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Considerations for the Papers Developed for the SSI Youth Solutions Project

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I. Introduction

Youth with disabilities, particularly youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), have consistently poor outcomes as young adults compared with youth without disabilities (Deshpande 2016; Levere 2019). These outcomes prompt increased interest among policymakers and other stakeholders for programs and services to better support transitions from school to young adulthood. To generate testable ideas for improving outcomes among youth receiving SSI, the Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) initiated the SSI Youth Solutions project in 2019. The project gathered proposed ideas—both those based on existing research and practice and those that represented novel, untested ideas—from subject matter experts for testable program and policy solutions to promote employment for this population. ODEP and its federal partners reviewed the ideas and selected 12 to develop into comprehensive papers.

This report offers a deep dive into the 12 papers developed for the project. It presents and contrasts their characteristics, potential strengths and limitations, and other factors that might guide policymakers, advocates, and other stakeholders in deciding which might be best to pursue. It serves as a companion to an introductory report (Contreary and Honeycutt 2021) that briefly summarizes the papers developed under the SSI Youth Solutions project.

To assess the ideas proposed in these papers, we used a framework designed to help policymakers identify and select an intervention across an array of potential programs and policies (Exhibit I.1). This framework comes from a prior ODEP project, the SSI Youth Formative Research Project (Honeycutt et al. 2018). The framework considered how potential interventions could meet specific policy objectives and fit within the existing landscape of supports, along with various factors related to their levels of evidence, costs, and potential for replication, scalability, and sustainability.

In what follows, we first provide a high-level summary of the 12 papers developed for the project. We then consider the proposed ideas in terms of the three sets of characteristics identified in Exhibit I.1 (refine policy objectives, assess the landscape for implementation, and assess criteria for selecting a proposed intervention). We conclude with final thoughts on selecting among the ideas to further the outcomes of youth receiving SSI.

Exhibit I.1. Framework for assessing the potential of a proposed intervention

Intervention characteristics	Questions
Refine policy objectives	
Goals	• Is the intervention consistent with the federal agency's mission and activities? • How can federal policymakers use information obtained from the implementation and evaluation of an intervention to improve current programs and policies?
Outcomes	• In addition to substantive employment outcomes, will evidence on other outcomes be important to achieving federal policymakers' goals? • Are the intervention's expected impacts on the target population consistent with policymakers' goals?
Assess landscape for implementation	
Existing public program context	• How can the existing investments and resources of the federal agency be used to support the intervention and facilitate achievement of its goals? • Which federal agencies have previously invested, or are currently investing, in the funding and research of related initiatives and/or intervention(s)?
Federal agencies' demonstration authority	• Is any federal agency currently testing related interventions under its demonstration authority? Do any federal agencies have plans to do so? • What legislative changes, if any, would be necessary to implement the initiative?
Apply criteria for selecting interventions	
Causal evidence	• Has the federal agency considered the evidence documented by the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research, the What Works Clearinghouse, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, or other resources? • If evidence does not exist, how will a new evaluation produce rigorous evidence?
Costs	• With respect to the demonstration, is the expected value of the information gained likely to exceed the opportunity cost of conducting the demonstration? • Does it make more sense for the federal agency to invest in initiatives that have existing evidence or lack causal evidence but promote innovation and creativity?
Replicability, scalability, and sustainability	• What is the likelihood that the intervention (with similar objectives) can be applied to different populations or in areas that the federal agency serves? • How can the federal agency sustain the intervention at the state and local levels? • What additional capacities are needed for the federal agency to sustain the intervention?

Source: Honeycutt et al. 2018.

II. Summary of Proposed Interventions

As a starting point for understanding the papers, we categorized them into four broad topics based on their primary focus or service. We use the short titles from Exhibit II.1 to refer to each paper throughout this report.

Four papers propose *case management and service coordination* solutions to promote youth outcomes (Exhibit II.1). While three of these papers (Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, and Youth and Family Systems Navigator [YFSN]) propose embedding a case manager into existing systems, a fourth paper (Transition Tracker) introduces an administrative data system for staff to track the services used by high school students from various entities.

Exhibit II.1 Overview of proposed interventions involving case management and service coordination

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
Family Empowerment Model The Family Empowerment Model: Improving Employment for Youth Receiving Supplemental Security Income	Catherine Anderson, Ellie Hartman, D.J. Ralston	The Family Empowerment Model relies on three elements for promoting the transitions of youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI): (1) targeted outreach to youth beginning at age 14 to inform them and their families about job services; (2) family empowerment specialists who use trauma-informed approaches and evidence-based practices to engage and empower youth and their families; and (3) integrated resource teams to connect to job services, Social Security Administration benefits counseling, financial empowerment resources, and other programs once youth reach age 18. Combined, these elements create a robust and holistic approach to engage and support youth receiving SSI and their families in meeting their employment and other goals.	Youth and families	14–24
Healthcare Treatment Team Improving Youth SSI Recipients' Employment Outcomes Through an Integrated Treatment Team Intervention in a Healthcare Setting	Aryn Taylor, Teresa Nguyen, Melanie Honsbruch	The proposed intervention would add case managers to the health care provider team that serves youth SSI recipients ages 14 to 17 at specialty health clinics. The case managers would join the integrated treatment team at the clinics, educate medical providers on employment issues, and coordinate care and communication across medical and nonmedical services. Case managers would offer referrals to vocational rehabilitation, benefits counseling, and potentially other existing support services deemed beneficial by the youth and family. The intervention leverages contacts with SSI youth that occur through regular medical visits to promote positive education and employment outcomes.	Youth, families, health care clinic staff	14–17

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
Transition Tracker Secondary Systems Linkages and Transition Tracker: A Systems Approach to Enhance Post-School Employment Outcomes	Jade Ann Gingerich, Kelli Crane	The state of Maryland is implementing the Maryland Transition Linkage Tool, a digital tool designed to share data across agencies and enable school and state agency personnel to systemically communicate and track the planning and delivery of transition services. The tool facilitates the collection, sharing, and analysis of key data points on transition-age students, including their work-related services, connections to post-school services, and post-school outcomes. The tool is not intended to be a case management system, but rather to facilitate system accountability and collaboration.	Secondary schools, service providers	High school age
YFSN Policy Considerations for Implementing Youth and Family Case Management Strategies Across Systems	Andrew Karhan, Thomas P. Golden	The Youth and Family Systems Navigator (YFSN) can assist youth receiving SSI and their families in managing the transition process and obtaining better employment outcomes. The proposed intervention offers a means to address the array of needs that arise by allowing greater freedom on the part of the YFSN to address challenges that typically fall outside the realm of employment supports, yet are essential to overcoming obstacles to youth's long-term success. Assigned at age 14 and continuing services through age 24, the YFSN encourages greater financial independence and self-sufficiency for youth through connections to existing transition supports and services.	Youth and families	14–24

Two papers (Employment Empowerment and Family Employment Awareness Training [FEAT]) offer a *disability employment curriculum* to improve the knowledge and skills of youth, their families, and program staff around employment, self-advocacy, and empowerment.

Exhibit II.2 Overview of proposed interventions involving disability employment curricula

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
Employment Empowerment Employment Empowerment—A Foundational Intervention for Youth with Disabilities to Build Employment Skills	Paul Hippolitus	This paper suggests adopting an employment empowerment approach throughout the disability policy arena, calls for a federal cross-agency working group to promote employment empowerment, and offers piloted materials to build the employment self-confidence, ambition, focus, and workplace knowledge necessary for youth with disabilities to pursue their employment potential. Employment empowerment instruction offers youth with disabilities attitudes and knowledge to address their fears and enter the competitive labor market. Competitive employment success requires self-confident job seekers who can impress potential employers with their ambition and ability to get the job done.	Youth, families, transition staff	14–24

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
FEAT Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT): A Research-Based Program for Promoting High Expectations for Employment and Knowledge of Resources	Judith Gross, Grace Francis, Stephanie Gage	FEAT is a two-part training for youth with disabilities transitioning from school to adulthood, their families, and the professionals who support them. FEAT's purpose is to raise attendee expectations in obtaining competitive employment and increase their knowledge of how local, state, and federal resources can make employment a reality. FEAT targets transition-age youth ages 14–22 with significant support needs. The training bridges the gap between secondary school and adulthood by organizing and simplifying issues related to finding jobs, accessing services and supports, and offering youth and those who support them guidance to facilitate successful school-to-employment transitions. Training attendees develop plans for employment along with next steps to use what they learned about available resources. After the training, participants can access technical assistance in overcoming employment barriers they might encounter. FEAT has been implemented in five states with promising outcomes among youth with disabilities and their families.	Youth, families, transition staff	14–22

Five papers put forward systematic approaches to improve the human capital of youth through *education and training* programs (Exhibit II.3). The proposals offer ways to encourage apprenticeship or career and technical education (CTE) (Apprenticeship Infrastructure and Translating Evidence to Support Transitions—Career and Technical Education [TEST-CTE]), improve education options funded through vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies (Progressive Education and ResPECT), or develop a comprehensive program to support youth through age 30 (Transition to Economic Self-Sufficiency [TESS]).

Exhibit II.3 Overview of proposed interventions involving education and training

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
Apprenticeship Infrastructure Building an Apprenticeship Infrastructure for SSI Youth	Daniel Kuehn	The paper describes a framework for supporting youth with disabilities during the transition to adulthood using a registered youth apprenticeship training model; it proposes a grant program to expand apprenticeship for youth with disabilities. Youth apprenticeships combine structured on-the-job training with career-relevant classroom instruction; success in both domains is necessary for the intervention's effectiveness. These apprenticeships can improve education and employment outcomes for youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and promote their eventual independence. The paper describes best practices for supporting youth apprenticeships that would encourage innovative approaches and build an infrastructure in which programs coordinate services, accommodations, training plans, and benefits for youth with disabilities by relying on key apprenticeship partners.	Secondary schools, employers	16–24

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
Progressive Education Progressive Education: Early Intervention Strategy to Improve Postsecondary Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities	Tara Howe, Christine McCarthy, James Smith, Rich Tulikangas	Progressive education is a model for public vocational rehabilitation programs to increase participation in postsecondary education and training for students with disabilities. It builds on the premise that maximizing opportunities to experience postsecondary education while in high school leads students to higher participation rates in postsecondary education and training programs. The model offers a graduated series of activities to experience postsecondary opportunities well before high school exit. It also provides a menu of supports to promote youth's success in postsecondary programming, such as coaching or tutoring, collaborations with school staff and agency partners, and access to assistive technology.	Vocational rehabilitation agency staff	14–24
ResPECT Demonstrating the Effectiveness of Short-Term Career and Technical Training in a Residential Setting for Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities	Kevin Hollenbeck	ResPECT combines elements of services offered by the Michigan Career & Technical Institute (MCTI) and the Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) program. From MCTI, ResPECT incorporates postsecondary residential career and technical education; from PERT, it draws on career interest and aptitude assessments. The proposed intervention expands access to residential programs as a way of increasing the sustainable and satisfying lifetime careers and earnings of youth receiving SSI. The intervention achieves this goal through two intermediate outcomes: skills acquired through career and technical education at the postsecondary education level and the self-efficacy gained through independent living and peer socialization.	Secondary and postsecondary schools	14–24
TESS Prototype Transition to Economic Self-Sufficiency (TESS) Scholarships for Youth and Young Adults with Significant Disabilities	David Stapleton, James Smith, Tara Howe	This paper proposes the phased development and testing of a TESS scholarship program that offers cash support (up to $10,000 per year) to youth from age 18 to 30, along with postsecondary education and training services, career coaching and planning, health and long-term services and supports, and financial management. TESS scholarships and associated supports represent a significant investment in the youth's human capital development over an extended period to increase participant engagement in postsecondary education, improve employment, and foster economic independence. The scholarships would be funded and managed through a public-private partnership between a state agency and a foundation or other private sector sponsor.	Youth	Youth apply in their last year of high school; program participation until age 30

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
TEST-CTE Career Technical Education for Students with Emotional Disturbance	Colleen McKay, Marsha Ellison	The Translating Evidence to Support Transitions—Career and Technical Education (TEST-CTE) guidebook includes information and techniques for high school education staff to develop career and technical education (CTE) programs for this population. CTE can improve the education, employment, and self-efficacy outcomes of high school students with emotional disturbance who are at high risk of receiving SSI. The guide is fully developed and tested to ensure that staff can deliver the program with accuracy in a school setting and that students can create career goals and earn CTE credits. The program's goals for students include (1) establishing goal setting, interests, and expectations; (2) completing four CTE credits while in high school; and (3) securing a job or enrolling in education within six months of high school graduation.	Secondary and post-secondary school staff	High school age

A final paper (Delaying SGA [Substantial Gainful Activity]) affects *federal program policy* by suggesting that Social Security Administration (SSA) wait until age 22 (instead of the current age of 18) to apply adult disability criteria to child SSI recipients and new SSI applicants (Exhibit II.4). Many of the papers across the four broad topics have overlapping service components. For example, the *case management and service coordination* papers emphasize the need to connect youth to many of the employment and training services that the *education and training* papers promote.

Exhibit II.4 Overview of a proposed intervention involving federal program policy

Short and long title	Authors	Intervention description	Group addressed	Youth age range
Delaying SGA Delaying Application of SSI's Substantial Gainful Activity Criterion from Age 18 to 22	Sheryl A. Larson, Judy Geyer	This paper proposes that the Social Security Administration (SSA) delay using substantial gainful activity as a criterion for adult Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibility until age 22 for new applicants and child SSI recipients undergoing the age-18 redetermination. The delay would smooth the transition from education to employment by offering a stable income source during a period when youth are still developing the capacity to work and live independently. In doing so, it would increase the proportion of youth receiving SSI with jobs at age 22. The proposed policy change is consistent with other federal programs and policies that allow youth with disabilities to remain eligible for services until age 22.	SSA programs and program applicants and participants	18–21

Although all papers either directly or indirectly involve youth receiving SSI, they differ in their involvement of existing programs and staff. Three papers (Apprenticeship Infrastructure, Progressive Education, and ResPECT) build services around existing programs—such as VR agencies or secondary and postsecondary education—while four (Employment Empowerment, FEAT, Healthcare Treatment Team, and TEST-CTE) emphasize building the skills and knowledge of existing staff. One paper (Delaying SGA) seeks to alter SSA's assessment process to qualify for SSI. Another paper (Transition Tracker) connects agency staff through an administrative database to coordinate service delivery. The remaining three papers (Family Empowerment Model, TESS, and YFSN) all emphasize new staff and programming.

Another way to consider these papers is how they involve family members. Given the project's focus on youth ages 14 to 24 and the role that family members play in their children's lives, proposed interventions might benefit from addressing families' needs and offering them additional information and services. The papers involving *case management and service coordination* and *disability employment curricula* typically include families as an explicit part of their models in terms of meetings and trainings alongside the youth. The other papers do not explicitly include family members as part of the intervention, though they might be involved in some way. For example, because the proposed interventions in Progressive Education, ResPECT, and TESS all address youth postsecondary education options, family members would likely be involved in discussions, decisions, and consent.

Most papers offer solutions that could address the full transition-age range defined by this project (ages 14 to 24). However, three (Healthcare Treatment Team, TEST-CTE, and Transition Tracker) concentrate on youth before age 18 or who are in high school, and one focuses exclusively on youth ages 18 to 21 (Delaying SGA). One paper (TESS) proposes to offer supports through age 30, though would enroll youth from ages 18 to 24.

Given the unique characteristics of this population, Exhibit II.5 presents additional information on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for youth receiving SSI. Many youth receiving SSI are also from disadvantaged populations and thus face additional challenges reflecting those characteristics. Implementing any of the ideas proposed by the papers might address three areas with DEI in mind: staff interactions with youth and families, infrastructure of transition programs and systems, and evaluations that assess program effectiveness.

Exhibit II.5 Diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations for youth receiving SSI

Issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can be crucial in selecting among ideas to improve employment outcomes for youth receiving SSI because of systematic inequalities that these youth face, including lower access to services, that can lead to poorer outcomes (Enayati and Karpur 2018; Gary et al. 2019; National Disability Institute 2020; Sima et al. 2015). Youth and young adults receiving SSI have identities and characteristics that can affect their service experiences. In addition to having high poverty rates, low levels of earnings, and health conditions that affect functioning, they are more likely to be non-White and have lower educational attainment relative to youth and young adults in the general population (Bardos and Livermore 2016; Vespa 2017). Many also often live in households with other members who have a disability and receive benefits (Rupp et al. 2005/2006).

Some of the papers for the SSI Youth Solutions project touch on DEI issues, such as ensuring that staff use culturally appropriate interventions or tailoring interventions to fit local environments and preferences. A greater focus on DEI in the provision of transition services could enhance programs offered to youth receiving SSI and their families and thus lead to better outcomes. Such an approach is consistent with the President's Executive Order to advance equity for people of color and underserved communities, as many youth and young adults receiving SSI are members of these groups. The order authorizes federal agencies to pursue activities to advance equity, such as engaging members of underserved populations, assessing and addressing barriers to full participation in services and procurements, and promoting investments in underserved communities. Considerations of DEI issues also follow from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, which requires the workforce system to offer increased opportunities for those with barriers to employment.

Policymakers might consider incorporating a DEI focus through three areas of program implementation: staff interactions with youth and families, the infrastructure of transition programs and systems, and evaluations that assess program effectiveness.

DEI through staff interactions with youth and families. Youth and families from marginalized communities report feeling disregarded and disempowered by service providers, resulting in not having their needs met and turning away from programs (Hirano et al. 2018; Wilt et al. 2020; Rossetti and Burke 2018). Establishing culturally appropriate and inclusive service models that bridge differences as a central principle of programs for youth with disabilities can therefore promote program engagement. Person-centered planning and services, based on a broad consideration of cultural sensitivity, can lead to youth and families feeling heard, identifying and using services they want, and identifying and obtaining outcomes they want (Suk et al. 2019).

DEI through infrastructure of transition programs and systems. In addition to training staff on DEI issues, program administrators might consider four additional steps to integrate DEI into their infrastructures. These steps include (1) conducting hiring practices that are inclusive of people from minority backgrounds or who have a disability, thus reflecting the program's customers; (2) obtaining input on program development and implementation from a diverse set of stakeholders participating in the program, such as through youth councils or having youth and parents or guardians on advisory boards (deZerega and Verdone 2011); (3) partnering with local organizations with specific DEI expertise, such as parent training and information centers and community advocacy organizations; and (4) pursuing more systematic identification and targeting of programs to underserved populations and adapting recruitment materials for those populations (Gold et al. 2019).

DEI through evaluations that assess program effectiveness. Many of the ideas proposed by this project require further testing and evaluation. A first key consideration is having sufficiently large sample sizes to assess outcomes specifically for subgroups of interest, such as those defined by race and ethnicity. Other examples of specific evaluation practices include ensuring that evaluation activities reflect the local community's values, defining research questions and data collection activities with community input, and sharing findings with those who participated in the study (Rangel and Valdez 2017).

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III. Policy Objectives Addressed by the Proposed Interventions

The 12 papers propose to address similar challenges to achieve outcomes, though they vary in their immediate goals and their approaches. For example, the interventions differ in whether they aim to increase use of existing services, encourage positive attitudes about employment for youth with disabilities, offer specific career-focused skills training, or increase financial support during the crucial early adult years. Often, interventions to improve transition outcomes seek to increase adult employment rates among participating youth, which could reduce their reliance on public benefits such as SSI. Sustained employment and long-term benefit use are difficult to measure over typical evaluation timelines. Policymakers could consider what is of most interest in selecting among programs to implement: promoting specific short-term outcomes or addressing particular transition challenges. In this section, we describe the goals of each paper, the transition challenges that they offer to address, and the various outcomes they intend to attain (Exhibit III.1).

A. Goals

Within each of the four topic areas, the papers have common goals that they intend to achieve with their interventions, despite offering different means to achieve them. The *case management and service coordination* papers aim to support youth (and sometimes their families) in navigating the complex transition landscape by facilitating greater coordination among individual service providers. The *disability employment curricula* papers hope to shift existing disempowering narratives to raise expectations for employment among youth and their supporters and provide career-relevant knowledge and skills. The *education and training* papers offer ways to increase exposure to and participation in secondary and postsecondary education, training, and other career-focused activities. The *federal program policy* paper seeks to increase early adult eligibility for SSI.

B. Transition challenges

The similar goals within a topic area reflect efforts to address the same transition challenges. Below, we identify the papers that address each of these challenges.

Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment. Eight of the 12 papers directly address the challenges related to not being ready for employment, education, and independent living after leaving secondary school. Four of the five *education and training* papers (all except TESS) offer additional training or structured college and work exploration opportunities to address this challenge. Employment Empowerment and FEAT (*disability employment curricula*) prepare youth and families for employment by educating them on how to prepare for work and what to expect in work environments. Finally, two papers—Delaying SGA (*federal program policy*) and TESS (*education and training*) would give youth more time to prepare for work and independent living.

Uncoordinated service system. Seven of the papers offer solutions to the challenge of navigating a complicated service system. In particular, the frequency with which case management appears in papers aimed at improving outcomes for transition-age youth underscores the importance of offering information to youth and families about available services and supports and of harmonizing transition strategies across service providers. Case management is a critical intervention component for three *case management and service coordination* papers. It is also a primary component of Apprenticeship Infrastructure, Progressive Education, ResPECT, and TESS (*education and training*); each proposes staff who would offer case management alongside other intervention components. Delaying SGA (*federal program policy*) seeks to

improve service coordination by allowing youth to remain connected to services as they enter young adulthood. Because it addresses data infrastructure, the Transition Tracker paper would promote the coordination of the service system from the perspective of agencies, rather than from the perspective of the youth and family.

Lack of information and awareness. Somewhat related to the challenge of an uncoordinated service system is the lack of information and awareness of existing programs on the part of youth and families. Four papers directly address this challenge: the three *case management and service coordination* papers that introduce a dedicated case manager to help youth and families navigate the transition landscape (Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, and YFSN) as well as one of the *disability employment curricula* papers (FEAT). Youth and families are often either unaware of the work incentives offered by SSA and other programs or are confused about how they operate. Thus, many of the papers, recognizing that decisions around employment have consequences for benefits, offer benefits counseling to support youth and families in strategizing about these decisions. Benefits counseling is an important intervention component of the *case management and service coordination* papers and the *education and training* papers.

Low expectations. Low expectations among youth and family members, as well as among providers, can prevent youth from engaging fully in preparations for employment or postsecondary education. One *case management and service coordination* paper (Family Empowerment Model) and both *disability employment curricula* papers (Employment Empowerment and FEAT) explicitly address how to overcome potentially low expectations among youth and family members around anticipated transition outcomes for youth with disabilities. The latter two papers also include training on this topic to transition provider staff as part of its intervention.

Limited or delayed access to services. Two *education and training* papers (Progressive Education and TEST-CTE) address additional challenges of youth having limited or delayed access to services. Both papers seek to connect youth to better education and training options while youth are in high school, either by presenting a broad range of options to youth early (as in Progressive Education) or by encouraging high school staff to connect students with disabilities to available career and technical education options (as in TEST-CTE).

Limited use of evidence-based practices. None of the papers included in the SSI Youth Solutions project directly addressed the final transition challenge: limited use of evidence-based practices under existing transition programs.

C. Outcomes

All of the papers seek to improve employment among youth with disabilities. This outcome is by design, as ODEP staff selected papers for the SSI Youth Solutions project based on their potential to increase employment among youth with disabilities. Employment outcomes that papers mention include being employed, increased earnings and wages, and career pathways. Section V discusses whether the papers would result in such outcomes if implemented. The proposed interventions also could particularly support youth in maintaining employment in the event of economic downturns (Exhibit III.2).

The papers also propose reduced reliance on SSI as a long-term outcome, although often as an assumed latter-stage outcome of greater employment. In some cases, papers envision increased use of SSI benefits as an intermediate step toward eventual greater independence. Delaying SGA aims to increase short-term SSI enrollment (from ages 18 to 21) in pursuit of longer-term reductions in use through better preparation

for independence. Many paper authors envision increased use of SSI's available work and education incentives while youth use services and training, which include extended SSI benefits (Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, and YFSN among the *case management and service coordination* papers; both *disability employment curricula* papers; and Apprenticeship Infrastructure and Progressive Education among the *education and training* papers).

Somewhat related to reduced reliance on SSI benefits, several papers intend to reduce other types of public benefits as a potential long-term outcome (Family Empowerment Model and YFSN among the *case management and service coordination* papers, and ResPECT and TESS among the *education and training* papers). In the short term, however, use of such benefits is often encouraged to support transition. Delaying SGA (*federal program policy*), for example, envisions increased use of some benefits (such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and housing subsidies) during the period of extended eligibility. Those services are a crucial component of the proposed idea's intent to offer more support to young adults, making space for establishing a career and independence.

Increased use of transition support services is a common expected outcome. All *case management and service coordination* papers and all of the *education and training* papers (except TESS) anticipate increased use of existing or new services. Among the *education and training* papers, ResPECT and TEST-CTE intend to increase use of industry-focused CTE by participating youth, Progressive Education expects to increase use of VR-related and other postsecondary education and training services, and Apprenticeship Infrastructure would increase participation in registered apprenticeships. The *case management and service coordination* papers generally anticipate that the case manager, or greater interagency transparency, would facilitate increased use of a range of transition support services.

The papers also tackle an array of other youth outcomes. Two papers (Employment Empowerment and ResPECT) aim to increase social skills, which complement technical skills in preparing youth for employment and greater independence. Employment Empowerment would impart skills for youth to use in navigating job interviews and the workplace. ResPECT would foster independent living and social skills through its residential postsecondary education programs. Delaying SGA intends to result in reduced arrests and involvement with the justice system. By including CTE credits in a youth's individualized education program, TEST-CTE would improve the transition planning process in high school. One paper (FEAT) would improve the knowledge of local resources and supports on the part of youth and families, while two (Family Empowerment Model and YFSN) would improve financial literacy. Healthcare Treatment Team, given its placement in health care facilities, would improve health care supports alongside increased employment services and benefits counseling.

Finally, a few of the papers anticipate benefits to the organizations that comprise the transition landscape. Transition Tracker expects enhanced collaboration across agencies. Employment Empowerment aims to bring about system-wide orientation toward employment for youth with disabilities. Apprenticeship Infrastructure anticipates more comprehensive data collection on youth apprenticeships, as well as improved infrastructure for such apprenticeships. The Family Empowerment Model would promote community integration through trauma-informed counseling approaches that emphasize community connections.

Exhibit III.1. Policy objectives addressed by proposed interventions

Short title	Goals	Transition challenges addressed	Intended outcomes
Case management and service coordination			
Family Empowerment Model	• Improve the ability of youth and their families to navigate services to gain long-term employment	• Lack of information and awareness • Uncoordinated service system • Low expectations	• Increased employment and earnings • Reduced reliance on SSI • Improved special education individualized education program indicators • Increased use of VR services • Increased use of postsecondary education • Reduced use of means-tested benefits • Improved independence and financial self-sufficiency • Improved community integration
Healthcare Treatment Team	• Improve transition outcomes by offering intensive employment-focused case management in health care setting	• Lack of information and awareness • Uncoordinated service system	• Increased employment and earnings • Reduced reliance on SSI • Increased use of VR and employment services • Increased coordination of health care system and employment supports • Increased use of work incentives and Medicaid buy-in programs
Transition Tracker	• Coordinate services across government agencies connected to transition, education, and employment by linking data systems and obtaining consent from parents/students to share data across agencies	• Uncoordinated service system	• Increased employment • Increased use of transition services • Increased engagement in postsecondary education and training • Enhanced collaboration across agencies
YFSN	• Connect youth to existing transition services through case management to meet basic needs and improve long-term outcomes	• Lack of information and awareness • Uncoordinated service system	• Increased employment and earnings • Reduced reliance on SSI • Improved ability to meet basic needs • Increased financial literacy • Increased self-sufficiency • Increased use of transition services • Reduced use of means-tested benefits
Disability employment curricula			
Employment Empowerment	• Shift culture of disability programs throughout government and society to promote employment empowerment mindset among youth with disabilities • Promote employment empowerment through federal messaging coordinated by an inter-agency working group	• Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment • Low expectations	• Increased employment • Increased youth attitudes of self-efficacy toward competitive employment • Improved youth skills for navigating job interviews and the workplace • Expanded employment empowerment attitudes through transition agency/organization landscape

Short title	Goals	Transition challenges addressed	Intended outcomes
FEAT	• Raise expectations among youth, families, and transition support staff for competitive integrated employment • Increase knowledge of local employment resources	• Lack of information and awareness • Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment • Low expectations	• Enhanced expectations for competitive integrated employment • Improved knowledge of local resources
Education and training			
Apprenticeship Infrastructure	• Fund youth apprenticeship intermediaries that coordinate apprenticeship opportunities and assist youth in navigating applicable supports	• Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment • Uncoordinated service system	• Increased employment and earnings • Increased use of SSI work incentives • Increased participation in apprenticeship programs (paid training) • Improved infrastructure for recruiting and supporting youth with disabilities in training
Progressive Education	• Increase exposure to and participation in postsecondary education and training while in high school or shortly thereafter	• Limited or delayed access to services • Uncoordinated service system • Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment	• Increased employment • Increased postsecondary education and training
ResPECT	• Offer postsecondary residential career and technical education driven by employer needs	• Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment	• Increased employment and earnings • Enhanced career development • Reduced reliance on SSI • Increased independent living and social skills • Reduced use of means-tested benefits
TESS	• Establish a scholarship program that offers cash and other supports through age 30	• Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment	• Increased employment and earnings • Enhanced career development • Reduced reliance on SSI • Reduced use of means-tested benefits
TEST-CTE	• Increase CTE involvement for youth with emotional disturbance and promote career pathways	• Limited or delayed access to services • Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment	• Increased employment • Reduced reliance on SSI • Improved transition planning
Federal program policy			
Delaying SGA	• Increase early adult eligibility for SSI by postponing the use of SSI's adult medical eligibility criteria until age 22 and adopting modified children's criteria for ages 18-21	• Uncoordinated service system • Inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and employment	• Increased employment at SGA levels • Reduced long-term reliance on SSI • Increased use of transition services • Reduced use of means-tested benefits • Increased postsecondary education • Reduced arrest

CTE = career and technical education; FEAT = Family Employment Awareness Training; SGA = substantial gainful activity; SSI = Supplemental Security Income; TESS = Transition to Economic Self-Sufficiency; TEST-CTE = Translating Evidence to Support Transitions—Career and Technical Education; VR = vocational rehabilitation; YFSN = Youth and Family Systems Navigator.

Exhibit III.2 Economic downturn considerations for the proposed interventions

Economic downturns due to the Great Recession and COVID-19 have devastated the American economy twice within a 12-year span. These experiences have highlighted the need to better prepare youth with disabilities to weather business cycle fluctuations. Employment among youth and young adults with disabilities is particularly sensitive to economic downturns (National Disability Institute 2020). During the Great Recession, this population experienced higher unemployment and labor force exit than workers without disabilities (von Wachter 2010), and a similar pattern emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic (Livermore and Schimmel Hyde 2020).

Interventions that increase educational attainment or provide career-focused training, such as those proposed for the SSI Youth Solutions project, could be especially beneficial by imparting skills that may remain in demand throughout the business cycle. Low-skilled workers experience greater employment reductions during recessions than higher-skilled workers (Hoynes et al. 2012). Compounding the larger job losses among low-skilled workers, employers often respond to the increase in job seekers by raising the education and experience requirements for available jobs (Modestino et al. 2015). Youth and young adults with disabilities, who tend to have less education and experience than their counterparts without disabilities, may thus find themselves at a disadvantage in competing for jobs during economic downturns.

Interventions that improve youths' ability to navigate support systems and access resources will also help them weather economic downturns. Federal, state, and local governments often adopt policy responses to combat downturns, such as enhanced unemployment benefits and increased support for return-to-work services. These supports can provide a necessary bridge from pre-downturn labor earnings to post-downturn labor earnings, enabling youth and young adults with disabilities to remain in the labor market rather than turning to disability benefits. Interventions that offer information and tools for navigating resources—including case management, as several of the interventions proposed for the SSI Youth Solutions project do—might therefore be particularly helpful to youth transitioning to adulthood during economic downturns. Ideally, through the increased information and awareness of supports afforded through the case manager, youth would be better able to independently navigate the fragmented transition service landscape, even after graduating from the intervention. Interventions that coordinate the various components of the transition system for youth with disabilities can also create linkages and relationships that better prepare the system to react to economic downturns and support youth and young adults with disabilities.

Ultimately, any program that increases reliance on labor earnings relative to program benefits among youth with disabilities will necessarily increase their exposure to business cycle fluctuations. However, with appropriate preparation and support, the increased risk can be managed so that youth and young adults with disabilities are better off because of their greater economic independence.

IV. Landscape for Implementing the Proposed Interventions

The 12 papers touch on many aspects of the existing transition service system. Some are new ideas or innovative twists on existing approaches, while others would modify or enhance existing programs in ways that promote the success of youth with disabilities. All would require, or at least benefit from, federal sponsorship to promote implementation. Most would fit within one or more agencies' missions and could be implemented and tested through existing demonstration authorities and grant funding mechanisms. In this section, we describe how the 12 papers fit into the existing service landscape by whether they represent modifications to existing services or offer new services. We also detail the relevant federal, state, and local agencies that might be best suited to implement the intervention.

A. New services versus modifications to existing services

Categorizing the papers as representing new services versus modifications to existing services is somewhat subjective. The ideas in all papers represent modifications to existing programs or services because they must be implemented in some manner within the existing transition landscape and thus would require modifications to existing programs and services. Nonetheless, some envision services or approaches that either do not exist or currently exist only rarely in the transition system. In Exhibit IV.1, we classify the papers by whether, if implemented, they would be new services or modifications to programs that currently offer similar types of services. In designating an idea as new, we considered whether it featured a relatively uncommon component of existing programs or one that was not highly prevalent in some form throughout the transition system.

We classified all four *case management and service coordination* papers and three of the *education and training* papers as new. Two papers (Family Empowerment Model and YFSN) would introduce a new case management staff role that, although it would likely be housed within a specific program or agency, would operate systemwide and encompass all types of resources and supports youth with disabilities might need during the transition process. This aspect represents a new service that currently does not exist, although the Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI (PROMISE) demonstration tested a form of it. Transition Tracker is novel in a similar way; it encompasses data sharing among transition service providers systemwide. Although some states have developed data linkages across programs, it is uncommon for states to use those linkages for purposes of connecting youth with disabilities to services and monitoring their outcomes. We classified Healthcare Treatment Team as new because it proposes to incorporate employment-related referrals and case management into a new setting—health clinics serving youth with significant disabilities. Links between the private medical and the public VR systems are uncommon in the provision of transition services. Healthcare Treatment Team also seeks to instill greater awareness of issues related to employment and self-sufficiency among medical providers treating youth with significant disabilities—another innovation. Although both apprenticeship models (Apprenticeship Infrastructure) and residential training programs (ResPECT) currently exist, most do not focus specifically on youth with disabilities or tailor the services to their needs. Similarly, needs-based scholarship programs are common, but we classified TESS as offering new services because it focuses on youth receiving SSI and seeks to more holistically develop a youth's career potential with connections to employment-promoting services in addition to financial assistance.

The remaining five papers propose interventions that modify existing services. We classified the two *disability employment curricula* papers (Employment Empowerment and FEAT) as modifications to existing services. Employment Empowerment seeks to enhance existing services by instilling an

employment empowerment focus and training in all programs that serve youth and young adults with disabilities. Similarly, FEAT proposes to incorporate its employment-promoting curriculum into existing services using a train-the-trainer model. We classified two *education and training* papers (Progressive Education and TEST-CTE) as modifications to existing services because both seek to enhance programs currently offered by VR agencies and secondary schools. Progressive Education proposes new ways for VR agencies, in partnership with secondary and postsecondary schools, to support youth in exploring and preparing for postsecondary education opportunities. Schools and VR agencies already offer these supports to varying degrees. TEST-CTE would build on the existing CTE programs offered by secondary schools to better serve students with severe emotional disturbance—a group that represents a sizeable share of youth receiving SSI. Finally, we classified the *federal program policy* paper (Delaying SGA) as a modification to an existing program because it does just that: it proposes to modify the adult SSI program eligibility requirements by delaying application of the SGA criteria from age 18 to age 22.

B. Agencies to sponsor and implement the interventions

All of the interventions proposed by the papers seek to promote the employment and self-sufficiency of youth and young adults with disabilities and thus could be sponsored or implemented by federal, state, and local agencies whose missions align with that objective. At the federal level, most of the ideas proposed in the papers would fall under the demonstration authorities of DOL, the U.S. Department of Education (ED), or SSA. Some might naturally fit with one or more of these agencies, along with their state and local counterparts. Regardless of the potential fit with an agency or funding source, all proposed interventions involving youth receiving SSI would benefit from SSA support in the form of data sharing for purposes of outreach and tracking long-term outcomes.

The *case management and service coordination* papers fit under a variety of agencies. Family Empowerment Model, Transition Tracker, and YFSN could be supported by any of the federal agencies addressing youth education and employment, and they could be implemented at the state level by a variety of state and local organizations—including VR, secondary schools, community rehabilitation and independent living service providers, and workforce programs (Exhibit IV.1). As demonstrated under PROMISE, with appropriate funding, partnerships of state and local entities can develop the capacity to offer system-wide case management to families. State offices of disability, such as the Maryland Department of Disabilities where the Transition Tracker originates, offer another potential home for these interventions. The case management offered under the Healthcare Treatment Team model could be partially funded through Medicaid waivers, but it also could be implemented in partnership with VR agencies using Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) funds. It would also be possible for SSA to test the ideas in the three case management papers through a demonstration that expanded the role of the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) organizations, similar to the Benefit Offset National Demonstration, or that established other types of case managers, as in the Project NetWork demonstration.

The *disability employment curricula* papers (Employment Empowerment and FEAT) could be supported and implemented by any agency offering services to youth and young adults. The family focus of FEAT, along with its use through ED-funded parent training and information centers, make ED a suitable funder. The curriculum is also applicable to services offered by secondary schools and state VR agencies. Although the specific curriculum offered in Employment Empowerment was primarily used with college students, it could be adapted for use with younger youth in a variety of settings. For example, the self-determination training offered by some secondary schools and centers for independent living could

incorporate the employment focus and preparation envisioned by Employment Empowerment to implement the intervention more broadly.

The *education and training* papers suggest a range of appropriate agencies for support and implementation. Apprenticeship Infrastructure and ResPECT seem a good fit with DOL because that federal agency already funds apprenticeship programs (for example, the State Apprenticeship Expansion and the Equity and Innovation Grant Program) and residential training programs (for example, Job Corps). ResPECT is also well suited to implementation by state VR agencies using RSA or state funds, as is Progressive Education, because similar models have been implemented by VR agencies. TEST-CTE applies largely to secondary schools and thus could be supported by ED and implemented by state and local education authorities. TESS proposes to rely on private funding; however, successful implementation must be in partnership with state VR agencies, secondary and postsecondary schools, and other relevant service providers (such as WIPAs) because these entities would play key roles in the successful career development of participating youth.

Delaying SGA could only be implemented by SSA. Although there would be logistical, legislative, and administrative challenges to address in the implementation and evaluation of the policy (including rules that apply specifically to children and adults), it could be tested through program waivers under SSA's demonstration authority.

Exhibit IV.1. Landscape for implementing proposed interventions

Short title	New or modify existing services	Relevant programs or agencies
Case management and service coordination		
Family Empowerment Model	**New services.** New system-wide family empowerment specialist role incorporated with integrated resource teams in the service system	State agencies offering transition services to youth with disabilities (such as education, VR, workforce, IDD, WIPAs, centers for independent living, and Medicaid) and the federal funders of those programs
Healthcare Treatment Team	**New services.** New employment-focused case management role and health provider training incorporated in pediatric specialty health care settings	Federal agencies interested in promoting the employment of people with disabilities (DOL, RSA, SSA) and those interested in promoting the health of children with special health care needs (CMS, HRSA) along with their state and local counterparts
Transition Tracker	**New services.** New tracking tool to enhance system-wide service coordination and track outcomes	State agencies offering transition services to youth with disabilities (such as education, VR, workforce, and IDD); linkages with federal data sources maintained or funded by ED and SSA would facilitate tracking long-term outcomes
YFSN	**New services.** New system-wide youth and family service navigator role to guide families in navigating existing services	State agencies offering transition services to youth with disabilities (such as education, VR, workforce, IDD, WIPAs, centers for independent living, and Medicaid) and the federal funders of those programs

Short title	New or modify existing services	Relevant programs or agencies
Disability employment curricula		
Employment Empowerment	**Modify existing services.** Advocates for incorporating employment empowerment orientation in all existing programs serving youth and young adults with disabilities and includes content to use for training	All federal, state, and local entities offering any type of service to youth and young adults with disabilities; leadership and impetus at the federal level through Federal Partners in Transition member agencies
FEAT	**Modify existing services.** Curriculum to use in existing services using a train-the-trainer model	Parent training and information centers funded by ED; state and local agencies offering transition services to youth with disabilities (such as education, VR, workforce, IDD, WIPAs, centers for independent living, and Medicaid)
Education and training		
Apprenticeship Infrastructure	**New services.** New models and methods for recruiting and supporting employers and youth apprentices	Federal, state, and local entities delivering education and employment training services with funding through VR, ED, SSA, and DOL
Progressive Education	**Modify existing services.** Enhance existing VR services and secondary/postsecondary education planning with greater opportunities to connect youth with postsecondary educational opportunities	Federal, state, and local education and VR authorities
ResPECT	**New services.** New approach to offer residential job training opportunities that combines elements of two existing interventions	Federal, state, and local entities delivering education and employment training services with funding through VR, ED, SSA, and DOL
TESS	**New services.** New scholarship program to support long-term career development and combat work disincentives in income support programs	Federal, state, and local education and VR authorities; community service providers; private organizations willing to sponsor scholarships and those administering ABLE accounts
TEST-CTE	**Modify existing services.** Enhance existing CTE to better serve students with emotional disturbance through educator and support staff training using piloted materials	State and local education authorities
Federal program policy		
Delaying SGA	**Modify existing services.** Modify existing SSI eligibility criteria by delaying application of the SGA criteria from age 18 to age 22	SSA

ABLE = Achieving a Better Life; CMS = Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; CTE = career and technical education; DOL = U.S. Department of Labor; ED= U.S. Department of Education; FEAT = Family Employment Awareness Training; HRSA = Health Resources and Services Administration; IDD = intellectual or developmental disabilities; RSA = Rehabilitation Services Administration; SGA = substantial gainful activity; SSA = Social Security Administration; SSI = Supplemental Security Income; TESS = Transition to Economic Self-Sufficiency; TEST-CTE = Translating Evidence to Support Transitions—Career and Technical Education; VR = vocational rehabilitation; WIPA = Work Incentives Planning and Assistance; YFSN = Youth and Family Systems Navigator.

V. Criteria for Selecting a Proposed Intervention

In this section, we apply a set of criteria to the 12 papers to identify which ideas might be most worthwhile to implement. These criteria include the existing level of *causal evidence* in support of the paper's proposed intervention and its ability to result in positive effects on youth employment, the potential *cost* for implementation, the ability to *replicate* an intervention in multiple locations, the potential to *scale* the intervention from the local to the state or national level, and how the intervention could be *sustained* once implemented (Exhibit V.1). We selected these criteria because they reflect practical considerations that policymakers often weigh in making decisions.

A. Causal evidence

Ideas with strong evidence of a positive relationship between activities and outcomes are most likely to have the desired effects for youth, providing policymakers with some assurance that implementing these ideas can lead to success. For ideas lacking such evidence, policymakers might prefer to initially conduct case studies or small pilot tests to determine whether the proposed interventions work as intended. The assessment in Exhibit V.1 shows the level of evidence that currently supports the papers. The assessment is based on the criteria used for evidence ratings by DOL's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation Research (2015). A high rating reflects evidence that is causal in nature, meaning that a clear path can be drawn between the service and the outcome. A moderate rating indicates that, although the evidence suggests that a service leads to an outcome, the evidence has not accounted for other factors that could also influence the relationship. A low rating is assigned to correlational evidence from studies that lack a comparison group. We assign a fourth rating, no evidence, to identify those papers with no supporting research for the main components of their proposed intervention.

Only two papers have either high or moderate levels of evidence for the main components of its service model: ResPECT and Apprenticeship Infrastructure. ResPECT has a high level of evidence based on an experimental study on the employment impacts of Job Corps for people with significant medical conditions. Apprenticeship Infrastructure has a moderate level of evidence, which is based on a non-experimental study of Registered Apprenticeship programs for individuals ages 16 and older (which was not disability- or youth-specific). The general lack of strong evidence is largely due to a lack of rigorous empirical evaluations for interventions involving youth with disabilities, rather than to the papers themselves.

Five papers have a low causal evidence rating. For these papers, supporting evidence is from correlational studies (TEST-CTE) or from studies in which a key component—such as case management—was only tested as part of a larger set of services (Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, and YFSN), or research on a short-term outcome that itself could lead to improved employment (FEAT). As defined in their papers, the proposed interventions that add case management staff to support youth and families also emphasize referrals and connections to other services, which is similar in implementation to the studies showing the correlational effects of case management. However, there is no guarantee that those ancillary services would be included or accessed with the implementation of case management supports.

Finally, five papers (Delaying SGA, Employment Empowerment, Progressive Education, TESS, and Transition Tracker) have either descriptive evidence or compelling logic models to support their implementation and testing. Such ideas would benefit from additional tests to assess their feasibility of

implementation and likely impacts on outcomes. One of these (Progressive Education) might obtain stronger supporting evidence once an evaluation of the demonstration on which it is based concludes later in 2021.

B. Potential costs

We categorized the papers as having a low or high potential cost based on a simple metric: whether they would require new staff or a separate program for implementation (high cost) or not (low cost) (Exhibit V.1). We used this approach because most papers did not directly include cost estimates.

Seven papers have relatively high implementation costs. These proposed interventions would require funding new staff positions (as with Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, and YFSN), involve a comprehensive, ongoing system of supports and services (as with Apprenticeship Infrastructure, ResPECT, and TESS), or necessitate additional outlays by SSA for SSI benefit payments (Delaying SGA). A high cost of implementing a proposed intervention is not on its own a reason to avoid it. If the benefits that result are also high, then the return on the investment of resources could be substantially larger for an intervention with high costs than one with low costs.

The remaining papers would require relatively low costs to implement. The two *disability employment curricula* papers (FEAT and Employment Empowerment) both have low costs. TEST-CTE and Progressive Education also fall into this category. We classified Transition Tracker as being low cost. While it might incur initial infrastructure costs to build the database, it would not necessarily require new staff or programs to support its ongoing use.

C. Replicability

Most of the papers offer solutions that are likely replicable in multiple locations (Exhibit V.1). The exception is Delaying SGA, which proposes changes to an existing national program. Three papers propose service models that have already been demonstrated in whole or part as replicable (FEAT in five states, ResPECT in two states, and TEST-CTE in three states). Authors of Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, and YFSN modeled their case management services on the PROMISE demonstration, replicated in 11 states. The remaining five papers (Apprenticeship Infrastructure, Employment Empowerment, Progressive Education, TESS, and Transition Tracker) propose ideas to be implemented in other similar localities, and all have the flexibility to fit into local and state transition environments.

D. Scalability

Policymakers might be concerned about the scale at which a proposed intervention could be implemented. While local policymakers might pursue an idea that affects just their organization or geographic location, state policymakers might want to invest in an idea that is applicable statewide, including rural, suburban, and urban areas. Ideas that can be implemented nationwide might be of most interest to federal policymakers.

Half of the papers could be scaled to the national level (Exhibit V.1). Apprenticeship Infrastructure, Employment Empowerment, Family Empowerment Model, TESS, TEST-CTE, and YFSN propose interventions that could be offered at local levels and expanded or promoted to cover larger geographic areas.

The remaining six papers seem to have more limited scalability. Two proposed interventions (Progressive Education and ResPECT) could be implemented statewide from their start; given their reliance on state and local resources, neither could be easily scaled nationwide, though federal agencies could encourage their adoption by VR agencies and their partners. Two others (FEAT and Transition Tracker) could be scaled from the local to the state level, but not nationally. Delaying SGA is intended to affect all SSI applicants and recipients ages 18 to 21 at the national level, so scalability is not applicable. Because of its specificity to health care institutions, Healthcare Treatment Team can only be implemented to a single clinical setting, though a federal agency or other entity could encourage or fund its broad adaption.

E. Sustainability

The final criterion we considered is the sustainability of the proposed intervention after its implementation and testing. Sustainability is relevant because it reflects the amount of resources that might be required to continue a program after it is established.

Policymakers could sustain interventions from six of the papers through existing program funding or minimal investments by local and state partners (Exhibit V.1). Two interventions could be funded through state VR programs (Progressive Education and ResPECT), and four involve either maintenance and updates for databases, training, or curricula (Employment Empowerment, FEAT, TEST-CTE, and Transition Tracker).

The interventions proposed in the other papers might have more requirements to achieve sustainability, either because they necessitate a legislative change (Delaying SGA) or long-term funding supports (as with Apprenticeship Infrastructure, Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, TESS, and YFSN). These requirements might not be significant if testing shows that these approaches successfully promote youth outcomes and could thus justify investments from private sources or state and federal governments.

Exhibit V.1. Criteria for selecting among proposed interventions

Short title	Causal evidence	Potential costs	Replicability	Scalability	Sustainability
Case management and service coordination					
Family Empowerment Model	**Low.** Case management has been evaluated as part of a service package for youth with disabilities, but not as a single intervention.	**High.** Requires new staff for service delivery	The case management model has been replicated in multiple states; any locality could replicate the intervention, though tailored to their environment.	It could be scaled to a state or national program.	It requires support from a single federal agency for long-term sustainability.
Healthcare Treatment Team	**Low.** Case management has been evaluated as part of a service package for youth with disabilities, but not as a single intervention.	**High.** Requires new staff for service delivery	The case management model has been replicated in multiple states; replicable in multidisciplinary clinical settings, such as children's hospitals.	Scalability is limited to a single multidisciplinary clinical setting; it is not able to scale to a state or national approach.	It requires long-term funding, possibly through state Medicaid waivers.
Transition Tracker	**None.**	**Low.** May require resources to build the technical infrastructure	The process around linking systems within government interoperability is replicable, but would be unique to each state.	It is designed to be piloted in school districts and later expanded to be statewide.	It requires regular system maintenance and data updates after initial set up.
YFSN	**Low.** Case management has been evaluated as part of a service package for youth with disabilities, but not as a single intervention.	**High.** Requires new staff for service delivery	The case management model has been replicated in multiple states; any state could replicate the intervention, though tailored to their own environments.	Although it is a state-level program, it could be scaled to a national program.	It requires a permanent funding solution or amendment to an existing law.
Disability employment curricula					
Employment Empowerment	**None.**	**Low.** Requires staff training	The intervention can be replicated in various locations.	Cultural change and federal working group are intended to be national in scale, while curriculum is designed for adoption by individual local and state agencies and organizations.	It is sustainable, though curriculum materials would benefit from periodic updates.

Exhibit V.1 (*continued*)

Short title	Causal evidence	Potential costs	Replicability	Scalability	Sustainability
FEAT	**Low.** Correlational evidence from a comparison of attendees and non-attendees showed higher expectations and knowledge among attendees one month after the training and increased knowledge one year after the training.	**Low.** Requires licensing trainings materials and conducting two day-long training sessions	The program has been implemented in 5 states and could be adapted to other states.	It could be scaled to a state-level program.	Ongoing program delivery requires continued funding, which has been previously achieved by pooling resources across state partners in states that implement FEAT.
Education and training					
Apprenticeship Infrastructure	**Moderate**. Quasi-experimental evidence supports Registered Apprenticeship's effects on employment outcomes for adults, but no specific evidence for youth with disabilities.	**High**. Requires funding a number of new programs	The core service model could be adapted to different geographic locations.	It could be scaled to state or national level.	To continue the program, grantees would develop a sustainability plan to identify resources after the initial grant ends.
Progressive Education	**None.** Descriptive evidence from a demonstration on work-based learning experiences, an intervention after which Progressive Education is modeled.	**Low.** Services, training, and staff all funded through existing VR program	The intervention can be replicated by other state VR programs.	It is designed to be state-wide; it's likely not scalable nationally.	State-specific interventions could be sustained through existing VR funding.
ResPECT	**High.** While correlational evidence suggests that MCTI and PERT are successful in increasing employment and earnings of participants, other causal evidence shows that Job Corps (which has similar components) has positive employment effects for youth with medical conditions.	**High.** Requires an extensive curriculum and a residential component	The intervention replicates elements of existing programs in two states and could be adapted to other states.	It is designed to be state-wide; it is likely not scalable nationally.	State-specific interventions could be sustained through existing VR funding.
TESS	**None.**	**High.** Requires funding for scholarships and staff	Once success of the intervention has been established in a pilot program, it could be replicated in other states or regions within a state.	It could be scaled to state or national level.	It requires investments from private donors or public state or federal agencies.

Exhibit V.1 (*continued*)

Short title	Causal evidence	Potential costs	Replicability	Scalability	Sustainability
TEST-CTE	**Low.** Correlational research indicates substantially higher likelihood of finding employment after high school for students with emotional disturbance if they had taken CTE courses, and in particular if they obtained at least four credits in a career cluster.	**Low**. Implemented at local/state level through existing professional development channels; promoted at the federal level without requiring new programs or staff	The intervention can be replicated in other locations.	It could be scaled to state or national level.	It is sustainable, though schools may need ongoing or occasional training.
Federal program policy					
Delaying SGA	**None.**	**High.** Expanding eligibility is estimated to increase SSA program costs	Proposing new federal legislation would not require replicability.	Proposing new federal legislation would not require scalability.	It requires a change to current law.

CTE = career and technical education; FEAT = Family Employment Awareness Training; MCTI = Michigan Career & Technical Institute; PERT = Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition; SGA = substantial gainful activity; SSA = Social Security Administration; TESS = Transition to Economic Self-Sufficiency; TEST-CTE = Translating Evidence to Support Transitions—Career and Technical Education; VR = vocational rehabilitation; YFSN = Youth and Family Systems Navigator.

VI. Conclusion

This report synthesizes characteristics of the 12 proposed interventions developed for the SSI Youth Solutions project. These characteristics may be helpful for policymakers, as well as advocates and other stakeholders, in considering funding programs and policies to further the transition outcomes of youth receiving SSI. The value of the proposed interventions might depend on a stakeholder's vantage point: where they sit in the transition system, what outcomes they want to achieve, the types of youth in which they are interested, and the resources they have available. No matter the vantage point, a stakeholder will likely find at least one idea among the 12 that deserves serious consideration for implementation.

Because all 12 proposed interventions explicitly or implicitly aim to increase employment among youth with disabilities as a long-term outcome, the goals are broadly compatible with those of most state and federal policymakers operating in the youth transition space. The wide variety of interventions address a range of transition challenges, giving policymakers the latitude to select ideas that directly address particular challenges.

Each proposed intervention has a unique set of factors to consider in implementation. We present a summary of what we consider the key strengths and limitations of the papers in Exhibit VI.1. Based on our knowledge of the papers and the information presented in sections III, IV, and V, we considered ease of implementation and benefits for the implementer from the perspective of someone interested in starting a program or adding to an existing program involving youth receiving SSI.

Exhibit VI.1 Strengths and limitations of proposed interventions

Proposed intervention	Strengths	Limitations
Case management and service coordination		
Family Empowerment Model	• Connects existing policy infrastructure • Comprehensive approach targets youth and families through sequential supports • Promotes culturally sensitive approaches	• High implementation cost • Uncertain identification of what agency will provide oversight • Requires new staff
Healthcare Treatment Team	• Uses existing health care services • Focuses on youth seeking services from multidisciplinary health care clinics	• High implementation cost • Limited number of implementation settings • Limited evidence on whether intervention will lead to better employment outcomes
Transition Tracker	• Uses existing administrative data more efficiently Adds to existing practices • Streamlines process to obtain data sharing consent from youth and parents or guardians	• Identifying youth receiving SSI could be difficult • Interagency data sharing arrangements vary by state
YFSN	• Comprehensive approach connects multiple agencies • Targets short-term basic needs and longer-term outcomes	• High implementation cost • Uncertain identification of what agency will provide oversight • Requires new staff

Proposed intervention	Strengths	Limitations
Disability employment curricula		
Employment Empowerment	• Provides low-cost, flexible curriculum • Can be added to existing federal, state, and local programs without involving significant changes	• Requires adaptation for broader populations • Weak theory of change and no evidence that policy will lead to better employment outcomes •
FEAT	• Addresses low expectations for employment • Adapts curriculum locally • Tested in multiple states	• Unclear if one-time training with limited follow up will lead to better employment outcomes • Scaling to the national level requires adapting curriculum to local and state environment
Education and training		
Apprenticeship Infrastructure	• Extends supportive evidence that apprenticeship programs lead to employment • Focuses on in-demand skills and credentials • Can build on existing DOL apprenticeship programs	• Time- and resource-intensive • Involves multiple partners, including employers
Progressive Education	• Emphasizes education options • Uses existing vocational rehabilitation and postsecondary education services	• Exposure to postsecondary education options might not be sufficient to improve employment outcomes
ResPECT	• Emphasizes in-demand skills and credentials • Residential component focuses training and fosters social skills • Builds on strong existing causal evidence	• High cost to operate and scale residential component
TESS	• Provides comprehensive approach • Uses long-term intervention to support youth through young adulthood • Reduces employment disincentives for SSI youth	• High implementation cost • No evidence and testing might not be feasible because of long-term approach • Requires private donors
TEST-CTE	• Uses existing guide with high school staff • Makes CTE widely available • Tailors intervention to large population of youth with disabilities	• May require ongoing refresher training and reinforcement • Scaling requires implementation on individual district or school level
Federal program policy		
Delaying SGA	• National intervention that affects all disability applicants ages 18 to 22 • Consistent with other federal policies that consider age 22 a critical age for adulthood	• Weak theory of change and no evidence that policy will lead to better employment outcomes • Requires change to current federal law • High cost and complexity to implement

CTE = career and technical education; DOL = U.S. Department of Labor; FEAT = Family Employment Awareness Training; SGA = substantial gainful activity; SSI = Supplemental Security Income; TESS = Transition to Economic Self-Sufficiency; TEST-CTE = Translating Evidence to Support Transitions—Career and Technical Education; YFSN = Youth and Family Systems Navigator.

Depending on the policy objectives and transition landscape, the ideas offered in six papers represent those that could be considered as having a high reward and low risk for policymakers to implement, given their level of evidence, cost, and potential for replicability, scalability, and sustainability. TEST-CTE and FEAT have at least some supporting evidence, are low-cost to implement, and appear to be replicable, scalable, and sustainable. Progressive Education and Transition Tracker might meet these criteria with additional empirical evidence. Apprenticeship Infrastructure and ResPECT meet all of these criteria, though they are high cost.

The interventions proposed in the remaining papers (Delaying SGA, Employment Empowerment, Family Empowerment Model, Healthcare Treatment Team, TESS, and YFSN) might have more obstacles to overcome from policymakers' perspectives because they have a combination of low or no evidence, high costs, or barriers to sustainability. Nonetheless, these interventions also offer promising solutions for supporting youth receiving SSI in achieving their employment goals—that is, youth outcomes might improve substantially as a result for these high-cost, high-risk ideas.

By asking the transition field for innovative ideas, ODEP expected that the project's papers would have gaps and limitations in what we know. Common gaps include the proposed intervention's effects on employment outcomes, costs, and implementation challenges. Despite these gaps, the papers identify ways for policymakers and other stakeholders to take the next steps—large and small—that could encourage youth receiving SSI to further their employment outcomes. To address these gaps, all proposed interventions would benefit from collecting additional evidence to fill these gaps and offer policymakers a basis to implement an intervention on a larger scale. Those papers identified as having a high reward and low risk could benefit from large-scale demonstrations, while other papers could document their potential through small-scale pilot tests. A companion report for the project will document evaluation considerations for the ideas proposed by the papers.

Because nearly all papers seek to address the needs of youth receiving SSI, collaborating with SSA would be highly beneficial for purposes of identifying these youth for outreach and recruitment into services. Such collaboration could take the form of data exchanges for programs to obtain the contact information of current or former SSI recipients. SSA is limited by law in its ability to share data with external entities. Federal, state, and local agencies interested in obtaining SSA data can request it by submitting SSA's data exchange request form (SSA-157). The agency's data use must be consistent with the administration of SSA's own programs, and the agency must meet SSA's data security requirements. Requestors might also face a cost to obtain the data (SSA undated). The process for establishing a data exchange can take 18 months or longer to complete. Because most states already have data exchanges in place between one or more state agencies and SSA, a more expedient route could be for state and local agencies to amend an existing agreement to accommodate their needs for purposes of directing transition services to youth receiving SSI. Because SSI eligibility confers eligibility for Medicaid in most states, working with the state Medicaid agency to identify and conduct outreach to youth receiving SSI is another option. A final option would be to work with SSA to have information about services incorporated into routine or specialized brochures and mailings sent to youth receiving SSI. However, SSA's ability to provide active service referrals is limited both by the required costs and resources as well as its legal authority. SSA is not permitted to refer its disability program participants to state VR services because of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act. However, the act does not prohibit SSA from making referrals to other entities, and nothing prohibits these other entities from connecting SSI recipients to other services, including VR. If the proposed interventions are to have any impact on the long-term

success of youth receiving SSI, they must first be able to find those youth and engage them in their efforts.

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