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YOUTH-TO-WORK INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

1. **Establish a Federal Interagency Task Force on Transition-Aged Youth.** From our conversations with young people with disabilities and their Leadership Council, this recommendation has been identified as their top priority. The President should issue an Executive Order to establish a Presidential Task Force on Transition-aged Youth with Disabilities. This Task Force will be composed of relevant Federal Agencies, young people, families, employers, service providers, and researchers.
2. **Increase Public Awareness.** The President should issue a directive to design and coordinate a public awareness campaign to promote high expectations and successful transition of young people with disabilities. This directive would be issued to the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, and the Small Business Administration and the Social Security Administration. This campaign should promote successful examples from local programs, youth, and employers.

The outreach plan will be designed to:

- Educate parents of youth with disabilities of the initiatives and services that will help prepare their children to successfully transition into adult roles.
- Educate business, especially during such a tight labor market, that youth with disabilities can grow up to be productive, contributing adults in the workplace.
- Educate the general public of the strides being made to help prepare youth to be active members of the community and eliminate the stigma associated with disabilities.

The outreach plan must create an environment where stakeholders can be well-informed of the services available to improve the transition outcomes of youth with disabilities. In addition, stakeholders should be encouraged to share successful strategies with one another. Now is the time to create a legacy for the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act by

providing new opportunities for the next generation of young people with disabilities.

3. **Promote the Availability of Information to Youth, Families, and Employers.** The President should issue a directive to design and implement an interagency one-stop information center on transition of young people with disabilities. This directive would be issued to the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, and the Small Business Administration and the Social Security Administration. This Center will work with these Federal departments and agencies to create a national information center to provide youth, families, employers, and multiple-agency service providers at the state and local level with one-stop information on a range of transition and post-school services, supports, and best practices issues. The Center will provide coordinated information on resources and options about education, employment, health care, independent living, and other opportunities.
4. **Increase Collaboration Among Federal Agencies.** At the recent National Transition Summit in Washington D.C., participants expressed a need for better collaboration among and across agencies that extend and promote services and programs for youth with disabilities. The President should announce an initiative, through the Presidential Task Force, to host a National Institute of Federal Agencies to focus on the alignment of resources, programs, and services to improve the transition into adult roles for youth with disabilities.

The purpose of the Institute will be to bring together senior level representatives from various Federal agencies to work in teams to develop action plans containing strategies for the creation of a seamless delivery system for youth with disabilities. The Institutes also will provide an excellent opportunity to bring together representatives from various Federal agencies (e.g., Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration, Transportation, Commerce) to share with colleagues what they are currently doing, what they are getting ready to do, and what they ought to do to serve youth with disabilities.

In essence, the Institute model will allow participants to brainstorm, exchange ideas, draw on resources, and formulate a strategic plan to improve services for youth with disabilities. The Institute model will allow participants to work in teams to develop a strategic plan. A trained facilitator will guide the team through the process. Through individual team facilitation, each team will develop a strategic plan focusing on the creation of a seamless and collaborative system serving youth disabilities. The Federal government will model the kinds of collaboration that can take place at the state and local levels and share the strategies to do so.

5. **Strengthen Guidance to Families, Youth, and Service Providers on the Transition Requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** Many families, young people with disabilities, and service providers express the need for coordinated guidance on the multiple services that are available to facilitate the realization of transition goals and plans. As highlighted in a recent report from the National Council on Disability, many states and localities are not in compliance with the transition requirements of the IDEA. The Administration believes that working together, Federal agencies and programs can enhance the transition planning process and assist families and young people to better understand their options and plan for successful transition.

The President should issue a directive to issue comprehensive policy guidance on Federal agency programs, purposes, and how they meet transition services planning requirements of the IDEA. This directive would mandate that the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, the Small Business Administration, and the Social Security Administration work with the Office of Management and Budget to develop this comprehensive policy. This policy guidance will achieve two outcomes: (1) establish clear guidelines on the interpretation of definitions of common terms in Federal law impacting young people in transition; and (2) strengthen interagency coordination in the transition planning process and provision of transition services to young people with disabilities.

6. **Promote Transition Under Workforce Investment Act Programs (WIA).** The WIA brings a new emphasis on how youth are served within the workforce development system. The Act's major services

for young people include: (1) the establishment of local youth councils; (2) comprehensive services based on individualized assessment; (3) youth connections and access to the One-Stop delivery system; and (4) performance accountability. The Department of Labor's publication, "The Workforce Investment Act of 1998: A Vision for Youth," specifically mentions young people with disabilities as a specific target population under WIA. Federal policy efforts must ensure that young people with disabilities are included in the opportunities that WIA presents. Examples of this effort include technical assistance to Workforce Investment Boards and Private Industry Councils, and that young people with disabilities actually have membership on Youth Councils.

7. **Coordinate Research, Demonstration, and Training Activities.**

The President should issue a directive to strengthen and coordinate research, demonstration, and training activities. This directive would mandate that the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, the Small Business Administration, and the Social Security Administration work with the Office of Management and Budget and the Presidential Task Force on Adults with Disabilities in FY 2001: (1) coordinate and implement research activities to identify and synthesize best practices, across agencies and programs, for improving the transition results of young people with disabilities; (2) conduct interagency demonstration programs to promote "what works" to young people with disabilities, families, service providers, employers, and decision-makers; and (3) carry out interagency cross-training activities designed to integrate best practices for transitioning youth with disabilities for service providers.

8. **Promote Access to Health Care for Young People with Disabilities.** The President should issue an Executive Order to establish a Federal Healthy, Ready to Work Interagency Council, composed of the HRSA, Health Care Financing Administration, Social Security Administration, Indian Health Services, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and other appropriate departments and agencies. The Council will also include representatives of families, young people with disabilities, and service providers. The charge of the Council will be to ensure access to, and

utilization, of Healthy, Ready to Work services by youth with special health care needs.

9. **Improve Services to Youth with Mental Illness.** Young people with mental illness experience particularly poor transition results. Many of these youth are involved with the correctional systems. Moreover, public attitudes towards these youth create significant barriers to employment, training, and independent living. Last year, the President convened a White House Conference on Mental Illness. We believe that the President should build upon the success of this conference by announcing several initiatives involving youth with mental illness. These include:

(A) **Increase Interagency Collaboration.** The President should issue a directive to increase interagency collaboration to better meet the employment and training needs of youth with mental health disabilities. This directive would mandate the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Justice, and Department of Health and Human Services initiate a Federal interagency demonstration project to enable local communities to address the employment and training needs of young people with mental illness, including youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

(B) **Ensure that Young People with Mental Health Disabilities Benefit from Youth Programs under WIA.** The President should also issue a directive to ensure that youth with mental health disabilities benefit from the youth programs established under the Workforce Improvement Act (WIA). Currently, the Departments of Labor and Justice have entered into a MOU to better coordinate programs of the two departments. We believe that the President should direct these departments to work with the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration to ensure that youth with mental illness are served by these programs, including youth out of school or those who have had juvenile justice system involvement.

10. **Expand Postsecondary Education Opportunities.** The President should issue a directive to strengthen transition planning in postsecondary education programs. This directive should mandate that the Department of Education review and analyze transition

planning in postsecondary education and make recommendations to the Presidential Task Force on strategies for making transition services available on college campuses.

11. **Expanding Employment Opportunities for Youth with the Most Significant Disabilities.** Young people with the most significant disabilities experience remarkable barriers to employment. For many, transition services are uncoordinated and fragmented. The President should issue a directive aimed at improving transition results for youth with significant disabilities. This directive would require the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, the Social Security Administration, and Small Business Administration to strengthen implementation of current programs through cross-agency collaboration activities, develop employer partnerships, and identify and disseminate best practices for successful transition of young people with significant disabilities.
12. **Enhance Transition and Employment Opportunities for Native American Youth with Disabilities.** The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has the responsibility to fully implement special education services to Native American Youth with Disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To support this effort, BIA receives a 1.22 percent set aside from IDEA Part B appropriations. BIA transfers these funds to Tribal governments who provide special education and related services. However, many Tribal governments lack the knowledge and expertise to serve the unique needs of Native American youth with disabilities, and are not equipped to ensure that quality transition services, as mandated under the IDEA, are in place.

The President should announce a major initiative to strengthen the quality of transition services and special education that Native American youth with disabilities receive. This directive would mandate that the BIA take actions to strengthen the quality of community-based special education, related services, and transition services available, and that this mandate become a top priority in the agency. The directive would require that BIA work with the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and the Social Security Administration to develop culturally appropriate technical assistance activities to achieve systems change in

community programs. This effort could be achieved through an interagency-funded technical assistance center on special education and transition services for Native Americans with disabilities in FY 2001. This Center will work with Tribal governments to build their capacity to implement quality special education and transition services.

CURTIS RICHARDS

AGENDA

POTENTIAL YOUTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Proposed Executive Order
 - a) Contents
 - Findings
 - Public Awareness Campaign
 - One Stop Information Center
 - Cross-Agency Policy Guidance
 - Institutes
 - Coordinated Research
 - Shared Demonstrations
 - Cross-Training
 - b) Resource Commitments
 - c) Timelines for Completion
- 3) Youth Recommendation for a Coordinating Council
- 4) Other Potential Announcements
 - a) WIA Youth Programs Policy Guidance
 - b) TA Guidance to Job Corps and YO programs
 - c) Joint DOL/ED letter on how to access WIA youth programs
 - d) ED's Disability Harassment Guide
 - e) ED's Assessment of Students with Disabilities Q & As
 - f) SSA's Student Earned Income Exclusion Regulations
- 5) Message/Theme
 - Instilling a Strong Work Ethic in our Young People
 - High Expectations
 - Independence Not Dependence
 - "It takes a Village"
 - Interdependence of Agencies
 - All Kids

**PROPOSED
EXECUTIVE ORDER**

INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, and in order to promote the employment of young people with disabilities, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy

(a) Over the past twenty-five years, Federal legislation has been enacted to exact changes in how youth with disabilities are educated, engaged in postsecondary education, and prepared for and involved in meaningful employment and independent living. This year, our nation will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the tenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Because of these laws, more young people with disabilities are completing high school, going to college, entering the workforce, and participating in lifelong learning. Although these Federal initiatives have resulted in some success, many young people with disabilities remain far behind their peers without disabilities on many measures of success, including graduation rates, and on such postschool outcomes as employment, postsecondary education participation, and independent living.

(b) The transition needs of young people with disabilities are reflected in many factors. School completion rates for students with disabilities are low, while at the same time, national studies report that students with disabilities who complete high school as well as participate in work site learning experiences are more likely to be employed, to earn higher wages, and to enroll in postsecondary education and training. The labor market demands higher levels of education and skills, and the completion of high school and further

education has become even more critical. Practitioners lack knowledge about integrating service systems to assure a smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood. However, more than 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that key ingredients to a smooth transition for young people with disabilities include: (1) career exploration and development as an integral part of the educational process; (2) school personnel using contextual teaching and learning methodologies that clearly connect classroom learning with the real world, (3) opportunities to participate in work-based learning activities that tie the world of work back to classroom learning; (4) partnerships between multiple agencies serving young people with disabilities and employers; and (5) facilitating self advocacy, self-determination, family interventions and independent living.

(c) The unemployment rate of young people with disabilities 16 to 24 years of age is 22.5%, among the highest of disadvantaged groups in the nation. These individuals are an important, untapped resource of talent and skills, and a key element in sustaining our historic economic growth. Improving the postschool, transition, and independent living results provides a critical new source of employment opportunities for young people with disabilities.

Sec. 2. Implementation

(a) Each head of executive departments and agencies shall work with the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities to design and coordinate a public awareness campaign to promote high expectations and successful transition of young people with disabilities. This campaign should promote successful examples from local programs, youth, and employers. The campaign will be designed to:

- Educate parents of youth with disabilities of the initiatives and services that will help prepare their children to successfully transition into adult roles.
- Educate business, especially during such a tight labor market, that youth with disabilities can grow up to be productive, contributing adults in the workplace.

Educate the general public of the strides being made to help prepare youth to be active members of the community and eliminate the stigma associated with disabilities.

The campaign will create an environment where stakeholders can be well-informed of the services available to improve the transition outcomes of youth with disabilities. In addition, stakeholders should be encouraged to share successful strategies with one another.

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(b) Each head of executive departments and agencies shall design and implement an interagency one-stop information center on transition of young people with disabilities. This Center will work with these Federal departments and agencies to create a national information center to provide youth, families, employers, and multiple-agency service providers at the state and local level with one-stop information on a range of transition and post-school services, supports, and best practices issues. The Center will provide coordinated information on resources and options about education, employment, health care, independent living, and other opportunities.

(c) The Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, the Small Business Administration, and the Social Security Administration shall work with the Office of Management and Budget to issue comprehensive policy guidance on Federal agency programs, purposes, and how they meet transition services planning requirements of the IDEA. This policy guidance will achieve two outcomes: (1) establish clear guidelines on the interpretation of definitions of common terms in Federal law impacting young people in transition; and (2) strengthen interagency coordination in the transition planning process and provision of transition services to young people with disabilities. At a minimum, the guidance should incorporate the key ingredients of a smooth transition outlined in Section (1) (b).

where are they

(d) The National Performance Review shall convene a National Institute of Federal Agencies to focus on the alignment of resources, programs, and services to improve the transition into adult roles for youth with disabilities. The Institute will be to bring together senior level representatives from Federal departments and agencies to develop action plans containing strategies for the creation of a

seamless delivery system for youth with disabilities.

(e) The Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, the Small Business Administration, and the Social Security Administration work with the Office of Management and Budget and the Presidential Task Force on Adults with Disabilities in FY 2001: (1) coordinate and implement research activities to identify and synthesize best practices, across agencies and programs, for improving the transition results of young people with disabilities; (2) conduct interagency demonstration programs based on the key ingredients outlined in Section (1) (b) to promote “what works” for young people with disabilities, families, service providers, employers, and decision-makers; and (3) carry out interagency cross-training activities designed to integrate best practices for transitioning youth with disabilities for service providers. While these coordinated activities shall serve all youth, it shall ensure a focus on young people with mental illness, those with the most significant disabilities, and youth from diverse cultures and with limited English proficiency.

(f) The Department of Education shall review and analyze transition planning in postsecondary education and make recommendations to the Presidential Task Force on strategies for making transition services available on college campuses.

(g) The Department of Health Services shall convene a Federal interagency Work Group to develop a legislative and budgetary proposal to ensure access to and utilization of Healthy & Ready To Work services by youth with special health needs. The work group shall be composed of: Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA, Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) within the Department of Health and Human Services; the Social Security Administration; the Department of Education; the Bureau of Indian Health Services within the Department of Interior; the Department of Labor; the Office of Management & Budget; and other appropriate departments and agencies as well as family and youth representatives. The work group shall submit its recommendations by December 1, 2000.

Sec. 3. Judicial Review. This order does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by a party against the United States, its officers, its employees, or any other person.

THE WHITE HOUSE