



ASPIRE

Achieving Success by Promoting Readiness
for Education and Employment
A PROMISE Initiative

Chapter 5: ASPIRE Findings

January 6, 2020

This chapter of the ASPIRE final report is a summary of findings by the ASPIRE Formative Evaluation Team. It is the fifth of six documents. Chapter 1 describes ASPIRE's formation, implementation, evaluation and conclusion. Chapter 2 describes the unique characteristics and challenges of a consortium of states implementing a federal model demonstration project. Chapter 3 describes ASPIRE's implementation of the ABLE deposit opportunity. Chapter 4 describes the ASPIRE's comprehensive training program to ensure fidelity of the PROMISE research study. Utilizing the lessons learned and development of best practices, ASPIRE's recommendations are in Chapter 6.

ASPIRE - Summary Findings

The U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor, and the Social Security Administration (SSA) funded a large research study called PROMISE, Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income. The goal of PROMISE was to improve the educational and employment outcomes of youth with disabilities who received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Six model demonstration projects were funded through PROMISE. One of these model demonstration projects, called ASPIRE, Achieving Success by Promoting Readiness for Education and Employment, was conducted across six rural western states including Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah.

A total of 2,051 youth aged 14 to 16 receiving SSI benefits were recruited into the ASPIRE study and were randomly assigned into control group (n = 1,018) and intervention group called ASPIRE (n = 1,033). Over the past six years since 2013, the ASPIRE youth and families were provided case management services, self-determination training, financial education, parent training, and benefits counseling. Nearly six years of work with youth and their families has resulted in findings which can inform future work with young people with disabilities. *All findings below have statistical significance.* To read further, see the attached references

Planning for the Future

- ASPIRE youth understand their own capabilities and have more self-confidence in their potential.
- Self-determination training of ASPIRE youth was able to affect observable behavior changes in ASPIRE youth.
- ASPIRE youth feel encouraged by their parents to pursue goals for the future.
- Parents of ASPIRE youth report an increased understanding of their own financial stability.
- Both youth and parents have a greater understanding of their public benefits.

Graduation and post-secondary education

- ASPIRE youth have a higher graduation rate than youth in the control group.
- ASPIRE youth who graduated, attended post-secondary education at a rate higher than youth in the control group.
- Parents of ASPIRE youth have higher expectations of post-secondary education and employment for their children.

Youth Employment

- ASPIRE youth are more likely employed than their disabled peers in the control group.
- ASPIRE youth who became employed created and pursued a higher number of personal goals during case management.
- ASPIRE youth who received higher rates of face-to-face case management meetings and higher rates of career exploration activities had better employment outcomes.
- Career exploration activities including information gathering and external linkages, and increased case management were significant predictors of youth employment.
- Career exploration activities were more strongly associated with employment outcomes when they were delivered earlier during case management, when youth were just beginning to think about their futures.
- Reviews of cases where youth became employed highlight three approaches that characterize effective case management: holistic family focus, persistence, and flexibility.

Case Manager and Family Interaction

- Provision of services was amplified when Case Managers were able to develop strong relationships with ASPIRE families, offer flexibility for meeting location, dates and times, and provide reimbursement or incentive for participating in services.
- More frequent discussions with the Case Manager and more frequent case management meetings regarding the youth's future expectations about employment, education and finances resulted in a significant difference from the Usual services group.

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Additional PROMISE References

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A collection of 15 PROMISE research publications can be found in the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, Volume 51, Issue 2. <https://content.iospress.com/journals/journal-of-vocational-rehabilitation/51/2?start=0>

Mathematica Policy Research conducts the national PROMISE evaluation. Reports for the PROMISE evaluation design and other PROMISE projects can be found at <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/relatedcontent?itemID={655434B1-8E94-4D8A-B237-89742E106C58}&relatedcontent=Related%20Publications>.

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