



Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA), in partnership with Arizona Town Hall, are leading a year-long community engagement project designed to bring visibility, spark dialogue, and motivate action to ensure more successful transitions of young people with disabilities — driven by their dreams, desires, and strengths — into postsecondary education and career pathways.

Startling trends reflecting the exclusion of young people with disabilities in postsecondary education and the workplace exist in Arizona. Mirroring national trends, young people with disabilities in Arizona are less likely to graduate from high school, enroll and obtain a degree in postsecondary education, and enter the world of work, compared to their peers without disabilities. Examples include:

- In 2020, only 68% of students with disabilities graduated in 4 years, compared to 78% statewide.
- Only 24% of 25-64 year olds with disabilities had an Associate's Degree or higher, compared with 41% of 25-64 year old's without disabilities.
- Only 36% of working-age individuals (ages 16-64) with a disability were employed, compared to a 72% employment rate for working-age individuals without a disability (ADDPC, 2019).

The critical gaps and untapped potential among young people with disabilities in our state has a significant impact on the lives of young Arizonans and their families, as well as our state's collective success. The research is pointing to challenges and opportunities for action such as:

- **Investment and supports in K-12:** Structural education opportunity gaps disproportionately affect youth with disabilities.
- **Early childhood and family supports:** Families report challenges in navigating complex systems and messages about their child's educational journey and future pathways
- **Career & Technical Education and counseling:** Increased awareness about and access to apprenticeship and CTE programs are needed for students with disabilities, families, educators.
- **Evidence-driven strategies:** More data is needed on effectiveness of programs that serve students with disabilities.
- **Career recruitment and workplace:** Youth with disabilities experience greater challenges during the career recruitment process, discriminatory hiring practices, and barriers to the workplace.

CFA and Arizona Town Hall are working to:

- bring trusted data to inform and prompt dialogue around these issues;
- engage cross-sector leaders to understand the challenges and opportunities for action;
- amplify the voices of young people with disabilities themselves, and their families, in generating solutions with a focus on starting the conversation at earlier ages; and,
- identify where action can be taken through additional data, engagement, or resources.

We invite you to join us in this journey and offer your input and perspectives as we work together to activate community-led solutions to ensure young people with disabilities have equitable access to opportunity in postsecondary and career pathways.

Questions for Discussion:

What are the most important areas to address and why?

What actions can we take to have the most impact? Who should take those actions?