

Supporting the Whole Child: Connecting Brain Health, Systems, and Practice

Employment as a Health Outcome: Supporting Youth with Disabilities

July 30th, 2026
Session #8



What This Series Is

- An ongoing, twice-monthly learning series
- Grounded in the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework
- Interactive and case-based (not just presentations)
- Designed for multiple disciplines and perspectives
- Focused on real-world practice and collaboration

A space to learn, share, and problem-solve together in support of the whole child



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Career Coach



Today's Session

- Explore how employment contributes to the overall health and well-being of young people
- Highlight how individuals with disabilities can achieve employment success with the right supports and accommodations
- Provide an overview of the career coach role and the process of supporting youth with disabilities in exploring and obtaining employment opportunities
- WSCC component(s):
 - Community Involvement



Learning Objectives

1. Identify how employment can serve as a health outcome for youth.
2. Recognize key employment supports available to youth with disabilities.
3. Describe the role of career coaches in connecting youth with disabilities and employers.
4. Explore strategies to help youth prepare for successful employment.
5. Identify supports and resources available to employers who hire youth with disabilities.



Why Employment Is a Health Outcome

Young adults who work are more likely to:

- Report stronger self-esteem and confidence
- Experience greater social inclusion and community participation
- Build routines and life skills that support wellbeing
- Increase financial stability and reduce long-term poverty
- Develop stronger problem-solving and communication skills
- Experience improved mental health and life satisfaction

(Robertson et al., 2019)



Challenges

- Low expectations for working and self sufficiency
- Lack of access to employment services and work-based experiences
- Uncoordinated handoff to adult services
- Inadequate access to social and health services
- Financial disincentives to work
- Lack of knowledge about how benefits change when a person works



Interventions that Work

- Self-directed and Individualized Planning
- Family Involvement and Support
- Early and Meaningful Work Experiences
- Interagency Coordination including school based Transition Teams
- Supportive services
- Access to appropriate health care
- Employer engagement

Source: Social Security Administration (2024)



The Role of a “Career Coach”



Helps clarify career goals and direction

Supports skill development and career readiness

Provides accountability and motivation

Connects people to resources and opportunities

Assesses work tasks and develops tools and solutions for success on the job



In Practice

1. Assess skills, interest strengths, needs, and goals
2. Discuss potential next steps: develop workplace readiness skills, job shadowing, work experience, and provide information about community resources.
3. Coordination with CHASE to support well-being and self-advocacy skills
4. Job Site Supports and **Self-Assessment**
5. Support long-term career goals
 - a. High school completion
 - b. Post-secondary options
 - c. Find permanent employment
6. Follow-up



Working with Employers

- Build sustainable connections with local businesses
- Provide education and information to support hiring youth with disabilities
- Match abilities and interests of the youth with the business needs
- Set clear expectations and encourage regular, planned communication
- Employers provide tours, interviews, supervision, training, and is engaged in corrective action plans
- Support supervisors and employers are willing to learn new ways of communicating and providing supervision for successful job completion



Tips for Assisting Youth with Employment Goals

- Relationships Matter - develop trust by be honest, transparent, and following through.
- Respect youth by allowing them to take managed risks such as working or community engagement.
- Provide opportunities to experience a variety of jobs and careers.
- Communicate expectations clearly and check-in often.
- Recognize growth and accomplishments.
- Find the right resource for the need.



Supporting Youth Employment: An Employer's Perspective



Garden Academy Early
Learning Center
Esther Pena, Director



Downtown Vision
Patrick Herd, Director



Finney County Transit
Joe Hopkins, Director



Employer Discussion Questions

1. When you first considered partnering with Kansas WorkforceONE to create a work experience for a young person with a disability, what questions or concerns come to mind?
2. Based on your experience, how can employment positively impact the lives of youth with disabilities?
3. What role can employers play in creating more inclusive workplaces for youth with disabilities?
4. What supports, training, or resources would help employers feel more confident recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retaining youth with disabilities?
5. What advice would you give to another employer who is considering hiring a young person with a disability for the first time?
6. Can you share a success story about a young person you've worked with through knectY? What made that experience meaningful for your organization?



Case Discussion

- How can you advocate within your organization or community for expanding employment opportunities for youth with disabilities?
- What can you do in your current role support a youth with a disability?



Kansas Employment Programs and Services

[KANSASWORKS Workforce Centers](#)

WIOA Youth and Adult Services

Veteran's Services

[Ticket to Work & Benefits Counseling](#)

[Kansas Centers for Independent Living](#)

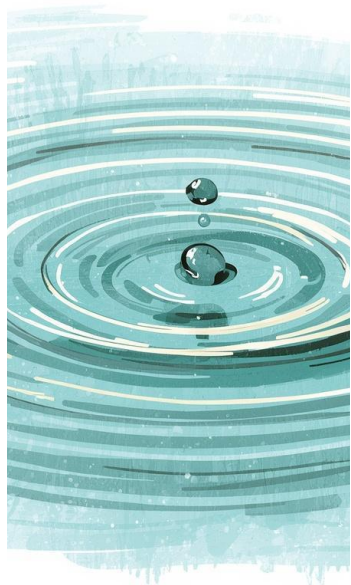
[Kansas Rehabilitation Services](#)

[Working Healthy, Benefits Counseling, WORK, and STEPS](#)

[Job Accommodation Network](#)



Today's Ripple



- Many young adults can work with the right support.
- Job coaches help youth and young adults be successful and become independent on the job while working with employers, coworkers and supervisors.
- Providing real world opportunities to experience different careers early on is important.
- There are resources to help families and youth try work and develop short- and long-term career goals, gain the skills they needs, and navigate services.



Thank you!



What's Next

From ACEs to Resilience: Supporting Adolescents Through Adversity

Join us August 12th at 9 AM CST with Gwen O'Brien & Allison Hilton!



References

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Lindsay, S., Fuentes, K., Tomas, V., & colleagues. (2024). Impact of employment and income support interventions on the health of young adults with episodic disability: Findings from a systematic review. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 46(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2023.2288878>

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Social Security Administration. (2024). *PROMISE effective practices: Findings and implications for supporting youth with disabilities in transition to adulthood*. https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/documents/PROMISE_Effective_Practices.pdf

