

## **Youth Advisory Council for the National Council on Disability** **Overview: “The Next Generation Roundtable 2006”**

The National Council on Disability (NCD) Youth Advisory Council (YAC) recently opened new doors for young people with disabilities striving to initiate change. The day-long annual meeting of the NCD YAC usually consists of confirming the completion of annual goals, establishing new focal points that mesh with the emphasis of NCD, and passing the baton between officers and chairs from one year to the next.

However, this year, the YAC representatives selectively cut their meeting time in half, and invited 23 additional emerging leaders to come together for half-a-day and collaboratively define the focal points of young people with disabilities in the employment world specifically. The YAC hosted the Next Generation Roundtable on July 25, 2006 at the Embassy Suites Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia just south of the Washington, DC.

Summary highlights from the rich and candid discussion revealed a number of challenges, concerns, and suggestions for future consideration of ways to improve opportunities for full inclusion of young people with disabilities in all aspects of the world of employment. Overwhelmingly, the message resounded that the next generation of leaders can be described as energetic and willing to actively engage in making a difference through national policy and decision-making.

The youth who participated in the discussions were affiliated with internship or other leadership endeavors of the following organizations: American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Booz Allen Hamilton, SAMSHA, Workforce Recruitment Program, and the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN).

Focal points of the retreat included the following: 1) Preparing youth for productive career in a challenging labor market; 2) Promoting transparent program outcomes; and 3) Quality, equity, and access for youth in transition in all cultures and communities.

The conversation may be summarized by the following details that reflect perspectives of the youth participants:

### **Part One: Youth and Employment**

#### **1. What is needed for a positive experience in the workplace?**

- Reasonable accommodation is part of employment
- Similar opportunities and equal opportunities for all

(Everyone in the room raised their hands when asked if you have had an employment experience)

#### **2. What has been the greatest obstacle in the workplace?**

- Difficulty learning the process of how things worked
- Knowing the technology is important in the workplace
- Knowing what accommodations you need

### **3. What training has your employer provided?**

- I create timelines every two weeks to help me manage my time
- Organizing my computer space

### **4. If you had a friend with a disability and think he/she can't work, how would you change their mind?**

- Explain your personal situation so you can show how people with disabilities can succeed
- Few people cannot work; ask them what they can do and go from there

### **5. What should you know when going into an employment experience?**

- Disclosure: You don't have to disclose in an interview
- Know how to advocate for yourself
- Learn how to balance going from school to work
- Don't think first about the disability...think about your skills first, and disability second
- Benefits can be a support but they are not a solution
- The number one barrier to employment is offset SSI/benefits; employers are afraid to invest in the employee. They don't want to pay for the accommodation.

### **6. What are the major successes for you?**

- The Ticket to Work is a great program with excellent intentions, but people didn't know what to do with the tickets; the lack of education to people with disabilities was a major problem
- Internship Programs are important
- When employers say they are willing to work with and hire youth with disabilities
- The private sector is getting more involved...Monster.com has a search engine for people with disabilities
- I was a high school drop out in a residential facility; the GED program helped succeed
- Take advantage of the scholarships that are available; it worked for me
- Have a PASS (Plan for Achieving Self Support) plan

## **Part II: Youth and Leadership**

### **1. What kinds of experiences have you had that have made you a better leader for people with disabilities?**

- Participate on conference calls
- All my leadership experiences have had nothing to do with the disability community; the NCD YAC is the first thing I've participated in that includes people with disabilities
- It's the leadership skills that have helped me succeed not in the disability context
- Learning to be a person who leads in opposition is an important skill for me
- Compare how the different universities accommodate students with disabilities

- I have participated in the DO-IT program, which is a high school program that teaches advocacy and the STEM classes
- Youth Move is a board to work with the mental system; I am also a Youth involvement coordinator
- My state's Healthy and Ready to Work board has been helpful
- Peer-to-peer mentoring

**2. Have any of your leadership experiences involved a mentor?**

- Mentors have been very helpful...informally...with out those mentors, I would have no idea what the bigger picture is

**3. As a result of being a leader, have your expectations changed?**

(Yes: The whole room raised their hands.)

- You find out more about yourself through these experiences
- I am someone so I have a responsibility to do something
- Participating in a leadership level makes you feel like you can contribute and gives you confidence to participate

**4. What do you consider to be your role?**

- Creating a need and make your voice heard
- Know who has the power to make change
- Join in partnerships that are not only disability organizations
- Write editorials to your local papers about issues that affect you
- Offer to help to do the work related to state and local policy makers
- Bring solutions to the table

**5. What other actions are needed for you to transition to the workplace?**

- Spread the word in order to affect change
- Find a program to connect it all: housing, transportation, employment, health care
- Educate all students for future employers to gain disability awareness
- Special education teachers aren't the only teachers who need disability training; all teachers need to take those classes

**Summary of Discussion:**

1. Lead by example
2. Having one central place for information for youth with disabilities
3. Benefits was a major topic-reinforcement to go to work
4. Knowing yourself and your accommodations: Know what you need so you can talk to your employers
5. Importance of networking with other youth and adults with disabilities for mentoring purposes

The federal partners want to make the website [ww.DisabilityInfo.Gov](http://www.DisabilityInfo.Gov) more youth friendly. Take a look at the site and if you have comments, e-mail the YAC [yac@ncd.gov](mailto:yac@ncd.gov)

The agenda followed and questions raised in the discussion evaluated here are included as attachments.

With a rating scale of 1=Poor; 2=Fair; 3=Good; 4=Excellent, the following cumulative rating and comments were shared via the written evaluation following the session:

**1. To what extent did you feel that the conversation shared today provided information that you can take away to your community and/or organization?**

Score: 3.22

Comments:

“Many national issues [were revealed].”

“I found that this was more of an opportunity to gain solidarity with other youth/individuals with disabilities.”

“This information is imperative in the collective sense to understand how others in the community feel.”

“I think we got an idea if we can work together from the different states we can make a greater impact to the disability community.”

**2. Were the topics and perspectives shared well rounded and representative of the youth issues? If you choose 1 or 2, please share what perspectives you feel were not included at this session that could have been or need to be shared.**

Score: 2.96

Comments:

“I feel like there were two very different perspectives shared in the categories of physical and invisible disabilities. The first group seemed more for an integrated society whereas the non-physical disabilities veered toward segregating first.”

“I wonder more about English as a second language for people with disabilities and how their obstacles compare.”

“I believe that there was a lot of perspective shared. I also was impressed by the conversations that we generated to the issues that matter most to us. I was really impressed at how we came up with the conclusion that we need to come up with a central location of information and I know that one exists but obviously not every youth knows about called [www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov). I also was excited to see how we drew from other areas such as economics and policy backgrounds.”

**3. How do you feel about the time allotted for this discussion?**

Score: 2.52

Comments:

“Discussion duration’s varied much.”

“Some sections seemed short, some seemed long.”

“I felt like we were able to get a comprehensive discussion of employment. However, I did not feel that we hit very much on other issues relating to individuals and youth with disabilities.”

“I would have been great to go over a few more topics and allot getting to know each other time.”

“This is too much for a ½ day; it is overwhelming.”

“Needed more time! Should have been a whole day.”

“With a group this big, I felt that there should be more time.”

“Not structured enough. Prompts were too broad.”

“I thought there was enough time allotted. However, based on the discussion that was generated we could’ve probably talked for a good 24 hours more.”

**4. Were your disabilities accommodated in a reasonable way at this meeting?**

Score: 3.22

Comments:

“I found the CART services to be excellent. However, I was disappointed with the placement of the table as it was in the back corner of the room. I like to utilize my hearing capability as much as possible.”

“I really was glad that I do not have to fulfill my evaluation at the hotel. I do a better job when I’ve had time to process what I learned.”

**5. Was there enough diversity in the questions asked and discussed during this roundtable?**

Score: 2.83

Comments:

“More on physical disabilities than mental.”

“Yes. However, the largest percentage of people with disabilities are minority groups and it seemed white privilege dominated.”

“Mostly related to government employment.”

“Refocus discussion on next stage disability policy development. ‘Where are we going from here?’”

**6. Was there enough diversity in the people who attended?**

Score: 2.91

Comments:

“A lot more than expected.”

“Yes. However, the largest percentages of people with disabilities are minority groups and it seemed white privilege dominated.”

“Again, government issues vs. private sector.”

“Yes, please don’t start manipulating who can and can’t come through a quite system.”

**7. To what extent did you feel included? Were you given adequate opportunity for expression?**

Score: 3.17

Comments:

“Shared very much and all points were shared and issued.”

“Some of the comments had to be shortened and a little too succinct so they could fit in the time frame.”

“Didn’t care too much for the wrap-up signs as most of the time people were in the middle of making good points.”

“I was included. However, I believe certain speakers were cut short due to the nature of the message.”

“I was really glad to see that there was enough staff support where every youth could respond to all or at least one or more questions.”

**8. Do you feel this meeting helped you better understand current issues facing youth with disabilities?**

Score: 3.22

Comments:

“Gained a better perspective on how other youth feel.”

“Lots of issues that for surely came out of this meeting.”

“The fact that multiple disabilities represented here today helped to show me that these preambles and solutions are not bound by parameters of the disability.”

“No, we covered little that was unknown. Instead, we simply reiterated the same points over and over again.”

“I believe that this meeting gave me an opportunity to do more research in the field of disability policy.”

**Acknowledgements:**

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Youth Advisory Committee for the  
National Council on Disability presents:

*Next Generation Roundtable*

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July 25, 2006 – 8:30 A.M. - 12:00 noon  
Embassy Suites Crystal City Hotel – Arlington, VA  
Capitol Hill Conference Room

**Agenda**

8:15 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Registration
8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Opening: Welcome and Introductions
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Part I of Facilitated Discussion
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Break (timely return is needed)
10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Part II of Facilitated Discussion
11:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	Compilation/Summary & Adjournment
11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Exit Evaluation & Networking

Note: Participants are invited to attend the 1:30 p.m. public session of the July 25, 2006 quarterly meeting conducted by the National Council on Disability.

*\*Room location within the Embassy Suites Hotel will be provided.*



# Guiding Questions

## Part I of Facilitated Discussion

### YOUTH & EMPLOYMENT

- 1.) What have been the greatest obstacles or successes that you have experienced in the work place?
- 2.) What actions are needed to address the challenges facing youth with disabilities in employment?

## Part II of Facilitated Discussion

### YOUTH & LEADERSHIP

- 1.) What do you consider to be your role regarding policy development impacting youth?
- 2.) What kinds of experiences have you had that have made you a better leader for people with disabilities?