



## Transcript of Conference Call Presentation

# The New Freedom Initiative: Linking with the Workforce Investment System to Support Transition Goals

presented by:

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**MS. MACK:** My name is Mary Mack, and I'm an associate director of the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, and I would like to welcome you all to our monthly teleconference call. We're very excited about this month. The topic of today's call is "The New Freedom Initiative: Linking the Workforce Investment System to Support Transition Goals." We are very excited to have Paul Hippolitus from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, who is going to talk to us about the new things that are going on in the Department of Labor. And then Joan Wills is going to talk about a new collaborative that's going to be providing technical assistance to some of the grantees in the Workforce Investment System. So, with that, Paul, I'm going to turn it over to you.

**MR. HIPPOLITUS:** Thank you very much, Mary, and I share your enthusiasm and excitement about the fact that this call is going to be dedicated to a whole new set of resources that will, hopefully, lead to a lot of opportunities from the transition point of view with respect to preparing youth for employment.

I'd like to start by just giving a little bit of a background statement about the Administration's New Freedom Initiative. Some of you may know that during his second week in office President Bush announced his New Freedom Initiative. It was one of the first programs that he chose to bring forward to the nation. And everyone in the

disability community, I think, was pleasantly pleased that such a priority seemed to be given to disability issues including disability employment. Since that announcement we have seen a lot of effort and resource allocation designed to put some meaning behind it and create some activities related to it.

One of the things to come out of the New Freedom Initiative related to employment, related to transition, related to people with disabilities, was the creation of this new office within the U.S. Department of Labor, which I'm representing, called the Office of Disability Employment Policy, or ODEP for short. Now for the first time, the U.S. Department of Labor has a major office, or operation, that is singularly dedicated to the subject of employment and people with disabilities. I think that's a very significant accomplishment or a milestone. For many years, there were specialized activities related to employment in the Department of Labor. And for this to rise to the level of a major office and then to see both the Secretary of Labor and the Administration support it with significant funding in the first year, which was the last fiscal year, and then again this year, portends well for where we are headed.

Suffice it to say that now the U.S. Department of Labor has become formally involved in a major way in the employment situation facing people with disabilities, including both youth and adults. The first effort of this new Office of Disability

Employment Policy has been to provide the U.S. Department of Labor and the Workforce Development System and all the WIA-related programs, with some technical assistance, with some leadership that helps the full system to discover its increasing potential to serve the population.

One of the key roles that ODEP is designed to play, is to provide this leadership, this example, this technical assistance. And very early on we recognized that role and embraced it fully. In order to accomplish that role, we began a number of grant programs, which I want to tell you about. But before I do, a little bit more background.

Leading to the development of this Office of Disability Employment Policy was the combination of two prior organizations. And this is still happening to some degree, but we are almost complete now with this combination. So, ODEP is not starting from zero, with nothing happening from the beginning, but it brings together to start this new office two existing operations. One is the old President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, which had been around for a number of years and had been active with programs and projects attempting to break new ground and push the boundaries back related to the employment of people with disabilities. Combined with that is the President's Task Force on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities and their strong focus on policy issues, policy analysis, and policy development. The combining of these resources has given ODEP a pretty fast start because we have staff that's been working on these issues for a long time. We have existing programs and an existing sense of policy. The combination of this existing power base or this existing resource base has helped ODEP to get started quickly.

As I mentioned, a number of grant programs were one of our first big hallmarks of activity as we took up this new responsibility called ODEP. And so last fiscal year, to give you a sense of at least the budget side of things, the old President's Committee had a budget of about six or seven million dollars. And when we became ODEP that was immediately raised to \$28 million dollars. One

of the products that we dedicated most of the new money to was the implementation of several grant programs, to design and assist the Workforce Development System to increase its capacity to serve its youth and adults with disabilities.

Let me tell you a little bit about those grant programs because Joan Wills, who will speak next, represents one of the major manifestations of that effort as she is leading one of those efforts as a project manager. As I said, there were a number of grant programs, and I want to review those that were implemented last fiscal year, which ended September 30th. They are now in operation all across the country. We started by funding 14 demonstration grant activities. Seven of them are focused at the adult level, and the other seven were focused at the youth level, both designed to show what could be done for youth or adults with disabilities. In the adult area, we funded seven programs, and they were called Customized Employment Programs because they were dedicated to bringing together both the workforce development system and other existing rehabilitation and private and nonprofit, other community resources, in a combined effort pooling everyone's capacity and know-how in a community-wide effort to serve people with significant disabilities with customized employment strategies. The one-stop career centers and their WIA partners were all brought into this coalition and combined their efforts to develop this capacity at a community level, to demonstrate how it could happen so that we could showcase this to other parts of the country and hopefully push back the boundaries or move forward in demonstrating what can be done when we work more at this and use new techniques and new materials and promising practices in ways that increase our potential to serve the population.

So, we funded seven of these customized employment grant programs across the country. I wanted you to know where they were, so, if you are in the part of the country where they are, that you might look to them, partner with them, or connect with them in some way so that you can help them or you can be a part of the process. The seven

locations where these adult, customized employment grants are located are outside of Boston in Malden, Mass.; Napa, CA; Blaine, MN, which is near Minneapolis; Knoxville, TN; Marietta, GA; Fairfax, Virginia; and San Diego, CA. There is more detailed information on each on our Web site. And while I am mentioning that, if you make note of our Web site, you can see more information about all these grant programs, both in a general sense and also gain their local information. And you are going to also see the solicitations that we published to generate this competition, which led to these award winners and these grant programs. Because as you will hear next about the youth program, we are going to re-compete them this year, and particularly with the youth programs, these may be proposals or SGAs that you might want to be involved with in some way because they are locally focused and you might want to take up a leadership role or join a partnership arrangement whereby you could participate in the next round of our youth grant program. At any rate, the Web site where you can find more detailed information on these grant programs is [www.dol.gov/dol/odep](http://www.dol.gov/dol/odep).

In addition to the customized or adult grant program last year, we also funded seven youth innovative or demonstration grant programs where we invited communities — through partnership arrangements and other teamwork kinds of activities — to develop a proposal where young people with disabilities would have services to them to assist them with their transition utilizing the Workforce Investment Act systems or programs. Those seven programs, as you will find when you go to the Web site, are located in these locations: Bloomington, MN; Wheaton, MD; Chicago, IL; Honolulu, HI; Oklahoma City, OK; Jackson, MS; and Portland, OR.

We are represented now in all the locations I mentioned with seven adult or customized grant demonstration programs and seven youth demonstration grant programs, all designed to assist in those localities or workforce systems along with other partners.

Paralleling that effort but focusing on youth-related issues and our youth grantees as well as youth and disability technical assistance in the Workforce Development System is the National Technical Workforce Center that Joan Wills heads up and will talk about next called the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth. So we have created not only seven local demonstrations but also two technical assistance centers to reinforce their efforts to assist them to full implementation and also to glean from them their best practices and their activities and the materials they develop so that it can be distributed through the rest of the Workforce Development System.

ODEP is attempting to build a network that both demonstrates and communicates to the rest of the field how we can increase our capacity and increase our level of service.

This year we will be repeating both of those competitions, the youth and the customized grant programs. The two technical assistance centers are on a five-year time line so they will be in business at least for that long. And I must say with the youth grant proposals we received last year, there was an awful lot of school system connection with the winners and even the other competitors, so I think there is a significant role that the transition community can play with regard to perhaps helping us to get more demonstrations, maybe with your involvement directly in other parts of the country. This year we will fund at least another seven of the adult grant winners and another five to seven of the youth grant winners.

I will also add a new competition, which I will just mention briefly, that we did not do last year, but is in relation to the Olmstead Supreme Court decision. It's our Olmstead grant program. Last July, the President issued an executive order asking U.S. Departments to help state governors to implement the Olmstead decision. Our Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, decided that our contribution to that directive was to assist state governors in developing employment-related Olmstead plans so that we would provide some resources to state governors or their designees to develop planning

and capacity for meeting the employment needs of people with disabilities who are affected or impacted by the Olmstead decision and would be leaving institutional settings headed for community settings.

I don't know how much you know about the Olmstead program, but there's a significant amount of activity at the state level, so that if people with disabilities want to leave institutions under the Olmstead decision, the governor in the state has to provide them with community-based settings. States are trying to develop this capacity, and our contribution to the equation will be in the area of employment, employment planning, and also employment demonstrations.

So that's ODEP's new grant program that we are going to add this year, and you may or may not be interested in getting involved with that. All of these SGAs are keeping in touch with our Web site as it is a good connecting point for getting the latest on when they are going to be offered.

As I mentioned earlier, the ODEP combined two organizations at its creation, and the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities brought into the new office a number of existing programs that continue. I wanted to mention those very briefly. Several are strongly disability youth focused, and I think all of them offer potential to you and your efforts in the transition community. One of them, which was a President's Committee program, now is an ODEP or U.S. Department of Labor program, is our Job Accommodation Network, or JAN. And for those of you who don't know it, it's a national toll-free service that's available every day from nine in the morning until nine at night, East Coast time, and field's calls from anyone who has questions on either job accommodations or instructional accommodation issues or questions, or is looking for technologies or methods or techniques.

And this JAN business has been in operation since, almost 18 years now, and has served over 300,000 accommodation cases. It does about 30,000 cases per year now. That's our current rate of productivity. And you should keep it in mind and utilize it whenever job accommodation

questions come to the forefront. The number for JAN is 1.800.JAN.7234.

We have a couple of other youth programs. I will mention those briefly as well. And then, Joan, I will ask you to talk about the national center that you are heading up with the national collaborative.

The three youth programs that we brought to ODEP that we are continuing include the High School/High Tech Program, which is something that the old President's Committee started several years ago. The first one was in California in the South Bay area of Los Angeles. It was started by employers who wanted to recruit people with disabilities for technology-related occupations and couldn't find them in the pipeline. And so they sat down with educators and rehabilitation professionals and people with disabilities in the community and they devised an extracurricular or a career exploration program that we have come to call High School/High Tech. It's a school-year program which provides students with disabilities with activities and field trips and mentors and paid summer internships which test their interests and abilities with regard to careers and technology and also assists them in their career planning about how to prepare for such careers.

We have over 70 High School/High Tech Programs located around the country, and we believe it's a fairly good model for intervention strategies. In fact, some of the High School/High Tech Programs that we have been able to track show that 30% to 70 % of the high school students with disabilities who go through the High School/High Tech Program go on to postsecondary education, and that's quite a bit higher than the usual result as far as postsecondary ed for special education students.

So, the intervention seems to work well and it challenges students with that age-old question: What do you want to be when you grow up? Then it provides resources and ideas and mentors and, as I said earlier, paid summer internships to build that interest or that knowledge or that expectation, and it leads most often to postsecondary education and then employment as well.

That program continues. In fact, when Joan does speak in a minute, part of her responsibilities relate to supporting with technical assistance our High School/High Tech network. We also offer grants to start up High School/High Tech programs. And so if this is something that seems interesting to you, you may want to either contact Joan or myself afterwards as well, or look at our Web site to get more details.

Two other youth programs that we operate, one is called the Youth Leadership Forum, YLF we call it for short. And that also was first started up in California under the Governor's Committee in California. They have been doing it now for I think six or seven years, maybe longer. And we watched it happen, and we went to it and other states looked at it, and we all said this should happen in every state and so we have embarked on a plan to try and bring it to every state. At this point, we have 29 states that operate, every summer, youth leadership forums for high school-age students with disabilities. There's an application process that they all go through where they send out notification to school systems and other networks inviting young people with disabilities, high school-age students, to apply, and through a selection process they will serve anywhere from 50 to 60 to 70 with a four-day program usually at a local university or a college campus. They stay in a dorm. They hear from disability advocates. They get career planning information. They get to talk to each other, which seems to be one of the greatest attributes of the program and reinforce each other in their expectations and their confidence and come away with a network of people that will serve them well through their full life. So these YLFs are going on under our auspices.

Lastly, we operate at the college level something called the Workforce Recruitment Program, which is the provisioning of summer internships for college students with disabilities. In fact, this time of year I just got back from a week swing through New England and there were 60 recruiters — I was one of them — who, over the last three weeks, had been going to about 170 colleges and universities across the country meeting college students with

disabilities, interviewing them, and collecting their resumes and transcripts. We will be putting them into a database, which will be released March 20th to employers who have pledged to hire from that database. We know we have 300 paid summer internships in the Federal government that will go to that population. And we know other employers who are anxious to look at these candidates for their own purposes and their own recruiting.

This program was started in response to many employers who said to us, we can't find qualified people with disabilities. We went out and found them and put them in a database on a CD-ROM and it's taken off from there.

ODEP does a number of things. It brought to its situation activities that had already been ongoing, but it also created new activities most notably in the grant areas with the two national technical assistance centers. And we continue to grow. This year, which we are currently in, fiscal year '02, our budget was increased again by about 90%, and we are almost at \$40 million. Again, most of that money will be going to our grant programs.

So, I encourage you to make note that we are now in business. Think of us as a parallel to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and Department of Education. We are working very closely with their assistant secretary, Dr. Pasternack, because we feel there is quite a bit of interface between the two operations. Certainly we have a common interest and a common concern, but we also have an opportunity to cross-connect the two major systems that relate to employment and training and education for people with disabilities. We are very interested and anxious to be ready to fulfill our role as helping the Department of Labor, the Workforce Development System, WIA-assisted programs, to see how they can increase their service to people with disabilities, and we are also interested in cross-connecting and cooperating with other activities most notably those in the education arena.

That's an overview of ODEP, what we are all about, what we have been doing to date. I think of all the things I have said, the one that probably

comes closest to being something you will use quite often is this new National Collaborative or national technical assistance center that's been set up to serve the Workforce Development System in their efforts to serve youth with disabilities.

So, here to tell more about that activity is Joan Wills, who is director of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth.

**MS. WILLS:** Let me give a quick overview of this collaborative. First of all, several organizations are involved, including the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET). This project is based upon the recognition that no one organization, no one part of our education and training system has capacity, knowledge, or expertise to speak, to solve all of the problems that all young people face in terms of making a transition from the world — from schooling to the world of work and, in particular, meeting the needs of young people with disabilities.

So, this is a new experiment. I have been involved in lots of different kinds of technical assistance activities for a long number of years, and I think it's important to recognize how sophisticated the Federal government is becoming. Even when they sent out RFPs, in this case they said it had to be a collaborative of different organizations. Let me tell you who our partners are. I have already mentioned the fact that we have NCSET. But we are also supported by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), housed here in Washington, DC, and AED has a long history of working in the area of disability as well as workforce development. We have engaged our friends at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, they are helping us; Goodwill Industries; and the National Association of Workforce Boards, which is the voluntary organization of the Workforce Investment Board. Some of you may have known it when it was called the Private Industry Council. We have engaged the National Conference of State Legislators to work with us, and TransCen, which is a specialized organization that focuses on improving employment programs for youth with disabilities. And another key partner is the National Youth Employment Coalition, which is by far the largest

organization of organizations that focus on youth employment and youth development issues. So, you can see we have ten organizations plus some individual consultants that are working with us in this collaborative.

Now, what is it we are trying to do? Well, we have some ambitious dreams. And when Paul mentioned the fact that it is a grant, though it may not be us, five years from now, these are long-term, long-standing issues and agendas, and, indeed, I hope somebody is around doing some of these kind of things 10 to 15 years from now.

We have three goals, and they focus predominantly on helping people in the field. The first is to improve the development and implementation of state and local policies. The emphasis here is on the term "policies," to promote full access of high quality services for youth with disabilities. But just having good policy isn't sufficient. That leads us to our second goal: To strengthen the services of the organizations, in other words, improving the organizational capacity of organizations, like I am assuming many of the people who are on this conference call now.

And then the third goal, which I can tell you we don't have enough money for right now but hopefully in two to three years, we will be able to increase the amount of dollars that are focused on improving the capacity of individual workers who are responsible for providing direct services to youth. We are convinced that this is a critical issue because we can have the best policies in the world, we can have the best demonstrations in the world, but if we don't enhance the knowledge and skills of the individuals who are out there in the field working daily with young people, all this is for naught. And we know that's a very, very large population.

One of the key things that the organization has been assigned to do is to improve the linkages between programs that have traditionally focused on youth with disabilities to that of the larger workforce development system in the United States. I want to say a couple of words about Workforce Development Systems. It's important to remember that even the terminology "Workforce

Development System” was not in our nomenclature in the United States until the 1990s. Prior to that time and indeed, even today, we have a lot of silos or specialized programs, and there’s a lot of good reasons they are specialized programs.

Pulling all those pieces together in something that I would like to call “the seamless system” is a dream and not yet a reality anywhere in the United States. Many of the programs that have been funded by the Federal government have focused on very, very different at-risk target populations and pulling all the pieces together to create a set of services regardless of income or regardless of disability has, in fact, alluded us.

When the Workforce Investment Act was passed, it really had two functions: One was to help create a planning and a resource allocation infrastructure that is really very different than what we have had in the past. And the other function under WIA is to allocate some dollars — but, quite frankly, that’s a very limited amount of dollars — for actual training and direct services to people. So, you have two different functions within that piece of legislation.

We are predominantly focusing on the first function - how to help create a new infrastructure. So that means our target population, our target audiences, are state workforce investment boards, state agencies, the local workforce investment boards. And I am sure many of you on this call are familiar with the fact that youth councils are now required as the result of passage of the WIA legislation. And those youth councils provide for the first time at least some federal resources to help communities, all the different actors inside a community, to come together and decide hopefully in a very collaborative way what are the needs of all youth, and then go through a community consensus-building process that helps ensure that all youth are served regardless of their status. Now, that’s a dream. It hasn’t yet been realized anywhere, but Mary Mack is probably one of the best people in the country to give a speech about all means all, that all youth need high quality services, all youth need adult mentors, all youth need to have exposure to the world of work, all youth need to have some

kind of support system that helps promote their own leadership skills, et cetera.

So, we are being serious in our work about promoting this concept of “all,” and working through these various networks to improve policy, practice, and the capacity of individuals.

Now, we don’t have enough money to do it all, so we are building partnerships, and that’s why we have deliberately selected many of the organizations that I mentioned earlier that are a part of our collaborative. So, we will be working through the National Association of Workforce Boards, through the Chamber of Commerce, et cetera, to reach a variety of people.

Paul mentioned the fact that we also have a lead responsibility to provide direct technical assistance to the demonstration grants. We call them the innovative grantees, the idea grantees, as well as the High School/High Tech grantees. So that’s another special life task that we are undertaking. And we see those organizations in many ways as an extension of our own work because they can, over time, become trainers of other organizations. They can help us codify and identify the knowledge and skills required of front-line service workers. So, we are doing everything possible — based upon a network strategy — to improve the practice.

One final thing — and then we will take questions — over the years people have used the term “best practice” sometimes rather loosely. And so one of our charges is to document and promote concepts of best practice around servicing youth with disabilities. One of the things that we are doing and paying particular attention to in our first year of work — we are currently very focused on this — is to come to some kind of agreement across the different parts of this system: Vocational rehabilitation, IDEA Transition Services, WIA funded programs, et cetera. What constitutes best practice? What are the characteristics of a best practice? Best practice can focus on a policy, how an organization is fulfilling its own strategic plans, or the direct services. So we are using something that has been called the codification of common sense. What that is also called is the Malcolm Baldrige criteria, seven different categories of practice that

any good organization has to use in order to be successful.

Now, it's not an accident that we are choosing something that is frankly a neutral tool because it doesn't matter whether or not you are a school district, a local school, a vocational rehabilitation program, a substance abuse program, or whatever the case may be; these Baldridge criteria have application, they have utility, so that we don't get ourselves, when we are talking about best practices, caught in the traps of, well, is this the performance criteria that the Department of Labor says we have to have for a youth program under WIA. Those performance criteria serve a different purpose.

So, we are very much in search, particularly starting this summer, of examples of best practices. And I hope that all of you will make sure that you sign up and become a part of this network that we are planning to grow. It's not active yet, so I don't want to promise you that it is active yet, but we do have a Web site. Let me give it to you. It's [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info). We also have a special Web site for the long-standing High School/High Tech Program, and you can go to <http://www.dol.gov/dol/odep/public/media/reports/hsht00/toc.htm> and you will find information about that program.

**MS. MACK:** Thank you so much, Paul and Joan — a lot of great information. I would just like to open it up to questions that you have for either Joan or Paul.

**MS. ZIMBRICH:** Hi, this is Karen. I have a question for Paul — actually either presenter — on a little more information about High School/High Tech Programs. And you mentioned a figure, maybe 33% of students in special education in these programs go on to higher ed; is that correct?

**MR. HIPPOLITUS:** Yeah, I mentioned that earlier that some of our anecdotal studies existing High School/High Tech Programs reveal that the students who have participated in their High School/High Tech Program went on to postsecondary ed at a rate of anywhere from 30% on up to 70%. And we think that's a rather glowing testament to what it can do for students. In other words, it not only challenges them but it gives them the context and the resources to plan for a future. I

mean, we are talking about kids that were expected to go to McDonald's going to Georgia Tech. And so there's a lot of potential that's just not realized or isn't tapped and challenged and this program does that. In Georgia also, I should mention, right now the State Superintendent of Public Instruction is looking at giving Carnegie credits for High School/High Tech. And the rehabilitation program is looking at providing support for those High School/High Tech participants who are clients as well.

So, it's beginning to grow as an initiative and it's based on a transition or a secondary special ed program, and I wanted to mention it for sure because we are always interested in partners for bringing this program to new parts of the country.

**MS. ZIMBRICH:** And any examples in the Northeast right now, particularly near Boston?

**MS. WILLS:** If you go to the High School/High Tech Web site at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/odep/public/media/reports/hsht00/toc.htm>. Let me just give a comment about the characteristics of the High School/High Tech model. For those of you who may be familiar with the WIA legislation, you may know that in that legislation there are ten characteristics of good programs, characteristics for youth programs specifically. For example, it says you need adult mentors, youth need to have work-based learning experiences. High School/High Tech in the main follows these criteria. And while we are all dedicated to improving, even getting better information, what's happening with High School/High Tech, Paul is absolutely correct: Anecdotal information suggests this is a very powerful model that includes summer work activities, some are internships.

**MR. GRUISE:** Hi, everybody. Joan and Paul, you did a great job, by the way. My name is Randy Gruise and I am calling you from Southfield, Michigan, just outside of Detroit.

I am a person with a disability and I am a professional speaker and trainer, and I was a part of the Minority Youth Leadership Initiative in the year 2000. And my question to you was, in this initiative, is there any focus or emphasis or any outline in particular to deliver services through this

new plan to under-served young adults, maybe in urban communities for those that were identified as under-served population and rehabilitation of services.

**MR. HIPPOLITUS:** Cultural diversity is something that is paramount. It is a theme or a stream that needs to run through all of these activities and all of these initiatives. We had started awhile back, even before we became ODEP, to build some relationships with key minority organizations on the very end with the expectation that they can reach the community perhaps better than the more traditional ones. And plus they have resource capabilities to serve people with disabilities here from minority backgrounds.

The NAACP has been very active in this. In fact, they started a demonstration High School/High Tech Program in Baltimore City. The National Urban League, likewise, has been active and they are very active in the WIA system as well. So, there was a double bonus there. And they too have started up two High School/High Tech Programs in some of our other programs. And then ASPIRA and La Raza are also working with us on a regular basis.

So, one technique we have employed is to go out and meet with the organizations that serve the minority community and help them to see the disability issue, understand the disability issue, and lead them to the resources and the information that would be useful to them to help us all to make some progress in this area. That's a small step I admit, but we have begun in that direction.

One of our grantees in Mississippi has a very strong minority focus. They all have minority involvement. And so I think that the demonstrations are going to also bring forward new information, best practices, materials, and through the technical assistance centers and through our Web site you will be able to keep abreast of some of those developments.

**MR. GRUISE:** Great.

**MS. WILLS:** And just let me quickly add another piece to that equation. I mentioned that one of our key partners is the National Youth Employment Coalition, and it has very strong roots

in the minority communities, Latino, African/American. And as a matter of fact, it was organizations such as those Paul just mentioned that really helped launched the National Youth Employment Coalition many years ago.

So, we have people who have a great deal of familiarity with the issues of ethnic minorities. How can we, as a nation, though, and in all of the different communities bring people to the table? Obviously one way to bring them to the table is through the youth councils, bring them to the table and sort through what will happen. I know they are going to be hard choices because there is never enough money to go around. So, we plan to spend a lot of our time and effort, as I know NCSET has, in helping communities help themselves. We can't, with our limited amount of dollars, start new programs. That's Paul's shop with his demonstration. He can help support those kinds of things.

But it's probably in some ways just as important to help communities find ways to increase better communications and common strategies inside local communities then, quite frankly, always coming to Washington, DC for another new program. Because my sense is we have probably reached pretty close to a limit as to how much we can expect from Washington, DC in the way of to solve many of these enduring problems. So, we have got to improve practice at the state and local level, which is why we so very clearly made that our point of emphasis.

**MS. MACK:** I want to thank both Joan and Paul for being on the call today. We have heard a lot of wonderful information. In our April teleconference, we will be talking about mentoring transition aged youth with disabilities, a specific program that's being piloted in Minnesota and in Iowa that we are looking toward expanding. So, I think that that will be of particular interest. Mentoring seems to be something that young people and service providers seem very interested in.

So, with that, thank you for being on this call. I really appreciate your being involved.

**(Conclusion of teleconference)**

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