



**March 7, 2018**

**#ePWChat Twitter Chat**

**Work Matters: Readying a Skilled  
Workforce**

*Summary Report*



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## Chat Recap

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### Topic Summary

On March 7, 2018, ePolicyWorks hosted a Twitter Chat in partnership with the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) and the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) for Youth. Participants joined a real-time, interactive discussion on apprenticeships and other workforce-preparedness options for youth and young adults with disabilities.

The chat was presented in conjunction with the ongoing ePolicyWorks online dialogue, "[Work Matters: Readyng a Skilled Workforce](#)," hosted by U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy's State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED). Throughout the Twitter Chat, participants were invited to continue the conversation in the online dialogue. The goal of these events is to provide the disability and advocacy community the opportunity to assist SEED in expanding on the state policy options in the *Work Matters* report aimed at improving employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities..

### By the Numbers

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- Number of Tweets posted with the #EPWChat during chat: (including tweets from ePolicyWorks): **260**
- Number of asked questions: **9**
- Number of Retweets for @ePolicyWorks during chat: **79**
- Number of Tweet "likes": **139**
- Number of Tweet impressions (times a user is served a Tweet in timeline or search results) during chat: **20,176**
- Number of active Tweeters (participants who posted at least once) during chat: **26**
- Number of new Twitter followers: **41** since initial chat promotions

## Key Topics Discussed by Participants

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- Access to resources and career training opportunities
- The value of mentorship for young people with disabilities
- How employer perceptions of disability impact job opportunities
- The need for alternatives to post-secondary education as a career pathway
- The importance of inclusive apprenticeships and internships

## Notable Participating Twitter Accounts

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- U.S. Business Leadership Network – @USBLN
- National Disability Mentoring Coalition – @DisMentors
- American Foundation for the Blind – @AFB1921
- Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program – @chooseworkssa
- Tennessee Disability Coalition - @tndisability
- National Fund for Workforce Solutions - @national\_fund
- CDE What Can You Do? - @CDEtweets
- DisabilityMentors - @DisMentors
- Commonwealth Corporation – @CommCorp\_MA
- BroadFutures - @BroadFutures
- TransCen - @TransCenInc
- ThinkCollege - @thinkcollegeICI
- Getting Hired - @gettinghired

## Chat Questions and Responses

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### 1. What specific barriers do young people with disabilities encounter when trying to enter the workforce?

- **NCWD/Youth – @ncwdyouth\_iel:** “Youth with disabilities face many of the same barriers to entering employment as other youth plus some unique ones. Attitudinal barriers & misperceptions about what they can or can't do is a big one.” View NCWD’s response to Question One on Twitter  
**BroadFutures – @BroadFutures:** “When young people with disabilities begin to enter the workforce, the stigma around the word “disability” may make them decide not to disclose their disability and miss out on their reasonable accommodations.” [View BroadFutures’ response to Question One on Twitter](#)
- **LEAD Center – @LEADCtr:** “A barrier for young people entering the workforce is a lack of knowledge about programs, resources, trainings etc. A network of connections is not in place. Knowledge is power.” [View LEAD Center’s response to Question One on Twitter](#)
- **US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) – @USBLN:** “For some, there are reservations on #DisabilityDisclosure, especially regarding if and when, or how, to ask for reasonable accommodations. Thankfully USBLN corporate partners make it easy for #PeopleWithDisabilities to enter their workforce.” [View USBLN's response to Question One on Twitter](#)
- **Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) – @PEATWorks:** “From a technology perspective, accessible eRecruiting is often a barrier to those with disabilities entering the workforce.” [View PEATs response to Question One on Twitter](#)
- **American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) – @AFB1921:** “Assumptions that they are not capable is the biggest hurdle. They have to be able to convince employers that they can do “stuff”. That takes confidence in themselves. That confidence comes from experiences where they grow and are successful.” [View AFB’s response to Question One on Twitter](#)
- **Amy Sparks – @ReinventChronic:** “Young people with #mobility issues can be concerned that a mobility aid could give a first impression of

weakness. It helps for them to have intermediaries who can help dispel that." [View Amy's response to Question One on Twitter](#)

## **2. In what ways can apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities benefit youth and young adults with disabilities?**

- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) – @AskEARN:** “Apprenticeships help young people prepare for careers not only in trades like construction, but also in new, high-growth industries like IT & health care. They’re also a proven strategy for creating a highly skilled workforce for employers.” [View EARN’s response to Question Two on Twitter](#)
- **NCWD/Youth – @ncwdyouth\_iel:** “Apprenticeship & other work-based learning is a great way for young people to get learn skills & job training (while getting paid if it's an apprenticeship), build relationships with employers who may hire them later, & explore career options.” [View NCWD's response to Question Two on Twitter](#)
- **AFB – @AFB1921:** “Don't forget volunteering! A volunteer position in a career field of interest can help you to qualify for a desired job. For example, if you are looking to work as a child care provider, you may seek a volunteer position within a children's community organization.” [View AFB's response to Question Two on Twitter](#)

## **3. How can educational institutions and businesses support career-readiness policies and strategies that prepare youth, including those with disabilities, to enter the workforce?**

- **National Disability Mentoring Coalition (NDMC) – @DisMentors:** “Develop policies to support and fund career mentoring pipelines and internships.” [View NDMC's response to Question Three on Twitter](#)
- **EARN – @AskEARN:** “Inclusive mentoring is another work-based learning opportunity employers can offer youth with disabilities. Like internships, mentoring also serves as an effective employee recruitment & retention tool by helping to identify future talent.” [View EARN's response to Question Three on Twitter](#)
- **NCWD/Youth – @ncwdyouth\_iel:** “State leaders should explore ways to design career development opportunities for all youth in partnership

with employers. Our guide has recommendations: <http://bit.ly/2oPC6ub>”  
[View NCWD's response to Question Three on Twitter](#)

- **Tennessee Disability Coalition – @tndisability:** “Transition programs are KEY. These types of programs prepare youth with disabilities not only to get jobs and internships, but also to live independently in their communities.” [Question Three on Twitter](#)

#### 4. What can state policymakers do to promote apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities?

- **NCWD/Youth – @ncwdyouth\_iel:** “State policy makers can adopt policies that require career development for all students starting in middle school or earlier. One example is state policies requiring individualized learning plans (ILPs) for all students: <http://bit.ly/2oPpAuW>” [View NCWD's response to Question Four on Twitter](#)
- **Edmund Asiedu – @AsieduEdmund:** “State policymakers must involve persons with disabilities, their family members, #disability advocates, other stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of policies on apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.” [View Edmund's response to Question Four on Twitter](#)
- **USBLN – @USBLN:** “USBLN works primarily with business, but we are in full support of state policymakers promoting #apprenticeships and other work based learning opportunities. Often times, we find that if business is already doing it- there is increased #PolicySupport.” [View USBLN's response to Question Four on Twitter](#)
- **NDMC – @DisMentors:** “State policymakers should start by including individuals with disabilities in their internship and mentoring programs to learn about what people with disabilities can do at work; then move forward to bust inclusion barriers in apprenticeships and beyond.” [View NDMC's response to Question Four on Twitter](#)
- **Michael Townsend – @MikeTownsend28:** “Promote @USDOL Apprenticeship program & work with businesses in its state to develop their own apprenticeships. There are almost 1400 apprentice occupations. This can be done.” [View Michael's response to Question Four on Twitter](#)

**5. @PEATWorks, we hear you're going to be focusing on how #apprenticeships can create a pathway to employment for people with disabilities. Can you tell us more about the role accessible technology policy plays in opening up these kinds of work-based learning opportunities for people with disabilities?**

○ **PEAT – @PEATWorks:**

- “Sure! Our recent Think Tank meeting came up with key recommendations for expanding government apprenticeship and workforce programs for people with disabilities. Our goals are threefold.” [View part one of PEAT's response to Question Five on Twitter](#)
- “First, create new approaches that expand on traditional #apprenticeship programs. These initiatives could encourage virtual internships and apprenticeships, as well as cohesive training programs that offer transferable skills and/or credentials across industries.” [View part two of PEAT's response to Question Five on Twitter](#)
- “Second, provide policy support that can advance necessary changes, including the acknowledgement that #apprenticeship programs are pathways to return to work.” [View part three of PEAT's response to Question Five on Twitter](#)
- “Third, raise awareness about accessible technology and the skills and talents of people with disabilities through catalogs of best practices, stronger rating programs for exemplary businesses, and national public education campaigns.” [View part four of PEAT's response to Question Five on Twitter](#)

**6. How can family members of young people with disabilities best support them in pursuing career preparation opportunities such as apprenticeships?**

○ **NCWD/Youth – @ncwdyouth\_iel:**

- “Families can talk regularly with youth about their career interests & goals. They can help youth find & pursue work experiences & apprenticeships. They can practice soft skills at home.” [View part one of NCWD's response to Question Six on Twitter](#)

- “Networking is huge part of finding work opportunities. Families can use their networks to assist youth with meeting others who can connect them to training & work experiences.” [View part two of NCWD's response to Question Six on Twitter](#)
- **Campaign for Disability Employment (CDE) – CDE Tweets:** “It’s important that family members cultivate high expectations related to work & community participation. Our “Because” PSA illustrates why, like all young people, youth with disabilities should grow up expecting to work & succeed. <http://bit.ly/1VcdFB7>” [View CDE's response to Question Six on Twitter](#)
- **BroadFutures – @BroadFutures:** “Family members of young people with disabilities can offer support by staying aware of disability policy updates and having open communication about the challenges their loved one may be going through.” [View BroadFutures' response to Question Six on Twitter](#)
- **Amy Sparks – @ReinventChronic:** “Families need to know what resources are available. Getting information to school guidance counselors could also get the information to students, who could then share with parents.” [View Amy's response to Question Six on Twitter](#)
- **Edmund Asiedu – @AsieduEdmund:** “Family members of young people with disabilities must be encouraged not to prevent them from exploring career opportunities out there. Family members shd form a support system that will guide the young person w/ #disability as she/he pursues career apprenticeship.” [View Edmund's response to Question Six on Twitter](#)

**7. In what ways can state policies promote meaningful engagement from family members of youth with disabilities who are working toward employment?**

- **NCWD/Youth – @ncwdyouth\_iel:** “State policies that promote youth career development, such as ILP policies, can incorporate families as required stakeholders in implementation of opportunities for youth. Many states with ILPs have specific outreach to families.” [View NCWD's response to Question Seven on Twitter](#)

**8. @ncwdyouth\_iel, can you tell us about some of the work you've done around work-based learning as a key opportunity for youth with disabilities to transition to employment?**

- **NCWD/Youth – @ncwdyouth\_iel:**
  - “Our TA Center shares successful practices for designing & implementing work-based learning for youth with disabilities. We profile local & state programs who have strong models.” [View part one of NCWD's response to Question Eight on Twitter](#)
  - “One of our briefs, <http://bit.ly/2Ibm32e>, features common successful work-based learning practices from various programs at the school & community level.” [View part two of NCWD's response to Question Eight on Twitter](#)
  - “We promote career-focused mentoring as a strategy that can coupled with work-based learning. Check out the Paving the Way to Work Guide here: <http://bit.ly/2to7jth> We work with local programs to implement this model.” [View part three of NCWD's response to Question Eight on Twitter](#)
  - “We also recommend a program model call High School High Tech with is providing career exploration & work-based learning to students with disabilities in several states. See the guide: <http://bit.ly/2oQTItF>” [View part four of NCWD's response to Question Eight on Twitter](#)

**9. Has an apprenticeship or other work-based learning opportunity led to employment for you or someone you know who has a disability?**

- **Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program – @chooseworkssa:** “Amy found the supports and education she needed through her State VR agency, EN and Project SEARCH. After her internship with Project SEARCH, she found full-time work. Find out more in her #TicketToWork success story: <http://bit.ly/2gLUzE4>” [View ChooseWork's response to Question Nine on Twitter](#)
- **Campaign for Disability Employment (CDE) – CDEtweets:** “Meet Nirath, who started as a summer intern with @BoozAllen & is now a senior consultant with their Infrastructure & Military Health Team! Nirath, who is deaf, is one of ODEP’s Policies in Practice profile

participants. <http://bit.ly/2vvB1IM>” [View CDE's response to Question Nine on Twitter](#)

- **USBLN – @USBLN:** “YES, absolutely! We found that 85% of talent with disabilities participating in our Rising Leaders Initiatives (including mentoring program) find employment. Check out our #DisabledandHired stories here: <http://www.usbln.org/studentstories/>” [View USBLN's response to Question Nine on Twitter](#)
- **Kathy Flaherty – @ConnConnection:** “I had a summer internship at @CTLegalRights after my first year of law school (recommended to me after I disclosed my history of being in a psych hospital as a patient) - and now (25 years later) I’m the Executive Director.” [View Kathy's response to Question Nine on Twitter](#)

## Conclusion

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This Twitter chat served as a successful complement to ePolicyWorks’ [“Work Matters: Readyng a Skilled Workforce,”](#) online dialogue by gathering insights from individuals and organizations regarding apprenticeships and other career preparedness opportunities. Several key ideas contributed by participants during the chat were added to the dialogue, which will support the development of state policies to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities. ePolicyWorks will continue to host Twitter chats in tandem with future “Work Matters” dialogues to leverage the crowdsourcing power of social media.