

## SECTION 21J & 21K

### J. EXPLORING A “GAP YEAR” OR DELAYING COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Some youth may not be prepared to attend college immediately after graduating high school, and/or may want to take time to build skills through academic remediation and/or a career development experience (e.g., work, an internship, a workforce/training program, a meaningful volunteer experience(s), etc.).

In other cases, a young person might graduate over the winter or at the end of the summer and may not want to rush into college weeks after their high school graduation. If the time is spent productively, taking a semester or a year between high school and college can provide young people with time to mature, build skills and confidence, and be better prepared for post-secondary success. One option for this transition period is to participate in **workforce development programs**: some of which offer job readiness, sector-based training, college coursework in a specific area (often leading to a certification), internships, and/or job placement support.

### K. EXPLORING VOCATIONAL & OTHER PATHWAYS

Some young people may be interested in another post-secondary pathway, such as the trades or another vocational, sector-based training program. The Coach should work with the young person and the Specialists to explore options. Using assessment tools can help youth to determine what post-secondary path is best for them.

For simplicity purposes, all vocational, workforce training, and direct-employment pathways fall under Fair Futures “Career Development” umbrella. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22.](#)

Youth should be aware that **vocational programs can be just as challenging and time-consuming as college (as sometimes there is this misperception!)**.

For example, many accredited vocational programs in the trades require advanced skills/credentials just to apply. Union jobs in particular take several years of on-the-job experience (and/or a long apprenticeship) before one can apply and these exams are extremely competitive in themselves.

**Young people should never be discouraged from embarking on a pathway in the trades, but they should exhibit a strong interest in the industry, as the credentials and experiences they earn will be mostly limited to that broader industry.**

#### **PROGRAMS TO EXPLORE (BOTH DURING HIGH SCHOOL AND AFTER GRADUATION) IF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS OR DIRECT EMPLOYMENT:**

**There are a number of youth workforce training programs in Buffalo and Erie County.**

These are free or low-cost programs that teach foundational skills (e.g., communication skills, how to interview, etc.) and/or provide sector-based, employer-recognized trainings in the trades/construction, IT, culinary, hospitality, healthcare, transportation, and other fields.

Some programs even offer stipends during training and/or internships. Programs typically have flexible schedules, and some support participants with childcare and transportation. Many employ best practices in youth development. Some also help participants gain work experience through placement into paid internships. Many have strong completion and job placement outcomes. While requirements vary, some programs require a high school diploma or equivalent and most require that the participant be unemployed, under-employed, and/or low-income. Some also offer on-site GED programs.

Consider exploring specific programs based on: sector, industry, eligibility requirements, job placement/retention rates, certificates earned, etc.

See [Appendix H9: Workforce Training Programs](#) for examples of workforce training programs.

**College certificate programs** offer young people with a high school degree/GED an opportunity to take courses and earn certificates and/or college credits in a specific area that can help them improve their employment credentials in that field. (It can also provide exposure to a college setting.)

**Union Jobs and Apprenticeships:** Union-affiliated career pathways are a time-tested opportunity for youth with a strong interest in the trades or considering an alternative pathway to college. Union careers offer sustainable wages and viable career-tracks that offer skill development, leadership opportunities, and upward mobility. Many jobs in New York City's economy have union affiliation and apprenticeship training programs leading to entry-level and middle-skills jobs. There are approximately 100 apprenticeship programs in NYC, and over 90% are in the trades. Most apprenticeship programs are 1-6 years and can be competitive.

- **The NYS Department of Labor** has general information on union apprenticeships [here](#).
- **Currently available union apprenticeships** are listed [here](#).

**Civil Service:** There are also career opportunities in city government for young people with at least a high school degree/equivalent. Young people must pass a competitive civil service exam before they can be hired to become permanent employees. These exams assess a candidate's qualifications for a particular Civil Service job title. The exams can be very competitive, and many require college credits and/or experience in that area – they are often not entry-level jobs.

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