CAREER NAVIGATION JOURNEY MAPS

EARLY CHILDCARE WORKERS

Career navigation is rarely – if ever – a linear journey. Enhancing career navigation for workers and learners provides a valuable opportunity to actively address structural barriers contributing to occupational segregation.

Phases of Career Navigation

- Self-Assessment
- Career Exploration
- Connect to Job
- Skills and Credentials
- Career Pathways

Follow Nia’s Career Navigation Journey

Nia’s journey represents workers in the childcare industry. The experiences represented align with the stories we heard, not a predetermined order or number.

Walk through her career navigation journey map by following her experiences, which are numbered, color-coded, and listed in chronological order.

Each phase is further illustrated through the Timeframe, Thinking, and Pain Points that were notable in each phase.

Career navigation phases varied in order, timeframe, and number of experiences.
Background and Family Life
Nia was born and raised in Chicago. She is the oldest sibling on both her mom and dad’s sides. A first generation college student, Nia drops out completing her degree. She just moved into her first apartment.

Quote
“I do want to go [back] to school. I just know once it starts, I’ll give it my all, but then again, I need money. I just got my own apartment. My lifestyle now, the money is coming in. Do I really want to stop that, jeopardize that right now to go back to school? But I do, because I’m working around all teachers, literally everybody has a degree but me. Even the other TAs [teacher assistants].”

Goals
• Complete college degree.
• Job with financial security, but isn’t sure this is the right path to that goal.

Barriers
Feels stuck — makes good money compared to peers right now, but feels like a failure for not finishing bachelor’s degree.

Expectations
Continual learning and increased responsibilities will lead to moving up the ranks with experience. A college degree will allow her to move into larger responsibilities.

Skills and Credentials
Timeframe: Ongoing
Thinking: Success = a degree to get a good job
Pain points: Leaving college without a degree.

Career Exploration
Timeframe: A couple sessions in high school
Thinking: Success = jobs you hear about – police, doctor, firefighter
Pain points: Limited exposure. Success = one of these careers.

Connect to Job
Timeframe: A couple months
Thinking: I feel proud. Maybe this is what success looks like. I like the job, it is big and important to the community. I am successful and have support in this job.

Nia’s Career Journey
1. Nia has limited access to career exploration opportunities, but attends her school’s career info sessions.
2. Nia graduates from high school. She is proud and her family celebrates this milestone.
3. She enrolls in a 4-year college a few hours from home.
4. Without sufficient support at college, Nia’s mental health declines and she struggles in academics as a result. She feels like being away at college is a burden to her family and decides to come home in her first year.
5. Feeling depressed and aimless after coming home without a degree, Nia is introduced to an early childcare education program by a friend and joins the program.
6. The program connects her to a paid internship with the opportunity for full-time work after certificate completion.
7. In her internship, Nia receives the support and strong mentorship that was missing at college.
8. Nia earns the certificate and excels in her role. She is immediately hired to a full-time role.
9. While on the job, Nia learns about the breadth of teaching responsibilities, which are overwhelming.
10. Nia loves working with the kids. Though this wasn’t the career she expected, now that she’s doing it, she can see herself continuing in the field.
11. After a year on the job, Nia is feeling stuck – she doesn’t want to leave a full-time paid job to go back to college, especially since she just got her first apartment, but wants a college degree.
12. Nia realizes without more education, she can’t move up or make more money. To make enough money right now, she has to work long hours and she’s left with no work-life balance.
13. Nia signs up for an associate program she can do without leaving her job.

How Nia Experienced Her Career Journey

Positive
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are your observations about Nia’s journey?

Which experience was most surprising to you, and why?

Which experience was least surprising to you, and why?

What is the experience you’d want a client to have in their career navigation journey?

What stands out to you on this journey map as a crossroads, where a resource or support intervention might have benefited this individual’s career journey?

What shifts can you make in your work to offer, improve, or publicize that support or intervention?

Are there policy recommendations that would improve outcomes for Chicago Childcare Workers?