



Connecting Justice-Involved Youth to Good Jobs

What Title I, Part D State Coordinators Can Do Now

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May 2026



- ▶ The Urgency: Youth Disconnection & Justice Involvement
- ▶ The Future of Work and What's at Stake
- ▶ Title I, Part D + WIOA: Untapped Levers
- ▶ State Examples: CA, CT, & National Practice
- ▶ Steps Together: What You Can Do
- ▶ Action Roadmap & Resources

Who's in the room?

In the chat, please share:

- Name
- Role/Title
- Organization
- What was your first job?
- What is one thing you learned from it?



Our Mission:

National Youth Employment Coalition advances a future where every young person has access to high-quality pathways for economic success and social well-being.

NYEC accomplishes this through strengthening programs and practices throughout the country; engaging employers; advocating in the halls of government; and elevating youth leadership.



Our Pillars:



Capacity Building

Expanding skills, resources, and networks through trainings, collaborations, events, and peer learning.



Policy & Advocacy

Shaping policy with data-driven advocacy, legislative engagement, and policy committees.



Youth Leadership

Empowering young people to lead, shape policy, and gain national exposure through projects and presentations.



Employer Engagement

Collaborating with employers to create inclusive pathways that connect young people to quality career opportunities.



CAPITOL HILL SUMMIT

Bridging Practice
to Policy

September
21-23, 2026

Washington,
D.C.



*previously known as Youth Days



- **Employment is one of the strongest predictors of successful reentry**
- Nearly **1 in 7 young people (ages 16–24)** are disconnected from school and work nationally
- Justice-involved youth experience **much higher rates of disconnection** due to school disruption, stigma, and system gaps
- Disconnection fuels **recidivism, poverty, and long-term labor market exclusion**
- Even **limited justice contact** sharply reduces graduation and employment odds

State Coordinators are the connective tissue that makes change possible.



~11%

National youth disconnection
rate (ages 16–24)
Measure of America, 2022

15–20%

Disconnection rate in high-
burden states and metros
National Equity Atlas

Across regions and communities —
justice system involvement
significantly deepens these effects
NYEC / Annie E. Casey Foundation

Key insight: Justice-involved youth are already the most disconnected — and the workforce system can't wait for them to find the door.



Structural Barriers

- ▶ Interrupted education and credit loss
- ▶ Limited access to CTE and work-based learning
- ▶ Transportation and documentation challenges
- ▶ Workforce as a spectrum: Diversion → Placement → Aftercare/Parole

Labor Market Barriers

- ▶ Employer bias and background check barriers
- ▶ Fewer entry-level jobs to build experience
- ▶ AI & automation shrinking entry-level opportunities — AI could eliminate up to 27% of teen jobs by 2030
- ▶ Employers require prior experience — locking youth out before careers begin



Growing Sectors for Justice-Involved Youth

- ✓ Healthcare support roles
- ✓ Skilled trades & infrastructure
- ✓ Logistics and supply chain
- ✓ Technology-adjacent roles (IT support, AI-enabled operations)

Strategy: Focus on career exposure + ladder advancement, not one-off placements

Change the Narrative: Youth as Assets

“Our approach to workforce preparation for justice-involved youth isn’t all that different from other opportunity youth, but there is a big difference in how they are perceived by employers. So, we do a lot of development and training for the employers on tolerance, understanding, and mitigating the barriers these kids face.”

— Hector Rivera, Our Piece of the Pie



What Title I, Part D Already Supports:

- ▶ Transition to employment
- ▶ Career readiness and workforce preparation
- ▶ Cross-agency coordination and system alignment

The Key Insight:

- ▶ Part D does **not need to fund jobs directly** to unlock workforce dollars
- ▶ Part D **sets the table**; WIOA **brings the jobs**
- ▶ You are a **systems connector**, not just a grants manager



WIOA Youth Offers:

- ▶ Paid and unpaid work experiences
- ▶ Pre-apprenticeships and on-the-job training
- ▶ Occupational skills training
- ▶ Supportive services

Justice-involved youth are explicitly eligible for WIOA Youth services

What is your level of collaboration with workforce partners? Enter your number in the chat!

- 0 No Interaction — unaware of partners
- 1 Networking — sharing information
- 2 Cooperation — sharing information and resources
- 3 Coordination — sharing information and resources, some shared decision-making
- 4 Coalition — frequent and prioritized decision-making, voting on decisions
- 5 Full Collaboration — consensus, shared system, mutual trust**

Goal: Move from networking to coordination with workforce boards



Building Pre-Release to Post-Release Workforce Continuity

The Problem

- ▶ Youth exited juvenile facilities without immediate workforce access
- ▶ Education and workforce systems operated in parallel, not together

What Coordinators Did

- ▶ Embedded workforce readiness planning into Part D transition services
- ▶ Established MOUs: data sharing, pre-enrollment, warm handoff protocols
- ▶ Partnered County Offices of Education with Local Workforce Development Boards



Building Pre-Release to Post-Release Workforce Continuity

How Funding Aligned

- ▶ Part D → career exploration, transition planning, workforce readiness
- ▶ WIOA → paid work experience, pre-apprenticeships, OJT after release

Results & Lesson

- ▶ Youth exited placement with workforce referrals already established
- ▶ Workforce boards saw higher engagement from justice-involved youth

“Pre-release alignment is more powerful than post-release outreach”



Coordinating Justice, Education & Workforce Through State Governance (JJPOC)

What Coordinators Did

- ▶ Leveraged JJPOC to align Dept. of Education, Dept. of Labor, Court Support Services, and Regional Workforce Boards
- ▶ Elevated employment and paid work experience as reentry priorities, not add-ons
- ▶ Vocational offerings aligned to labor market demand and workforce board sector strategies

Results

- ▶ Youth accessed employment faster post-release
- ▶ Governance structures unlocked alignment without creating new programs



“We have weekly conversations with the police and court officials, from the assistant chief to individual probation officers. Also, our staff are stationed at the police department to enroll youth who are referred to diversion programs. The police officer just walks the paperwork over to our desk and we take it from there.”

— Mauricio Torre

Key Strategy: Station staff in probation, parole/aftercare offices, and juvenile courts so direct referrals happen efficiently and effectively.



Coordinate WIOA Enrollment

- ▶ WIOA eligibility is determined at time of enrollment — coordinate timing with juvenile justice partners
- ▶ Pre-enroll youth before release date
- ▶ Establish MOUs and formal referral protocols between education and workforce systems
- ▶ Appoint juvenile justice providers to local workforce boards and youth committees

On-Site + Pre-Release

- ▶ Offer on-site programming within facilities: job readiness, career counseling, GED, occupational prep, work-based learning
- ▶ Start re-entry planning early — assess academic and occupational needs well before release
- ▶ Build trust and relationships while youth are still in placement
- ▶ Consider workforce participation as part of restitution and sentencing processes

Share & Prioritize Paid Work

- ▶ Share professional development, space, and data between systems
- ▶ Prioritize paid work experience as the **first** service, not the last
- ▶ Help employer partners see justice-involved youth as assets — provide employer training on tolerance and barrier mitigation
- ▶ Connect to summer/year-round jobs, internships, pre-apprenticeships



Track and Review:

- ✓ % of transitioning youth accessing **paid work experience**
- ✓ Time from release → first job
- ✓ Employment retention at 6–12 months
- ✓ Credential + actual job alignment
- ✓ Access to paid work experience by race and geography — spot disparities

Your Role as Coordinator:

- ▶ Use Part D data to spot disparities and adjust strategy
- ▶ Share data across systems to identify priority target populations
- ▶ Elevate successful local approaches statewide

The guiding question to ask your partners:
“What would success look like for this young person one year after release?”

Your Action Roadmap: 6 High-Impact Steps



NOW – 30 DAYS: Map the System

Identify where youth disconnect from workforce. Map transition points: facility → community → employment. Use existing Part D transition plans as baseline.

30–90 DAYS: Lock In WIOA Partnership

Schedule standing quarterly meetings with workforce board leadership, juvenile justice, and facility/LEA reps. Establish simple referral pathways — no new system required.

ONGOING: Prioritize Paid Work Experience

Use WIOA funds for paid work experience. Push for employer-based experiences. Youth must earn wages with real employers and see advancement pathways.

ONGOING: Align to Jobs of the Future

Partner with workforce boards to identify high-growth regional sectors resilient to automation: healthcare, skilled trades, logistics, tech-enabled roles.

ANNUALLY: Use Data That Matters

Track paid work experience access, time from release to first job, retention at 6–12 months. Use Part D data strategically to spot disparities and elevate successes.

ALWAYS: Lead as a Systems Convener

Translate education ↔ workforce language. Normalize cross-system collaboration. You are the connective tissue — not just a grants manager.

Questions?

Thank you

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Key Resources:

- NYEC & AECF Justice-Involved Youth Toolkit: nyec.org
- DOL WIOA Youth Fact Sheet: dol.gov/eta/youth
- Ed.gov Title I Part D Results Brief:
ed.gov/rschstat/eval/neglected
- DOL Negotiating Performance Goals:
dol.gov/agencies/eta/performance/goals



When Title I, Part D + WIOA + Workforce Boards align around paid work experience, justice-involved youth move from disconnection to opportunity.