

Issue BRIEF

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A Worksheet to Select Employment Interventions That Benefit Youth

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, along with many other stakeholders, is working to improve outcomes for youth ages 14 to 24 who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits or are at risk of receiving SSI. Mathematica Policy Research contributed to this effort—known as the SSI Youth Recipient and Employment Transition Formative Research project—in two ways. First, we identified promising programs and policies for youth with disabilities, including research questions for further study. Second, we uncovered testable interventions for helping these youth make the transition to sustained, gainful employment.

WORKSHEET DESCRIPTION

This brief features a worksheet with questions that policymakers can ask themselves as they identify and develop interventions to improve employment-related outcomes for youth with disabilities (Table 1). Our intent for the worksheet is to give policymakers a transparent, three-step framework to follow in selecting an initiative. The framework, which is laid out in a companion issue brief, is summarized below:¹

- **Refine policy objectives.** Policymakers can reflect on important objectives for their agency to pursue. They might select interventions directly aligned with their agency's mission, for example, particularly as it relates to programs and policies designed for the target population.
- **Assess the landscape for implementation.** Policymakers might want to pursue interventions that fit in the broader landscape of public programs for youth with disabilities and are consistent with their own demonstration authority.
- **Apply criteria for selecting interventions.** As a final step, policymakers must decide whether there is enough evidence to justify a test of an intervention, and whether the results

of a demonstration could lead to a policy or program change.

USING THE WORKSHEET

Policymakers can use the worksheet in two ways:

1. They can apply the questions in the worksheet to any promising intervention to develop and assess its potential. This process can help policymakers narrow their options and ultimately select and implement an intervention that can achieve their goals for youth with disabilities.
2. They can decide what the answers to the questions are, and then identify interventions that meet the objectives revealed by the answers. Policymakers could specify, for example, that interventions must have certain characteristics before they will consider them seriously.

Establishing a core set of required characteristics for candidate interventions allows the interventions to be grouped into a cohesive set. This approach might be especially appropriate if policymakers want to create a long-term strategy for developing interventions, particularly those designed to address specific policy objectives, or those for which cross-agency collaboration is required.

¹ See "A Framework for Selecting Employment Interventions to Benefit Youth Populations" at <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/a-framework-for-selecting-employment-interventions-to-benefit-youth>

Table 1. Worksheet for assessing the potential of an intervention

Characteristics	Questions	Responses
Refine policy objectives		
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the intervention consistent with the federal agency’s mission and activities? How can federal policymakers use information obtained from the implementation and evaluation of an intervention to improve current programs and policies? 	
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to substantive employment outcomes, will evidence on other outcomes be important to achieving federal policymakers’ goals? Are the intervention’s expected impacts on the target population all consistent with policymakers’ goals? 	
Assess landscape for implementation		
Existing public program context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can the existing investments and resources of the federal agency be used to support the intervention and facilitate achievement of its goals? Which federal agencies have previously invested, or are currently investing, in the funding and research of related initiatives and/or intervention(s)? 	
Federal agencies’ demonstration authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is any federal agency currently testing related interventions under its demonstration authority? Do any federal agencies have plans to do so? What legislative changes, if any, would be necessary to implement the initiative? 	
Apply criteria for selecting interventions		
Causal evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the federal agency considered the evidence documented by the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research, the What Works Clearinghouse, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, or other resources? If evidence does not exist, how will a new evaluation produce rigorous evidence? 	
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With respect to the demonstration, is the expected value of the information gained likely to exceed the opportunity cost of conducting the demonstration? Does it make more sense for the federal agency to invest in initiatives that have existing evidence, or lack causal evidence but promote innovation and creativity? 	
Replicability, scalability, and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the likelihood that the intervention (with similar objectives) can be applied to different populations or in areas that the federal agency serves? How can the federal agency sustain the intervention at the state and local levels? What additional capacities are needed for the federal agency to sustain the intervention? 	

For all materials related to this project, including full reports, other issue briefs, and webinars, please visit the project website at <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/projects/initiatives-to-improve-adult-outcomes-and-employment-opportunities-for-young-recipients-of-ssi>.

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