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Using Social Capital to Support the Personal and Professional Growth of Young Adults with Disabilities

What is Social Capital?

Social capital refers to the benefits and positive outcomes that arise from people being friendly and helpful to each other. It encompasses both tangible and intangible benefits such as favors, shared information, and innovative ideas. Social capital is a collective resource, emerging from friendly connections and interactions among individuals.

Importance of Social Capital

Social capital is crucial for:

- Personal connections and friendships that enhance group or organizational success.
- Building trust and strong relationships within a company, which can improve overall performance.
- Fostering a supportive environment that benefits both individual and collective growth.

Building Social Capital: Key Activities

- **Networking and Relationship Building:** Intentionally create connections through conversation and collaboration
- **Participation in Projects:** Engaging in presentations, media, conferences, and collaborative projects.
- **Community Engagement:** Actively participate in your community, explore volunteer opportunities, engage in sports, hobby religious and social organizations.
- **Resume Building:** Support young adults in documenting experiences and skills gained through these activities.

Organizational Support for Professional Social Capital

- **Opportunities:** Provide internships, apprenticeships, and certification courses for youth.
- **Mentorship:** Establish mentor relationships where experienced individuals guide and support young adults.
- **Networking Events:** Host accessible events to facilitate connections between youth and professionals.
- **Long-Term Relationships:** Develop and maintain supportive relationships with the youth you engage with.
- **Foster engagement:** Discuss interests, skills and hobbies and potential organizations and activities in the state and local communities.

Tips for Supporting Youth Social Capital

- **Start Early:** Building social capital is a gradual process that benefits from early engagement.
- **Monetary Compensation:** Social capital should supplement, not replace, financial compensation.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure participation is not hindered by cost barriers. Provide necessary support such as per diem, transportation arrangements, and other accommodations.
- **Engagement:** Youth are motivated to engage as it connects them to valuable networks and opportunities.

For further questions or support on how to best assist youth in building social capital, simply reach out and ask! Your proactive involvement can make a significant difference in their professional and personal growth.

