

**California's Initiative to Promote the
Readiness of Minors in Supplemental
Security Income (CaPROMISE)
-Final Report-**



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Prepared for and on behalf of the

California Department of Rehabilitation

and the

State Agency partners, 20 Local Educational Agency

partners, the 16 Family Resource Centers and SSI

participants and their families

by the

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	4
PROJECT SUCCESS and IMPACT	5
What did we learn about the educational attainment of the CaPROMISE youth?	5
* High school persistence and retention, for students with educational challenges, requires individualized support and consistent and constant follow-through on the part of educators, staff, and related partners.	5
* Expectations, goal setting, monitoring and ongoing planning while in high school creates the foundation for pursuing postsecondary education or training.	6
* Educational attainment is related to a student’s course of study (high school diploma or certificate of completion).	7
What did we learn about the employment of CaPROMISE youth?	8
*All youth must have work experience(s) in the community and at least one must be a paid work experience while in high-school.	8
* Work experiences (paid and unpaid) while in high school are a game changer for youth receiving SSI benefits and their families.	10
*Department of Rehabilitation’s (DOR) engagement of transition students and their families must begin when students are 14 years of age or earlier.	13
What did we learn about engaging family members?	15
* Engaging and supporting the family unit including accessing needed supports and services is vital to reducing their reliance on the youth’s SSI benefits.	15
PROGRAM REPLICATION	16
Person-Centric vs. System-Centric.	17
Capacity	21
Accountability	23
Partnerships	24
SUSTAINABILITY and DISSEMINATION	28
Program Continuation.	28
Presentations and Trainings.	33
CONCLUSION	36

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall goal of the California Initiative to Promote the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (CaPROMISE) was **to increase the self-sufficiency for youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families**. The goal was operationalized through four objectives:

- Objective 1: Design and implement the model demonstration program for California that will serve at least 1,539 child SSI recipients and their families in the treatment group and compare their progress to at least 1,539 child SSI recipients and their families in the control group of the five-year research and demonstration program.
- Objective 2: Demonstrate partnerships focused on policies and practices with child SSI recipients and their families with five specific California State Departments that will participate in the development, review and collaboration of the model demonstration program.
- Objective 3: Demonstrate the student and family driven service delivery system, coordinated through 20 LEA partners, will increase the child SSI recipient's self-sufficiency and increase family economic independence.
- Objective 4: Implement the five-year research and program evaluation program that will assess formative, progress and outcome measures for child SSI recipients and their families that are consistent with the National Evaluator, the Federal Partners for PROMISE and the California partners.

The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) in collaboration with five State agencies, 20 Local Education Agencies (LEAs), 16 Family Resource Centers (FRCs), four Independent Living Centers (ILCs), five university programs in rehabilitation education and the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University (SDSU-II) administered and implemented CaPROMISE. CaPROMISE recruited 3,273 youth (exceeding our target of 3,172 and OSEP's requirement of 3,078) who were current SSI recipients between the ages of 14 and 16. The participants were randomly assigned to the Usual Services Group (n=1,627) or the CaPROMISE group (n=1,646). Participants in the Usual Services Group did not receive individualized support and interventions; whereas, participants in the CaPROMISE Group and their families received individualized support and interventions to achieve targeted outcomes including: graduating from high school; participating in and completing postsecondary education, job training and work experiences; and/or obtaining competitive employment in an integrated setting.

By the end of the program 1,233 (75%) of the CaPROMISE youth were active for the full duration, 213 (13%) were inactive, and 200 (12%) withdrew from the program. The immediate outcomes for CaPROMISE participants (students and their families) were

documented in terms of educational attainment, work experience or employment, family engagement, and DOR referrals:

- 95% of participating youth had at least one work experience and 81% had two or more work experiences (paid or unpaid)
- 89% of participating youth had at least one paid work experience with an average salary of \$11.59 per hour
- At program exit, 79% of youth and parents/guardians reported the expectation that youth would be employed after high school compared to only 50% at program intake
- 50% of participating youth completed high school with a diploma and 23% with a certificate of completion
- 18% of participating youth were still enrolled in high school and only 2% dropped out of school
- 22% of participants who graduated reported enrollment in a formal academic program beyond high school
- 78% of participating youth with earned income explored and utilized SSA Work Incentives
- 84% of youth and families received services in financial and benefits planning
- 92% of participating families received referrals to services based on their individually identified needs and interests
- 463 family members enrolled in and 448 member completed a formal academic program during the course of CaPROMISE
- 378 family members obtained part-time employment and 603 obtained full-time employment
- 77% of CaPROMISE participants enrolled in DOR compared to only 18% of Usual Services participants

The commitment of resources to build and expand the capacity of the CaPROMISE staff to meet the individual needs of the youth and their families resulted in:

- 111 staff certified in work incentives planning by Cornell University's Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability
- Cross-training of LEA staff from the 20 CaPROMISE service areas and DOR staff from 10 field offices dedicated to serving CaPROMISE participants

- 4 Independent Living Centers in collaboration with the LEAs provided training to youth and families in self-advocacy, setting boundaries, goal setting and action planning, time management, social skills, problem solving, money management, and health and wellness
- The CaPROMISE Toolkit was continually refined and expanded over the course of the project. The Toolkit contains a comprehensive array of information, guides, worksheets, and related materials to aid educators, counselors, and other professionals serving and supporting transition youth with disabilities and their families.

The contributions of CaPROMISE to evidence-based practices are summarized below with greater detail provided in the full report:

- High school persistence and retention, for students with educational challenges, requires individualized support and consistent and constant follow-through on the part of educators, staff, and related partners.
- Expectations, goal setting, monitoring and ongoing planning while in high school creates the foundation for pursuing postsecondary education or training and employment.
- Educational attainment is related to a student's course of study (high school diploma or certificate of completion).
- All youth must have work experience(s) in the community and at least one must be a paid work experience while in high-school.
- Work experiences (paid and unpaid) while in high school are a game changer for youth receiving SSI benefits and their families.
- Department of Rehabilitation's (DOR) engagement of transition students and their families must begin when students are 14 years of age or earlier.
- Engaging and supporting the family unit including accessing needed supports and services is vital to reducing their reliance on the youth's SSI benefits.
- Administrators of government and community organizations serving youth with disabilities must direct the transition efforts based on the needs of the students and their families – not solely on categorical or financial resources.

Finally, recommendations for program replication are provided in the full report with an emphasis on the key elements essential in the CaPROMISE model – person-centric values, student and family engagement, capacity building, comprehensive data management system, and collaboration. The report describes sustainability efforts and dissemination activities and concludes with recommendations from CaPROMISE families.

INTRODUCTION

The California Initiative to Promote the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (CaPROMISE) was successful in achieving outcomes at multiple levels and phases from design and recruitment to implementation and outcomes. The measurement of success for a project of this magnitude requires an investigation and understanding of the multiple components and perspectives that served as the driving forces in the program implementation and acknowledging the numerous moving parts that contributed to building, implementing, and realizing the goal to increase self-sufficiency for transition-age youth receiving SSI and their families. This final report presents the immediate and direct outcomes (summative) of CaPROMISE and begins to examine, explore, and question the long-term impact of CaPROMISE on students, programs, and systems. Recommendations for program replication are provided with an emphasis on the key elements essential in the CaPROMISE model. The report describes sustainability efforts and dissemination activities and concludes with recommendations from CaPROMISE students and families.

CaPROMISE set out to recruit 3,172 SSI recipients 14-16 years old and their families. At the end of the enrollment period, 3,273 youth and their families were recruited, exceeding our target by 101 and OSEP's requirement by 195 more participants. Of the enrolled participants, 1,646 were randomly assigned to the CaPROMISE services group (herein referred to as CaPROMISE youth or participants) and 1,627 were assigned to the Usual service group. By the end of the program 1,233 (75%) of the CaPROMISE youth were active for the full duration, 213 (13%) were inactive, and 200 (12%) withdrew from the program. The immediate outcomes for

CaPROMISE participants (students and their families) were documented in terms of educational attainment, work experience and employment, family engagement, and DOR referrals.

PROJECT SUCCESS and IMPACT

What did we learn about the educational attainment of the CaPROMISE youth?

**** High school persistence and retention, for students with educational challenges, requires individualized support and consistent and constant follow-through on the part of educators, staff, and related partners.***

At the conclusion of CaPROMISE, only 2% of the active CaPROMISE youth had dropped out of high school. The remaining CaPROMISE youth had either exited (79%) or not yet completed high school (18%). These percentages were significant when compared to the state dropout rate of 13% for students with disabilities and 9.6% for students without disabilities (California Department of Education, 2018). The individualized approach and time invested in each participant's educational achievement included arranging for tutoring, regular and constant communication with students and parents, ongoing encouragement, attending IEP meetings, coordinating with teachers, setting goals, progress monitoring, and completing college campus tours. Both project staff and participants expressed throughout the program the positive **impact** CaPROMISE had on high school retention and persistence:

- "We got several students who were not on target to graduate. My greatest source of pride – not one of them has dropped out. Career Service Coordinators (CSCs) are amazing – the investment is incredible." (LEA Manager)

- “A lot of students with an IEP are impacted with not having enough credits to graduate because they are failing the classes. We are checking in with each student. Arranging for tutoring was really helpful. You can’t just leave them, you have to check in at least once a week.” (CSC)
- “A troubled student, who hated school, and was credit deficient was motivated to complete his credits and graduate after the positive influence of his work placement.” (LEA Manager)
- “My CSC helped me – making sure I had my credits and that my grades were up. Before CaPROMISE a few teachers helped me with that, but not really.” (Student)
- “A struggling high school student who got the help he needed, vastly improved his grades, and got a college scholarship.” (LEA Manager)

**** Expectations, goal setting, monitoring and ongoing planning while in high school creates the foundation for pursuing postsecondary education or training.***

After CaPROMISE completion, 21.7% of participants reported current enrollment in a formal academic program beyond high school. The **impact** of CaPROMISE on participants’ pursuit of college was evidenced in the following remarks from participants and staff:

- “I have one client who is doing great academic work in college and most likely will achieve an employment outcome consistent with informed choice.” (DOR Counselor)
- “My CSC helped me with my strengths and weaknesses – more than what the schools did. When I applied for college, I qualified for honors classes and

stats classes – and I didn't think I even qualified. CaPROMISE was very helpful.” (Student)

- “Before CaPROMISE, I wasn't planning to go to college. I was just planning to finish high school and go to work. What changed – being in CaPROMISE I was exposed to more colleges at field trips, seeing how it looked. That made me start thinking. I had a lot of encouragement from my CSC to go to college.” (Student)
- “CaPROMISE set me on a routine. I know what I got to do. I know what my goals are. It's all about planning ahead. I didn't do that before – I was playing it by ear.” (Student)

*** *Educational attainment is related to a student's course of study (high school diploma or certificate of completion).***

When exploring the relationship between the participants' course of study and their post-high school expectations as reported upon exiting CaPROMISE, only 35.9% of CaPROMISE participants who completed high school with a certificate expected to attend college while 85% of diploma-earners reported an expectation to pursue postsecondary education. The wide gap in college aspirations between these two groups may reflect the curricula differences with the certificate focused on social development and life skills and the diploma on academic development; consequently, preparing students for different post-high school outcomes. Feedback from staff and parents on this topic highlighted the **impact** CaPROMISE had on raising parents' awareness of the differences between the courses of study and choices available to them:

- "The CSC helped us enforce our belief in going to school and getting a diploma – not just put it in drawer but going into the world. . . With the CSC, we learned a lot about the different certificates and to stay on top of things with the teachers." (Parent)
- "Keeping students in high school vs. putting them in other [certificate] programs. Advocacy is very important. We [CSC and grandparent] had to fight for the diploma track." (Grandparent)
- "Talking to the case carrier and sometimes principal to find out what needs to be done for a student to graduate was really important. It comes down to follow-up [with the student]. The sad thing is because their loads are so heavy, they feel students should be in a certificate program." (CSC)
- "I work with the teachers to determine which would be the best route for the student. And in turn make sure parents understand." (CSC)
- "Other students feel they don't belong in the transition program – their disability is not as significant. The students are not challenged in the transition program. But they would face challenges if they went on the diploma track." (CSC)

What did we learn about the employment of CaPROMISE youth?

**** All youth must have work experience(s) in the community and at least one must be a paid work experience while in high-school.***

Work experience was a central component of the CaPROMISE model with the ambitious goal of every CaPROMISE youth (100%) having at least two work experiences during their program participation with at least one of the experiences being paid employment. As if this bar wasn't high enough, the requirements for a

placement to qualify as a CaPROMISE work experience specified the job must involve work performed in an integrated setting, with the student performing the real work, and the employer providing some level of supervision. At the conclusion of CaPROMISE, **95%** of participating youth had at least 1 work experience and **81%** had 2 or more work experiences (paid or unpaid). An impressive **89%** of participating youth had at least one paid work experience with an average salary of \$11.59 per hour. From the onset, the individual circumstances of participating youth and their families, especially the youth's disability, was not a determining factor in who received a work experience or not. This was particularly important in that individuals with complex needs required and received a variety of accommodations to ensure access. This intention was realized and reflected in the data analyses that revealed there were no significant differences among disability groups regarding average total number of work experiences. Similar results were revealed when examining work experience data for CaPROMISE youth who completed high school with a diploma (68%) or a certificate (32%). The two groups were similar with respect to the average number of work experiences completed. These results reflected the CaPROMISE program model in which all participants, regardless of demographics or level of disability severity, were expected to have work experiences. This expectation was communicated to service providers repeatedly throughout the program implementation and reinforced through ongoing guidance, training, and technical assistance. The lack of difference among disability groups and courses of study was a positive finding demonstrating that the high expectations of staff can translate into successful outcomes for all students.

The analyses revealed significant differences in paid and unpaid work experiences based on disability and the youth's course of study. Youth with autism spectrum disorder participated in significantly lower numbers of paid work experiences and higher numbers of unpaid work experiences than students in the other disability groups. Regarding the course of study, youth who graduated with a high school diploma participated in significantly higher numbers of paid work experiences while certificate earners had a greater number of unpaid work experiences. These findings did not imply that the CaPROMISE youth in the ASD group or in the certificate group were prejudged or treated differentially by service providers. It instead suggested that service providers must receive 'up-front' guidance regarding effective planning, placement and monitoring to achieve CaPROMISE youth parity in paid work experience participation, regardless of disability or course of study.

*** *Work experiences (paid and unpaid) while in high school are a game changer for youth receiving SSI benefits and their families.***

Not all CaPROMISE youth and their family members readily jumped at the opportunity to participate in a work experience. In fact, at intake only 50% of youth and their parents/guardians expected the CaPROMISE youth would obtain employment after high school. The percentage increased dramatically at the end of CaPROMISE with both youth (79.7%) and parents/guardians (79.2%) reporting they expected the youth would become employed after high school. The **impact** of the work experiences was reflected in higher expectations for CaPROMISE youth and aligned with the two goals that were central to the CaPROMISE mission – advanced levels of formal education and competitive employment. The work experiences incentivized youth to persist in their high school education and pursue a college education. The work

experiences directly impacted CaPROMISE participants' self-confidence and pride and instilled in them and their families a sense of hope, direction and increased opportunities.

- “There are so many success stories, however one that stands out was a youth that would not come out and did not want to participate. This one stands out as the staff could barely if at all, get the youth to look them in the eye let alone come out into the community. The LEA staff worked with him and the youth was able to participate and complete a work experience.” (DOR Counselor)
- “Dad was really protective of the student and it took us 2 and 1/2 years for him to allow the student to work in a supervised setting. Dad was convinced the student could not do this. We invited Dad to come down to watch the student work and he was amazed at what she was able to do. Upon graduation the student was hired as a receptionist where she is making \$40,000 a year in a job that she absolutely loves.” (LEA Manager)
- “One of our CaPROMISE students was known District-wide as a non-compliant behavior challenge, and was recommended for expulsion at one point. The student hated school, and was at risk of not graduating from his last stop, the District's continuation school. He wanted nothing to do with CaPROMISE, and dodged our outreach. The prospect of work was ultimately our hook. The student began a placement; he was an immediate success. The staff liked him, he was successful, and was shortly thereafter hired permanently!!!! He still holds his job to this day!!!!” (LEA Manager)

- “One of the CaPROMISE students was hired as an employee after his internship ended and was promoted to a department manager. We had a lot of success in placing students into internships which prepared them for direct hire positions after the internship experience.” (LEA Manager)
- “The best part of being in CaPROMISE was being able to work, having a job, and seeing how it feels.” (Student)
- “The job made me into a better person because I was able to work with people in order to learn new things. Also, it made me be open-minded about stuff – like learning new things that I never knew before. As an auto mechanic I learned how to change breaks and complete oil changes.” (Student)
- “I struggled a little before CaPROMISE. The CSC helped me a lot get back on my feet, graduated, and I went to college for welding. Welding is my passion – its calming. I finished college in June. Now I’m working in construction.” (Student)
- “In the beginning he had so many problems and I was at the end of my rope by the time the CSC connected. He graduated with a 3.0, working at \$22/hour. The CSC was his mentor. The job sites she placed him in they wanted to hire him. She came when we needed her the most. Everything the CSC said, she meant, and she did it. I had a direct line to her.” (Parent)
- “I didn’t even know my daughter knew what work was. When she got her first paycheck I asked her what she wanted to do with that and then we put the rest of it in an ABLE account. CaPROMISE helped us with the ABLE account.

- It's made a huge difference in her life. The glow in her face is nothing I've seen before." (Parent)
- "Going to the program, the student was so happy working. She thought she was the manager – she felt needed and important." (Guardian)
 - "Thank you to everyone that has helped me. I feel I learned a lot. Before I was scared. I didn't want to work, but the CSC expected me to work. Everything I learned here I keep it in my heart because it's for my own good. My dream is to go to college." (Student)
 - "When the program was explained, it sounded like it could benefit my sons. When we went into the employment subject, in my mind I thought my sons can't work because they have a disability. After the CSC explained services and supports they could provide so my sons could work, that little thought started growing in my mind. My vocabulary has changed – now I can say, 'Yes, my son can do it.' I was a helicopter mom before. Now I can see my son developing and the things he can do (take bus from home to the mall). When he got back, he hugged me and said, 'I can do this.'" (Parent)

**** Department of Rehabilitation's (DOR) engagement of transition students and their families must begin when students are 14 years of age or earlier.***

The end of the project data revealed 77.46% of CaPROMISE participants enrolled in the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) compared to only 17.7% of the participants in the Usual Services group. Analyses of CaPROMISE participants' age at the time of their last CaPROMISE intervention indicated statistically significant differences between the mean ages of those who did and did not open DOR cases.

Participants who opened a DOR case were older at the time of their last CaPROMISE intervention (average 19 years old) compared to those who did not open DOR cases (average 18.13 years old). In regards to disability, analyses indicated that some significant differences in proportions existed, but the strength of the association was low. A significantly greater proportion of individuals with sensory disabilities (82.1%) and cognitive-intellectual disabilities (75.9%) opened cases. In contrast, individuals with multiple health disabilities (56.1%) were less likely to open cases with DOR.

When comparing participants in the CaPROMISE group to the Usual Services group:

- CaPROMISE participants were determined eligible for DOR services at a higher rate than Usual Services participants.
- The Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) approval for CaPROMISE participants occurred at a higher rate than Usual Services participants.

Analyses of DOR data for both CaPROMISE and Usual Services participants continued after the CaPROMISE program services ended. Data as of September 2020 showed that the majority of the CaPROMISE youth (57%) with DOR remained open or in eligibility determination status. With respect to the cases closed, 58 cases were closed successfully and 494 unsuccessfully. Comparing the successful and unsuccessful closures of CaPROMISE participants provided some insight into factors that correlated with the youth's eventual success as a DOR client:

- The successfully closed cases had higher instances of receiving CaPROMISE services in the financial planning and benefits management

category, the career and work-based learning category, and other services and supports category than those who were closed unsuccessful.

- CaPROMISE youth who graduated with a high school diploma were more likely to have a successful case closure than youth who received a certificate of completion.
- Cases that were ultimately closed successful had on average 0.88 more paid work experiences than cases closed unsuccessfully.

What did we learn about engaging family members?

*** *Engaging and supporting the family unit including accessing needed supports and services is vital to reducing their reliance on the youth's SSI benefits.***

The challenges experienced by the CaPROMISE families were complex and if not addressed would have created additional barriers for serving the CaPROMISE youth. One of the keystones to the success of CaPROMISE was the capacity to meet families where they were at and work with the family unit in resolving basic needs, pursuing educational opportunities, and addressing employment needs. An Exit Survey was administered to family/household members as they left the program. Survey responses were obtained from 1,200 (72.9%) of the 1,646 families/households who were initially enrolled in the CaPROMISE program. Changes in the *formal education status* of CaPROMISE family/household members during their participation in the program were reflected in the survey results:

- 463 family/household members *enrolled* in formal academic programs during the course of CaPROMISE. Programs ranged from formal high school diploma track programs to postsecondary graduate level degree programs.

- 448 family/household members *completed* formal academic programs ranging from formal high school diploma track programs to postsecondary graduate level degree programs.
- While 49 individuals *dropped out* of formal academic programs during the course of their participation, for every single dropout, there were 9.45 program enrollments and 9.14 program completions!

Survey results also showed changes in *employment status* of CaPROMISE family and household members during their participation in the Project:

- 378 household members obtained part-time employment.
- 603 household members obtained full-time employment.

While 257 individuals became unemployed during the course of their participation:

- For every individual whose status changed to 'Currently unemployed looking for work', there were 3.00 individuals whose status changed to 'Currently employed part-time' and 4.79 individuals whose status changed to 'Currently employed full-time'!
- For every individual whose status changed to 'Currently unemployed and not looking for work', there were 2.89 individuals whose status changed to 'Currently employed part-time' and 4.60 individuals whose status changed to 'Currently employed full-time'.

PROGRAM REPLICATION

The success of CaPROMISE as evidenced in the overall outcome data presented in the previous section was driven by core values that served as the foundation for all decisions and activities:

- All youth and family members have the **potential** for employment and self-sufficiency
- The **dreams and interests** of the youth and family members must drive the discussion (the primary strategy is a person-driven plan and person-centered interventions)
- **Collaboration**, developing local partnerships and identifying shared resources is core to student planning, interventions and achieving the explicit outcomes.

Person-Centric vs. System-Centric

A program built on these core values require a framework that is more person-centric than system-centric. Building and sustaining such a framework requires flexibility, agility, transparency, and accountability. Programs with built-in silos and rigid structures present barriers to such a framework by restricting communication, resource allocation, and responsiveness. Consistent oversight to ensure these core values are maintained involve four questions applied to all phases of program development and implementation:

- In discussions regarding outreach, recruitment and interventions, is the primary discussion about how the services operate (system-centric) or how the services can be improved to meet the needs of each youth and their family members (person-centric)?
- As programs learn more about the unique characteristics of each youth and their family members, are we concerned about how the presenting challenges will affect our “numbers” (system-centric) or how we can be more innovative

- and responsive with the individual youth and their family members (person-centric)?
- When policies and strategies are created, are they designed to help us conform to a law, regulations or funding expectations (system-centric) or are they designed to benefit each youth and their family members receiving services (person-centric)?
 - When examining program accomplishments, is the primary focus on the number of youth and family members being served and the cost of the services (system-centric) or on the uniqueness of each youth and their family members being served and their long-term economic and personal independence (person-centric)?

The presumption of benefit means the expectation that **all** students with disabilities can achieve an employment outcome no matter their age, disability, gender, ethnicity, personal circumstances, etc. This message must be reinforced at all levels of the organizations and reflected in the support and guidance provided to staff (i.e., hiring, orientation, staff development, individual case conferencing, performance evaluation, etc.).

A person-centric approach takes time, flexibility, and resourcefulness. Time to devote to each individual to truly understand not only their needs, but also their dreams. Flexibility to modify and change how, when, and what services are provided as the individual's life changes. Resourcefulness to connect individuals to programs and services beyond what is within our current awareness, reach and traditional resources. The ratio of 26 CaPROMISE youth for every one Career Service Coordinator (CSC)

was critical in maintaining a person-centric approach and meeting the unique needs of each individual and family. The addition of a dedicated DOR counselor as part of the team whose sole caseload (typically between 80 and 120 CaPROMISE students) was the CaPROMISE students allowed for the meaningful partnership with the school district and staff. Person-centric services require that both the CSC and DOR counselor have:

- the flexibility to meet students and families in their homes and communities and not restricted to the school campus or DOR office.
- the resources (i.e., cell phones, iPad, etc.) to communicate with students and families.
- the knowledge of a wide range of community resources and the ability to link families to these resources as the needs arise.
- the latitude to keep cases open even when a student or family are not actively engaged for a period of time.
- the ability to seek to understand the reason for disengagement as families face numerous challenges including housing instability, food insecurities, disconnected phones, immigration status, and multiple family crises.

Integral to the person-centric approach and inherent in the CaPROMISE model was the provision of services to the family unit. This component is unlike traditional models in which the focus is entirely on the youth with disabilities. The family unit might be included in these traditional models, but limited to planning and providing natural supports for the youth. CaPROMISE was unique in its capacity to identify and address the individual and multiple needs of household members from parents' employment and siblings' educational attainment to basic needs (i.e., housing, food, transportation,

immigration, etc.). Family services and supports are essential for replicating the CaPROMISE model.

- “This is the only program where we can work with students and families. It makes a huge difference. By serving families we hope to break the chain and educate the family.” (LEA Manager)
- “Working with the family is the only way to transition to self-sufficiency. We can job develop all we can with the youth. But we will not make a difference unless we also work with the family.” (CSC)
- “The CSC has been very resourceful presenting us with options and opportunities we can access – not only for [the student], but for the whole family unit. It shows that we’re all affected as a family and not just [the student]. This is key for making programs like this flourish.” (Guardian)
- “Before CaPROMISE, programs were all talk and no action. Our CSC made a difference. She helped me get through a difficult time too.” (Parent)
- “Really important to be inclusive with the nucleus of the family. CaPROMISE expects the whole family to participate – that’s huge and a big deal. Other agencies are so compartmentalized. It’s a family issue, but I can’t use regional center [services] because it’s only for my child. So, I have to look for my own resources. Family problems are family problems. CaPROMISE was cohesive. If that philosophy of family involvement was put into programs at a younger age – the impact would be huge.” (Parent)

Hindsight – We wish we would have incorporated family-centered goals and objectives into the individualized plan to further ensure the needs of the family unit were being addressed in addition to the needs of the youth with disabilities.

Capacity

A program that strives to meet the complex and individuals needs of youth with disabilities and their families necessitates ongoing capacity building and investment in staff through training, mentoring and focused technical assistance. The CaPROMISE infrastructure for staff development involved a seven-tiered approach:

- Benefits Planning Certification Training – an intensive training on work incentives, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security Disability Insurance that prepares staff to provide families with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate the complex Social Security system, especially as it intersects with employment of individuals with disabilities.
- Annual meeting for all program staff and partners to reinforce collaboration, review program goals, highlight accomplishments, and introduce new knowledge and strategies.
- Regional trainings, at least quarterly, to address needs specific to communities and populations in that region.
- Regularly scheduled statewide conference calls including staff from all programs and partners (i.e., LEAs, DOR, evaluation team, Family Resource Centers, etc.). The purpose of these calls is to promote fidelity across all program efforts.
- Monthly conference call with the local LEA Managers and DOR.

- Individualized training, mentoring and technical assistance to address topics, strategies, practices, and other areas that an individual staff or group find challenging in application or implementation.
- Contract training and technical assistance by DOR including monthly calls, trainings, site visits, and program reviews.

This tiered approach provides a consistent focus on the development and improvement of knowledge and skill sets with all program staff. Additionally, this multi-tiered approach provided an opportunity to share best practices. The intensity of the services, complexity of the students' and families' needs, and the ever-changing landscape of services and resources requires constant and consistent training and technical assistance. The constant and consistent message and charge to CaPROMISE staff was to always put the needs and dreams of the student and family first. **The focus must be person-centric**. In practice, this message was translated into innovation, creativity, flexibility, and resourcefulness. It was not easy and we received push back from staff (i.e., we were only interested in research and data), but the consistent message and ongoing technical assistance compelled and encouraged them to keep trying. That would not have happened if we lowered our expectations to make the job easier for the staff.

Building and sustaining the capacity of the staff must be a priority for leadership. If we expect a high level of performance and quality of service of our staff, it is essential that we equip them with the knowledge and skills to meet these expectations.

Hindsight – We must build in resiliency training for the staff – because person-centric

and family engagement is intense and difficult work. Leaders must lead by their actions – not only by words.

Accountability

A robust and comprehensive Data Management System is essential to ensure accountability, transparency, and help to inform evidence-based practices. The data management system utilized for CaPROMISE (CP-DMS) was built from the ground up with the primary purpose to help staff keep track of the services they delivered in relation to participants' needs, progress, and accomplishments. From the beginning, the CP-DMS team worked closely with all parties in CaPROMISE to observe, receive, and communicate the needs for the data system. Staff who used the system, the managers who accessed the information to support the staff efforts, and the upper management who retrieved and analyzed the data for better understanding and improvement were the driving forces for creating the responsive and flexible data system. Non-technical stakeholders' descriptions of the various processes and operations were translated into the practical and advanced technology solutions. With the focus on providing interventions, the interfaces as well as the additional structure of the back-end data system were continuously refined to provide overall progress of the youth and their family through the CaPROMISE life cycle rather than providing static demographic and quantifiable information. Building and maintaining a flexible and responsive system is one of the strengths of the CP-DMS as an in-house, custom-made data management system. The CP-DMS team continued to apply this person-centric approach to provide a user-friendly and dynamic data system for the CaPROMISE staff.

A data management system such as the CP-DMS provides a way for the leadership team to track program progress and outcomes. It also helps and requires staff to be accountable. The other side of the coin is transparency. The data staff enter into the system must be analyzed and the findings must be communicated back to them. Findings were shared with staff as often as possible and in a variety of formats (a dashboard, monthly reports, summary briefs, etc.). Leadership and staff must review these findings together to identify evidence-based best practices and take corrective action when progress is stalled or strategies are proving to be ineffective.

Hindsight – We needed to designate staff on each team whose primary role was to review and provide quality assurance for data entered in system.

Partnerships

Meaningful partnerships and collaboration are essential! Fundamental to a program built on the values of person-driven and family-centered approaches is the partnership with youth and their families. Achieving outcomes is next to impossible without collaboration with youth and their families. Similarly, outcomes are not attainable without collaboration within and between programs. Partnerships between the DOR, LEAs, Family Resource Centers, and universities are central to replicating the CaPROMISE model. Each partner brings to the model assets and expertise that contribute to the overall coordination and provision of individualized services and supports. For example, DOR provides employment services and supports including pre-employment transition services. The LEAs provide a direct link to the youth and their families to facilitate their participation in transition planning and work-based learning.

The Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and/or Parent Information Training Centers serve as content experts on family support and parent engagement and oversee quality assurance of family support components. The FRCs can also provide training and technical assistance to program staff plus provide services to the families.

The universities are a source for interns from academic programs in rehabilitation counseling or related fields. The interns can assist with Person-Driven Planning, employment preparation (i.e., resume writing, completing applications), and college exploration.

Additional key stakeholders that must be involved from the beginning if the CaPROMISE model is to be replicated include Independent Living Centers, American Job Centers, and Social Security Administration. At the local level, staff must build and maintain a local resource network comprised of employers, social service agencies (i.e., housing, foster youth, social services, food assistance, etc.), justice programs (i.e., legal aid, immigration, justice involved youth, etc.), educational programs (i.e., tutoring, English as a Second Language, internships, apprenticeships, after school programs, etc.), health and human services, workforce programs, and charities and private foundations.

Forging partnerships and collaborations in the local communities builds and expands CaPROMISE's responsiveness to the myriad of needs and challenges confronting youth and families. The following examples illustrate how partnerships increased staff's capacity to address the needs of CaPROMISE youth and families in different areas:

- Food and shelter: a family was living in an apartment with black mold until a CSC connected them with an Independent Living Center who assisted the family to find housing and secure a deposit. Another family was connected to a local food bank, while another service area is partnering with a local foundation that provides meals and supplies to anyone in need.
- Education: collaboration with a community foundation resulted in a student receiving a computer and internet services, which the family was unable to afford. The student's grades have improved simply due to his ability to complete the assignments. Another service area connected with a program that offers free academic, career, financial aid, and college application assistance to participants.
- Employment: partnerships with community programs that provide employment services provided CaPROMISE youth and families with access to youth specialists and employment specialists. These programs worked with CaPROMISE youth and family members on resumes, interviewing skills, pre-employment skills and provide job readiness training and subsidized employment training.
- Other: Partnerships throughout the community resulted in a network of services that were responsive to the varied and unique needs of the CaPROMISE participants including transportation, citizenship issues, clothing, grief counseling, and communication/cell phone service.

Specific to employment preparation and workforce development the following collaboration recommendations are essential:

- Partner with other workforce development providers to coordinate use of business partner resources and work sites across the district, city, community and/or county.
- Coordinate employment services with DOR, LEAs, Regional Centers and other agencies to promote quality and cost- effective programming.
- Utilize a Universal Referral Process (URP) to promote communication across agencies for planning of work training and employment opportunities. This allows for multiagency involvement in programming to ensure coordination, equal access, quality/effective training, job placement and ongoing monitoring to promote the success of each individual. This also eliminates duplication and waste of services and efforts.
- Provide business partners technical assistance support in ensuring inclusive practices at the worksite for individuals with a wide range of disabilities.
- Provide opportunities for workforce development partners to work together with local businesses to receive guidance on employment/training opportunities and Labor Market Information (LMI) in the community through Business Advisory Committees, business panels, workshops and other advisory capacities.
- Cross-agency professional development expands the workforce development knowledge of all professionals who are responsible for promoting Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) opportunities. This in turn promotes CIE for all individuals with disabilities including those with significant disabilities.

SUSTAINABILITY and DISSEMINATION

Program Continuation

CaPROMISE continues to impact youth and their families beyond the original 1,646 participants through the leadership and sustained efforts of the LEA staff and administrators, regional managers, DOR counselors and administrators, Family Resource Centers, CaPROMISE interns, and the CaPROMISE research and evaluation team.

One strategy that has been particularly effective in continuing best practice strategies identified through CaPROMISE has been the “Local Partnership Agreements”. This effort sanctioned through the California CIE Blueprint is the combined effort of the California Department of Education (CDE), DOR and Department of Developmental Services (DDS), in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders including Disability Rights of California (DRC), with leadership provided by the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS). The purpose of the Blueprint is to increase opportunities for Californians with intellectual and developmental disabilities to prepare for and participate in CIE.

The Local Partnership Agreements (LPA) provide a broad platform to continue the CaPROMISE efforts especially regarding person-driven planning, CIE, and cross agency coordination. The LPAs “were created at the local level to identify the ways in which LEAs, DOR Districts, and regional centers will work together to streamline service delivery, engage their communities, and increase CIE opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Each agreement is tailored to meet the needs of the local community and represents the specific activities the core

partners have agreed to implement” (California Health and Human Services Agency). For example, the Orange County LPA (OCLPA), under the leadership of CaPROMISE Regional Managers Linda O’Neal and Richard Rosenberg, is comprised of an extensive network of partners representing individuals with disabilities and families, LEAs, career pathway programs, post-secondary education, adult service providers, workforce development programs, disability resource agencies, disability advocacy organizations, and foundations and non-profits. New partners are added as needs are identified to support workforce development programming and CIE. Monthly meetings support ongoing staff development and resource sharing. The OCLPA piloted a universal referral process to promote coordinated service provision that supports CIE. The process is based on an “Integrated Resource Team” (IRT) approach to determine needed services and supports of individuals with disabilities where there appears to be a need for multi-agency efforts in work-based learning and CIE programming. The goal is to work together to create coordinated, well sequenced service delivery for individuals while optimizing the use of local partner resources.

Another form of sustainability is the DOR Community Resource Navigator, a position newly developed to work closely with the rehabilitation delivery team and community partners to support a consumer’s IPE goal attainment by identifying and connecting them to community resource services. The navigators provide a variety of high-level analytical support toward connecting applicants, students with disabilities and consumers to community resources available to support their independence and efforts toward achieving an employment outcome. The navigator supports, educates, and informs consumers to seek community resources available for their IPE needs and

access community resource services to remove employment barriers. The navigator's role in the DOR process builds on the lessons learned at the beginning of CaPROMISE when CSCs were charged to become acquainted and build partnerships with programs, services, and other community resources. This activity paid dividends throughout CaPROMISE as staff were confronted with the various needs and challenges presented to them by youth and their families. The CSCs intimate knowledge of the community and the relationships they nurtured increased their responsiveness to participants.

The focus on work incentives and benefits planning has also been sustained. A large investment of CaPROMISE was in the certification of the CSC as work incentives planners, which was critical to educating youth and families about work incentives and addressing the misconception regarding earning wages and losing benefits. There is an ongoing need to provide training and education to LEA staff and transition specialists on benefits, work incentives, and navigating the social security system. There is still a great concern with the lack of coordinated information and the many myths in the community regarding SSI and benefits. Under the leadership of CaPROMISE Regional Manager Richard Rosenberg, the California Transition Alliance initiated the Social Security Workgroup comprised of representatives from DOR, Department of Education, local schools, benefit planners and adult agencies. The purpose of the Workgroup is to provide support for youth, family members, school staff and social security staff to improve the ability to work with local SSA offices and help youth and families to understand work incentive waivers and benefit planning options. Included in these efforts is a focus on use of the ABLE Savings Accounts to offer a better quality of life for people with disabilities. It is particularly important to save for today's needs and/or

invest in a tax advantaged ABLE account that will not impact the means tested benefits needed by many individuals with disabilities.

Lodi Career Connections (LCC) is an example of how CaPROMISE has been sustained within one school district. LCC is a transition program in the Lodi Unified School District re-designed and based on the lessons learned from CaPROMISE. The overarching focus of the LCC was to present as one program (one team) to students, their families, the school district, agency partners and the business community. LCC made available to all its students a full range of services as compared to traditional individual programs with limited options. The services students accessed and the activities they participated in were based on their interests, person-centered plan, career pathways, age/grade level plus family input. LCC transformed the program design from funding driven to student driven focused in all activities and outcomes. The strength of the LCC design was that funding streams and restrictions were not used to constrain the staff's responsiveness and participants' access to services that align with their person-driven plan, transition goals, and interests.

Continued access to the CaPROMISE Toolkit provides another form of project sustainability. The Toolkit is a compilation of resources organized according to the project's core interventions – case management and transition planning, benefits management and financial planning, career and work-based learning; parent/guardian training and information, and other services and support. The Toolkit is designed to provide a comprehensive array of information, guides, worksheets, and related materials to aid educators, counselors, and other professionals serving and supporting

transition youth with disabilities and their families. The Toolkit is available online from the SDSU Interwork Institute website.

Finally, a recent survey of LEA managers and staff, DOR managers and counselors, and interns was conducted to determine how CaPROMISE has been sustained one and one and half years after the program ended. Four CaPROMISE program components rose to the top: person-driven planning, benefits planning, family engagement, and partnerships. The following quotes capture each of these components:

- “The biggest component that we’ve been able to sustain is the person-centered-planning (PCP) model. I have been lucky enough to be promoted to the program coordinator, where I have made PCP the heart of our vision and mission. I’ve also had the opportunity to reach out beyond the adult transition program to train high school teachers to start the person-centered-planning model in the 9th grade. This will give students eight years to work on self-advocacy skills and the ability to make choices for themselves.”
- “All staff have kept up their Work Incentives Planning credentials and non-CaPROMISE staff have had general work incentives training through Virginia Commonwealth University. We hold parent workshops for SSI and this year we are implementing those workshops at the middle school level. We are still believers of work experience for youth and how that translates into paid employment and removing barriers to paid employment.”

- “We have been able to grow and develop better processes for communication and family support. We have a LOT of work to do in this area, but we are starting to get more buy-in from teachers across the district.”
- “The partnerships developed during CaPROMISE have been sustained with employers, community-based organizations, colleges and universities, vocational training providers, and the DOR.”

Presentations and Trainings

Dissemination of lessons learned and research findings occurred at national, state and local levels. Audiences have included families, individuals with disabilities, rehabilitation professionals, educators, disability service providers, workforce professionals, program administrators, researchers, policymakers, and other related fields. Selected presentations and trainings are listed below:

- McFarlane, F. & Guillermo, M. (2020). *Organizing Schools to Serve Students with Disabilities*. Moderated Panel at the Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) Annual Conference: Evidence to Advance Equity and Excellence in California’s Cradle-to-Career Vision. Sacramento, CA.
- Rosenberg, R., & O’Neal, L. (2020). *Real World Transition Programming Leading to Competitive Integrated Employment*. Thompson Policy Institute’s 2020 DisAbility Summit.
- Guillermo, M., Tucker, M., & Corona, V. (2020). *Differences in Work Experience Supports for Young SSI Recipients Earning Diplomas or Certificates*. 20th Annual National Rehabilitation Education Conference.
- Tucker, M., Guillermo, M., Corona, V., & O’Neal, L. (2020) *Serving Transition-age SSI Recipients: Incorporating Lessons Learned into the Rehabilitation Counseling Curriculum*. 20th Annual National Rehabilitation Education Conference.
- Tucker, M., Guillermo, M., O’Neal, L., Corona, V., Oh, M., & Rocha, K. (2020). *Work-Based Learning Innovations for Extraordinary Times*. Fall 2020 National Rehabilitation Education Online Conference.

- O’Neal, L., (2020). *Utilizing Person Centered Planning for Individuals with Complex Support Needs*. National Technical Assistance Center Capacity Building Virtual Institute.
- O’Neal, L., (2020). *Promoting Collaboration to ensure Appropriate Transition Programing for Individuals with Complex Support Needs*. National Technical Assistance Center Capacity Building Virtual Institute.
- O’Neal, L., & Rosenberg, R. (2020). *Collaboration & Building Partnerships for Successful Employment*. Employment Partnership Training for Local Education Agencies, Community Rehabilitation Providers and the California Department of Rehabilitation.
- Rosenberg, R., & Corona, V. (2020). *DOR Student Services: Pre-ETS Work Based Learning Experiences*. Employment Partnership Training for Local Education Agencies, Community Rehabilitation Providers and the California Department of Rehabilitation.
- Thompson Policy Institute Transition Initiative. (2020). *Ask the Orange County Experts*. Monthly expert panel series coordinated by Linda O’Neal on various topics including transition, employment training programs, work incentives planning, disability support services, and work-based learning.
- Montgomery, J., Lott, A., Jimenez, A., & Guillermo, M. (2020). *Evidence-Based Practices from CaPROMISE Leading Toward Successful Post-School Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities Receiving SSI*. Youth@Work Conference. San Jose, CA.
- Rosenberg, R. & O’Neal, L. (2020). *Effective Strategies that Inform Post-Secondary Transition Goals*. California Transition Alliance.
- O’Neal, L. (2020). *Preparing for Employment*. Regional Center of Orange County Virtual Family Workshop.
- Rosenberg, R. & O’Neal, L. (2020). *Collaboration in Schools, in the Community & with Agencies*. California Transition Alliance.
- Nye-Lengerman, K., McFarlane, F., & Guillermo, M. (2019). *Changing Expectations, Changing Systems: Lessons Learned from PROMISE Youth and Families on SSI*. Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) 2019 Conference. Washington, DC.
- Guillermo, M., Tucker, M., & Corona, V. (2019). *Discrepancies in Delivery of Career and Work-Based Learning Interventions to Young SSI Recipients*. 19th Annual National Rehabilitation Educators Conference. San Diego, CA.

- Tucker, M., Guillermo, M., & Corona, V. (2019). *Predictors of Education and Work Expectations of Young SSI Recipients*. 19th Annual National Rehabilitation Educators Conference. San Diego, CA.
- Anderson, C., Enayati, H., Williams, B., Guillermo, M., Tansey, T., & McCormick, S. (2019). *Early Employment and Earnings Outcomes of Transition-Age SSI Youth Receiving PROMISE Services*. 19th Annual National Rehabilitation Educators Conference. San Diego, CA.
- Anderson, C., Hackey, D., Williams, B., Tucker, M., Enayati, H., & McCormick, S. (2019). *Engaging Transition-Age SSI Youth and their Families through PROMISE Research and Services*. 19th Annual National Rehabilitation Educators Conference. San Diego, CA.
- O'Neal, L., Rosenberg, R., Corona, V., & Guillermo, M. (2019). *Collaboration & Building Partnerships for Successful Employment*. Employment Partnership Training for Local Education Agencies, Community Rehabilitation Providers and the California Department of Rehabilitation.
- O'Neal, L., Rosenberg, R., Corona, V., & Guillermo, M. (2019). *DOR Student Services: Pre-ETS Work Based Learning Experiences*. Employment Partnership Training for Local Education Agencies, Community Rehabilitation Providers and the California Department of Rehabilitation.
- Tucker, M., Guillermo, M., & Corona, V. (2019). *Longitudinal Exploration of Factors Associated with Work Experiences of Young SSI Recipients*. 12th Annual Summit on Performance Management Excellence. Portland, ME.
- Averitt-Sanzone, R., Golden, T., Guillermo, M., & Montgomery, J. (2019). *Evidence-based Practices Leading toward Successful Post-school Outcomes for Youth on SSI*. 2019 OSEP Leadership Conference. Arlington, VA.
- Guillermo, M. & Williams, B. (2019). *Family Engagement*. Catalytic Convening: Bridging the Divide between Disability and Poverty Services. Manhattan, NY: Cornell University.
- McFarlane, F. & Guillermo, M. (2019). *Changing Expectations, Changing Systems One Family at a Time: Lessons Learned from CaPROMISE Youth and their Families*. Interwork Institute Brown Bag Research Seminar Series. San Diego, CA.

Publications including articles published in professional journals and manuscripts under review are listed below:

- McFarlane, F. & Guillermo, M. (2020). *Work-Based Learning for Students with Disabilities*. Stanford, CA: Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE).

- Tucker, M., Guillermo, M., & Corona, V. (2019). Career and work-based learning interventions for young recipients of Supplemental Security Income. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 51*(2), 145-157.
- Tucker, M., Guillermo, M., Corona, V., & Sax, C. (2019). CaPROMISE: Training interventions for parents and guardians of young recipients of Supplemental Security Income. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 51*(2), 225-234.
- Guillermo, M., Tucker, M., Corona, V., McFarlane, F., & Jacobs, R. (manuscript submitted for publication). Pursuing graduation: Differences in work experience supports for young SSI recipients earning diplomas or certificates.
- McFarlane, F. & Guillermo, M. (2019). *Lessons Learned from CaPROMISE Youth and their Families*. San Diego, CA: San Diego State University, Interwork Institute.
- O'Neal, L. (2019). *If I Could Make Changes...This is What I Would Do*. San Diego, CA: San Diego State University, Interwork Institute.
- Guillermo, M., McFarlane, F., Jacobs, R., Tucker, M., & Corona, V. (2019). *CaPROMISE research brief: The status of CaPROMISE students based on the available DOR AWARE data elements*. San Diego, CA: San Diego State University, Interwork Institute.

Dissemination of findings from the ongoing analysis of the CaPROMISE data combined with current DOR data will continue to inform and contribute to the documentation of evidence-based practices in transition and serving youth with disabilities and their families.

CONCLUSION

This final report attempts to capture, synthesize, and summarize the milestones, achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from CaPROMISE. As mentioned in the introduction, a project of this magnitude involved multiple components, numerous stakeholders, and ongoing learning. Maintaining the integrity of a person-driven approach for students, families and staff required agility, flexibility, resourcefulness, and innovation. Humility was a critical requirement – the recognition and acknowledgement

that the youth and their families were the experts and their expertise was derived from their lived experiences. The recent survey distributed to LEA managers and staff, DOR managers and counselors, and interns posed the question: “What was your most valuable lesson from CaPROMISE.” The overall theme was family:

- “We must engage the entire family to support students as they work to become responsible, independent members of their community.”
- “I learned about our families’ resilience and how much they are willing to go the extra mile to support their children.”
- “Not to give up on families. Many times, families wouldn't get back to us, refuse to use services, wouldn't let students work, wouldn't attend meetings, and overall just wouldn't engage. But, reaching out every two weeks, ultimately, there came a time where a parent or family member could use the services CaPROMISE offered. In those moments, families started to trust that we could help connect them to the resources they needed.”
- “Families are key to promoting access of their children to CIE...it is critical for them to have high expectations, support of work experiences while in high school and encouragement for expanded opportunities for career relevant post-secondary education.” (Regional Manager)

The impact of CaPROMISE on the youth and their families is described at the beginning of this report. We will continue to analyze the data and seek to better understand how individual, program, and system variables intersect and impact outcomes for youth and for families. However, not all measurements of success can be quantified. The concluding recommendations that follow are from CaPROMISE families

and speak to the value CaPROMISE staff and programming has had on their lives and outlook for the future:

- “CaPROMISE has made a huge impact on a young person like my sister. The support for the families is key to explaining how the program works. Wrap up the overall experience for student and family. Emphasize what it did for one family – think about how it can benefit more families. This program has been exceptional. It delights my heart to hear other families’ stories. There’s not many programs that are taking the challenges that this program has taken on. They’re our voice, attentive and caring. Overall, their goal is for students to have lives like all of us.” (Guardian)
- “The Program laid a good solid foundation for us – gave us a pathway and options that will be available beyond CaPROMISE. This program supports you along the way so you feel more comfortable, solid in reasoning as you make transitions for your child.” (Parent)
- “CaPROMISE is good because we keep pushing forward; without CaPROMISE my daughter wouldn’t have had a work experience.” (Parent)
- “CaPROMISE has to continue in some shape or form for all families and students.” (Parent)

As we complete this final report and reflect on the past 7 years of CaPROMISE’s journey, there are three enduring principles that transcended this program from its inception through its completion.

First, the focus for all efforts and initiatives must be driven by the desire, needs, and expectations of the student and their family. While conformance to policies and

practices are a part of the fabric of our organizations, it is being responsive to the needs of the persons being served that must be the ultimate driver of our vision, beliefs, values, action and outcomes.

Second, we must demonstrate servant leadership at all levels – from the most senior administrator to the person who provides the direct services with the student and their family. The leadership must encompass an understanding of the beliefs and values of the program and demonstrate those beliefs and values in all actions. With this leadership is a humility to listen, learn and be willing to continuously examine our practices and adapt to the uniqueness of each student and their family.

Third, we must take a long view of improving the lives of the students and their families. Too often we look at projects, approaches, services and outcomes that meet an immediate need without regard for the long-term impact. When learning with a student and family, you are shaping a lifetime. The benefits may take months and years to be realized. The long view requires building a solid foundation and teaching and supporting the students and families to continuously build on that foundation. The investment today is significant but, if we are successful with the students and their families, there will be a return in human and economic capital for a lifetime.

CaPROMISE provided “another way” to engage students and their families in creating an opportunity for a positive and sustainable future with the promise of a quality and fulfilling life.