



**Supporting Youth with  
Disabilities in  
Employment through  
COVID-19**

**CAPE - Youth**

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CENTER FOR ADVANCING POLICY  
ON EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH

May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

# The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth (CAPE-Youth)

CAPE-Youth seeks to improve employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities by helping states build capacity in their youth service delivery and workforce systems.

# CAPE-Youth Strands of Work

CAPE-Youth is dedicated to assisting states in identifying new opportunities to increase capacity by improving:

- Strategic Partnerships and System Coordination;
- Work-based Learning; and
- Professional Development.

# Partners



**The Council  
of State  
Governments**



**ILR Yang-Tan Institute**

The center is fully funded by the United States Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy in the amount of \$5 million under Cooperative Agreement No. OD-33982-19-75-4-21

# The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth

## CAPE-Youth:

- Conducts research on new and existing innovative policy and practice;
- Develops strategic partnerships;
- Shares best practices among key stakeholders; and
- Helps states identify opportunities for new programs and services.

# Current Initiatives

- National Youth Transition Policy Working Group
- Youth Engagement
- Technical Assistance
- CAPEYouth.org
- Research Initiatives



# CAPE-Youth Research Initiatives: COVID-19 Scan (1 of 6)

While youth with disabilities are not inherently at higher risk for contracting COVID-19, youth with disabilities may be disproportionately affected by the disruption of services, including receiving appropriate special education, related services, and accommodations, among other programs and services.

[Cape Youth COVID Scan](#)

# CAPE-Youth Research Initiatives: COVID-19 Scan (2 of 6)

CAPE-Youth conducted a national state by state scan on state level responses to COVID-19 that focus on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the transition of youth and young adults with disabilities. Current areas of focus include:

- Assistive Technology
- Distance Learning
- Family Engagement
- Individualized Education Programs
- Mental Health
- Telehealth
- Transition Services



# CAPE-Youth Research Initiatives: COVID-19 Scan (3 of 6)

What are states doing to assist youth and young adults with disabilities in their transition during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **Assistive Technology**

- *Michigan* is increasing access to assistive technology to support online learning through initiatives such as the Alt-Shift Lending Library.

- **Distance Learning**

- *Washington* has conducted least restrictive environment (LRE) case studies to help schools and educators understand how to provide least restrictive environments for students with disabilities during remote learning.

# CAPE-Youth Research Initiatives: COVID-19 Scan (4 of 6)

What are states doing to assist youth and young adults with disabilities in their transition during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **Family Engagement**
  - *North Carolina* Department of Public Instruction developed a website “Remote Learning Parent and Caretaker Resources” to assist parents in finding technology help, COVID-19 information, and online educational activities.
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**
  - *Colorado* provides IEP tele-facilitation services at no cost to schools or families remotely during COVID-19.

# CAPE-Youth Research Initiatives: COVID-19 Scan (5 of 6)

What are states doing to assist youth and young adults with disabilities in their transition during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **Mental Health**

- *Maine* Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services funds the Family Respite program. The program has expanded access to services during this time and now provides 26 hours per month of in-home support for families raising a child with a mental health diagnosis or two or more developmental delays.

# CAPE-Youth Research Initiatives: COVID-19 Scan (6 of 6)

What are states doing to assist youth and young adults with disabilities in their transition during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **Telehealth**

- *Wisconsin* Department of Public Instruction released Teleservice Considerations for school districts and service providers understand how teleservices can be used to continue providing services to students with disabilities.

- **Transition Services**

- *Texas* Vocational Rehabilitation is hosting Online Student Transition Fairs.

# Employment of Youth and Young Adults w/ Disabilities in a Recovering Economy

**CAPE -Youth**  
CENTER FOR ADVANCING POLICY  
ON EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH

## Employment of Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities in a Recovering Economy:

Lessons from the Great Recession and Considerations for Policymakers Today | by Matthew Saleh and Andrew Karhan | February 2021

### Summary

Youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD) face a steeper road to employment and reemployment because of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession. Economic downturns disproportionately affect the employment outcomes of Y&YAD. Lessons from the Great Recession of 2008—coupled with an understanding of the unique service delivery challenges posed by the pandemic—can help guide responses by state policymakers and program administrators. Supporting Y&YAD during this time will require states to focus on reemployment and unemployment for those who were working, while maintaining and adapting supportive services and career pathways necessary to find employment for those Y&YAD who are not yet in the labor force. This brief outlines state-level strategies and examples policymakers and program administrators can utilize to support Y&YAD in securing employment. Key considerations include:

#### AVOID FORFEITING FEDERAL FUNDS

States are operating on tighter budgets than before the pandemic, but limiting cuts to programs supporting Y&YAD that provide federal matching funds (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation and Medicaid) can avoid further losses to essential services and activities for the population of Y&YAD.

#### BEING NIMBLE TO INCREASE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Many Y&YAD are experiencing disruptions to skill building, career preparation, and supported employment services during the pandemic. Securing and increasing access to these services can be accomplished in the following ways:

#### 1 Providing technical assistance (TA) to local areas to serve the unique needs of Y&YAD

State-level TA and support to regional and local service providers can help them navigate uncertainties about the reopening of business sectors and new workplace requirements, while identifying and leveraging scalable innovative steps—both from within your state and from other states—to meet the specific needs of Y&YAD.

#### 2 Initiating and leveraging collaborative partnerships

Adapting policy in response to the pandemic will require innovative partnerships between workforce development systems, employers, and employment service providers. Identifying innovative solutions to fiscal and program challenges requires policymakers and program administrators to explore new partnerships and consider leveraging existing “shovel-ready” workforce programs (those that can be implemented or expanded quickly), interagency taskforces, and local-level community partnerships to meet the needs of Y&YAD.

#### 3 Working to maintain continuity of services for youth and families

Policymakers and program administrators can take steps to meet the continued need for effective remote services (such as telehealth services) in place of traditional in-person services, as well as innovative approaches to providing career preparation experiences and activities (e.g., job shadowing, apprenticeships, and career fairs) to help maintain continuity to career pathways for Y&YAD.

1. Avoid forfeiting federal funds
2. Be nimble to increase access to employment service
  - Initiating and leveraging collaborative partnerships
  - Provide technical assistance to serve needs of youth
  - Working to maintain continuity of services for youth and families
  - Need for effective remote service delivery

[Employment of Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities in a Recovering Economy-Brief](#)

# Avoid Forfeiting Federal Funds

- Funding to explore:
  - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (2014) – Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation: 21.7% Match
  - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) – Special Education
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
    - State formula grants
    - Financial assistance
  - Medicaid
    - Employment services
    - Case coordination

# Be Nimble to Increase Access to Employment Service – Part 1

- Provide technical assistance (TA) to states and localities to serve needs of youth
  - Increasing concern from providers about meeting the demand for services in the pandemic.
  - TA can:
    - Address uncertainties about reopening process.
    - Offer guidance on maintaining relationships with business.
    - Identify and scale innovated practices.
    - Provide tools to professionals serving youth to address the challenges of the pandemic (State Example - Oregon).



# Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Library Toolkit



**Jen Munson**

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Vocational Rehabilitation  
Counselor  
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Oregon Department of Human  
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**State Library of Oregon**  
Government Information and Library Services

**Amy Coughenour**

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Electronic Resources Librarian  
Government Information &  
Library Services  
State Library of Oregon

# Background & Overview



# Process

- VR staff sends research request
- Follow-up questions
  - Topic parameters
  - Format preferences
    - Clients' tech skills/needs
  - Identities to emphasize
  - Deadlines
- Add to VR Toolkit?
  - Yes = email link to section
  - No = email list of resources



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# Vocational Rehabilitation Library Toolkit

Toolkit of resources and services for ODHS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and staff and their clients

## About

### Resources for Clients

Career Exploration

Job Seeking

Soft Skills Training

Technology Skills & Training

Applying for Disability Benefits

Booklists

### Resources for VRCs

Job Seeking Support

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Mental Health Resources

Support Formerly Incarcerated

Trauma Informed Resources

Professional Development

Collaborative Networks

### Content Updates

### Questions/Comments

## Vocational Rehabilitation Library Toolkit: About

This toolkit includes links to library resources and curated online resources for both vocational rehabilitation clients and vocational rehabilitation counselors and staff.

Resources are organized by **user group** (clients or staff) and **topic area** (see left-side menu and lists below).

**Note:** This toolkit is designed to be flexible and constantly growing. Check back for updates, or subscribe to email updates from the [Content Updates](#) page.

### Resources for Clients

- **Career Exploration:** general information, high interest careers
- **Job Seeking:** informational interviews, video resumes, finding remote work
- **Soft Skills Training:** communication skills, concentration, conflict management, goal setting, professionalism, time management
- **Technology Skills & Training:** computer skills, internet skills
- **Applying for Disability Benefits:** information from SSA and Oregon, videos about the process
- **Booklists:** biographies by people with disabilities; anthologies by people with disabilities



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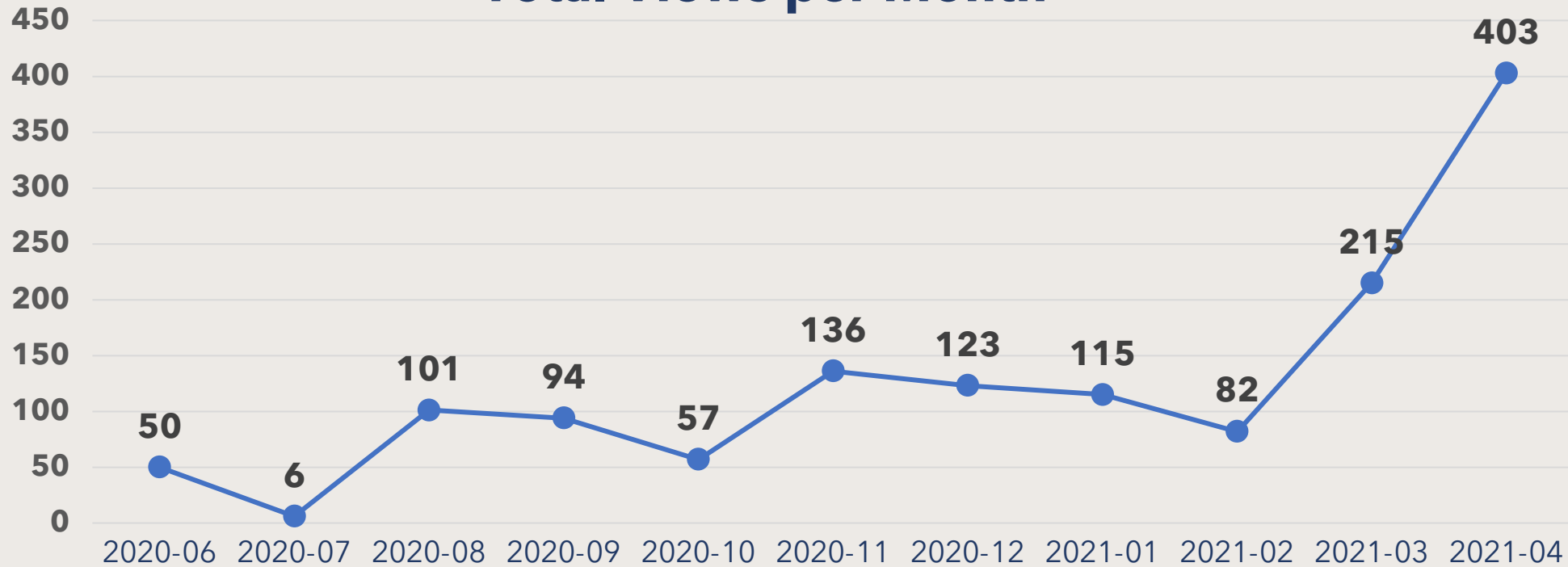
### Resources for Voc Rehab Counselors

- **Job Seeking Support:** creating video resumes; remote work
- **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:** DEI, anti-racism, equity frameworks
- **Mental Health Resources:** video and recorded webinars; articles, reports, & websites; databases; workbooks
- **Support Formerly Incarcerated:** articles & books, training, videos
- **Trauma Informed Resources:** trauma informed care, trauma informed vocational rehabilitation counseling
- **Professional Development:** training resources, goal setting, reading/book club suggestions, streaming video options
- **Collaborative Networks:** Oregon Library Directory, Oregon Local Workforce Boards

[VR Toolkit from the Library](#)

# Usage Analytics (1 of 3)

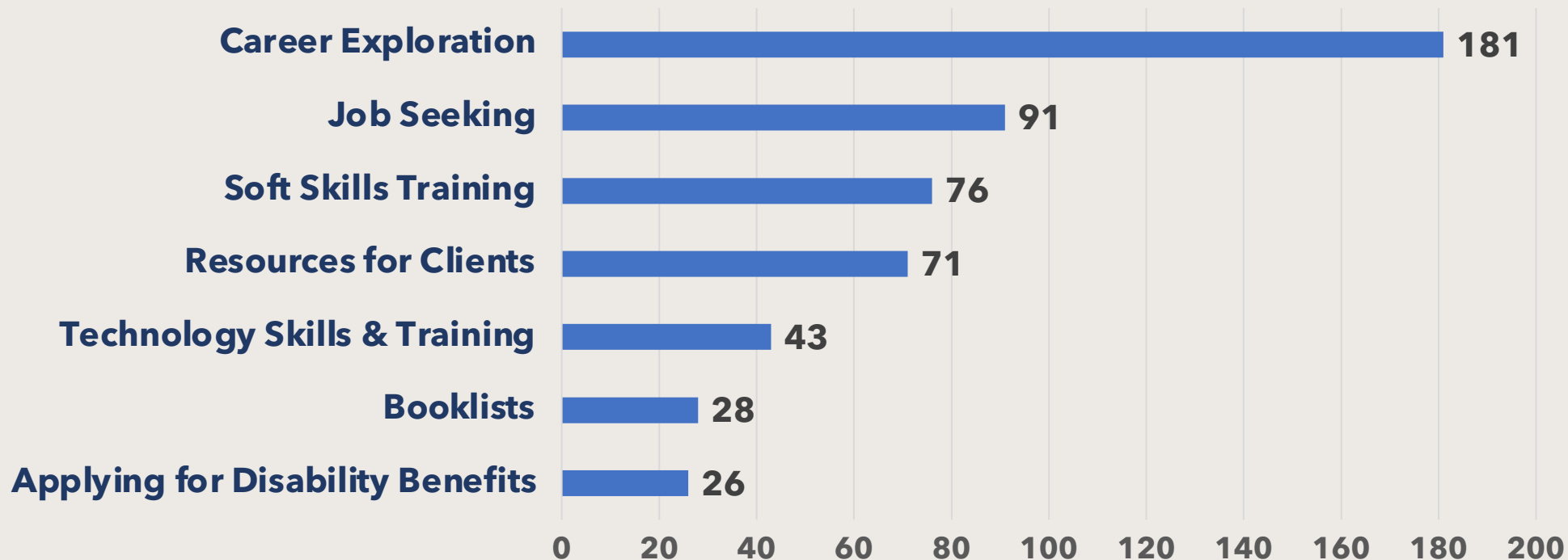
## Vocational Rehabilitation Library Toolkit: Total Views per Month



Timeframe: June 15, 2020 - April 30, 2021

# Usage Analytics (2 of 3)

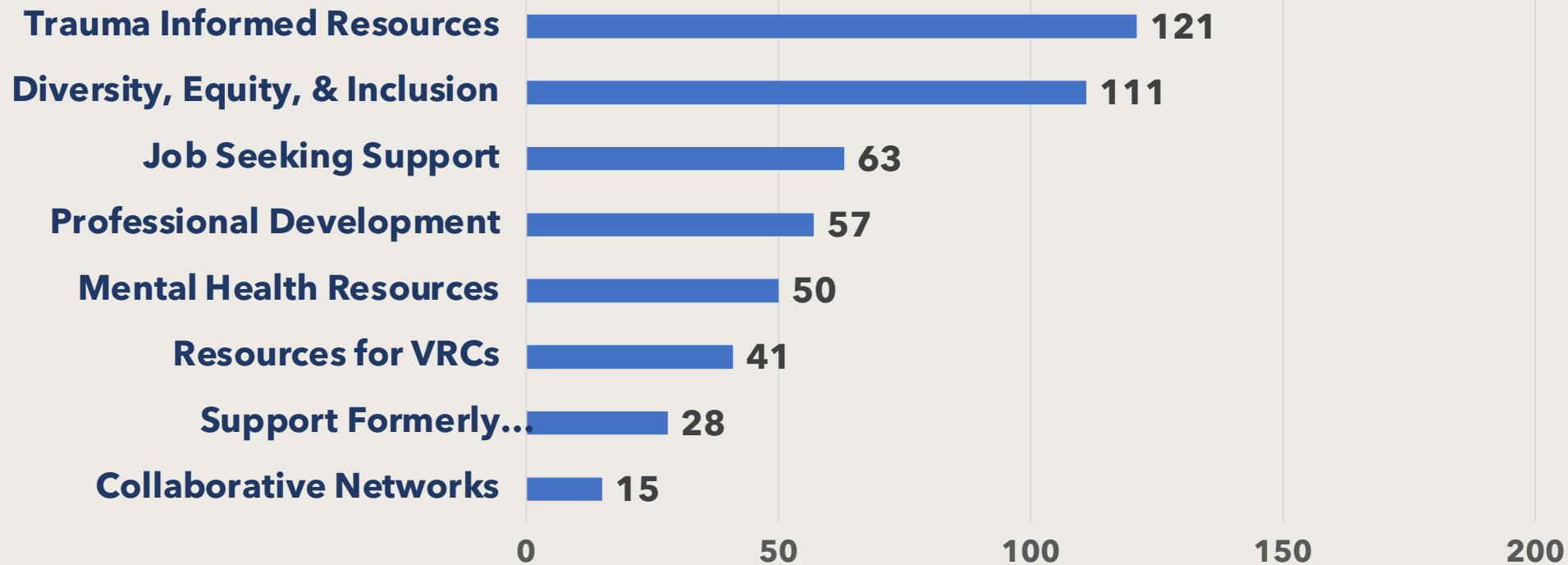
## VR Library Toolkit - Resources for Clients: Total Page Views



Timeframe: June 15, 2020 - April 30, 2021

# Usage Analytics (3 of 3)

## VR Library Toolkit - Resources for VRCs: Total Page Views

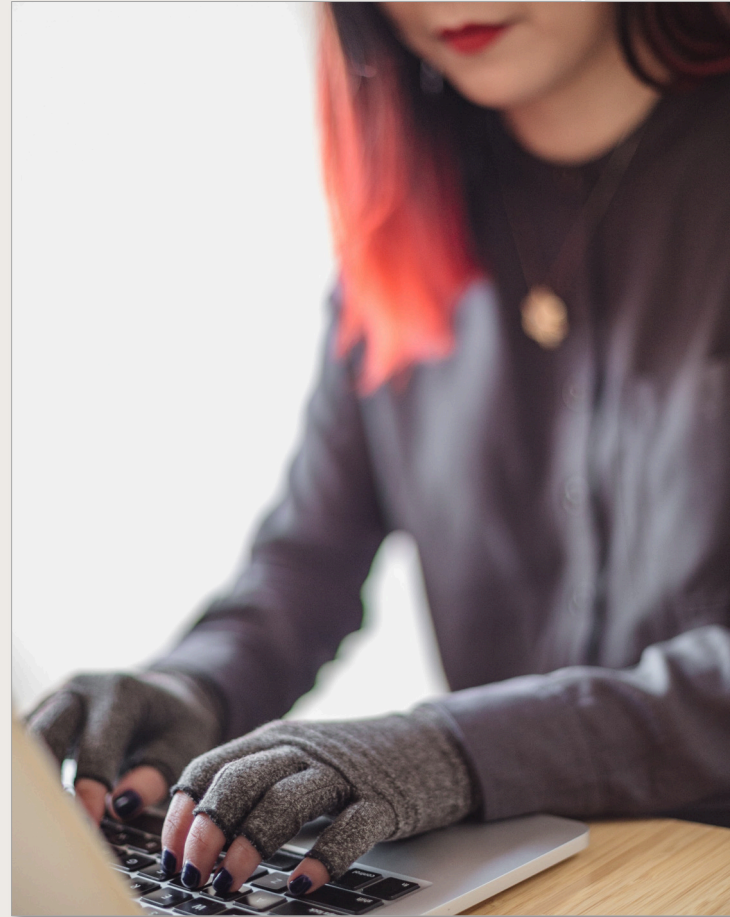


Timeframe: June 15, 2020 - April 30, 2021



# Successes

- Collect and curate resources to fill service gaps
  - Clients' resources = open access or via statewide databases for all Oregonians
  - All resources are reviewed and vetted for relevance
- Collaborative environment generates learning opportunities



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# Challenges

- Reaching appropriate people at relevant times
- Overwhelming number of resources sent to VR counselors in response to COVID-19 pandemic



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# Toolkit Overview

- Toolkit designed to be dynamic – continually add sections and resources
  - High demand, entry level careers
- Seek outreach opportunities
  - Local branch office meetings
  - Newsletter broadcasts
  - All staff demonstrations
- Replicate for other areas of need



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# Be Nimble to Increase Access to Employment Services – Part 2

- Initiating and leveraging collaborative partnerships
  - One unforeseen benefit – removal of barrier to working from home.
  - Developing strong career pathways requires innovative collaborations.
  - Leveraging existing “shovel ready” programs
    - Summer youth employment programs
    - Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
  - Examine new partnerships to maximize existing resources.
    - WorkHawaii Youth Program

# WorkHawaii Youth Program (WHYP)

## Career Explorations through Virtual Tours

**Mark Menard**

Disability Resource Coordinator Youth Services Center

**Lord Ryan Lizardo**

Program Manager of Work-Based Learning  
Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i

**Kiyana Higa**

Case Manager, WorkHawaii

**Kirstin Punu**

Community Engagement and Strategic Partnerships – AES



# Virtual Tours

In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii (CCH):

- WHYP is delivering career exploration tours via ZOOM virtual platform for our participants.
- Using ZOOM we are able to connect with businesses at their sites in real time to offer a comparable experience.
- Video tour
- Employee interviews
- Participant Q & A
- Post tour re-cap meetings also take place to provide feedback for improvement.



# WHYP Staff Function (1 of 2)

## Before Virtual Tour

- Discussion/selection of potential sites with CCH
- Conduct pre-tour meeting with CCH and site
- Ask site to focus on job opportunities, required skills, importance of soft skills
- Share Zoom link with invite
- Request PowerPoint for sharing
- Request names of partner attendees for secure access into meeting
- Create questionnaire for participants to complete after tour





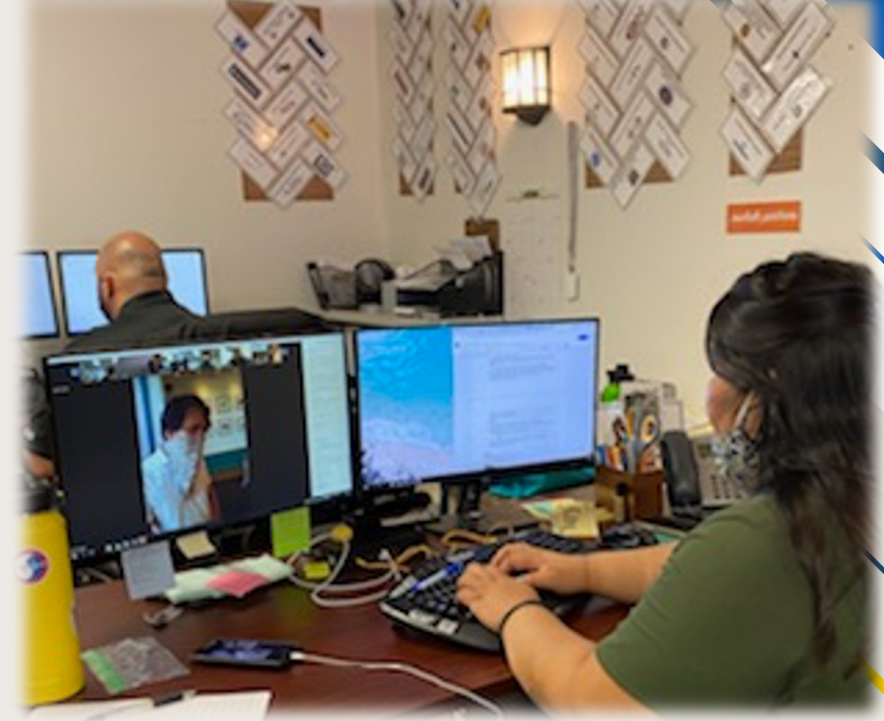
# WHYP Staff Function (2 of 2)

## During Virtual Tour

- Provide technical support (screen sharing presentations)
- Reading questions from chat room

## After Virtual Tour

- Participants complete questionnaire
- Feedback from questionnaire shared with WHYP staff and CCH during debrief



# Preparing Participants for Virtual Tour

- Discuss upcoming business confirmed for tour
- Research company
- Discuss possible questions
- Provide participants Zoom info/link/invite, earphones with microphone
- Utilize chat box
- Encourage use of reaction features
- Camera/video on
- Appropriate behavior and language
- Complete questionnaire

# Virtual Tour

Local Joe

"DEEP ROASTED COFFEE WITH A SOULFUL ESSENCE"

[www.localjoehi.com](http://www.localjoehi.com)

# Virtual Tour @ Local Joe – 8.21.2020

Mr. Michael, General Manager of Local Joe, provides answers to participant questions during the virtual tour. His positive presence and communication skills were a great example of why customer service matters in any position, in any industry. The Aloha spirit is thriving at Local Joe.

**Mahalo Mr. Michael**





# Mahalo Local Joe: Feedback from our participants after our 1st Virtual Tour with Local Joe



"Thanks for taking the time to talk to us & showing us around." –Daysha

"Thank you! I would definitely promote their shop everyway I can." -Roy

"Thank you for taking the time to give us information about the workforce." –Isaiah

"I would order something from them then post a picture of what I got and where I got it." –Alejandro

"Keep doing what you're doing because it will continue to grow your business." -Erphina



# The AES Corporation (AES)

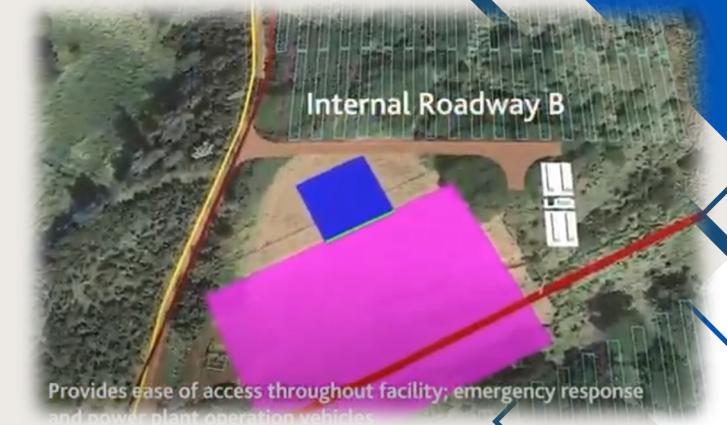


**Kirstin  
Punu**  
Community  
Engagement and  
Strategic Partnerships

## Who is AES Clean Energy?

As Hawai'i accelerates its transition to a 100% renewable future by 2045, AES is partnering with utilities, communities, landowners, and customers to deliver greener, smarter energy solutions and help ensure a responsible and equitable transformation to clean energy.

Hawai'i is the nation's most dependent state on imported fossil fuels, making its clean energy targets all the more critical for supporting the state's economy, the environment, and energy security. Working together with local leaders and utilities at the forefront of the clean energy transition like Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative and Hawaiian Electric Companies, we're developing innovative, renewable energy solutions that will accelerate Hawaii's energy transition while delivering affordable, reliable electricity to serve customer needs across the state.



# Be Nimble to Increase Access to Employment Services – Part 3

- Working to maintain continuity of services for youth and families
  - Identify ways to serve as many youth as possible.
  - Disruptions in internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning opportunities.
  - Barriers to youth and families accessing online learning platforms and assistive technology.
- Need for effective remote service delivery
  - Tele-health
  - Web-based Pre-ETS
  - Online transition fairs (Texas)



# Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWC-VRS)

Mayra A. Gutierrez, M.S.

Transition Program Specialist

Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation  
Services (TWC-VRS)

# (TWC-VRS): Virtual Service Delivery

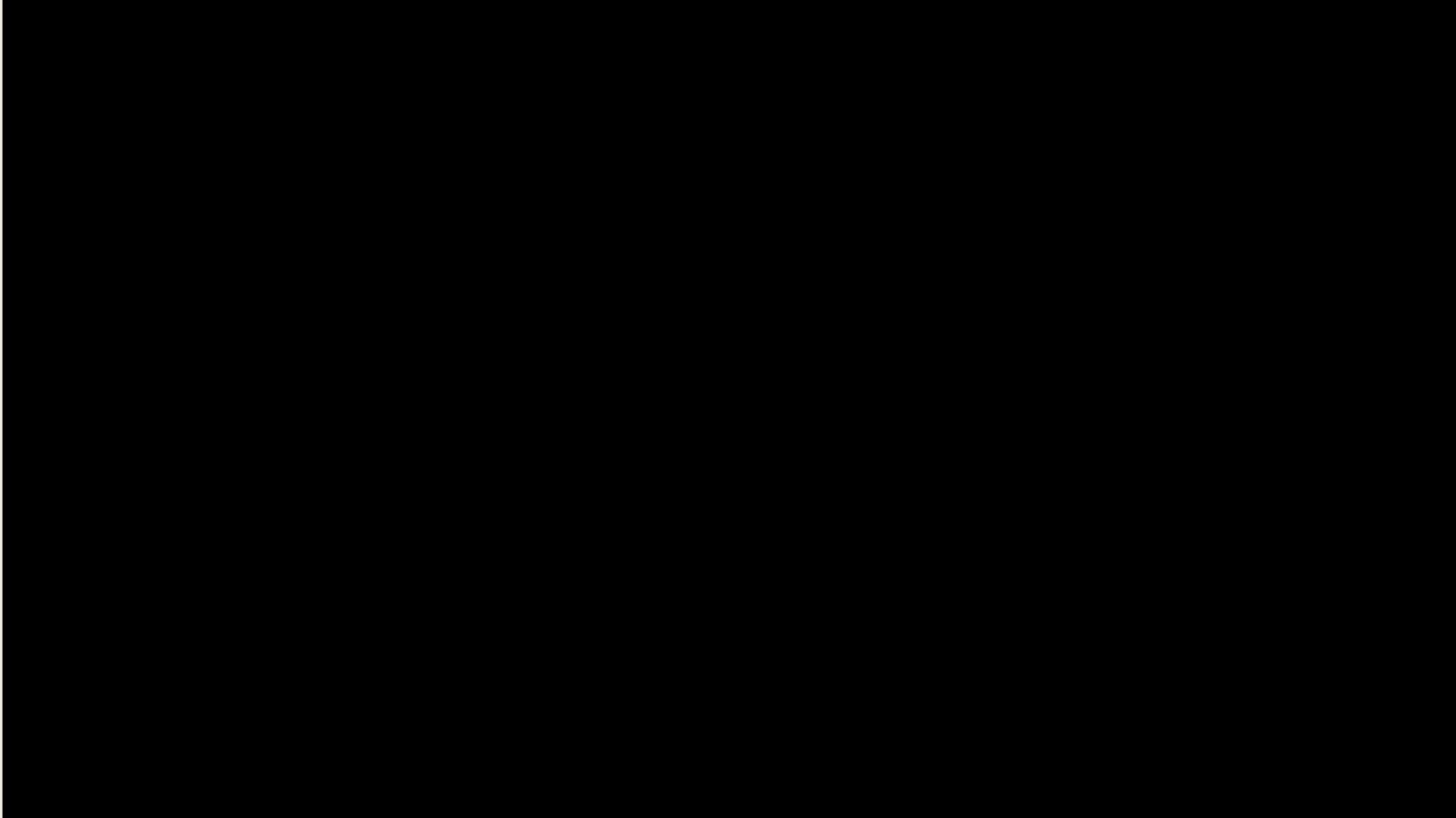
## Easy Virtual Fair (EVF)

- Online event platform
- Fully customizable
- Built in chat (video and audio options available)
- Webcast, webinar, and networking features
- Metrics and analytics; live support; compatible with desktops/laptops and mobile devices

## Licenses | Pavilions | Booths

- 4 Licenses: Job/Career fairs, transition events, training events, and special events
- 6 pavilions tailored for each event
- Unlimited booths for each pavilion

# Demo Easy Virtual Fair - Gulf Coast Virtual Job and Resources Fair



# Successes and Challenges - EVF

TWC-VRS has hosted over **50** unique events on the Easy Virtual Fair platform with an overall participation of nearly **5,000** attendees.

## Successes

- Uninterrupted service delivery
- New customer referrals
- Customers hired
- Partnerships and collaboration

## Challenges & Limitations

- Technology
- Accessibility

# Plans for Future Growth - EVF

- As we continue to work through the challenges and limitations, we'll continue expanding our audience and increasing in the number of events.
- We continue to train our staff and increase support available to our customers when using EVF.
- Our goal is to host 52 unique events per license, a total of over 200 virtual events per fiscal year.



# In Summary . . . .

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## Employment of Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities in a Recovering Economy-Brief

# Questions?

## Contact Us

If you are interested in learning more about our work, participating in our research initiatives, or providing information for our National or Covid-19 Scans, please contact:

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