

The Top 10 Things I Wish I Had Known Before I Left High School

The Wisconsin Youth First Leadership and Development Practice Group conducted a survey, "The Top 10 Things I Wish I Had Known Before I Left High School". The survey was taken by youth with disabilities, ages 18-25, who have transitioned out of high school.

These are the top 10 results:

I wish I had known...

1. What I wanted to do with my life in regards to employment.
2. What was the right job for me.
3. How to get the services and/or supports I needed in college.
4. How to get help with communication barriers in the community so that I could have been better understood.
5. How to be a good self-advocate and communicate my needs effectively.
6. What supports and/or services worked best for me.
7. How Medicare and Medicaid worked and understood my health insurance.
8. What kind of recreational/social activities were offered in my community and how to join them.
9. What volunteer opportunities were offered in my community and how I could have been involved.
10. What assistive technology worked best for me.

How will this information help?

Wisconsin Youth First will be working on improving the issues identified through this survey by offering more information and support to youth with disabilities. We will also communicate our work to educators, parents, vocational rehabilitation staff, service providers and others to help them reinforce important transition skills and opportunities that are important from the perspective of students with disabilities in their transition process.

How you can help:

Join the Wisconsin Youth First group and encourage youth around the state to join too! Give youth the tools needed to develop a smooth transition through opportunities listed in the "Get Involved" brochure. Provide opportunities to the youth you work with to learn about and practice these important skills. Point youth to www.wiyouthfirst.org for youth friendly information and resources.

Youth Panel

Six Wisconsin youth have developed a panel to discuss the results of the survey. The main outcome of this presentation is to improve the knowledge and understanding of what's important to youth during their transition, their families, and professionals who work in the areas of transition planning for youth with disabilities.

Neelam Dhadankar

I graduated from the University of WI-Whitewater with a degree in Psychology. I took some time off after college to gain some work experience before I can apply to law schools, which is what I want to do this Fall. I live in Madison but I'm from Chicago so I spend a lot of time between these 2 places.



Stacy Ellingen

I'm 25 and from Fond du Lac, WI. I'm a 2009 graduate of UW-Whitewater with a degree in Advertising/Multimedia. Currently, I'm working for Midwest Alliance mentoring students who have disabilities.

Alenia Heisz

I graduated from UW-Whitewater in 2005 with a degree in Advertising/Public Relations. I currently live in Platteville and work at The Platteville Journal.

Nathaniel Lentz

Currently I am an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. I am going to major in Organizational Communications next fall. I am also working on being employed at Whitewater over the summer, being a tour guide.



I'm **Jeremiah Swisher** and I have High Functioning Autism. I'm 20 years old and a Junior studying Business at UW-Whitewater. Overall I am very passionate about helping out people with autism and other disabilities which is why I do speaking engagements from time to time. I enjoy being active in my community and helping people out. If there is one word to describe me it would be determination because when I say I'm going to get something done, I get it done to the best of my abilities.

Matthew Zelmer joined the WI FACETS staff in 2009 as the Transition Coordinator for the YITRC grant after serving on the project's youth steering committee for two years. He now also serves as the Director of the Milwaukee County Advocacy grant. Matthew graduated from UW-Whitewater in 2003 with a degree in broadcast journalism, then earned his Master's in communication from there in 2006.



For more information about Wisconsin Youth First please visit our website: www.wiyouthfirst.org



The Wisconsin Youth First Practice Group is a member of the Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative, Community on the Practice of Transition.