



Clark County Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program’s (CCMEP’s) Life in Transition (LIT) Remote Support Group for Youth at OhioMeansJobs

Summary

In 2020, Clark County’s CCMEP established LIT to provide remote peer support and peer mentorship for youth ages 16 to 24 participating in CCMEP through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Two youth receiving WIOA services led the design of the pilot phase of LIT and led the support groups for the first cohort. LIT incorporates CCMEP’s coaching-based case management model that teaches youth about self-regulation and goal pursuit. LIT helps participants explore careers, establish goals and action steps, attain skills, and receive mentorship from their peers in an effort to gain economic security and become self-sufficient.

Funding source



CCMEP, of which LIT is a part, is supported by WIOA and TANF funds. LIT’s youth facilitator role is a paid work experience internship under CCMEP.

Intervention description



LIT is a peer-led remote support group that aims to create a community for youth ages 16 to 24 receiving WIOA and TANF services. LIT is a component of CCMEP, a program operated through OhioMeansJobs in Clark County, OH. CCMEP serves youth in Clark County through an integrated intervention combining TANF and the WIOA Youth programs. LIT was developed to engage youth remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic began, youth in the Clark County CCMEP felt disengaged because they could not access the American Job Center and the common area space it offered to connect with other youth and their case managers.

Services provided



Case management;
Financial incentives;
Soft skills training; Work and work-based learning (*Work experience*); Work readiness activities (*Employment coaching*)

Populations served

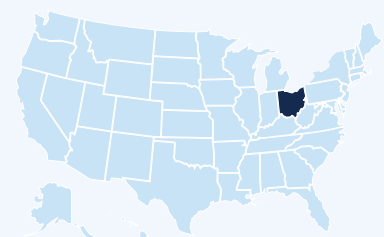
LIT serves youth ages 16 to 24 who receive WIOA and TANF services and participate in CCMEP.



Setting



OhioMeansJobs in Clark County, OH, operates LIT as part of its CCCMEP.



Year first implemented

2020 (ongoing at the time of data collection)

What are case studies?

Case studies provide practitioners with information about innovative interventions that states, counties, community-based organizations, or other entities are undertaking to improve employment outcomes for TANF participants and other individuals with low incomes, especially public assistance recipients. **Case studies cover interventions not included elsewhere in the Clearinghouse because they have not yet been rigorously evaluated.**

To recreate the feeling of the space and to help youth connect virtually, CCMEP staff collaborated with the organization Mathematica, which worked with Clark County OhioMeansJobs to implement Goal4 It!TM, a science-informed approach to delivering human services and workforce programs in a way that activates a person's motivation and commitment to change. CCMEP staff selected two WIOA youth, known as emerging professionals, to lead the design of LIT during summer 2020 and facilitate the first pilot group in fall 2020. The first LIT pilot group consisted of six youth participants; the peer-led groups occurred online weekly for six weeks.

With the LIT intervention, CCMEP seeks to further promote human capital development among youth, introduce them to the world of employment, engage them in career development, and strengthen their social capital through peer support and mentorship. The intervention gives youth an opportunity to embark on self-discovery, and explore and progress toward employment and career goals. LIT bases its facilitation on "the three pillars of career exploration," as developed by the higher education consulting firm Entangled Solutions. The three pillars are (1) increasing social capital, (2) forming an occupational identity, and (3) attaining skills (Salisbury and Kraft 2020). LIT participants receive case management and other services as part of CCMEP, including supportive services, tutoring, mentoring, and job retention services. They also attend virtual presentations from career pathways experts.

For a young person to partake in LIT, they must be referred by CCMEP staff and choose to opt in. CCMEP staff believe LIT is best suited for youth in the early stages of identifying and setting their employment and career goals who would benefit from additional peer support. Participation in the LIT support group is voluntary and does not count toward any program requirements or TANF activities. Before attending the online LIT group session, participants meet with a CCMEP caseworker to develop their goal plan and learn how to use the Microsoft Teams platform. Once all participants are trained and enrolled in the group, the emerging professionals lead virtual sessions for an hour per week on the Microsoft Teams videoconference.

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Each LIT session consists of activities that aim to encourage collaboration and relationship building among participants. During the sessions, youth do the following:

- Build rapport and connections through icebreaker activities and by sharing their goals and interests to find commonalities with one another
- Create a shared understanding of group objectives and rules to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all LIT members
- Develop professional identities through brainstorming activities and discussions among participants about their research on potential careers
- Identify careers, formulate achievable steps toward them, and leverage one another's resources and connections
- Reflect on and discuss goals and lessons learned as a team to help one another address challenges
- Establish group accountability for members by reporting on progress toward their goals

For participants, LIT serves as a safe space in which they can consider ways to address challenges they face while navigating employment and careers. Participants also have an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings with peers, and share successes to encourage and inspire one another to keep working toward goals and establish long-term relationships. Once the participant completes the 6-week cohort, they can enter future LIT cohorts if they demonstrate interest in the group and the CCMEP staff believes that they will benefit further from it.

CCMEP leaders believed involving youth in the process of designing LIT would incorporate youth perspectives into the program and would support the youth's development. CCMEP staff gave two youth the formal role and title of emerging professional to empower them, foster

their ownership and active contributions in the process, and ensure a balanced and collaborative relationship with staff. The initial emerging professionals selected by CCMEP staff had a long-standing involvement in the CCMEP program and were considered strong candidates to become peer mentors of other WIOA and TANF youth. The emerging professionals role is a 6-week paid work experience internship that provides \$125 for each of the weekly group sessions the youth organize and facilitate. Exiting emerging professionals are tasked with training new facilitators for future LIT group cohorts.

CCMEP's objective is for LIT to be youth driven; thus, CCMEP staff and leaders take on a primarily supportive role by providing training, technical assistance, supervision, coaching, and case management to the emerging professionals and participants. One CCMEP staff member is assigned to the LIT group to guide the emerging professionals on how to engage youth and lead the support groups effectively. During the LIT sessions, the assigned CCMEP staff member observes, takes notes, and assists the emerging professionals if any complicated issues arise during the intervention. They also help coordinate potential guest speakers on professional careers for the group. In addition, all CCMEP staff learned how to use the Microsoft Teams platform, and they assist and instruct LIT participants on the platform when they join the program. Before the LIT pilot program began, CCMEP staff addressed technological issues that arose when using Microsoft Teams and other online platforms in the early stages of the pandemic, which helped the emerging professionals implement the intervention.

To maintain active participant engagement, it was important for CCMEP staff to identify the most appropriate youth to participate in the program. At the start of the intervention, staff attempted to engage youth who had already decided on their career goals; staff quickly learned, however, that those participants were too advanced for LIT's focus on goal setting and determined that they did not need the program. Moreover, staff observed that making the LIT program mandatory was problematic because many youth were not interested and did not attend the meetings. Therefore, LIT became a voluntary program for CCMEP youth.

The emerging professionals' ability to relate to LIT participants is key to their effectiveness as mentors. Similar to LIT participants, emerging professionals during the pilot were youth navigating career exploration and job searches, which helped them easily connect with participants. Another key part of the LIT intervention is the use of webcams so all LIT participants are visible to one another. The webcams enabled emerging professionals to see the participants during the pilot and observe their dispositions as they led the sessions. Leading the group via webcam also enabled participants to build rapport with each other and helped replace in-person encounters they lost because of the pandemic.

CCMEP staff said they noticed significant growth in the emerging professionals' leadership skills, confidence, and self-empowerment after developing and implementing LIT. Staff also reported that participants who enrolled in LIT became more engaged with their CCMEP caseworker to work toward their goals in their plan. Therefore, CCMEP leaders decided to keep the LIT group as a permanent voluntary component of CCMEP. They met with the emerging professionals in the early months of 2021 to evaluate and revise the program and commence planning for a second LIT pilot phase. At the time of this case study's drafting, CCMEP staff was surveying LIT candidates to assess needs, expectations, and interests to inform the content and activities for the next LIT group.

Research on intervention to date



This intervention has not been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness. There are no evaluations or measured outcomes of LIT to date as it is a relatively new program.

Case study information sources

In winter 2021, the Pathways Clearinghouse collected information for this case study from telephone interviews with Clark County OhioMeansJobs. The Pathways Clearinghouse shared a near-finalized draft of the case study with OhioMeansJobs and incorporated revisions for accuracy and completeness. For more information about the methods for selecting and developing the case studies, please see the Protocol for Pathways Clearinghouse Case Studies on the [Pathways Clearinghouse project page](#).

More information



More information on this intervention is available from the following resources:

Clark County Department of Job & Family Services. *Comprehensive Case Management Employment Program (CCMEP)*. Available at <https://clarkdjfs.org/380/CCMEP-Youth-Program>.

Salisbury, Allison Dulin, and Kate Kraft (2020). *Unlocking career potential: An analysis of the career navigation*

and guidance product landscape, San Francisco, CA: Entangled Solutions.

Mathematica (2019). *Goal4 It!*. Available at <https://www.mathematica.org/features/goal4-it>.

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Project Officers: Amelia Popham and Siri Warkentien

Project Monitor: Clare DiSalvo

Senior Advisor: Kimberly Clum

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

Administration for Children and Families

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Project Director: Diana McCallum

Mathematica

1100 First Street, NE, 12th Floor

Washington, DC 20002-4221

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