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Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF): Developing Leadership Skills in Youth With Disabilities

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MS. SOCHA: My name is Julia Socha and I work with the Youth and Family Participation Network at the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the University of Minnesota. On behalf of our center, I'd like to welcome all of you to this month's teleconference call.

Today's topic for the teleconference call is Youth Leadership Forum (YLF): Developing Leadership Skills in Youth with Disabilities. And we're very lucky today to have guest speakers with us who are coordinators of their state's YLF and have very unique viewpoints on coordinating YLF's which are wonderful local opportunities for youth to build leadership skills and also skills to plan for the future through the development of state youth leadership forums.

We have Alicia Epstein, Policy Advisor for the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor. We also have June Hermanson, YLF Project Coordinator for Montana, Jessica Wells, and Michael Beers who are delegates of their states YLF which is in Montana. And hopefully, we'll have Angeline Pinckard joining us along with some of her state's delegates. That might occur later on in the call so just be aware of that.

And basically, just so people know the format of today's call, we're going to go through it now. We'll start with Alicia Epstein. Alicia is going to be providing us with a little bit of history on Youth Leadership Forums from a national and local perspective. And then June Hermanson, Jessica Wells, and Michael Beers will go through how they coordinate their state's YLF. Then we'll move on to Angeline Pinckard and as I mentioned, hopefully she'll be joining us. And then after the final presentation of the teleconference, we'll open it up for any questions that any of the participants might have at

that time. And then just at the end of the call, I'll give you some information about related information on this topic.

MS. EPSTEIN: Good afternoon everyone. Before I start, I just want to let you know that I'm using a sign language interpreter. So during your questions, please identify your name. That will help the interpreter figure out who's talking and so forth.

I'm very happy to be on this call today and talk about a wonderful youth leadership program, the YLF. I'm just going to give you some brief background information on YLF. In 1992, the California Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities got started. And then that program sort of grew and became widely recognized from the California state perspective. And then the group who planted that wanted to open up a nationwide program. And so they contacted the former President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities. In 1998, the former President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities began an effort to have the program replicated nationwide. Currently, we have 28 states participating in the program. Over 1,000 high school students with disabilities attended Youth Leadership Forum.

What makes YLF really spectacular is really the uniqueness of the focus of our program on the high school students with disabilities. It is a four or five [Day] event taken on at the state level in the state capital. And the delegates are encouraged to have independent experiences, [where the delegates stay at a college dormitory] socialization opportunities, opportunities for career development. The program is based on four core elements philosophy.

The four elements are:

- 1) Targets students during their last two years of secondary education

- 2) Restricted to youth with disabilities
- 3) Presenters for the on-site modules are successful adults with disabilities
- 4) Core curriculum includes several basic modules

Now the way that the program is set up, it's done on a state level, through state's individual organizations for example, independent living centers or government's committee on employment of people with disabilities, the developmental disability counsel or through the Workforce Investment Act.

Besides the California model, states develop their own program activities. For example, some states develop outdoor activities such as Discovery activity where the delegates participate in roping courses and team building activities. Other states came up with a mock debate where delegates engage in debates on controversial issues concerning their communities.

Another important part is the mentoring component of this project. A mentor luncheon is held where the delegate is matched with a mentor and so forth. During the week, the delegates will work on their leadership development plans. This is an opportunity for the delegates to develop their personal leadership goals. The plan encourages the delegates to explore opportunities for them to become involve in their community. They also work on their postsecondary education plan where they explore options for going to college, vocational training and employment opportunities.

Now here at ODEP, my role is to provide technical assistance to all of the states, such as telephone conferencing, the monthly conferences to just help them through, possibly E-mail, answer their questions and so forth. And also work with the National Youth Leadership Network, which is another organization that promotes youth and adults with disabilities working from a national level. So I'd like to give it over to June now.

MS. HERMANSON: My name is June Hermanson and I'm a Project Coordinator at the Montana Center on Disabilities at the Montana State University Billings Campus. I learned of the YLF five-and-a-half years ago while serving on our State Independent Living Council. It took approximately a year-and-a-half to plan, fund-raise, and develop the first forum. Our first forum took place in July of 2000 and last week, we just completed our fourth leadership forum.

Some of the greatest successes that we've had are just the opportunities that youth have had to participate in. We've had a number of youth that had opportunities, and they've been able to take advantage of those opportunities. And just some of the outcomes. In the three years that we have – we don't have this years numbers

in here, but the first three years of our program, 13 of the delegates have gone on to college, six are employed. Sixteen just graduated from high school. We're unable to locate 10 of the delegates. And 17 different delegates that have attended the forum have had the opportunity to make presentations at a community, state, or national level. So the delegates have had a wide variety of opportunities.

Of course the greatest challenge in setting up a program like this is fundraising. We have entered into partnerships with public and private entities from Kiwanis clubs to exchange clubs. We make presentations to those groups. Our Office of Public Instruction is instrumental. The Montana Center on Disabilities is, needless to say, the primary funding source for the project. Because one of the biggest challenges with youth with disabilities is the medical component and making sure you have a solid medical partner that provides medical services is crucial. We've been very fortunate to enter a partnership with a local hospital here in Billings. And they have - they provide medical equipment, those types of things all free of charge to us. And they have a doctor available should something arise.

Some of the auxiliary types of services that you need for a forum are one of the most important set of partnerships that you can develop. But once they're developed, and once you get your forum going, you're able to be able to keep that – those partnerships in place from year-to-year and that helps a lot. You don't have to keep recreating.

Our planning of our YLF is done through a state-wide advisory council. Montana is vast in geographical space, getting together regularly is virtually impossible and financially not feasible. We do monthly conference calls. One thing unique to the Montana Youth Leadership Forum is that we elect a leadership team at each forum. Delegates decide that they're going to run. They file and they campaign. And the winners are announced. That leadership team then is part of the advisory council and they get part of the responsibility for helping form what the next forum will be like. So that we've always got youth as one of the major emphasis as far as input goes.

So that's a little bit about our forum. But I want to pass it on. We have two former delegates or alumni I should say on the call today: Michael Beers from Missoula, Montana, and Jessica Wells from Hamilton, Montana. And I'd like them to talk a little bit, so Jessica, why don't you kick it off. And then Michael if you would follow her, please.

MS. WELLS: My – when I was a delegate in my life

it's – it was the first thing I had ever done where I went in to a place where there was a whole bunch of people – other people with disabilities. And it opened my eyes to see that other people have challenges like I have challenges. And it also gave me a sense of belonging, that I had a place where I actually kind of fit in a little bit.

And the speakers were always full of information and they answered your questions. And YLF was fun and entertaining and it was also informational. OK. That's pretty much all I have to say about YLF, other than that it was a really good experience.

MS. SOCHA: Thank you very much. Michael if you want to go ahead.

MR. BEERS: Yes, a lot of the things – going on in my life. In 2001, when I went, when I signed up, and when I showed up I really didn't know what to expect. And I had no idea it would turn out as wonderful as it did. But it really gave me an opportunity to, like Jessica said, be around other people with disabilities. Because like – especially my peers, because in the high school normally, you know, there are few people with disabilities. And maybe you don't necessarily, you know, hang out with those people.

But being at YLF for a week was the first time I had had an opportunity to spend an entire week surrounded by people my own age that had many different disabilities. But there's a common thread that we all share, and a common experience, and struggles and things like that. And it really gave me an opportunity to learn from the delegates; kind of share and talk about what each of us had been through. It also gave me a great opportunity to listen to the speakers and I went to YLF right after I graduated. So I was right in the middle of that transition. Listening to some of the speakers from Social Security and just other people really helped give me a lot of resources to help me out making that transition. And it really educated a lot.

It also opened my eyes to disability as a culture, and as a movement. I had no idea that there was a larger movement or a history. And it really gave me an appreciation for the people that had – the people that had come before me and have given me – paved the road so that I can have an education and so that I can enjoy the quality of life I do today.

And it also gave me with that education, kind of a responsibility to maybe continue that and see how far I can go with that. And it really opened the doors to a lot of opportunities in the last two or three years that have gone through my life. I've come back both years in 2002 and 2003 as staff. And I've learned every year. Every time I go back I learn more from the delegates, from

the staff, and from everybody. Even hearing the same presenters three years I've gotten something different out of it every year.

In my first year coming out of it, I mean I went in there really unsure and not real confident in myself and what I could do. But just in that week, I came out, feeling like I could do anything. And there wasn't anything that I couldn't do. And I became so close with the delegates in the staff in that week and really bonded and I still keep in touch with a lot of them. So it really gave me an opportunity to further my education as well as, make a lot of friends that I'm sure I'll have for a long time.

MS. SOCHA: Wonderful, thank you very much, Michael and Jessica. Your participation in this call is very critical. And we're very grateful to have you. I think now we're going to move along to Angeline Pinckard who is going to make her presentation. And then also, I understand she also has some delegates with her on the phone that have graciously joined us for this call despite their challenges of phone problems and weather. So I think we'll go ahead with that. Angeline, are you on the line?

MS. PINCKARD: We have enjoyed having our YLF conference, our YLF forum for the past five years. And we feel like it's been very successful. We've had as many as 30 delegates at a conference, and as few as 19. We've pretty much followed the same track as the California forum design. And our goal has been to build self esteem among the YLF delegates, to provide an opportunity for delegates to meet other students with disabilities, to encourage the delegates to investigate what their rights are, and to learn to stand up for their rights in school and in the community.

We also found that it's very important to introduce the history of the disability movement to the delegates because many of them don't know about it. And many of them feel – find a connection with that organization and with that movement. We also encourage our delegates to participate with other participants in the school and the community. But one thing that we like about our program is that it's more of a three part program, training program as opposed to just for the delegates. Of course, the main focus is for the delegates, the high school students that come in for the Youth Leadership Forum.

The second prong to that is that instead of using volunteer adult staff, we use college students since we are on the Troy State University Campus. Our staff consists mostly of young people that are getting degrees in social work, in special education, and vocational rehabilitation. So knowing that they are going to be working with

young adults with disabilities and adults with disabilities, we felt like this was a good training program for them too. And that has proved to be so. The college students have been very appreciative in what they have learned from being a staff member.

Also, the third prong is that we invite alumni to come back as staff. And we feel like that's a second level of education for the staff. They have to stay a year out of YLF. So they've been a delegate and alumni for one year. And then they can come back as staff. And it's interesting to see the changes in the delegates when they come back as staff members.

Currently, we have about five staff members that continue to come back year-after-year-after-year as alumni as staff. They just seem to have taken on the YLF as their own lifetime project to be role models for the new delegates that are coming in. And they continue to realize that they have learned new facets of themselves every year when they come back as staff members too.

Our delegates, as I said, they range from 25 to 30 delegates every year. Some recommendations that I would make to the other states would be when you're starting your organization to be sure that all of the key players are on your planning committee. Really look at who the key players are. It might be your financial institutions. It may be, for example, we have a very strong involvement with the vocational/rehabilitation department in our state and the transition program under vocational rehab. We have a strong connection with the school. We have a strong connection with our Workforce Investment Act. In fact, that's where we get our funding from. And the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. We suggest that you really think about who your key players are and put them on the planning committee.

Some of the support that we have – that we're suggesting to keep the YLF running is, of course, that the key players on your planning committee and the enthusiasm that is built in the planning committee, year-after-year, when you see the advantages for our delegates and what the young people say have benefited them in attending the YLF. Not only that, but the parents too can tell you about changing into young adults. And we hear from teachers and school systems about for example, the students are learning to stand up for themselves. They'll participate in their own IEP and not let parents and teachers do it for them all of their time.

Some of the successes and challenges, this is too many to enumerate here. But some of the things I'd like to talk about is that the delegates seem to appreciate learning about other disabilities. And the feeling that

they come away from this program with from the fact that they are not the only one with their kind of disability. And that they belong to a unique different group of people. I'm going to let Jennifer talk some more about that.

Many of these young people have come to the forum not understanding that they can be independent and live on their own or go to college on their own. And they find that they have more independence and they can do more things for themselves than they thought. And also we see that they're beginning to cut their apron strings from the parents. As I think so many of you know, parents sometimes are the ones that keep their children from becoming independent. And we're finding that this is a good program for parents as well as the delegates.

We have had also a spin-off program from the Youth Leadership Forum and it is called transition weekend. This transition weekend is based on the same kind of schedule from YLF and meets at Florida State University for a weekend just like YLF does. Transition weekend is focused specifically for students with visual impairment, students who are blind or visually impaired and their parents. YLF does not invite parents, but transition weekend has a segment of the program for parents. And that has been very successful too.

Some of the challenges that we have had recently are meeting all of the requirements that are found in the grants under the Workforce Investment Act. Some of the things that we have to put together for delegates in order to meet their requirements - that's one of our big problems.

And we've had difficulty tracking the students after the YLF is over. But we will be hiring someone in the staff position this coming year to do that for us. For recruitment of our delegates we contact special education supervisors, school counselors, all of the transition coordinators within the school and the vocational rehabilitation. We contact the disability groups in the state, the independent living centers. And we've particularly worked with the children's rehabilitation services program in the state of Alabama. And we contact alumni if they know other students with disabilities in their area; we encourage them to pass on applications to them.

We're pleased to say that the delegates once they become alumni had been referred to the children's rehabilitation services youth advocacy council as memberships on those councils. And they have been very successful at that. And we plan to be referring our delegates to the Workforce Investment Youth Council for their participation in that too.

I'm going to turn the phone over now to – remember, we're speaking on a cell phone. So everybody can't hear what's going on. I'm going to turn the phone over to our alumni Jennifer Thomas. She was a delegate two years ago. She came back this past year as a staff member. And she's currently working for Children's Rehabilitation Services. Here's Jennifer.

MS. THOMAS: OK. Well again, my name is Jennifer Thomas. And I was a delegate of YLF in 2001. After – well when I first came to YLF I was very nervous. You know, I didn't know exactly what to expect. And like many of the other delegates it was my first time away from home. Never had I been away from home, out of the city alone by myself. And when I go there, everyone was just too friendly, the staff was so inviting. And everyone made it possible to the point where delegates didn't have to feel like they were dependent. Everything that we needed done was done. If we couldn't do it they're saying I'll help you, let me get that for you, let me help you with this. But they didn't push themselves on us either.

After a couple of days of being there, I started to adjust a little bit more. And we were broken down into the group. So I noticed that the group I was in we began to learn a lot more. And everyone began to open up and to speak out about their various concerns. And when I first went to YLF there were a lot of things that I didn't know that I learned about later such as the introduction that was given to the – about the disability movement. After hearing that, I no longer claim the title of being handicapped because I learned the etymology of the word. And I felt that that was a very important factor of YLF because that was something that I didn't know or I wasn't aware of that.

Also I believe that after attending YLF and after the group began to bond separately and being together it kind of made us realize that we were all a part of this disabled community. And it made us realize the necessity for us to band together and to stand together on a lot of issues because of that. You know, if we don't help each other out, our own issues would never be voiced or we would never gain the things that we wanted.

YLF also provided me with skills that I needed to basically handle business such as obtaining modifications in schools. As I entered YLF I had just graduated high school and I was about to make a transition into college. There were a lot of things I didn't know such as how you actually go about getting your accommodation or who to contact and what things to say. And by attending YLF, I sort of learned a little bit more about, you know, how to become an advocate for myself and how to be

assertive. And I think those were all very important elements of the program.

After attending YLF my confidence very much felt renewed. I began to feel like wow I can do anything again. It gave me the change to prove to myself, you know, not just my parents, not just my friends and other family members but to myself, that yes, I can live on my own some day. Yes, I can do those things that I desire to do, that right now I may not be able to do because I don't have the necessary accommodations. But yes, I can do these things if I put my mind to them.

The speakers gave a lot of encouragement as well because the way YLF has been set up in Alabama the speakers came too have whatever- some of the disabilities that the delegates have. And I feel that that allows the delegates to relate more to those speakers because, you know, we would listen to them more, and be able to say OK, yes, this was a person who has gone through what I've gone through so they know how I feel. And they can speak on this subject to me.

So like I said, after attending YLF my confidence was renewed. I became more motivated to get involved in other things such as organizations that help young people with disabilities to gain their rights or know more about their rights and become more knowledgeable of them and to answer the things that they need.

Also, after a while, I gained a lot of links and bonds with other delegates. And even now I still keep in touch with some of them. So I think that was very important too because here it is, you've met this person that you've never known before. And you all have something in common, you have YLF in common. And you talk about it. And you've gone through it together. So after it's like you all have become stronger together. And you're ready to go out and tell the world about YLF. You're ready to share all of those fascinating things that you've learned about. And I think that was very important too. Because now I don't feel as alone. And I also learned that there were various types of disabilities, you know, out there, and that I represented under ADA that I didn't know about. I wasn't aware of it. -, disabilities were actually like really disabilities. I mean I didn't notice that. I wasn't really aware of that. And I also learned about some disabilities that I didn't even know existed.

So I think it kind of just opened us more as young people. It made us say hey, I can fight for my rights too. I don't have to sit back and wait for someone else to step up to the plate and fight for me. I can be involved in this. And I just – I don't – I love YLF. I really did have a good time. And like I said everything that we did everyone was able to participate in. I don't feel that there

was anything that anyone had fit to decide on. Like I said, maybe we couldn't do it exactly like it – you know, someone would think that it was supposed to be done. But there were modifications in games, in activities or what have you where everyone could have some in on participating.

So and in addition to all of the other things I've mentioned, YLF also gave us a change to enhance our speaking skills. Each group had a day where they had to introduce the speakers for that day that would come in and talk with the whole group. So I think that was also very important. I mean didn't just get skills about dealing with other people with disabilities. Or how do you act on a job or how to go about finding a job and learning about accommodations. But we also gained skills regarding communications. And I think that was very important too because we learned how to communicate with other people. We learned how to communicate our ideas and how to share them in a productive manner.

Whereas before those were some things that we probably didn't know how to do. So I feel like I am indebted to YLF in some aspects of life because they gave – it gave me meaning I feel I will be able to carry with me, you know, for the rest of my life. And then coming in as a staff member, I learned the other side of YLF and how it all just comes together. And it's very, very important for all of the key players to be in place at their designated times. And, you know, I didn't realize these things as a delegate. But now that I've come in as an alumnus and as a staff member, I know the roles that everyone has. And yes, it's time consuming. Yes, it's not very easy at times, but it's fine. And I think that's what the delegates kind of appreciated about, you know, YLF, yes, it's fun. And yes, I've learned something at the same time. And then on top of that I made bonds with other people who are like me. And I don't feel isolated because these other people are like me. We have something in common. And that thing that we have in common is our difference. So those are some of the things that I've gained after attending YLF.

MS. SOCHA: Well thank you very much, Jennifer. I really appreciate your participation. Now, I would like to invite the participants to ask any questions or to comment on what they've heard. Please announce your name, maybe the group that you're with or the state that you're from. That would be really helpful. And please address who your question is directed towards. We'll go ahead and get started if there are questions.

MR. PORTER: This is Doran Porter from Hawaii. I wanted to see if there are any Web sites that might give some of this information and even additional data.

MS. SOCHA: Sure, maybe I can answer that. This is Julia Socha and I'm the moderator. We will hopefully after the end of this – after this call there's a transcript that's produced that housed on our Web site through the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET). And at the end of the call I'll give you that Web site. And we'll be happy to provide additional links to resources and information. As Angeline and June will probably mention, many of the states, the YLF's have their own Web sites right now. So you can just do a search, for example, for Montana's YLF, they have a Web site. And I believe Angeline's also does, and maybe they can give you that address also. We'll be happy to provide that information.

MS. PINCKARD: OK. Our Web site in Alabama is <http://www.rehab.state.al.us/Home/default.aspx?url=/Home/Services/VRS/AGCEPD/Youth+Leadership+Forum/Main>, for Governor's Committee. And the Youth Leadership Program is listed as a program under the Governor's Committee with the Department of Rehabilitation Services.

MS. HERMANSON: And Montana's Web site is <http://www.msubillings.edu/mtcd/mylff>. I will tell you also that on our Web site a young person can click on to the E-mail of a member of the leadership team and be able to contact the leadership team directly and correspond.

MS. SOCHA: Great. Thank you. Are there additional questions?

MS. EPSTEIN: Yes, this is Alicia. ODEP does also have general overview information on our Web site about WLF which is <http://www.dol.gov/odepl/>.

MS. GRECO: I have a couple of questions. My name is Tina and I'm calling from vocational rehabilitation in New Hampshire. One of my first questions is for the students that have presented this afternoon, what kind of leadership opportunities have you or would you like to be involved in within your communities after participating in the YLF?

MR. HORNE: Michael, this is Richard at ODEP. Do you want to talk about the opportunity that you applied for?

MR. BEERS: A few months after I went through as a delegate in 2001, June E-mailed me with an opportunity to apply to be on the U.S. Advisory Council to the President's Task Force for Adults with Disabilities. And I applied. And I really wasn't expecting to get accepted but I was. And it gave me an opportunity to go to D.C. and meet with other peers and put together recommendations for the Department of Labor and other organizations nationally. And that – the term ended last summer, but it really gave me an opportunity to meet

other leaders my age. And then work with Richard and a lot of other great people. And get involved on more of a national level.

I'm also gotten more involved with my local independent living center. I also went through their peer training. And as I've mentioned before I'm come back as staff and worked a lot with the Montana Center on Disabilities and June over the last few years.

MS. GRECO: Wonderful. Thank you. And my other question is in regard to those states that are present today that may be interested in doing YLF as their own. Will there be information that will be available on the transcript in terms of how to go about doing that?

MS. SOCHA: I wanted to also mention that the NCSET hopes to do some additional publications featuring information about YLF's. We hope to put a spotlight possibly on these same states or other states, with regard to how they've conducted their YLF, how things have been successful, the challenges that they've run in to. And just some additional resources and information.

MS. GRECO: OK. Great. Thank you.

MS. EPSTEIN: This is Alicia. And there is also a manual for states on how to set up an YLF based on the California model. So if you contact me I can refer to you or explain to you how to get that manual. And that manual really will answer all of your questions about how one sets up that kind of program, how you get the funding, where you can get support, how you can recruit youth with disabilities. How you can do the – find a site, pick a site for you YLF, how to get presenters to come in. That sort of thing. So that manual is a great reference.

MS. GRECO: Thank you.

MR. GILMORE: This is Claude Gilmore in Wisconsin. And I was interested in knowing about whether the – how do you maintain the network with the young people? Is there adult and youth partnerships? Or does this become a more peer mentoring model to sustain it between the forms because the kids the need support? I understand you had – there was a huge leadership sort of advisory committee, but is this a government run? Or is this pretty much outside the spectrum of government.

MS. HERMANSON: Well this is June from Montana. And really it depends upon each state comes up with its own avenue by which it finds a sponsor or a home if you will. And then you do get a seed grant through the Department of Labor. States have gotten their initial seed grant for their first year. But then it's your responsibility to become a free standing entity where you raise the funds yourself.

As far the state that might be starting from scratch, the network of the leadership forums across the country

provide a great amount of resources from one other and support as we go along, create – with new ideas or things to do things. So although ODEP facilitates the conference calls that we participate in on a monthly basis, each state really creates under the mission of the California model, but we create the type of program that's applicable to our state.

MS. GUILLORY: My name is Joan Guillory. I'm with the Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum. And after that last comment as a perfect lead in to my question, we just held our fifth forum last week. And one of the things that we did a little differently this year was that we took a slightly different approach that would culminate in the development of that leadership plan that is on the core components.

And just giving a little information, we approached it from the avenue of a leadership portfolio. So the format and the protocol was a little different, specifically as part of the application process, the development of that portfolio began. And then it continued as part of the entity process. And then it certainly continued as part of the Youth Leadership Forum itself. I was wondering if any of the other states that have been conducting the forums have tried to use any type of different approach to the development of that leadership plan.

MS. PINCKARD: This is Angeline. I'm not sure about that. I know in Alabama we're not doing that.

MS. GUILLORY: OK.

MS. PINCKARD: We are trying to track to see if they actually follow up with what they've put on their leadership plan to see if they're actually doing what they said they wanted to do.

MS. GUILLORY: And in fact, as part of our leadership portfolio we will have contact with the delegates for at least one year after their participation in the forum because action journals are part of that leadership portfolio. We were particularly excited about how things went this year. And certainly we'd be willing to share more information. But again, at this point, I was just curious to see if anyone had deviated at all in terms of the approach to development of the leadership plan.

MS. EPSTEIN: This is Alicia Epstein. Just to add to your question about following up activities, and also for the personal leadership plan. Different states due have different kinds of reunions. Some have reunions, you know, six months later, a year later, they all get to meet up again. And they meet up with our mentors again as well. And also there's an E-mail kind of communication contact that some people keep up with. And then some of the states keep a personal leadership plan. And then three months after the YLF they will

send a copy of that plan, the personal leadership plan to the delegates again as like a reminder. For them just to remind what they did plan to do. So this is some of the follow up activities that other states have done.

MS. GUILLORY: OK.

MS. HERMANSON: This is June from Montana. Now what we have done is we've blended information from personal future plans for those that are familiar with personal future plans. Our small group facilitators found the first year that they needed a little more information to assist the delegate. And, so, some of the personal future planning process has been blended in to notebooks and in to our leadership plan development. And we found that to be beneficial. And at this point, we found that that will stay in place. We too track individuals for a year, at least a year.

MS. GUILLORY: Right. I probably would be interested in speaking with you a little bit more at length later. Because actually the leadership portfolio piece that was put in place does also feature aspects of personal futures planning, a person centered planning in terms of personal statements, and a future vision and dreams and those kinds of things. So that could be an interesting conversation for us to have if you don't mind.

MS. HERMANSON: Certainly.

MS. WELLS: This is Gillian with Nevada Parent Training and Information Center. And I have a couple of questions. One question is – I'm sorry – anyway, I have a question that with the YLF I was curious, I know it's a week's program. I've gone through the training in Washington, but has any other state taken it kind of like what Nevada is trying to do and make it a three year program where kids get actual credit. Has that – has any other state kind of expanded the idea?

MS. PINCKARD: What kind of credit are you talking about?

MS. WELLS: It would be a leadership elective credit.

MS. PINCKARD: OK. We've not done that in Alabama. We've just encouraged them to come back as staff members because we think that's another way to deal with leadership potential.

MS. HERMANSON: This is June from Montana and we have not done that. But this year for the first time the personal assistants that were on staff on our forum got credit for their attendance of the sectionals that they were in with our delegates that they learned a great deal about. And so they received training credits for their participation.

MR. GILMORE: This is Claude Gilmore from Wisconsin. For those who mentioned about credit, were

those credits to the Department of Public Instruction? Or were those credits to college or any kind of body?

MS. WELLS: Well what we're talking about in Nevada is having it go through the department so that these are actual high school credits.

MR. HORNE: This is Richard from ODEP in Washington. Has anyone tried to connect them through any kind of service learning requirements?

MS. PINCKARD: Well there are certain, I don't know whether you call them service learning requirements or not but under our funding source with the work investment youth council money we are required to do a certain amount of checking about their educational, where they are in their educational program.

And two of our college students that act as staff many of them are getting college credits for being staff members.

MS. WELLS: OK. And then my second question kind of takes us on a different topic. As I mentioned before, I'm with the Parent Training and Information Center - have any of the other states included the PTI in the whole process of putting their YLF group together.

MS. GUILLORY: This is Joan Guillory from Louisiana. Since our inception five years ago, we've have three collaborating agencies involved in our Youth Leadership Forum. And that is one of our collaborating agencies. So we've had a history of five years along those lines.

MS. WELLS: Nice to hear thanks.

MS. RINKIN: This is Judy Rinkin from Oregon Parent Training and Information Center. And I presented at our forum this year. And I believe in the past, we have had others who have gone and participated with our leadership forum.

MS. HERMANSON: This is June from Montana. Our parent program organization is actively involved including providing the technology segment of our program agenda.

MS. PINCKARD: Our parent training program is under the division of special education in Alabama. And special education is participating with us. Our strongest agency though that provides the most support is the Department of Rehabilitation services.

MR. NURSE: This is Tom from Colorado. I'm with the Colorado Service Inclusion project. And I heard Richard mention this a little bit, and I didn't really get a clear sense as to what other participants in the call felt about if there were any sorts of efforts made to expand the Youth Leadership Forums in to a learn and serve type of a program, for they might be able to impact the community with the leaderships kinds of skills that these

delegates had received. Do you know if anybody is doing that?

MS. PINCKARD: This is Angeline from Alabama. As far as I know there are some programs that don't have strictly a four day or a five day format as in the original model. There are a couple of states that have like two or three sessions during the year, or they have one long session and then come back as a reunion. But as far as actual service involvement as a follow up to YLF, I don't know about any of those. Alicia, do you?

MS. EPSTEIN: No, I don't – tend to have that four or five day model. So yes, no, there's not really more what you're looking for.

MS. SOCHA: Angeline, this is Julia Socha. As we were planning this call, you and I spoke, and I believe you mentioned involving Vista members, AmeriCorps members and the correlation of your YLF. How did that take place? And are those members individuals with disabilities? Hopefully, I'm remembering correctly. Can you refresh my memory on that?

MS. HERMANSON: Actually on July 17th, the Montana Youth Leadership Forum received – we applied for and received – was awarded a Vista position. We have a Vista worker that is with our YLF for the next year working 40 hours a week. And we just went through the normal process that anybody would do as far as applying for a Vista worker. We did the interviews. We did – the young woman that will be serving with our program for the next year does not have a disability but is a family member of a person with a disability. So she has first-hand experience with the disability community.

So her first week on staff as the Vista was to participate in the forum. Some of the things that she will be doing over the next year is helping us come up with recruitment strategies, resource development, some survey materials so that we can continue to track and collect data as we come upon our fifth year of the forum and possibly put together a statewide youth conference, which would immediately follow the Youth Leadership Forum next year pulling in youth of more than – a wider age group than currently has served through the forum.

Another thing that she will be helping with is National Mentoring Day which I hope that we can blend some of this year's delegates into that day. We will learn together but it's a great opportunity for our YLF to have someone on board full time.

MS. SOCHA: Wonderful. This is Julia again. Thanks for clarifying that and sharing that information. I just want to mention here that it would be a great opportunity to involve and explore service-learning opportunities through collaborative efforts of the Youth

Leadership Forums. I direct the Minnesota Service Inclusion Project, and it would be wonderful to have presentations about individuals with disabilities that are involved in opportunities, service learning opportunities, or opportunities like AmeriCorps. And the Vista opportunities as well as even Senior Corps have let the YLF delegates know about some of those future opportunities that they can also explore.

And unfortunately we are heading towards the end of our call here. And I want to make sure to make some final announcements here. So we need to wrap up the presentation today. I wanted to let you know that further information about the YLF will be coming in the future and available through the NCSET Web site. We will be exploring these and many other opportunities for youth as we've shared through this call today to gain leadership skills and to help to market some of those types of activities through collaborative effort.

And then as far as transcripts for today's call, I would say that within the next five to six weeks there will be a transcript on our Web site which is <http://www.ncset.org>. And you would go under teleconference section which is on the left side bar. And just click on this and you'll find a transcript of this entire call. And so that if you'd like to go ahead and do that, please feel free. And please also feel free to forward this information to others that may not have been able to join us on this call today.

If you're interested in participating in another teleconference call you can just visit the NCSET Web site. Click on teleconferences link and you'll also get the information on upcoming calls. So I would like to really thank, on behalf of the National Center of Secondary Education and Transition, all of our speakers and the participants. Your questions were very poignant and helped us to really explore some of these unique opportunities. So thank you very much to our presenters and the participants for being on the call today. I know everyone really appreciates it.

And if you would like to contact me, Julia Socha, for additional information you can do that by calling me on my phone 612-624-2008. Otherwise my e-mail address is wash004@umn.edu. And that I will help you in any way possible to direct you to appropriate resources that you might be looking for. So again, I want to thank everyone. It's two o'clock now. Thanks again. And we appreciate you being on this call. Have a great afternoon!

END OF TELECONFERENCE

Additional Resources:

Alabama Youth Leadership Forum Web site:
<http://www.rehab.state.al.us/Home/default.aspx?url=/Home/Services/VRS/AGCEPD/Youth+Leadership+Forum/Main>

Montana Youth Leadership Forum Web site:
<http://www.msubillings.edu/mtcd/mylff/>

ODEP/Office of Disability Employment Policy Youth Leadership Forum information
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/youth.htm>

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