https://www.opressrc.org/content/what-works-disconnected-young-people-scan-evidence

The Youth Transition Funders Group commissioned this MDRC paper to provide a better understanding of what does and does not work in helping disconnected youth. A comprehensive literature review highlighted findings of relevant program and policy evaluations as well as interviews conducted with various representatives from foundations, coalitions, and research organizations dealing with disconnected youth. A number of programs struggled with outreach and enrollment, committed engagement from participants, frequent staff turnover, and external barriers to program participation such as lack of child care or transportation. One common factor that limited the impact of programs was the lack of coordination among education, juvenile justice, foster, and mental health systems, leading to fragmentation of services and funding as well as redundancy. There were three common components of successful programs: they provided financial incentives, opportunities for paid work, and support services that continued even after program completion.

https://www.opressrc.org/content/disconnected-youth-look-16-24-year-olds-who-are-not-working-or-school

This report used data from the 2014 Current Population Survey to analyze the characteristics of disconnected youth with the goal of providing policy-makers with recommendations for reconnecting these young people. The report defined disconnected youth as 16 to 24 years old who were unemployed or not attending school in the previous year. The report found that between 1999 and 2010, the rate of disconnection fluctuated between 3.9% and 7.5% of the entire youth population depending on economic cycles. In 2014, disconnected youth made up 6.1% of the 2.4 million person total youth population, with minority youth having consistently higher rates of disconnection. Estimates on the prevalence of disconnected youth varied across reports depending on how authors defined this population; though the age range given in this report was consistent with other studies. Compared to connected youth, the study found that disconnected young people were...
twice as likely to be poor, have parents with low educational attainment or chronic unemployment, have fewer years of education themselves, and were more likely to have children. The report recommended a number of programmatic approaches, including reconnection to employment and school, early intervention to counteract adverse outcomes, and family and community development programs.


The authors of this article conducted a literature review and evaluated programs that provide transitional services for at-risk youth in order to develop and present a conceptual framework aimed at helping programs that promote economic self-sufficiency. The report used two theories of youth development, the theory of risk and resiliency and the theory of capital development, to inform the conceptual framework as a means to identify a holistic approach to transitional services for at-risk youth. The conceptual framework made the following recommendations for creating evidence-based programs: recognizing both the youth’s underlying risk as well as protective factors, stabilizing youth in crisis, engaging youth in on-going assessments and services, focusing on increasing human capital to prepare youth for economic self-sufficiency, and rigorously evaluating program impacts.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/connecting-disconnected-improving-education-and-employment-outcomes-among-disadvantaged

Using data from the 1997 and 2007 Current Population Survey, this report examined the trends in educational attainment and employment for disconnected youth. The authors also examined policies aimed at improving education and employment outcomes for disadvantaged youth. Intensified by the Great Recession of 2007, the employment rate among less-educated Americans had been on the decline in the last three decades. Minority male youth were at a higher risk of being disadvantaged and becoming disconnected—two factors which often led to the gradual withdrawal from the labor market. This was true for black males in particular. The report recommended implementing policies to improve the education and employment outcomes of these disadvantaged youth by addressing employment barriers, specifically those associated with having a criminal record. The report also recommended increased focus on improving the skillsets of these youth as well as improving the quality of available jobs in the labor market.

[https://www.opressrc.org/content/foster-care-and-disconnected-youth-way-forward-new-york](https://www.opressrc.org/content/foster-care-and-disconnected-youth-way-forward-new-york)

This report highlighted and expanded on key topics discussed at a December 2011 policy forum that addressed strategies to prevent youth aging out of foster care from becoming disconnected. Many of these youth experienced situations that make it particularly difficult to transition into self-sufficiency such as trauma, homelessness, early pregnancy, and emotional difficulties. Although comprehensive programs existed to assist youth aging out of foster care, they were under-funded and did not reach all of the population that needed support. The authors detailed various policy recommendations such as prioritizing children’s social-emotional health in welfare practice, connecting foster children ages 14 and up to part-time and summer job opportunities, and providing full tuition to State University of New York and City University of New York for current and past foster youth.


[https://www.opressrc.org/content/reconnecting-disconnected-young-adults-early-experience-project-rise](https://www.opressrc.org/content/reconnecting-disconnected-young-adults-early-experience-project-rise)

This policy brief described lessons learned from the early implementation of Project Rise in New York. Project Rise is a federally funded program seeking to reconnect disconnected youth to work, education, and social supports. The brief recounted the following three lessons: (1) enrolling participants in cohorts is important to success as it allows them to bond and create peer supports; (2) participants value the education component more than the paid internships; and (3) due to the difficulty of engaging disconnected youth, it is important to be flexible in responding to youth barriers and strengths.


[https://www.opressrc.org/content/economic-value-opportunity-youth](https://www.opressrc.org/content/economic-value-opportunity-youth)

Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, the Educational Longitudinal Survey of 2002, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (ADD Health), and the Current Population Survey, this report calculated the short-term and long-term economic burdens of disconnected youth, also referred to as opportunity youth. The report found that there were 6.7 million opportunity youth, 17% of the total youth population, who were not working or in school. They were predominantly minority males and were either chronically disconnected (never in school or work after age 16) or under-attached (sporadic attendance in school or short-term employment without progress). Taking into consideration the lost earnings, lower economic growth, and lower tax revenue of opportunity youth, as well as higher government spending on these youth, the report found that the annual taxpayer burden of a single opportunity youth was $13,900 and the lifetime burden was $170,740. The report recommended that interventions to promote employment and educational attainment must be highly customized as chronic
opportunity youth and under-attached opportunity youth face different challenges in attaining self-sufficiency.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/disconnected-youth-federal-action-could-address-some-challenges-faced-local-programs

This report highlighted findings from an evaluation conducted by the Government Accountability Office of 39 local programs, most of which received funding from the Department of Labor’s Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth program. While programs varied in services, source of funding, or target populations, they shared similar goals such as serving disconnected youth holistically and reported similar challenges such as the complexity of serving these young people, service gaps, and funding restraints. In addition to these challenges, the programs that relied on WIA Youth funds reported extra pressure to meet performance goals in the timelines set by workforce investment boards. As a result of this pressure, the programs that relied on WIA reported they were often unable to meet the needs of the youth they served. The report recommended that the Department of Labor work more closely with the investment boards and local programs to develop achievable goals in order to allow for programs to more successfully serve disconnected youth.