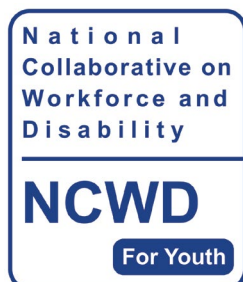


# BY FOR YOUTH



# EMPLOYMENT



Navigating the Road to Work

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This publication was co-written by members of the Youth Action Council on Transition (YouthACT), Jennifer Thomas, and Nathan Cunningham. YouthACT is a national initiative to get more youth with disabilities and their allies involved as leaders who partner with adults and organizations to improve opportunities for youth to succeed in life. YouthACT is led by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

# INTRODUCTION

Caitlyn Bosco, a high school senior with the YouthACT Thundercats team, understands the importance of work. Caitlyn has a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and works two jobs while balancing school: one at her local Arby's and another at the Minnesota Renaissance School.

"Nearly all young people—98.6 percent—hold at least one job between the ages of 18 and 25" ([www.youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-employment](http://www.youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-employment)). These early work experiences help youth to prepare for and understand their path to lifelong careers. For youth with disabilities who face barriers to graduating from high school, attending college, and becoming employed, the knowledge and skills gained from early work experiences are extremely important.

If you're a young person and want to know more about finding and keeping the right job, the information in this brief can help. It is important to consider what makes a job right for you, where to look, and how to write a resume and interview. If you have a disability, you will also need to consider disclosure and how to ask for accommodations if you need them to do your work. After accepting a job offer, you can take advantage of opportunities for mentoring and continuing to build your skills.

This brief covers each of these topics and provides information on supports like vocational rehabilitation and transportation. It was created by youth and adult partners involved in the **National Youth Action Council on Transition (YouthACT)** to give youth tips on employment. You can use this brief and other resources like it to help you as you work toward your employment goal.

*"I LOVE WORKING AT THE RENAISSANCE SCHOOL BECAUSE I GET TO HELP THE KIDS WITH FUN THINGS LIKE CRAFTS, RECESS, LUNCH, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES. THEY ARE TODDLERS TO PRE-KINDERGARTEN, SO THEY'RE BUSY. BUT I HAVE EXPERIENCE BEING WITH FEISTY KIDS!" —CAITLYN BOSCO*



# FINDING THE RIGHT JOB

Depending on your current employment goal(s), you may be interested in finding a job that piques your interests or will help you gain more skills. On the other hand, you may have expenses and may be more concerned with how much the job will pay and whether or not your current skills are enough for you to qualify. If you have a disability, you may be concerned about your future employer's willingness to provide accommodations. You should think about whether or not you are looking for a job that is temporary (like a summer job) or permanent. You should also think about whether or not you want to work part-time or full-time. Whatever your situation, knowing your skills and what matters the most to you are important considerations when completing job applications, targeting employers, and searching for a job that is the right fit for you.

## Resources

- **O\*Net OnLine**  
[www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)
- **My Next Move**  
[www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org)
- **Kickstart Your ILP Toolkit**  
[www.dol.gov/odep/ilp/Kickstart.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/ilp/Kickstart.htm)

### Finding the Right Job Checklist

- Think about and research “dream jobs” that match your interests.
- Search for jobs in your area that will help you work towards your “dream job.”
- Be clear about your current and long-term employment goals.
- Know your skills, what you're looking for, and what you're unwilling to do for work.
- If you have a disability, think about what accommodations you may need to do the jobs you want.
- Visit potential employers in the community and look for jobs online using job finder websites.






# ***PREPARING A RESUME***

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As you're looking for a job that is right for you, it's important to become comfortable sharing what makes you a good fit for the position. Developing a resume (a short summary of your skills and experiences) for potential employers is one way to prepare. When you're developing your resume, think of ways to make yourself stand out. List your educational background, your work and volunteer history, and any skills and experiences you have that separate you from other applicants.

Try to always adjust your resume to the job that you're applying for. If you have just a standard resume that you send out for any and all jobs, that resume may not highlight the right qualifications for each one. If your resume focuses on your having a retail job, and you are applying for an office job, most of what you have listed may not be relevant. However, you can change the way your resume is worded to make many of the skills and experiences you gained from working in retail fit a resume for an office job.

When possible, try to have a cover letter in addition to your resume, even if it is not required. Employers receive a ton of applications and resumes for job postings. Providing a cover letter



# Resume

## Career Summary:

gives you an opportunity to explain to the employer why you are so interested in the position, and it allows the employer to learn a little bit more about you quickly

If you are applying for a creative job that may include writing, drawing, or painting, it can be helpful to include work samples that you have done in the past in a portfolio. Having a portfolio will allow you to highlight your past accomplishments and can give an employer more insight into your skill level.

## Resources

- ***44 Resume Writing Tips***  
[www.dailywritingtips.com/resume-writing-tips](http://www.dailywritingtips.com/resume-writing-tips)
- ***6 Tips for Writing an Effective Resume***  
[www.asme.org/career-education-retired/articles/job-hunting/6-tips-for-writing-an-effective-resume](http://www.asme.org/career-education-retired/articles/job-hunting/6-tips-for-writing-an-effective-resume)
- ***How to Write a Cover Letter***  
[www.career.vt.edu/JobSearchGuide/CoverLetterSamples.html](http://www.career.vt.edu/JobSearchGuide/CoverLetterSamples.html)

### Preparing a Resume Checklist

- Make sure you have everything on your resume, including schooling, past and current jobs/internships, skills, job responsibilities, accomplishments, volunteer and extracurricular activities, leadership roles, and contact info.
- Develop a cover letter, even if it is not required.
- Consider submitting a portfolio including artwork or writing samples when submitting your resume to help demonstrate your skills level.



## ***AGING AN INTERVIEW***

Just as it's important to prepare for a job by developing a resume, it's also important to prepare by getting ready for the interview. Interviews are conversations used by employers to learn more about the candidates they are most interested in hiring. When prepping for an interview, start by researching the company interviewing you. Whether they are big corporations or small "mom & pop" businesses, doing research on the organization can go a long way if and when you are asked what you know about the company. Understanding what the company does and communicating this knowledge during the job interview will show that you are really interested in the position.



*"THREE THINGS I BELIEVE SOMEONE HAS TO DO TO GET READY FOR EMPLOYMENT: 1) BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE; THIS CAN DETERMINE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION BY YOUR FUTURE EMPLOYER; 2) PREPARE YOUR APPEARANCE; 3) THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK OR ACT; PRACTICE AND PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW." – BLAKE AYERS, YOUTHACT GUIDING LIGHTS TEAM*

In addition to learning about the companies you are interested in working for, it is important to practice being interviewed. Have a friend or family member ask you mock interview questions to help you feel more comfortable with responding to questions that could be asked during an actual interview. Although some questions asked during a mock interview may not be the same questions asked during an actual interview, participating in mock interviews can help you gain confidence. Employers often expect you to make eye contact during interviews, so remember to practice this skill along with reviewing other interview tips located in the resources below.

At the end of the interview, employers often ask if you have any questions for them, so make sure you have at least one question in mind. Examples of questions you can ask future employers during interviews are, "Is there an opportunity to grow with the company?" and "What originally drew you into the business?"

When prepping for an interview, make sure you have, or can borrow or purchase, proper clothing so that you are "dressed to impress," no matter what job you are applying for. Dressing appropriately for an interview shows professionalism, demonstrates your character, and gives the employer an idea of how your character may translate into the workplace. If you're male, your interview outfit may consist of a button up shirt, a tie, slacks, and dress shoes. If you're female, you may choose to wear a nice top with dress pants or a nice dress with nice shoes. Depending on the type of job you are applying for, you may also decide to wear a blazer or an actual suit.

## Resources

### *Interview Tips for Youth*

[www.teenforce.org/uploads/interview\\_tips.pdf](http://www.teenforce.org/uploads/interview_tips.pdf)

### *20 Tips for Great Job Interviews*

[www.experisjobs.us/exp\\_us/en/Career-Resources/Career-Center/20-Tips-for-Great-Job-Interviews.htm](http://www.experisjobs.us/exp_us/en/Career-Resources/Career-Center/20-Tips-for-Great-Job-Interviews.htm)

### *Dress for Success*

[www.dressforsuccess.org](http://www.dressforsuccess.org)

### **Acing the Interview Checklist**

- Do your research! Know about the company you are interviewing with.
- Practice as much as possible for your interview. Become comfortable talking about the information on your resume.
- Think of questions you will ask the employer.
- Gather appropriate clothing for the interview and brush up on interview etiquette.





# ***DISABILITY DISCLOSURE & ACCOMMODATIONS***

After getting a job, you may realize you need supports to be successful in the workplace. If you have a disability, it's important to know that the accommodations or additional supports you received in high school do not automatically apply once you enter the world of work. In order to avoid discrimination through protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you will need to inform your employer that you have a disability. You will not need to disclose your specific diagnosis or the medical terms used to describe it, but if you require accommodations to perform the job, it's your responsibility to disclose so that you get your accommodations.

When disclosing, your employer will need to know how your disability affects your ability to do your work and the types of supports you feel are needed to do



*“AT THE END OF A GREAT INTERVIEW, I TOLD MY FUTURE BOSS ABOUT MY DISABILITIES AND THE ACCOMMODATIONS I WOULD NEED. SHE SHOOK MY HAND; I WAS VERY SCARED OF WHAT SHE WAS GOING TO SAY, BUT SHE SAID, ‘SOUNDS LIKE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU NEED. I’M GLAD YOU CAME TO ME AND DISCLOSED EVERYTHING.’ I GOT THE JOB AND RECEIVED MY ACCOMMODATIONS I NEEDED BECAUSE I WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO ASK FOR THEM.”* —**BETHANY BOUCHER, YOUTHACT RI DREAM TEAM**

the job successfully. For example, if you have attention deficit disorder (ADD), you can tell your employer you have a condition that affects your concentration, and you need support dividing large tasks into smaller steps. Disability disclosure is an individual decision, but if you choose to disclose, be positive and show you have a strong understanding of what you need. List your strengths and experiences and how they will positively affect your work performance.

In addition to obtaining protection under the ADA, disclosing your disability may relieve stress that can be experienced behind hiding a disability. Disclosing your disability is your choice, and there are pros and cons either way. If you choose to disclose, you can decide when to disclose by determining what, if any, accommodations are needed during the different stages of the hiring process. See the chart below for examples of pros and cons that you **MAY** experience when disclosing at different levels of the hiring process.

### Pros and Cons of Disclosure

| Stage of Hiring Process                | Pros  | Cons  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Cover Letter</b>                    | Shows that you are not ashamed and are confident in your ability to do the job  | Opens you up to potential pre-conceived opinions or stereotyping by employer  |
| <b>Before Interview</b>                | Provides you the opportunity to request accommodations during interview   | Leads to the possibility of being judged before meeting employer because of stigma connected with disability                        |
| <b>During Interview</b>                | Allows opportunity to address needs and demonstrate and discuss strengths   | Leaves the employer with the wrong impression if you did not disclose before and need accommodations to have a successful interview |
| <b>Immediately After Being Hired</b>   | Activates protection from discrimination under ADA and begins process of securing accommodations  | May affect job assignments and duties without having the chance to demonstrate skill level  |
| <b>Further Along After Being Hired</b> | Gives you time to get a better idea of accommodations needed, such as sick days or assistive devices, to perform job and establish a relationship with employer | Results in poor performance due to lack of accommodations and may affect relationships with co-workers and promotion opportunities  |

## Resources

- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**  
[www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)
- **The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities**  
[www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure)
- **Cyber Disclosure for Youth with Disabilities**  
[www.ncwd-youth.info/cyber-disclosure](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/cyber-disclosure)

### Disclosure & Accommodations Checklist

- Decide if you need to disclose a disability or other things and when and how you will do it.
- Be able to describe how your disability affects your work performance and the supports you need to succeed at work.
- Understand your rights and responsibilities under the ADA.
- If you do not want to disclose your disability, check your privacy settings on social media sites, as employers may see information posted online related to a disability.







## ***KEEPING A JOB***

After you get hired, you'll need to work in a way that allows you to keep your job and grow in it. All jobs have certain rules, guidelines, and expectations. It's important to know what these are from the beginning and to follow them. Timeliness and strong communication skills are essential. You must communicate with your supervisors and coworkers so you know what work needs to be done, when it needs to be completed, and how you will complete it. Remember that doing your job well will help you build a positive work history and professional contacts to support you throughout your career.

Strong communication skills can help you to succeed on the job in many ways, including talking to your supervisor about expectations. Getting to know your coworkers and interacting with them is also great for building communication skills, which are soft skills that help you work effectively with others. When practicing communication, it's important to know that communication is not just about talking. Communication also involves listening so that you can provide an appropriate response. Communicating with your coworkers can help you get to know them better personally or learn more about the type of work they do.



## Resources

- **10 Ways to Communicate Better at Work**

<http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2012/08/14/10-ways-to-communicate-better-at-work>

- **Soft Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success**

[www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills)

### Keeping a Job Checklist

- Make sure you understand when you must report to work. You may want to arrive earlier than your scheduled time so that you are prepared to start on time.
- Communicate clearly with your supervisor and coworkers and ask questions if you need help.
- Allow your coworkers and supervisor to finish talking before you respond.
- Take initiative and be proactive. If you complete a task, ask a coworker if he or she needs help, or ask if there are additional tasks for you to do.
- Build relationships with your coworkers so that you have a strong support network at work.
- Learn about important soft skills that help you succeed on the job.



*“I AM CURRENTLY EMPLOYED AT THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE. I REALLY ENJOY MY JOB AND MY CO-WORKERS ARE REALLY NICE TO ME. SOMETIMES I HAVE CUSTOMERS THAT ARE ANGRY AND GET MAD AT ME SOMETIMES, BUT I JUST STAND THERE AND KEEP SMILING. MY TIPS FOR YOU FOR KEEPING A JOB [ARE] DO NOT QUIT ON YOUR FIRST WEEK AND GIVE IT SOME TIME. A LOT OF THINGS HAPPEN IN YOUR JOB THAT YOU MAY NOT LIKE, BUT THAT IS OK. MY FINAL SUGGESTION IN KEEPING A JOB IS TO SPEAK WITH A SUPERVISOR IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM. THEY ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO LISTEN TO YOU.”* –HARDIN

*MANHEIN, YOUTHACT TN NEXT STEPS TEAM*

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION, INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS, AND OTHER SUPPORTS

As you move forward with your job search, and even after you are hired, you may realize you need services or supports. For example, you may need help managing your schedule or figuring out your local transportation system. If you have a disability, you may need help figuring out what assistive devices or other forms of accommodations might be best for you.

## Vocational Rehabilitation

Each state has a vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency, and it is the agency's job to provide eligible individuals with disabilities the supports and services they need in order to get, keep, and be successful in employment. If you have a disability and are in need of supports and services, ask a teacher or family member to help you apply to your state's VR program while you are still in high school. Once you apply, you will meet with a VR counselor to discuss your employment interests and needs. The counselor will determine if you are eligible. If you are eligible, you will work with a VR counselor to come up with an individual plan for employment, which includes your employment goal and the services and supports you need to reach this goal. Examples of services and supports include job coaching, professional clothing, assistive technology, and transportation.



*"IT IS IMPORTANT TO APPLY FOR VR SERVICES SO THAT YOU CAN HAVE THE SUPPORT YOU NEED TO PUSH YOU TO DO A GOOD JOB. DC REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION GOT ME ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, WHICH HELPS ME COMPLETE MY ASSIGNMENTS FOR BUSINESS AND COMPUTER CLASSES THAT WILL HELP ME REACH MY EMPLOYMENT GOAL."*

*—TERIANA COX, YOUTHACT DC TEAM*

## Vocational Rehabilitation Resources

- *Explore the World of Work...Discover Your Career Youth in Transition Toolkit*  
[www.dctransition.org/rsa](http://www.dctransition.org/rsa)
- *Rehabilitation Services Administration*  
<https://rsa.ed.gov>

### Vocational Rehabilitation Checklist

- Reach out to people who will support you in working towards employment goals.
- Reach out to your family or teachers who can help you with applications and for advocating with VR for the supports you need to do your job well.
- Research the job you are interested in first and figure out what it's all about so that you can identify the supports you need to do this job.

## Independent Living Centers

If you have a disability, Independent Living Centers (ILCs) may also be a helpful resource before or after you find employment. Your local ILC can provide services such as independent living skills training, information and referral services, and peer support. The ILC in your community can offer advocacy services as well.

## Independent Living Center Resources

- *National Council on Independent Living*  
[www.ncil.org](http://www.ncil.org)
- *Virtual CIL*  
[www.virtualcil.net/cils](http://www.virtualcil.net/cils)
- *Independent Living Research Utilization Program (ILRU)*  
[www.ilru.org/projects/cil-net/cil-center-and-association-directory](http://www.ilru.org/projects/cil-net/cil-center-and-association-directory)

### Vocational Rehabilitation Checklist

- Locate the ILC near you.
- Visit your local ILC and learn about the services offered.
- Participate in independent living and budgeting skills training, if needed.



# MENTORS

Whether you're looking for a job or already working, it's often helpful to have someone you can talk with who is doing the things you want to do. A mentor will listen to you, give advice, and show you new ways to be successful in reaching your employment goal. They have already accomplished the things you want to do. Most importantly, a mentor believes in you. Mentors are community members who may have worked at their job for a long time. They can teach you what they know and introduce you to other people who are experts. They can help you meet new people who live in your community. It could be helpful to have a mentor at work, in your community, or both.

## Resources

- ***Mentoring: Mind Tools***  
[www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV\\_72.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_72.htm)

### Mentors Checklist

- Identify a person in your community or at work who you think might make a good mentor.
- Tell the person what you would like to learn and ask him or her to be your mentor.
- Once you have a mentor, make time to meet so that you can tell your mentor about yourself and update him or her on your progress and goals.
- Ask your mentor to provide advice on how you can do your job well.



# CONCLUSION

Finding employment can be challenging. So much is involved: résumés, interviews, and accommodations, not to mention doing the job itself. Knowing your interests and options and preparing in advance can help you make a smooth transition into the working world. Remember to also explore options for support, including friends and family, to help you along the way.



*“YOU’VE GOT TO CHANGE PEOPLE’S MINDS ABOUT WHAT THEY THINK SOMETIMES. ONCE THEY KNOW YOU THEY WILL WANT TO WORK TOGETHER. I GOT MY FIRST JOB WHEN I WAS 16 YRS OLD. I WANTED TO WORK. I WANTED TO MAKE MY OWN MONEY. I WENT TO THE GOODWILL IN BROWNSBURG ON MY OWN AND GOT THE JOB. I WAS THE YOUNGEST PERSON WORKING AT THE GOODWILL. MY SCHOOL DID NOT HELP ME LEARN ABOUT EMPLOYMENT. I WAS ‘EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH’ FOR TWO DIFFERENT MONTHS. CUSTOMERS APPRECIATED MY WILLINGNESS TO HELP OUT.*

*I WAS FOCUSED. I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BIPOLAR IN FOURTH GRADE AND AUTISM IN TENTH GRADE. I CAN’T AFFORD TO BE AFRAID AND SHY AWAY. I MUST EMBRACE IT. IT IS WHO I AM. I’VE HAD PEOPLE TALK ME DOWN, BUT ALL THAT MATTERS IS WHAT I THINK. OVERTHINKING WHAT YOU COULD HAVE BEEN CAN GIVE YOU PROBLEMS. I WANT THE WAYS I THINK ABOUT MY LIFE TO BE POSITIVE.*

*PASSION AND COMPASSION ARE TWO TRAITS I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF. I LIKE TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE FIND THEIR INNER PASSION. I WANT PEOPLE TO SEE WHAT I SEE.”*

*—BLAKE AYERS, YOUTHACT SHINING LIGHTS TEAM*



*The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development issues. NCWD/Youth is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. NCWD/Youth is charged with assisting state and local workforce development systems to integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies. To obtain this publication in an alternate format please contact the Collaborative at 877-871-0744 toll free or email [contact@ncwd-youth.info](mailto:contact@ncwd-youth.info). All NCWD/Youth publications will be posted on the NCWD/Youth website at [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info). Please visit our site to sign up to be notified of future publications. This document was developed by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, funded by a grant/contract/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (Numbers OD-16519-07-75-4-11 and OD-23804-12-75-4-11). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply the endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor. Individuals may reproduce any part of this document. Please credit the source and support of federal funds.*

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