Navigator Guide: Supporting Youth and Young Adults on Apprenticeship Pathways

Young people learn and grow most effectively when someone walks alongside them as they explore career options, try new tasks, and move into workplace environments. The Navigator role provides that steady connection. Navigators help youth and young adults understand the apprenticeship pathway, build confidence, and stay supported as they progress through different stages of learning and work.

A Navigator is not a job title.
It is a function that can be part of many roles.

Navigators help young people:

- Make sense of career options and training requirements
- Connect to opportunities and supportive resources
- Ask questions when things feel confusing or new
- Continue moving forward, even when challenges arise

What Navigators Do

Navigators ensure that young people:

- Know where to begin
- Understand what comes next
- Have someone to ask when they are unsure
- Feel valued and encouraged through each stage of the pathway
- Remain engaged in support through pathway stages

The most important part of navigating is relationship.
Trust opens doors. Consistency builds confidence.

Navigators do not need to solve every problem — they need to know who to bring in when support is needed.

Who Can Serve as a Navigator

Because navigating is a function—not a position—many different partners may serve in this role:

- CTE teachers or work-based learning coordinators

- Community college advisors or instructors
- Workforce case managers or youth counselors
- Vocational Rehabilitation counselors
- Job coaches or employment specialists
- Mentors, apprenticeship coordinators, or crew leaders
- Community-based organization staff
- Peer mentors and youth leaders

Key Strengths of Navigators

- They listen first
- They explain steps in clear, everyday language
- They help the young person problem-solve, not just comply
- They stay connected during transitions, when support is needed most

Navigator Mapping Tool

Use this table to identify who is already providing Navigator support — and where there may be gaps or opportunities to strengthen coordination.

Explore

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Connect

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Consider these career stages as you identify the existing navigators in your community:

Explore (career awareness and interest)
Connect (preparation and engagement)
Monitor & Support (check-ins, problem-solving, milestones through apprenticeship)
Complete & Advance (employment as a journey worker or next step)

This map does not need to be perfect. It should reflect what is real today, then guide where to go next through reflection of support system as it exists.

Monitor

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Complete

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Scenario 2 — Starting at the Job Center

A young adult visits the job center looking for a job. They learn about a pre-apprenticeship pathway and are paired with a workforce counselor who helps them update their resume, practice interviewing, and connect to a supportive peer mentor. The counselor checks in weekly during the early apprenticeship weeks, helping the youth stay motivated and supported.

Navigators are not responsible for doing everything.
They are responsible for not letting the young person feel alone in the process and facilitating ongoing and long term support to the next step – and sometimes beyond.

Small conversations.
Steady encouragement.
Clear next steps.
That is what opens pathways — and keeps them open.

