

Promise Newsletter December 2018

Wisconsin Promise: What Have We Learned?

Wisconsin PROMISE was highlighted in a recent presentation by Meredith Dressel, Project Director, and Ellie Hartman, Project Manager, at the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) 2018 Fall Conference in Long Beach, CA. The presentation provided background on PROMISE participants, including disability and poverty related factors, Wisconsin's history of inter-agency collaboration, Wisconsin PROMISE services and supports, preliminary findings, lessons learned, and implications for policy and practice. Wisconsin PROMISE, a federal grant funded by the Department of Education (DOE), enrolled 2,024 teenagers receiving Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and half were randomly assigned to the Wisconsin PROMISE Services group and the other half continued services as usual with the aim to improve youth and family member's education, employment, and financial self-sufficiency outcomes.

In Wisconsin, PROMISE services were delivered through the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) service system with youth automatically enrolled in DVR and receiving both DVR and PROMISE services. Family members could also receive services and supports through a Family Service Plan on the youth's case. PROMISE services included at least one (preferably two) paid work experiences while still in high school, work incentive benefits counseling, financial coaching, on the job social skills training, family and self-advocacy training, and health promotion. Promise Counselors and Case Coordinators found poverty can impact engagement in services. With youth and families trying to live day to day and worries about food and shelter made it difficult to always follow through with program expectations. In addition, training and services did not always account for hardships of poverty including trauma, basic needs, ambivalence, need for a hands-on learning environment, and meeting the youth and families where they were at. For these reasons, PROMISE case management included key features that helped to increase engagement in services supports, including bringing services and supports to youth and families and using effective outreach methods including emails, texts, voice mails, and postcards. Case Management was employment focused, strength-based with a focus on empowerment and included person centered planning, rapid engagement, motivational interviewing, and trauma informed care. PROMISE DVR Counselors also made sure to connect youth and families with resources to better navigate public benefits and financial concerns. This approach led to increased employment outcomes.

In looking at July 2017 to June 2018, 53 percent of youth in the PROMISE Services group reported wages to Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance, compared to 43 percent of youth in the services as usual group. This employment rate of 53 percent was similar to the employment rate of all youth in Wisconsin (regardless of disability status) who were 19 or younger during the same period (Community Population Survey, CPS). Wisconsin PROMISE is demonstrating the importance of connecting youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to employment services available through VR, as youth in both the PROMISE and usual services groups who had employment services through DVR, especially paid work experiences and on the job supports, had higher employment rates.

Wisconsin PROMISE has helped inform Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) in Wisconsin DVR, establishing soft skills training in Wisconsin using the Department of Labor's Skills to Pay the Bills Training Curriculum (<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>), allowing for a consultation model of providing Work Incentives Benefits Counseling that is enhanced when adding financial coaching, informing the implementation of self-advocacy training in an interactive training model, adding text messaging as a way to connect to youth, enhancing relationships with schools, and improving Counselor case management through rapid engagement, motivational interviewing, and trauma informed care. Wisconsin PROMISE also helped to build capacity around customized and supported employment, although more work needs to be done in this area. To learn more about Wisconsin PROMISE lessons learned please visit <https://promisewi.com/success/>, which includes a Lessons Learned Document, a summary of a recent Congressional Briefing, and summary statistics in a one page infographic. In addition, Wisconsin PROMISE youth and families share their stories in short video clips at <https://promisewi.com/videos/>.

SSI Youth Formative Research Project: Considerations for Identifying Promising and Testable Interventions

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Disability Employment Policy and its federal partners seek to build the evidence base for promising strategies to improve the employment outcomes for youth ages 14 to 24 who receive Supplemental Security Income. The purpose of this report, the final of three research reports for the project, is to identify promising interventions that could assist youth with disabilities. This report builds on findings from the project's first two reports, which summarized previous evidence on intervention models for youth with disabilities and options to identify target populations of youth. As part of both reports, we reviewed findings from the literature and received input from the Community of Practice on options for intervention and target populations. [This report includes...](#)

A Worksheet to Select Employment Interventions That Benefit Youth

This issue brief includes a worksheet of questions that federal policymakers can ask themselves to help identify and develop interventions to improve employment-related outcomes for youth with disabilities. The issue brief's insights come from the U.S. Department of Labor's Supplemental Security Income Youth Recipient and Employment Transition Formative Research project.

[Worksheet for assessing the potential of an intervention.](#)

It's Time to Move Forward on Solutions to Support Youth with Disabilities

Policymakers face a seemingly intractable problem: how can they promote better outcomes for youth ages 14 to 24 who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI)? Despite an array of programs and tests for this population—which numbered about 900,000 youth in 2017—the needle hasn't budged on their outcomes as they make the transition from youth to adulthood. Employment rates, earnings, and educational achievement are all lower for these youth than for their peers with disabilities who do not receive SSI. Many youth receiving SSI end up relying on federal disability programs for life.

Read the rest of Todd Honeycutt's (Senior Researcher at Mathematica Policy Research) [blog post](#).

Promise Follow-Up Survey

If you have completed the Follow-Up Survey, THANK YOU! If you haven't, there is still time to complete this.

As part of the Wisconsin Promise study, we are asking all Promise youth and one family member to each complete a Follow-Up Survey to collect information about your time in the Promise program. This information will help us improve future services for youth and families.

All youth who complete the survey by January 31st will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a \$30 Walmart or Target gift card.

[Find the survey here](#)

Contact Us

Promise Research Team

1-855-480-5618

Steering Committee Profile Members and Emails

Project Director

Meredith Dressel

meredith.dressel@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Project Manager

Ellie Hartman

ellie2hartman@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Members

Cayte Anderson

andersoncay@uwstout.edu

Wendy Henderson

wendy.henderson@wisconsin.gov

Suzan VanBeaver

suzan.vanbeaver@dpi.state.wi.us

Aimee Jahnke

aimee.jahnke@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Meredith Dressel

meredith.dressel@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Suzanne Lee

suzanne.lee@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Sam Ninnemann

samantha.ninnemann@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Jessica Thompson

jessica.thompson@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Allison Gordon

allison.gordon@dwd.wisconsin.gov

The contents of this website were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Cooperative Agreement H418P130004. 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.