

6 FAST FACTS

Expanding Employment Opportunities through Community Conversations

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A community conversation is a collaborative approach to problem solving that brings together diverse community members to address shared concerns.

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Numerous communities have successfully used community conversations to generate strategies for increasing employment opportunities for youth with extensive support needs.

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Community conversation events typically last two hours and involve three structured round table discussions and one large group discussion.

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Key components of effective community conversations are the presence of a local planning committee that includes people with disabilities, a welcoming venue for the event, discussion facilitators, a clear meeting structure, and attendees with differing perspectives.

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Following the event, ideas that emerge are organized into “pathways” by the local planning team and used to encourage participants to create change within the community.

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Individuals who have participated in community conversations focused on employment felt the events were a good use of their time and the ideas generated were likely to increase employment opportunities for youth in their community.

This fact sheet was developed by the Illinois Center for Transition and Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign through a contract with the Illinois State Board of Education. Information presented may not reflect the position or policy of the Illinois State Board of Education.

