

WIOA Youth Program COVID-19 Session Lessons Shared

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) hosted a "[WIOA Youth Program COVID-19 Session](#)" on Monday, May 4, 2020. This document shares highlights of the attendee input provided during the webinar. The audience consisted of nearly 1,700 youth workforce professionals from across the country. Those in attendance shared their solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing young people during COVID-19. Some of the solutions below may spark innovation in service delivery in your local area.

Communicate to keep youth engaged!

The most commonly shared sentiment was the importance of consistent, timely communication with youth. This includes weekly phone calls, e-mails, texts, newsletters, and updates to websites and social media pages checking in to see how youth are doing and sharing critical resources for supportive services (i.e. food access, housing, transportation, etc.); Wi-Fi access (listings, maps, etc.); employment opportunities; and recommendations on educational instructional videos (One-Stop Career Center, PBS, YouTube) and "Life Skill" modules). These resources may be accessed quickly and shared with family and community members for multiple touch points.

So communicate, communicate, communicate!

How are programs continuing to serve youth?

- ▶ Using on-line teleconference services and platforms (ZOOM, Google Classroom, Skype, Telehealth systems, WebEx) to provide:
 - Streamlined enrollment process by creating fillable forms for use online and providing direct referral with partner agencies;
 - Classes on life lessons such as health, self-care, anger management, stress reduction, parenting, improving public speaking, starting your own business, and leadership; and
 - Youth-facilitated meetings, with the help from staff, and youth advisory board meetings to engage young people in decision-making.
- ▶ Assisting with conducting deliveries of food, mail, diapers, wipes, etc.
- ▶ Getting laptops and computers to students through the school district and other methods

- ▶ Finding ways to recognize graduating participants to make this year special for them including lawn signs, “Adopting a Senior” programs, and having radio stations make announcements regarding recent graduates
- ▶ Engaging youth in career and self-care “mini-challenges” delivered via text messaging that they can respond to
- ▶ Connecting with youth through video games and on-line trivia

Any solutions you’ve identified to address housing issues? Any new partnerships or resources that would be helpful to share?

- ▶ Working with partners such as local homeless and domestic violence shelters, social services organizations, ministerial alliances, transitional housing, departments of health and human services, and local housing authorities to provide resources to participants including locating units specific to homeless youth
- ▶ Partnering with local and national for-profit, non-profit, and charitable organizations such as Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, YWCA/YMCA, United Way, and Urban League and well as local hotels to explore available shelter and housing resources
- ▶ Providing referrals to rental assistance and local energy programs to help pay for rent and utilities
- ▶ Working with landlords to ensure housing will be secured
- ▶ Connecting youth to Legal Aid if there is an issue with rent and evictions
- ▶ Providing “Tenant Education” courses on line to teach how to interact with landlords, fill out online rental and housing applications, understand terms/definitions and understand their rights
- ▶ Working with states agencies that work with local housing authorities on housing/homelessness

Any solutions you’ve identified to address food insecurity? Any new partnerships or resources that would be helpful to share?

- ▶ Connecting youth to food distribution resources including churches, soup kitchens, after care organizations, and charitable organizations
- ▶ Connecting youth to food programs for in-school youth for lunch deliveries by the school districts
- ▶ Connecting youth to departments of social services for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
- ▶ Assisting youth in signing up for weekly food delivery boxes
- ▶ Partnering with local farms and restaurants for food donations and reduced food prices

Any solutions you've identified to address lack of technology/access to internet? Any new partnerships or resources that would be helpful to share?

- ▶ Connecting with schools, community colleges, libraries, and work experience providers who offer hotspot and "checkouts" for Chromebooks and laptops
- ▶ Utilizing agency parking lot as a Wi-Fi hotspot and providing youth the password so they may complete homework, apply for employment, or take training classes
- ▶ Asking businesses to share hotspots and Wi-Fi access with the larger community
- ▶ Linking students to school districts buses outfitted with Wi-Fi access
- ▶ Utilizing grant, foundation, or WIOA Youth program funds to purchase, rent, or acquire Chromebooks or internet access or to reimburse the purchases
- ▶ Encouraging youth to utilize public buildings such as libraries, community colleges, as well as restaurants and offices where free Wi-Fi access is being offered
- ▶ Sharing information on local and regional cable and telephone companies offering free or reduced priced internet services
- ▶ Using tablets as incentives for youth
- ▶ Partnering with non-profits selling refurbished computers for low-income families at affordable prices

Any solutions you've identified to address the lack of employment opportunities? Any new partnerships, resources or strategies that would be helpful to share?

- ▶ Hosting virtual employer advisory council and employer recruitment meetings to solicit workplace experiences, keep abreast of upcoming and current opportunities, and encourage businesses to host virtual business tours
- ▶ Connecting youth to virtual internships and work opportunities including "work-from-home" employment and certificate programs
- ▶ Connecting youth to safe work experiences with delivery, food banks, food distribution centers, and grocery stores
- ▶ Hosting and connecting youth to virtual job fairs and online job search engines (Indeed, One-Stop Career Center job banks, LinkedIn, Getschooled.com, etc.)
- ▶ Continuing partnerships with local offices of economic development, Chambers of Commerce, and vocational rehabilitation agencies
- ▶ Linking employers that are still actively hiring to participants for small group interaction and to provide paid work-based learning opportunities
- ▶ Connecting youth to virtual project-based training opportunities with local employers and community colleges
- ▶ Finding online certification programs including college credits, and free online self-paced courses

- ▶ Providing education and training using subject matter experts on Zoom, like college tours, panel of employers and employees for in-demand jobs, or financial literacy or expungement clinics
- ▶ Producing resume, interview, and soft skills workshop videos to social media pages
- ▶ Providing work and job readiness training and job skill roundtables, trainings for youth on how to work virtually, virtual work environment, dress, etc. and producing podcasts and pre-recordings on different workforce issues
- ▶ Working with employers who have eliminated the background check in order to hire workers more quickly
- ▶ Creating work-based experiences as an independent study