

SPECIAL COLLECTION ON DISCONNECTED YOUTH: SUMMARY BRIEF

IssueLab's new collection on the topic of disconnected youth brings together 139 reports, case studies, program evaluations, factsheets, and toolkits from nonprofits and foundations across the U.S. This diverse collection of "grey literature" from organizations both large and small, dates back 16 years and describes a broad range of approaches to meeting the needs of young people who are critically disconnected from institutional, community, and educational supports.

The focus of IssueLab's search and collection efforts was on the practice-based evidence regarding labor market and skills development for affected youth. Reports were selected for their topical focus but also for their focus on lessons learned from the implementation of different programmatic approaches, providing evaluative rather than just descriptive data. Additional attention was given to identifying and collecting evidence about programs specifically serving youth of color and system-involved youth.

Although the collection was initially motivated by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's own knowledge needs, by working with IssueLab the foundation has made what is normally an internal evidence scan a public good instead. Our hope is that this collection will continue to grow to include new evidence and insights from work in this field, and help to ground our collective strategies in the hard-earned lessons of those delivering services to young people.

METHODOLOGY

Search → After establishing the collection's topical focus and inclusion criteria, and identifying appropriate and inclusive search terms, IssueLab employed the following search strategies: an initial search of the existing IssueLab database; the mining of citations from a bibliography provided by AECF and MDRC; an in-depth review of nonprofit and foundation websites identified through an analysis of grants related to disconnected youth, and; a search of relevant clearinghouses and online collections maintained by research organizations serving the field .

Review → This initial search resulted in 253 possible resources, which was then reduced to 150 resources based on closer review of whether they met the stated inclusion criteria. After an initial review of the draft collection by AECF, a second search was performed for additional reports addressing the intersection of disconnected youth and issues of racial justice & equity, resulting in five new additions.

Index → After fully indexing the collection for basic metadata, identifying duplicate resources, and excluding titles that did not allow full access to the resource itself the final collection was reduced to

139 titles.

Code → During the search and indexing phases IssueLab staff captured keywords for each document through an open coding process, tagging the content with terms that appeared in the reports themselves. This set of keywords was then reviewed for possible groupings or themes. The relatively large set of themes that resulted from this process primarily reflected populations being served and programmatic approaches being employed. IssueLab staff then compared this set of emergent themes to the established taxonomy used by Foundation Center in coding and analyzing grants, collapsing smaller groups and renaming thematic categories when appropriate. Cross-walking the collection's themes to Foundation Center's Philanthropic Classification System as closely as possible will allow for future analysis such as mapping the evidence base about this field to the grants being made to the field. The resulting list of themes and categories was then shared with program staff at AECF to validate their relevancy. Once these had been validated IssueLab staff re-coded all of the resources in the collection to the following category groups: "affected community", "programmatic approach", and "funding source".

In addition to these more descriptive codes, we also felt it was important to code the literature for patterns in both the obstacles the reports described and the recommendations they proposed. Following a similar approach to the thematic coding we also coded each report to four commonly cited obstacles and seven commonly cited recommendations.

Share → After indexing and coding all of the included resources, the browseable and searchable collection was made available at <http://disconnectedyouth.issuelab.org>

SCOPING SUMMARY

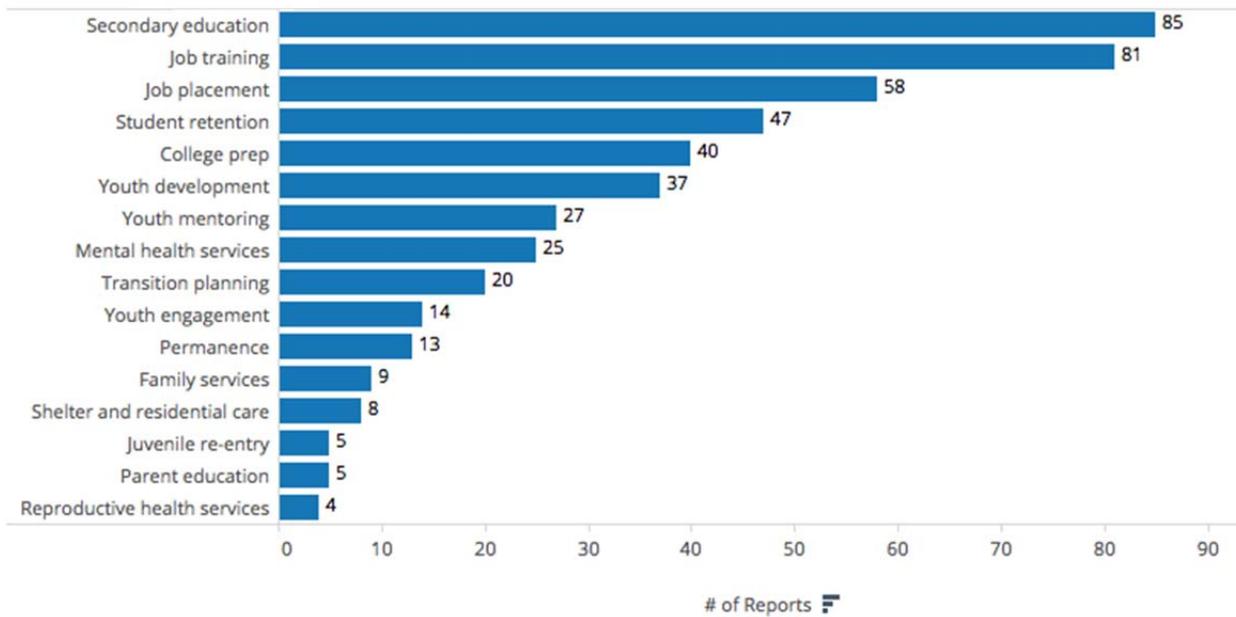
Research in the collection clearly clustered around a number of program types, commonly cited obstacles, and recommended solutions. Note, these clusters do not represent any synthesis of the findings themselves but rather, they represent the themes and topics around which the evidence is grouping.

These clusters may be most helpful as prompts to practitioners and AECF grantees, helping to better understand whether the existing evidence reflects their lived experiences and priorities and/or where there might be a need for more knowledge around specific program approaches, obstacles, or solutions. Questions could include:

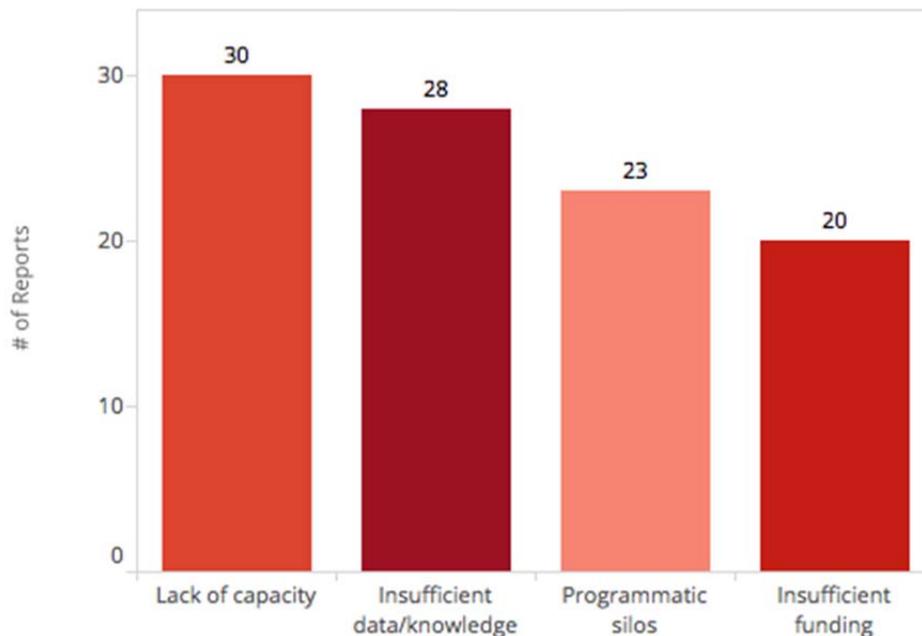
- Are there promising solutions and directions we know about that are not being discussed in the evidence?
- Are there obstacles we have experienced that are being overlooked in the evidence?

- Are there program approaches that aren't getting enough attention and around which we collectively need more data?
- Does this evidence exist but isn't represented in this collection? If so, how do we get our hands on it so it can be more broadly shared?

Programmatic Approaches to Skill Building Addressed in Reports



Obstacles Commonly Cited in Reports



Promising Solutions Cited in Reports

