The Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development (RYAD) Project promotes the development and advancement of vocational rehabilitation (VR) apprenticeships programs for youth with disabilities (16-24) in underserved rural communities.

Over the course of five years, the RYAD Project will:
» Build and disseminate a toolkit with rural-specific resources
» Promote VR partnerships with businesses, workforce system entities, and schools
» Increase the number of youth apprenticeship programs in rural areas where there are higher rates of people with disabilities who face lower rates of employment

PROJECT ACTIVITIES
» Learning Collaborative with VR agencies, workforce partners, schools, and businesses
» Advisory Groups with various rural and apprenticeship subject matter experts, knowledge translation professionals, youth with disabilities, and other stakeholders

PROJECT GOALS
The RYAD Project will help VR programs:
» Develop policies that support apprenticeship programs in rural areas
» Remove rural-specific barriers to apprenticeship program implementation
» Implement rural strategies and best practices to improve apprenticeship outcomes for youth with disabilities
» Enhance statewide collaborations to facilitate the apprenticeship process to benefit both businesses and jobseekers in rural communities
» Evaluate the success of apprenticeship programs with Mathematica’s VR Program Evaluation Coach

Project Partners
The RYAD Project is a project of ExploreVR at the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston, in partnership with:
• Mathematica Policy Research
• Montana Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities
• Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
• Arkansas Career Development Center

ExploreVR offers VR agencies easy and convenient access to a range of VR research, related data, training and tools for planning, evaluation, and decision-making.

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