**WorkforceGPS**

**Conversation about Youth Individual Service Strategies**

**Friday, September 27, 2019**

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JON VEHLOW: Without further ado I am going to kick things off to your moderator today. Sara Hastings, youth and performance team, Division of Youth Services. Sara?

SARA HASTINGS: Thanks, Jon and hi, everyone. Happy Friday. Welcome, welcome to our conversation today. We are super excited that you all are joining us on this Friday afternoon, in some places, and morning for others. We're glad to have you here. We always love having the opportunity to talk with our friends and family out there in the Youth Workforce Development System. All our practitioners and policy makers that are out there, we're so glad you could join us.

Today's conversation is about individual service strategies. And I am going to be moderating. You'll hear a little bit from me today, but you'll also be hearing from Carmen Rodriguez who is our workforce specialist in Region 1, which is our Boston Office. And we will have a cameo appearance from our friend in Region 2, in our Philadelphia region. So we are glad to have you.

So we, at the Employment and Training Administration, as folks know, often survey you. And we've had webinars over the last few months where we said, what do you guys need? What kind of technical assistance would be helpful for you, as you work to help connect young people to employment and education opportunities? What are some of the things that challenge you? Where are there where there's some best practices? So we continue to try to have those conversations with you.

And over those conversations, over the last, really this has been several years that we've heard this, and maybe even decades, is that the individual service strategy, which is a key part of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Youth Program. It's something that's required.

And folks say, well, what should it look like? How do I know that we have the right pieces and elements to our individual service strategy? How do we use it? Can you give us a template, for gosh sakes. So we've heard you guys say that over the years. To be honest, we've been a little hesitant to develop a template because we don't want people to feel like they have to use it.

So we will share this caveat throughout the webinar today. This is a template we have developed because you guys asked for it. And we really wanted to support you, as much as we can. So we've developed a template that we're going to walk you through today. Give you some tips on how you might want to use it, or adapt it for your own use in your local area. And then we're going to have a little conversation about how do you guys use your ISSs in the local area, really to build relationships with youth. And that is the thing that we want to highlight.

This tool and the practice of filling out an ISS would be a people – it's not just an exercise in futility. It's a not a paperwork exercise. It's a requirement in the law, because folks have understood that when you develop a plan and you sit down with a young person, and you talk with them about their goals, and you assess their needs, and you put a plan in place, that helps them understand where they're going and why they're coming into your offices every day, or why you're going to them at their workplace or in their schools.

This ISS is critical for really setting the stage, for building a relationship with the young people and we want to make sure that folks have the right tools in place. And we also want to hear if you've got some good practices in your local area that you want to share with the rest of the group. So that's why we're calling it a conversation today. So we are going to walk through the tool. Carmen's going to tell you all about it. And then we're going to have a conversation with you guys.

So, as I said, how did we get here? We have been hearing from you guys for a long time that it would be helpful to have a template and to really have an example of what might be helpful. We have had monitoring visits, as folks may have been lucky enough to be engaged in. Our federal project officers in our region, and monitor state, and then they monitor local areas.

And one of the things that has come up almost in every local and state monitoring visit is issues around ISS. Either they're not really filled out, or they're not updated. Really this is supposed to be a living document so that you're using to really have conversations with the young people and continue to update it as needed, as plans change. So we often see that they're not really being used as a way the law intended. And really what's best practice for working with young adults.

And so we've had monitored visits and we've had these conversations through our TA. So we did develop a tool and we're excited to talk through it today. Hopefully you have seen it before this webinar, but if not you can get it at the web links – link there. You can see example, use individual strategies – service strategies. You can see it there.

And we'll talk through it and then we're going to hear from you, what your guys' thoughts are and really what works best for you guys in your local area and any best practices that you can share with the rest of (the book?).

So I am going to stop talking. I am going to turn it over to Carmen Rodriguez and she's going to tell us a little bit more about our tool. Carmen.

CARMEN RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Sara. Can everyone – can you hear me?

MS. HASTINGS: Yes, Ma'am.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Perfect. So what Sara shared, my name is Carmen Rodriguez and I've been working on youth programs for about 10 years or so. I am the youth program lead at the Boston Regional Office and most of the Region 1 states and locals know me through regional technical assistance activities or monitoring visits, to those states and local areas. I want to say thank you – thank you to all of you for taking the time from your busy days to listen in and participate in today's ISS webinar.

But before we dive in, I wanted to make sure you have the actual ISS tool. And so we can conduct the walk through. Also that these slides are available on the web link, as well, on your screen. As indicated on the slide, WIA section 129 requires all eligible youth must have a plan of action, or an individual service strategy that identifies the needs of the youth and details a plan to achieve program goals.

This document is meant to be a live document, meaning that when the youth and case manager identify the needs of the youth, their challenges, goals while participating in the program, it also identifies that to support the individual's progression during – for program success. This ISS template should be revised, revisited periodically to ensure program goals and steps identified are still relevant to the youth as they move forward to achieve these goals.

So Sara indicated, in April of this year, ETA hosted a technical assistance webinar based on a list of common findings, of areas of concerns from throughout the country. And it's based on our own FPO's monitoring visits of the local areas and state.

One of the most common findings identified is the need for better understanding of the individual service strategy. So ETA and the regional office staff decided, what better way to provide this technical assistance? Well through the development of this tool that states and locals can use. They can customize it to support the goals of the youth, but also it can ensure that the youth is clear about the steps to be taken to achieve the goals they set up to accomplish while in the program.

So we started the technical assistance by asking states to submit examples of the current ISSs they're using with their youth. So we received 39 different ISSs – 39 different examples of ISSs from states in local areas, from around the country, which helped us tremendously to develop this template. So thank you all for sending us your ISS tools and for your work in supporting young people through their program journey.

So why did we develop this template? The team that worked on the template of the ISS tool shared their observations as they – as to why the developers of the tool would improve youth program provisions systemically. We shared that monitored reviews revealed the use of different ISSs that do not necessarily include the intended WIOA components.

FPO's, during their visits also shared that throughout our monitored visits of the local Workforce Development areas and providers, in some instances, there was more than ISS within a participant file. We also noticed that the ISS reviewed does not include the WIA components that identify the youth needs, their challenges, and that ISS was not necessarily tied to career pathways.

We also noted that some ISS's still referenced WIA, or that they had not been revised to reflect WIOA youth program changes. As Sara indicated earlier, the ISS is meant to build relationships with youth, address their needs, their challenges, and identify steps to build – to help build skills that will lead to career pathways, be it a pathway in education or employment.

So now I'd like to acknowledge Toby Willis and Ava Driftwine for their valuable input, feedback, and discussions, while developing this ISS template. Both Toby and Ava are regional office youth leads, as well, here through our ETA. So I'd like to invite my colleague Toby, who's instrumental in developing the template, to share his thoughts on why he felt it was important to develop this tool.

TOBY WILLIS: Thank you, Carmen. And thank you all for contributing to our success in developing this optional ISS tool. So the genesis of the ISS template resulted from salient national monitoring findings, as Carmen mentioned, as well as some interviews that we conduct while on-site and request for best practices from practitioners.

I'm a person who likes to speak in analogies so I'm going to do that. An ISS is like a home's foundation. The more attention, more investment in the early details and the quality craftsmanship that entails, will likely result in a more long-lasting, positive result. So with your providing these 39 samples, we attempted to build ETA's model ISS foundation.

So continuing this housing analogy, this is the base model ISS home. It contains the minimum to meet ETA's code requirements. In short, we hope that the ISS template will satisfy four Cs.

The first C is compliance. This tool provides the sure compliance with WIOA law, ETA regulations, guidance, and technical assistance.

C number two, federal state, and local monitors would be familiar if this were the tool of choice. It also has the potential for portability between locals and states.

C3, it facilitates needs, identification, and remediation of the youth, goal identification and attainment, as well as a way to have a constructive, strength-based conversation about the use of training, education, employment, and personal goals.

The last C is that it's customizable. As it is the basic compliance document, it can be individualized by add-ons from either the state, local, procure provider, or HAC partner's needs.

So hopefully, throughout this presentation, you will see the synthesis of some of your ISS instruments, as well as some of our compliance thoughts and thinking. But most importantly, let's remember that we're building up young people and so this is not, as Sara said, just a paperwork exercise. We're building, hopefully, these ISS houses, with strong foundations that will hopefully have these young people have successful work lives.

And with that, Carmen, let's walk them through the ISS template.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Toby. Now I'd like to walk you through the template. I hope you have a copy of the template itself and walk along with me. So the template, I want to add that the 39 ISS examples shared, noted as best practices, and helped us to develop the template we're looking at this afternoon. As indicated in the slide, there's no one example of the perfect ISS. However, we did review some very strong examples, which led us to this template.

I want to emphasize that there is no wrong or right ISS, but more, we look at this as an opportunity to build a stronger ISS that captures the youth plan of action to excel in the program. Based on local areas – and I wanted to share that states in local areas are not required to use this tool, but at least it provides a model that can be used to build upon relationships with the youth participant, as they participate in the program. There is no requirement in WIA that dictates how an ISS should be developed.

This template supports, improves, and captures key elements, common themes, and best practices shared by all of you. You will note that the document is in Word, so that you can customize it to the needs of the youth and the local Workforce Development area's policy and procedure.

The first section is pretty basic. It has name, a date of birth, address e-mail, so forth and so on. It's mainly demographical information, which as most of you know is information that we also capture in our – in your MIS systems to report back up to ETA.

The next section is assessments. As you can see – as you, the youth case managers, or counselors are developing the ISS, the assessment piece is just as important. The short assessment does not replace the actual comprehensive assessment required by WIOA, but instead, it's meant to compliment it. This section focuses on a quick assessment of the young person's strengths, challenges, or barriers they've encountered to help identify the needs of the participant.

If the young person is a parent, do they need childcare services, does the young person need housing, food? Are they interested in reentering school or college? Do they need transportation to attend workshops, or to complete programs? Do they need help with substance abuse or counseling? And so forth and so on. This is where we suggest referrals be recorded.

MR. WILLIS: Carmen, do you mind if I add a little something?

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Sure, go ahead.

MR. WILLIS: So this also serves to limit having the youth repeat info that we have already – that's already been shared. We ask for the same information, oftentimes, on many different forms. And it's exhausting and may convey that we're not listening, but rather going through this paperwork process. And that's not good for relationship building.

So using it to inform future services, or revisiting items that were shared here, for more detail shows that we're committed and detail-oriented. And it may result in more trust and buy in. It also, if another case manager were to pick up a file or have to reference something quickly. It allows them to, on the front page, see what services are being provided and by what partners.

And lastly, I would say, it identifies strengths that a case manager can leverage to build relationship with the youth, or identify a leadership opportunity for this youth. Thank you.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Toby. So the next section on the ISS focuses on goals. What are the goals the youth would want to achieve while participating in the program.

I found this section to be very – to be an area where we, FPOs, while we were discussing and pulling together the actual ISS, it provided an opportunity for us to sort of talk through what we've seen as we go out and visit our states and local areas, what ISSs were missing, and where we thought we could improve the ISS – the development of the ISS itself. It provided for lots of comments as we developed the ISS template.

So we wanted to make sure that the ISS captured the participants wishes or goals for educational and career success. We wanted the tool to at least capture the stepping stones of attaining skills that led to the successful program completion. What you will note, here on the screen, is that the youth counselor manages this – as they discuss the goals, they can directly tie the educational, occupational, employment, and personal goals to WIOA performance indicator. This helps both the agency staff and youth and teen and perspective of how participants in the program support not just the youth, but the local and state progression to meeting established performance goals. And that's just an added benefit.

With the achievement of goals, and once exited, will the participant meet the second and fourth quarter after exit of employment or education? Will the participant meet any of the five measurable skills and goals? Will the participant attain or recognize credential or employment credential? The youth is aware that their participation in the program, in program achievement is important and has an impact.

Program elements. So the program elements section is broken out by four categories, or buckets, which include the 14 program elements. You will note that educational achievement includes the tutoring, alternative secondary school offerings and activities to help prepare for transition to post-secondary education and training. The preparing for and succeeding in employment bucket includes the paid, and unpaid work experience, the provision of labor market information, education offers concurrent with Workforce prep and training, for a specific education, occupational skill, and entrepreneural skills.

The next bucket support youth includes supportive services, adult mentoring, comprehensive guidance counseling, and follow-up. And the final category, developing the potential of young people as citizens and leaders, includes the leadership and the financial literacy education element. You will note that each box provides a section where you can input important information such as start and completion date. And whether the youth successfully completed the established steps.

I also want to point out – this is on page four of the template itself – I want to point out that there's also a section on potential barriers to goal achievement. This is where you can add any additional information that you think is relevant in helping the youth progress onto the next step. Again there's a section in here for case notes. You can also indicate when the ISS was reviewed and updated. And there's also a section for the individual service strategy updates.

We felt this was a piece that we found was – an example that we looked at, we found that there was several pages with dates and signatures and information in all sorts of places. So we actually added this piece to provide a more cohesive place to maintain that information.

So finally, this is the last page on the ISS, which is the ISS agreement. And it's an agreement between the youth and the case manager. So we found the contents – or similar contents of this page in several of the examples we reviewed. We observed this last piece of the ISS as a good practice, actually. Both the youth participant and the case counselor or manager agree to maintain a relationship to support the youth, to complete the different goals identified in the ISS, to continue progression through the program.

The youth agreed to stay in contact with the case manager and counselor. Share program progress, such as goal attainment, shared information regarding any issues, any problems that may prevent them from attending, their academic component or the program participation – might prevent them from participating in the work experience opportunity and finally agree to stay in touch for a minimum of 12 months after they exit the program. The case manager or counselor agrees to assist youth access a variety of services to support goal attainment and program success.

So this is the overview of the ISS template. I hope that you've all had a chance to review the template itself prior to our webinar. And we're looking forward to having it a more diverse conversation about changes that you may have, suggestions that you may have to improve it, or maybe that – maybe that you like this tool as it is, that you'll be using it at your local areas.

The other piece I wanted to mention was a signature and the date are also important. And it states that there is an open communication that identifies revisions to the ISS as needed, and maintains that the ISS is a live document.

This is slide number 13 and here, if you, your colleagues, or partners have not seen the six minute webcast, please do so. Short and sweet. It's to the point and provides a simple overview of the ISS template, as well. You can click on the link above – directly above, or once you download the slide, you can access it there, as well.

So how should this template be used? I'm going to switch this over to Sara.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you so much, Carmen, for walking through that. That's super helpful. And hopefully people got a good sense of the template. I see a few questions. And before I go into it, I just – I think it might be a good time to just answer and clarify a couple questions. And since we – Toby, you're still on. I know you might need to leave us before the end. So I thought I would just quickly check in with Toby here.

One question is, what should be recorded in strengths? And I know some of you had some thoughts on that. Do you want to jump in?

MR. WILLIS: Certainly. I think I spoke to it earlier, but the strength section is a way for the youth – because this is bilateral thing. This is not just one sided. So it's a way for the youth to represent him or herself in a positive way and speak to the things that they feel they do well. And they don't often get that opportunity. So it's a relationship building tool. That's a way to get information that they're willing to share without feeling like you have to drag it out in some conversations that might be quiet.

And again, it allows for the identification of others, leadership opportunities that would build on that strength allow them to come out of their shells, or excel in a way, where they might be challenged later on in the program. It's just a way to connect them.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thanks, Toby. Yeah, I mean, if folks, if a young person has access to a car, that's a strength. If a young person can drive, is very creative and artistic, you want to put that down. You want to have conversations and you want them to see – to have the opportunity to say I've got a lot going for myself, and not just focus on what's missing, what the challenges are. We know that there's tons of challenges.

This is such a key part of building relationships with young people – is saying, I see all the things that you have going for yourself. And the fact that they walked in the door and are there, that's a strength. They're showing up. So there's a lot that can be done. We could probably have a whole webinar just on how do we take a strength-based approach with young people. But that's a good place to do that.

We have another question that talks about the assessment that we have, that section, that I'm going to add, what's different between that and the objective assessment. The objective assessment is still required and there's – this is not something that we brought into the conversation today, but obviously the objective assessment feeds into the ISS. And so you would still want to complete an objective assessment that looks at needs and skills and assets. Looks at their basic skills, deficiencies, or strengths.

What we have in that short little box right there, really is an opportunity to just quickly glance at some of the key highlights from the objective assessments. But the objective assessment, the findings and everything you've learned from that really feeds into – but that's a really good question. Thank you for asking that. That might be something we tackle at another time, is what is a good objective assessment look like. So I wanted to mention that.

We had another quick question about – if a barrier's medical-related, will this page have to be extracted and kept separate to comply with WIOA Section 188?

And Toby, you kind of wrote out a little – do you want to share kind of your thoughts on that?

MR. WILLIS: Yes. In no way do we want to violate HIPPA laws. So discretion should be used. A generic description might be put in this place. So it might say view MIS case note dated such and such, or needs healthcare referral. That's all we're saying. This is a brief assessment, just to give you guidelines on where to go – again, not asking questions over and over again, turning off the youth to the fact that we're not listening.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thanks, Toby. So I just want to kind of jump on a few questions right now while we have the chance. I am going to then talk a little bit about the use of the template. As we have said now, numerous times, and will continue to say this is an optional tool and it is not mandatory in its use. So please know that. It's just a guide, really to inform practitioners of essential components for developing an ISS and be tailored for a local area. So please do take a look at it.

If you guys love your ISS and it's an awesome one, share it with us. Share it with the field. We are happy to look and share out best practices that work. So this is in no way saying that you need to use this specific tool, but it helps us have this conversation about what's key. What are the key pieces and elements to it? You know, states and local providers have the flexibility, as we said, to customize this ISS, to make it make sense for you guys, for your program, for your policies, your organization culture, your data collection systems and service prophecies.

How should this form be used? You're encouraged to adapt it to align within your own contacts in your local area. That means maybe keeping some sections that make sense, adding more where needed or deleting what you don't think seems necessary, or maybe it's redundant if you have another form that you're adapting it to.

This one could be used as a paper version, or you could tailor it for electronic submission. Staff and use should have input in the final form. So really this is a conversation you want to have with your staff and even young people that are doing this – have them look at it and see if this makes sense for them. And then you want to review and update if needed.

Some of the key features of the template includes the assessment section. And again, this is not intended to replace the objective assessment, the comprehensive assessment that's completed with the young people. It really should complement that, provide a quick overview, so the person who asks that question was right on. That was a good question. The template includes a goal section, as we talked about.

All the 14 program elements which – it's good to just be able to see. You are not required to provide every one of the 14 program elements. You are required to offer the 14 program elements and make them available. So that means if a young person is in need of a mentor, or if a young person is interested in entrepreneurial skills training, and you have a conversation about that and you put it in that is – and it's a great opportunity to take a look at all 14. Have the young person see what's available for them, and help them know what their options are.

If a young person doesn't come up to you and say, I need an mentor, and you don't say, we could offer you a mentor, they may not know, so having the 14 program elements on this document is helpful to you – it prompts you to sort of say, here's the kind of stuff we have, that we can either provide in our office, in our center, or we can connect you to other organizations or folks that may provide it in the community. And so we'll work with you to do that.

So some tips for implementing the ISS. If you have a new ISS form and you're introducing that, really you want to make sure staff receive training on the use and the implementation of the form. So some of the questions that were asked already are good questions. So these are the kinds of thing that you'd want to have a discussion about with your other case managers or career counselors, career coaches, and leadership, to see how do we really want to implement this. Or how do we implement our own ISS that we have developed already. What key, how do we want to walk through this with young people.

You want to dedicate enough time to complete the ISS with the young person. You want to allow time to brainstorm and develop their road map and how they plan on accomplishing the goals. And so instead of just sort of saying here's a packet of paper, or here's a computer with an assessment on it, or ISS, go ahead and fill it out – that's not what we want. We really want to use the ISS as a way to build a relationship with young people and it helps guide the conversation around planning.

You want to introduce the concept and encourage the youth to develop smart goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. I think folks have heard those before. Encourage the youth to lead and take ownership of the ISS process. You are doing it for them. They are not doing it because they have to do it. It's part of the program – it is required. So yes, they do have to do it. But the reason why they are doing it is really because it's going to help them understand what they're working towards.

Development schedule for the ISS review would be youth and so you want to say let's check back in in a month. Let's see where we're at. You know after you've taken a work readiness (report ?) or after you've had a couple weeks working at an internship or work experience. Let's reflect on that and say, did this stuff change your plans? What are you thinking about next steps, based on some of the experiences?

Some young people may come in saying I just want a job. They just want a job. They just want a job. They don't want to go back to school. I was not good in school and I don't want to do that anymore. I just want to get a job. We know as Workforce professionals and youth development, specialized. We know that young people often are going to need additional education and training. They're going to need the credentials. But that's not why they come in.

So meet them where they're at. Fill it out. Focus on what they think they need. And put – again, let's check back in in a couple weeks. Let's check back in in two months. See where you're at. Maybe things have changed. And that again, you've built trust, you build the opportunity for the young person to guide their process, without sort of forcing a plan on them in the beginning. So those are some tips.

And this also provides the opportunity, when you are writing updates, and updating the ISS, is to celebrate their successes, right? Like take the opportunity to say, you finished all of these things. You have finished a couple weeks of your GED or task – prep classes.

You've done – you've got – you finished your resume. You've done these things that we said you needed to work on. You got your driver's license. That's huge, right? All of those things, I think, when you mark them down and then when you can check them off, they're going to feel like they are on their way and they're accomplishing really good things towards success. So that's all really – (inaudible).

So let's ask you guys – that's the tool. Those are some best practices, whether you use our tool or not. Those are things you want to be keeping in mind when you're working on filling out an ISS with a young person. Let's hear from you guys. This is a time to answer some questions and start the conversation. Do you use the ISS process to begin building a relationship with youth? So let's see what folks say.

So we're seeing about 80 percent or so saying yes, you do use this as a way to begin building a relationship with youth. Those – there are about 20 percent that are saying no, that's not how they do it. And there might be many other ways that you build a relationship. This is not the only thing, but hopefully – the intention of the ISS is to build, or strengthen, perhaps. Maybe there are better ways to do that.

But if you're filling this out in the early days and you don't know the young person really well, it is an opportunity to be able to start having some conversations. And have them not feel like they're just filling out paperwork, but that this is an opportunity to get to know each other, share about their strengths, their challenges and talk through that. So thank you for filling that out.

So let's also ask you. How would you describe your ISS process? And sometimes, in local areas we see that people are doing it because it's just a required document, right? B, it helps me get to know the youth a little in the beginning, but then I don't really use it much after the initial intake. And then there's C, I use it as a tool to have ongoing conversations about goals, service needs, and progress. And then D, other. So let's hear from folks. I'm sure there's some answers and some others, as well, people filling out a lot of thoughts on this.

Let's see here. So we've got about – the numbers are still coming in. So I'm going to give it just a second. So think about that. How would you describe your ISS process right now? And this is an opportunity in this conversation today to rethink the way things are done, if you hear from your colleagues about different best practices.

So we're kind of landing – I think the numbers are coming in, about 15 percent are saying it's just a required document. This is where we use it in our local area. It comes in. We have about 27 percent, it looks like, helps me get to know the youth a little bit in the beginning, but then I don't really use it much after the initial intake. And the bulk of folks, a little over 50 percent, said they use it as a tool to have an ongoing conversation about goals, service needs, and progress. And so I wanted to see if there's some comments that people are putting in the chat here. And I'm not seeing that now.

But that was helpful. Thank you for filling that out. We do hope that the ISS, and again, maybe perhaps right now you're not using it in a way that's really building relationships. We want people to think about that. If you're not doing that now, is there a new way to be thinking about it, or a different way to be thinking about using your ISS process to build relationships with young people. Again, there's many other ways to develop relationships with young people and all of the case managers and case – current coaches on there – on this webinar so they know that.

Based on our conversation today, we're hoping that folks move into the direction of using it as a way to build trust. So I'm looking at some of our comments. Yes, we do use this to build relationships, to have conversations and get to know where they're at and if they have any barriers. It builds trust and they get to know us as people trying to help them move forward and succeeding. So thank you for that comment. I really appreciate that.

Yes, I like the new ISS template. We have just used it as a required document before. Right. And I think the fact – that's what we've seen when our monitors have gone out and looked at the use of the ISS. We want to help you guys all move away from a paperwork exercise. And I know every local area has a different way of going about it. Hopefully it's prompting some conversations with your team, to kind of think about this in a way that it doesn't just feel like we're sitting down and forcing them to fill things out.

We know that in many cases, you have MIF databases where you're putting some of the information in. That might be the case, but can, when you're gathering the information, be having a good conversation with young people and documenting strengths, etc. So Carmen, or Toby, other thoughts on this one?

MS. RODRIGUEZ: No, I think you nailed it, Sara. I was looking at some of the comments, as well. I have a specific comment here. How would you like to – like the labor market and employment information, including career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services, to be applied to the template. This is a note that you would make because this is one of the elements. You have to think of this – this is not just a template that you use with the participants, but you have to also use it at the other end, which is, you're also collecting information that will be reported in your quarterly reports, right?

And so I would make a note, within that section, saying that provided – attended a workshop at the HAC, which spoke to labor market information, jobs and occupations that are in demand. And you can have the conversation with the youth around what are these different occupations? How long is it going to take for me to go to school, or that participant to go to school and achieve a credential and then end up with a job? So, I would make a note within that section to say that they did attend that workshop and put the date of the workshop within the ISS template.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thanks, Carmen. So let's move on. Let me actually just mention Roxanne Garcia's comment. It's really hard to update all these processes and improvements, but with a large caseload and every day being an emergency, it's hard to remember to update it. I hear you, Roxanne. I know how tough it can be to have a large caseload. And you're putting out fires every day. You're making sure people are saved and they're getting to – getting connected to the resources and referrals that they need. And you're supporting young people.

We hear that, and we understand that. And we're hoping that by building the ISS process really into the way you do your work as opposed to something that you have to do on the side. But that it's part of your program model, that it's connected to how you sit down with young people and really talk to them. If it's built into your processes, that maybe helpful to you; as opposed to, oh yeah, shoot, I need to remember to update this.

So I hear you. It's a balance and we're hoping that by using some good use development approaches and using it as a strengths-based model, a way to celebrate successes that it can be integrated into the work that you do in a more seamless way, as opposed to something on the side. So I definitely hear that. So thanks for that comment.

Let's go to the next side and we – we'll open it up so people can share their thoughts. You'll be able to see now, what people type in. We want to hear from you guys, what is your ISS, what does it look like right now, the one that you're using? What is in it that you like and that helps you make a plan with the young person?

So maybe some folks on the call don't love their ISSs and maybe they don't have a whole – just say here I know some folks, in talking a lot of practitioners around the country. Not everybody loves what they have going on right now, but for those of you that have some parts of your ISS that really, that you like, and it helps you connect with young people and make a plan, tell us a little bit about what you – what you're using, or what parts of you think are helpful to building relationships.

So it looks like a lot of people are typing in right now. So we'll just give it a second. So, yeah, think about that. And again there might be things that you don't love about what you are currently using, especially for the folks that are like, oh, this is just another piece of paperwork that I have to fill out. Again, we're hoping to move in the direction, move the field in the direction of it being a tool to build relationships.

And so Katherine Hernandez (sp) says, it helps the client to be focused. Yes. I mean, if – there's always a ton of things going on in a young person's life. Often it's hard to sort of focus in on specific strategies and make sure you kind of touch on all the different complexities of a young person's life that you want to address when you're talking about – so it can be used as a way to focus the conversation.

So I'm hearing, ours (is done?) very similar in content to this one, but I think you've added information that I'd like to incorporate. So that's great. Carmen.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I was just reading some of the comments, Nancy says this is a living, breathing document. You must update it often as necessary. By doing so it allows you both – you and the youth to stay on track, which is true.

MS. HASTINGS: Right. And Amanda Baker (ph) says that our past goals and then objectives that explain how the goals will be accomplished. So it's the order in which you have the conversation is important, right.

Alicia – (inaudible) – says it gives detailed steps to achieve their short and long-term goals.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: We see Allison Green (ph) who indicates that their ISS is very cumbersome, which is a piece of their MIS, goals only that that – give direction. And it has to be completed online. So I hope that this template that we just created will be helpful to help you streamline your own ISS.

MS. HASTINGS: Yeah, and I think that brings up a really good point, is that we also know that you have reporting requirements. So I'm sure there's some people on this call, or on this webinar thinking, oh sure, easy for you to say. We also have all these other requirements to make sure that we're putting all this information in our MIS and that we're reporting on the program elements, etc. I think with this tool – it's supposed to help you connect to the reporting requirements.

But take a look at it. Look at it next year, MIS and sort of see, how can it align – perhaps there's a way you can adjust this template so that it aligns maybe better with what you've got going on, in terms of your reporting requirements. But the MIS – the ISS is not just for reporting, right? It is intended to be a tool and a plan for young people. So you may need to think about it from both those lenses, both the reporting opportunity to document what's going on, in order to report, but also a way to connect to plans and achievements with the young people.

So it says since the ISS is to be completed the first time, prior to enrollment, how far out do you recommend projecting the elements that you will use? That's a great question, Holly. I think again, this goes back to – this is a living document. This is something that should be updated and you can see on there, we have some space where you can put the date in in case notes updates, right?

So change it up, right. Or make a copy, start a new one if things have changed, but obviously you don't know, in six months, what a young person's going to need. You don't know, necessarily a month out. It's a way to sort of put some goals and ideas forward. Think big with the young people. And get them excited about opportunities. But you don't know what it's going to look like in six months.

And maybe they said they didn't again, want to go back to school, just wanted a job. We hope that they changed their minds, because often the young people are going to need additional education or training. So fill it out for where they're at. Meet the young person where they're at and then update it when you see them again.

Schedule an appointment in a few weeks to check back in with them and see where they're at. And then update it. So you want to use your discretion around that. (Inaudible) – makes people feel like pressured or pushed to get somewhere when they're not quite ready for it. But that's a way you can think about that. Is trying to see where they're at and asking them to come back and re-look at that question and re-look at the tool.

Is the agreement page intended to be signed upon every update? I think it depends on – thanks, Jennifer. I think it depends on how much updating you're doing. But, yeah, I would think you would want to – and you can add columns there, right? So if you reviewed it and nothing changed, you might want to just make a note saying we're still on track. This plan still works for us. Together, as a team, we're working to help this young person get there.

But it provides the opportunity again, also on the monitoring side, for folks to come and say, this is not just a stagnant document. We didn't just do it once when they were getting enrolled. We have been using it ongoing, but it was the plan that worked and we're going to continue to talk through it. But likely things will change and so you want to have that conversation and update it when there are – update it when you can. If the effort is there to sign it, that's great, as well. Yes, Carmen, go for it.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Well I just wanted to add, what I've seen in my visits to local areas, there typically is a policy and procedure that the local board puts in place for case managers to follow when completing the ISS with the youth. It typically states, we're going to do this follow-up, or we're going to do check-ins every month, or every three months – quarterly and so forth. So I think you should look at what your policy and procedure also says, to make sure that you're also in compliance with your local board's requirements, as well.

MS. HASTINGS: Yes, great. Thanks, Carmen. And I'm just looking at our time. We wanted this to be kind of a quick conversation, but it's going a little longer. If people want to hang on for a little bit longer, that's great. We have a few more slides, but we wanted to hear from you, quickly. Share your thoughts now, on the challenges that are faced when completing and updating your ISS.

And this might be an easier one for folks to answer, because I think we do know that this can be – can be complicated sometimes. And I think we've heard that a little bit before. We're so busy working with young people. We have a high caseload. It can be tricky. So let's just quickly take a minute to kind of hear what some of your challenges are and then we'll move to the best practices.

Youth don't always respond to us on a regular basis. Yep, that sounds about right. Tracking down the young people. That's right. And I think all of that really goes back to when you hear young people say, I couldn't have done it without this program. I couldn't have done it without my case manager. It's because they've been – they have built relationships with you. And they're truly engaged. And if they're finding that they're getting some really good support and help, they often will come back.

And so thinking about how you work with young people – how much time and energy you can give to young people, especially in the beginning, so that you're starting to build – the building blocks of good relationships. Hopefully that makes it easier. Again, you're not just getting information from them, but you're working with them to help them get where they need to go.

A lot of scheduling. A lot of young people. And I think that's totally understandable. You know, that's – this is where they are in their life. And the more you can help them feel like they're connected and they're coming to you because it's a place they feel safe. It's a place that they know they're being able to move forward in their life. The more they feel that, the more you're going to see that. And when we've seen really good programs out in the field, kids – they can't kick them out. They can't even – they're showing up because they want to be there.

And they have felt like they're getting the things that they need so I think some of that is just looking at your program model a little bit, figuring out, are the young people feeling like they have to come out, they have to show up? Or are they really engaged with you? And what can you do to help engage them? Because once you address those issues, I think some of the other, kind of getting them to text you back, or whatever, gets a little bit easier.

So I think people are still typing there. I want to move on, since we're almost at time, to share your thoughts. What are your ISS best practices? So we're going from challenges to ISS best practices. This is similar to our question that we had before, which is what did you like? Are there any other best practices that people wanted to share with the group? And so we'll let people just have another 10 seconds to type in. Any ISS best practices that we didn't really catch on that earlier slide, when we asked you, what did you like about your ISS.

Combining the objective assessment and ISS. They should definitely be aligned Karen. I hear you on that. That's really key and stuff, so to have it all in the same place. Allison Green says strengths and positive things help you see their value and potential. I think that's exactly it. That is why we're doing this work.

They absolutely need to know that they have value and they're – that they already have a lot of strengths. The fact that they're there and showing up. Their resiliency, through all the things that they have gone through. Help them see that. Write it down. Let them know that you see them for all that they are and what they've gone through. And that they're to improve themselves. And so document that. That's great.

Meet youth where they are at and grow from there. That's exactly it. Thank you, Amy. I like when we set small attainable goals so the student can see the progress they are making and feel like they are getting somewhere. Absolutely, that's – back to the other question that we had, how often do you fill these out and update them. Make the goals achievable. They're smart goals, right? Achievable, attainable. Help them feel successful and that they can accomplish goals. And if they are small goals, because things are really hard in life, help them – help them see that they can make successes.

So we see a few of us are typing in. Let's see here. We have different ways of working with youth, but one of our best practices is making the form simple for the youth to understand and get through. Yes. We let them tell us what they want and then we help them grow in thoughts and learning.

And then once they reach a small goal, they are happy and they want to continue to reach goals. Thank you so much. That is great. And again, I think that's, again, another way to think about the template, or your ISS that you have in place now, is really a way to have this conversation with young people and help them feel like they're moving forward.

So we're a couple minutes over thanks for sticking with us. Let's move – this has been such a good conversation. And we are going to continue to have this conversation. We are going to continue to have webinars and talk about best practices. So let's go to the next – I'll talk about links and resources to join our community. So join our community, we really want to make sure you guys are connected to our Youth Connections, Community of Practice. Become a member, because then you get all our information and resources and technical assistance that comes out.

And you can see here, join WorkforceGPS and then look for the community membership, so you'll scroll down because you can't see it here. But they are the Youth Connections Community of Practice. When you see Youth Connections, think WIOA Youth Program. That's what that is. There are a few options there. There's Youth Build. But Youth Connections is our WIOA youth page. So go there and check it out.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: And Sara, I just wanted to mention that from the prior, from the prior slide. Once you hit the get started, you should be able to land on this page. This is just the screenshot of the page itself. There's a lot more information. Go in there, sign up, and you'll begin receiving a lot of this information that you get through WorkforceGPS. And you'll be able to stay on top of all these different webinars and grant opportunities. Might be other options – other things that might be shared. But also other webinars and technical assistance activities of interest.

MS. HASTINGS: Often yeah. Thank you, Carmen. Thanks for mentioning that. And this is just a screenshot of our youth.workforcegps.org. This is the Youth Connections Community Practice page. When you go to featured resources, you'll see right there, WIOA Youth Program Resources page. That is our go-to page. It's got eligibility. It's got performance. It's got the 14 program elements. It's got the ISS tool which we've been talking about today.

We will continue to add more resources to that. I want you to be on the lookout. We have finalized a request for proposal document that we've heard a lot of people say, other examples of strong RFPs. We just posted that. We're going to kind of blast that out to folks soon. But take a look at it on WIOA program resources page. There's a lot of good stuff there. And if you're a member, when we put new things up, you will get those alerts. So please do that.

Another – just a specific resource that we wanted to put you to is the Youth Case Management page. And you'll find that from the page I just mentioned on the WIOA Youth Resources Page. You'll see Youth Case Management. And it has a case management tool kit. Preparing youth for a lifetime of success. There's a lot of good stuff in here. We've updated this tool kit. It's been around for a while. And we updated it recently with WIOA. So take a look at that.

And then, what's next? So what's next is we're going to continue to have conversations with you guys. This is not the end of a conversation with ISS. If you guys have questions that we didn't get answered today, because we're a few minutes over now, definitely sent those questions – thank you – to Division of Youth Services. You can do youth.services@dol.gov. If you have a burning question that we did not get to – and I know there's a handful of questions that folks ask that we didn't get a chance to address. Send it to youth.services@dol.gov and we will get back to you.

If you have other questions, if you have comments, if you have best practices, if you have tools, if you have things you want to share with us and talk to us. Send it to youth.services@dol.gov and we will definitely get back to you. We love to hear from you guys. And we're always working to help provide you with the resources that are going to help you work with young people and get them to where they need to go.

So I want to thank Carmen so much for her leadership in pulling this all together. So thank you, Carmen for that. And Toby thanks – thank Toby for joining today. And thank you all for joining us and having this conversation. We will continue to have it. Please continue to talk to us and let us know what's helpful. Let us know if you're using this tool. We can update it as we need o and make improvements.

But let's hear from you. I'm going to turn it over to Jonathan close us out. So thank you everyone for joining us and sticking with us a few minutes after the hour. Thank you.

MR. VEHLOW: Thanks so much Sara. And I just want to thank all of you participants for joining.

(END)