

Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE)

Improving the Trajectories for Youth with Disabilities and Families Living in Poverty Systems Change in 11 PROMISE States

NTACT Capacity Building Institute - - May 6 – 9, 2019

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Implementation of Federal Research Projects

Panelists:

Brent Williams, Arkansas PROMISE



Landscape at Implementation (October 2013)

- Build on existing evidence base with infrastructure models
- Complex partnerships between siloed agencies: culture and infrastructure challenge
- On the heels of YTD
- Timeframe: Infrastructure + Intervention needs more time



Implementation of Federal Research Projects

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Participant Population

- Intersection: Disability, Poverty, Minority
- School to Work/Independence Transition
- Distrust and need for relationship building
- Expectations: agency, family, self



Project Design

- Flexibility, Adaptability within Uniformity, Fidelity
- Student & Family Driven
- Holistic and Relationship-based
- Customized, Interest-based, Individualized



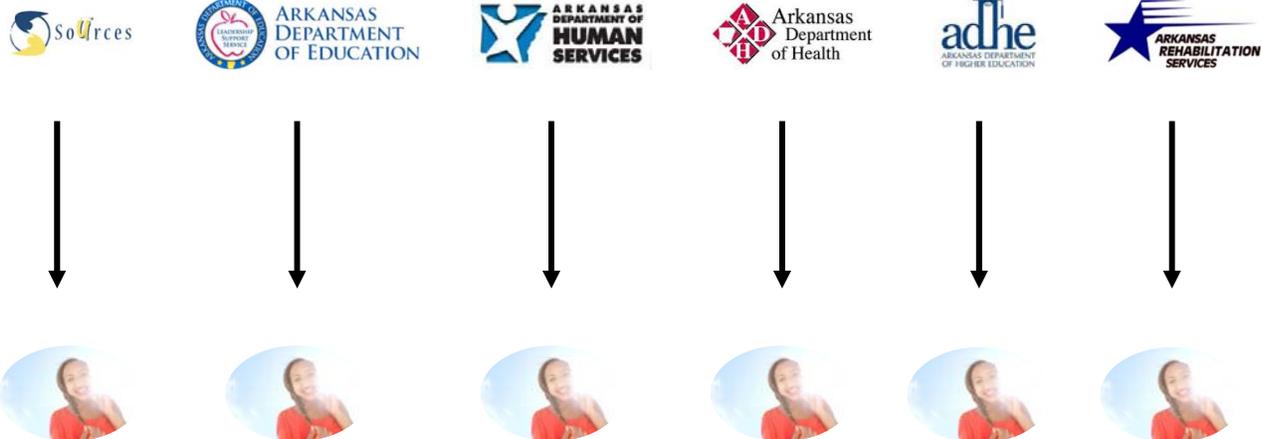


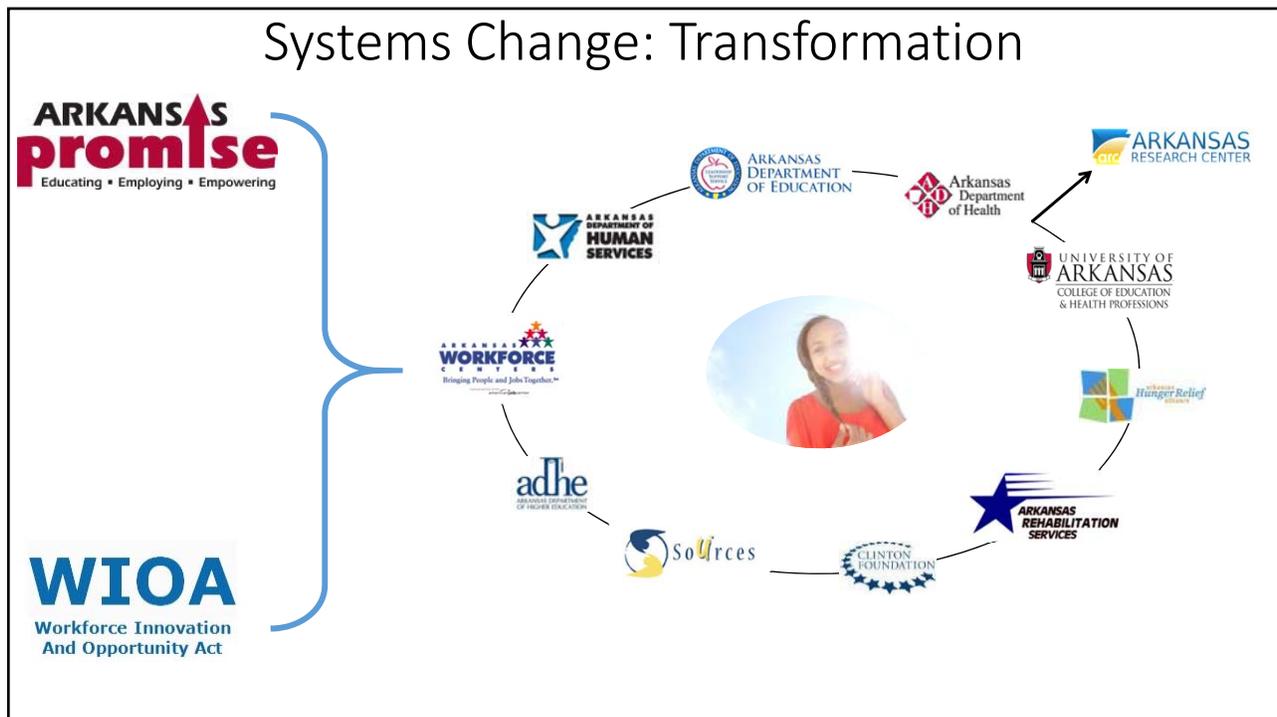
Systems Change: Alignment

ELEMENTS OF EMPLOYMENT	RSA	SSA	PROMISE
Formal Documents	Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	Individual Work Plan (IWP)	PROMISE Plan (includes ED goals)
Preliminary Assessment	Initial determination of eligibility and need for VR services	EN intake to include information gathering on strengths, goals, and skills	Gradual through Connector. Formal assessments through Transitionist.
Short-Term Goals	Measures of progress toward IPE completion	"S.M.A.R.T." goals set for 2-24 months	Small steps leading to long-term goal
Long-Term Employment Goal	Specific outcome with timeline	Specific goal within 3-5 years	Post-secondary work goal (+ ED if needed)
Employment means	Integrated setting, competitive wages	>/= Substantial Gainful Activity	Integrated setting, competitive wages
Services and Supports	Identified VR services in IPE	EN provides to secure and maintain emp.	Blend of PROMISE, federal, state, community services.

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Systems Change: Transformation





- ## Challenges
- Complexity of students' and families' needs
 - All needs are interconnected
 - Low to no expectations by all
 - No work experiences
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Participant Accomplishments

- High school retention and graduation
- Youth receiving vocational rehabilitation services
- Engaging in work experiences while in high school
- Participants were familiarized with Benefits Info



Program Accomplishments

- Serve whole person and family (person-centered and family-driven services)
- LEA staff - DOR counselor collaboration with youth and families
- Certified benefits planners
- Opened ABLÉ accounts, some seeded



Systemic Coordination and Collaboration of Services

Panelists:

Carol Ruddell, ASPIRE

Jade Gingerich, Maryland PROMISE



Required PROMISE Partners/Collaborators

- State VR services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act;
- Special education and related services under Part B of the IDEA;
- Workforce Development services under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), including Youth Services described in the WIA (Section 129(c)(2));
- Medicaid services under Title XIX of the Social Security Act;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act;
- Developmental/intellectual disabilities services; and
- Mental health services.



Lessons Learned: Partners

- Additional needed partners: Housing, Transportation, Juvenile Justice, General Education and American Indian Tribes
- Cross agency federal partnerships linked to state and local should be occur with greater frequency.
- Reframe the messaging around individuals on SSI within partners
- Increase capacity to serve individuals, particularly those with non obvious disabilities
- Message of “everyone can work with right supports and services” must extend beyond disability services
- What opportunities are there for youth with disabilities not in special education or on 504 plans?



Coordination of Services

- Local resource teams essential to connect students and families to the many services and supports for which they are eligible
- What information does each team member have?
- Students and family needs were in a constant state of change, and staff needed to meet youth and families where they were
- Smaller caseload sizes allowed for intensive supports through the process of connecting to services
- Poverty vs disability, understand there was a disability
- Individual vs family. Who is eligible is who is served



Lesson Learned: Coordination of Services

- Data across all the sites demonstrates youth on SSI and families can be engaged, with the right level of staff and resources
- Engage families, not just the eligible student
- Commitment of PROMISE staff time to obtain and maintain engagement in the process from application to service reception
- Use of supplemental targeted staff in addition to Case Management (job connectors, family facilitators etc.)
- Confidentiality – who knows what and what can be shared
- Need for more disability professionals cross training across the array of disability types/services
- Siloed services also translated into staff without broad cross section of knowledge



Leveraging of Funding

- PROMISE Funds offset existing gaps within the state systems
- Funding and levels of commitment vary with each partners, by statute or resource limitations
- Existing funding and staffing fluctuates with budgetary restraints.
- State/local Procurement processes, time frames and requirements posed challenges; mid-course corrections even more so
- Braiding of funds is optimal, but it must meet the mission of each funding source and eligibility of the student or family



Lessons Learned: Funding

- Highlights the need to have a robust system of supports to ensure the full array of services are available to students and their families
- Need to meet students and families and provide services where they are, often in the moment of crisis
- Additional gaps in existing funding such as housing and utilities, obtaining IDs (required to apply for jobs), driver's ed/licenses, etc.
- Need to improve access to and capacity of America's Job Centers and VR services Expectation of access to existing services as a priority



Data Sharing

- State and federal inter-agency data collection and sharing helped to ensure services were implemented with fidelity
- Communication and coordination of service delivery, and the measurement of the impact of service delivery and supports on education, employment and financial self-sufficiency outcomes
- Social Security Administration data pivotal to PROMISE implementation. It works both ways.
- Each agency may or may not have information that the other has. For example, schools do not know who is receiving SSI.
- Protection of personal information is enforced by separate laws in each agency (HIPPA, FERPA, other) causes confusion



Lessons Learned: Data Sharing 1 of 2

- Use of MOAs/MOUs by states/LEAs to enhance recruitment marginally successful
- ‘Youth Find’ - All youth with disabilities are not served by IDEA (Special Education) or through 504 plans, etc.
- When quality data available, it enhanced the speed at which PROMISE moved forward with a youth or family
- Some states have state-wide case management system and data warehouse which provided a solid foundation to enhance already existing partnerships



Lessons Learned: Data Sharing 2 of 2

- Consent from parents for schools to share info with VR and others is still a major barrier to effective transition and linkage.
- Federal resources/clear guidance needed to encourage and empower more states to develop Data Management Warehouses
- Families very concerned about sharing information for benefits counseling and fraud and identify theft is much more prevalent.



Holistic Coordination and Collaboration 1 of 2

- Managing complex bureaucracies while mobilizing the “indigenous” model added significant complexity and hurdles that only deterred from the delivery of supports and services to students and families.
- Partnering needs to be framed to focus on benefits to individual organizational mission/outcomes, not only the student
- Need to develop cross agency staff expertise, which does not naturally exist
- Agency single point of contacts, or even better, FTE, with authority, improve collaboration, someone who can tackle the challenges
- Relationships matter - Communication based on individual and agency preferences



Holistic Coordination and Collaboration 2 of 2

- Need a communication feedback loop from local level to identify and develop systemic improvements, success breeds success
- Policy/systems/change/research – collect data and make the time to analyze what is or is not working, identify the gaps and success strategies
- Face your biases. Overcome societal and individual biases that limit the expectations of people with disabilities
- One size does not fit all – it’s still an IEP.
- Philosophy and practice must be that people with disabilities can work, can attend higher education, can live self-determined lives



Strategies for State Teams



Connecting Youth to Paid Work while in High School

- Inter-agency Targeted Outreach
 - Inter-agency data sharing agreement for a outreach campaign, to share youth and family friendly transition service information
 - Monthly Postcard, text, email
- Targeted Case Management for youth receiving SSI and their families
 - Empowerment and employment focused
 - Youth and family-centered
 - Trauma Informed with Motivational Interviewing and Rapid Engagement
- Better engagement with youth with disabilities living in poverty across systems
- Importance of finding good job match and building a career after initial job experiences



Employment Services and Supports

- Inter-agency collaboration
 - School, vocational rehabilitation, long term care, mental health, **foster care**, juvenile justice, job centers
 - Referring and connecting to employment opportunities and service supports
 - Summer and School employment programs
 - Pre-Employment Transition Services
 - **Job Centers**
 - Youth apprenticeships/internships
 - Service coordination – implementation and funding
 - Employment provider capacity building
- Transportation and Technology and Housing
- Partnership with local employers
 - Better Bottom Line and Building a Stronger Workforce
 - Community Conversations to help build local employer partnership



Employment To Financial Self-Sufficiency

- Work Incentive Benefits Counseling and Financial Capacity Building
 - Consultation model including both benefits counseling and financial coaching
- Family Navigators to increase Youth and Family Engagement
 - Increase Expectations
 - Navigation of Transition Services
 - Self- and Family Advocacy
 - Youth and Family becoming leaders and peer to peer networking
- Individualized consultation
- Interactive trainings and networking



Asset Development

- Targeted outreach to connect youth to asset development opportunities
 - Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)
 - Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts
 - Establish Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for transition aged youth receiving SSI and their families
 - Independence Accounts or similar accounts as part of the state Medicaid Buy-In Program
- Build in opportunities/grants for youth and family members to lead their own projects to increase employment opportunities for youth with disabilities in their own communities



Tips, Tools, Strategies - ASPIRE

- Understanding the culture of poverty. Training and 'book club', as well as a Poverty Simulation experience. It's never one and done
- Non traditional times and locations were essential
- Supporting the teen, means supporting the family
- Understanding American Indian culture.
 - Overcoming a history of mistrust
 - Membership vs identify
 - Build relationships at all levels
 - The definition of family, mobility, etc.



Tips, Tools, Strategies - Arkansas

- Start Earlier—Transition is critical
- Connector/Navigator vs In Office Case Manager
- Trust Brokering
- Building a Community
- Regionally and Environmentally tuned to needs
- Change Culture
- Genuine concern for participant vs program metrics
- Life based timeline, including conceptual goals
- Kept the door open, continuous engagement & recruitment
- I Do, We Do, You Do model
- Real Feedback Loop, flexibility within strict fidelity



Tips, Tools, Strategies - Maryland

- Youth on SSI are highly transient and not always known to schools. Respond best to text messages. Also clustered in poorer zip codes. Many have non obvious disabilities and may not have IEPs.
- Knowledge of things such as Trauma Informed Care and Motivational Interviewing are critical as well as how to work with students with non obvious disabilities.
- Many youth on child SSI will not meet adult criteria for SSI, and won't be eligible for adult disability services so need to connect them to Pre ETS and America's Job Centers
- Staff working with individuals in poverty need to better understand how all individuals with disabilities **can** work with the right supports, and without jeopardizing critical benefits.
- Many youth with non obvious disabilities, with or without IEPs are unwilling to self identify/self advocate



Tips, Tools, Strategies - Maryland

Work and Linkage Strategies

- Focused on outcome measures and targets. What gets measured gets done. Set numeric targets for employment specialists of 10 employer contacts per week.
- Data driven and informed, tracked using task tracker to see how staff time was spent, if they were stuck and if technical assistance was needed. Critical for staff working in communities.
- Developed a tool for PROMISE staff, school and DORS personnel to coordinate what youth was receiving from the partners as well as to ensure linkage to post school services.



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[To learn more about the six PROMISE Initiatives, click this link to visit the PROMISE TA website:](http://www.promisetacenter.org/promisemdps)

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The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Cooperative Agreement H418P130007. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

