

Building Bridges to Employment

Work Experience Insights for
Students (14-16) with Disabilities





Speakers

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Objectives

- Importance of Obtaining Work-Related Experience at an Early Age
- Tapping into Employment Opportunities for Young Students
- Non-Work Experience Building Blocks
- Scope of Paid Work Experience through Vocational Rehabilitation
- Results of Bridging the Gap
- Hear Examples of Existing Program Initiatives
- Q/A



**The Journey to Employment
has Different Roads.**

Importance of Starting Young

Obtaining work-related experiences at an early age offer numerous benefits that extend beyond career development.

- Helps young individuals build valuable skills.
- Prepares for the challenges and opportunities of adulthood.
- Develops confidence.

Early work exposures can set a strong foundation for future success in both personal and professional life.

Tapping into Employment Opportunities

Volunteer Work: While not paid, volunteering can provide valuable experience and skills.

Family Business: If your family owns a business, inquire about opportunities to help out and gain experience.

Summer Camp Counselor: Many summer camps hire teenagers as junior counselors. It's a great way to gain leadership and teamwork experience.

Retail / Recreation Work: Some retail stores/recreation facilities hire 14-year-olds for positions like bagging groceries , stocking shelves, ticket takers, greeters, summer programming.

Tutoring: If you excel in a particular subject, consider offering tutoring services to younger students.

Lawn Care or Yard Work: Offer lawn care or yard maintenance services to neighbors or local residents.

Tapping into Employment Opportunities, cont.

Babysitting: Babysitting is a common job for teenagers. It helps develop responsibility and childcare skills.

Pet Care: Pet sitting or dog walking can be a rewarding job for responsible teenagers who love animals.

Farm Work: If you live in a rural area, you might find opportunities to work on farms during certain seasons.

Online Opportunities: Explore online platforms for freelance work in areas like graphic design, writing, or social media management.

Work Permits: Ensure you comply with local labor laws and obtain any necessary work permits or parental consent if applicable.

Always prioritize the safety, well-being, and school commitments while seeking work at a young age. It's essential to strike a balance between work and education.



Child Labor Law

- Child Labor Laws apply to all employees who are under 18 years of age. Once a person is 18, they are considered an adult.
- It is illegal to employ a child under age 14 except under specific circumstances.
- The Texas Child Labor Laws make sure a child is not working in a job or way that could harm the child's safety, health, or well-being.
- Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) also has rules to make sure a job does not interfere with a child's education.

For more information on exceptions, permitted occupations, & prohibited occupations, visit:

[TWC | Child Labor Law Online](#)

Non-Work Experience Building Blocks

- **Job Shadowing:** Spend time with professionals in fields you're interested in to gain insights and make connections.
- **Informational Interviews:** Discover what you're passionate about and where your strengths lie.
- **Online Courses:** Take online courses to develop relevant skills that can boost your resume.
- **Career Counseling:** Consult with a career counselor who can provide guidance and help identify suitable opportunities.
- **Resume Building:** Start your resume early. Include volunteering/HS organizations.
- **Community Involvement:** Start to build networking skills.
- **Self-Advocacy:** Learn to advocate for your needs and accommodations in the workplace, which will be important in the future.
- **Soft Skills:** Develop essential soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are valuable in any job.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services | Scope of Paid Work Experience

- Coordinated, arranged, and purchased by TWC-VR
- Available year-round for up to 12 weeks per worksite assignment and up to 20 hours per week for students.
- Multiple PWE placements are allowable if it is needed to learn a new set of skills.
- VR Participants are placed at the job sites by TWC-VR, and TWC-VR is responsible for monitoring each worksite and providing case management.

Results of Bridging the Gap to Employment

- ✓ Transition Planning
- ✓ Increased Independence
- ✓ Career Exploration
- ✓ Career Path Development
- ✓ Skill Development
- ✓ Self-Advocacy
- ✓ Social Integration
- ✓ Building Network
- ✓ Financial Responsibility
- ✓ Improved Confidence



Impactful Programs & Initiatives



Local ISD Model

- Partner with ISD to identify students
- Assist in identifying worksite.
- Set up rotating internship opportunities in the local community:
 - TJ Maxx
 - Home Goods
 - Local area restaurants
- ISD/Families may assist with items such as:
 - Transportation
 - Advocacy
 - Planning
- Work experience trainers on-site initially to assist in learning



Texas Internship Challenge



TXInternshipChallenge.com is a free website where employers can post internships.

- Students 16+ have access to thousands of internship postings.
- Internship opportunities are usually offered to high school, postsecondary students, and recent graduates.
- Wages typically: \$12-15/hour.
- This may increase for more high-demand industries or companies.

SAN JACINTO
COLLEGE



Explore Apprenticeship

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I GENERATE RURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK

iGROW
I GENERATE RURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK



This project is supported in part by Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) with a contract totaling \$9,578,500 to the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University. The contents are those of the project and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by TWC, VR, or the Texas Government.

iGROW

I GENERATE RURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK

iGROW Video

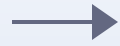




Why iGROW?

iGROW is a four-year pre-employment and leadership training program in partnership with Texas A&M Center on Disability and Development, for rural county students with disabilities. Each year 20 transition students are selected from to participate in the 4 year program. Program contents are provided in the high school they attend, during school hours, by the teachers from their district. During the summer they participate in Paid Work Experience to gain on the job work related skills and further career exploration.

The purpose of the program is to provide a training environment to help students with career exploration, Person Centered Employment Planning, and paid work experience as they prepare to transition into postsecondary education and/or competitive integrated employment. This program serves students ages 14 - 22.



How do we implement pre-employment transition services in iGROW?

- Pre-Employment Skills Training (NextUp Transition) taught by teachers during school (16+ lessons/year)
- Person-Centered Planning for employment and postsecondary education during school
- Exploring, exposure to, and connection with local (& beyond!) employers
- Work-based learning opportunities in student's communities (PWE; SEAL, etc)
- Connecting student with VR Counselor and other local resources (learning to advocate!)
- Exploring colleges and technical programs related to career choice
- Summer leadership, Career/College Exploration Camps

*Based on VR Counselor recommendation and input from the iGROW program staff, teachers, school contacts, student, and family members, student

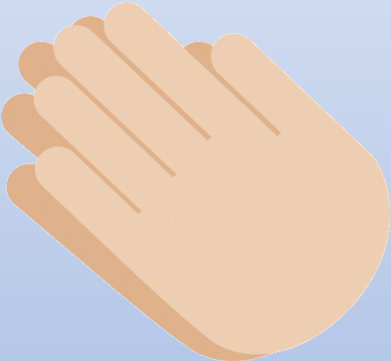
LET'S TALK ABOUT GROWTH

7

School Districts
in Texas
Participating in
iGROW

60

Students Introduced to
VR & Now Have
Access to
Services



9

Students Attended
Career Exploration and
Leadership Summer Camp
at TAMU

15

Parent, Teacher &
Community
Trainings Held

Spring 2022

(19 students)

- 10 – Fourteen year olds
- 2 – Fifteen year olds
- 3 – Sixteen year olds
- 4 – Seventeen year olds

Fall 2022

(20 students)

- 6 – Fourteen year olds
- 12 – Fifteen year olds
- 2 – Sixteen year olds

Spring 2023

(28 students)

- 14 – Fourteen year olds
- 12 – Fifteen year olds
- 2 – Sixteen year olds

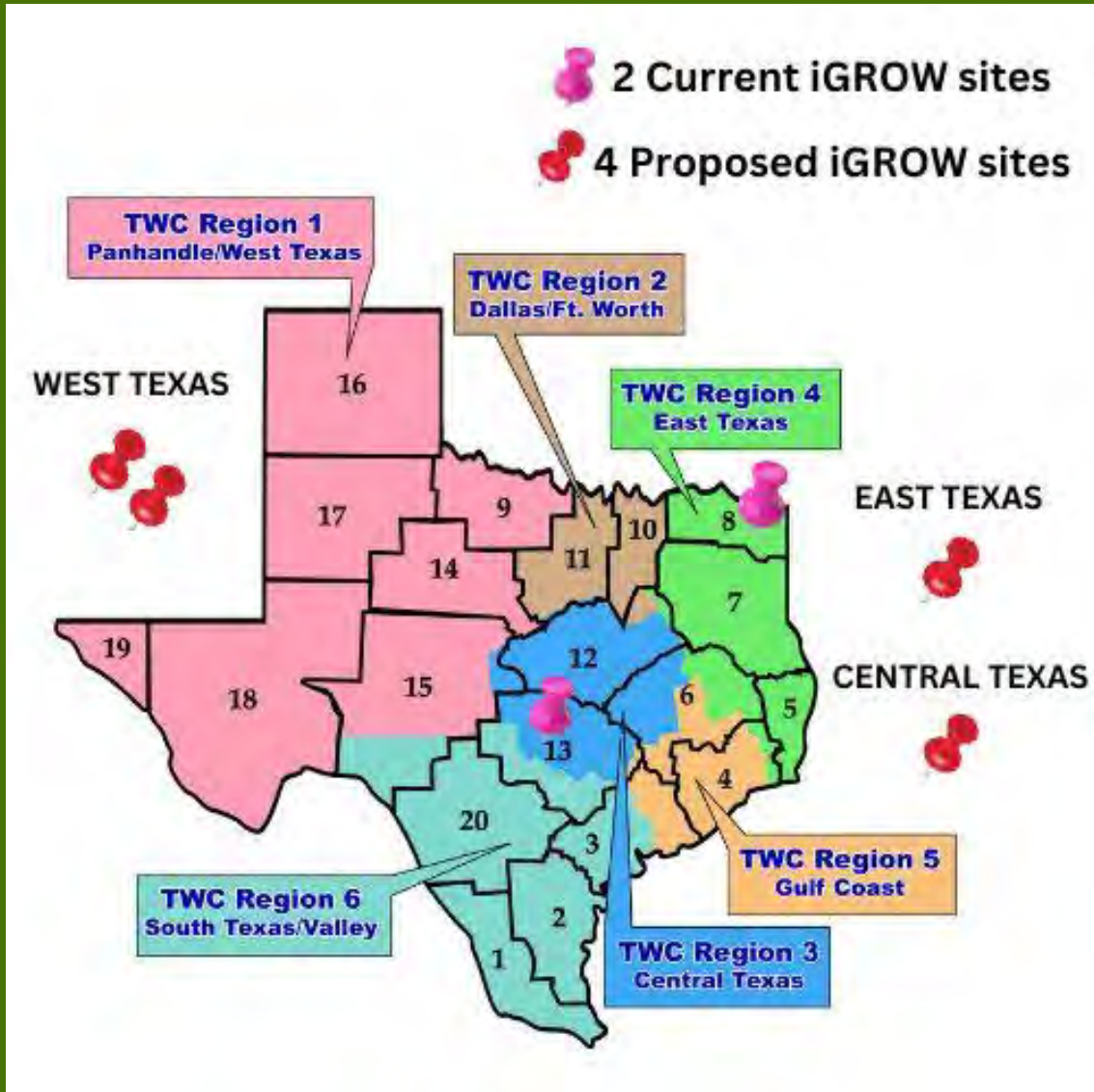
Fall 2023

EXPANSION OF CENTRAL TX & ADDITION OF EAST TX

(52 students)

- 20 - Fourteen year olds
- 17 - Fifteen year olds
- 11 - Sixteen year olds
- 4 - Seventeen year olds

Looking Ahead + Closing Thoughts



iGROW Expansion: Replicating iGROW Model throughout Texas

Tips for Replication:

- All partners agree to collaborate and want something different and better for their students
- Collaboration takes open communication, shared responsibility, and a shared goal for student outcomes
- Don't underestimate a "let's meet for coffee" to start the conversation. It's truly Person-Centered Work!



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