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**The Social Security  
Administration's Youth  
Transition  
Demonstration Projects:  
Profiles of the Random  
Assignment Projects**

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## **G L O S S A R Y   O F   A C R O N Y M S**

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AWIC	Area work incentive coordinator at SSA
BHBF	Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures; the Miami-Dade County, Florida, YTD project
BOCES	Erie 1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services; the organization that administers the Erie County, New York, YTD project
CAT	Creative Arts Team; a component of the Bronx, New York, YTD project that uses educational theatre as a medium to promote social, emotional, and intellectual growth
CATI	Computer-assisted telephone interviewing; used in the YTD evaluation to conduct interviews with youth
CDB	Childhood Disability Benefits; Title II disability benefits
CDR	Continuing disability review
CED	The Center for Excellence in Disabilities at West Virginia University; a partner organization in the West Virginia YTD project that provides benefits counseling services to enrolled youth
CEDS	Community employment development specialist; title of service-provider staff at the Miami-Dade County, Florida, YTD project
CEO	Community Employment Office; a partner organization in the Erie County, New York, YTD project that provides employment preparation services and assistance in identifying and linking with appropriate jobs in the community
CES	Customized employment specialist; title of service-provider staff at the West Virginia YTD project
CTP	Career Transition Program; the Montgomery County, Maryland, YTD project

CTS	Career transition specialist; title of service-provider staff at the Montgomery County, Maryland, YTD project
CUNY	City University of New York; the organization that administers the Bronx, New York, YTD project
CYW	Colorado Youth WINS; the Colorado YTD project
DDD	(Colorado) Division of Developmental Disabilities
DI	Social Security Disability Insurance; Title II disability benefits
DOE	(New York City) Department of Education
DOL	(New York State) Department of Labor
DORS	(Maryland) Division of Rehabilitation Services
DPN	Disability program navigator; title of service-provider staff at the Colorado YTD project
DVR	(Florida) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
EIE	Earned income exclusion; a work incentive for SSI beneficiaries
ETO	Efforts to Outcomes; a web-based management information system used by the YTD random assignment projects to record enrollment efforts and the delivery of services to enrollees
HRDF	Human Resources Development Foundation, Inc.; the organization that administers the West Virginia YTD project
HSC	Human Services Coalition; a partner organization in the Miami-Dade County, Florida, YTD project that provides financial literacy education and political advocacy to low-income individuals
IDA	Individual development account
IEP	Individualized education program
IMP	Individual Marketing Profile; profile created in the Colorado YTD project to list participants' strengths and interests for presentation to potential employers
IPE	Individualized plan for employment
I-Teams	Independence Teams; teams of service-provider staff located at each of the four sites for the Colorado YTD project
MCPS	(Maryland) Montgomery County Public Schools

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M-DCPS	(Florida) Miami-Dade County Public Schools
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NDI	National Disability Institute, a partner organization in the Miami-Dade County, Florida, YTD project that promotes income and asset development for people with disabilities
NLS	Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc.; a partner organization in the Erie County, New York, YTD project that offers legal services to low-income people and people with disabilities
OMH	(New York State) Office of Mental Health
OMRDD	(New York State) Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities
PASS	Plan for achieving self-support; a work incentive for SSI beneficiaries
PCP	Person-centered plan; also person-centered planning
RSA	U.S. Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration
SD-1	Self-determination 1; a workshop offered by the Erie County, New York, YTD project that focuses on youths’ awareness of themselves, including their likes and dislikes and their strengths and needs
SD-2	Self-determination 2; a workshop offered by the Erie County, New York, YTD project that focuses on setting goals, communicating effectively, and making decisions
SED	Severe emotional disturbances
SEIE	Student earned income exclusion; a work incentive for SSI beneficiaries
SLH	St. Luke’s House, Inc.; the organization that administers the Montgomery County, Maryland, YTD project
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income; Title XVI disability benefits
SYEP	Summer Youth Employment Program; a program operated by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development that places New York City youth in summer jobs
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
VESID	(New York) Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation

WIA      Workforce Investment Act  
YTD      Youth Transition Demonstration

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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The transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities, particularly youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other disability program benefits, can be especially challenging. In addition to the host of issues facing all transition-age youth, young people with disabilities face special issues related to health, social isolation, service needs, and lack of access to supports. These challenges complicate their planning for future education and work, and often lead to poor educational and employment outcomes, high risk of dependency, and a lifetime of poverty.

The public cost of child dependence on SSI is quite large. In April 2005, approximately 776,000 youth 14 through 25 years old were receiving SSI benefits totaling more than \$340 million each month. Many additional youth receive Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB) payments or Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) benefits. Furthermore, thousands of youth whose applications for disability benefits have been denied are at high risk of receiving benefits in the future if they do not transition successfully to working in their adult life. This group includes youth whose disabilities currently are not severe, but who have a prognosis for decreased functioning over time, as well as youth who are income ineligible due to parental income, but who might be eligible if they were to move out of their parents' households after reaching the age of 18.

Recognizing the importance of service intervention at this critical juncture in youths' lives, the Social Security Administration (SSA) initiated the Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD) evaluation. SSA is providing funding to develop and rigorously evaluate promising strategies to help youth with disabilities become as economically self sufficient as possible as they transition from school to work. Hallmark features of the YTD evaluation include (1) strong, policy-relevant demonstration projects that serve relatively large numbers of youth with disabilities compared with other programs, and (2) a rigorous evaluation design based on random assignment.

The YTD evaluation provides SSA with a valuable opportunity to identify program components and strategies that can show successful employment and earnings outcomes for youth. The demonstration is doing this by supporting and testing a multisite study with six interventions, all with a strong focus on employment, and with considerable leveraging of

community services. The demonstration also includes waivers of certain SSI rules to help youth who work keep more benefits and provide them with incentives to obtain and retain employment. By testing a variety of service delivery models on the target population of youth with disabilities, combined with the provision of SSA waivers, this demonstration provides a unique opportunity to learn about effective interventions to increase employment and earnings for youth with disabilities, and eventually reduce their reliance on SSA disability benefits.

In partnership with SSA, the YTD evaluation is being led by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a nonpartisan firm that conducts policy research and surveys for federal and state governments, foundations, and private-sector clients. Mathematica has assembled a multidisciplinary team, including key partner organizations MDRC and TransCen, Inc., to design and conduct the evaluation and to provide technical assistance to the projects as they develop and implement their YTD interventions.

This report profiles the six YTD projects that have been selected for rigorous evaluation. The following chapters discuss each of these projects in turn. A profile of each project is provided, focusing on the services provided. Before turning to the project profiles, we briefly describe the conceptual framework underlying the YTD interventions and the process for selecting these projects.

## **A. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK UNDERLYING THE YTD INITIATIVE**

Figure I.1 presents a conceptual framework for understanding the potential role of the YTD projects in helping targeted youth to achieve successful transition outcomes.<sup>1</sup> We developed the conceptual framework underlying the YTD initiative based on (1) relevant findings from previous interventions that focused on youth with disabilities, (2) guideposts for effective transition programs developed by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (2005), and (3) SSA's goals for the YTD projects, including the importance of waivers and benefits counseling for YTD youth.<sup>2</sup>

Youth with disabilities face many barriers that can affect the success of their transition to adulthood. Some of these barriers exist due to the specific nature of a youth's disability and health conditions, while others arise from a poor fit between the youth and his or her environment. As presented in the conceptual model, one such barrier relates to societal and individual perceptions of disability. These perceptions lead to low individual and societal expectations about working and self sufficiency, which in turn can lead to marginalization, isolation, and diminished expectations about a youth's abilities among family members, teachers, and employers. Lack of availability or poor access to employment services and few opportunities for work-based experiences create other key barriers for youth with disabilities. In addition, youth with disabilities may have to deal with school support systems that have significant gaps in services and are missing critical linkages to adult services, leading to an

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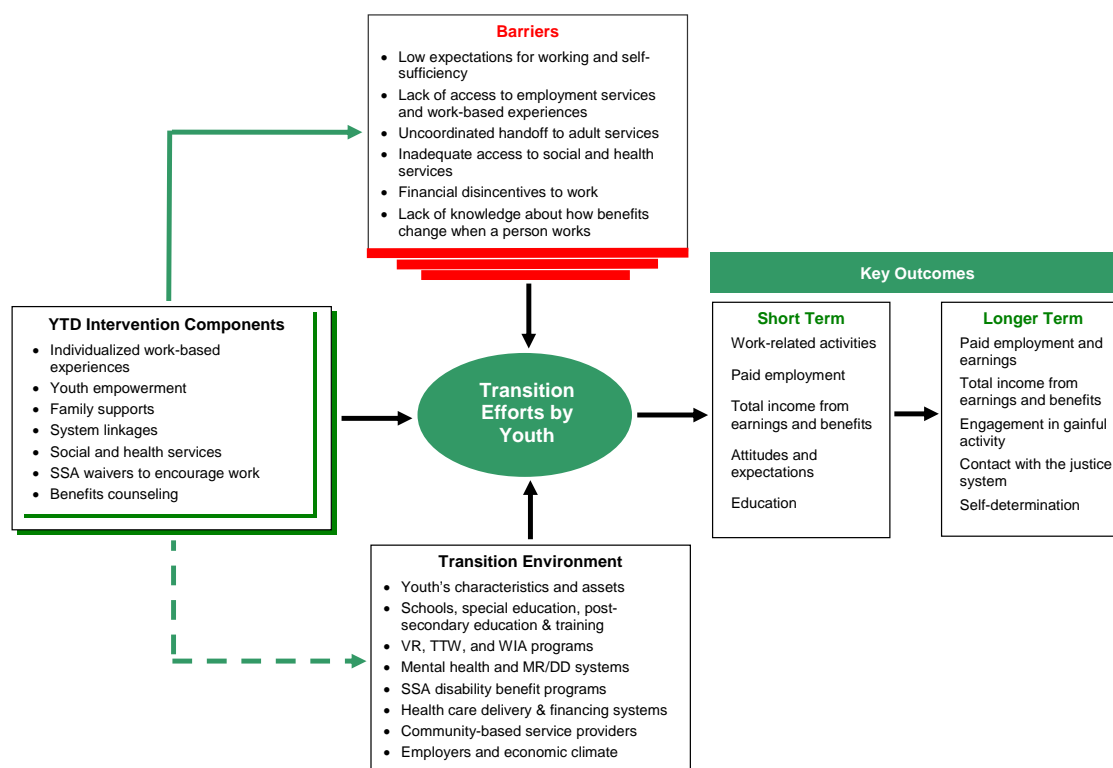
<sup>1</sup> Details on the conceptual model and relevant literature used to develop the conceptual framework can be found in the YTD evaluation design report (Rangarajan, Fraker, et al. forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Benefits counseling includes information on the SSA disability programs, the various work incentives available under those programs, and other federal and state public benefits.



uncoordinated handoff to the latter. Inadequate access to social and health services may require that youth with disabilities divert time and resources from other activities to overcome environmental barriers. The possibility that youth may jeopardize benefits by increasing employment or earnings creates a financial disincentive to work, which may present another long-term barrier to transition. In addition, although SSA offers SSI beneficiaries several work incentives, lack of knowledge about how work, benefits, and these incentives interact leads to low utilization of the incentives among beneficiaries.<sup>3</sup> Taken together, these barriers can lead to significant challenges in successfully navigating the transition to adulthood.

**Figure I.1. Conceptual Framework for SSA's Youth Transition Demonstration Projects**



<sup>3</sup> Examples of these work incentives include the earned income exclusion, the student earned income exclusion, and the plan for achieving self-support (PASS).

The YTD projects are intended to address these barriers by providing services and financial incentives directly to youth with disabilities and their families. The key components of the projects—the services and incentives—are listed in the conceptual model, and are described briefly below. Subsequent chapters present the components in detail, as implemented by each project.

- ***Individualized work-based experiences*** provide opportunities for youth to learn the “soft skills” needed to succeed in the workplace, as well as specific occupational skills, and can help a youth and his or her family or other supporters identify specific employment and career preferences. Examples include career exploration, job shadowing, volunteer work, internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment.
- ***Youth empowerment*** and ***family supports*** enable youth to move from passive assent to active choice regarding education and other services, based on knowledge of the benefits and disadvantages of the options. The acquisition of these skills and knowledge allows youth to begin to direct their own life choices.
- Services that facilitate ***system linkages*** allow for a more effective, seamless transition for youth. A connection of academic efforts to work-based experiences creates one such linkage, but often is available only to in-school youth. Coordinating the ancillary and postsecondary services that focus on youth with disabilities, such as the school system and the vocational rehabilitation (VR) provider, represents a more broadly applicable linkage, which often is still unavailable. Developing services to help address some of the gaps in the handoff of youth to adult services can make the transition smoother from the perspectives of the youth and his or her family.
- Referral to, or provision of, a comprehensive array of ***social and health services***—commonly referred to as “case management” or “care coordination”—can help youth succeed in the classroom, in the community, and on the job. Examples of such services may include those that address a wide range of mental and physical health issues, social skills deficits, and personal and family challenges.
- ***SSA waivers for YTD*** allow youth to retain more earnings while keeping disability benefits in the short term, and encourage them to explore whether they can achieve higher levels of economic success through employment rather than exclusive reliance on SSA disability programs. Two types of waivers complement project services: One allows youth participating in YTD to remain on the rolls, regardless of the outcome of a continuing disability review, and the second type allows youth to keep more of their earnings and accumulate assets. Together, they are designed to reduce the extent to which SSA rules deter paid work. The SSA waivers are discussed in more detail in Appendix A.

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- ***Benefits counseling*** is designed to inform youth and their families about standard SSA work incentives (and work incentives related to other federal and state public programs), as well as the waivers for YTD, and eliminate confusion about benefit-related issues. This counseling should help youth make better employment choices.

The YTD intervention components are designed to serve youth directly and help them address the barriers described above. These components are being delivered in the existing transition environment, and the projects, to varying degrees, leverage the services available in their communities. While system change is not a goal of this initiative, the design and delivery of YTD services occur in the context of the existing service system, and the services available in the community may influence the service delivery approach. Furthermore, the YTD projects may be able to break down some of the artificial institutional barriers that youth face, thereby leading the system to function as if the components were better integrated.

If the interventions are successful, we would expect to observe better outcomes for youth who are selected into the YTD projects than for those who have access only to the status quo services and incentives that the existing system provides. In the short term, the interventions will help youth to gain experience in work-related activities as well as paid employment; have a higher income from an increase in earnings, as well as benefits due to the SSA waivers; improve attitudes and expectations about the future; and achieve greater engagement in education (for those projects with a focus on education activities). In the longer term, it is anticipated that the YTD interventions will have enduring impacts on participating youth, ultimately leading them to secure and maintain paid, competitive employment, increase their earnings and income, engage in more gainful activities, reduce contact with the criminal justice system, and conduct themselves with a greater degree of self-determination.

## **B. SELECTION OF PROJECTS FOR THE NATIONAL IMPACT STUDY<sup>4</sup>**

The YTD evaluation identified six promising interventions for youth with disabilities to be evaluated rigorously as part of the national impact study. In selecting projects, our goal was to choose the mix that would best allow the random assignment impact study to address a broad range of research questions important to SSA. In particular, we wanted to ensure that the projects in the impact analysis:

- ***Offer high-quality intervention services expected to improve self-sufficiency among the target population.*** The interventions should have many of the core components described earlier, including a strong emphasis on work-based experiences. In particular, the focus on employment should lead to improved earnings, income, and self-sufficiency for YTD youth.

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<sup>4</sup> This section is drawn from Chapter IV of the YTD evaluation design report (Rangarajan, Fraker, et al. forthcoming).

- ***Reflect a variety of approaches to delivering the core intervention components.*** Given the limited evidence-based knowledge available about the effectiveness of strategies for youth with disabilities, the projects should be selected so as to support the testing of several service delivery approaches across projects, rather than replicate one intervention at all six.
- ***Are able to participate in a random assignment evaluation.*** Because of the rigorous evaluation requirements for the YTD study, the projects selected for the evaluation must be able and willing to implement a random assignment evaluation design.
- ***Are large enough to support the estimation of project-specific impacts.*** Each project and its target population of YTD-eligible youth should be large enough to allow 880 youth to be enrolled in the evaluation, 480 of whom will be randomly assigned to the program group, and 400 to a control group. Each project has to provide services to at least 400 of the 480 youth assigned to the project over a two- to three-year period. This will allow the evaluation to assess (1) program impacts at the project level, and (2) what it takes to scale up projects to a size larger than is typical for programs serving youth with disabilities.

Projects for the random assignment impact study were selected in two phases. In the first phase, three of the original seven YTD projects funded by SSA in 2003 were selected to participate in the national impact study. In the second phase, five new projects were identified, selected, and funded to pilot small-scale YTD interventions in 2007; three of these subsequently were selected to scale up to be included in the national random assignment impact study.

### **1. First-Phase Selection of Projects for the Impact Study**

To learn about promising approaches for increasing employment among youth with disabilities, in June 2003, SSA initiated the Youth Transition Process Demonstration, later shortened to the Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD). In September 2003, SSA funded seven YTD projects in six states:

- ***Bridges to Youth Self-Sufficiency***, led by the California Department of Rehabilitation
- ***Colorado Youth WINS***, led by Colorado WIN Partners/University of Colorado Denver
- ***Smart Start***, led by the University of Iowa's Center for Disability and Development
- ***Project Transition***, led by the Maryland State Department of Education

- 
- ***Mississippi Youth Transition Innovation***, led by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
  - ***Transition WORKS***, led by the Erie 1 Board of Cooperative Education Services
  - ***The Youth Transition Demonstration Project of the City University of New York***, led by the university's John F. Kennedy, Jr. Institute for Worker Education

Each project worked with SSA to develop a cooperative agreement for five years of project operations with annual incremental funding. We refer to these seven YTD projects as the “original projects.” As of July 2008, five of these were continuing to operate.<sup>5</sup>

Nearly all of the original YTD projects targeted youth 14 through 25 years old (or a subset of this age group) who were receiving, or were at risk of receiving, SSI, DI, and/or CDB; the Mississippi project targeted youth as young as 10. SSA funded cooperative agreements to develop youth transition models that integrated existing resources to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. SSA gave the projects considerable flexibility in their intervention designs and, at the outset, project goals were to develop system linkages among various local, state, and federal partners. While each project used a unique intervention, all shared the goals of improved educational opportunities and outcomes, better employment opportunities and outcomes, and reduced reliance on disability benefits. The original projects also incorporated the waivers of federal SSA program rules summarized above.

From the outset, SSA recognized the importance of evaluating the evolving YTD projects. The original projects were required to evaluate their own efforts, and typically contracted with local universities or research groups for this work. While SSA intended for the local evaluations to produce rigorous evidence on the success of the projects, the local evaluators had flexibility in coming up with their own designs to assess project effectiveness.

As interest in the possibility of a national evaluation grew, SSA funded a study to assess the feasibility of implementing a random assignment national evaluation of YTD. The feasibility study was conducted by MDRC. Starting in December 2003, MDRC staff conducted multiple telephone conference calls with project personnel, as well as site visits to each. Meetings were held with administrative officials, program providers and partners, and representatives of the local evaluations.

Based on its assessments, MDRC concluded that a subset of the original YTD projects might be good prospects for a random assignment evaluation based on (1) the strength of the interventions relative to existing services, (2) the interest of project management in participating in such an evaluation, (3) the compatibility of the intervention designs with random assignment, and (4) the potential to enroll enough youth in the evaluation at each

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<sup>5</sup> The Iowa and Maryland projects ceased operations in March and April 2007, respectively.

project for the planned statistical analysis to have sufficient power to detect reasonably sized impacts (Butler et al. 2004).

During the early months of the full YTD evaluation, the evaluation team visited all of the original projects to assess which could be included in the national impact study. Based on the criteria presented in the feasibility study, the team recommended three of them to SSA: the Colorado, CUNY, and Erie projects.<sup>6</sup> SSA accepted this recommendation.

## 2. Second-Phase Selection of Projects for the Impact Study

Anticipating that it would need more projects for the national impact evaluation, SSA charged the national evaluator to help locate new projects that potentially could participate. For this reason, in addition to assessing and recommending original projects for inclusion, the YTD evaluation team spent much of the first year of the evaluation identifying other existing or potential transition programs for recommendation. Thus, at the same time that we were identifying and developing the core components of strong transition programs, we also were conducting reconnaissance work in the field to better understand how best practices were being applied. We visited many promising programs to (1) build a knowledge base about such strong programs, (2) better understand implementation challenges, and (3) help us select additional projects for the national impact evaluation.

The plan for this second phase of project selection was to identify five strong potential YTD projects by fall 2006. These would run pilot programs for small numbers of youth in 2007. The pilot phase was designed to provide the evaluation team with enough information to assess each project's potential to recruit and deliver strong services to much larger numbers of youth. The intent was that, at the end of the pilot year, the evaluation team would recommend to SSA three projects that could be selected for full implementation and inclusion in the national impact study.

### a. Criteria for Selecting Pilot Projects

Based on the lessons learned from the implementation of the seven original YTD projects, prior experience, and our identification of the core components of strong transition programs, the evaluation team developed criteria to assess each potential pilot project's fit with the goals of the YTD initiative. These criteria fell into four general domains: (1) program features, (2) management capacity, (3) research considerations, and (4) contributions to the knowledge base (Butler 2006). We describe these domains here:

- **Program Features.** Organizations seeking to operate one of the pilot YTD projects were expected to include the core components as detailed in the logic model (discussed earlier) as key features of their existing programs, or to

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<sup>6</sup> The evaluation team proposed modifications to the original interventions in these three projects, particularly the strengthening of the employment services, to make the interventions and project goals line up with SSA's emphasis on employment for youth. It was not possible to recommend two other projects—California and Mississippi—for the national impact study, even though they had strong interventions. The California project was unwilling to implement random assignment, and the Mississippi project planned to serve only a small number of youth very intensively.

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demonstrate their willingness and capacity to add them to their program design. In particular, a presumption of employability—a belief that, with proper support and opportunities, any youth with a disability can exit school with a job or have the ability to pursue postsecondary training and education to advance his or her prospects for a career—and an emphasis on work experience were key criteria for the selection of new pilot projects.

- ***Management Capacity.*** The management and institutional capacity of organizations to design and deliver strong interventions also were of great importance in project selection. The management factors used to assess potential projects included having a mature organization with the demonstrated experience and capacity to manage a complex, multifaceted demonstration project with a strong employment focus. It was deemed important that the lead organization have extensive experience in working successfully with at least some of the key partner organizations needed to design and implement strong YTD projects, and that the lead organization or several of its key partners have considerable experience in working with youth with disabilities and their families at the community level.
- ***Research Considerations.*** The ability and willingness of prospective pilot projects to implement research protocols and procedures related to the random assignment design were important considerations in making selection decisions. The primary research considerations included (1) the appropriateness of individual-based random assignment, (2) the willingness of projects to participate in a random assignment study, (3) the capacity to implement procedures to ensure that control group members do not receive YTD services, and (4) the willingness and ability to meet the data needs and other research requirements of the national evaluation.
- ***Contributions to the Knowledge Base.*** The YTD evaluation is expected to generate important findings with broad programmatic and policy relevance. For this reason, criteria were developed to help ensure that projects participating in the random assignment impact study reflect the diversity of program and service environments around the country, including diversity in geographic location, kinds of organizations leading the projects, and targeted youth.

#### **b. Process of Selection and Features of Selected Projects**

Between December 2005 and August 2006, 29 organizations expressed interest in participating in the YTD evaluation. In determining which of these to recommend to implement YTD pilot projects, the evaluation team relied on various sources of information, including (1) written information submitted by the organizations, (2) the reputations of the organizations among experts in the field, (3) telephone interviews and conference calls conducted by the evaluation team with senior managers of the organizations, and (4) visits to organizations deemed promising. These visits provided an opportunity to discuss the services currently being provided, and review in more detail the organizations' plans for

implementing the YTD intervention. Finally, the evaluation team required that a prospective project prepare a well-developed concept paper for its proposed YTD project, which was required to include a realistic initial implementation plan and a schedule for implementing services during the pilot year. Of the 29 organizations, 15 submitted concept papers and were eligible to be considered for selection as pilot YTD projects.

Based on a systematic review of all of this information, we identified five organizations to recommend to SSA to implement YTD pilot projects. These organizations proposed the strongest projects and met the criteria for selection based on the strength of their intervention design, their capacity to implement the proposed intervention, and their ability to provide us with a fair and rigorous test of the YTD intervention. Moreover, as a group, these organizations offered a mix of programmatic features, management and organizational variation, and geographic and population diversity that would maximize learning opportunities for the YTD evaluation. The five organizations were:

- *Abilities, Inc. of Florida*, Miami-Dade County, Florida
- *Community-Minded Enterprises*, Spokane, Washington
- *Human Resources Development Foundation, Inc. (HRDF)*, West Virginia
- *St. Luke's House, Inc.*, Montgomery County, Maryland
- *Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*, Vermont

Customized employment and work-based experiences were key features of the YTD projects proposed by all of these organizations, as were benefits planning and counseling. Four of the five projects (in Miami, Spokane, Vermont, and West Virginia) targeted youth from the SSA lists; Spokane also planned to serve a small number of youth who had applied for the SSI program, but whose applications for benefits had been denied (an “at-risk” group). The Montgomery County project was the only one that included mostly at-risk youth, and did not recruit youth from SSA lists. This project recruited youth with severe emotional disorders from the Montgomery County public school system. The five pilots operated for six to nine months, and served about 20 to 25 youth during that time. In addition, all five piloted the random assignment process.

### **c. Selecting Projects for Full Implementation**

The evaluation team worked closely with the five pilot projects to help them meet their goals for enrolling youth into program services. In November 2007, the team assessed the pilots, and made recommendations to SSA regarding which best met the criteria for advancing to full implementation of project services. In addition to the criteria discussed earlier, two additional criteria that we used for this recommendation included (1) achievement of goals for recruitment of youth into the pilot study and enrollment of treatment group members in project services; and (2) strong project operations, as demonstrated by such factors as availability of and ease of access to project services and fidelity to the intervention design (Martinez 2007).



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Based on information gathered over the course of the pilot operations, ongoing interaction with the pilot projects, formal assessment visits conducted by senior members of the evaluation team, and the projects' achievement of recruitment and enrollment goals, we found that all five had operated very strong programs, making it challenging to select only three. After a careful assessment process, the evaluation team recommended to SSA the projects operated by the following three organizations for full implementation and inclusion in the national impact evaluation: (1) Abilities, Inc. of Florida, (2) St. Luke's House, and (3) HRDF. SSA accepted these recommendations and the five pilot projects were notified in November 2007. The three new YTD projects joined the three original projects in the national impact study.

Table I.1 gives an overview of the six YTD projects participating in the impact study. It provides the project name, the lead and partner organizations involved in operating each project, the geographic scope, the target population, the start and end dates for random assignment, and the approximate length of program services provided to each participant. Additional details on these topics are provided in the subsequent project-specific chapters.

### **C. RECRUITING YOUTH FOR THE NATIONAL IMPACT STUDY**

The national impact study uses a random assignment design to determine the effects of YTD on key outcomes. In each project participating, approximately 880 youth are recruited into the study. Of those 880 youth, approximately 480 are randomly assigned to a treatment group whose members are eligible to enroll in YTD services, and the remaining youth are assigned to a control group; they are ineligible to enroll in YTD services, but may receive other transition services available in the community. Each project is responsible for enrolling and providing project services to at least 400 of the 480 youth randomly assigned to the treatment group.<sup>7</sup>

For five of the six projects, Mathematica is responsible for recruiting eligible youth into the study from lists generated from SSA administrative records. For these projects, Mathematica collects baseline data by telephone; obtains written, informed consent for participation in the research project by mail, or in person; and conducts random assignment after receiving written consent. For the project in Montgomery County, project staff are responsible for identifying eligible youth and obtaining informed consent. Once the consent form is signed, the information is sent to Mathematica, which then contacts the youth to complete the baseline survey. When the baseline data have been compiled, Mathematica conducts random assignment. Appendix B presents a more detailed description of the random assignment process.

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<sup>7</sup> The goals for the Montgomery County project are slightly different; 840 youth are being recruited into the study, and 440 are being randomly assigned to the treatment group. The project's enrollment goal is 400 treatment group youth, as in the other projects.

**Table I.1. Overview of the Projects in the YTD National Impact Study**

Characteristic	Bronx Co., NY	Colorado	Erie Co., NY	Miami-Dade Co., FL	Montgomery Co., MD	West Virginia
Project name	The Youth Transition Demonstration Project of the City University of New York	Colorado Youth WINS	Transition WORKS	Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures	Career Transition Program Youth Transition Demonstration Project	West Virginia Youth Works
Lead organization	John F. Kennedy, Jr. Institute for Worker Education of the City University of New York	Colorado WIN Partners/University of Colorado Denver	Erie 1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services	Abilities, Inc. of Florida	St. Luke's House, Inc.	The Human Resources Development Foundation, Inc.
Partner organizations	CUNY colleges and programs and local and state agencies	One-Stop Workforce Centers and various state and local agencies	The Parent Network of Western New York, Neighborhood Legal Services, and the Community Employment Office	Human Services Coalition, National Disability Institute, Miami-Dade Co. Public Schools, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Montgomery Co. Public Schools, Montgomery Co. Non-Public High Schools, State Division of Rehabilitation Services, Montgomery Co. Mental Health Core Service Agency, Montgomery Works	The West Virginia University Center for Excellence on Disabilities
Geographic scope	Bronx Co.	Boulder, El Paso, Larimer, and Pueblo counties	Erie Co., including the city of Buffalo	Miami-Dade Co.	Montgomery Co.	19 counties
Target population	SSA beneficiaries 15 through 19 years old	SSA beneficiaries 14 through 25 years old	SSA beneficiaries 16 through 25 years old	SSA beneficiaries 16 through 22 years old	High school juniors and seniors with severe emotional disturbances or other significant mental illnesses	SSA beneficiaries 15 through 25 years old
Random assignment						
Begin	8/2006	8/2006	1/2007	4/2008	4/2008	4/2008
End	9/2008	3/2008	3/2008	3/2010	10/2010	6/2010
Length of services	20 months on average	At least 18 months	18 months, followed by employment supports	18 months on average	9 to 18 months, with up to 24 additional months	18 months on average

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For all six projects, once Mathematica has randomly assigned a youth, it uses the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) web-based management information system to notify the project if the youth is in the treatment group.<sup>8</sup> The notification is done through a newly created record in ETO containing contact and demographic information for the youth. Project staff use the contact information to reach out to the youth in order to enroll him or her in YTD project services. Outreach efforts for enrolling youth are recorded in the ETO system; once the youth is enrolled, ETO also is used to collect data on project services and interactions. ETO is intended to serve as a case management system, meaning that, for the purposes of YTD, it functions as both a service delivery and management tool for the projects, and a source for service utilization data for the evaluation. Each project has an ETO site administrator, who is responsible for troubleshooting problems with the system, training the staff on its use, and generating reports that are used by both project managers and staff.

#### **D. ROADMAP OF THE REPORT**

Each of the next six chapters profiles one of the projects selected for inclusion in the national YTD evaluation. Within a chapter, we present background information on the lead organization. In many cases, the lead organization has partnered with other local organizations to provide certain key YTD services; a discussion of such organizations and their roles in the intervention is provided. We also briefly describe how the YTD intervention components detailed above have been implemented at each site. This is followed by a detailed description of the services participants receive as they move through the project. The final chapter, Chapter VIII, presents information related to key evaluation-related milestones.

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<sup>8</sup> ETO was developed, and is maintained, by Social Solutions, Inc.

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## CHAPTER II

# THE BRONX, NEW YORK, YOUTH TRANSITION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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### A. OVERVIEW

The City University of New York (CUNY) YTD project provides employment-focused services to youth receiving SSA disability benefits. By the project's scheduled completion in 2010, it will have served nearly 400 youth in three cohorts. Services, which include work-based experiences, youth empowerment, family support, social and health services, SSA waivers, and benefits counseling, are delivered at two CUNY campuses in Bronx County, New York. Similar to other areas of the United States, the Bronx has an array of transition services, but many are duplicative, fractured, and insufficiently staffed and funded. The CUNY YTD project was designed to empower families and youth to navigate these systems, as well as to offer some direct transition services to fill the gaps identified through reviews of the existing services. Table II.1 provides an overview of the basic features of the CUNY YTD project, which are discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

#### 1. Lead Agency and Key Partners

The Bronx YTD project is hosted by CUNY and administered by the University's John F. Kennedy, Jr. Institute for Worker Education (JFK, Jr. Institute). The JFK, Jr. Institute, located in CUNY's Office of the University Dean for Health and Human Services, supports workforce development initiatives in health, education, and human services, and was selected by CUNY to administer the project due to its expertise in the disability field. The JFK, Jr. Institute also was awarded a WIPA grant in 2006, and has been able to draw on a variety of existing programs and services throughout CUNY, as well as external resources, to meet the needs of YTD participants. The project also benefits from the facilities and resources offered by the two CUNY campuses where services are being delivered: Lehman (a four-year college) and Hostos (a community college).

**Table II.1 Overview of the Bronx, NY, YTD Project**

Project name	The Youth Transition Demonstration Project of the City University of New York
Lead organization	The John F. Kennedy, Jr. Institute for Worker Education of the City University of New York
Partner organizations	CUNY colleges and programs and local and state agencies
Geographic scope or location(s)	Bronx County
Target population	SSI, DI, and CDB beneficiaries 15 through 19 years old
Length of services	Participants receive 20 months of YTD services on average.
Staffing structure	The intervention relies on benefits counselors, career developers, and parent advocates, as well as many part-time and temporary staff.

CUNY, the nation's largest urban university, was selected by SSA to operate a YTD project in September 2003. CUNY ran a successful pilot at Lehman College, serving two cohorts, the Pioneers, who started in May 2004, and the Pilots, who started in May 2005.<sup>9</sup> Following this promising beginning, the CUNY project was selected in spring 2006 to participate in the national YTD random assignment evaluation. The early cohorts received all YTD services at Lehman College; the Hostos Community College site was added to accommodate the larger cohorts needed to support the sample size requirements of the random assignment evaluation. Three cohorts (the Vanguard, who started in October 2006; the Navigators, who started in October 2007; and the Voyagers, who began in October 2008) will be tracked as part of the national evaluation.

The partnerships for the CUNY YTD project build on existing relationships established by the JFK, Jr. Institute with CUNY colleges and programs, as well as with city and state agencies (for example, the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities [OMRDD]; the office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities [VESID], which is the state's vocational rehabilitation services agency; Medicaid; the New York City Department of Education [DOE]; and the New York State Department of Labor [DOL]).<sup>10</sup> CUNY YTD works with these organizations to leverage existing opportunities or services for participants. The project has a formal contract with VESID and partners with a community-based organization, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, to provide tutoring for enrolled youth at least once a week. The project also has an advisory committee comprised of stakeholders and experts from various CUNY campuses, community-based organizations that serve individuals with disabilities (for example, YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Network, Lifespire, the Association for the Help of Retarded Children), SSA's area and regional offices, and several of the public agencies mentioned previously.

<sup>9</sup> The 84 youth in the two pilot cohorts received services through September 29, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Although the NYC DOE participates in the advisory committee, it is not a formal partner in this intervention (that is, there is not a memorandum of understanding).

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## 2. Project Structure and Staffing

The CUNY YTD project employs nine full-time and many part-time staff. The deputy director of the JFK, Jr. Institute oversees the project. Administrative staff for the project include a full-time project director and an ETO site administrator, who is responsible for overseeing the project's management information system. Most services are delivered by two campus-based teams, which combined are staffed by three benefits counselors who divide their time between the WIPA project and YTD, two full-time and one part-time career development specialists, and two full-time parent advocates (parents of youth with disabilities who coordinate the curriculum and activities, and work primarily with parent participants on improving their self-advocacy skills). These staff work cooperatively to deliver services, and often contribute to efforts outside of their specific areas of expertise. The project considers itself to be a community-based grassroots effort. Demographically, the staff is largely representative of the families of the YTD target population; most of them reside in the Bronx, and some have children with disabilities or have disabilities themselves.

The project also relies heavily on part-time and temporary staff, many of whom are CUNY students, to enable flexible staffing of project activities. For example, some part-time paid staff serve both as job coaches, supporting participants in the Summer Youth Employment Program, and as Saturday workshop student "buddies," assisting youth in various capacities. The project also uses part-time paid parent peer mentors to assist the parent advocates with the various Saturday workshops and to facilitate and record the PCP sessions. These staff primarily work in-person with the youths' families during the Saturday morning sessions, as well as by phone during the week. Other part-time staff facilitate Saturday youth workshops and provide support for PCP sessions. In fall 2008, for example, more than 60 part-time staff were needed to run the Saturday workshops.

## 3. Target Population

The CUNY YTD project is open to Bronx County youth 15 through 19 years old (although the project's preferred target age is 17) who receive SSI and are classified as having a wide range of disabilities. Some of these youth also receive DI and CDB concurrently. In 2008, there were 4,533 such beneficiaries in Bronx County.

Overall, the Bronx is one of the most disadvantaged urban areas in the country. More than 1.35 million people live in the county's 42 square miles. In 2004, the median household income was \$28,173, and 89 percent of the housing was in multi-unit structures. More than 28 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The population is 42 percent black and 51 percent Hispanic. A language other than English is spoken in 53 percent of the homes.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report. Last Revised: Wednesday, January, 2 2008. Available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.

## **B. CORE YTD COMPONENTS**

The CUNY YTD project's implementation of each core intervention component specified in the YTD logic model is summarized in Table II.2. The project seeks to maximize economic self-sufficiency and independence for youth disability beneficiaries by improving their educational and employment outcomes. Project services include Saturday workshops for youth and their parents, including recreation and self-determination activities and discussions related to SSI benefits (youth and families are provided transit fare cards to facilitate their participation); benefits planning; person-centered planning; career development and summer employment; individualized follow-up activities; and other services to address youth and their families' support needs. Services are delivered at Lehman College and Hostos Community College in the Bronx.

## **C. CUNY YTD SERVICES**

Once a youth is assigned to the treatment group for the YTD evaluation, the youth's name and other basic contact information is provided to the CUNY project staff through the ETO data system. The staff focus on engaging both youth and their parents. The two parent advocates organize project enrollment efforts, which occur in July through September and take the form of one-on-one meetings or group orientation sessions with parents and youth. Beginning in early October, Saturday workshops offer youth recreation, self-determination activities, and benefits planning while parents attend workshops on benefits planning, community resources, and supporting youth in their transition to adulthood. During the break between fall and spring workshops, families and youth engage in person-centered planning to learn about the youth's life, interests, and goals, with an eye toward summer employment. The spring Saturday workshops focus on career development for the youth, while the parents continue to learn about benefits, community resources, and supporting the transition. Using the information gathered through person-centered planning, participating youth are placed in summer employment positions, mainly on the Lehman and Hostos campuses. At the end of their work experiences, the youth, along with their families, participate in additional person-centered planning to reassess the youths' goals. After this, the youth move into follow-up activities, which entail continued support by the project staff, as necessary. In October, a new cohort of participants begins project services and repeats this cycle. The remainder of this section provides more details about the services provided by the CUNY YTD project.

### **1. Fall Saturday Workshops**

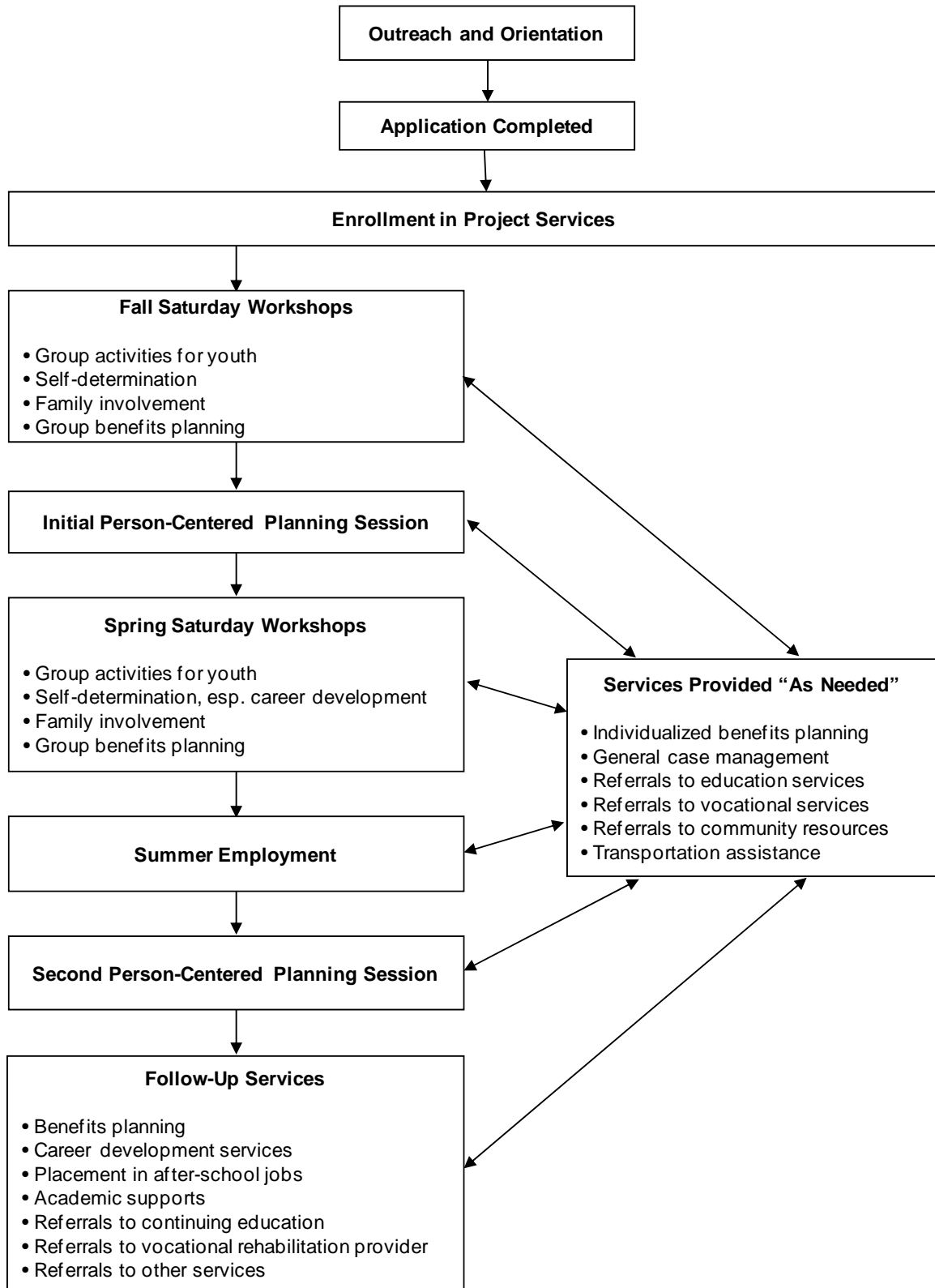
As shown in Figure II.1, after enrollment in project services, youth and their families begin attending Saturday morning workshops at one of the two project sites. These workshops, which include a range of group activities, are held for a nine-week semester from October through December.



**Table II.2. Core Components of the Bronx, NY, YTD Project**

Core YTD Intervention Component	CUNY-Specific Component	Description
Individualized work-based experiences	<p>Career development activities</p> <p>Vocational workshops</p> <p>New York City agencies provide summer/after-school jobs program</p> <p>Person-centered planning</p>	<p>Career exploration is offered through person-centered planning sessions and vocational assessments. Youth participate in paid work experiences through New York City agencies. Project staff assist youth in navigating the summer jobs application process, identify appropriate placements, and provide job coaching.</p>
Youth empowerment	<p>Saturday workshops include self-determination and group activities</p> <p>Person-centered planning</p> <p>College buddies</p> <p>Self-determination sessions in dealing with schools, agencies, and other community resources</p>	<p>Self-determination sessions help youth identify goals, learn about available community services, and advocate for themselves. Goal identification is furthered through person-centered planning. The college buddy system and Saturday workshops also include components of self-determination.</p>
Family supports	<p>Saturday workshops</p> <p>Parent advocates and peer mentors</p> <p>Family advocacy in dealing with schools, agencies, and other community resources</p> <p>Parent guides</p>	<p>Parents attend classes during the Saturday workshops, where they learn, among other things, how to advocate for their youth. Parent-peer mentors check in with families on a regular basis. Parents also attend workshops on benefits and family supports. Parent guides provide resource information.</p>
System linkages	<p>Parent advocates and other staff with active involvement in Bronx community groups</p>	<p>Linkages exist with the local OMRDD, VESID, and WIPA services. A YTD advisory committee includes stakeholders and experts from CUNY campuses, community-based organizations that serve people with disabilities, and public agencies.</p>
Social and health services	<p>Referrals by career development specialists and parent advocates to social and health services</p> <p>Youth participation in group activities during Saturday workshops</p>	<p>General case management and support services are offered as needed. Referrals are made to educational, vocational, and community resources.</p> <p>Youth participate in physical fitness classes during Saturday sessions.</p>
SSA waivers and benefits counseling	<p>Informational sessions during Saturday workshops</p> <p>One-on-one counseling</p>	<p>Waivers and benefits are addressed at Saturday workshops. Counseling is provided as a stand-alone service via benefits counselors.</p>
Other key components or features	<p>Supportive service payments</p>	<p>Paid fare cards for public transportation are provided to youth and families who attend the Saturday workshops.</p>

**Figure II.1 Participant Flow Through the Bronx, NY, YTD Project**



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### a. Group Activities for Youth

Group activities for youth are offered for two hours at the start of each Saturday session. Because of the smaller numbers of YTD participants at Hostos Community College, all of them have participated in recreation activities and, beginning in 2008, they also participated in drama activities. In contrast, the numbers of youth participating in YTD at Lehman College have been larger, necessitating that they choose one of three group activities at the start of each semester: recreation, multimedia art, or drama. Each of these activities is designed to foster socialization, develop teamwork, and promote choice, all of which complement the CUNY self-determination curriculum.

#### *Recreation*

The “Freshen Up” recreation program encourages decision making and social development, and promotes physical fitness among the YTD youth. CUNY YTD staff worked with faculty in the recreation department of Lehman College to develop Freshen Up, which includes a wide range of recreation activities (for example, aerobics, martial arts, racquet ball, basketball, swimming, weight training, tennis, and volleyball). At Lehman, these activities are led by student buddies who are enrolled in the 3-credit undergraduate course, “Inclusive Recreation for Teens with Developmental Disabilities,” with support provided by “super buddies”—graduate or undergraduate student mentors who already have completed this course. At Hostos, part-time YTD staff lead the recreation activities.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Multimedia art*

The multimedia art component of YTD’s Saturday programming provides opportunities for the participants to use various media (for example, computers, audio recorders, digital cameras, and digital video recorders) to express their creativity. In the fall 2007 semester, the goal of this component was for the youth to retell Homer’s *Odyssey* through pictures and sounds from their own lives to create a “real world interpretation of what they heard in the story.” In the spring 2008 semester, this component focused more directly on the youth themselves. It was designed to help them chart routes of travel across the Bronx and the Lehman College campus; they were encouraged to share their methodologies, symbols, and terminologies.

#### *Drama*

The Creative Arts Team (CAT) is a unit within CUNY that uses educational theatre as a medium to promote social, emotional, and intellectual growth in communities throughout New York City. YTD has contracted with CAT to work with youth each Saturday at Lehman College. The CAT staff enact live dramatic scenes to portray thematic and

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<sup>12</sup> The Lehman College recreation department’s course, “Inclusive Recreation for Teens with Developmental Disabilities,” meets on Saturdays for the entire semester. The students enrolled in this course design and implement recreation programs for the YTD participants as part of the course requirements and they are awarded academic credits for successfully completing the course. Since Hostos Community College does not have a recreation department, Freshen Up buddies at Hostos are paid, part-time staff.

interpersonal issues important to the youth, and then encourage feedback and reflection in a group setting. For example, the CAT staff may enact a challenging work-related situation, such as sexual harassment, and ask the youth to discuss appropriate ways to handle the situation.

#### **b. Self-Determination**

Following the recreation, art, and drama activities, youth participate in group self-determination sessions, in which they identify goals, hear about available community services, and learn how to advocate for themselves. The self-determination curriculum includes role-playing and public-speaking, with occasional parental involvement. The CUNY YTD project also has contracted with CAT to facilitate a role-playing session on topics that have emerged over the course of the project, such as empowerment, informed choice, and disclosure of disabilities to employers. This session is provided at each campus once per semester for all youth.

#### **c. Family Involvement**

The CUNY YTD project strives to involve families in its services. It provides each family with a parent guide during the initial fall workshop. This is a binder that includes resources (for example, SSI benefits information, transition tools, individualized education program [IEP] information, and a family-support guide), the workshop schedule, a description of the person-centered planning process, and project materials needed for various workshop sessions. While the youth participate in recreation and self-determination activities, their parents attend workshops (conducted either in English or Spanish), or work with CUNY YTD staff on benefits or family support needs. Each semester, CAT staff work on Saturdays with parents at both campuses to prepare them for various meetings, such as with staff of schools, SSA, and other agencies.

#### **d. Benefits Planning**

CUNY YTD provides group benefits planning services during the Saturday workshop; however, it also provides individualized benefits planning as an ongoing stand-alone service. The bilingual workshop sessions address issues related to SSA benefits, as well as other state and federal benefits. There are several of these sessions each semester as part of the parent curriculum, but youth are invited to join part way through a semester, so that families can review and learn about this topic together.

As a follow-up to these workshop sessions, families are invited to contact the CUNY YTD benefits counselors for individual benefits assessments, which often are followed by more intensive individualized benefits planning. This approach to benefits planning allows the project to be proactive about benefits-related issues, dealing with both current and future concerns and questions about benefits. While benefits planning focuses on youth and how employment would affect their benefits, the counselors also may address issues faced by other family members receiving benefits.

As previously noted, CUNY was awarded the WIPA grant for Bronx County in 2006. This grant supports the provision of benefits counseling to anyone receiving SSI or DI. The

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WIPA grant has allowed CUNY YTD to offer expanded benefits planning expertise by significantly increasing the project's access to SSA-funded training resources and staff. WIPA services are now a key resource for providing ongoing benefits management services to YTD participants as they obtain jobs or increase their employment, even after they have exited the project.

## **2. Initial Person-Centered Planning Session**

During January and February of each program year, YTD participants and their families work with CUNY staff in initial individualized person-centered planning sessions. These sessions promote self-advocacy on the part of the youth and their parents by identifying educational, career, and quality of life goals. Examples of goals youth set for themselves include getting a job, going to college, obtaining a driver's license, and developing a girlfriend or boyfriend relationship. CUNY's approach to person-centered planning is built around the "quality of life vision" of the person, not around diagnostic or professional criteria. The written plan for each youth that is the end result of this process informs the job development and placement activities that precede summer employment.

Person-centered planning in the CUNY YTD project involves the use of wall charts to display a comprehensive view of where a participant is currently, and where he or she hopes to be in the future. The planning covers many topics, including key relationships, interests, abilities, school, work and day activities, goals, and next steps. The latter are detailed clearly to show how the youth can move systematically toward his or her goals. A trained facilitator leads a youth-centered discussion through the topics, while a designated recorder takes notes on the wall charts; occasionally, additional staff members also provide support. The facilitator may be a parent peer mentor, self-determination instructor, parent advocate, career development specialist, or benefits counselor. The recorder is typically a student buddy. The work of the facilitator is guided by a list of questions prepared by the career development specialists. These ensure that the planning will produce all of the information (for example, on interests and job-related skills) that the youth's career development specialist will need to place him or her in an appropriate summer job. Subsequent to the planning session, the career development specialist meets briefly with the youth to confirm his or her summer work interests before placement.

## **3. Spring Saturday Workshops**

The spring workshop series meets for nine Saturdays, from March through May, following a format similar to that for the fall workshops. The same group activities for youth (recreation, multimedia art, and drama) that are offered in the fall are repeated in the spring, although youth are encouraged to select a different activity than in the fall. The spring self-determination sessions have a particular focus on career development.

The career development component of CUNY YTD prepares participants for the project's summer work experience, described below, and assesses their long-term career interests and goals. In addition to the spring Saturday workshops, career development services are provided at multiple points throughout the project: through individual sessions with career development staff, as part of the summer work experience, and during the

follow-up phase. All participants are expected to complete a career interest profile through the state DOL's CareerZone, a web-based career exploration and planning system designed for students. Project staff conduct vocational assessments for youth who have not completed one in school as part of the IEP process.<sup>13</sup> The career development component also encompasses job development and job coaching.

#### **4. Summer Employment**

After completing the spring Saturday workshops, YTD youth participate in paid summer employment through the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). CUNY YTD decided to access SYEP placements for its participants through existing vendors (for example, the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center and the New York City DOE). By partnering with large, well-established vendors, CUNY YTD hopes to leverage future resources and opportunities for participants after the project ends. SYEP is the first work experience for most YTD participants. Job placements for the two cohorts of participants in the pilot project included Home Depot, various offices and departments of Lehman and Hostos colleges (for example, the bursar's office, campus security, and food services), and local health agencies. Currently, the project prefers to place youth in summer jobs on the two CUNY campuses to facilitate job coaching.

The CUNY YTD project facilitates SYEP placements by helping participants to navigate the complex SYEP application process (which includes the submission of numerous documents), identifying appropriate placements, conducting orientations, and providing job coaching. Job coaches typically are students with disabilities at Lehman or Hostos colleges. SYEP is also available to other youth in the city; however, the CUNY YTD staff believe that the supplemental services they offer greatly increase the likelihood of participation in SYEP by treatment group youth, and that these services significantly exceed what is available typically for other SYEP participants.

#### **5. Second Person-Centered Planning Session**

Following placement in a summer job, a second person-centered planning session is held. This session involves discussing what the youth learned from his or her employment experience, and revising goals and next steps based on that experience.

#### **6. Follow-Up Services**

A follow-up phase begins after the summer employment experience and the second PCP session. During this phase, youth are eligible to receive 10 additional months of individualized services, including, but not limited to benefits planning, career development services, placement in after-school jobs, academic supports, referrals to continuing education providers, and referrals to other services.

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<sup>13</sup> CUNY YTD conducts level 1, 2, or 3 assessments, which are designations for vocational assessments derived from NYC DOE terminology. See [www.nycareerzone.org](http://www.nycareerzone.org).

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The project staff are continuing to develop the follow-up career development services. They currently offer career exploration, employment support services, and referrals to other employment services providers. They are exploring after-school job opportunities for YTD youth through the Department of Youth and Community Development's In-School Youth Program, the CUNY Training and Opportunity Program (a jobs program for youth with disabilities who attend New York City public schools), and direct job placements with local employers. CUNY YTD expects that part-time jobs will be appropriate for out-of-school youth and some in-school youth. However, for many of the latter, academic concerns are a more immediate focus than after-school employment. Moreover, the project staff recognize that in-school youth also face major transportation barriers (for example, the long distances that many youth must travel between school and home and, in other cases, a lack of familiarity with the complex public transportation system).

## **7. Services Provided “As Needed”**

CUNY YTD participants can access a number of support services offered by project staff on an as-needed basis, including individualized benefits planning, general case management on transition or other issues, and referrals to available educational, vocational, and community resources. These services are offered throughout the course of the project. CUNY YTD makes referrals to many local agencies and partners for social and health services, including VESID, OMRDD, disability services offices on the various CUNY campuses, the New York City DOE, CUNY continuing education programs, the CUNY College Now program for high school students, and other local organizations and programs. Families also receive transportation assistance through free MetroCards for the New York City bus and subway system.

## **D. DESCRIPTION OF THE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

Recruitment and enrollment for the random assignment phase of the CUNY YTD project began in August 2006 and July 2007 for the Vanguard and Navigator cohorts, respectively, and was completed in January of each of the following years. Recruitment and enrollment for the Voyager cohort began in May 2008, and was completed in October 2008, though a few additional youth may be enrolled prior to the January 2009 enrollment end date. As of December 2008, 918 youth had consented to participate in the evaluation; of that total, 509 had been randomly assigned to the treatment group. CUNY had enrolled 396 youth, or 78 percent of the treatment group. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the recruitment and enrollment process for CUNY and the five other random assignment YTD projects.

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## CHAPTER III

# THE COLORADO YOUTH TRANSITION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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### A. OVERVIEW

The Colorado Youth WINS (CYW) YTD project provides system navigation, benefits counseling and assistance, case management, and employment services to youth receiving SSA disability benefits. By the project's scheduled completion in 2009, it will have served more than 400 youth in four geographically dispersed counties. In principle, the state of Colorado offers an array of transition services to youth with disabilities, but many of these services have waiting lists, are difficult to navigate, and are poorly coordinated. CYW seeks to maximize independence, employment, and economic self-sufficiency for youth on SSA disability benefits by using a person-centered approach, with an emphasis on filling gaps in existing services and providing comprehensive program navigation. CYW services are delivered by three- to five-person Independence Teams (I-Teams) based in local One-Stop Workforce Centers. This co-location and integration with the Workforce Centers makes CYW unique among the YTD projects. Table III.1 provides an overview of the basic features of CYW, which are discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

#### 1. Lead Agency and Key Partners

The Colorado YTD project is administered by Colorado WIN Partners/University of Colorado Denver. Colorado WIN Partners came into being through the Project WIN (Work Incentives) grant, a five-year systems change grant (1998-2003) from the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. Project WIN was designed to expand employment opportunities for people who receive public assistance and have mental or physical disabilities, or both.

Colorado WIN Partners was selected by SSA in September 2003 to operate a YTD project. During a 2004-2005 pilot period, each of the four I-Teams enrolled a small number of youth into project services.<sup>14</sup> This pilot period provided important information on

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<sup>14</sup> CYW pilot operations are described in Kellar-Guenther and Pike (2006).

**Table III.1. Overview of the Colorado YTD Project**

Project name	Colorado Youth WINS.
Lead organization	Colorado WIN Partners/University of Colorado Denver
Partner organizations	One-Stop Workforce Centers and various state and local agencies
Geographic scope or location	Boulder, El Paso, Larimer, and Pueblo counties
Target population	SSI, DI, and CDB beneficiaries 14 through 25 years old
Length of services	Participants receive at least 18 months of YTD services.
Staffing structure	The intervention relies on Independence-Teams, located in the Workforce Centers, which consist of a disability program navigator, a benefits counselor, and one or more career counselors.

enrollment and recruitment efforts, informed consent, marketing, and working with partner agencies. Following this successful pilot, in spring 2006, CYW was selected to participate in the national YTD random assignment evaluation.

The partnerships for CYW build upon its strong historical relationships with the One-Stop Workforce Centers in Colorado. CYW service delivery staff, the I-Teams, are located in Workforce Centers and leverage resources there; they work with the existing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) partners, which include the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), local mental health providers, local school districts, and the Colorado Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

## 2. Project Structure and Staffing

Colorado WIN Partners has a three-person management team overseeing CYW: a project director, who is responsible for overall program implementation and management; a project coordinator, who works directly with I-Team members and partners to coordinate day-to-day project activities; and a local evaluator, who oversees CYW's local evaluation and data collection activities. CYW also has a full-time ETO site administrator.

Each of the four CYW sites has an I-Team, based in a Workforce Center, that provides project services. A team is made up of a disability program navigator (DPN), a benefits planner, and at least one career counselor. (The I-Team in El Paso County has three career counselors to accommodate a larger caseload.) According to the design for CYW, each I-Team member plays a well-defined role in working with project participants:

- The DPNs help participants access a range of supports and services from government agencies and community-based organizations, and also advocate on their behalf with these entities. They seek to fill gaps in the current service system by solving system shortcomings.

- The benefits planners work with participants on issues specifically related to SSA benefits, the SSA waivers for YTD, and other SSA work incentives. These I-Team members help youth, their families, and their representative payees understand the implications of work, earnings, and resources for disability program benefits. They inform youth of the work incentives available to them under standard SSA rules, and encourage and facilitate use of the SSA waivers.
- The career counselors assist CYW participants with all employment-related activities. This assistance includes vocational assessments and career exploration, as well as job development services (that is, working with employers to identify appropriate jobs for CYW participants). The career counselors also provide support to maintain employment after youth obtain jobs; this can include services such as arranging job accommodations and job coaching services.

In practice, the day-to-day work of the I-Team members varies by site. While all staff are cross-trained, at some sites, I-Team members mainly provide services prescribed by their own job positions, and pass on cases to other team members for additional services as appropriate. At other sites, staff play less distinct roles, filling in for each other or taking the lead on different aspects of cases, as necessitated by caseloads and staff availability.

Two groups provide oversight of the CYW I-Teams: management staff at the Workforce Centers and the Colorado WIN Partners management team. Each group has a different focus. Within a Workforce Center, a local supervisor assists the I-Teams with community service connections and interactions with other Center staff and systems. The local supervisor is responsible for also conducting formal performance evaluations of the I-Team members, with input from CYW management. These supervisors typically spend 20 percent of their time managing the I-Teams; however, their level of involvement in CYW varies by site. For example, supervisors differ in the frequency with which they attend case reviews of CYW participants and staff meetings with Colorado WIN Partners. The Colorado WIN Partners management team sets policy goals, provides overall project supervision, provides technical assistance and training on intervention implementation, and manages the ETO data collection effort. The I-Teams look to their local supervisors for help in working effectively within the Workforce Center and in making connections with local services, but Colorado WIN Partners provides overall direction to the project. The I-Teams are fully funded by CYW, and each Workforce Center also receives funding from CYW for local supervision of the I-Teams.

### **3. Target Population**

CYW is open to youth in the four target counties who are 14 through 25 years old and receive SSI, DI, or CDB. The demographics of the counties vary; the northern counties of Boulder and Larimer represent two of the more educated and affluent counties in the state. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, both consist of predominately white residents, with poverty rates just below 10 percent; this is below the state's overall rate. Pueblo County, the southernmost county in CYW, has a more diverse population, with more than one-third of residents being of Hispanic origin. It also has a higher rate of poverty (16 percent) and a

greater percentage of SSI recipients than the northern counties. El Paso County, which borders Pueblo County to the north, has a population that is about three-quarters white and a poverty rate of 10 percent.<sup>15</sup>

## **B. CORE YTD COMPONENTS**

The Colorado project's implementation of the core intervention components specified in the YTD logic model is summarized in Table III.2. In general, CYW seeks to maximize economic self-sufficiency and independence for youth disability beneficiaries by improving service coordination and enhancing educational and employment outcomes identified through a person-centered planning process. I-Team members provide youth with individualized career counseling and job development, including vocational assessments, job placement services, and assistance in obtaining employment supports available through DVR, DDD, and other community-based services and organizations within the Workforce Network. Participants are empowered to take charge of their own transitions through highly individualized plans with a strong emphasis on person-centered planning. Families are engaged in the planning process, and counseling on SSA benefits and waivers often reduces the concerns they may have about their youth obtaining paid employment. Disability program navigation connects participants with other resources for which they are eligible, including referrals to social and health services. A final YTD core component is provided by the CYW benefits counselors, who work with youth and their families to provide individualized information on SSA disability benefits, the SSA waivers, and other sources of public assistance. They give encouragement and advice on the compatibility of paid employment with receipt of SSA benefits.

## **C. CYW SERVICES**

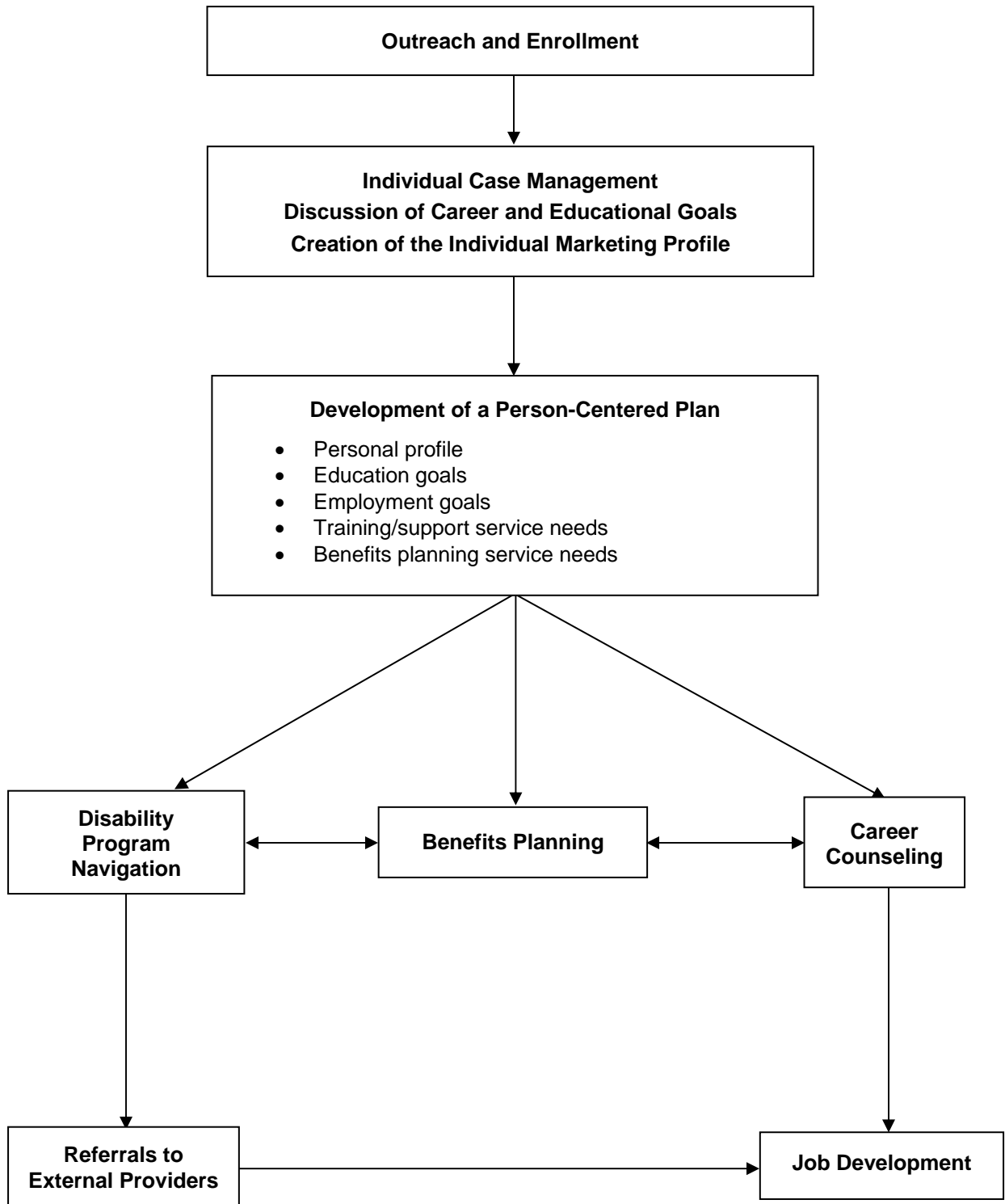
CYW is an intensive, person-centered case management intervention that first seeks to gain a deep understanding of each youth's unique goals and service needs, and then uses resources within the existing service system to meet those needs. Figure III.1 depicts the flow of CYW services from a participant's perspective. Once a youth is assigned to the treatment group for the CYW evaluation, his or her name and other basic information, including contact information, is provided to project personnel through ETO. Responsibilities for outreach and enrollment are determined within each I-Team, but typically the DPN takes the lead. The enrollment process concludes with the I-Team gathering written consent from the youth and his or her parent or guardian to participate in services.

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report. Last Revised: Wednesday, January 2, 2008. Available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.

**Table III.2. Core Components of the Colorado YTD Project**

Core YTD Intervention Component	Colorado-Specific Component	Description
Individualized work-based experiences	Person-centered planning Disability program navigation Career counseling Job development	Career exploration is offered through person-centered planning and vocational assessments. CYW helps youth connect to various local employment service providers and assists them in locating paid, competitive employment, and sometimes unpaid work.
Youth empowerment	Individual case management Person-centered planning Disability program navigation	Individual case management helps youth identify goals, learn about available community services, and advocate for themselves. Goal identification is furthered through person-centered planning. Disability program navigation services help youth advocate for themselves with local providers.
Family supports	Person-centered planning Benefits counseling	When appropriate, parents attend and are involved in person-centered planning. Benefits counseling can be essential in helping a family navigate various benefit programs and understanding how a youth's work may impact his or her benefits and the family's income.
System linkages	Disability program navigation	Linkages are made with DVR, DDD, and WIPA programs and other service providers within the Workforce Network. The I-Teams seek to fill gaps in services, help youth access services, and work to ensure that services are provided as intended.
Social and health services	Referrals to social and health services	General case management and linkages with support services are provided as needed, generally by the DPN. Referrals are made to educational, vocational, and other community resources.
SSA waivers and benefits counseling	One-on-one meetings with benefits counselors	Individualized benefits counseling and information on waivers is provided to all CYW participants.

**Figure III.1. Participant Flow Through the Colorado YTD Project**

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After the youth has enrolled in the project, the I-Teams engage him or her in discussions on a broad range of topics related to his or her transition to adulthood. Short- and long-term goals for the youth flow from these discussions. These are ultimately incorporated in an evolving person-centered plan, which also specifies the services that the youth needs to achieve these goals. The DPN ensures that the youth accesses the services that he or she is entitled to from various governmental agencies and community-based organizations within the Workforce Network. The benefits planner informs the youth and family about SSA work incentives and the SSA waivers for YTD, and encourages their use through employment. Having assisted the youth in developing employment goals, the career counselor then provides assistance, either directly or through referrals to other service providers, to find a job that is consistent with those goals. The remainder of this section provides additional information about these CYW services.

### **1. Individual Case Management**

Highly individualized case management is a core service in CYW; consequently, the I-Teams expend extensive effort in getting to know participants and their families. As shown in Figure III.1, after enrollment, youth and, when appropriate, their families participate in meetings with the I-Teams that yield information essential to the effective management of these CYW cases. During these meetings, which may be as short as a single session or may stretch across several sessions, youth are assessed in terms of their goals and service needs. In one county, this assessment is done by the career counselor, in another, by the DPN, and at the other two sites, the assessment may be assigned to any member of the I-Team. The assessment meeting consists of in-depth interviews with the youth and families about their goals for education, employment, independent living, hobbies, interests, significant relationships, disabling conditions, family support, and other issues that may be important. This assessment informs the creation of an individual marketing profile (IMP), which presents the youth's general interests and specifies initial goals.

### **2. Development of a Person-Centered Plan**

Following the completion of the IMP, a person-centered plan (PCP) is developed. The PCP is the primary CYW case management tool; it guides the delivery of services to each participant. CYW staff, representing the three I-Team roles, contribute to the PCP, focusing on their respective areas of expertise. It is developed through face-to-face meetings with the youth and his or her family, starting with the initial assessment meeting and continuing with as many follow-up meetings as are necessary to complete the plan. The PCP is a "living document," open to revision based on changing goals and circumstances. Since the plan evolves to match the youth's needs, it requires periodic updates, ideally at least every six months. An I-Team member may provide a copy of the PCP to a youth during a meeting and then work through the document together to update it.

The PCP consists of five main sections:

- Personal profile
- Education goals

- Employment goals
- Training/support service needs
- Benefits planning service needs

The PCP provides a way for the I-Team to record a participant's goals, as well as the services that he or she will need to make progress toward those goals. It is used as a guide for successful transition, focusing on the youth's unique circumstances through the use of a strong, person-centered approach. In sum, the PCP serves as the overall plan for how a youth will achieve his or her educational, employment, and life goals. CYW seeks to develop a PCP for each youth it serves within 30 to 60 days of his or her enrollment in the project.

### **3. Disability Program Navigation**

Disability program navigation is typically among the first services that CYW participants receive, and in many ways represents the heart of the project's person-centered case management approach. The navigation services assist youth in accessing services from various governmental agencies and community-based organizations. The DPNs seek to fill gaps in existing services by solving system shortcomings and ensuring that the various programs serve CYW participants appropriately when considered from a holistic perspective. In addition to referring youth to services, the DPNs advocate for services on their behalf.

### **4. Benefits Planning**

All CYW participants receive benefits planning services. These services are critical not just for the youth, but also for their families, as the latter often have significant concerns over access to various public benefits and how work may impact those benefits. Benefits planning under CYW helps youth, their families, and representative payees understand the implications of work, earnings, and resources for disability-related benefits. It informs these stakeholders of the work incentives available under standard SSA rules, and also encourages use of the special SSA waivers. CYW benefits counselors help participants access the work incentives and waivers, and they serve as liaisons with SSA field offices to ensure that the youth report their earnings appropriately and receive the benefits to which they are entitled. In a small number of cases, CYW refers youth to the local SSA Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) project.<sup>16</sup>

The SSA waivers for YTD are a key component of the CYW intervention. Because the waivers are complex, most youth require counseling to understand them. All CYW participants receive a basic introduction to the waivers and encouragement to use them during enrollment and the development of a PCP. When youth decide to seek employment, they have extended, individualized discussions with the CYW benefits counselors about the waivers that they are eligible for, and how to utilize them.

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<sup>16</sup> As the official SSA benefits counseling program, the local WIPA may have access to resources beyond the scope of the time-limited YTD funding that supports these efforts by CYW.



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## 5. Career Counseling

Career counseling, along with job development, reflects the ultimate goal of CYW, which is to assist youth with disabilities in developing career goals and going to work. The I-Teams provide CYW youth with individualized, client-driven career planning services. This includes vocational assessments and career exploration, as well as job development and job placement services. The I-Teams work closely with local employment service providers, especially DVR, DDD, and other partners within the Workforce Network. CYW also helps youth to access the full array of generic employment supports available in the Workforce Centers, including resume writing and GED courses, job listings, and employer contacts.

## 6. Job Development

Job development services in CYW are designed to help participants find jobs that match their interests and abilities, and to support them once they are employed. I-Team members, primarily the career counselors, work with youth and local employers to identify appropriate jobs. They also provide post-employment support by arranging accommodations and job coaching. Many job development activities are coordinated with the resources in the Workforce Centers and with DVR. Additionally, the I-Team career counselors work with local businesses to build relationships that may result in job placements for CYW participants. The project focuses on paid, competitive employment. However, in a small percentage of cases, CYW works with DVR and DDD to place youth in volunteer jobs, internships, and sheltered workshops.<sup>17</sup>

## D. RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

Recruitment and enrollment for CYW began in August 2006 and was completed in May 2008. As a result of this effort, 880 youth consented to participate in the evaluation; of that total, 488 were randomly assigned to the treatment group. The enrollment target for CYW was 83 percent of the treatment group youth, or 407 youth. The project exceeded this target in May 2008, having enrolled 417 youth, or 85 percent of the treatment group.

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<sup>17</sup> CYW I-Team members are working, in collaboration with TransCen, to enhance the career counseling and job development services in CYW. This includes staff training by TransCen on customized employment, individualized employment services, and job development.

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## CHAPTER IV

# THE ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK, YOUTH TRANSITION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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### A. OVERVIEW

The Erie YTD project, known as Transition WORKS, seeks to maximize economic self-sufficiency and independence for youth who are SSA disability beneficiaries ages 16 to 25 by improving their educational and employment outcomes. Transition WORKS serves youth in Erie County, New York, which includes the city of Buffalo. The project is designed to fill identified gaps in transition services. It provides training on self-determination and self-advocacy for youth and their families, transition planning, work-based experiences, family support and instruction on organizing the materials needed to apply for benefits, social and health services, SSA waivers, and benefits counseling. Table IV.1 provides an overview of Transition WORKS.

#### 1. Lead Agency and Key Partners

Transition WORKS is administered by the Erie 1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). This is one of 37 regional public education service organizations established in 1948 to serve school districts throughout New York. Erie 1 BOCES delivers education services to 20 school districts in Erie County. Among other services, it provides academic and functional programs and related special education services during the school year, including counseling; occupational, physical, and speech therapy; and hearing and vision services. Erie 1 BOCES also offers a six-week summer program, which gives school districts the opportunity to purchase services at cost to provide dedicated summer school activities for special education students.

Erie 1 BOCES directly delivers many Transition WORKS services, but it also has formal arrangements with three partner organizations to provide additional services that are central to the intervention:

**Table IV.1. Overview of the Erie County, NY, YTD Project**

Project name	Transition WORKS
Lead organization	The Erie 1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services
Partner organizations	Neighborhood Legal Services, the Community Employment Office, and the Parent Network of Western New York
Geographic scope or location	Erie County, including the city of Buffalo
Target population	SSI, DI, and CDB beneficiaries 16 through 25 years old
Length of services	Participants receive at least 18 months of intensive services, followed by employment supports as necessary.
Staffing structure	Transition coordinators, job developers, benefits counselors, and parents affiliated with the Parent Network deliver intervention services.

- ***Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. (NLS).*** NLS is a legal services corporation that provides services to low-income families and people with disabilities. Located in downtown Buffalo, NLS staff work with Transition WORKS participants and their families to provide benefits planning services and assistance with the SSA waivers.
- ***The Community Employment Office (CEO).*** The CEO, in cooperation with the Western New York Placement Partnership, is an alliance of public and voluntary agencies working together to promote integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the Western New York area. The CEO provides employment preparation services to Transition WORKS participants and assists them in identifying and linking with appropriate jobs in the community.
- ***The Parent Network of Western New York.*** The Parent Network of Western New York is a parent-led community organization with a mission to support youth with disabilities and their families. It conducts a “binder-training” workshop that helps the parents and guardians of Transition WORKS participants organize important documents on their youth. The Parent Network also prepares a monthly newsletter with information on topics of importance to youth with disabilities and their families.

In addition to these formal arrangements, Transition WORKS also leverages services from the local offices of VESID, the state vocational rehabilitation agency, the New York State OMRDD, and the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH). A number of organizations contract with OMRDD to provide services in Erie County, including local affiliates of the Association of Retarded Citizens and United Cerebral Palsy.

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## 2. Project Structure and Staffing

Transition WORKS is staffed by ten employees of Erie 1 BOCES and by additional individuals who are employees of the partner organizations. The assistant director for school support services at Erie 1 BOCES serves as the project director for Transition WORKS, devoting approximately 40 percent of her time to that responsibility. The project also is staffed at Erie 1 BOCES by a project manager, two transition coordinators, and six job developers. One of the responsibilities of the project manager is to serve as the site administrator of the ETO data system, ensuring accurate data collection and record keeping. He also oversees the transition coordinators and job developers to ensure that treatment group youth are enrolled in the project and receive services. In addition, he coordinates with the partner organizations to ensure that they are appropriately serving Transition WORKS participants. The transition coordinators and job developers at Erie 1 BOCES provide the bulk of services to the project participants, forming a cohesive, close-knit team whose roles often are interchangeable. Completing the team are a full-time staff member at the CEO, three full-time and two part-time staff at NLS, and staff at the Parent Network who provide binder training.

To coordinate service provision to the project participants, the Transition WORKS staff hold several scheduled meetings each month. These include a monthly meeting with SSA's area work incentive coordinator (AWIC), a case review meeting once a month to discuss new participants and those experiencing problems with SSA benefits, and a weekly vocational meeting to coordinate staff efforts in the key areas of career exploration and job placement.

## 3. Target Population

Transition WORKS serves youth in Erie County who are 16 through 25 years old and receive Social Security disability benefits (including SSI, DI, and CDB). About 3,000 such individuals resided in Erie County in July 2007.

A standard array of services is available for youth with disabilities in Erie County. However, the service system is fragmented, with gaps in services and a lack of systematic coordination of services for specific youth. The service gaps include deficiencies in the following areas: vocational programming in the schools, assistance to connect in-school youth with the adult services system, services for youth who are not eligible for OMRDD services, benefits planning and advisement, transitional housing, substance abuse programs, and public transportation.

The population of Erie County is approximately 921,000. Of those individuals, 285,000 live in Buffalo, its largest city. Erie County's median household income in 2004 was \$42,122, compared with the state-wide median of \$45,343, and 13.4 percent of the county residents were living below the poverty line. In 2006, the population was 79.4 percent white, 13.6 percent black, and 3.6 percent Hispanic.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit

## **B. CORE YTD COMPONENTS**

The Erie project's implementation of the core YTD components, as specified in the YTD logic model, is summarized in Table IV.2. Transition WORKS is designed to empower participants and their families to navigate the existing fragmented service system and offers transition services to fill service gaps for youth in Erie County. Project services begin with self-determination training that culminates in development of a transition plan, which guides the services that a youth receives. Subsequent services focus on work-based experiences that capitalize on the youth's interests and strengths. These include career exploration, informational interviews, job tours, individualized job development, job shadowing, internships, and competitive employment. Staff also support youth in furthering their educations. A core project component is individualized counseling on SSA disability benefits, including the SSA waivers, and other sources of public assistance. YTD staff also provide family supports, including binder-training to help families keep important documents organized; systems linkages for connecting youth to vocational rehabilitation services and other employment supports; referrals to other social and health service providers; and financial support for work-related expenses.

## **C. TRANSITION WORKS SERVICES**

A youth's progression through the Transition WORKS YTD project is depicted in Figure IV.1. After Mathematica assigns a youth to the evaluation's treatment group and conveys the contact information to Transition WORKS via ETO, a transition coordinator is primarily responsible for conducting outreach to the youth and conducting an intake meeting. The meeting is scheduled to occur at a time and location convenient for the youth, frequently in his or her home, but sometimes in the BOCES office or another easily accessible location. During the intake meeting, the transition coordinator (sometimes assisted by a job developer) informs the youth about Transition WORKS and the services it offers, as well as the SSA waivers and provides written information on these services and waivers. Basic information regarding the youth and his or her situation also is collected as part of the intake process. The youth is considered to be enrolled in project services upon the successful completion of the intake meeting.

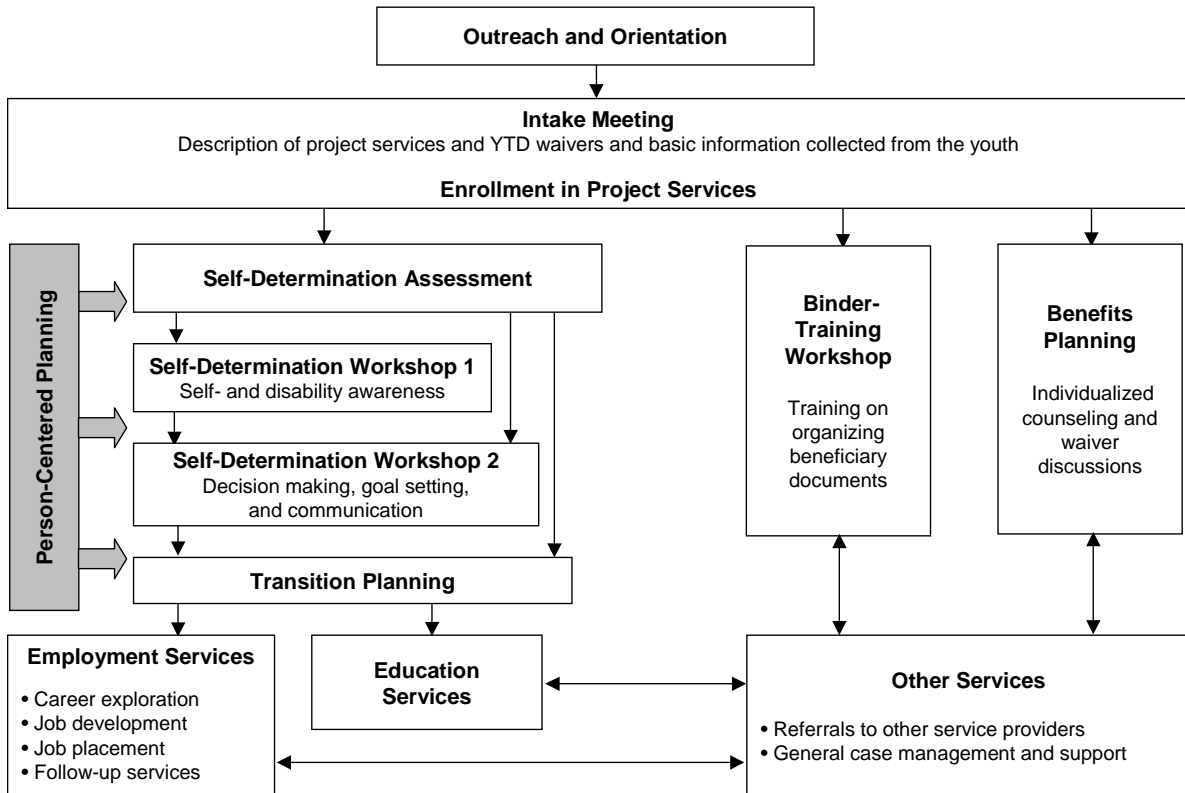
Once enrolled in Transition WORKS, the next step for a typical youth is to attend self-determination workshops, where most person-centered planning occurs. As part of the intake process, the transition coordinator makes an assessment as to whether the youth needs to attend one or both of the project's self-determination workshops and schedules the youth for these. Most youth are determined to need one or both; however, youth who know what type of employment they desire may not need to attend either of these workshops. At intake, the youth also is scheduled for a transition-planning meeting and is referred to NLS for benefits planning. The family is referred to the Parent Network for organizational binder training.

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Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report. Last Revised: Wednesday, January, 2 2008. Available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.

**Table IV.2. Core Components of the Erie County, NY, YTD Project**

Core YTD Intervention Component	Erie-Specific Component	Description
Individualized work-based experiences	Vocational assessment and career exploration Job development, job search, work experiences, follow-along services	Based on skills and interests outlined in the transition plan, job developers arrange work experiences, such as job shadowing, internships, informational interviews, job tours, and competitive employment. Job developers also provide job coaching and other follow-along services to youth who are employed.
Youth empowerment	Self-determination assessment Self-determination workshops Transition planning	If a participant is assessed as being not self-determined, the transition coordinator provides him or her with self-determination training. The next step is to develop a transition plan, which outlines the youth's strengths, aspirations, and work experiences. The transition plan enables the youth to outline action steps for engaging in employment, education, and other gainful activities.
Family supports	Benefits counseling Binder training Newsletters	Benefits counseling is provided to families to increase parental support for youth employment and also to address the family's other economic needs. A binder-training workshop provides instruction on keeping beneficiary documents organized. Monthly newsletters keep parents informed of resources available at the Parent Network.
System linkages	Linkages with external providers	Linkages with public agencies include VESID, the local transit authority, and other local service providers.
Social and health services	Referrals	Transition coordinators provide referrals to other programs and organizations for social and health services.
SSA waivers and benefits counseling	One-on-one meetings with benefits counselors Benefits advisement letter and individualized counseling on demand	General information on benefits and waivers is provided during the intake meeting. Individualized counseling and an advisement letter on benefits and waivers are provided by NLS after enrollment and also at job placement and close-out.
Other key components or features	Education services General case management	Support is provided for high school completion, IEP meetings, obtaining a GED, obtaining financial aid for postsecondary education, and enrolling in postsecondary education. Transition coordinators provide general case management, including check-ins and follow-up services pursuant to check-ins.

**Figure IV.1. Participant Flow Through the Erie County, NY, YTD Project**

## 1. Self-Determination

Transition WORKS is guided by a strong philosophy of youth empowerment, based on the person-centered, self-determination model. During the project's pilot phase, in 2004-2006, the staff developed a self-determination curriculum that addresses four key life domains: living, learning, working, and playing. The staff trained special education teachers in the Erie County school districts to implement the curriculum in their classrooms. Currently, teachers can choose to use this curriculum and any student, regardless of whether he or she is participating in Transition WORKS, may receive it.

Upon intake, youth enrolled in Transition WORKS are assessed for their ability to express goals, their awareness of their disability, and their ability to take age-appropriate control over their lives. During this assessment, youth are asked to (1) describe their disability and how it impacts their education or employment; (2) articulate their goals in living, learning, working, and playing; and (3) express their strengths, likes, and dislikes. Youth who have difficulty discussing these topics are directed to project workshops for self-determination training. Most youth are deemed to need such training, regardless of whether they previously have received it in school. Staff also evaluate whether project participants have the cognitive ability to benefit from the self-determination workshops. Those who are



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deemed unable to benefit from group training receive individualized instruction from the project staff.

Self-determination training is typically provided by the transition coordinators to small groups of youth in two workshops: self-determination 1 (SD-1) and self-determination 2 (SD-2). Training is provided in a youth's home if he or she cannot attend the workshops or is unable to learn in a group environment, but this is not the preferred option. This training addresses the same four life domains as the school curriculum, but with an added emphasis on career exploration and the world of work. SD-1, which focuses on the youths' awareness of themselves and their disabilities, assists the youth in articulating likes, dislikes, strengths, and needs in each life domain. SD-2 focuses upon goal setting, decision making, and communication. Participants in this workshop use role-playing to explore: (1) ways of communicating about their disabilities with educators and employers, (2) how to communicate needs assertively, and (3) how to request reasonable accommodations. SD-2 ends with the youth setting short- and long-term goals related to the four life domains.

Early on in the project, two transition coordinators jointly ran each of the self-determination workshops, but this changed over time as the number of participants in Transition WORKS increased. Currently, one transition coordinator runs each workshop, assisted when possible by one or more job developers. The training provides an opportunity for the transition coordinator and the job developer(s) to get to know the youth and to start obtaining the information that will be needed for transition planning.

## **2. Transition Planning**

Once a youth has been through the self-determination workshops, or has been assessed as being self-determined and therefore does not need to attend, the next step is to develop a PCP, which is referred to in the Transition WORKS project as a "transition plan." The transition plan outlines a youth's strengths, aspirations, and work experience. It provides a format for the youth to specify goals for employment, education, and other areas and to identify the steps that he or she will take to achieve those goals. All youth are expected to complete a transition plan by about three months after enrollment in project services.

## **3. Binder Training**

During the intake meeting, parents and guardians of Transition WORKS participants are scheduled to attend a workshop on binder training that is conducted by the Parent Network of Western New York. The participants themselves frequently attend this workshop as well. Parents are encouraged to bring paperwork on their youth, such as a copy of an IEP or letters from SSA, to the workshop. During the workshop, these documents are compiled in well-organized binders that are divided into several sections, including "work," "medical," and "school," and have pockets for Social Security and Medicaid cards. Also during the workshop, staff of the Parent Network provide the parents with an orientation to the service system for young adults with disabilities, and respond to the parents' questions about the various services.

The binder training begins with a discussion of the importance of the transition process and how to infuse the principles for successful transition in the four key life domains that are the basis for the self-determination training for youth. For example, the workshop participants may learn how to infuse transition services in an IEP or how to request a vocational assessment before exiting school. The training ends with an action plan that may include attendance at training sessions on specific services, conducted by the Parent Network with funds through sources other than YTD. Every parent is placed on the Parent Network's mailing list after the binder training and they are informed of additional training opportunities. The Parent Network also prepares a monthly newsletter that contains information, resources, and news of upcoming activities for youth with disabilities and their families. Transition WORKS participants are included on the distribution list for this newsletter.

Participation in binder training is voluntary, but strongly encouraged. The two-hour workshop is scheduled to occur several times per week at the office of the Parent Network; it is cancelled if sign-up for a particular session is low. Generally, between two and eight individuals attend each session; this provides ample opportunity for the trainers to tailor the information to the specific circumstances and needs of the attendees and answer questions about their particular situations.

#### **4. Benefits Planning**

Benefits planning is a major service component of Transition WORKS. Following a limited discussion of SSA benefits, standard SSA work incentives, and the SSA waivers for YTD during the project intake meeting, a participant and his or her family are referred to NLS for intensive, individualized benefits counseling. NLS assigns a staff member to work with the youth. That individual contacts the youth to schedule an initial benefits planning meeting. The full benefits planning process at NLS consists of the following components:

- ***Initial Meeting.*** The Transition WORKS participant is generally accompanied to this meeting by a family member or a representative payee. Following a structured protocol, this hour-long interview includes a thorough review and analysis of the youth and family's financial situation and the benefits they receive. The NLS staff member also explains the SSA work incentives and waivers, medical benefits, and vocational services, adapting the explanations to the youth and family's specific situations.
- ***Benefits Advise ment Letter.*** This letter summarizes the interview and benefits analysis. It reiterates information gathered during the interview, answers beneficiary questions, and makes recommendations.
- ***Technical Assistance on Demand.*** For youth who are currently working or are ready to begin working, this component includes the development of a plan to use all appropriate SSA work incentives and waivers. It also includes assistance in implementing such a plan. For all Transition WORKS participants, this component includes referrals to additional benefit programs, including those providing housing, medical, and food assistance.

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- ***Proactive Contact.*** Through short, bimonthly telephone contacts, the NLS staff member follows up on recommendations, answer questions, and supports the Transition WORKS participant in carrying out plans. The staff member also offers a more comprehensive in-person or telephone meeting at least once every six months to discuss any changes in the youth's situation that may affect his or her benefits.

As part of its benefits counseling, NLS may provide a youth and family with assistance on financial and legal concerns that are not directly connected to the youth's SSA benefits. For example NLS may address their economic needs by assessing whether they might be eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, housing support, or assistance with domestic violence. When appropriate, NLS refers a youth or family to its public benefits unit for more information and to determine their eligibility for such assistance.

## 5. Employment Services

The initial focus of employment services in Transition WORKS is on career exploration, which a participating youth engages in under the guidance of a job developer. This process generally begins with a vocational assessment that may entail written tests, job try-outs, and referral to a local vocational assessment center. Building on the findings from that assessment, plus the skills and interests outlined in the transition plan, the job developer arranges work-based experiences for the youth. These may include job shadowing, internships, informational interviews, and job tours. The youth also may participate in interview training provided by CEO, during which he or she is videotaped while undergoing a mock interview. CEO staff review the tape with the youth and together they critique the performance and develop strategies for improvement.

The project's job developers spend much of their time getting to know employers in Erie County and developing employment opportunities with them for Transition WORKS participants. They make appointments with employers to introduce themselves and Transition WORKS and to discuss possible employment opportunities for youth. Some job developers present the project as an employment program specifically for youth with disabilities; others present it more broadly as a youth employment program. The job developers seek to establish rapport with the employers and to develop an understanding of their operations and staffing needs. This groundwork creates a heightened potential for placing Transition WORKS participants in paid jobs or work-based experience at those organizations.

Job developers use the knowledge that they have collectively accumulated about Erie County employers to place Transition WORKS participants in paid jobs. When a participant is ready for paid employment, a job developer identifies one or more jobs that match the youth's interests and skills. The job developer provides the youth with information on these jobs and assists him or her in applying for those that he or she selects.

Transition WORKS job developers provide follow-up services to support youth in maintaining their jobs, or to assist them in identifying new employment opportunities when

placements prove to be unsatisfactory. A basic follow-up service, which may head off job-related problems before they develop, is job coaching. Job developers discuss coaching with employers if the youth need this support and give their permission. Smaller employers, especially, may not be familiar with this service, so the job developers educate them as necessary. Other follow-up services often entail problem solving around job-related issues, including relationships with supervisors and co-workers, appearance and social comportment, and youth dissatisfaction with some aspect of a job. Job developers work with the youth to address these issues directly with their supervisors or co-workers. Job developers assist youth who must quit their jobs to do so in an appropriate and respectful manner, so the employers will provide positive references for them. The job developers also work with these youth to understand why their jobs proved to be unsatisfactory and to learn lessons that may improve future employment experiences.

## **6. Education Services**

The Transition WORKS staff provide education services to receptive youth who are in need of them. Such services include support for completing high school or obtaining a GED, attendance and support at IEP meetings, help with enrolling in postsecondary education, and assistance in accessing financial aid for continuing education. For youth who want to pursue postsecondary education, the staff offer guidance in assessing options and identifying appropriate programs and institutions.

## **7. Other Services**

Transition WORKS staff also offer other services, including referrals to other service providers and general case management. Referral services include referrals to and assistance in obtaining services from VESID, OMRDD, OMH, the local transit authority, and other local service providers. General case management encompasses family support services, telephone check-ins, and follow-up services pursuant to check-ins. The Transition WORKS program model does not strongly distinguish core program services from follow-up services. The project has a flexible approach to service delivery and staff address youths' needs as they arise.

## **D. DESCRIPTION OF THE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

Recruitment and enrollment for Transition WORKS began in January 2007 and was completed in May 2008. As a result of this effort, 880 youth consented to participate in the evaluation; of that total, 480 were randomly assigned to the treatment group. The enrollment target for Transition WORKS was 83 percent of the treatment group youth, or 400 youth and the project achieved this goal. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the recruitment and enrollment process for Transition WORKS and the five other random assignment YTD projects.

# CHAPTER V

## THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, YOUTH TRANSITION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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### A. OVERVIEW

Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures (BHBF), the YTD project in Miami-Dade County, Florida, promotes the economic self-sufficiency of youth with disabilities by providing them with customized employment services, benefits counseling, and through its relationships with partners, individual development accounts (IDAs) and financial literacy training. The goal of BHBF is to place participants in competitive employment based on their individual interests, skills, and desires, primarily through customized job placements. BHBF serves 400 youth 16 through 22 years old, all of whom live in Miami-Dade County and receive Social Security disability benefits. Community employment development specialists (CEDS) and benefits specialists provide the services, which are delivered in an individual, small group, or workshop format. The project's ties with the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) promote guided transitions from high school to adulthood. Table V.1 provides basic information on BHBF, which is expanded upon in the remainder of this section.

#### 1. Lead Agency and Key Partners

Abilities, Inc. of Florida (henceforth referred to as "Abilities"), based in Clearwater, is the lead agency for the BHBF YTD project. Abilities is a private, nonprofit organization that has provided services to individuals with disabilities throughout Florida since 1959 and has served Miami-Dade County since 1990. It is one of four affiliates of the ServiceSource Network, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, that share resources, expertise, and best practices in serving individuals with disabilities. Abilities manages a variety of programs including a WIPA grant. All of Abilities' programs and services are community-based and most are accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, although BHBF is not.

**Table V.1. Overview of the Miami-Dade County, FL, YTD Project**

Project name	Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures
Lead organization	Abilities, Inc. of Florida
Formal partners	Human Services Coalition, National Disability Institute, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Geographic scope or location	Miami-Dade County
Target population	SSI, DI, and CDB beneficiaries 16 through 22 years old
Length of services	Most participants receive 9 to 18 months of YTD services.
Staffing structure	Six employment specialists and three benefits specialists provide direct services, with additional support for IDA's and financial literacy training from two subcontractor agencies.

BHBF was one of three YTD pilot projects selected by SSA for full implementation from 2008 through 2012. BHBF started on a pilot basis in January 2007 to demonstrate its ability to enroll youth and deliver services. During the pilot, BHBF enrolled and served 21 youth and developed relationships with local service providers. BHBF staff also refined their intervention by expanding the eligible population from in-school youth to out-of-school youth and by increasing their capacity to provide benefits planning.

Abilities has developed strong working relationships with national and local service providers that significantly enhance the intervention. For instance, Abilities contracts with the Human Services Coalition (HSC) and the National Disability Institute (NDI). HSC empowers low-income residents of Miami-Dade County through financial literacy education and political advocacy. For BHBF participants, families, and staff, HSC develops informational materials and curriculum and provides instruction on financial literacy. HSC also connects BHBF participants with community organizations that administer IDAs.<sup>19</sup> NDI promotes income and asset development for people with disabilities. It provides specialized training on benefits specific to Florida, including state-specific policies and guidance on the use of favorable tax benefits and the relationship between resource limits

<sup>19</sup> IDAs are matched savings accounts in which participants save earned income and receive matching funds with the goal of acquiring a home, capitalizing a business, or attending postsecondary education or training. The program is administered by the Office of Community Services (OCS) within the Administration of Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. OCS awards grants to nonprofit entities and state, local, and tribal governments to administer IDA projects. Grantees must acquire an equal share of non-federal funds to support the program. Grantees account for the federal grant funds and the nonfederal cash in special accounts called Project Reserve Funds, from which they support program costs and provide funds to match participant IDA savings.

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and continued eligibility for various public benefits. NDI provides customized training for BHBF's benefits specialists.

Abilities also partners with M-DCPS and DVR in implementing BHBF, both of which serve youth with disabilities in Miami-Dade County. These relationships ensure that BHBF participants receive the services to which they are entitled and that the services are coordinated. M-DCPS offers transition services to youth with disabilities. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between M-DCPS and Abilities is being developed that will allow BHBF staff to be involved in developing IEPs and to help coordinate the transition from school-based services to adult services. DVR, the traditional provider of employment services for people with disabilities, has a transition counselor who serves youth in Miami-Dade County. Abilities has a cooperative agreement with DVR to refer all BHBF participants to the agency. BHBF staff members also have informal relationships with DVR counselors through which they assist in the development of DVR's individualized plan for employment (IPE) and service delivery. Through the project's informal relationships with the South Florida Workforce Investment Board and the Business Leadership Network of Miami-Dade County, BHBF participants can access employment and training services, including job listings, job-preparation workshops, and other employment opportunities.

## **2. Project Structure and Staffing**

BHBF has a staff of 20, including direct service staff and support staff. The executive director of Abilities serves as the BHBF project director.<sup>20</sup> He is responsible for the overall management of the project, including supervising the project manager, overseeing the subcontracts with all partners, and preparing all required reporting and documentation for Mathematica and SSA. He also ensures that BHBF is implemented as planned and that it achieves its objectives in a timely fashion.

The project manager is responsible for the project's day-to-day operations and supervises the nine direct service staff. She also develops and maintains relationships with the various collaborative partners and employers.

Six CEDS provide employment and case management services to BHBF participants. They enroll participants, conduct the person-centered planning process with participants and their families, refer participants to the benefits specialists, coordinate social services, and provide employment services. Four of these positions are entry-level (CEDS-I), while two positions (CEDS-II) require more experience with rehabilitation counseling, case management, or benefits planning. One of the duties of the CEDS-II staff is to provide technical assistance to the CEDS-I staff.

Three benefits specialists provide intensive benefits counseling and advice to BHBF participants and their families and also assist in developing IDAs. BHBF has two levels of benefits specialists. The two lower-level specialists work directly with participants and their families to offer individualized counseling on benefits and waivers. The higher-level specialist does this as well but also coordinates benefit workshops for participants, works

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<sup>20</sup> He is budgeted to spend about 20 percent of his time in this role.

with SSA's area work incentive coordinator, and provides technical assistance on waivers and benefits planning to the BHBF team.

An ETO site administrator oversees the project's management information system, provides supplemental training to BHBF staff on ETO, and troubleshoots ETO problems. A customized employment/program director provides training and technical assistance to staff on community assessment, individualized job analysis, job carving, person-centered career planning, self-employment, job accommodations, assistive technology, and natural supports, such as co-workers and supervisors, in the workplace.<sup>21</sup>

The project director, the ETO site administrator, and the customized employment/program director are located at the Abilities main office in Clearwater. The project manager and her nine full-time direct services staff have two offices, one in South Miami and one in North Miami. To facilitate communication, the project director and project manager have weekly telephone meetings to discuss BHBF project progress and issues. The project director has been meeting with the project manager and her staff in Miami at least monthly during the first year of the project. The project director also coordinates with the ETO site administrator to ensure that project needs are being met and that the Miami-based staff have the support they need.

### **3. Target Population**

BHBF's target population consists of youth with disabilities 16 through 22 years old who receive Social Security disability benefits, are either in school or out, and who live in Miami-Dade County. In January 2008, 7,009 individuals met these criteria. To deliver services better, BHBF has divided the county into two regions, north and south, and plans to serve approximately 269 participants in the latter and 131 participants in the former.

Miami-Dade County, home to BHBF, is a large, multi-cultural urban center. Of its 2.4 million residents, 62 percent are Hispanic, and 20 percent are black. Fifty-one percent of the population is foreign-born, while 68 percent of residents speak a language other than English at home. The county's median household income (\$34,700) is below the state average (\$40,900), and as of 2004, 17 percent of residents were below the poverty level.<sup>22</sup>

## **B. CORE YTD COMPONENTS**

As summarized in Table V.2, BHBF offers all of the core intervention components identified in the YTD logic model. From the initial intake interview, the CEDS work with participants to identify their employment goals and empower them through a person-

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<sup>21</sup> Job carving is the act of analyzing work duties performed in a given position and identifying specific tasks that might be assigned to a youth with severe disabilities.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report. Last Revised: Wednesday, January 2, 2008. Available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.



**Table V.2. Core Components of the Miami-Dade County, FL, YTD Project**

Core YTD Intervention Component	BHBF-Specific Component	Description
Individualized work-based experiences	Person-centered planning Customized employment services Career preparation	CEDS provide one-on-one career preparation activities, job development, job placement, work experiences, and follow-up services after placement.
Youth empowerment	Person-centered planning	CEDS use a person-centered planning approach to help youth develop employment goals and understand that they are in charge of their future.
Family supports	Person-centered planning Benefits counseling	CEDS meet with families at intake, involve them in the person-centered planning process and services, and hold workshops on family needs. Benefits specialists meet with family members during the benefits planning process.
System linkages	Multiple partner relationships	The intervention includes youth referrals to a partner organization with experience in financial literacy and IDAs. CEDS facilitate youth linkages with the school district, DVR, the South Florida Workforce Investment Board, and other community organizations.
Social and health services	Person-centered planning Life skills training Community provider referral network	CEDS identify social and health service issues as part of both the person-centered planning process and the life skills component of the intervention, and make appropriate referrals as needed.
SSA waivers and benefits counseling	Benefits management	Benefits specialists provide initial benefits planning, one-on-one services, and workshops on waivers, work incentives, and benefits.
Other key components or features	IDAs Financial literacy	Youth have access to local IDA programs and financial literacy education; benefits specialists provide support in implementing IDAs.

centered process. Participants have contact with a benefits specialist within the first month of enrollment and throughout the intervention to help them understand their current benefits and how they can make the most of the SSA waivers and work incentives. Using a sequence of assessments, pre-employment preparation activities, and job placement, CEDS provide customized employment services that are focused on securing a competitive paid job. CEDS and benefits specialists engage family members at intake and during the participant's involvement in BHBF through individual and workshop activities designed to help them understand the participant's employment and benefit issues. The relationships that BHBF has established with its partners—HSC, NDI, M-DCPS, DVR, and others—are the conduit between participants and additional employment and transition services. In addition, BHBF draws on an informal network of community service providers that offer social and health services through which participants and their families can work toward independence. As mentioned, participants are also connected to enhanced financial services and IDAs through HSC and community partners.

### C. BHBF SERVICES

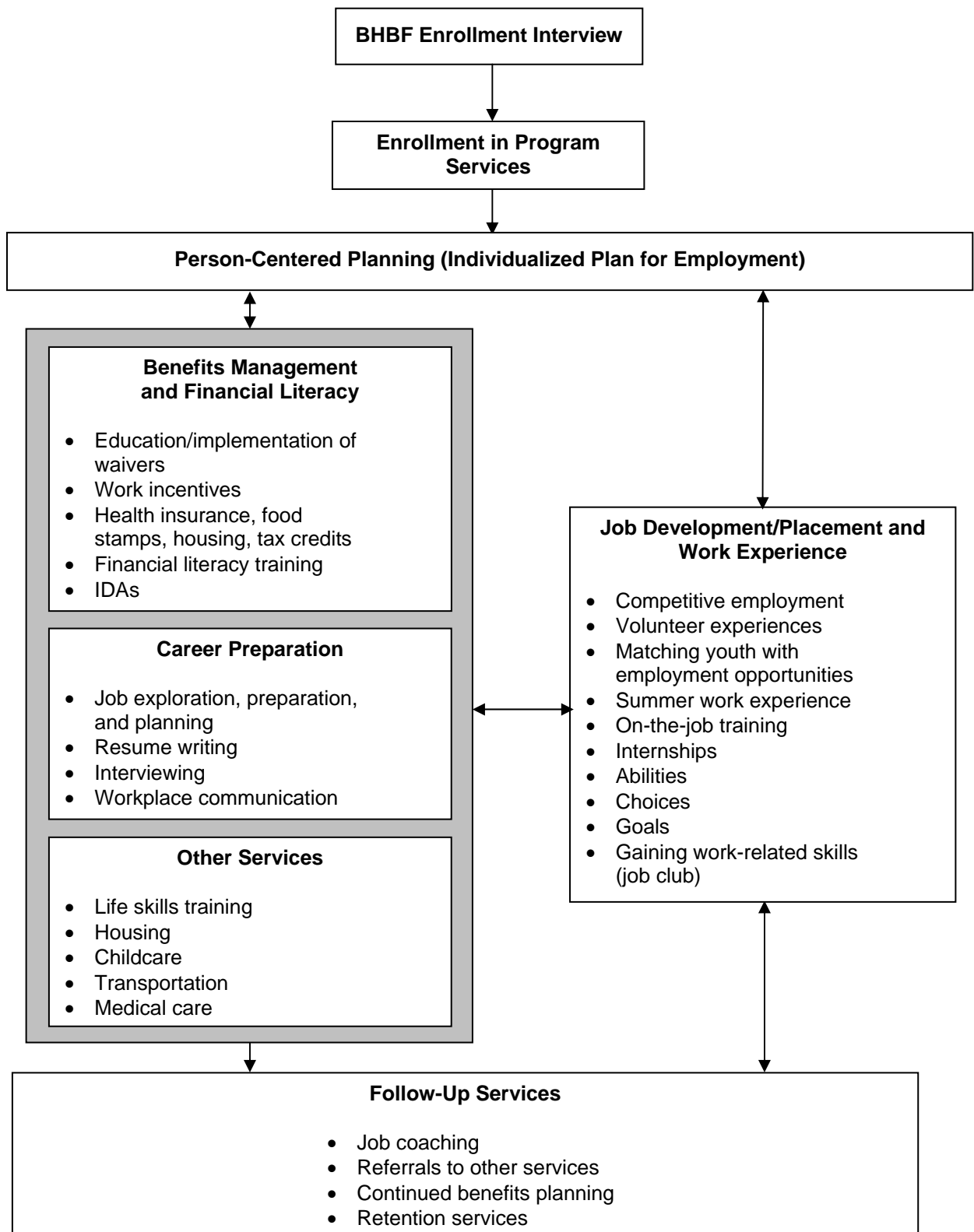
The key components of the BHBF approach to helping youth with disabilities become independent are person-centered planning, benefits management, career preparation, life skills training, job development and work experience, and follow-up services. Figure V.1 presents these components from the participant's perspective as he or she moves through the intervention; each component is described in more detail later in this section. BHBF staff offer these components to participants and families in the following three formats:

- ***One-on-One.*** One-on-one contact is the primary vehicle for delivering individualized BHBF services. The services begin at intake through a person-centered planning process, which emphasizes employment, and continue as long as a person remains in the project. Benefits counseling is initially provided on an individualized basis and subsequently in group workshops. It also may be necessary for CEDS to offer supports on managing other life issues that are unique to the participant, such as physical and mental health, housing, transportation, and legal matters. The CEDS work with participants and families to best address issues that present challenges to obtaining and maintaining gainful employment.
- ***Job Club.*** BHBF offers a series of job club activities to small groups of participants to promote employment and self-sufficiency.<sup>23</sup> These activities are organized around the four key areas of empowerment, benefits management, career preparation, and life skills. Job clubs continually add new activities in these areas, such as resume writing, interviewing skills, dressing for work, job search skills, sample job applications, continuing education and training, and life skills (for example, goal setting, time management, and managing relationships). This format allows CEDS the flexibility to bring in guest

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<sup>23</sup> Job clubs are essentially support groups for job seekers.

Figure V.1. Participant Flow Through the Miami-Dade County, FL, YTD Project



speakers (such as employers), arrange for job-site tours, and accompany participants to job and agency fairs. The job club format also offers opportunities for peer networking, through which participants can learn, be supported, and in turn offer support to others. Job club meetings are held every other week in both the North Miami and South Miami BHBF offices at times most convenient for participants and families. These 45-minute sessions are voluntary, and BHBF provides refreshments.

- **Workshops.** Workshops provide BHBF participants with information designed to help them achieve their employment and life goals. Two to three workshops for up to 40 participants are held each spring and fall. These workshops, developed and delivered in collaboration with BHBF partners such as HSC, cover such topics as benefits planning, building assets through IDAs, and the family's role in the transition process.

## 1. Person-Centered Planning

Once an individual has enrolled in BHBF, the CEDS involves the participant in a person-centered planning approach to identifying his or her overall goals, including education, employment, and other milestones. During this process of self-discovery, the CEDS assesses the participant's abilities, interests, and preferences by using a collection of person-centered assessment tools, including a positive personal profile.<sup>24</sup> After the assessment is complete, the participant and the CEDS develop an IPE, which outlines the course of action through which the participant will work toward his or her goals. This plan is customized to the needs, abilities, interests, and experiences of the participant. The CEDS also shares self-determination strategies during the initial meetings with participant. These are designed to help the participant develop the sense of being in control over his or her life.

## 2. Benefits Management and Financial Literacy

Benefits management, a key BHBF component provided by benefits specialists, involves educating participants in how to use the five SSA waivers for YTD and other SSA work incentives. The benefits specialists also help participants to access ancillary benefits, such as health insurance, food stamps, housing subsidies, and tax credits. One-on-one counseling in benefits management begins within one month after the intake process and continues for as long as an individual participates in the project. Benefits planning workshops also are offered to participants and their families.

Benefits specialists also link participants with HSC, the organization that provides financial literacy training and connects participants to IDAs. HSC works with two agencies, the YWCA and Partners for Self-Employment, both of which have IDA programs for low-

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<sup>24</sup> The positive personal profile is a way to take inventory of a youth's attributes relevant to job search, employability, job match, retention, and long-range career development. It is a mechanism for collecting information from a variety of sources, including assessments, observations, interviews, and discussions with the youth, and people who know the youth well.

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and middle-income workers. These agencies use public and private funds to offer IDAs with a \$2 to \$1 match for purchasing a home, starting or enhancing a business, paying for education, or buying an automobile. HSC also assists BHBF participants and their families by:

- Leading a training session for BHBF staff on state and local programs for low-income people
- Offering one to two financial literacy workshops per year
- Sponsoring a “prosperity fair,” which provides information on tax assistance programs, banking programs, earned income tax credits, a discounted telephone assistance program, small business development, poverty-related programs (such as food stamps and subsidized housing), and IDAs
- Providing workshops and other educational opportunities for participants interested in IDAs

### **3. Career Preparation**

BHBF career preparation activities are offered by CEDS one-on-one, in job clubs, and in workshops. The activities include interviewing techniques, mock interviews, and resume preparation; coaching in career advancement, appropriate dress for the workplace, the benefits of self-employment versus working for someone else, workplace communication, and body language skills; and job search strategies such as how to use job fairs, web sites, newspaper listings, flyers, bulletin boards, community agencies, and networking. CEDS coordinate field trips to job fairs so that participants can actually experience what it feels like to explore different ways to look for a job.

### **4. Other Services**

Because BHBF recognizes that participants have needs and interests other than those related to benefits and employment, the project offers life skills training through job clubs and workshops. The training focuses on goal setting and decision making, time management, interpersonal and social skills, self-esteem, managing relationships, and addressing physical and mental health issues. The CEDS also work with participants through the person-centered planning process to identify needs in critical areas such as housing, child care, transportation, medical care, and mental health services. BHBF has a network of community partners and services to which participants are referred; project staff follow up to ensure that the connections are actually made.

### **5. Job Development/Placement and Work Experience**

The CEDS work with a network of employers to help participants find work. For participants who are in school, the focus is on summer and after-school work, while for participants no longer in school, the focus is on year-round work. The BHBF project assists participants in identifying work experiences, including job shadowing, volunteer activities,

and on-the-job training. When participants are ready to work, the CEDS encourage them to participate in work experiences based on their individual interests and abilities with the ultimate goal of competitive paid employment. Guided by the IPE, the work experience activities allow participants to gain the work-related skills necessary for successful transitions to work.

## **6. Follow-Up Services**

Follow-up and support services are provided by the CEDS immediately after participants are placed in paid jobs or in work experiences. The idea is to ensure that they succeed in their new ventures. The services include short-term job coaching; long-term or intensive job coaching is provided through referrals to other community services such as DVR and developmental disabilities agencies. Employed participants meet with the benefits specialists, who ensure that they are both reporting their wages to SSA and using the work incentives and waivers.

### **D. DESCRIPTION OF THE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

BHBF recruitment and enrollment began in April 2008 and will be completed in March 2010. To obtain a sample that is large enough for the evaluation, Mathematica will recruit 880 youth in Miami-Dade County for random assignment; 480 will be assigned to the treatment group (eligible to receive BHBF services), and 400 to the control group (ineligible to receive BHBF services). BHBF will enroll at least 400 participants from the treatment group, achieving an 83 percent enrollment rate. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the recruitment and enrollment process for BHBF and the five other random assignment YTD projects.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND, YOUTH TRANSITION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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### A. OVERVIEW

The Career Transition Program (CTP) YTD project provides employment-focused services to high school-aged youth with severe emotional disturbances (SED) in Montgomery County, Maryland. CTP has served 50 youth a year since 1993 and operates within St. Luke's House, Inc. (SLH), a comprehensive mental health provider in Montgomery County. The SLH YTD project is an expansion of CTP. Under YTD, CTP works with transition teachers in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to recruit juniors and seniors with SED. It provides them with comprehensive employment-focused services including work-based experiences, youth empowerment, family support, linkages to other resources in the local service system, social and health services, information on SSA waivers, and benefits counseling. CTP offers a unique combination of individualized mental health and career/vocational services. These empower youth with SED to improve their functioning, increase their chances to graduate from high school, and find jobs. While most of the youth that CTP serves are not receiving SSI or other Social Security disability benefits, the large majority are "at risk" for receiving disability-related benefits in the future.<sup>25</sup> Table VI.1 provides an overview of the basic features of CTP, which are discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

#### 1. Lead Agency and Key Partners

SLH was founded in 1971 by concerned citizens from St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Bethesda, Maryland, to address the needs of patients being released from state psychiatric hospitals who had no place to go. Shortly thereafter, SLH was established as an independent, non-sectarian agency and is now an independent nonprofit 501(c)(3)

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<sup>25</sup> A case file review of CTP participants by a university-affiliated disability expert determined that it was likely that many of the youth would end up on the Social Security rolls at some point in the future in the absence of CTP services.

organization that is licensed by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and the Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration. Known primarily for providing housing and psychiatric rehabilitation in its early years, SLH has grown to provide comprehensive mental health services, including supported living, life skills training, vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, and recreation and socialization activities. Approximately 800 adults and youth receive services from SLH at any given time.

CTP was one of three YTD pilot projects selected by SSA for full implementation from 2008 through 2012. SLH implemented CTP as a YTD pilot project starting in July 2007 to demonstrate its ability to enroll youth and deliver services. During the pilot, CTP enrolled and served 31 youth, while refining its intervention by revising its management structure and increasing the focus on benefits planning.

CTP is distinctive in that it combines mental health, educational, and career/vocational support for transitioning youth in the public school system. Its mission is to enable most students to graduate from high school; to provide each student with a competitive employment experience; and to help students matriculate into some level of postsecondary education if they are interested in doing so. Although programs with a similar mission operate in the MCPS system, they do not cover the entire county and do not focus strictly on youth with SED.

SLH partners with the following public and private agencies to make it easier for CTP participants to access resources and supports for work and postsecondary education:

- ***The Transition Unit of Montgomery County Public Schools.*** The Transition Unit of MCPS actively partners with SLH in providing services to SED youth through CTP. This partnership is formalized in an MOU between SLH and MCPS.
- ***Montgomery County Non-Public High Schools Serving SED Youth.*** The special education program that serves SED youth in Montgomery County's non-public high schools is called Pathways. SLH has a shared service agreement (similar to an MOU) with Pathways that provides a formal basis for the two organizations to partner in serving CTP youth who are enrolled in non-public high schools.
- ***Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).*** SLH leverages DORS resources to enhance the services that it can provide to CTP participants. DORS staff attend IEP meetings for CTP participants, provide job leads, offer training opportunities, and purchase equipment and services that advance a participant's employment goals. There is a shared service agreement between SLH and DORS.
- ***Montgomery County Mental Health Core Services Agency.*** This local mental health authority provides referrals for county and state mental health supports, authorization for services, technical assistance for difficult cases,



crisis management, and alternative resources for hard-to-serve clients. A number of CTP participants are eligible for these services.

- **Montgomery Works.** The Montgomery County One-Stop Workforce Center helps county residents enter or re-enter the workforce and local employers meet their staffing needs. Included among its services are a number of employment training opportunities that are especially appropriate for young adults. There is a shared service agreement between SLH and Montgomery Works.
- **Benefits InfoSource.** Montgomery County’s WIPA program provides training, technical assistance, and one-on-one benefits counseling to CTP staff and participants on an as-needed basis.

**Table VI.1. Overview of the Montgomery County, MD, YTD Project**

Project name	Career Transition Program Youth Transition Demonstration Project
Lead organization	St. Luke’s House, Inc.
Partner organizations	Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery County non-public high schools, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, Montgomery County Mental Health Core Service Agency, Montgomery Works, Benefits InfoSource
Geographic scope or location(s)	Montgomery County, MD
Target population	Montgomery County high school juniors and seniors with an SED diagnosis by MCPS or a significant mental illness as determined by the public mental health system
Length of services	Most participants receive between 9 and 18 months of YTD services. Follow-up services may be provided for up to two additional years depending on a youth’s goals.
Staffing structure	Two teams of career transition specialists, each led by a supervisor, provide individualized services to youth and families. A member of each team is designated as the benefits point person. These two CTP staff members coordinate closely with a benefits specialist at SLH.

## 2. Project Structure and Staffing

The SLH vocational director serves as the CTP project director and is responsible for all contractual, administrative, research, partner liaison, and reporting functions. The project director also supervises the CTP program manager, who is responsible for such day-to-day functions as recruitment and enrollment, provision of services, and the project’s management information system, ETO. The program manager also supervises two CTP supervisors, the ETO site administrator/enrollment coordinator, a benefits specialist, and a workforce development specialist. Through a combination of staff meetings, group and individual supervision, ETO reports, an in-house tool for tracking participants’ progress through services and work-based experiences, and customer feedback, the project manager ensures that the quality and quantity of services are as planned.

Two teams of five career transition specialists (CTS) provide direct services to youth; one is based in Gaithersburg (serving the northern part of the county), and the other is based in Bethesda (serving the southern part of the county). CTS are responsible for marketing, job development, job placement, job retention, and customer service for the business community. Each team supervisor is responsible for the hiring, training, team building, and direct supervision of the five CTS, including the one who serves as the benefits point person. The current supervisors were promoted from the CTS positions they formerly held in CTP.

A full-time benefits specialist at SLH serves the entire agency and is CTP's point of contact with local SSA offices and the WIPA. Twenty-five percent of the benefits specialist's time is dedicated to serving CTP youth. The overall supervision of the benefits specialist is under the SLH vocational director, but the CTP-specific responsibilities are supervised by the CTP program manager. The benefits specialist is responsible for the training, technical assistance, and quality assurance related to all CTP benefits counseling functions. He or she also partners with the benefits point person on each CTS team to ensure that CTP participants and their families have the information they need to make good decisions about SSA disability benefits and other benefits for which they may be eligible.

The workforce development specialist serves as CTP's point person with the business community. This individual trains and mentors CTS, responds to initial requests from the business community, facilitates work trials and job placements, serves as CTP's point person with Montgomery County One-Stop, and provides quality assurance for customer service to the business community.

### **3. Target Population**

The CTP target population consists of high school students 16 through 22 years old in Montgomery County, Maryland, who are classified as having SED and are in their last two years of high school or have graduated or left school within the past 12 months. CTP also works with Montgomery County youth who have not been classified as having SED, but who otherwise meet the enrollment criteria and are known to MCPS or the public mental health system as having been diagnosed with a significant mental illness. Eligible youth may be attending either public or private schools in Montgomery County and may receive SSI, DI, or CDB, although receipt of these benefits is not a CTP eligibility requirement. We estimate that approximately 15 percent of the CTP caseload are youth who receive Social Security disability benefits.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Montgomery County's population is estimated at 932,131 people. As of 2006, 55.1 percent were white, 16.8 percent were black, and 13.8 percent were Hispanic. A language other than English is spoken in 31.6 percent of homes. The median household income is high: \$76,957 in Montgomery County in 2004 compared

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with \$57,019 in Maryland overall. In 2004, 6.5 percent of Montgomery County residents were living below the poverty line.<sup>26</sup>

In 2007, MCPS had approximately 16,578 students who received special education services. MCPS estimates that approximately 1,500 high school students are coded (06) for SED. Private schools designed specifically to serve youth with SED had an additional 150 high school students. These figures indicate that approximately 1,650 students in Montgomery County are eligible for CTP.

## **B. CORE YTD COMPONENTS**

CTP offers all of the core YTD intervention components (Table VI.2). The project's mission is to provide participants with skills and individualized work experiences that promote smooth transitions to the workforce and adult services, thus paving the way to self-sufficiency.

Competitive paid employment is the first priority for CTP, though it also provides internship opportunities and other work-based experiences for participants as appropriate. Project services also include highly individualized goal, vocational, and service-needs assessments; support services for families; linkages to social and health services, including the mental health system; and counseling on Social Security benefits, the SSA waivers for YTD, and other public assistance. CTP staff provide follow-up services to youth for up to two years after they are no longer actively engaged in the program.

## **C. CTP SERVICES**

CTP's highly individualized services begin at the point of enrollment (Figure VI.1). CTP staff interview an eligible youth and the important adults in his or her life to assess the youth's goals, strengths, and needed supports. The staff also use this information to decide which one of them would be the best point person to engage and support the youth while working toward his or her goals. Interim goals act as stepping-stones in a successful transition. Vocational assessments are used to refine short-term employment and long-term career goals. Work-based assessment strategies, including informational interviews, visits to job sites, internships, and subsidized employment are designed to meet the needs of each individual. Once a youth finds competitive employment, CTP provides supports to help him or her succeed. On an ongoing basis while enrolled in CTP, a youth also receives both counseling on Social Security benefits and other public assistance and referrals to other community resources. The remainder of this section provides a more detailed account of CTP services.

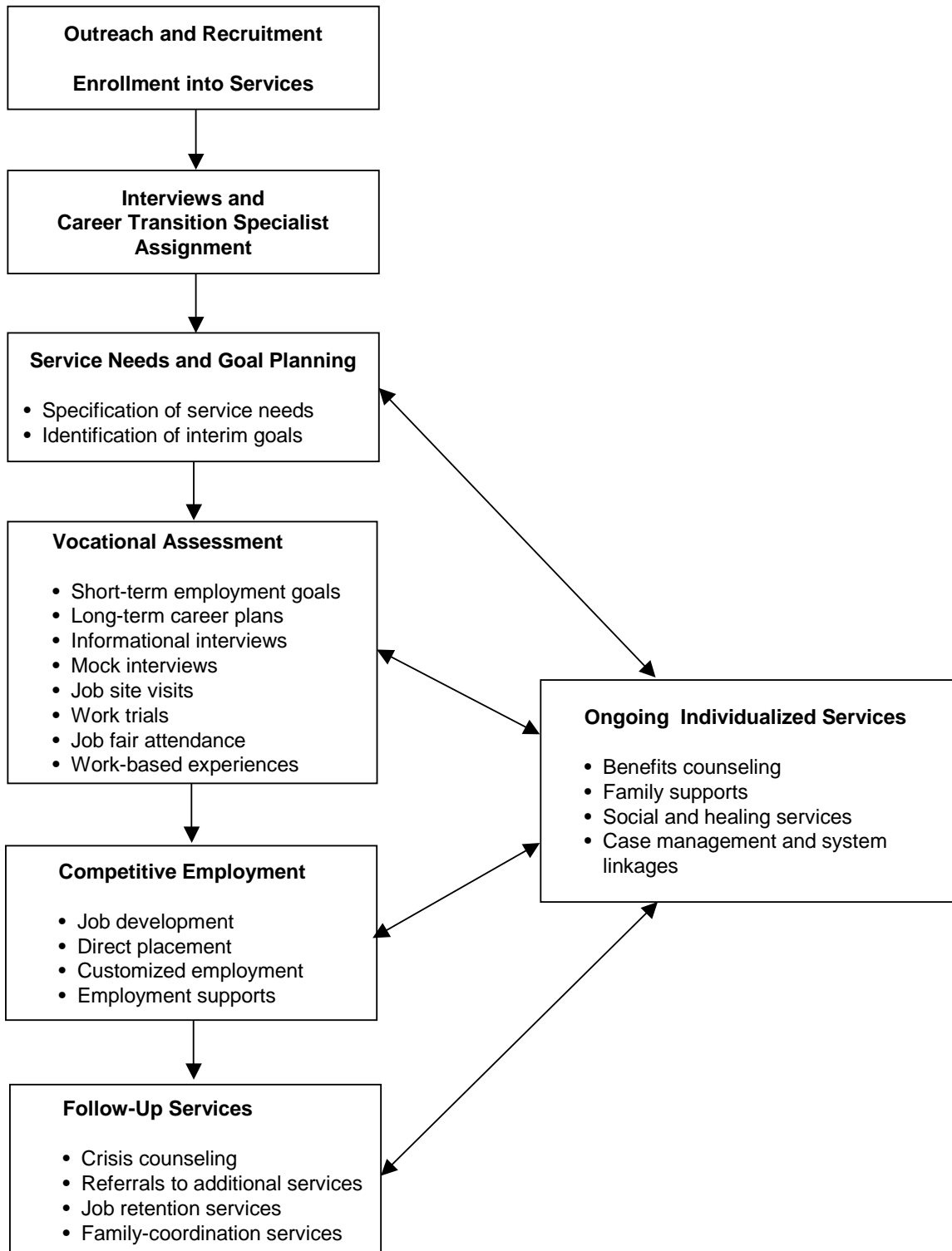
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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report. Last Revised: Wednesday, January 2, 2008. Available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.

**Table VI.2. Core Components of the Montgomery County, MD, YTD Project**

Core YTD Intervention Component	CTP-Specific Component	Description
Individualized work-based experiences	Individualized job development Customized employment Job coaching (on- or off-site) Supported employment Work experiences Goal planning and follow up	Employment goals are identified through goal and vocational planning. Competitive employment is the first priority for job placements, but other work-based experiences may be arranged. The CTS provides all individualized services related to work.
Youth empowerment	Service needs and goal planning Vocational assessments	Service needs and goal planning help youth identify goals, learn about available community services, and advocate for themselves. Vocational assessments help youth identify their short- and long-term career plans.
Family supports	Benefits counseling CTS meetings with youth and family	The CTS and a parent work together to identify the appropriate level of independence and responsibility throughout the transition process. Parents are educated about a youth's disability, benefits, and how disabilities impact education, employment, and daily living.
System linkages	Referrals to community resources for additional career exploration, postsecondary education support, or pursuit of other goals	Resources include the local WIPA program, DORS, Montgomery Works, and Montgomery College. Referrals are provided by the CTS.
Social and health services	Case management, mental health services, and medication management Support groups and social activity groups within SLH Referrals to other service providers	General case management, specific mental health services, and other support services are offered as needed. Referrals are made internally to SLH and externally to providers in the community.
SSA waivers and benefits counseling	One-on-one meetings with benefits counselors	All youth receive individualized counseling from the CTS benefits point person. Current SSA beneficiaries receive additional counseling from the SLH benefits counselor. The latter includes extensive information on SSA waivers and work incentives.

**Figure VI.1. Participant Flow Through the Montgomery County, MD, YTD Project**



## **1. Interviews and CTS Assignment**

After a youth enrolls in CTP, two CTS interview the youth as well as his or her transition support teacher and parents/guardians separately to assess the youth's goals, the parents' assessment of their son's or daughter's strengths, and the areas in which the youth may need support to accomplish his or her goals.<sup>27</sup> The CTS present information from these interviews at a weekly meeting of the CTS team, at which time the participant's case is assigned to one member of the team.

## **2. Service Needs and Goal Planning**

The designated CTS attempts to meet at least once per week with the participant. Within the first 30 days of this relationship, the youth's needs, skills, and interests are identified and translated into a plan for education, employment, health care, housing, and other key life activities during the transition years. The CTS uses a "service-needs planning grid" to specify the youth's service needs (for example, residential, vocational, social, education, health/mental health, financial, and so on). This grid is designed to be a living document to be reviewed and updated throughout the period of service delivery and follow-up activities.

The goal-planning process is based on an "individual goal sheet," which is filled out by the CTS in consultation with the youth. This document establishes the interim goals that may lead to a successful transition. Examples of these goals include obtaining a driver's license, opening a bank account, working towards living independently, and registering for classes at a community college. Actions required of the youth, the CTS, and others to achieve the goals are discussed, as are target dates for their completion. Participation in this person-centered planning fosters decision making skills and self-confidence.

Services to accomplish the interim goals may include an activities group, community and life-skills classes, and forums on issues such as drug/alcohol use, safety, and nutrition. The CTS may arrange campus tours to familiarize the participant with education and vocational training options and the resources available at each school or center. The CTS also consults with the family to link the participant with appropriate adult support systems.

## **3. Vocational Assessment**

The vocational assessment typically consists of one or two interviews by the CTS with the youth and sometimes his or her family and teachers. The interviews are designed to help the youth clarify his or her short-term employment goals and long-term career plans. The assessment continues with a variety of work-based activities including informational interviews, job site visits, mock interviews, attendance at job fairs, work trials, job shadowing, volunteer work, internships, apprenticeships, and subsidized employment. These activities are designed to meet the participant's unique needs, with the ultimate goal being competitive paid employment.

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<sup>27</sup> Transition support teachers are specialized teachers who serve youth with disabilities. They are affiliated with the Transition Unit in MCPS and are based in public high schools throughout the county.

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Typically, a youth clarifies his or her interests and develops short-term employment goals within 30 days of completing the vocational assessment. However, some need additional time to clarify those goals and build confidence. In such instances, the CTS continues to provide work-based activities.

#### **4. Competitive Employment**

Beginning during the vocational assessment period, the CTS works directly with a participant and potential employers to develop competitive, paid employment experiences that are consistent with the youth's goals and abilities. There is no requirement for hours worked, but participants are encouraged to seek out as many work opportunities as possible. Matching a youth's skills, abilities, and interests with jobs in the community is critical to job satisfaction and retention. Customized employment is offered to participants whose skills and interest are not congruent with standard job descriptions. The CTS provides flexible ongoing employment supports, such as on-site or off-site job coaching, as long as a youth is fully participating in CTP. Long-term supports are obtained through referrals to DORS and the Montgomery County Mental Health Core Services Agency.

CTP staff also use community resources to support career exploration, job training, and job placement. These resources include the SLH Workforce Development Program, DORS, Montgomery Works, and local Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs.

#### **5. Ongoing Services**

CTP offers a broad range of ongoing services that complement planning activities, vocational assessments, and competitive employment, as noted in the participant flow figure. Key ongoing services are described in detail below.

##### *Benefits Counseling*

CTP takes a tiered approach to benefits counseling in which all participants receive basic information on benefits, while those with greater need for advice on benefits, especially current SSA beneficiaries, receive more in-depth counseling. The two five-member CTS teams include a benefits point person who understands SSA and other public benefits. These individuals help all youth understand their current benefits, the benefits for which they may be eligible, and how employment may affect those benefits. For more complex benefit issues, particularly those involving SSA disability benefits, youth are referred to the SLH benefits specialist, who provides in-depth benefits counseling and analysis. This service includes a comprehensive overview of the SSA waivers for YTD, an accompanying waiver fact sheet, and in-depth counseling on the relationship between waivers and employment.

##### *Family Supports*

To maximize the likelihood that the families of CTP participants will be a positive influence on their transition efforts, CTP reaches out to the families to inform them about the project and allay concerns they may have about their child's participation in it. In so doing, CTP seeks to establish an alliance with parents/guardians through which an appropriate level of independence and responsibility for their child can be identified through

the transition period. Staff also educate parents on their child's disability and on how it affects his or her education, employment, and daily living options. The following areas are covered:

- Rights and responsibilities regarding youth with disabilities
- Balancing standards-based academic instruction with life skills training
- Postsecondary options and supports, including financial aid
- Eligibility/entitlement requirements for vocational rehabilitation (DORS), the Workforce Investment Act (Montgomery Works), Medicaid, SSA disability benefits, and community resources
- SSA work incentives and waivers
- The family's role as a resource for the youth in the transition process

This education occurs through group workshops, one-on-one counseling by CTP staff, peer counseling by family members of youth who have already achieved key transition goals, newsletters, social events, and other means.

#### *Social and Health Services*

Many youth with disabilities require social and health services to help them succeed in the classroom, in the community, and on the job. Therefore, CTP provides, either through SLH or through referrals to formal or informal partner organizations, a comprehensive array of services and supports such as medication management, assistive technology devices, personal attendants, counseling, supported employment, and help developing independent living skills.

Besides mental health-related services delivered by SLH, CTP provides referrals to community resources for additional career exploration, postsecondary education support, and assistance in achieving other goals. Key resources include:

- DORS, which provides vocational services, including the purchase of assistive technology, skills training, and services that advance employment goals
- Montgomery Works, the local One-Stop Workforce Center, which provides computerized job listings, job fairs, resume writing workshops, computer skills training, and other employment-related services
- Benefits InfoSource, the SSA WIPA program serving Montgomery County, which provides in-depth benefits counseling
- Various community organizations and services that provide assistance with activities that may be critical to a successful transition, such as obtaining a



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driver's license, opening a bank account, developing skills for independent living, and registering for classes at a community college

### *Case Management and System Linkages*

The CTS perform a variety of case management functions, including case coordination, referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment, linkages to generic community resources, help with addressing housing issues, and referrals to adult rehabilitation and supported employment programs. SLH has arranged with other organizations to provide services to CTP participants that complement those provided directly by SLH staff. For organizations that deliver services integral to CTP, the arrangements are formalized in MOUs or shared service agreements. Less formal arrangements exist with other organizations. These linkages are used to obtain supports for youth in the form of, for example, job coaches, work clothes and tools, and transportation assistance.

## **6. Follow-Up Services**

CTP provides up to two years of follow-up services to participants and their families once they are no longer actively engaged in the program. The services include crisis counseling, referrals to additional services, job retention services, and family coordination services. Youth are placed in follow-up services after they have:

- Attained their transition goals
- Established linkages with the necessary supportive services
- Shown that they no longer need support from a CTS

SLH plans to secure funding from alternate sources for follow-up services that will be delivered after its participation in the YTD evaluation ends in 2012. These alternate sources had provided funding for CTP prior to SLH's participation in the evaluation.

## **D. DESCRIPTION OF THE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

CTP's recruitment and enrollment process differs from that of the other five random assignment YTD projects in that CTP assumes most of the recruitment responsibilities. Both recruitment of youth into the evaluation and enrollment of youth in CTP began in April 2008 and will be completed in October 2010. The evaluation design specifies that 840 youth recruited for the evaluation will go through random assignment, approximately 440 of them will be assigned to a treatment group and thus eligible to enroll in CTP, and the remainder will be assigned to a control group and thus ineligible for CTP. The control group members may, however, receive other transition services available in Montgomery County. SLH is expected to enroll 91 percent of the treatment group members, or about 400 youth, in CTP. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the recruitment and enrollment process for CTP and the five other random assignment YTD projects.

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## CHAPTER VII

# THE WEST VIRGINIA YOUTH TRANSITION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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### A. OVERVIEW

The West Virginia YTD project, known as West Virginia Youth Works (henceforth referred to as “Youth Works”), provides employment-focused services to youth who are SSA disability beneficiaries. Youth Works services include PCP, benefits counseling, family supports, individualized job development and job placement, and post-employment follow-along services. The project’s service delivery area includes many of West Virginia’s larger cities as well as a number of predominately rural counties. Within this area, the services for youth with disabilities are generally quite limited, and employment opportunities are constrained by the chronically sluggish state economy. Table VII.1 provides basic information about Youth Works, which is expanded upon in the remainder of this chapter.

#### 1. Lead Agency and Key Partners

The Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF) administers Youth Works in partnership with the Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) at West Virginia University. With headquarters in Morgantown and field offices throughout West Virginia, HRDF is the largest nongovernmental human services provider in the state. It has 40 years of experience in the administration of employment programs, occupational skills training, and educational programs for disadvantaged youth and adults, and in the construction and management of almost 1,000 units of subsidized housing for both the elderly and people with disabilities.<sup>28</sup> In addition to administering Youth Works, HRDF is directly responsible for delivering employment services to youth participating in the project.

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<sup>28</sup> HRDFs sister corporations, Human Resources Development and Employment (HRDE) and Unity Housing, operate the subsidized housing programs.

**Table VII.1. Overview of the West Virginia YTD Project**

Project name	West Virginia Youth Works
Lead organization	The Human Resources Development Foundation, Inc.
Partner organizations	The West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities
Geographic scope or location	Region 1: Eleven counties in northern and central West Virginia Region 2: Eight counties in southern and western West Virginia
Target population	SSI, DI, and CDB beneficiaries 15 through 25 years old
Length of services	Most participants receive 18 months of YTD services.
Staffing structure	Three types of front-line staff deliver services to youth: customized employment specialists, job developers/job coaches, and benefits counselors.

Established in 1978, CED supports individuals of all ages with disabilities so that they can experience both independence and being included in their communities. For Youth Works, CED provides participants with counseling on SSA disability benefits and other government benefits.

Youth Works was one of three YTD pilot projects selected by SSA for full implementation from 2008 through 2012. The pilot phase, which encompassed most of 2007, was marked by successful cooperation between HRDF and CED to enroll two dozen youth in three counties in Youth Works and deliver services to them. Before the pilot, HRDF had little experience providing employment services specifically to youth with disabilities, although it did have considerable experience serving disadvantaged youth and meeting the housing needs of individuals with disabilities. To close the gap in its experience, HRDF partnered with CED, which has a wealth of experience serving both youth and adults with disabilities, to implement the Youth Works pilot project. Furthermore, CED's experience providing counseling on SSA benefits as a WIPA complements HRDF's expertise in delivering employment services to disadvantaged youth. This partnership was formalized during the pilot phase by a signed service agreement between the two organizations, specifying that CED would be responsible for providing benefits counseling to Youth Works participants and for helping HRDF to enroll youth in the project. In the full implementation of Youth Works, responsibilities are similarly divided and are formalized in a signed service agreement.

Participants in Youth Works benefit from the services provided not only by other programs operated by HRDF and CED, but also by other public and private agencies. Access to these services is achieved through referrals as opposed to formal service agreements.

Participants may be referred to HRDF's sister corporations for assistance in meeting their housing needs, and youth completing their participation in Youth Works may be referred to CED's WIPA program for ongoing benefits counseling. Youth Works also collaborates with public school districts to ensure that its participants who are still in school

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receive appropriate special education services and other school-based services. In addition, Youth Works coordinates with the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services to obtain services such as transportation assistance, adaptive equipment, and job coaching, which may be necessary to obtaining or maintaining employment. Youth Works may refer participants to the Association for Retarded Citizens for independent living services.

## **2. Project Structure and Staffing**

The director of education, training, and employment services at HRDF oversees Youth Works in the role of project director. She supervises the Youth Works project manager, who is responsible for the intervention's day-to-day operations. To facilitate the management of this geographically dispersed project, HRDF has created two administrative regions. The project manager is directly responsible for one of these regions, while a regional coordinator, who reports to the project manager, is responsible for operations in the other. In both regions, CED's WIPA program manager supervises benefits counseling. This manager reports to the Youth Works project manager and CED's assistant director. An ETO site administrator for Youth Works provides design, maintenance, and training support for the project's management information system.

Services for Youth Works participants in each of the two regions are delivered by a team of seven HRDF and CED staff members:

- Three full-time and one 80-percent-time customized employment specialists (CES) from HRDF
- One full-time and one 80-percent-time job developer/job coach from HRDF
- One half-time benefits counselor from CED

## **3. Target Population**

With full implementation, Youth Works is expanding its target population from 24 youth in 3 counties to serving 400 youth in 19 counties. As noted, HRDF has assigned these counties to two administrative regions. Region 1 comprises 11 counties in the north-central part of the state, and Region 2 comprises 8 counties in the southwestern part of the state.<sup>29</sup> Participants include SSI, DI, and CDB beneficiaries 15 through 25 years old regardless of their school enrollment status. In January 2008, there were 4,702 such beneficiaries across both regions. Youth Works plans to serve approximately 200 youth in each region.

Much of West Virginia is sparsely populated, creating special challenges for service delivery and job placement. There are only 1.8 million residents in the state's 24,230 square miles. Consistent with the low population density, only 12 percent of the state's housing units are in multi-unit structures. The median household income was \$31,008 in 2004, and

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<sup>29</sup> The Region 1 counties are: Barbour, Harrison, Jackson, Lewis, Monongalia, Marion, Preston, Randolph, Taylor, Upshur, and Wood. The Region 2 counties are: Cabell, Fayette, Kanawha, Mason, Mercer, Putnam, Raleigh, and Wayne.

16 percent of residents live below the poverty line. West Virginians are racially, ethnically, and linguistically homogeneous; over 94 percent are non-Hispanic whites, and English is the principal language spoken in 97 percent of homes.<sup>30</sup>

## **B. CORE YTD COMPONENTS**

HRDF's design of Youth Works was guided by the YTD logic model with help from the national evaluation and technical assistance team. Accordingly, all of the core YTD intervention components are reflected in Youth Works services, as summarized in Table VII.2. CED benefits counselors work with youth and their families from the outset—starting with the enrollment process—to ensure that they understand the basic SSA work incentives as well as the enhancements to those incentives provided by the SSA waivers for YTD. This counseling is one component of a strategy to support families as their youth transition to employment and independence. Additional family supports include workshops attended by youth and families, and newsletters. The project also engages youth early on, empowering them to shape their own futures through PCP and active engagement in the job search process. Workshops and social events are designed to develop the social skills of Youth Works participants and to boost their confidence in dealing with others. Work-based experiences are the central feature of the Youth Works intervention. CES and job developers/coaches from HRDF match youth with employers to ensure that they have substantive work experiences that are consistent with their PCP goals. The emphasis is on paid, competitive employment, but alternative work-based experiences may be arranged. The project offers stipends to participants in unpaid work experiences.

Youth Works provides general case management to address social and health needs. Social and health services that are not directly provided by Youth Works are nevertheless available to participants and their families. Facilitated by Youth Works staff, access to these services is through programs that are internal to the Youth Works core team, such as subsidized housing offered by HRDF's sister corporations and CED's statewide network of parents of children with disabilities. Other such services may also be accessed through referrals by Youth Works staff to external providers and programs, such as transition programs within local school systems, the state VR agency, and local mental health and MR/DD agencies.

## **C. YOUTH WORKS SERVICES**

West Virginia Youth Works provides a comprehensive set of services designed to encourage and enable youth with disabilities to obtain employment that will foster self-sufficiency and decrease or eliminate dependence on SSA disability benefits. The intervention, based on a person-centered approach, delivers customized services and

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<sup>30</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report. Last Revised: Wednesday, January 2, 2008. Available online at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.

**Table VII.2. Core Components of the West Virginia YTD Project**

Core YTD Intervention Component	West Virginia-Specific Component	Description
Individualized work-based experiences	Person-centered planning Individualized job development, placement, and follow-up Job coaching	An employment goal is identified through the PCP process. Competitive employment is the first priority for job placements, but other work-based experiences may be arranged. Job developers/coaches assist in placement and provide follow-up support.
Youth empowerment	Person-centered planning Job search preparation Workshops and social events	The person-centered planning process engages youth in clarifying career interests and identifying employment goals. Job-search preparation includes development of independent living skills. Youth are active participants in the job search process. Workshops include social activities that build skills and confidence in dealing with others.
Family supports	Benefits counseling Workshops Newsletters	Benefits counseling is provided to families to increase parental support for youth employment. Bi-monthly newsletters keep parents informed and supportive of the project's goals. Family-focused workshops provide opportunities for parents to share transition concerns and accomplishments with peers.
System linkages	Linkages with other HRDF and CED programs, as well as with external providers	Participants have access to HRDF's youth employment and housing programs and to the CED's diverse services for persons with disabilities, including WIPA benefits counseling. Linkages with public agencies including VR, the Department of Health and Human Services, and One-Stop Workforce Centers, as well as diverse private organizations such as employer associations and independent living centers.
Social and health services	Referrals Workshops	Customized employment specialists provide general case management, including referrals to other programs and organizations for social and health services. Workshops often include social and recreational activities for youth.
SSA waivers and benefits counseling	One-on-one meetings with benefits counselors; group workshops	Individualized counseling on benefits and waivers is provided at enrollment, job placement, and close-out. General information is also provided during workshops for youth and families.
Other key components or features	Stipends Financial support for work-related expenses	The project offers stipends to participants in unpaid work experiences. It provides financial support for the purchase of work-related clothes, tools, and transportation.

supports to youth and their families in their homes, schools, or other locations. This flexible approach is appropriate for the West Virginia setting and the diverse target population because it allows Youth Works to serve rural and urban youth as well as in-school and out-of-school youth. That said, there is enough structure in the intervention to ensure that participating youth receive all of its key components. Frontline staff from HRDF and CED deliver intervention services in the following four stages:

- **Stage One: Goal Identification.** An eligible youth is enrolled in the intervention; initial one-on-one benefits counseling is provided; the youth's interests, assets, and challenges are assessed; and a PCP is developed.
- **Stage Two: Job Placement.** This stage comprises job search preparation, job development, and work activities.
- **Stage Three: Follow-Up.** Once a youth is placed in a job, Youth Works provides additional benefits counseling, job coaching, visits by project staff to the worksite, and performance evaluations.
- **Stage Four: Participant Close-Out.** The intervention's final stage consists of a review of the youth's PCP, counseling on the termination of the SSA waivers, and referrals to other programs and agencies.

Figure VII.1 shows how youth progress through the four stages of the Youth Works intervention. The remainder of this section fleshes out these stages and their service components.

### 1. Stage One: Goal Identification

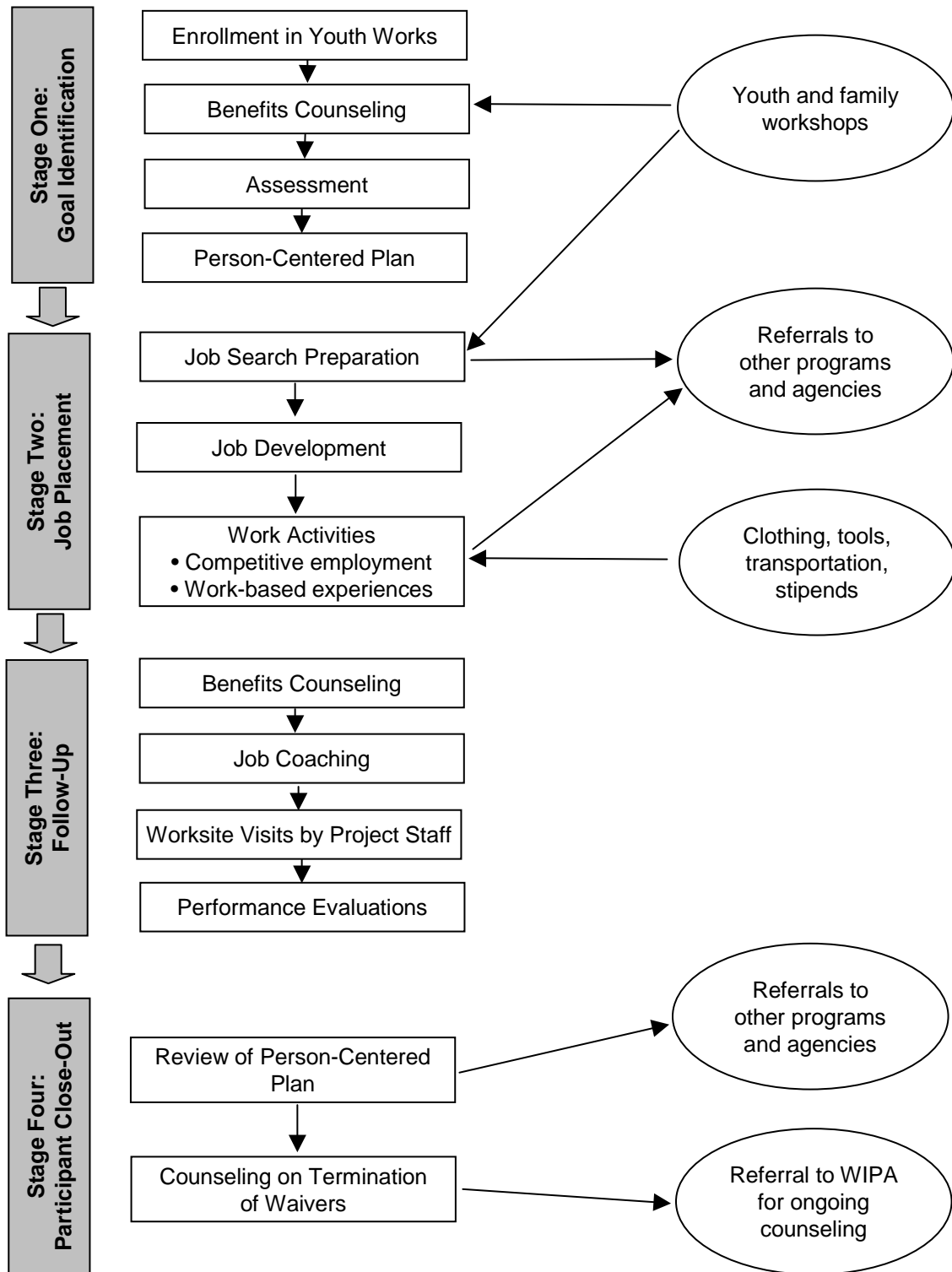
During the first stage of the intervention, the staff of Youth Works enroll youth in the project, provide initial benefits counseling, conduct assessments, and develop PCPs, which guide the youths' participation in the project.

**Enrollment.** The CES retrieves information from ETO on each youth who has been assigned to the evaluation's treatment group and contacts that person by telephone to schedule an enrollment meeting, which typically occurs in the youth's home. During this meeting, the CES provides the youth and the family with an overview of the project's goals, services, and the SSA waivers; answers their questions; and addresses their concerns. Enrollment is formalized at this time by the youth or guardian signing an "Agreement to Participate" form.

**Benefits Counseling.** Shortly after enrollment, the CES and the benefits counselor together meet with the youth and the family to begin the assessment process and to provide initial counseling on benefits. A key purpose of this meeting is to allay any concerns that the youth and family may have regarding the possibility of losing SSA benefits or health insurance as a consequence of employment obtained through Youth Works. The benefits counselor explains the basic SSA work incentives as well as the enhanced incentives that are



Figure VII.1. Participant Flow Through the West Virginia YTD Project



provided by the SSA waivers for YTD. The youth's own benefit situation is reviewed, and the impacts of potential earnings are demonstrated through a sample benefits calculation sheet, which is completed by the benefits counselor. Workshops are another opportunity for the youth and the family to receive information about benefits and waivers in a group setting.

**Assessment.** Over the course of one or more early meetings, the CES assesses the youth's abilities, challenges, and interests in order to assist him or her in identifying an employment goal and developing a PCP. Each youth enrolled in Youth Works completes an employment skills checklist and additional assessments as needed, such as the Picture Interest Career Survey, the Transition to Work Inventory, and the Work Preference Match. These tools, which capture information on employability and barriers to employment, cover topics such as medical and dental needs, grooming, and housing.

**Person-Centered Planning.** Using findings from the assessment, the CES, in partnership with a job developer/coach, works with the youth to develop a PCP that outlines the youth's course of action for the remaining stages of the intervention. The youth and the family are actively involved in developing the PCP to ensure that they are committed to making the plan work. The PCP specifies career interests, short- and long-term employment goals, and strategies to overcome barriers to employment and independence. The PCP is reviewed by the CES every 90 days to document the youth's progress and any changes in his or her employment goals, barriers, and supportive service needs.

## 2. Stage Two: Job Placement

During the second stage of Youth Works, the CES works to make sure that the youth is prepared to engage in job search activities. For instance, the CES and the job developer/coach use their knowledge of local employers to help the youth identify and apply for work activities that are consistent with his or her employment goal. The youth may directly enter competitive paid employment, which is the first priority in developing a work activity for participants in Youth Works. But if this is not possible, then the youth may participate in any of several types of subsidized work experience, and competitive employment would follow.

**Job Search Preparation.** If a participant requires preparation in order to successfully engage in job search and work activities, the CES helps that person acquire the necessary skills through individual counseling, workshops, and referrals. Job search preparation activities may include preparation of a resume and a JIST Card (a mini-resume), mock interviews, correction of hygiene problems, and development of a transportation plan. Youth Works also offers workshops on time management, communication in the workplace, financial literacy, independent living, conflict resolution, and job retention. Referrals may be made to other programs and agencies for supportive services to remove barriers to a successful job search that Youth Works staff are not prepared to address directly.

**Job Development.** Assisted by a CES and job developer/coach, a participant in Youth Works is expected to take an active role in the job search process. The youth learns how to contact an employer, fill out an application, and complete an interview. The youth may go

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to informational interviews with employers to learn about specific jobs and careers, attend job fairs, and enroll in and use WORKFORCE West Virginia and its network of One-Stop Workforce Centers to obtain job leads. The job developer/coach uses his or her community and employer contacts as well as those developed by HRDF staff on other programs to supplement the job search process. As a result of these efforts, the participant typically obtains competitive employment or enters a work-based experience in either an existing position or one that has been customized to the youth's interests and abilities.

**Work Activities.** The ultimate goal of Youth Works is to place youth in competitive paid employment. This placement may follow directly from the initial job search preparation and job development activities, or it may occur later, after one or more work-based experiences. When youth are competitively employed, they are contributing to society as they contribute to their own financial support. These considerations make competitive employment a highly valued outcome for this intervention. For participants who enter competitive employment, Youth Works staff coordinate with other service providers to ensure that all necessary supports are in place, such as job coaching and adaptive technologies. Youth Works also provides financial assistance to participants who are unable to purchase goods and services that may be essential to securing employment. For example, this assistance may be used to purchase work clothes, tools, transportation, and other prerequisites for employment.

Youth Works participants may engage in work-based experiences to develop skills that promote the successful transition to competitive employment. Work experiences, developed by the CES and the job developer/coach, are customized to each youth's PCP. A participating youth may have one or more work experiences, depending on his or her preparedness for work, abilities, school schedule, and other considerations. The experiences are selected from four categories: (1) job shadowing, (2) occupational exploration and training, (3) on-the-job training, and (4) volunteer work. Youth Works offers a \$3 per hour stipend to participants in job shadowing and occupational exploration and training, and it subsidizes 75 percent of the employer-paid wages of participants in on-the-job training.

### 3. Stage Three: Follow-Up

During the third stage of the intervention, Youth Works staff provide follow-up services that are designed to improve employment retention for participants who have been placed in competitive jobs and in certain work-based experiences. These services are delivered at the youth's worksite, home, or other convenient location. Key follow-up services include benefits counseling, job coaching, and performance evaluations that incorporate information gathered by Youth Works staff through worksite visits.

**Benefits Counseling.** After a participant obtains paid employment, the benefits counselor meets with the youth (and the family, if appropriate) to review the procedures for reporting earnings to SSA and how the earnings will affect his or her SSA benefits. In addressing issues specific to the participant's new employment situation, this counseling supplements the more general benefits counseling that is provided shortly after enrollment. The counselor explains the SSA work incentives and waivers so that the youth can make informed decisions about which of them to take up. To that end, the counselor assists the

youth in completing worksheets that show how the new earnings will affect his or her disability benefits under different scenarios regarding the use of work incentives and waivers. After the meeting, the participant and his or her family understand reporting procedures, work incentives and waivers, and the implications of the earnings from the new job for the monthly disability benefit amount.

**Job Coaching.** Job coaching may be necessary in order for a youth to perform a job as independently and as efficiently as possible and to retain employment. Youth Works often provides job coaching directly, but it sometimes arranges for other organizations, such as the Association for Retarded Citizens or Easter Seals, to provide coaching with funding from the state VR agency. A participant's need for job coaching is usually identified during the Stage One assessment process and is specified in the PCP; however, sometimes the need for this service does not become apparent until a youth is actually working. The duration and intensity of job coaching varies greatly among participants and is largely determined by a youth's ability to learn and perform the various functions of a job.

**Worksite Visits by Project Staff.** After a participant has been placed in a competitive job or a work experience, the CES follows a structured protocol for visiting the youth at the worksite. This protocol is the same regardless of whether the participant has a job coach. During the first month of employment, the worksite visits occur weekly. Their frequency diminishes as the participant becomes more independent and proficient on the job. In a successful placement, the visits occur every other week during the second and third months and monthly thereafter until the youth has been successfully employed for one year. During these visits, the CES observes the participant working on the job and speaks with the youth and his or her supervisor about the youth's job performance and any related issues that may need to be addressed.

**Performance Evaluations.** A participant's job performance is monitored and evaluated through the worksite visits by the CES, ongoing observation by the job developer/coach (if any), and written input from the youth's supervisor. That input, recorded on a standard form, covers the participant's performance relative to the employer's criteria for advancement on the current job or on other jobs in the organization. Based on the supervisor's assessment, direct observation, and input from the participant, the CES and job developer/coach identify and remediate issues that may jeopardize the youth's continued employment.

#### **4. Stage Four: Participant Close-Out**

Youth Works services continue for 18 months for most participants and conclude with Stage Four close-out activities. Key among the close-out activities are a review of progress toward the goals established in the PCP and counseling on the pending termination of the SSA waivers.

**Review of the PCP.** Close-out activities commence after a participant has been successfully employed for one year. Youth Works staff meet with the participant and the family to implement the close-out process. The PCP is reviewed, and the achievement of its goals is discussed. If the group agrees that all goals were attained and no immediate work-

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related needs are identified, then the case will be closed after counseling on the termination of the SSA waivers. If non-work-related needs are identified, then referrals are made to other programs and agencies.

**Counseling on the Termination of Waivers.** The SSA waivers for youth who enroll in any of the YTD projects are time limited.<sup>31</sup> They are scheduled to terminate for most Youth Works participants several years after the close-out process. Therefore, it is critical that counseling on the eventual end of the waivers be provided. During close-out, the benefits counselor and the youth discuss general issues pertaining to SSA benefits, including the termination of the waivers. Together, they develop worksheets detailing the effects of waiver termination on the youth's benefits.

#### **D. DESCRIPTION OF THE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

Recruitment and enrollment for West Virginia Youth Works began in Region 1 in April 2008 and is scheduled to be completed in that region in May 2010. In Region 2, recruitment and enrollment began in September 2008 and is scheduled to be completed in June 2010. The evaluation design specifies that 880 youth will go through random assignment, approximately 480 of those youth will be assigned to a treatment group, whose members are eligible to enroll in Youth Works. The remainder will be assigned to a control group, whose members are ineligible for Youth Works, but may receive other transition services available in their communities. HRDF's MOU with Mathematica specifies that 83 percent of the treatment group members, or about 400 youth, will be enrolled in Youth Works. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the recruitment and enrollment process of Youth Works and the five other random assignment YTD projects.

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<sup>31</sup> The *Federal Register* (2008) states that the SSA waivers for YTD "apply for a fixed period of four years or until the participant attains age 22, whichever occurs later. (In no instance will the alternative rules apply after September 30, 2013.)"

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## CHAPTER VIII

### EVALUATION SCHEDULE

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Table VIII.1 presents key activities and deliverables as well as their target dates for the six projects participating in the YTD evaluation. Random assignment began at the Colorado and Bronx County projects in August 2006, in the Erie County project in early 2007, and at the three remaining projects in April 2008. Random assignment has ended at the Colorado and Erie County projects, is nearly completed at the Bronx County project, and will continue for the next several years at the three remaining projects.

Follow-up surveys of youth are conducted at 12 and 36 months after random assignment by Mathematica. The 12-month survey gathers information on the following: participants' experience and satisfaction with project services, participants' knowledge of SSA waivers, and information on short-term outcome measures such as attitudes and expectations, educational achievement, and participation in work-related activities. The 36-month survey will gather information on longer-term outcomes such as paid employment, total income from earnings and benefits, and engagement in any gainful activity, such as employment, training, and education.

One major report on each YTD project, the interim implementation report, will present findings from two analyses: an implementation analysis of data that will be gathered by evaluation staff during visits to the projects and an impact analysis of data from the 12-month follow-up survey and from SSA administrative records. The final YTD evaluation report will present impact estimates for all six projects based on data from the 36-month follow-up survey and up to 48 months of SSA administrative data, consolidated implementation findings, and results from a benefit-cost analysis. This report will be delivered to SSA in August 2014.

**Table VIII.1. Key Activities and Deliverables for the YTD Evaluation**

Activity or Deliverable	Colorado	Bronx Co., NY	Erie Co., NY	Miami-Dade Co., FL	Montgomery Co., MD	West Virginia
Random assignment						
Begin	8/2006	8/2006	1/2007	4/2008	4/2008	4/2008
End	3/2008	9/2008	3/2008	3/2010	10/2010	6/2010
Follow-up surveys						
12 mo. begin	12/2007	12/2007	1/2008	4/2009	4/2009	4/2009
12 mo. completion	3/2009	9/2009	3/2009	3/2011	10/2011	6/2011
36 mo. begin	8/2009	8/2009	1/2010	4/2011	4/2011	4/2011
36 mo. completion	3/2011	9/2011	3/2011	3/2013	10/2013	6/2013
Deliverables						
Interim report	10/2009	3/2010	9/2009	9/2011	4/2012	12/2011
Final report	8/2014	8/2014	8/2014	8/2014	8/2014	8/2014



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## APPENDIX A

### THE SSA WAIVERS FOR YTD

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An important element of YTD is the modification of selected SSA program rules for project participants. These modifications, or waivers, have been designed to encourage and reward the efforts of youth to begin working, increase their earnings, or continue their education. Youth who enroll in YTD project services are eligible for waivers for four years post random assignment, or until the youth reaches age 22, whichever comes later. In addition, all waiver eligibility ceases after September 30, 2013.

**Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE).** Under the SEIE, SSA disregards up to \$1,550 per month of a student's earnings, subject to a cap of \$6,240 for the year in 2008. (The monthly and yearly amounts are adjusted for inflation each year.) Normally, the SEIE applies only to students who are age 21 or younger. For YTD participants, the SEIE applies regardless of age. As long as a YTD participant regularly attends school, he or she is eligible for the SEIE.

**Earned Income Exclusion (EIE).** For all SSI recipients who work, SSA disregards \$65 plus half of any earnings over that amount when it determines eligibility for SSI. For YTD participants, SSA disregards \$65 plus three-fourths of any additional earnings. This waiver allows YTD participants to keep more of their SSI benefits when they work. (The EIE is applied to earnings in addition to all other applicable exclusions, including the SEIE.)

**Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS).** Normally, a PASS must specify a particular employment or self-employment goal, list the steps that will be taken to achieve the goal, and identify the income and/or assets (other than SSI benefits) that will be used to meet the plan's expenses. YTD participants may specify postsecondary education or career exploration as the goal of a PASS. If SSA approves a PASS, it disregards the funds used to pursue the plan when it determines eligibility for SSI. Such funds may include, for example: wages, DI benefits, childhood disability benefits, or deemed parental income. If the individual is eligible for SSI without the PASS, SSI benefits replace all the funds used for PASS expenses. If the PASS creates eligibility for SSI (which generally conveys eligibility for Medicaid as well), SSI benefits replace part of the funds used for PASS expenses.

**Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).** This waiver expands the options for YTD participants to acquire certain kinds of assets. IDAs are trust-like savings accounts. For each dollar of earnings the account holder deposits, a participating nonprofit organization sets aside a matching contribution of 50 cents to four dollars (the average is one dollar). In IDA programs that involve federal funds, a federal match also is set aside. Federally funded IDAs must be used to help buy a home, pay for postsecondary education, or start a small business. All IDA participants undergo financial literacy training. Under current rules, SSA deducts accountholder deposits from countable earned income and disregards matching deposits, IDA account balances, and any interest earned by the account, when it determines SSI eligibility for someone who has a federally funded IDA. For YTD participants, these disregards also apply to IDAs that do not involve federal funds, including IDAs that may be used for purposes other than the purchase of a home, postsecondary education, or a business startup. The IDA may be part of an existing state or local program, or a program established by a YTD project for its participants.

**Continuing Disability Review or Age 18 Medical Redetermination.** YTD participants will receive coverage under Section 301 that will allow for continued benefit eligibility throughout the project regardless of the outcome of a continuing disability review (CDR) or age-18 medical redetermination. Under existing SSA rules, a CDR is scheduled to determine whether there has been an improvement in a disabling condition. Moreover, when an SSI recipient turns 18, there is a medical redetermination in which the SSI recipient must meet the adult criteria for disability. While this coverage does not eliminate these reviews, YTD participants who are determined ineligible for benefits for medical reasons can continue to receive SSI benefit payments under Section 301.

## APPENDIX B

### RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

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This appendix describes the recruitment and enrollment process across the six YTD projects that are participating in the national random assignment evaluation. Five of them use a common process, which is described in Section A. The last project, in Montgomery County, uses a different process, described in Section B.

#### A. THE USUAL YTD RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Five of the six YTD projects participating in the random assignment study (those in the Bronx, Colorado, Erie County, Miami-Dade County, and West Virginia) follow the same procedures for recruitment and enrollment. Once the process is completed across these five projects, 880 youth will have been recruited into the study for each project, with 480 youth assigned to a treatment group and the remaining 400 assigned to a control group; each project is expected to enroll about 400 of the 480 treatment group youth into YTD services. The following five steps outline the recruitment and enrollment process for these projects. Figure B.1 depicts the flow of the study sample through the five steps.

**Step 1: Review of Sample and Eligibility Screening.** The sampling frames for these five YTD projects are selected from lists of young Social Security disability beneficiaries. These lists are generated by SSA from automated beneficiary records and include all active SSI, DI, and CDB beneficiaries 14 through 25 years old with either mailing or residential zip codes in a project's service delivery area. As needed, Mathematica excludes youth who do not meet a project's specific criteria, or selects youth the project might want to prioritize. For example, a project may target youth in a certain age range, or prioritize youth living in certain zip codes.<sup>32</sup>

SSA periodically refreshes each project's beneficiary list. Mathematica deletes cases on the new beneficiary list that already have been selected for interviewing, and randomly selects the remaining cases for baseline interviews and recruitment into the evaluation.

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<sup>32</sup> For example, the CUNY project is targeting beneficiaries 16 through 18 years old, and the Erie project is targeting beneficiaries 16 through 25 years old.

**Step 2: Oral Assent and Telephone Interview.** Mathematica staff conduct the initial outreach to each youth in the sampling frame who has been randomly released for interviewing by sending an advance letter, using contact information from the SSA record. The letter explains the study and invites the youth to call Mathematica's toll-free number to complete a baseline interview and enroll in the evaluation. If he or she does not respond promptly to the letter, then one of Mathematica's survey interviewers calls the youth. Before using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) to conduct a baseline interview, the interviewer explains the local YTD project and the evaluation, including random assignment, to the youth and his or her parent or guardian (if the youth is under age 18, or is age 18 or older and has a legal guardian). The interviewer assesses whether the respondent understands the explanations.<sup>33</sup> If the interviewer believes the respondent understands, he or she obtains oral assent from the youth and parent or guardian to participate in the evaluation and administers the baseline interview. Based on experience in conducting outreach for the Colorado Youth WINS, CUNY, and Transition WORKS projects, approximately 39 percent of the youth selected from the SSA-generated list to be contacted about the YTD research orally consent to participate in the evaluation and complete the baseline interview. This interview takes approximately 30 minutes. The survey instrument, which includes youth and parent modules, gathers information on the following topics: education, employment experiences, computer use, life goals, health status and disabling conditions, living situation, insurance coverage, parental education, employment and income, and demographics. The interviewer also collects information to facilitate future contact with the youth.

The timeframe for the collection of baseline data varies across the YTD projects, depending on the size of the sampling frame, the design of project services, and project capacity. Baseline data collection was completed for the Erie and Colorado projects in 15 and 21 months, respectively. We anticipate that it will be completed in 26 months for the CUNY project, and take approximately 30 months for the three projects for which recruitment and enrollment began in spring 2008

**Step 3: Written Consent.** At the conclusion of the baseline interview, the interviewer explains the need for informed written consent (in addition to oral assent) for the youth to participate in the study and mails a consent form to the youth and his or her parent or guardian (if applicable) for their signatures. The form describes the services and waivers available through the local YTD project, and also describes the evaluation, including random assignment. The form's signature page includes boxes that can be checked to indicate whether or not the youth agrees to participate in the study and signature lines for the youth and parent or guardian. As an incentive, each youth who returns a signed consent form receives a gift card, whether or not he or she agrees to participate in the study.

Mathematica mails reminder letters and makes follow-up telephone calls if the completed consent form is not returned promptly. In each such contact, the youth is reminded that it is acceptable to return a signed form and decline to participate. In addition, Mathematica deploys field staff who follow up on obtaining signed consent forms from

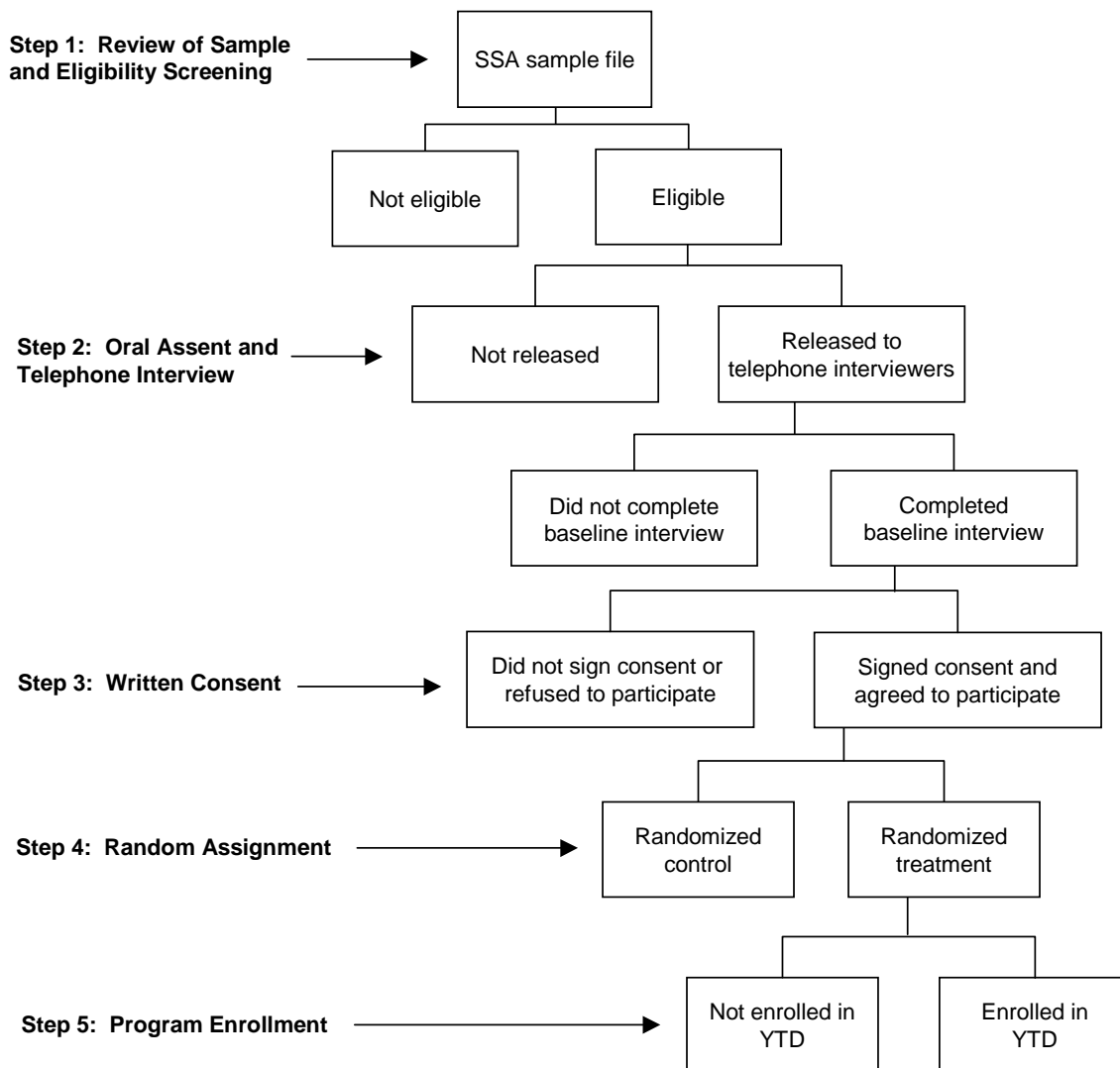
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<sup>33</sup> Interviewers receive training on how to make this assessment.

youth who have completed the baseline interview. At some YTD sites, project staff also help with the consent process by contacting youth designated by Mathematica and explaining the available services and waivers in more detail, if necessary.

Approximately 80 percent of the youth in the three original random assignment projects who have completed the baseline interview subsequently have returned signed consent forms to Mathematica.<sup>34</sup> The typical elapsed time between completion of the interview and receipt of the signed consent form at Mathematica is 15 to 60 days.

**Figure B.1. Sample Flow for Five Random Assignment YTD Projects**



<sup>34</sup> Mathematica has obtained written affirmative consent from about one-quarter of the eligible sample at the three original random assignment sites. This fraction is the product of a 39 percent baseline completion rate, an 80 percent written consent rate, and, of those written consents, an 80 percent rate of affirmative consents. This implies a need for a sampling frame of about 3,500 eligible youth at each site to meet the target of 880 youth enrolled in the study.

**Step 4: Random Assignment.** Within a day or two of receiving a signed form from a youth who has agreed to participate in the study, Mathematica staff put the case through an automated random assignment process. The treatment/control ratio is generally 6/5, but it is slightly higher for the CUNY project. Mathematica mails a letter to the youth stating the outcome of that process—assignment to the treatment or the control group—along with the aforementioned gift card. At the same time, Mathematica notifies the YTD project through the ETO web-based management information system if the youth has been assigned to the treatment group. This notification is in the form of a newly created ETO record that contains contact and demographic information for the youth. The creation of this record in the “intake” section of ETO signals the project to initiate contact with the youth to enroll him or her in YTD services.

**Step 5: Program Enrollment.** Each YTD project has some latitude in establishing criteria for classifying a youth as having enrolled in its intervention. In most projects, a member of the treatment group is considered to have enrolled if two conditions have been met: (1) there has been a face-to-face meeting between the youth and project staff, and (2) the youth and his or her parent or guardian (if applicable) have completed and signed a project application form. When these criteria have been satisfied, project staff generate a record for the youth in the “services” section of ETO. The appearance of a service record in ETO informs the project team that the youth can begin receiving services. It also informs the evaluation team and SSA that the youth can begin receiving the applicable SSA waivers.

Project staff initiate efforts to contact and enroll a treatment group youth within several days of Mathematica’s creation of an intake record in ETO for that youth. The duration of efforts to enroll a youth in YTD services and waivers varies across projects, according to the following factors:

- The mode of delivering services (individualized versus group activities)
- The philosophy of the project and of individual staff members regarding the efficacy of gradual versus rapid engagement
- The rate of the flow of treatment cases from Mathematica
- Other demands on project staff, including the need to deliver services to previously enrolled youth
- Project staffing levels

It is not unusual for the enrollment of a youth to require many telephone or in-person contact attempts by project staff and perhaps even several meetings after making a successful contact. Mathematica’s involvement in the enrollment effort is limited to responding to requests from project staff for more recent contact information, sharing information about specific youth that may have been obtained during the baseline interview, but not written into their ETO records, such as the time of day the youth was reached, and providing technical assistance on methods for successfully contacting youth.



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## B. THE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS FOR THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD, YTD PROJECT

The following five steps outline the recruitment and enrollment process for the Career Transition Program (CTP) in Montgomery County, Maryland. As described below, since most of the youth targeted by this program are not social security beneficiaries, they will not appear on SSA-generated lists; therefore, the recruitment and enrollment procedures followed by the other five random assignment YTD projects are not appropriate for CTP. The goals for this process in Montgomery County are to recruit 840 youth into the study, with 440 randomly assigned to the treatment group and the remaining 400 assigned to a control group; CTP is expected to enroll approximately 400 of the 440 treatment group youth into project services. Figure B.2 depicts the sample flow through the five steps.

**Step 1: Eligibility Screening and Presentations.** CTP serves in-school youth with severe emotional disorders (SED). The sampling frame is defined as youth who meet one of the following three criteria: (1) students in their last two years of Montgomery County high schools who have been classified as having SED; (2) youth classified as having SED who have left school within the past 12 months and are at least 14 years old, but no older than 25; and (3) youth who have not been classified as having SED, but who otherwise fit the enrollment criteria and are known to have been diagnosed with a significant mental illness. The CTP-eligible youth may be Social Security beneficiaries, although that is not an eligibility requirement. Outreach for study enrollment is done primarily through the Montgomery County schools, both public and non-public. During the school day, CTP staff make presentations to eligible youth about the project services and random assignment. The presentations are intended to generate interest in CTP among the youth and to encourage them to enroll in the evaluation.

**Step 2: Written Consent.** During a presentation, each youth in attendance is given a study consent form to take home for his or her parent or guardian's review and signature. Youth over the age of 18 years may sign and return the consent form immediately. Each youth who returns a signed consent form—whether agreeing to participate in the study or not—receives a \$10 gift card. CTP is responsible for following up with youth who do not return the consent form promptly.

**Step 3: Telephone Interview.** After youth (or their parents or guardians) have returned the consent form to CTP and a copy has been faxed to Mathematica, its staff conduct the baseline interview by telephone. The youth and parents or guardians are encouraged to call Mathematica's toll-free number to complete the interview. The survey interviewers place telephone calls to youth who have returned the consent form but do not call in. For those youth Mathematica cannot contact within two weeks to complete the interview, CTP works with Mathematica to contact them to complete the baseline interview, which is as described in Step 2 of Section A, above.

**Step 4: Random Assignment.** Within a day or two of completing the baseline interview, Mathematica staff put the case through an automated random assignment process. Mathematica mails a letter to the youth stating the outcome of that process—assignment to the group or control group. For members of the control group, that letter is accompanied

by a booklet that provides information on resources in Montgomery County that are available to them. At the same time, Mathematica notifies CTP through ETO if the youth has been assigned to the treatment group. This notification is in the form of a newly created ETO record that contains contact and demographic information for the youth. The creation of this record in the “intake” section of ETO signals the project to contact the youth to enroll him or her in CTP.

**Step 5: Program Enrollment.** Two CTS interview each youth who has been assigned to the treatment group, as well as his or her TST and parents or guardians separately, to assess interest in the program, the youth’s goals, the parents’ assessment of their son or daughter’s strengths, and the areas in which the youth may need support to accomplish his or her goals. Information derived from this set of interviews is presented at CTP’s weekly staff meeting, at which time a member of the CTS team is assigned to that youth’s case, based on which staff person would be most likely to engage with the youth and family and provide the most effective support in achieving his or her transition goals. The geographic location of the youth also is taken into account in making this assignment. A youth is considered to be enrolled in CTP once a CTS has interviewed the youth and has generates a record for the youth in the “services” section of ETO. The appearance of a service record in ETO informs the project team that the youth can begin receiving services. It also informs the evaluation team and SSA that the youth can begin receiving the applicable waivers, if the youth is an SSA beneficiary.

**Figure B.2. Sample Flow for the Montgomery County, MD, YTD Project**

