schools, but note that incorporating the tools into existing practices requires a larger commitment from school staff than expected.	Condon and Callahan 2008
Guided Group Discovery pilots (Kanas, Maryland, Tennessee, and Oregon,)	Individuals with disabilities (Kansas, Maryland, and Oregon) and veterans with disabilities (Tennessee). Implemented beginning June 2015 (Kansas and Maryland), September 2017 (Oregon), and December 2017 (Tennessee).	Job seekers are supported in developing job search plans and securing employment that matches their skills and business needs. Facilitators are trained to lead Guided Group Discovery sessions with job seekers and support their aims to gain employment and other forms of support such as VR and housing. Guided Group Discovery workshops assist individuals with disabilities seeking employment and those facilitating their employment through the process of understanding and preparing for customized employment and competitive integrated employment.	DOL, workforce development agencies, VR agencies, and (in Tennessee) military occupational specialists and disabled veterans programs.	None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	LEAD Center 2015, 2017a, 2017b
Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD)–Youth Enrichment Program (YEP)	Eighty-five students with disabilities ages 13 to 19 are served annually in YEP in Boston. Implemented beginning in 2001.	A weekly program aimed at improving job readiness by providing academic instruction, practical educational experiences, and mentoring services.	Private organization.	No evaluation conducted to date. PYD has served over 800 youth and claims the YEP yields improvements in the career development and independence skills of participants through evidence from pre- and post-survey results, but no specific evidence is available.	Partners for Youth with Disabilities 2017

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APPENDIX C

FEDERAL AND STATE PROGRAMS ACCESSED BY YOUTH SSI RECIPIENTS

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Youth SSI recipients access federal and state programs that are important for transition and could be leveraged or modified to improve their employment outcomes. The OSERS Transition Guide (OSERS 2017) and GAO studies (US GAO 2012, 2017) describe the programmatic supports and programs around transition (VR, LEAs, workforce development agencies), and they point to the need for improved collaboration and describe the challenges that youth face with the existing transition environment, especially after leaving secondary school. In this appendix, we first present information about SSA work supports and programs, then turn to other programs (such as VR and systems change efforts) that many youth SSI recipients encounter. We conclude with a discussion of proposed but untested systems change efforts that could benefit the employment outcomes of youth SSI recipients.

A. Evidence regarding SSA work supports and the Ticket to Work program

SSA offers a range of work incentives and supports for youth SSI recipients (SSA 2018) (Appendix Table C.1). These incentives were developed to encourage the employment and earnings of SSI recipients or SSDI beneficiaries. The evidence is largely descriptive regarding prevalence, with no evidence as to their effectiveness in long-term employment or benefit outcomes. Moreover, statistics to date suggest that these incentives are not widely used by transition-age youth SSI recipients (US GAO 2017), suggesting barriers to their use.

Of the SSA incentives and programs, we found evidence on just three, with mixed results as to their effectiveness on benefit receipt or earnings.

- The Ticket to Work program gives adults receiving SSI or SSDI increased access to employment services through VR agencies and community providers. Its evaluation showed that provision of access to additional vocational supports resulted in a higher likelihood of benefit suspension for SSDI beneficiaries (the study did not assess impacts for SSI recipients) relative to the traditional VR system (Stapleton et al. 2013; Livermore et al. 2013). Other evidence from the evaluation identified provider characteristics and experiences, characteristics of individuals receiving SSI and SSDI most interested in returning to work, and longitudinal earnings and benefit outcomes of those receiving SSI and SSDI.

- The Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE) is an SSI program provision that allows students under age 22 to exclude earned income below a certain threshold from being included in their SSI payment calculation. Despite the threshold being relatively high ($1,790 per month in 2017), studies have identified both a low take-up rate and limited evidence of an impact on individual's total income, particularly among those with lower levels of earnings. For example, the GAO (US GAO 2017) found that fewer than 2 percent of transition-age youth SSI recipients access SEIE, although many might be eligible for this incentive.

- SSA funds WIPAs to provide information about benefit and earnings among those receiving SSI or SSDI and interested in employment. Although descriptive evidence suggests positive employment outcomes and the use of work supports for those accessing the program, the level of supports was relatively low, and it is unclear whether those with earnings would have had similar levels of earnings without WIPA supports (Livermore et al. 2011; Schimmel et al. 2011).

B. Related services from other programs with promising strategies

Evidence on VR's effectiveness for youth SSI recipients is descriptive, and details about provided services are limited, despite one-third of VR applicants being transition-age youth. For example, Wehman et al. (2014a) examined the experiences of youth receiving supported employment services from VR agencies using a matched comparison design and identified positive employment effects, particularly for youth receiving either SSI or SSDI. A limitation cited in the study is that agencies might have delivered supported employment services differently. Studies such as these, although insightful, are limited in their interpretation because of selection issues (that is, youth who receive specific VR services might differ from those who do not in ways that are not measured in the data). Additionally, few studies focus on youth SSI recipients; those that do often indicate that such youth have poorer outcomes than do youth without SSA benefits (with the findings from Wehman and colleagues [2014a] being an exception). There is also some evidence that positive earnings and reduced SSA benefit outcomes result from the receipt of VR services. Pre-employment transition services represent an important expansion of VR services to students with disabilities, many of whom will receive SSI.

Youth with disabilities are one of the specific at-risk populations of youth that qualify for services under the DOL's workforce development agencies. The Disability Employment Initiative is a recent effort by the department to encourage states to develop programs that improve service delivery and employment outcomes for youth and adults receiving SSI or SSDI. Early impact results were inconclusive on outcomes, but early implementation findings document the successes and challenges around serving the target population. Employment First, another systems change effort implemented by DOL, helps states develop policies and programs that encourage competitive, integrated employment for youth and adults with significant disabilities.

A new option for individuals with disabilities is the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. For individuals who qualify, this benefit allows them to save money without their SSA benefits being affected. This strategy is relatively new, so there is no evidence yet as to its frequency of use or its effectiveness in encouraging earnings. However, a program targeting youth SSI recipients could incorporate this strategy into its service model, as some PROMISE programs do.

C. Systems change strategies

Broader systems change efforts point to alternative, top-down strategies to improving and expanding transition supports; such efforts can be complicated to implement, however (Appendix Table C.2). Partnerships in Employment, an eight-state systems change initiative, resulted in expansions of Employment First legislation and positive efforts to improve collaboration across agencies. Two of its state-level evaluations showed modest improvements in employment outcomes. An alternative strategy involves Medicaid waiver programs, such as one in Tennessee that assists individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with improved access to employment services.

Also included in Appendix Table C.2 are three systems change strategies that have been proposed but have not yet been tested. Two of the strategies focus on the age-18 redetermination process, the point at which SSA assesses child SSI recipients under adult SSI criteria. One

strategy would provide targeted benefits counseling to prepare child SSI recipients for the age-18 redetermination process, whereas the other would modify the school or work requirements to provide more incentives for youth to work. A third strategy, CareerACCESS, proposes a series of vocational and benefits supports to facilitate the long-term transition of youth SSI recipients ages 18 to 30 into adulthood. Such supports would include extended access to cash benefits and the ability to save in ways not currently allowed by SSA.

Appendix Table C.1. Strategies offered by federal and state programs

Strategy	Target population	Description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts (level of evidence)	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Strategies targeted to youth SSI recipients							
Ticket to Work and Work Improvement Incentives Act of 1999 (Ticket Act)–Ticket to Work (TTW) program	For quasi-experimental design (QED), SSDI-only beneficiaries (excluding SSI) ages 18 to 39. TTW is available to all SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. The program has been active since 1999.	The TTW program supports SSI recipients and SSDI beneficiaries with employment services through providers of employment placement services and supports.	SSA in partnership with state VR agencies and other rehabilitation service providers.	Participants are more likely than nonparticipants to experience nonpayment of cash benefits due to suspension or termination from work (5.1 percent compared with 2.7 percent).	Study purpose: to highlight findings from the seven studies completed under the TTW and Self-Sufficiency Program from 2011 to 2013, and to detail employment and benefit outcomes for TTW participants as compared to nonparticipants. QED and several descriptive studies.	Service enrollment increased, but there was no consistent evidence for increases in suspension of benefits or termination due to work.	Livermore et al. 2013; Schimmel et al. 2013
Student Earned Income Exclusion	SEIE has been available for all SSI recipients age 22 and under since April 1, 2005. Before that, SEIE was available only for child SSI recipients. The analysis focused on SSI recipients who received SEIE in any month during 2004 or 2005.	SEIE seeks to improve the employment and self-support prospects of SSI recipients attending school or receiving other formal training. SEIE excludes earnings up to $1,790 per month (in 2017) from being counted against the SSI payment amount.	SSA.	SEIE did not have a strong impact on total income for SSI recipients with a small amount of earned income. SSI recipients with high levels of earned income may have had larger effects.	Study purpose: to highlight SEIE and information about recipient characteristics, as well as with metrics and variations of SEIE use. Descriptive analysis with no comparison group. About 26,000 recipients included in the analysis.	SEIE recipients do not often meet or exceed the annual SEIE limit: one-third of SEIE recipients used less than 10 percent of the potential amount and half used less than 20 percent. Only 4–5 percent of SEIE recipients reached the limit. Ten percent of SEIE recipients received it throughout the calendar year, whereas 70 percent received it for six or fewer months.	Kemp 2010; US GAO 2017

Strategy	Target population	Description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts (level of evidence)	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
WIPA	Individuals receiving SSA disability payments	SSA funds WIPA projects to provide information to SSDI beneficiaries and SSI recipients about benefits and work supports to facilitate employment outcomes.	SSA; local providers.	Positive employment outcomes and use of work supports associated with WIPA services, although this relationship is not causal.	Study purpose: to highlight findings regarding services received, use of SSA work supports, employment, earnings, and benefit reductions from an analysis of WIPA beneficiaries, in addition to highlighting findings from organizations that received WIPA grants. Descriptive analysis.	WIPA can support those receiving SSDI and SSI, but the level of support received by those who use the projects is modest, and the timing is relatively brief. Those who use more WIPA services are more likely to access SSA work supports and have higher earnings; they are also more likely to have benefits suspended or terminated due to work than those who use WIPA services less.	Livermore et al. 2011; Schimmel et al. 2011; SSA 2018
Other SSA work incentives not identified above	SSI recipients	Impairment-related work expenses, subsidies, and special conditions; unincurred business expenses; unsuccessful work attempts; continued payments under a vocational rehabilitation program; expedited reinstatement; blind work expenses; earned income exclusion; plan to achieving self-support; property essential to self support; special SSI payments for people who work; reinstating eligibility without a new application; 1619(b) continued Medicaid eligibility.	SSA.	None reported.	No evaluation conducted to date. Descriptive.	Statistics on use in SSA annual reports.	SSA 2018

Strategy	Target population	Description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts (level of evidence)	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Strategies targeted to other youth with disabilities							
ABLE accounts	Individuals with disabilities. Enacted in 2014.	Tax-free savings account for individuals with disabilities, which do not count toward the assets cap for SSI, SNAP, and Medicaid eligibility. ABLE accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save money with a lower risk of losing SSI eligibility or payment amounts. ABLE accounts can be used toward medical expenses, education, transportation, housing, and employment expenses.	State agencies and financial institutions.	None reported.	Study purpose: to provide an overview of the ABLE National Resource Center, including state- by- state resources. Policy overview.	No evaluation conducted to date.	ABLE National Resource Center (http://ablenrc.org/)
Disability Employment Initiative	Youth and adults who receive Social Security disability benefits and are unemployed or underemployed. The Initiative has been active since 2010. DOL awarded $123 million to 49 projects in 28 states as of September 2016.	DEI grants support projects nationwide that are geared toward education, training, and employment for youth and adults with disabilities, with a focus on improving collaboration.	DOL, workforce development agencies.	For adults, positive employment and earnings effects were not statistically different from those in the control group. For youth, an imbalance in the characteristics of those in the treatment and control groups resulted in unreliable impact estimates.	Study purpose: to document implementation practices and challenges, system change efforts, service utilization and exits, employment and earnings outcomes, and educational gains. Implementation, descriptive, and RCT evaluations.	Identified challenges and successes related to TTW and benefits counseling and variation in implementing service strategies. Programs increased the number of adults receiving services.	Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/DEI.htm); Bleimann et al. 2016
Employment First	Youth and adults with significant disabilities.	Systems change effort to promote policy, practice, and funding opportunities for community-based, integrated employment	DOL, workforce development and other state agencies	No key findings to date.	Study purpose: to provide an overview of pilots launched across four states and highlight key findings and results. Implementation and descriptive studies.	Identifies specific policy and practice changes conducted within states.	Lead Center 2015

Strategy	Target population	Description	Primary organizations involved	Employment impacts (level of evidence)	Study purpose and analysis method	Key findings	Source
Pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS)	High school and postsecondary students with disabilities.	WIOA requires state VR agencies to spend at least 15 percent of their federal allocations on providing pre-ETS to students. Required pre-ETS include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on transition or postsecondary education opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy.	RSA, state VR agencies, LEAs, and community rehabilitation providers	No key findings to date.	Study purposes: to provide an overview of the impact of new requirements concerning pre-employment transition services implemented under WIOA, including the scope of pre-ETS recipients and services and implementation challenges and successes.	No key findings or lessons to date.	NCD 2017; Sevak and Miller forthcoming
Vocational rehabilitation services	Transition age youth (typically ages 16 to 24) who applied for VR services and subsequently exited the program. All combined and general state VR agencies (excluding U.S. territories). One study focused on Ohio VR customers only.	Vocational rehabilitation services and supports.	State VR agencies	Employment associated with receipt of on-the-job support services (4.3 times higher likelihood), job placement (3.15 times higher likelihood), and occupational and vocational training (1.67 times higher likelihood).	Study purpose: to highlight differences in service practices and transition outcomes across state VR agencies serving youth with disabilities, in addition to determining correlations between VR recipient characteristics and VR outcomes. Descriptive studies. Percentage who were SSI recipients or SSDI beneficiaries varied (when measured) from 21 to 33 percent.	Positive competitive employment outcomes correlated with higher levels of education, the number of VR services received, and not collecting Social Security disability benefits. Receipt of job search and job placement services was associated with successful outcomes for youth with disabilities. State VR agencies had substantial variation in employment outcomes for youth.	Honeycutt et al. 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Alsaman and Lee 2017; Kaya et al. 2016; Oswald 2010; Wehman et al. 2014a

Appendix Table C.2. Systems change strategies for federal and state programs

Strategy	Target population	Description	Primary organizations involved	Study purpose and key findings	Source
CareerACCESS	Young adults ages 18 to 30 with disabilities who are current or future SSI recipients. The program was proposed in 2013.	CareerACCESS initiative will support participants through career coaching, benefits and asset building counseling, and employment support services. Participants will be able to receive SSI federal cash benefits, health care, and the ability to build and keep their assets.	World Institute on Disability, National Council on Independent Living, and Policy Works	Study purpose: to provide an overview of the program and services for young adults with disabilities. The project has not yet been implemented.	World Institute on Disability, Disability Policy Works, and National Council on Independent Living (http://www.ourcareeraccess.org/)
Age-18 redetermination counseling	Families of SSI children ages 13 to 17 with a high likelihood of not receiving SSI as adults.	Provide families with information and counseling on the age-18 redetermination process, including the likelihood of the child's removal from SSI and resources to help before the redetermination.	SSA, VR agencies, school districts	Policy proposal no evaluation conducted to date.	Deshpande and Dizon-Ross 2016
Age-18 redetermination changes/work reporting changes	Child recipients of SSI.	Conduct early redeterminations to provide youth more time to adjust to the decision. Eliminate work reporting for child SSI recipients to promote work.	SSA	Policy proposal; no evaluation conducted to date.	Wittenburg 2015
Tennessee Medicaid 115 waiver program (TennCare Employment and Community First CHOICES)	Individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The program has been active since July 2016.	The program assists individuals in preparing for, seeking out, and sustaining employment. Services include individual and small group employment supports, prevocational training, independent community living supports, family caregiving supports, and self-advocacy supports.	State Medicaid agency and state disabilities department	Study purpose: to provide an overview of the program and services. None (demonstration is still in the field, no impacts reported yet).	TennCare—Employment and Community First CHOICES overview (https://www.tn.gov/tenncare/long-term-services-supports/employment-and-community-first-choices.html)

Strategy	Target population	Description	Primary organizations involved	Study purpose and key findings	Source
Partnerships in Employment Systems Change projects	Youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities transitioning from school to postsecondary education and employment. Implemented from 2011 through 2017 in eight states (Alaska, California, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Tennessee, and Wisconsin).	Five-year grants were awarded to eight states to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes through objectives such as changing policies, removing barriers, and improving cross-system and interagency collaboration. Six of the eight states implemented 50 model demonstration projects; the remaining two states developed other programs targeting individuals with disabilities.	Stakeholder consortia involved state and community agencies and organizations such as state developmental disability, VR, and education agencies.	Study purpose: to evaluate the eight programs and the outcomes observed for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and determine their effectiveness and best practices. In all states, relationships improved between individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, service providers, and employers. Alaska, California, and Mississippi consortia worked to pass Employment First legislation in their states. In Mississippi, New York, and Tennessee, Employment First Executive Orders were signed. In Mississippi, 70 students were trained in employment skills, and 55 students found employment from 25 employers. In Wisconsin, the number of students in the program with paid jobs after one year more than tripled (from 5 to 18 students). The number of employers hiring program students doubled.	Tucker et al. 2017

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