



# WIOA: New Law Helps Youth & Young Adults Get Jobs – What Families Need to Know

Tip Sheet 16

Transitions ACR

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**T**he **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) P.L. 113-128, 2014** mandates services for youth and young adults (ages 14-24) with disabilities, including those with psychiatric disabilities or serious mental health conditions, to help them prepare for, obtain and pursue careers in integrated settings that offer competitive salaries and benefits. This tip sheet provides information that parents can use to advocate for and educate themselves about WIOA services that are available to youth and young adults living with serious mental health conditions.

## What is important about this law for youth and young adults with psychiatric disabilities?

- » Students with disabilities can get new career and educational development services.
- » There is a focus on providing career and educational development services to youth and young adults who are not in school.
- » The focus is on competitive jobs in integrated settings paying at least minimum wage or higher.



## Who Can Access WIOA Youth Program Services?

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### Out-of-School Youth

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### In-School Youth

**Youth and young adults between the ages of 14-24 with a psychiatric disability are eligible.** A youth or young adult with a disability is defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

## Eligibility Criteria

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| <p><b>Out-of-School Youth</b><br/>(including those with a psychiatric disability)<br/><b>must be</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Between the ages of 16-24 at enrollment (age may differ in your state).</li> <li>✓ Not attending any school (as defined under your state's law).</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>In-School Youth</b><br/>(including those with a psychiatric disability)<br/><b>must be</b></p>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Between the ages of 14-21 at enrollment (age may differ in your state).</li> <li>✓ Attending school (such as high school, alternative school, or college).</li> <li>✓ "Low income", which is based on the young adult's own income--not the family's income (e.g., living in a high poverty area or is eligible to receive a free or reduced price lunch).</li> <li>✓ Meet the definition of disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Documentation of a disability includes having an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a 504 plan in place, or a physician's note.</li> </ul> |

## What Services Are Available?

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| <p><b>All Eligible<br/>In-School<br/>and Out-of-<br/>School Youth</b></p> | <p><b>Per Title I of WIOA, the following 14 program elements are to be provided to eligible youth and young adults.</b> Local agencies decide what services a youth or young adult will get based on each participant’s objective assessment and individual service strategy. <b>The 14 elements of WIOA youth services are:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and dropout prevention.</li> <li>2. Alternative secondary school and dropout recovery services.</li> <li>3. Placement in paid and unpaid work experience.</li> <li>4. Occupational skills training.</li> <li>5. Integrated education and training model combining workforce preparation, basic academic skills, and occupational skills.</li> <li>6. Leadership development opportunities.</li> <li>7. Supportive services, such as transportation, child care, dependent care, and housing, etc.</li> <li>8. Adult mentoring for the period of participation.</li> <li>9. Follow-up services provided after program exit to help ensure success in employment or education.</li> <li>10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling provide individualized counseling to participants, including drug/alcohol and mental health counseling.</li> <li>11. Financial literacy education.</li> <li>12. Entrepreneurial skills training.</li> <li>13. Services that provide employment and labor market information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations.</li> <li>14. Postsecondary preparation and transition activities help youth and young adults prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>In-School<br/>Youth<br/>Only (i.e.<br/>Students<br/>only)</b></p>   | <p><b>Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are only available to In-School Youth (i.e., students as defined by federal and state laws). These services are:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job exploration counseling, which may include helping students learn about the world of work, explore their interests and abilities, work with a job mentor, etc.</li> <li>2. Work-based learning experiences, which may include paid or unpaid in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships.</li> <li>3. Individualized student strategies to support a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary education settings and employment.</li> <li>4. Workplace readiness training to develop social and independent living skills. These are the skills and behaviors employers expect employees to possess prior to starting a job.</li> <li>5. Instruction in self-advocacy (which may include peer mentoring), which helps students to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his/her own interests and/or desires.</li> </ol>  |

A youth or young adult may not receive all WIOA youth program services—only those services they need. Typically, youth and young adults go through an assessment at an American Job Center (AJC), and, with assistance develop an individual service strategy to determine the services they need, which may or may not include vocational rehabilitation services. Once enrolled in a WIOA youth program, youth or young adults may be able to continue receiving these youth services after reaching the maximum eligibility age (21 for In-School Youth; 24 for Out-of-School Youth).

# Where Can Youth and Young Adults Get WIOA Services?

## Out-of-School Youth

**Out-of-School Youth** should go to a **local American Job Center** (also known as a One-Stop Center) to apply for and access WIOA youth services. While some services may be provided elsewhere in the community, AJCs serve as the hub to access WIOA youth program services. Some AJCs offer different youth services than others, so it may require some research to find the best fit. Staff at the AJC can help youth and young adults find employment, get training or education for a career path, or go back to school.



**Find a local American Job Center (AJC) here:**

<https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/local-help.aspx>

## In-School Youth (i.e. Students)

**State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and local school districts** work together to identify students with disabilities who may benefit from receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) from the VR agency; however, students with disabilities enrolled in the WIOA youth program who are in high school or recognized postsecondary education/training programs may benefit from such services as well, and the VR agency may serve as another referral base.

Pre-ETS services are provided in a variety of ways across the country. In some areas, the VR agency contracts with schools to provide the services, while in others the VR agency may be providing direct services or contracting with a college, university, or even community rehabilitation provider to provide the services. Schools are not necessarily the places in which the Pre-ETS are provided but certainly serve as prime locations for such collaborations. However, keep in mind that all students receiving special education services are entitled to transition services coordinated by the schools under IDEA irrespective of WIOA. If you have questions about how your in-school youth or young adult can get Pre-ETS, contact your local VR agency to find out about the referral process. Since Pre-ETS are not delivered that same way in every area, you can also contact your local AJC to see if they can provide any information or guidance on how your in-school youth or young adult can access similar or other WIOA youth program services.



**Find a State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency:**

<https://askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-%20agencies/>

## What If a Youth or Young Adult Needs More Comprehensive Services?

Youth and young adults who are receiving WIOA youth services may also be eligible for their state's VR services. Therefore, if a WIOA enrolled youth or young adult with a psychiatric disability needs more personalized services, they should apply for VR services through their state's VR agency. This way, if approved, they can have access to their state's VR services, which would include the specific services they need to prepare for or find competitive, integrated employment. This is true for both In-School and Out-of-School youth.

Don't let your youth and young adults with psychiatric disabilities miss out on these valuable services to get the training and education they need to achieve their post-school employment goals and get jobs that will help them have rewarding work lives.

# Resources

- Find local American Job Centers: <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/local-help.aspx>
- Find your State Agency of Vocational Rehabilitation: <http://www.askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies/>
- Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL): <http://iel.org/home>
- Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Resources for Youth: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth>
- RSA: Transition of Students and Youth With Disabilities from School to Postsecondary Education and Employment: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/transition-of-students-and-youth-with-disabilities-from-school-to-postsecondary-education-and-employment.pdf>
- Teens on IEPs: Making My “Transition” Services Work for Me - <http://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=pib>
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): A Young Adult’s Guide - <http://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1070&context=pib>
- Vocational Rehabilitation Youth Technical Assistance Center (VR Y-TAC): <http://y-tac.org/>
- WIOA Youth Program Eligibility: <https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/03/09/11/34/WIOA-Youth-Program-Eligibility>
- WIOA Youth Program Fact Sheet: [https://www.doleta.gov/Youth\\_services/pdf/WIOA\\_Youth\\_OWI\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_12\\_2016.pdf](https://www.doleta.gov/Youth_services/pdf/WIOA_Youth_OWI_Fact_Sheet_12_2016.pdf)
- WIOA: What it means for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD): <http://www.thearc.org/document.doc?id=5183>
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and its Application to Youth and Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions (SMHC) - <https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=pib>

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