

# **A Dynamic Trio of Webinars:**

## **Become an Adult Ally: Empowering Youth in Vocational Rehabilitation**

### **Part 1: Introduction**

Narrator: The following is a video symposium that alternates between static shots of participants in their offices.

Liam Kearney (LK): Hello everyone, my name is Liam Kearney with YesLMS. Welcome to the third in our series of dynamic webinars. YesLMS has partnered with CSAVR to provide the field's most requested training on topics such as case management, case documentation, and today's session on the importance of becoming an adult ally and empowering youth in vocational rehabilitation. We are excited to continue the trend of providing rapid response to your requested topic areas, and we're going to keep doing these webinars on a regular basis, so we hope to see you in those as well.

LK: At YesLMS, we offer the most accessible learning management platform. We're pre-loaded with course content for VR professionals, and if you would like to learn more, you can always email me at liam at yeslms.com, and I'll be putting my contact information in the chat as well. Throughout today's presentation, we'll be putting some information in the chat on how to access the materials, recordings, obtain your CRC for this session, as well as some helpful articles on changing your zoom settings to help optimize your experience. One thing that we recommend is to hover your mouse over someone's video and click the three dots, and then there's a video that says "Disable Non-Participant Video." This will help clear up your screen so you only see the people who actively have their cameras on. If at any time you have any questions about accessibility or encounter technical issues, please feel free to send a direct message in the chat to either me or Kevin Red. And thank you for joining us today. Now I would like to turn things over to Inger Neil, with CSAVR, to talk a little bit more about why we're here today. Inger?

Inger Neil (IN): Hello everyone. Thank you so much, Liam. And I echo the excitement that of joining, you all joining us here today. My name is Inger Neil with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, CSAVR, the National Employment Team, the NET. We are a membership organization that works with the 78 vocational rehabilitation agencies across the U.S. and the territories. We are so excited to continue to expand our partnership with YesLMS, which started during the fall of 2020, when our CSAVR Fall conference had to pivot to virtual, and YesLMS came to our rescue and made it a very successful conference. So from there, we continue to expand. Today is the final of the three webinars, as Liam mentioned. But since you've registered for today, you have access to the previous two webinars that will be available today on our website, our co-website, which is csavr.yeslms.com. And this webinar will be available for you to access in about three weeks. Again, I'm excited to be part of this awesome panel of presenters. Thank you again for being here, and I will pass the baton over to John Walsh with, with George Washington University. John?

John Walsh (JW): Wonderful. Thank you very much. It's just we are so appreciative of this collaborative effort with CSAVR and YesLMS to bring you relevant and important information to our VR community. I'm really thrilled to work with the panel of presenters we have today to talk about this important topic. And I love all the activity that's happening in chat already. So keep that up, because we want this session to be interactive. So we want you to engage with the materials and we want to get your questions, we want to get your comments. And I'm going to talk a little bit more a little later about how we can do that to make sure we're staying engaged with the material we're covering today.

JW: Before we get started in today's presentation on becoming an adult ally, I wanted to give a quick overview of the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation, or CIT-VR. If you're not familiar with the work we do at CIT-VR, please visit our website. I'm going to throw it up in chat. It's trainVR.org. It's really easy to remember. And I also put in the chat the latest edition of our newsletter. It's a Happy New Year newsletter to reintroduce you

to some of our training materials that you can engage with. What are the some of the things that we do? We facilitate or co-facilitate communities of practice. Some of them relate to supported employment, rapid engagement. We do one for training coordinators and directors. We have one that we do in collaboration with the NTAC-C, the National Technical Assistance Center for Transition, the Collaborative, that focuses on students who are blind, vision impaired, or deaf-blind, and the receipt of pre-ed services. We also have an LGBTQIA professional affinity group that we facilitate. If you're interested, it's really easy to get connected. Just send me an email. And my contact information is actually at the end of this slide deck. Our training center also maintains a really robust on-demand webinars. We currently have 31 on-demand webinars created by our team on a variety of topics. All of our training offers CRC continuing education hours. They're free of charge. They're available 24-7, so you can continue your learning what is convenient for you. We also try to curate the offerings on our training site based on specific learning pathways. So some of those pathways are broken up by role. So if you're looking for resources for onboarding new counselors, we have a learning pathway related to that, supervisors essentials, and then also training related to leadership and administration. We also have topical areas, learning pathways, including business engagement, employment strategies, engaging with your key partners, including those in the workforce development system, serving underserved populations and youth services. So please come check us out. We have lots of resources out there, [trainVR.org](https://trainVR.org) to get there. All right.

JW: So let me go back to talking about being an interactive session. We're going to do a lot of this interaction via chat. Summer's presentation team will be monitoring the chat, so please use it. If there's something in particular you hear and you want to go a little deeper, if you have a comment about it, put it in chat, and we're going to share that with the presenters. Now, also, if there's something, you're like, "I don't know if I want everybody to see my questions. I'd like to ask a question, but I kind of like to keep my anonymity." So if you want to send me a direct message, I will ask the question without identifying you, and I'll just preface it by saying, "I'm asking for a friend from Canada," so we'll keep it anonymous. We're also going to be using polling questions, and these are totally anonymous, so we really hope that you could participate because this is going to help us interact with you and get a pulse of what are the things you're interested in and, frankly, how we could develop additional relevant training that's going to be responsive to your needs. Okay, I also want to acknowledge that the contents of this presentation were developed in support by the U.S. Department of Education via the Innovative Rehabilitation Training Program grant. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

JW: Let's meet our presenters. So I'm going to start. My name is John Walsh. My pronouns are he, him. I'm a white cisgender male. I was born at the tail end of the Baby Boomer generation. Today, I'm wearing a blue and white checkered dress shirt and a charcoal sweater. I'm also wearing black rimmed glasses and a Bluetooth headset. It just helps me hear a little bit better and helps my voice project a little bit better during these presentations. My Zoom background is virtual, and it is blue with the George Washington logo on top. A little something about me. I'm a national park enthusiast, and my bucket list is my wife and I want to go see all 60 plus of them, and we're actually making pretty good headway on that. I'm an aspiring pickleball champion. That's a shock for a boomer, right? Now, of course, for the 60 over crowd. I am also a leadership geek, and I really enjoy engaging with any material around leadership theory and practice and helping other folks in our community learn about effective transformational leadership. Today, I'm presenting from my home office, which is located in the suburb north of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I do work for the George Washington University and have the pleasure as serving as the project director for the Center for Innovative Training and VR. And I'm also involved in providing training and TA through the VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition to Collaborative, and also the VR Return on Investment Project. Alright, so that's a little bit about me. Now, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, DJ, so they can introduce themselves.

DJ Ralston (DR): Thanks, John. Hi, everybody. My name is DJ Ralston. My pronouns are they them. I am a white transgender or transmasculine individual wearing a black hoodie with Bert and Ernie, the famous Muppets, holding a book that says book club on it. I got very dressed up for you all today. I am also in my home office. I have the privilege of being able to work from home pretty much 100% of the time. My background is a messy office. I'm not going to describe it beyond that. I'm going to let you use your imagination for that. So a little bit about me. I am what they call a geriatric millennial. I think that there's probably many of you on this, you know, like webinar who

are geriatric millennials. It's those of us that are not quite millennials, but not quite Gen Xers, right? I'm kind of born in that in-between space. I am also a huge fan of the Muppets. I guess that explains the hoodie, right? And I'm a bit of a foodie. So we're excited to be here with you today. And I'm going to pass it off to Sandi.

Sandi Miller (SM): All right. Thank you, DJ. Hi, everyone. Sandi Miller. I am a white female. My pronouns are she, her. I am in my home office with the background blurred and come from the humongous state of Delaware. I have long semi-curly blonde gray hair, and I am middle-aged or I'm one of those Generation Xers. And a little bit about me. I love strength training. I've been doing it now for about 10 years, and I had no idea how much I would love it and be addicted to it, but yet I am. So I'm going to keep doing this as I get older. Outdoor enthusiast, absolutely love everything about the outdoors. Not the hugest fan of winter, but I do like the peace of winter. And I am the lover of all things Ted Lasso. So that's a little bit about me, and I'm going to now pass it over to Linda.

Linda Hedenblad (LH): Hi, everybody. My name is Linda Hedenblad. I'm a Caucasian cisgendered old lady who looks really good for her age. My pronouns are she, her, and I am the luckiest person on this whole call, if I can be so presumptuous. I not only have the opportunity to work with SIT VR, which is this which is, this presentation, by the way, will also be available on the SIT VR website, but I'm also the CEO of YesLMS, the most accessible learning management system in the world, and we worked very hard to make it so because it's our way of changing the world and raising the bar for accessibility and technology. I've been doing some form of working with people with disabilities my entire adult life. So, you know, I rode a dinosaur to my first appointment, I think. But I am a big Bruce Springsteen fan, and I see that there are some folks from New Jersey, so if you want to hook me up, I can get you extra CRC credit. Just kidding, that wouldn't be ethical. But you know, if it's Springsteen, we could talk. And I'm a Boomer who was born to run. And now I'm not, it says here that I merely walk briskly. But actually with a broken ankle, I am barely crawling briskly. So we should adapt that. My background is lovely. And it is also not true. It's a beautiful living room with a fireplace and bookcase. And it is a photo that is my photo backdrop. And I'm wearing a lot of red today, which is very flattering on camera. And don't say other words in the chat. And that's it if we'd like to get started.

JW: All right, let's get started. So let's talk a little bit about our learning objectives this afternoon. So we really want to look at and explore the inherent power differential that exists within youth transition relationships. And we want to really explain why shifting the power differential in that relationship to being an adult ally, that really empowers the youth to be an active leader in their own career development. So we're going to give you some strategies around that. And then we're going to, how we're going to also talk about how do you continuously support that engagement with students and youth? And again, we want this to be interactive. So let's chat as concepts come up. And if you have a question, let's talk about it.

## Part 2: Why Adult Allyship

John Walsh (JW): So we're going to start at the very beginning. So why are we talking about becoming an adult ally? So Sandi, I'm going to hand it off to you. So we could start laying some foundation on this topic. And then we're going to build this out.

Sandi Miller (SM): Alright, thanks so much, John. So we're talking about adult allyship because the demographics of who VR is serving is really shifting. VR has always been involved or for several years has been doing transition and well before WIOA. But transition really for VR was oftentimes working with Seniors, maybe Juniors. But that was about as young as VR was going. And so now at WIOA, we have states across the country who are working with 14, 15, and 16 year olds. And things just need to be done a little differently.

SM: So we want to go over some of the data that we have regarding the demographics, just to give you an idea. And this is just a snapshot from one quarter. And we know that there's going to be variations from quarter to quarter. But really the data is virtually the same. So in quarter four of 2022, we have two tables on the slide here. Table one, it's a bar graph. The blue bar on the left is representing the total recipients of VR services in quarter four of 2022. And so total recipients includes participants who applied and were eligible for VR, as well as the

potentially eligible students with disabilities who received a service in that quarter. And that number was at around 734,000 individuals. The orange bar on the right represents the total recipients. So that's including participants and those potentially eligible students with disabilities who received a service who are 24 or younger. And that was almost 400,000. So we see that right about 54% of individuals receiving services from VR are 24 or younger.

SM: Table two on the right is essentially the same information. We just broke it down a little bit to sort of break out each of those categories. So the bar, the blue bar on the left is total participants. So those who at all ages who applied and were eligible for VR. The orange bar in the middle is participants who were 24 and younger. And then the far right gray bar is the potentially eligible students who received a service. So we're at about 630,000 of total participants, 290,000 for participants. So of those 630,000, 290 were 24 or younger. And then there was an additional over 100,000 of potentially eligible students with disabilities who received a service in quarter four, 2022. Now that doesn't include all the other students with disabilities who maybe did not receive a service but were reported. And we know that that number is much, much larger. So there is a lot of work being done by VR agencies with individuals who are 24 or younger. It's a big significant part of the population that we're serving. And we know that we need to do this differently. We also know that the younger folks are when they work with us and start working with us, the longer they're likely to stay with us. So we need to change the way that we're doing things to make sure that we're working with students and youth in an effective way so we can keep them engaged and really help them and support them to be successful in their pursuits after high school.

### Part 3: Critical Self-Reflection

DJ Ralston (DR): Alright, Sandi. You know I want to play a game, right? And John, you have to play. And Linda, you have to play. And you know what? All of you out there in Zoom land, PS, please play along. And if you saw this presentation in real life in either there's two places where I've done this before, one of which was CSAVR, the other which was a state's in-service this past fall, then you may already know how this game works. But as I said earlier, I'm a geriatric millennial, which means that I don't do TikTok or TikTok trends until they show up as reels on Instagram weeks to months later after they've already been viral, right? So we are going to play an older TikTok viral game. So I want you to put your hands up. Those of you that can and want to play along. So John, Sandi, Linda, I'm telling you, you have to play. Hands up, all fingers extended, okay? Now I want you to put a finger down each time I read a statement that either A, you have had said to you when you were in your adolescence and or B, that you have said to a young person in your life. So again, you're going to put a finger down if when I say the statement that you've either had this said to you or you've said it to a young person.

DR: So if you have ever had the phrase, "Because I said so," said to you or said it to somebody else. If you have ever heard the phrase, "As long as you're living under my roof, you will live by my rules." What about the phrase, "I'm not asking you to, I'm telling you to," followed by the phrase, "When you pay the bills, you can do whatever you want." Or the phrase, "They don't know what they want or what they actually need." And finally, "Children are meant to be seen, not heard." So when I look at my colleagues here on the screen, it looks like Linda, John, Sandi, and I many of us put all of our fingers down or all. So for all six of those statements. Now what we're going to do is we are going to open a poll. So John, next slide.

DR: Liam's going to open a poll that's going to ask you the same questions. So of those six statements, how many fingers did you put down? All of them? Five of them? Four of them? Three or less? And the second question in our poll is, do you find it challenging to work with students under the age of 18? And if you do, that's okay. We're going to talk a little bit more about that today and hopefully help unpack why some of that is and help hopefully you think about and develop some tools to put in your toolkit that will make it easier and maybe help you find some comfort. So, oh, we got, oh, just give it another like 10 seconds, Liam. Got some good participation there, about 70% participation. Okay, we can go ahead and end that. Well, yeah, there we go. So I'm going to share the results so everybody can see. Sorry, Liam, I beat you to that one. So it looks like just about, you know, not quite 30% of us put all of our fingers down. The next 30% put five of those six fingers down. 20% put four of the six fingers down. And then another 20% put three or less. So that tells me quite a bit, right? Now, what I want you to do, and then of

us, how many find it challenging to work with students under the age of 18? We're at about 40%. So that's great. I'm so glad that you all are here because hopefully you get to pick something up that will, you know, help you feel a little more comfortable, right? So we can stop sharing the poll now. I'm going to let Liam do that so I don't get in trouble. But part of what I want you to do is I want you all to hang on to some of those statements, because I'm going to talk about next slide, John, how those statements play into some of our own, like, some of our own underlying assumptions that are going to require some critical self reflections.

DR: So the purpose of playing that fun TikTok game, you know, following that trend, right, is for us to really kind of reflect on our own adolescence and our own young adulthood. And really think about, when we think about those six statements that I just walked through, and how many of those you have either had said to you as a teenager, or have said to somebody else, I want you to think about that because that's really about our social norms, right? Those types of statements were said because they were, right, largely part of our culture. It was really part of the way that we were raised, right? We were raised in an era where social norms really largely dictated that adults were a) always correct, right? Whole concept of respect your elders, probably should have put that in the poll, right? And even when or if the adults were not correct, right? So, I want you to think about our major American institutions and the cultures within those institutions. And when I talk about major American institutions, I'm talking about schools. I'm talking about, oh, I don't know, social safety net and social service programs, like VR, for example. What are some of our underlying assumptions that are kind of honestly baked right into those institutions about adults and youth, right? We think about it, we think about schools, right? Teachers, teachers are in charge, right? Teachers are at the front of the classroom, they know more than students, you know, right? Same thing with VR counselors, we're, you know, we're the adults, right? For many of us, we were raised in a culture in which, and I saw somebody even put it in the chat for us, right? Like you were seen, not heard, you were, what you had to say was dismissed, right? Because you were a teenager, you didn't actually know anything, right?

DR: And so, this is an important thing for us to think about because whether we realize it or not, next slide, we actually bring a lot of that right into our work, even though it's totally unintentional. And that's because of essentially how the human brain works, right? So, I want to talk a little bit about the human brain here in that we are processing so much information, right? The human brain is literally processing so much information that we can really only consciously be aware of a really small portion of like literally the millions of bits of data that we're processing every second. So, as a result, our brain creates cognitive shortcuts, right? That kind of makes sense. If we have to process all this information, how else do we do it? Well, in our subconscious mind, so our subconscious is this, you know, where those cognitive shortcuts are living, we tend to do three things. The first is we tend to categorize, right? This is where a lot of our either or comes from, right? Because our brains are literally categorizing at every second, that's we tend to go either or as opposed to both and that's important for later. But so, the first thing our brain does is it tends to categorize. I bet you that the first thing that you do whether you realize it or not when you are looking at a person is that you are trying to categorize by gender and you are categorizing like whether you realize it or not, probably by skin color, you're categorizing by people's size, right? Like it's literally just something that automatically happens. We just start to categorize, right?

DR: The next thing that we do is we typically start to create associations. So, things that are, you know, like associated with each other, right? That if I say one word, then the first word that I'm going to think of, right? Like so we're going to actually get to that in a poll in just a second. But before we get to how we create associations, because I want to actually demonstrate that in real time for you all, the last thing that we tend to do is fill in the gaps. So, we were actually having a really interesting conversation amongst the panelists before this that started, right? About how the fact, about the fact that we tend to fill in the gaps based on our experience, right? But we're also filling in the gaps, folks, on, you know, based on what we know from all of the different influences that contribute in our life to those experiences. This can include media, like major media. It can include social media. It's going to include our experiences in faith-based communities. It's going to include our experiences with families, friends, community, sports, Dungeons and Dragons, gardening, I don't know, right? But the fact is, is we fill in the gaps based on what we don't know. And all of the cultural and social input that we are, that we have experienced throughout our life and that we are exposed to is used to help us fill in that gap, right? So, John, next slide.

DR: So now we have a little poll. And what we wanted to do is demonstrate in action how we tend to create associations. So, this poll, well, we would have loved to have done a, you know, word cloud. We didn't quite have the tech this time. So, there you go. When you hear the word peanut butter, what's the very first thing that you think of, right? And good, you all are fast at it. This is great. And we, you know, realize that we didn't cover every option. And that's also important that we didn't because quite frankly, that is the complexity of today's world.

Linda Hedenblad (LH): This poll is making me hungry.

DR: I know, honestly, me too, kind of. All right. We'll give it like five more seconds, Liam.

LH: Sarah just added that this is not a diet friendly poll.

DR: Okay. So, and then are we sharing the results? Yes. So, hopefully everybody can see the results here. We had about 80% participation rate, which is fantastic. So, thank you all for playing along at home. And as you can see, let's see, when you say peanut butter, 67% of you said the first thing you think of is jelly, right? That's exactly what I'm talking about here. And we can kind of see the breakout. And yes, Elizabeth, all about Reese's, right? Like that's why I did put chocolate in there for the record. I didn't want a brand name and, you know, boast a specific brand. Can't be marketing in that way. All right. But the idea here is, and yeah, and anaphylaxis, that's why we had allergy. I'm telling y'all, we tried to cover the big categories, right? But this is it. And actually the fact that somebody would think of anaphylaxis and allergy is a really, really good indicator of how there can be differences in associations based on what our culture and our experiences are with these specific phenomena, right? So that's the whole thing. Whether we recognize it or not, our mental models, and we can stop sharing the poll and we can go to the next slide.

DR: So whether we recognize it or not, part of what's happening is like that kind of processing that our brains go through in combination with what we are experiencing through our social and cultural kind of, you know, interactions, right? Those are the things that come together to start to build out what we call mental models, all right? And mental models are essentially the frames that we are employing to help us make sense of and navigate the world. Because remember, when our brains are processing so much information all at once, we got to have some way to figure this out, right? And so largely, it becomes really based in our cultural and social experiences and more specifically in the interactions, right? Within those cultural and social experiences that really shape our reasoning. They shape what we think. They shape how we understand things. And they shape how we simplify complexity. This is a really, really key piece because oftentimes when we tend to simplify something, we don't make room for or we lose some of the nuance that allows for us to kind of create a more, you know, kind of monolithic or, you know, kind of individual picture. In other words, it doesn't allow for the diversity there, right? And that can predispose us to, you know, things like bias. Hashtag spoiler because that one's coming. In essence, mental models will play a big role in what we know and how we know it. So the problem with that is that mental models are often mistaken or they will often mistake our experience for objective fact. And that's just not the case because as we all just looked at, right, our different associations relative to peanut butter means that we all kind of have differences in terms of how we were, you know, raised in our social and cultural kind of influences, right? That ultimately shaped how we're thinking about these things. So mental models really do contribute to our underlying assumptions, whether we recognize that or not. Next slide.

Sandi Miller (SM): Okay, so as DJ alluded to, we can't really talk about mental models and underlying assumptions without really thinking about implicit bias, which is, you know, simply an inclination or reference towards or away from something or someone. It occurs automatically, unintentionally, but it's shaped by those experiences and learned associations like DJ was mentioning. So unconscious bias is the result of our limited cognitive capacity. Like DJ said, it's how we simplify the world, right? It's those assumptions that we make as things that affect how we categorize things. It's our unintentional preferences are formed by the socialization and experiences. Social media is a big, big has plays a big role in what we're exposed to what we're part of. And there's an overwhelming number of studies that show the significant impact that unconscious bias can have on our human cognitive processes. So it's important to identify where implicit bias may affect our behaviors and our judgments so that we can just be mindful of those risks. Implicit bias bias does not necessarily have to mean anything negative. It's simply important

for us to be aware of because it does affect our behaviors and how we interact with others in the world. Next. Oh, I do have to say we love this meme here. We have Morpheus from the matrix. And it says, what if I told you we all have implicit bias? And that is simply because we do. It is it's pretty much impossible to avoid bias in some ways. And so it's okay. It's just, again, something to be aware of because of its impact on how we sort of interact with others in the world. Next slide.

SM: So I'm curious how many of you may be familiar with the Harvard project, the implicit association tests. If you are or are not, we really invite you to try. There are several different variations of it. We have a few listed on this slide. There are some association tests related to disability, race, sexuality, age, religion, and there's several others. And it's they're really, really interesting. It's really a test that measures the strength of associations between concepts like age, race, disability, and evaluations or stereotypes like good or bad, those types of things. And it's the test has like five different phases and you're asked to sort words into different categories based on concepts, evaluations, and then they combine those together. And then they're really looking at how long it takes you to on average to like sort different things in different versions of the test. So it's hard to explain without going you just going out and visiting. There's a link on this slide for you to go and check the information out. We really highly recommend you do it because I think you might be surprised with, you know, what you learn about yourself. And again, it's not to I mean, you know, you can go out there, you can try these tests, and it's not to make anyone feel terrible about themselves. It's just to help sort of bring some awareness to where we may have some bias, right? So we have Homer Simpson here on the slide, and it says, "Implicit bias? I don't have any of that." And I think oftentimes that's what we all believe. And sometimes what we recognize what we end up identifying is that, you know, we have some bias that doesn't align with our values. And so it's just really important for us to bring that to our awareness. So we can mitigate that to the degree that we need to as we're working with others.

## Part 4: Awareness and Acknowledgement

John Walsh (JW): Right. So this brings us to how do we become an adult ally? So as we continue to grow and evolve as professionals, we're going through a process of critical self reflection that becomes a kind of a practice of what we do, kind of challenging some of our underlying exceptions, assumptions that often occur in our mental models. And, you know, also looking at, you know, what implicit biases do I have? And how does that impact my role as a counselor? We have to be self reflective that way, if we're going to truly be able to connect with the people we're serving. So let's talk some more about that. DJ and Linda, I'm going to turn it over to you, folks.

DJ Ralston (DR): Awesome. Thanks John. Yeah. So why did we spend, you know, kind of the first part of this, you know, talking about, you know, bias and mental models? Well, think back to the game that we played all the way at the beginning, right? So if we're talking about our social and cultural experiences, kind of influencing how we show up, right, then many of us come into our work with, you know, this kind of cultural and social influence that automatically, you know, creates a power differential between us and students or youth, right? And guess what? This is already, this is compounded, right? And it's compounded because we know that in any helping relationship, there's an automatic power differential, right? Because you have somebody who's offering help and somebody who's seeking help. And so oftentimes that person who is seeking help, right, is, you know, kind of in deference to the person that they're asking for to get help from. So helping relationships automatically have that power differential.

DR: And then when we start thinking about students and youth and adults, that gets compounded because essentially there are so many norms in our culture and society, right, that really are dismissive of adolescents and or, you know, assume that they don't know based on where they are in their developmental stages, right? And or, you know, just that we've had more life experience, so therefore we have, you know, we know better, right? So that's something, if we're bringing that in, that's something we have to work really hard on, you know, checking. But the first part of like figuring that out is recognizing that this exists, right?

DR: So on the screen, we do have a little cartoon and there is, you know, basically a picture of a seesaw or a teeter totter. I don't know what other words around the country are used for that, but I grew up calling it a teeter totter.



So it's a teeter totter and at the bottom of the teeter totter you have, you know, an adult who's wearing a yellow shirt and blue jeans and black shoes and above the adult's head it says transition professional. And then at the top of the teeter totter you see that there's a child, right, or a young person with a red shirt and blue shorts wearing, you know, red high tops and we can see that they have like been really kind of almost rocket launched by the little lines that show that, you know, they're up top and above their head it says student in youth. And the title of this little cartoon is The Inherent Power Differential in a Helping Relationship, all right? So this really is meant to give you all a visual of the fact that we're already walking in the door, right, with this power differential and this gets compounded. So this means that sometimes like young people may not be super inclined to talk to us right away.

DR: And I want you to think about your own adolescence and who were the important adults in your life and what made them important, like, and by important adults, I mean, who was there for you? Was there an adult you could talk to, right? Was there an adult who when you said I want to be a rocket scientist, I want to be an astronaut, I want to be an oceanographer, I want to be a VR counselor, who said, cool, let's make it happen, right? Who was that? Because I can bet you many of us also had what we called dream killers, right? Who were like, yeah, you aren't going to be a famous NBA player, you aren't going to make it to the NFL, you aren't going to be on Broadway, you aren't going to be blah, blah, blah. We don't want to be dream killers, right? We're all here because we want to help young people, right? And we're all here in this profession because we want to help people in general. And I think sometimes our desire, right, to help folks, and particularly help young people, it really does come from a good place. I think it does. I think it really does. We all are well intentioned. I'm going to, you know, I'm going to make that assumption. I'm going to give you, give all of us the benefit of the doubt and extend this grace, right? That we all have good intentions, right? But yet, in doing so, we are exercising some power based on some underlying assumptions. And that can really impact our dynamics with young people. So, Linda, I think you were going to talk to us about the Righting Reflex, because I know that this one shows up, right?

Linda Hedenblad (LH): Oh, yes, it does. So, my background of things that I've taught in the last 20 years, one of them is motivational interviewing. And motivational interviewing has helped me really zero in on this human tendency called the Righting Reflex. And what the Righting Reflex is, is if you were to express to me that you have a particular issue, you know, maybe you tell me I'm having trouble with time management. My initial reaction, most humans' initial reaction is to start giving you advice, is to start thinking about how can I solve the problem that you're expressing? Well, that's a natural human tendency. And what it does is if a person is actually thinking about a change that they'd like to make, the more that we impose these ideas, the more it kicks up all the yes butts. And the less likely it is statistically that the person is going to change. That's just a human fact. And now we think about working with transition students who we're coming in with our own biases, our own mental models, our own, the power dynamics that are inherent in the relationship that we have with a with a transition youth. And now we have this compulsion for the Righting Reflex. And because we're coming from a different pers-- well first of all, we don't want to ever start with leading with advice when we're when we're talking with people we, any person. We want to lead with that position of curiosity wanting to get to know the person, really using our listening skills, even if you know very little about motivational interviewing. If you use active listening as a way to join with a person and to really empathize with where they're at, right, that takes away some of our, some of the our mental constructs, and how we might deal with a particular student situation and help us better understand that student from a really more authentic place. So the Righting Reflex is kind of like, you know, we're hearing all of these things that we need to be aware of in order to be better advocates and allies for transition youth. And then we have the Righting Reflex is kicked in on top of that, which is our just our compulsion and our desire to fix things. So, I just thought I'd throw that in the mix as well.

DR: I love that, Linda.

## Part 5: Actively Addressing Needs of Youth

DJ Ralston (DR): And, you know, we started and we can already see this coming up too, right? Like, so this actually plays in there was a great comment in the chat about like, hey, yes, our role right as VR counselors is to help folks make sure that they're making informed decisions, right? And that's and not just saying like yes to whatever, like



willy nilly. Okay, so this is the idea though, is it really is about that informed decision and helping folks ensure, you're ensuring that we are creating conditions and offering the appropriate, you know, kind of background and context so that the individual can make that informed decision. And this is the key here, right? And this is true of our VR practice, whether this is for students and youth or adults, we are moving from power over or the goal is to move from power over to power with, right? So not the, you know, sage on the stage, but the guide on the side. Okay, so we're really about helping people have all the information to make their own decisions. And when people have all of that information, you know, the majority of the time, they're probably going to make a quote unquote, good decision. And, you know, and I'm putting those, I'm putting those quotations there too, because I think that that's important, because again, we have to allow room for that nuance, right? And the plurality and the complexity of our world. And there may be things that we might question. And there may be things that we see folks pursue that maybe isn't, we might question that a little bit, right? Like you get that kind of pit in your stomach, you're like, oh boy, like, but at the same time, it's not our job to be a gatekeeper. So we think that that's a really important piece of it.

DR: And so how do we go about doing that? Well, there's a few things. Humble inquiry is a great strategy. And I'm just going to say that. And then John's going to talk about it on the next slide in more detail. But what I want to talk about is the authenticity part. Okay. One of the best things that you can do when working with youth and students is be authentic. Be yourself. Do not try to be somebody that you are not. All right. Because guess what? They're going to read right through it, which P.S. I think is half of what makes adults so weary and leery of teenagers, right? Like teenagers can be moody. They can be surly, right? Like, and part of it is, I think that, you know, as they're struggling, right, to find themselves and work through their own kind of stuff, right? Like I think a lot of times, I don't know about you, but for me, it brings up when I went through it, right? And like, listen, I feel like anybody who has kids or who works with kids who are like in this stage of adolescence, you didn't necessarily maybe realize that you were signing up for going through it again, right? Like the heartache that some of these young people are going through, right? It just, it doesn't matter what it is, when you establish that really caring and that caring relationship and that rapport, it can, you know, it's great because you're connected, but that can also kind of raise things for you. So be aware of that, right? But if you're showing up as your authentic self, young folks, they're likely going to recognize that, and they're going to be more inclined to be open with you.

DR: And honestly, this sounds terrible, honestly, being honest and saying like, you know, being comfortable saying, "Hey, you know what? I haven't really worked with, you know, folks your age in your age group a lot. So like, we're learning together." Being a little bit vulnerable is an important piece of working with young people because you know what? They need to know that you don't have all the answers. All right? Like that's an important part of this. And I think our culture back, going all the way back to the beginning, right? Our culture raises us and socializes us in a way that like we don't necessarily feel comfortable expressing that vulnerability, which then can block our authentic selves from showing up. So I am like encouraging all of you to just lean in a little bit on that. Be a little vulnerable. Be your authentic self.

DR: Linda, do you want to talk about motivational interviewing before we let John talk about humble inquiry?

Linda Hedenblad (LH): Yeah, I'll throw in a couple pieces from motivational interviewing here. You know, I love everything that you're saying here, DJ, and it all really does tie in very well with motivational interviewing in that we're structuring conversations in a way that people talk themselves into changing. So it's not us imposing our ideas and our energy onto the person, but it's about listening, discovering the values and the motivations of the person, and turning that into what inherently makes that person tick, and turning that into something that they can see in order to make their own decisions. I love the idea of being authentic and being able to go in there and being a little bit vulnerable. That's handy. When I first started working with transition students, I was in my 30s. And I remember I was in an office where everyone was older than me. And when they said, "You want to be the transition counselor?" I was like, "Yeah, of course I do. I'm hip, right?" or whatever. It was hip back then. And I found that going in with that attitude, like I'm kind of one of you because I'm 30, really got me absolutely nowhere.

LH: But going in with it shortly afterwards with that same kind of idea, which is I don't understand. I want to understand. My experiences are different than yours, but I really want to understand how you see things. How do

you view this? When you hear this, how do you react to that? Really using some of those active listening skills, again, it's just a piece of motivational interviewing, but active listening skills more than anything else demonstrate empathy. And empathy is a critical building block in being able to work with anybody, including people who you might have, some of your mental models may be quite different from them. Something else that I'd encourage folks to understand as part of their toolkit. So having an understanding of your biases, understanding your own cognitive structuring and how your brain works and how your Righting Reflex works and how you may be reacting with a lot of advice.

LH: By the way, if you're not sure if you're using the Righting Reflex, if someone asks you, you know, or tells you that they're going through something, you know, I'm trying to lose weight, or I'm trying to quit smoking, or I don't want to hang out with these, you know, these people because they're a bad influence, you start hearing things like that. If you start giving advice, anytime you hear a client say, yes, but, or, oh, that wouldn't work for me. It's time to stop, just stop, because you're locking yourself into a type of conversation, where now you do have power over. And even that that type of advice-giving right at that moment, if you start to hear all the reasons why it won't work, you're building the resistance in the other person, you are actually making it harder for them to, to change.

LH: So the other thing I'd like to share with you that I think is also very useful for the toolkit. Again, I'm not saying if you walk up to a, to a wobbly leg on a on a desk, you use a hammer, you might want to use a screwdriver, or you might want to use some duct tape, you know, but you have the toolkit so that you have things at your disposal. One of the things that I've really found invaluable is understanding how, how neurologically we all develop. So in adolescence, that's the fastest period of time for brain development. It's also the fastest period of time for social development. The transition students that we're working with really are in an incredible place in their lives because of their ages, and how they make decisions and who they rely on, if they rely on peers, if they rely on all of that, all that can fluctuate quite a bit during during adolescence. If you have just an understanding for your toolkit, maybe if someone is reacting in a specific way in the toolkit, not that you would apply it as a hammer, but that may actually be fairly educational to you. For example, at certain developmental ages students or young people have, it's more challenging for them to do long-term planning than it is to do short-term planning. So if you're able to adjust and kind of explore that with the person, see where you think they may be at, and adjust where you're coming from, sometimes that kind of developmental, just like when we look at our mental models and how they're structured, how our biases impact us, also our developmental age can have a bit to do with this.

LH: Now, holy mackerel, you might be saying this is starting to sound complicated, but it's really not. If you even go through these steps that we've outlined so far, I think that you'll find that it actually makes a big difference in how you communicate with everyone. But particularly when communicating across generational divides, which are getting bigger, with all of the changes we're seeing in society.

## Part 6: Humble Inquiry

Linda Hedenblad (LH): John?

John Walsh (JW): Alright, Linda. So I told you at the beginning of my introduction, I'm a bit of a geek around leadership material. And I also have the distinct advantage of working with colleagues that are working on their doctorate. And so DJ, and DJ just is such a wealth of sharing books and other resources that I'm like, oh, man, I got to get this right away and go through it. So one of them that came up in one of our discussions is a book called Humble Inquiry. And this is interesting because this comes out of the space of organization development. And it's really written for managers and supervisors and leaders about interacting with their team. And it's really looking at turning traditional supervision on its head a bit and moving from a very directive model to a non-directive model that really has been shown to improve performance and improve relationships. So I'm going to put in the chat a link to Humble Inquiry by Edgar and Peter Schein. It's a father and son team. Edgar Schein, anybody that's familiar with organization development, is one of the real leaders in that space. I wanted to pick a couple of quotes from the book that I think really relates to what we're talking to. And if you want a really practical resource, we talked a

lot about toolkits, on how to practice your interactive methods with those that you're working together with. I really highly recommend this short, short little book that's highly readable.

JW: So let's first talk about what it is. So first of all, the authors contend it's an art. Humble Inquiry is the fine art of drawing someone out. I saw somebody put in chat, "Dream explorers." We should be asking why, asking questions. And this is key to which you don't already know the answer. Of building relationship based on curiosity and interest in another person. Now Humble Inquiry is also an attitude. So the first thing I learned from this is, you know, we have to practice it. We also saw someone in chat put, "Yeah, I go to Righting Reflex all the time, but now I start to notice it." So at step one, I become aware of it. And then two, what do I do to then change my behavior? As that comes up, I notice it, and then I can move away from it. So it's the same too of how we're interacting with folks we're working with. So what's the attitude? Humble Inquiry is not just asking questions. It is a total attitude that includes listening more deeply. We know that that's a real and emotional intelligence. And it's a skill we could practice with empathetic listening and listening more deeply and active listening. And how we respond to our inquiry. So responding appropriately, we're really more about ourselves in the relationship building process.

JW: So, you know, we also touched on that vulnerability piece. You know, I'm a big Brene Brown fan too. And she talks a lot about how vulnerability is a core leadership skill. That it takes courage to be vulnerable. But vulnerability also puts us in a space where we're better to connect with people. And so we can learn about each other in that process. So again, I just thought this really related to our general discussion. It is a great resource for folks to check out.

JW: Alright, so I think we now have another poll.

DJ Ralston (DR): Right. And I think that this poll is really about, is it, am I right? Like, so how many folks have completed some type of motivational interviewing training? And then we're just curious if any of you had actually heard of Humble Inquiry prior to today. So.

LH: I'm going to second John and DJ on that Humble Inquiry book. When DJ mentioned it, two days later, I went and picked up the book and I highly, highly recommend it. It's an easy read, but it's incredibly, incredibly interesting.

DR: And there is an audiobook version. If you're an audiobook person, as opposed to somebody who would want to read a paper book or a Kindle book, you know, what, ebook, there we go. There is an audiobook version of it, so.

JW: And it takes you through a lot of like practice dialogues about how you can actually frame it and how it may actually start and then how you reframe it to have that more of that approach. I'm really happy to see that, you know, this is the first time folks are hearing about it, but it's great that you're now hearing about it in today. So I'm glad that we, you know, we added this as well.

DR: Great. Yeah, so we can see we kind of, we've got, you know, about 50% of folks have had at least some, you know, a couple of classes around MI. That's awesome. Love to see that for the field. You know, 30%, you know, weighing in a little more than 30% weighing in that have at least one class. That's great. And 15% of you who are experts love it. So we can end the poll.

## Part 7: Action

DJ Ralston (DR): Moving on. All right. So we have a meme here on the right hand side of the slide and the meme is a picture of a little gray striped kitten. I think that's called a cowlick -- I got nothing people. I'm a dog person. Anyway, the cat is looking in a silver tray and you see a reflection. The cat sees a reflection and the words on the meme say to grow yourself, you must know yourself. Thank you. It's a tabby cat. Now I know I will study up folks. So the first thing that we want to talk about, so John talked about awareness, right? So the first thing is the

awareness, right? So we've spent all this time going, Hey, these are the things that you may not be aware of. And so the first step is now to be aware of it.

DR: And then the next step is to start to engage in what we are talking about as critical reflection. So what exactly does that mean? Well, this is really the process of analyzing and evaluating your experiences, your beliefs, and your actions to really develop a deeper understanding of yourself and the world around you and how you're navigating that world. Right? So you may be sitting here going, Hey, I'm not racist. I'm not ableist. I'm not homophobic or transphobic or xenophobic or any of the phobias or isms, right? Like, or isms, right? And I'm going to say cool. And I would encourage you to think about that before you say that, because the reality is again, if we think about how the science works, right, in terms of our brains, so we're categorizing creating associations and filling in the gaps based on our social and cultural experiences, then the reality is whether you intend to be any of these things or not, you may actually have at least some pieces of them because your social and cultural upbringing and experiences and exposure may not include, right, exposure to different types of groups. And therefore, you don't really think about it. And so this idea is that we all have these implicit biases, and we have to engage in this critical self-reflection in order to help really kind of push back against that bias and promote the learning and growth and professional development that we need to, that we need to. So that's what we're talking about. We're talking about critical reflection. Critical reflection is stopping yourself and asking the question, how do I know this? How do I know that I know this? Next slide.

DR: So there are some key characteristics of critical reflection. They start with self-awareness. So critical reflection involves a high level of self-awareness as individuals examine their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. So one of the things that I would encourage you to think about, and maybe you don't necessarily see this in regards to yourself, but maybe it comes, maybe you need to actually, because for folks that are new to really try to unpack some of their underlying assumptions, sometimes that's not an easy thing to even be aware of or recognize where those might be, right? So one of the things that you can do is you can potentially challenge yourself to go look at, you know, some, or read something or get on social media and find something, right? Like that's not trash, but that will kind of challenge you, that will go, that will push you to, that maybe makes you feel a little uncomfortable, right? Or gives you a pit in your stomach or that automatic desire to go, but, right? That should be an indicator to you that there is something there for you to explore. If you read something or you see something or you hear something and your automatic reflex is to go, yeah but, as, as, you know, as Linda pointed out earlier, that's an opportunity for you to dig deeper and do some of this critical reflection around your self-awareness and ask yourself why you're having those thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

DR: The next thing that we talk about within the concept of critical reflection is an idea of being open to feedback. Critical reflection really does require that individuals be open to feedback from others and be willing to consider alternative viewpoints. This is a really important thing. There is a difference between discomfort, right? And, and, and trauma, if you will, right? So, and I'm going to say that because discomfort, yes, sometimes we might learn some things or we might hear something that's going to make us uncomfortable. The last thing that any of us want to do is hurt someone, right? We talked about that earlier. We're all helping professionals, right? So all of the, you know, practices that we're really engaging in, they're all coming from a good place, but sometimes those don't, they aren't always the best strategy. So we need to be open to analytical thinking. So critical reflection really does involve a process of being able to analyze and evaluate your own experiences, beliefs, and actions. So again, thinking about how do I know, you know, how do I know this? How do I know that I know this? That requires a certain level of analysis, right? So you've got to be able to go, oh, well, you know, I know that, and of course, I can't think of an example right now. Look, there you go, folks. That's me being vulnerable.

DR: The last thing that we want to do is be action oriented. So critical reflection is not just about thinking about it. It's really about taking action to improve oneself in the world. Next slide, I'll build off of some of that. So how do we go about this? And in this, on the slide, we have a great meme of a very concerned little girl who's holding her hands out and has her mouth open making a face like, but how with her shoulders kind of hunched and raised, right? And the text literally says, "but how?" So some of the ways that we can encourage engaging in critical reflection include creating a reflective space, setting aside the time to do so, reviewing your experiences, identifying patterns, consider alternative perspectives, set goals for growth, seek support. So if you're somebody

who is constantly like trying to push students or youth off your caseload, that might be an opportunity, right, for us to do some critical reflection about why that is, because guess what, if we are being reflective and we're setting aside that time, we could identify that pattern that, ooh, I tend to like push students and youth off my caseload. Why is that? Right. And then we can think about, oh, you know, what are some other alternative perspectives, perhaps seeking out some of our colleagues who are regularly working with students and youth and asking what, you know, their best, you know, practices are for working with those youth. Next slide.

DR: So one of the biggest things that we can do, honestly, and I am reticent to say this, because VR gets tapped all the time, right, for not being fast enough. And we all know that rapid response and like rapid engagement are big efforts right now. And I'm not saying anything against those. In fact, I'm saying actually, you know, rapid engagement isn't just engagement. It's ongoing and sustained engagement, right? But within that context, what if we slowed down a little bit? And here's what I'm saying. I'm not talking about like prolonging things, but I'm talking about slowing down in the moment and asking yourself some very specific questions. So, you know, when it comes to working with students and youth in particular, asking yourself the question, what and who are controlling the narrative in this situation? You know, if little Johnny over here wants to go get an HVAC certificate, that's great. Where did that come from? Yes, exactly, Rich. Pausing to process before responding. Absolutely.

DR: You know, the other thing that we want to think about whenever we're working with students and youth, right, is what do you know about the student and youth you're working with? How do you know that? So, do you know all these things about the student and youth because you read their IEP or because you've talked to their special education teacher and their mom and maybe had like one session with the student and they maybe said three words? Like, where's all your information coming from? So, and why is that information or knowledge that you have about that student valid? I'm not saying that we shouldn't honor or listen to multiple perspectives because we absolutely should and the more information we can gather, oftentimes the better off, but we have to remember that students and youth have their own lived experiences and they are their own experts, right? So, are there other sources of knowledge that should be considered? So, what I'm getting at here is if most of the information that you have about a student or youth when you are in a meeting with them is coming from outside sources that are not the student or youth, no, we need to slow down a little bit and we need to have a session, even if it's just rapport building with that student or youth to really start to feel that out.

DR: The other question you should be asking is how is success being defined here? Who's defining it? Okay, I know, I know, we are all beholden to our performance outcomes, right? All of us. And we should also consider within that context. Yeah, I can't comment on that, Deidre, but that's a good one. You know, but we should be really thinking about is this success what the student wants? Is the goal of this plan ultimately what the student is aiming for or has this been manufactured or assumed by someone else? Because I see it happen all the time. Not that any of you would do that, but just think about all the examples in your life of places where you've probably seen young people and what they're trying to say maybe be dismissed in favor of, you know, you have to do this this way because this is the way that the culture dictates it, right?

DR: So why is one course of action recommended and not another? This is another really key thing you can ask is why are we doing, why are we taking these steps and not other? Who benefits the most from the course of action recommended? And again, nobody in this Zoom room I know would do this, but let me tell you, I've seen it happen, right? Where it's like, well, yeah, we're going to do this because it's easier to have this student, you know, do a job shadow or work, you know, on campus, you know, as opposed to like getting them work experience out in the community. So really thinking about what course of action is recommended, why that went over another one, and who's benefiting the most. These questions right here are enough to really help you start to deconstruct what it is that, you know, you're, when you're working with the youth about how to kind of start to break down and move from the power over to the power with.

Linda Hedenblad (LH): And DJ, I did like to reinforce something here. I think that these four questions, slowing down, in motivational interviewing is something that we encourage. And it's not that we don't encourage rapid response, because, you know, one of the worst things we can do with anybody who comes in the door is rush them through. And that, that feeling of being rushed really encourages that Righting Reflex. But what we find in

rushing people through is that it doesn't stick, they drop out, or, you know, they're employed in something that isn't what they wanted to, or, you know, the high dropout rates tend to come when we don't slow down, take a beat, and really assess the situation, like how you have laid out here. So, by slowing down, it can actually help us speed up, if that makes sense.

DR: Thanks, Linda. And the meme on this screen is lightning the sloth, stamping the form at the B.M.V. from the Disney movie. So Sandi, I think it's on you, my friend. Oh, we have one more poll.

Sandi Miller (SM): Okay, so here we are asking, are you interested in enhancing your ability to be self-reflective? All right, excellent. Looks like we got everyone. And that's a resounding yes, I would say. So that's great. So hopefully you found some of the information that DJ presented helpful to you. And we can move on to the next slide.

LH: So that's 98% of people that responded.

SM: 98% yes. That's great. That's that yep, a resounding, that was like a scream. Yes, yes. So excellent. And really, so DJ just covered a whole lot of information around critical self-reflection and what you can do yourself. And we also want to provide you with some resources around what you can do when you're actually working with students and youth. And so as we think about moving from power over to power with, we're really talking more about youth engagement and how we are really engaging with youth. Like I said, at the beginning, we're very likely to have these folks with us for a long time. So it's not about quickly getting them, you know, into our grasp, and then sort of dying off as we go. It is about how do we maintain that engagement with youth.

SM: And so for this, we turn to our partners at RAISE. They have some excellent resources. It's linked here on the slide. And if you're not familiar, RAISE is the National Resources for Access, Independence, Self-Determination, and Employment. They're another technical assistance center. And it's a project from SPAN, which is the Parent Advocacy Network. So they have great resources.

SM: So one of the things that we need to consider is how we are creating space where youth feel their actions and voice have value. So it's not just about, you know, it's not just about getting them in and, you know, having, you know, a quick conversation and, you know, starting the process off. It's about maintaining that. And when they are engaging with us and talking with us, we need to create conditions that foster that engagement with us and allow them to feel comfortable with sharing what they have to say. And some of what we need to do then is we need to follow through with what it is that we've agreed to do. We need to make sure that we are staying true to our word as we're working with youth so that we are maintaining that relationship and showing that what they have told us and what they are saying is meaningful and is we're taking it at face value.

SM: So part of creating that environment is helping the adults that are supporting youth change their mindset. So instead of looking at it from the perspective of I'm the adult in charge, sort of like what we talked about at the beginning of this presentation, that power differential, in changing that mindset, so we come at this from the perspective of working in partnership, being that adult ally with that youth to assist them with achieving their goals. Right. Okay. We can go to the next slide.

SM: So again, we, you know, really appreciate RAISE for all their great resources. Highly recommend that you go and check them out if you haven't. But that youth engagement, we know that it's present when we are finding opportunities to consistently allow the students and youth that we work with to participate in decision making. So it isn't about us telling them what to do. It's not about that fixing or giving advice. It's about providing opportunities for those young adults to participate in the decisions. We want them to take ownership of the work. If they don't have, if they're not interested in the work that we expect them to do, or if we have them involved in work that it's not what they really want to do, then we know that they're not going to, they're not going to be engaged with us. We see this a lot in pre-employment transition services. We hear from a lot of states and they, you know, are always talking about how they cannot get a lot of students to participate in their services. So we want to make sure that not only are, you know, when it comes to individualized services that we're engaging youth and having their voice be heard, but that when it comes to the services that we're providing, that they're also part

of those conversations, that they get to make decisions around those things, that they feel comfortable, that they can initiate those conversations, and then they can help make some plans, that they are also allowed to give feedback about the services that they're participating in. So not just about, you know, developing, but then how is it going? Are changes needing to be made? Are they effective?

SM: And as adults, we need to step back sometimes because I think sometimes when we hear feedback around something that maybe we've worked really hard to put together, and then we hear something that might be regarded as a little negative, you know, we might not want to hear that, and we might kind of shut down, you know, that comfort of the youth to be able to provide that feedback. So we really need to be open, not take things personally, and recognize that this is really for them. And so we need to be open to hearing their voice, and we need to respond to it, because when we don't respond, you know, that's when we start to see that engagement slip, because we're not following through with what they're needing from us, and what we said we would do. Okay, next slide.

SM: So some additional resources that are pretty tangible here from RAISE are, you know, developing that youth-friendly culture. So VR traditionally is pretty flexible. We're, you know, it's based on an individualized service delivery model, but it can also come across as very rigid, like we've talked about throughout. We tend to, you know, have this process we want people to follow, and we're not always terribly flexible in the way that we provide services. And it's extremely critical as we're working with young adults, that we can be creative and flexible with the way that we engage them in services. We need to make sure that we are very intentional about access to not just space that we're in, but also information. We don't want to use complicated acronyms and jargon. We, you know, we can see that blank look on, like, new employees who come into VR, new counselors who are hearing all these acronyms and all this jargon for the first time. We know that they don't understand it. Students and families, they are even less aware of what all of that means. So we need to just be sure that we are using language that is very clear to them, very understand that they're able to understand. We want to make sure that we have youth voice at every level.

SM: So, like I said before, you know, not just in those individualized, not just in those individualized services that we're providing, but also in service delivery, service development. When they're participating and they've had some say in what it is that, you know, we're offering to them, you know, that makes a big difference with engagement. We want to look at who's in our community. So where do the youth hang out? What other experts might we be able to partner with? What programs already exist? And we need to capitalize on that. And then we just to sort of reiterate everything we've said along the way is we need to build relationships with youth, which means slowing down, listening, asking questions, really getting to know youth and what it is that they need from us because they are going to be the experts in their own lives. And we need to make sure that we are, you know, that we can acknowledge that and respect that. Okay, next slide.

SM: So a few additional things. It's really about making sure that we are, you know, we're not sticking to a rigid way that we maybe have gotten into some habits. So if we have meetings, we can, we don't have to visit folks in the schools. Maybe there's some place outside school or outside of our work hours. And so as VR counselors, we need to think about are we willing if we're working with students and youth, are we willing to go outside of what we typically would do? And then we need as managers and administrators, we need to support staff to have flexibility with their schedules so that they can meet students when they are available. We need to have, we need to make sure that when we are meeting with individuals that we're considering the accessibility of them, giving them options, different ways to access, whether that be meetings or information. We also have to think about how we're communicating with students and youth because it's not just about being accessible, but it's also about what their preference is. We know they might have access to email, but if they are never checking their email, if that's not how they communicate, that's not how we should be communicating with them. And then we just want to, again, we want to just make sure that we are very intentionally making it easy and accessible for students and youth to work with us. Next slide. And DJ, I think this is you.

DR: Okay, so just to round it out real quickly, because I know we're coming up on time. According to YETI, which is the Youth Engagement Transition Initiative, which is a group of 25, 18 to 25 year olds who are an advisory group to



the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition the Collaborative. So NTACT:C is the major TA provider to state education and state VR agencies around transition age youth, trying to walk our walk by having our own youth advisory council, which is Yeti. So Yeti said when working with young people, here's their top 10 recommendations. They include build in time to recognize, understand, and use the student youth perspective. This doesn't matter if this is happening within the counseling situation and or within like, you know, inviting them to be part of an advisory group, this will always be important. Build in that time and recognize their perspective. Hear them out, right? Be open to their ideas and feedback, even if it's difficult to hear. This often times we hear from VR agencies, "Will we plan this great youth transition event?" and then nobody showed up. Well, did you talk to any youth about it when you're planning it? And most of the time that answer is no. That might be why they didn't show up. Give students and youth tangible things to work on. Take a young person at their word, so really don't dismiss them. Respect boundaries set by young folks. That's another really important one. Again, with this idea that when we go all the way back to the beginning, right, our socio-cultural norms say that, you know, it's okay for the adult to make the decisions which can at times violate boundaries. Somebody doesn't want to give you a hug. Don't, they're not giving you a hug. Somebody doesn't want to shake your hand. They're not going to shake your hand if they're uncomfortable with it. Respect those boundaries. Next slide.

DR: And then take time to teach students and youth the systems, including providing lists of typical acronyms. This is important, even in the context of a counseling relationship, by giving students a list and or like walking through things with them and not using jargon. And then teaching them the jargon will help them along the way. Youth are experts on their own experiences. Nobody knows that youth better than that youth knows themselves. Let's try and honor that. And YETI was, really hammered that one. Take time to learn about what young folks are about, what the young folks who are being invited into teams or spaces with adults are passionate about. This is more relevant to when you're inviting youth to provide input at every organizational level, right? But that's an important piece. Listen and honor accommodation requests. The number of them who have said that they've made an accommodation request and then had an adult tell them, yeah, no, we're not going to do that. Instead, we're going to do this. It's pretty flabbergasting. So I would listen to and honor those accommodation requests. And then finally, social interactions and discussions are important. So just because young folks might be talking about something that isn't really germane to maybe the topic at hand, there's actually a lot of information that can come out of that. And that we all know that's key to establishing that rapport. So don't be quick to cut that off. John just dropped a link in the chat for us. That link is to a YouTube video of members of YETI actually talking through these 10 recommendations. So we'd strongly encourage folks to check that out. And the next slide, I think that's it.

## Part 8: Closing

DJ Ralston (DR): So I will hand it back to Linda.

Linda Hedenblad (LH): Well, we went over a little bit on time and I appreciate that the majority of people are still here. That really speaks highly of DJ and Sandi in particular, you too, John. And the excellent support we've had from our folks with ASL. If anyone has a question, a burning question that you'd like to ask, we'll stay on for a bit longer and address those. And so I'm turning it back to John.

John Walsh (JW): Can I ask for a friend from Canada? So my friend from Canada says, many programs are created for the youth and keep students and groups kind of developed by the service providers. How do we let the students be the creator of their own path?

LH: That's a great question. Sandi or DJ?

DR: I mean, I think that that probably starts with the conversation with the provider, right? Like, and talking to the provider about, okay, if you know that this provider is going to provide self-advocacy or this provider really needs to cover workplace readiness, then I don't know, direct the provider maybe to this webinar, but then talk to that provider about maybe that first gathering of students that they have, they say, here are the things that we need to cover. Here are some different ideas. What are your ideas about how we could cover some of this?

Sandi Miller (SM): Yeah.

JW: And I mean, and I always think about like, anything we do, isn't it always more rewarding for everyone when there's co-creation involved and that we have input on especially things that are going to impact our life. So that whole portion of co-creation, I just think is a key element in anything we do. And that's part of that partnership piece.

SM: Yeah. Having say in services, having say in, you know, having students be involved is really where what we're talking about here.

LH: Yeah. So thank you from our Canadian friend. Alright. In wrapping up, did we have any other questions that popped up, John? I know we've addressed most of them along the way.

JW: Just taking a look, a lot of comments coming in. Appreciate that interactivity on chat. That's been really awesome.

Susan Gaillard (SG): This is Susan. The only comment that I made a note of that perhaps you can address is whether or not the numerous resources that you have shared during the presentation today, will those be available in the content that's posted on the CSAVR website? I believe the answer is yes.

LH: It sure will be, and any additional, there'll be a link to the Harvard information. There'll be any handouts that we have and they'll not just be available on the CSAVR site. They'll also be on the CIT-VR, boy, there's some acronyms that you could help with.

JW: Yeah. TrainVR.org.

LH: TrainVR.org, CSAVR.YesLMS.com. And if you are a state VR employee, and your state has YesLMS and the VR Development courses, this will also be added right to your state platform.

SG: Thank you.

JW: And, any of the, if we reference something as a source material, we also provided you those references. So, if you want to go back and continue your learning, we provide those resources there. You could take a bit of a deeper dive on that. And we also provided our contact information. So if you have additional questions, or we certainly learned, and I see a future training coming on deepening our skills in critical self-reflection, we had an overwhelming 98% of the participants say that might be a benefit. So it's really been a pleasure to be with you today. And for being such an interactive group. And Linda, do you have any final words?

LH: Yes, this has been a tremendous experience. Really a professional kind of apex here working with CSAVR, working with George Washington University and, and YesLMS, bringing it all together to try to move the needle a little bit for better services for students with disabilities. Thank you to the presenters and, and the interpreters and everybody who joined in. It's awesome.

[closing music]