

Bridging the Gap

The Critical Role of AJC Case Managers in Guiding Youth & Young Adults to Explore RA Programs

Introduction

Workforce development professionals who work with youth and young adults provide essential services, supports, and connections for career exploration and development. Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is another powerful option for in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY) enrolled in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth programming across the U.S. Opportunities through RA, including youth apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship, open doors to help young people prepare for high-demand careers through a tried and true earn-and-learn model. This guide offers Case Managers who work in American Job Centers (AJCs) information on apprenticeship opportunities that align with WIOA Youth program elements and lead to positive outcomes during and after program exit.



Key Definitions

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP (RA)

An earn-and-learn model that blends paid On-the-Job Training (OJT) with Related Instruction (RI). Programs are approved by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs) and result in industry-recognized credentials.



Important Note: Some apprenticeship programs in the U.S. are not registered with OA or an SAA and, therefore, may not align with DOL regulations and standards. These programs will not be able to leverage the support and funding that is allowable for registered programs.

YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

A structured work-based learning program that connects the educational needs of students with the talent needs of industry ([State Policy Playbook To Advance Youth Apprenticeship](#)). Youth apprenticeship programs are designed for students to begin an RA program while still attending high school.



Important Note: Youth apprenticeships are not defined by DOL; however, they are recognized as an innovative strategy to engage young people in RA. Many programs are designed and registered with OA or an SAA, meaning they include the required components and structure of an RA program. For the purposes of this resource, we will primarily refer to RA programs, which inherently include youth apprenticeship programs.

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

A program “designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed” in an RA program and includes the following elements as outlined in [20 CFR 681.480](#):

- Training and curriculum that align with the skill needs of employers in the economy of the state or region involved;
- Access to educational and career counseling and other supportive services, directly or indirectly;
- Hands-on, meaningful learning activities that are connected to education and training activities, such as exploring career options, and understanding how the skills acquired through coursework can be applied toward a future career;
- Opportunities to attain at least one industry-recognized credential; and
- A partnership with one or more RA programs that assists in placing individuals who complete the pre-apprenticeship program in an RA program.



Important Note: While the code of federal regulations defines pre-apprenticeship, DOL has not set regulations or standards on registering pre-apprenticeship programs. However, some SAAs will have a more formalized process for developing and potentially registering programs within their state.

Realizing the Potential: WIOA Youth and Registered Apprenticeship



The RA model offers benefits to both employers and career seekers. Employers who are experiencing challenges in finding qualified candidates or with high turnover in specific positions turn to RA to build their workforce. Developing RA programs to strengthen their current employees, employers will upskill workers into higher-level positions. As employees move up, RA is also used to bring in new talent. For career seekers, especially young adults, seeing these career opportunities and potential for growth can be a motivating factor.



Opportunities through RA and pre-apprenticeship directly align with the 14 program elements under the WIOA Youth program. Beginning with a participant's individual service strategy (ISS), you can introduce pre-apprenticeship and RA programming for those interested in career exploration and/or training in a specific industry. Based on a participant's assessment of skills, interests, knowledge, experience, and career goals, you can direct individuals to research apprenticeship opportunities in their area and identify key components for enrollment. This often includes any required minimum qualifications, such as a high school diploma or GED, industry certifications, or a driver's license. Depending on the occupation and industry, participants may be required to pass background checks and/or drug testing.



WIOA activities can support young people in meeting the minimum qualifications for an RA program. For ISY, understanding how and why a diploma is necessary for an RA program may be the motivation they need to complete high school. In some cases, students may be able to enroll in a pre-apprenticeship or RA program while still in high school. For OSY without a diploma, enrolling in a program to earn their diploma or GED may be an important step. Researching available pre-apprenticeship or bridge programs designed to support participants earning their diploma while also beginning industry-related training could be an appropriate option for this population. Pre-apprenticeship programs can also be a great strategy for high school graduates with little to no technical training or experience in a specific industry. In the following sections, additional information on WIOA Youth program elements, performance outcomes, and funding is provided in detail.

WIOA YOUTH PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The WIOA 14 program elements are specific services and programs that must be made available to youth participants through WIOA Youth programs. They ensure comprehensive support to help youth succeed in education, training, and employment. Of the 14 program elements, the list below includes activities that are generally integrated into most apprenticeship programs. However, it is important to fully understand the unique design of each pre-apprenticeship or RA program in your area, as some activities may not be available.



Work Experience: Pre-apprenticeship programs are listed as work experience in WIOA regulations since they often include both academic and occupation-specific preparation activities. [TEGL 09-22](#) clarifies that RA programs are also considered work experience, and both program types can be counted toward the requirement that a minimum of 20 percent of local area funds be spent on this service type.



Occupational Skills Training: Pre-apprenticeship programs that include skills training and lead to recognized postsecondary credentials for a specific occupation are included under this program element and can be recorded alongside work experience (TEGL 09-22).



Supportive Services: Participants may need services that will enable them to participate in apprenticeship programs and activities. This includes support with transportation, childcare, tools, equipment, and other items necessary for program involvement, such as a driver's license or background checks.



Mentoring: RA programs include mentoring as a core component for all apprentices so that they can learn alongside experienced professionals on the job. Participants who begin an RA program while in the WIOA Youth program or after exit should have this reflected in their service record. Some pre-apprenticeship programs may also offer mentoring.

WIOA YOUTH PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

ISY and OSY participants involved in related apprenticeship activities may successfully meet several WIOA Youth performance outcomes. Here is a list of performance measures alongside related apprenticeship activities:

WIOA Performance Outcome	Apprenticeship Alignment
Measurable Skill Gains	Participants may meet training milestones (e.g., completion of one year of an RA program) or skill progression (e.g., passing an exam, earning an occupational certificate/credential, progress towards benchmarks) in both pre-apprenticeship and RA programs
Credential Attainment	Participants may earn industry-recognized certificates during pre-apprenticeship and RA programs. In addition, DOL awards participants a certificate of completion for completing RA programs.
Employment Rate 2nd and 4th Quarters after Exit	Since RA programs are typically one or more years in length, individuals still participating in RA after exit meet the employment outcome. Additionally, many apprentices remain with their employer as full-time employees after RA program completion.
Median Earnings	Individuals in RA will earn progressively increasing wages for gaining skills and meeting training milestones throughout the program.
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Apprenticeship is a strategy to support employers in building a talent pipeline to meet their workforce needs.

WIOA FUNDING FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

Funding through WIOA Title I programs can be leveraged to support youth and young adults participating in apprenticeship programming as well as incentivize employers and training providers. The [WIOA RA Program Desk Reference](#) and [The Federal Resources Playbook for Registered Apprenticeship](#) provide additional guidance on the information below.

Individual Training Accounts

Funding for related instruction costs for WIOA-eligible participants.



On-the-Job Training

Wage reimbursement for employers hiring new apprentices.



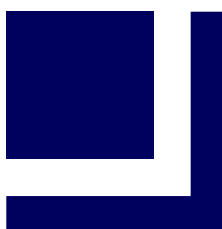
Youth Occupational Skills Training

Funds supporting RA program costs through youth programs.



Supportive Services

Funds for items enabling youth participation in programs.



Individual Training Accounts (ITA): RA program sponsors will need to opt in to being added to the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to qualify for funding that can cover the costs of related instruction for WIOA-eligible participants. Pre-apprenticeship programs will need to complete state's ETPL application process to receive training funds for WIOA-eligible participants.

On-the-Job Training (OJT): Specifically for RA programs, employers can be reimbursed for a portion of apprentice wages depending on state and/or local policies. Apprentices must be newly hired employees of the company to qualify.

Youth Occupational Skills Training: Funds are available to support RA program costs through this WIOA Youth program element. Occupational skills training aligns with RA since most programs are developed as training opportunities in high-demand jobs and industries.

Supportive Services: As mentioned earlier, youth participants may need additional supports to participate in pre-apprenticeship and RA programs. Funds can be used to pay for items that will enable participation.

■ Apprenticeships in Action

Check out the following program spotlights that illustrate a variety of program designs:



CALIFORNIA

[Launch Apprenticeship Network](#) is an apprenticeship intermediary and sponsor of multiple RA programs in partnership with several California Community Colleges. Students are hired by an employer partner, enrolled in college courses as part of the supplemental education, and do not pay any tuition for the RA program. Many programs take 1-2 years to complete, depending on the occupation. Apprentices earn college credit that can be applied towards a college degree if they decide to continue after completing the RA program.



INDIANA

The [Modern Apprenticeship Program](#) in Indiana is designed for high school students starting in their junior year to gain hands-on job experience and earn college credit in select industries. Over the course of three years, students will work 10-20 hours per week while still in school and continue the RA program after graduation, working up to 30 hours per week. By the end, some students may earn approximately \$40,000, industry certifications, and college credit towards a degree.



PENNSYLVANIA

[Philadelphia Academies](#) developed a pre-apprenticeship program in Early Childhood Education (ECE) to expose high school seniors to careers in education. Students participate in ECE courses at their high school that align with the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. A partnering childcare center provides internship opportunities where students receive hands-on training as early childhood assistants. Many students continue on the path to earn a CDA credential after completing required courses and work experience, which then allows them to matriculate into an ECE RA program.

Steps on Finding and Connecting with Apprenticeship Programs

Similar to the process of finding a job, training program, or college, research is a necessary first step to identify pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, and/or RA programs in the area. This research should begin with a young person's ISS. Having a clear understanding of a participant's career interests, skills, and prior experience can help them decide where to start and even open the door to previously unknown occupations. Below are some recommendations on how you can support youth participants with their research and ultimately connect them with a program that is the right fit.



STEP 1: CAREER EXPLORATION

There are so many available jobs out there that it can be difficult for a young person to understand their options. As an AJC Case Manager, you should integrate apprenticeship into your efforts when facilitating career exploration activities with youth.

- Start by visiting [My Next Move](#); their featured occupation videos help illustrate specific details for many RA occupations.
- Host a Career Fair specifically with apprenticeship programs so that youth can learn about opportunities in their area.
- Ask apprenticeship programs to make a presentation; request to hear from staff, mentors, and apprentices.
- Search for [National Apprenticeship Week](#) events in your area and bring youth participants when appropriate.



STEP 2: SEARCH FOR PROGRAMS

Useful tools are available to help find pre-apprenticeship and RA programs. It is recommended that AJC Case Managers connect with the registration agency in their state to understand what additional resources and supports exist. Here are some leads and tips to get started:

- Apprenticeship.gov contains many valuable resources; this [webpage](#) shows a map of the Apprenticeship System with a breakdown of OA and SAA states. Click on a state to see contact information and a website to connect with representatives.
- [Apprenticeship Job Finder](#) on Apprenticeship.gov is a directory of RA programs across the U.S. Use it by entering occupation titles or keywords to search by location or remote opportunities. Filters are available to narrow your search.
- The [Eligible Training Provider List](#) in your state might include both RA and pre-apprenticeship programs. Programs on this list can support training costs with WIOA ITA funding.
- Conduct an Internet search of local programs using keywords such as specific industry and occupation titles. While this is a decent option to find programs, it may not always show the best results, as some apprenticeship programs may not be registered, and it can be challenging to distinguish this information from the program website. Verify programs with the registration agency before moving on to the next step.



STEP 3: REVIEW PROGRAM DETAILS

Apprenticeship programs can vary greatly, so it is important to review as much information as possible to determine fit. Also, do not be afraid to reach out and get in touch with the program directly or look for opportunities, such as an open house event, to ask questions and learn more. Below are some ideas on information you should gather:

- General program information
 - » Program type (e.g., RA, pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship)
 - » Location—both for supplemental education and OJT, and/or remote availability
 - » Details including length of program, duration, and schedule
- Application process
 - » Minimum qualifications for program suitability—be mindful if a program has an age restriction where the apprentice must be 18 or older
 - » Application process and any required documentation that needs to be attained/submitted (e.g., authorization to work, transcripts, reference letters)
 - » Important dates and deadlines—plan accordingly, especially if you will need to gather or request documents
- Opportunities to connect
 - » Look for an email or phone number for a program contact, typically an apprenticeship coordinator, and reach out to ask questions.
 - » Some programs will host events or tours to learn more about the program and training space.

Whether a pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, or RA program, it is important to gather any available information to clearly understand if the program is the right fit for the participant before deciding to apply. This will likely ensure a more positive experience and a higher likelihood of successful outcomes.

Conclusion

RA and pre-apprenticeship programs offer strong pathways for WIOA Youth participants to gain skills and experience in high-demand careers. By combining RI and OJT with the support of mentors, the RA model is a proven, effective way to train new workers with limited skills and work experience. Case managers play a critical role in this process. By learning about local programs, helping participants make connections, and coordinating services and funding, case managers can ensure youths have the support they need to thrive.

Additional Resources

- [CareerWise Colorado](#) hosts modern youth apprenticeship programs in various industries modeled after apprenticeship programs in Switzerland.
- The Blueprint for Maryland's Future aims to have more high school graduates prepared for the workforce by integrating youth apprenticeship opportunities through the [Apprenticeship Maryland Program](#).
- [Career Exploration and Skill Development](#) on Youth.gov offers information on apprenticeship along with other helpful resources.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 09-22](#) (March 2, 2023) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance
 - » Provides details on reporting and expenditures for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship, and clarifies that a pre-apprenticeship can be counted as both work experience and occupational skill training if this component is available.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 21-16](#) (March 2, 2017) Third Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance
 - » Includes information on pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in alignment with program elements such as work experience, entrepreneurial skills training, and postsecondary preparation and transition activities.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 08-15](#) (November 17, 2015) Second Title 1 WIOA Youth Program Transition Guidance
 - » Includes pre-apprenticeships as career exploration activities that can lead to enrollment in RA, as well as how apprenticeships align with Vocational Rehabilitation programs.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 23-14](#) (March 26, 2015) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program Transition
 - » Provides an early definition of a pre-apprenticeship program and recognizes it as an activity under the 14 program elements.
- [Training and Employment Notice \(TEN\) No. 10-09](#) (September 21, 2009) Toolkit and White Paper on Improving Transition Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities through Apprenticeship.