

The Opportunity Youth “Crisis” and Emerging Best Practices

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“Opportunity Youth (OY)” what does that mean?

- * Nationally, generally refers to young adults who are:
 - * Between the ages of 16 and 24 or 25;
 - * Not in school; AND
 - * Not working
- * May have dropped out, or gained HS diploma
 - * Even those with diploma often have low skill levels
- * May have no work experience, or have held unstable/low wage jobs

The National Crisis

- * One in seven 16-24 year-olds are not in school or working (nearly 6 million young adults)
- * Less education = higher unemployment
 - * 35% unemployment rate for out-of-school 16-24 year olds with HS diploma or less
 - * 5 times higher than for those with a bachelor's or more
- * Unemployment at young age = lasting negative effects on employability, earning potential

* From Maguire, S. (2016). [*Optimizing Talent: The Promise and Perils of Adapting Sectoral Strategies for Young Workers*](#). New York: JobsFirstNYC & Aspen EOP/WSI.

The National Crisis: Racial Disparities

- * Unemployment rates for 18-24 year olds:
 - * Black: 30%
 - * Latino: 20%
 - * White: 14%

* From [Optimizing Talent](#).

The National Crisis: Dollars and Cents

- * “Economic burden” associated with youth who are not in education, employment or training
 - * each opportunity youth imposes, on average and compared to other youth, a taxpayer burden of \$235,680 and a social burden of \$704,020
 - * Taxpayer burden = resources for which the taxpayer is directly responsible (i.e. lost taxes, costs of welfare, health care, justice system)
 - * Social burden = broader resource implications despite who “pays” for them (i.e. lost earnings & productivity, additional costs related to crime & social supports)
 - * From Belfield, C., Levin, H. M., & Rosen. R. (2012). [*The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*](#). New York: City University of New York & Columbia University. Pages 2, 10-11, 24.

The National Crisis: Employed Young Adults

- * Young adults who are employed:
 - * Disproportionately represented among the working poor (more than double the rate of older adults)
 - * Disproportionately in low wage jobs in retail, wholesale, hospitality

* From [Optimizing Talent](#).

Growing Attention to OY

- * White House Council for Community Solutions, now within Aspen
- * Increased focus of:
 - * National and regional private funders
 - * Employers (including Starbucks, Gap Inc.)
 - * Public funding, such as WIOA

What Works for OY? Overarching Elements

- * Youth Development Approach
 - * Adolescence into young adulthood: significant brain development
 - * Youth as assets to be built, not problems to be solved
- * Holistic approach; meet young adults where they are
- * Opportunities to build skills & experience over time
 - * Academic, “soft,” and “hard” skills
 - * Informed by labor market demand

What Works? Key Practices

- * Connections to consistent, caring adults
- * Positive peer groups; cohorts
- * Comprehensive, coordinated supports to remediate barriers
- * Contextualized, hands-on learning
- * Career exploration, planning, goal-setting
- * Work experiences
- * Financial incentives, such as stipends, wages

What Works? Key Practices

- * Develop leadership skills, contribute to program & community
- * Earn industry-valued academic & occupational credentials
- * Preparation for and “bridging” into postsecondary
- * Support continues once on the job or in further education

What Works? Ongoing Research

- * Two recent publications from MDRC
 - * review completed studies
 - * preview evaluations in process
 - * identify promising practices & emerging lessons
- * Hossain, F. (2015) [*Serving Out-of-School Youth Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*](#). New York: MDRC. Pages 1-8.
- * Treskon, L. (2016). [*What Works for Disconnected Young People: A Scan of the Evidence*](#). New York: MDRC. Pages iii, 23-25, 29-31.

Sectoral Strategies

- * Sectoral workforce development: building pathways within particular industries, in close partnership with employers
- * Strong results for adults
- * Promise for young adults
 - * Initiatives: National Fund, JobsFirst NYC YASEP, Annie E. Casey Generation Work

Lessons from Sectoral Youth Employment Approaches

- * Collaboration = Essential
 - * Community providers
 - * Postsecondary institutions
 - * Employers
 - * Workforce intermediaries
- * From Grobe, T., Martin, N., & Steinberg, A. (2015). [*Creating Pathways to Employment: The Role of Industry Partnerships in Preparing Low-Income Youth and Young Adults for Careers in High-Demand Industries*](#). Boston: National Fund for Workforce Solutions & Jobs for the Future. Also discussed in [*Optimizing Talent*](#).

Roles of Community Providers

- * Recruit Youth
- * Assess & build youth skills & work readiness
 - * Prepare youth for sectoral training – serve as “on-ramp”
- * Provide supports to youth

Roles of Postsecondary Institutions

- * Provide training that results in employer-valued certification
- * Coaching & support for student success
- * Offer “stackable” certificates and longer-term degree options

Roles of Employers

- * Labor Market Intelligence
- * Advising on Skills & Curriculum
- * Offering Exploratory Job Experiences & First Jobs
- * Career ladders, support for further training/education

Roles of Workforce Intermediaries

- * Finding the Right Sectors
- * Brokering Relationships
- * Piloting Approaches
- * Developing Capacity

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