



Students with Disabilities in Correctional Education

A national perspective and state-to-local coordination

*Capacity Building Institute
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State Introductions

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Serving Students (Nebraska)

- Currently Nebraska VR provides Pre-employment Transition services to all students with disabilities in all schools across Nebraska.
- For all students with disabilities ages 14-21 in an educational program
- We provide all 5 Pre-Employment Transition Services
 - Workplace Readiness Training
 - Job Exploration Counseling
 - Instruction in Self Advocacy
 - Work-Based Learning Experiences
 - Counseling on Postsecondary Education Opportunities

Getting Started (Nebraska)

Many individuals across Nebraska realized:

That we had a population of youth that were not receiving Pre-employment Services

We were all working in our separate silos but knew we wanted to work with youth involved in the juvenile justice system

Began meetings with VR, Department of Labor, Juvenile Justice, and Probation and Department of Education.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was passed

- Mandated that Dept. of Labor and VR work together and develop a combined state plan.

Serving Students (Utah)

Utah has 12 secure care facilities (7 school districts)

1. Pre-ETS Contract Providers
 - Providing primarily individualized Pre-ETS
2. Pre-ETS Instructors
 - Providing classroom instruction during students “transition group” during school day on Pre-ETS
 - Provide information on how to connect with VR through orientations and classes
3. VR Counselors
 - Liaisons to schools/corrections
 - Prior to covid
 - VR Counselors had more presence in the facilities
 - Authorized “why try” classes

Getting Started (Utah)

- Local Facilities
 - Assigned a liaison
 - Communicated the value of our services
 - When to connect with VR (as the youth are reintegrating)
 - Problem solving
 - Signatures
 - Logistics (materials, where to meet with the students, how long we have to work with them there, where they are returning to, etc)
- Worked with State Leadership
 - Getting “buy in” to help make connections and explain the gaps
 - USBE Program Specialists – *Education Transition and Career Advocates*
 - Health and Human Services Specialist

Best Practices (Nebraska)

- Have regular meetings
 - Make sure you are including Nebraska VR, Juvenile Justice Administration, Probation, School Administrators and Nebraska Department of Labor.
- Soft Handoff

Share successes with the team

Involve the individuals that have a strong belief in the mission

Getting signatures from parents-

Put them in the intake packet.

Give the parent a personal call.

Have it present when there is a team meeting with the parent.

Give the parent grace they can be burned out.

Best Practices (Utah)

- Know your partners at the state and local level
- Invest time in building relationships and trust
- Assign liaisons to provide outreach to the centers and ensure consistency (make sure staff are consistent and there is a warm hand off if someone leaves)
- Recruit help to troubleshoot
- Ask questions in preparation for your visit (what is allowed in the facility, what you may need to do upon arrival –cell phone)

Lessons Learned (Nebraska)

- Leave the judgement at the door
- Planting seeds
- Working with youth while they are in the juvenile systems can reduce the recidivism rate
- Working with youth in the justice system can not be linear it is hard system. Give yourself some grace not everything will be perfect.
- Meet the student where they are.
- Give them grace and be willing to switch gears.
- Complete yearly partnership planning meetings to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Lessons Learned (Utah)

- Consistency can be a bridge or a barrier
- Process of VR can seem long
- Communication is key for logistics
- We can make a positive impact for students
 - Don't underestimate

Next Steps (Nebraska)

- Continue to work on improving the percentage of students that sign up for services
- Continue to meet as a group, the work is not done
 - Look at: What is going right?
 - What needs improved?
 - Are there other services that we can provide to youth?
- Off Campus Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Provide CTE classes for youth in juvenile justice facilities.

Next Steps (Utah)

- Statewide Collaboration with Education and Human Services Program Specialists
- Expansion of Transition Services and Pre-ETS, including work based learning experiences
- Engaging other state partners

Success Stories (Nebraska)

- Any student that takes a piece of the information that you have given them and uses it is a success
- Any student that asks to see you because they want to learn more or have further questions is a success
- Any student that can move forward with their life and get a job or attend college is a success.

Success Stories (Utah)

- Pre-ETS Instructor Example
- Pre-ETS Contractor Example



Questions?

Nationwide Perspective

Objectives

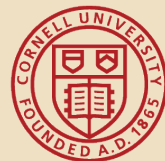
- Learn how frequency of collaborative practices, knowledge about partners agencies, types of collaboration practices and confidence in serving different vulnerable youth populations relate to employment outcomes;
- Estimate levels of collaboration within their own networks and identify collaboration practices that attendees can be apply to their own work;
- Discuss strategies for interagency coordination to serve justice-involved youth with disabilities.

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**The Council
of State
Governments**



ILR School



Why Study Collaboration?

- Interagency collaboration can be vital because some transitioning youth are involved in multiple systems.
- Coordination of services and supports can require increased information sharing, cross agency referrals and more.
- For instance, youth might simultaneously be involved in one or more systems such as: education, VR, social security, juvenile justice, foster care, developmental disability or mental health.

What Do We Mean By Collaboration?

- Interagency collaboration in transition-to-adulthood is a commonly recommended practice.
- But collaboration can mean many different things, so it's key to understand what type of collaborations lead to better transition and employment outcomes for youth.¹
- Some research suggests agencies should focus on instrumental elements like frequently communicating, sharing resources, having formal agreements and role clarity.^{2,3}

Accessing Vocational Services

- **WIOA:** new emphasis on services to underserved and unserved populations, particularly youth in high-risk categories.
- Justice-involved youth less likely to access vocational rehabilitation (VR) and other human services than other groups.¹
- **2018 Cornell Survey:** VR Counselors (VRCs) and Community Service Providers (CRPs) in New York State ($n = 489$) reported lower levels of training and confidence in serving justice-involved youth with disabilities than other diverse groups.²
- **Ongoing Research:** challenges getting VR staff into alternative education settings.

Discussion Question

Are there certain agencies that your agency works more closely with than others?

What factors contribute to this?

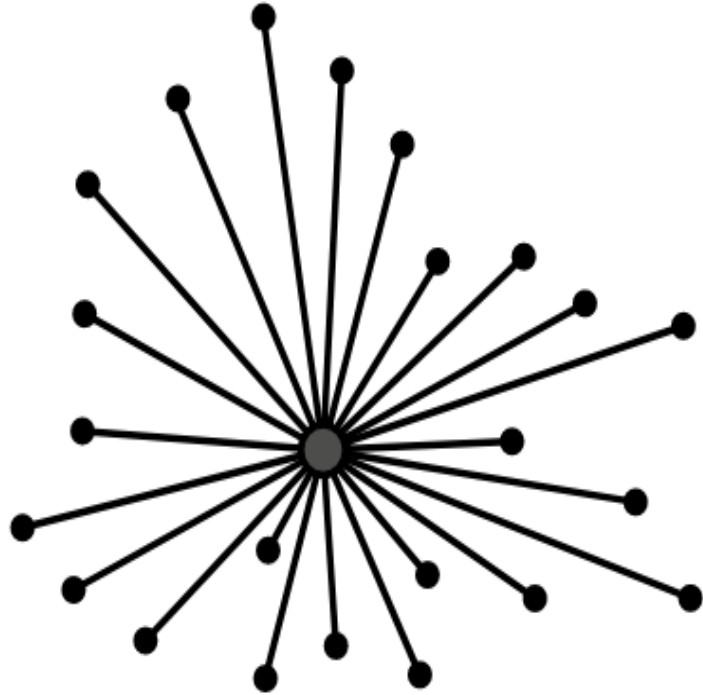
What barriers to collaboration exist with less frequent partners?

Interagency Collaboration

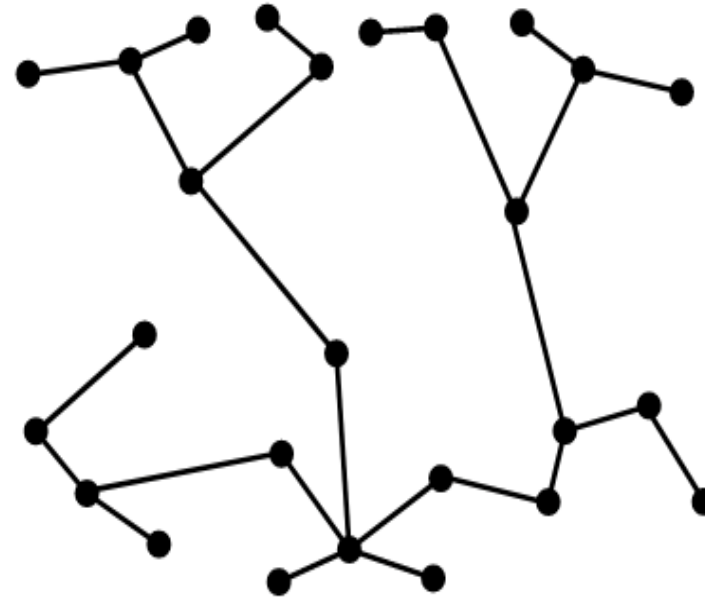
- **Cornell Study:** Based on national survey of supervisory and frontline staff at youth-serving agencies ($n = 338$) found that VR/workforce and juvenile justice agencies are some of the least frequent collaborators.¹
- Follow up qualitative study in ten states ($n = 64$ total participants) identified common thematic challenges to collaboration between VR/workforce and juvenile justice.²
- **These included:** (1) data and information sharing barriers; (2) lack of formal interagency agreements to facilitate communication and coordination; (3) silos and lack of awareness of services, outcomes, eligibility issues, etc.

Thinking About Networks

**Centralized
Network**



**Decentralized
Network**



Six Degrees of Separation

- This is a theory that we are all just six social connections away from everyone else in the world.
- In a January 1994 article, Kevin Bacon said “he had worked with everybody in Hollywood or someone who's worked with them.”
<https://oracleofbacon.org/movielinks.php>

Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon



Matt Saleh

knows



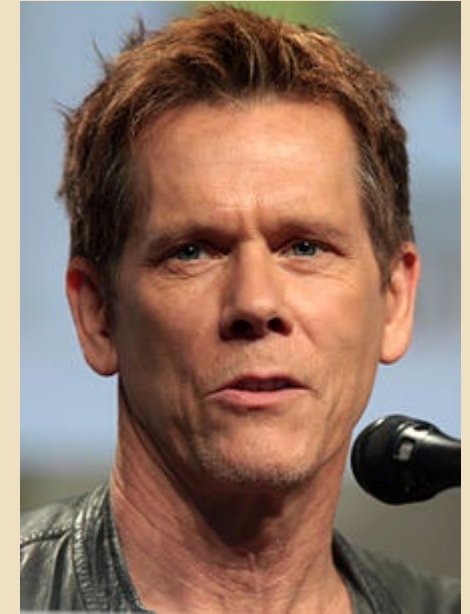
Paul Dano

knows



Paula Davis

knows



Kevin Bacon

Levels of Collaboration (Frey et al. 2006)

- **Networking (1):** Aware of each organization; loosely defined roles; little communication; independent decision making
- **Cooperation (2):** Provide information to each other; roles somewhat defined; formal communication; independent decision making
- **Coordination (3):** Shared information, resources; defined roles; frequent communication; some shared decision making
- **Coalition (4):** Share ideas, resources; frequent, prioritized communication; all members have a vote in decision making
- **Collaboration (5):** One system; frequent, trusting communication; consensus

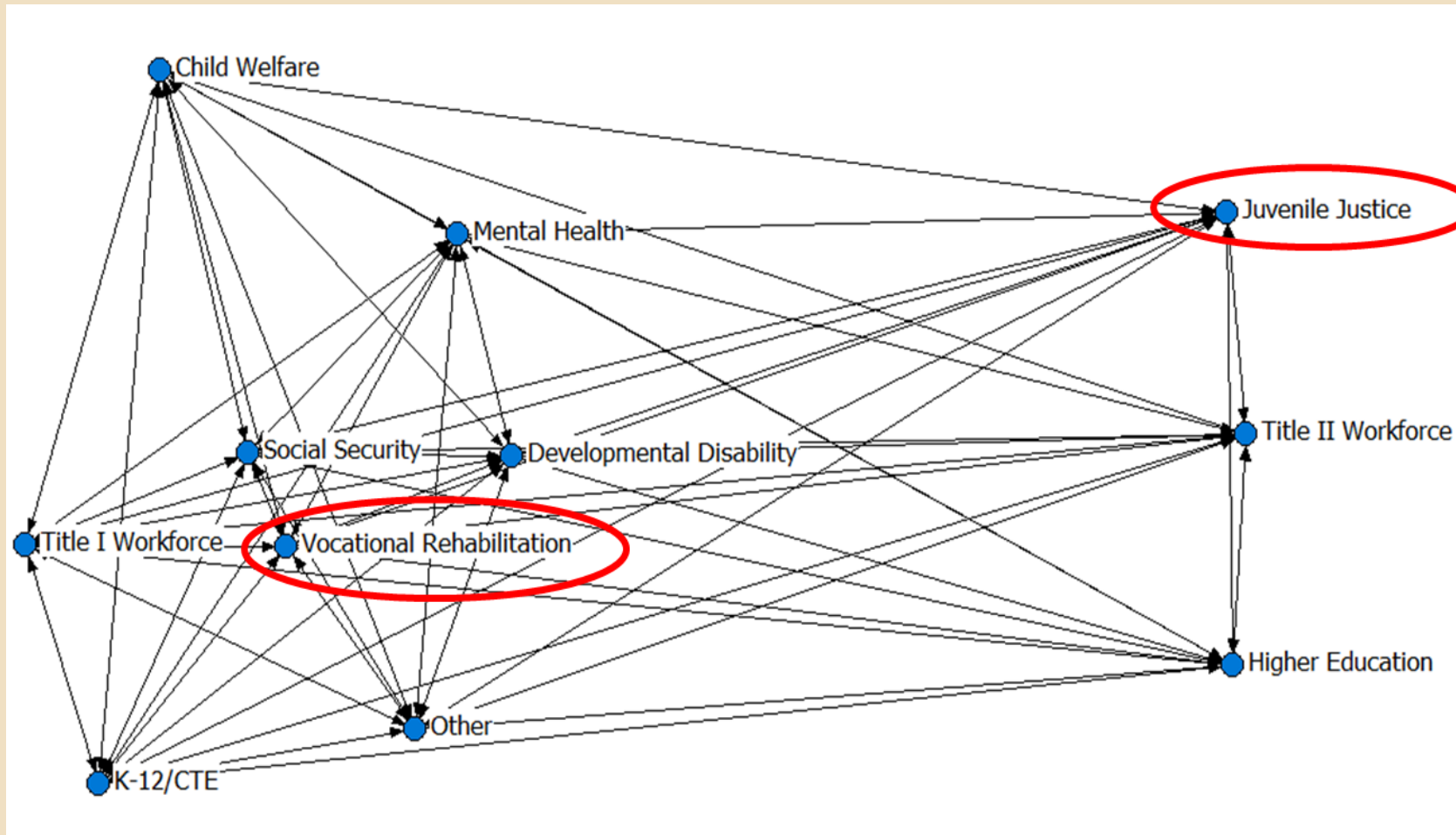
Collaboration Study

- **Research Questions:** What are existing levels of collaboration among agencies serving transitioning Y&YADs? What common features are present in states showing strong collaborations?
- **Phase 1:** Surveyed supervisors and “frontline” service providers across key agencies in all 50 states and compared with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)-911 data
- **Phase 2:** Conducted focus group interviews with a subset of professionals in 10 states (1 state per federal region)

338 Responses to the Survey

Agency Type	Number of Responses (<i>n</i>)
Vocational Rehabilitation	98
Workforce Title I	48
K-12/Career and Technical Education	41
Other	41
Developmental Disabilities	32
Child Welfare	23
Mental Health	14
Higher Education	12
Social Security	10
Workforce Title II	6

Interagency Collaboration (2)



Source: Shaw, Saleh, Osmani, & Jackson. Youth and adult transition systems collaboration study: Preliminary findings. CAPE-Youth (funded by U.S. Department of Labor, ODEP). <https://capeyouth.org/>

Challenges and Solutions

Challenges	Solutions
Lack of technology access for both staff and clients	Grant application to pay for Chromebooks
Virtual not suitable to assess progress of youth in workplace	Partnering with community site that has Wi-Fi hotspot
Too many meetings so can't get work done; online burnout	Hybrid of in-person, virtual
More training and less placement	Implement best practice models for placement

Qualitative Findings: Formality

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Written interagency agreements	Use of interagency agreements (e.g., MOUs, MOAs).
B	Interagency collaboratives	Existence and function of interagency working groups.
C	Agency bridges/liaisons	Agencies facilitating new connections.
D	Policy and practice disconnect	Effect of high-level collaborations on service delivery.

Qualitative Findings: Information/Resource Sharing

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Data sharing and referrals	Barriers and facilitators to sharing data across agencies.
B	Cross-training opportunities	Role of training in information and resource sharing.
C	Legal and process barriers	Practical barriers to agencies sharing information.
D	Familiarity and trust	Familiarity/trust with other agency's services and function.

Qualitative Findings: Communication

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Barriers/facilitators to communication	Barriers and facilitators to effective communication.
B	Role clarity & mutual decision making	Existence of clear roles and mutual decision making.
C	Staffing, capacity, and resource issues	Impact of capacity and resources on communications.

Qualitative Findings: Youth Empowerment

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Client self-determination	Supporting youth self-determined decision making.
B	Communicating complex systems	Describing complex systems/services to youth/families.
C	Preventing service gaps	Preventing gaps as youth move between systems.

Please take a moment to submit your session
Quick Reaction

