

## Guideposts for Success FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

**The future is only as strong as our youth.** Policymakers and administrators must ensure a robust framework exists to cultivate our future by recognizing these two guiding thoughts:

1. All youth benefit from opportunities, services, and supports that are tailored to their individual needs regardless of disability.
2. Policies and practices must provide full access to high-quality, community-integrated services that foster positive education and employment opportunities that lead to independent living and financial self-sufficiency.

**The Guideposts for Success** establishes the idea that strong public policy and practice should:

- Increase opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities transitioning to adulthood;
- Ensure youth have access to postsecondary education and training programs that lead to competitive integrated employment;
- Require systems of support to coordinate all youth transition-related programs, service, and strategies;
- Establish state and local priorities related to transition-age youth;
- Provide leadership with data that will help inform the decision-making process regarding funding to maximize the impact of resources; and
- Formulate an evaluation framework to measure the impact and alignment of agency programs and services with evidence-based practice.



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## FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE— POINTS FOR POLICYMAKERS

The “Guideposts for Success: Framework for the Future” provides policymakers and administrators with a practical construct that ensures the comprehensive delivery of programs and services across five key domains:

1. School-based preparatory experiences
2. Career preparation and work-based learning
3. Youth development and leadership
4. Connecting activities
5. Family engagement

This framework has broad implications across many youth-serving systems, including secondary and post-secondary education as well as career technical education, vocational rehabilitation, mental health services, developmental disabilities, health services, and other social services.

# 1 SCHOOL-BASED PREPARATORY EXPERIENCES

A youth's successful transition into adulthood begins with the foundation built within the educational environment. As policymakers, it is critical to **ensure this foundation is set by developing strong school-based preparatory experiences** that include rigorous, relevant, and inclusive academic curricular and program options that are aligned with local industry needs, a safe supportive learning climate and environment, and access to effective educators.

# 2 CAREER PREPARATION AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

As youth and young adults look to the future, the world of careers is often overwhelming. **Young people benefit greatly from timely and diverse career preparation and work-based learning opportunities.** Policymakers have a current legislative construct to ensure each youth has exposure to career preparation and work-based learning experiences, such as job shadowing, internships, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and summer work experiences. Work-based learning should prepare students with the skills needed by today's employers.

# 3 YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

**Youth are the future of society.** Communities benefit when policymakers design and develop service frameworks that provide youth opportunities to develop self-determination, self-advocacy skills, and social skills. Young people are our future leaders. Leadership has been defined as "influence." The ability to influence and lead is gained through integrity, creating positive change, problem solving, attitude, vision, and self-discipline. Policymakers must foster opportunities to help youth develop into leaders through participating in youth leadership forums, student councils and other advocacy and advisory groups.

*Source: Maxwell, J (1993). Developing the leader within you. Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN*



## 4 CONNECTING ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

The needs of young people can be diverse and can span a variety of life areas. Often the connecting services between these life areas are not available for youth, and it can significantly impact the successful transition process. Young people need bridges between core services and supports. **Policymakers are the bridge builders for the youth of today.** Bridges are needed across general health care, mental health, benefits counseling, financial literacy, recreational activities, and life skills education to promote a future of independence.

## 5 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The importance of families—including parents, guardians, caregivers, extended family, and systems of support including mentors, allies, coaches and friends—in the lives of young people is critical in the transition process. Our systems often take an individualized approach to service delivery, but there is **growing evidence for the need for a family systems approach to service delivery.** To this end, policymakers should embrace a **multi-layered approach** to service delivery that supports family members to set high expectations, to be involved in their young person's education, to build strong advocacy skills, and to create a vision for a positive future for their child. This should be done while supporting their child's development of self-determination.

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