2006 Compilation of Promising Practices

Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative
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Introduction

The 2006 Compilation of Promising Practices has been prepared to acknowledge and share examples of counties striving to support successful youth transitions throughout California. Some of the organizations featured here are members of Youth Transition Action Teams which have been working with New Ways to Work to strengthen their youth serving systems through innovative, collaborative efforts. The Compilation has been written with several audiences in mind: child welfare, juvenile justice, and workforce development practitioners, educators, policy makers, and institutional leaders at the local and state levels, and the partners and potential partners needed to develop a strong and vibrant system. We invite you to read these stories, take stock of the effective and innovative programs, and find ideas that can be adapted to support your mission and goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

New Ways to Work would like to thank all of the dedicated YTAT Team members and youth service providers who are working hard to build systems that provide youth with the comprehensive supports they need to prepare for adulthood. In particular, YTAT extends its thanks to the people who spoke with our staff about their programs, and who read draft articles. Without their contributions, this compilation would not be nearly so useful.

YTAT would also like to recognize the young people of California, many of whom are facing huge challenges yet nevertheless are bringing their vibrant talents and energies to bear as they make their way to successful futures.

THE YOUTH TRANSITION ACTION TEAMS INITIATIVE

The Youth transition Action team Initiative (YTAT), established in September 2004, was designed to assist California’s counties in supporting their Child Welfare Systems Improvement efforts by creating comprehensive local youth transition systems that support youth touched by the foster care system. Building upon the success of the All Youth-One System model developed for the California State Youth Council by New Ways to Work, the YTAT Initiative began pilot activities in twelve California Counties in 2005. The initiative focuses on bringing together the resources of the workforce, education, social service, philanthropic, and Child Welfare Systems to better prepare current or former foster youth achieve economic, educational, and employment success as they transition into the adult world. The strategy is designed to support counties statewide in meeting their systems improvement objectives.

ABOUT PROMISING PRACTICES AND THE FORMAT OF THIS COMPILATION

Promising Practices—short articles describing an approach or idea with potential and innovative thinking—were collected in 2006 as a means to share ideas among Youth Transition Action Team members and service providers. Promising Practices are written with readers in mind, and include the following information to provide some of the most useful information: the challenge facing the community that prompted them to develop a new practice or program, the practice the community instituted to address the challenge and the evidence that it was working, details about how the program was established, how the community evaluates (or plans to evaluate) the practice, lessons learned through the process, and plans for the future.
THE ALL YOUTH-ONE SYSTEM APPROACH TO SYSTEM BUILDING

Youth Transition Action Teams support their counties in meeting systems improvement objectives, facilitate inter-agency collaboration at the local and state levels, and bring local programs, initiatives, and institutions to a single table to strategize how to eliminate duplication of services, maximize multiple funding sources, and implement long-range plans to improve transition outcomes for foster youth.

Four core elements, illustrated in the chart on the following page, must be in place in order to provide a balanced set of services, opportunities and supports to youth, and ensure their success as they transition to adulthood. These four content elements are supported by a fifth: a community-wide structure and approach that ensures the coordination of a continuum of services across programs, institutions, and projects and delivers those programs and services with a youth development approach. These elements and descriptions of their respective goals are listed below.

**Academic Achievement**
- All Youth are engaged in their learning in the classroom
  - Adults promote high academic and technical success
  - Workplace experiences support classroom learning
  - Multiple educational approaches address individual needs
  - Standards-based alternatives are available at all levels of education

**Career Preparation**
- All youth are engaged in their learning in the workplace and community
  - Early employment exposure and experiences are provided
  - Quality work-based learning opportunities are in place
  - Employers and workplace partners provide work and learning opportunities
  - Classroom learning supports career preparation

**Community Services and Support**
- All youth receive individualized services and community support
  - All youth have safe and stable living arrangements
  - All youth have strong and enduring adult and peer connections
  - All youth receive life skills training and practice
  - A full range of social services is available

**Youth Leadership**
- Youth are visible and active in leadership roles
  - Youth actively participate in decisions about their lives
  - Youth voice drives policy and decision making
  - Youth are encouraged and supported in leadership roles
  - Youth leadership opportunities are leveraged and connected

**Comprehensive Youth Development Approach**
- A formal network provides the foundation for an equitable and coordinated system
  - All activities embody a youth development approach
  - Individualized, youth-centered plans guide programs and services
  - Engaged community leadership supports collaboration
  - Adequate resources are available and leveraged
  - A quality system is responsive to individual and cultural differences
  - The community publicly supports a focus on youth issues
Elements of a Comprehensive Youth Serving System

Core Functions of Youth Transition Action Teams
CORE FUNCTIONS OF A YOUTH TRANSITION ACTION TEAM

Five broad functions describe the roles and actions undertaken by a local Youth Transition Action Team as it builds and supports a comprehensive youth transition system. Each function needs to be addressed if a Youth Transition Action Team is to be successful in its efforts. A functional description – rather than a task or activities list – allows local Youth Transition Action Teams to develop their own plans, conduct operations that are responsive to local needs, and take advantage of unique opportunities. At the same time, Youth Transition Action Teams from diverse communities facing different sets of challenges can, by focusing on the functional aspects of the work, communicate, share practices, and build on each other’s accomplishments.

The five Functions a local Youth Transition Action Team performs to support the development of a comprehensive system, are illustrated on the chart on the following page and described in greater detail below.

Convene Leaders and Promote Policy
Youth Transition Action Teams bring together key leaders, practitioners, youth, and others across a range of sectors to support systems alignment and develop a policy environment that prioritizes youth issues. These leaders are able to make commitments of behalf of the organizations they represent and often dedicate staff and/or resources to mutually prioritized efforts.

Create Linkages and Connect Systems
Youth Transition Action Teams facilitate the creation of a community network of services and supports to ensure successful transitions for youth emancipating from the child welfare system. They provide the leadership for bringing together a full range of targeted programs, and eventually, all core services provide for young people in the community, including public education at all levels, social services and workforce development.

Measure Effectiveness
Youth Transition Action Teams set goals, establish standards for services, and measure their effectiveness against those goals and standards. They utilize external and internal evaluation and data collection tools to assess progress against defined outcomes, measure effectiveness, and improve program practice.

Build Awareness
Youth Transition Action Teams educate the community about issues affecting current and former foster youth, and build awareness around other issues critical to the lives of youth in transition. They support a community that keeps youth at the center of the public eye, and conduct outreach to families and the community at large.

Improve Program Practice
Youth Transition Action Teams regularly review and assess their program and system practices, and regularly engage in efforts to align systems and improve services within the programs they operate. They provide the communications link among all parties, effectively engage private sector partners, and promote permanence for the youth they serve.
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative
Leveraging Community Resources to Ensure Successful Transitions for Foster Youth

Alameda County Project HOPE
Connects Social Services with WIA Services

Submitted by: Alameda County Workforce Investment Board (ACWIB). Written by Thou Ny

Community: Alameda County, California

Key Partners: Alameda County Workforce Investment Board (ACWIB), Alameda County Department of Social Services

Subject: Cross-System Collaboration, Career Preparation, Housing

All Youth - One System Element: Career Preparation, Community Services and Support

Function: Create Linkages and Connect Systems

The Challenge:
Alameda County is home to some 700-800 youth in foster care who are between the ages of 16 and 18. Each year, approximately 200 to 250 of these youth age out the foster care system into the labor market. The labor market in Alameda County can be very competitive, and obtaining a job requires a tremendous number of skills. Not only do youth need the skills for a specific occupation, but also they require the skills involved in obtaining and maintaining a job. Many studies of foster youth show that up to 50% are not adequately prepared for the labor market’s challenges. As a result, these youth are not employable, and many do end up becoming homeless caught in other negative situations, which is a serious concern for Alameda County Social Services administrators.

The Practice and Evidence:
The practice The Alameda County Workforce Investment Board (ACWIB) prepares aging-out and emancipated foster youth for adulthood and the labor market through a County-wide partnership with the child welfare system known as Project HOPE: Helping Our young People with Education and Employment. The project is aimed at incorporating employment preparation services into the child welfare system. Approximately two years in the making, Project HOPE was one of the first programs in the nation to address the needs of foster youth by connecting County Children and Family Services with Workforce Investment Act services.

Through interagency collaboration between the County’s workforce development system and the child welfare system, Project HOPE offers transitioning and former foster youth an array of employment and educational preparation services made available by the Workforce Investment Act. By connecting foster youth to WIA youth funded programs, Project HOPE makes it possible for youth to participate in academic enhancement or job preparation activities. Working in conjunction with the County’s Independent Living Skills Program, the project assisted many aging-out youth into jobs, housing, and higher education. To expose foster youth to a variety of community services, Project HOPE also connects them to the One-Stop career center system in Alameda County.
The evidence: Project HOPE has altered the disconnected landscape between child welfare and the workforce systems. Prior to Project HOPE, the County's workforce investment and child welfare systems did not have a history of engagement with each other. Today, both systems are working together to integrate their programs to reduce transition barriers for foster youth.

More importantly, Project HOPE has found a way to bring much needed resources to aging out foster youth and the foster care system. Since its inception, Project HOPE has had excellent outcomes. It has reported 100% enrollment and placement in direct service delivery from its inception through April 2004. According to Rosario Flores, Program Finance Specialist for the ACWIB many youth are now getting jobs. Flores emphasized that the project works because the two systems are partnering. "The main word here is collaboration," she said. "Without the two systems working together and leveraging resources, the project would not exist today."

The Details:
The process used to establish the practice: In early 2002, the ACWIB and the County’s Department of Children and Family Services formed a transition care committee and initiated numerous discussions among key administrators to address emancipation issues. Over the next several months, members of the committee enlisted other members from within the child welfare services and external community organizations to help identify the needs of transitioning foster youth and develop and promote a framework for action.

Together, the committee members set an ambitious goal to integrate WIA services into the child welfare system so that transitioning-age and emancipated foster youth can be better prepared for the labor market. The effort was eventually named Project HOPE.

Once the program design was formulated, Program Finance Specialist Rosario Flores, with the support of the newly formed partnership, approached the Alameda County Workforce Investment Board (ACWIB) and requested funds to start Project HOPE. Specifically, they asked for support to create two full-time positions, an employment consultant and a staff person, for direct service delivery and program implementation.

The employment consultant’s work was to be three-fold; he or she would act as a liaison between agencies, be responsible for connecting foster youth to WIA programs, and develop a systemic framework to integrate the county workforce development and child welfare systems. The full-time staff person was to facilitate meetings among community stakeholders and to develop connecting infrastructures between the two systems. ACWIB allocated monies, and Project HOPE was launched and grew into a full-fledged program.

Project HOPE was later selected to be one of the three statewide foster youth pilot initiatives by the Governor’s Foster Youth Employment Training and Housing Taskforce, an inter-agency collaboration between the Employment Development Department, the California Department of Social Services, and the California Workforce Investment Board. The support from the taskforce enabled the project to work towards its goals as well as to develop a possible framework for other workforce development and child welfare practitioners to help reduce homelessness among aging out foster youth.

The strategy and practice: Project HOPE was strategically designed to have a strong foundation in the WIA-funded efforts. Because it was initiated and funded in part by the ACWIB, the Project HOPE staff have been able to bring the majority of the WIA-funded youth service providers in Alameda County to participate in its efforts. Each participating program was asked to...
specifically designate a case manager to handle foster youth referrals from the child welfare system generated by the HOPE referral process.

Another major key to the success of Project HOPE has been the strong support that top administrators in the County’s workforce development and child welfare systems offer. Without their support, institutional barriers cannot be reduced, and therefore integration cannot take place as easily. The administrators help the project move forward within the organizational structures, which in turn helps to generate support and reduce other external barriers from the greater community. Project HOPE would have a lesser degree of involvement and participation from the community if the top administrators were not interested.

An additional integral component of Project HOPE has been a campaign to educate foster care social workers since many were unaware of what the WIA and the One-Stop Career Centers had to offer. “Caseloads are so large, and it’s hard for youth to understand that they have to start employment planning as early as 16. So [the process] starts with educating the social workers,” Flores points out.

A great deal of preparation went into creating the educational materials for the foster care social workers. During the initial stages of Project HOPE, the employment consultant spent a considerable amount of time understanding the challenges of foster care system, particularly the needs of the child welfare workers. Child welfare workers have a lot on their plate, so information about employment must be presented within the contexts of their work. Fortunately, WIA services fit perfectly into the child welfare workers’ efforts to help youth transition into adulthood, so getting information about WIA services to child welfare workers is a matter of navigating the system’s organizational structure. With ample support from top administrators, Project HOPE has access to Child Welfare Unit meetings and other transitional programs for presentations about employment and WIA services.

On the workforce side, although foster youth are named in the Workforce Investment Act as youth with critical barriers to employment and self-sufficiency, WIA service providers know very little about the child welfare system and foster youth. Therefore, the other half of Project HOPE’s educational work involves introducing WIA service providers to the child welfare system and the needs of foster youth. Here, too, Project HOPE staff dedicated a great deal of time and effort to understanding the landscapes of the WIA system and the needs of the service providers.

Finally, because of the variety of resources and social services available at the One-Stops, transitioning-age foster youth can benefit tremendously from these centers. However, since the services offered at these centers are for adults, accessing these services can be very intimidating for youth. To introduce foster youth to One-Stop services, Project HOPE integrated three peer educators (foster youth employment specialists) at various sites in Alameda County, including the City of Oakland. The peer educators are former foster youth who understand various issues affecting their peers. As crucial team members, they play a key role in making the centers more youth friendly to foster youth as well as assisting them with navigating available resources and help them access other community services as needed.

Lessons Learned:
Flores explained that Project HOPE’s success stems from its many-faceted approach, which includes adequate staffing, regular communication among stakeholders, strong support from top administrators, and customized education for foster care social workers and WIA service providers.
The first component is adequate staffing. “A full-time paid staff person to make the liaison work and to conduct the necessary publicity campaigns is essential,” Flores maintains, as is the employment consultant. Flores refers to the employment consultant as a “change agent” who puts a working system in place before moving on. “When the consultant leaves, you have an ongoing referral process and network in place, with the question of getting resources to youth always at the center,” she explained.

Partnering with nongovernmental organizations dedicated to serving foster youth has also been invaluable. Representatives from Casey Family Programs, the National Center for Youth Law, and others have been very instrumental in the exploration and navigation of the WIA and child welfare systems. Their knowledge of transition issues and workforce development and child welfare policies is a tremendous help to the whole effort.

Regular communication among all the stakeholders is also a key strategy. “Roundtable discussions with key individuals and organizations, on at least a monthly basis [have been vital],” says Flores. The monthly meeting is great vehicle for the transition care committee or Project HOPE advisory team to address and resolve challenges. The institutional and programmatic challenges between the two systems are enormous. Without these monthly meetings to keep the partners and advisors engaged with ongoing technical issues, problems, and successes, progress would have been slow.

Where to go for more information:
ALAMEDA COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
24100 Amador Street, 6th Floor
Hayward, CA 94544-1203
(510) 259-3842
(510) 259-3845 (fax)
www.acwib.org

Rosario Flores
Program Finance Specialist
Alameda County Workforce Investment Board
24100 Amador Street, 6th Floor
Hayward, CA 94544-1203
(510) 259-3827
RFlores2@acgov.org
“BustNOut” Website Provides Current and Former Foster Youth with Access to Information

Submitted by: Glenn County Human Resources Agency

Community: Glenn County, California and counties in the northern region of California

Key Partners: The lead partner is Glenn County Human Resources Agency (HRA). Butte County was also a funding partner, in the origination phase. Other partners include the Independent Living Program providers, One-Stops, and county welfare departments of the northern region: Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, and Yuba Counties, as well as Yuba College.

Subject: Comprehensive Website for Foster Youth

All Youth – One System Element: Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice; Access to Information

The Challenge:
The staff of Glenn County Human Resources Agency (HRA) who work with foster youth saw the struggles these young people face when they transition to adulthood. A number of times the youth were disadvantaged because they lacked a sense of where to go and what to do as they were emancipating. They often don’t have access to resources, and they [frequently] aren’t welcomed in employment resource centers. HRA staff thought that a youth-friendly website could be an effective way to make the information available to youth transitioning from foster care.

While mandated to serve the emancipating foster youth in Glenn County, the HRA staff recognized that youth in neighboring counties were experiencing the same difficulty. They thought it might be possible to pool efforts and resources to serve youth throughout the area with a single web site. The intention was to help foster youth find a local One-Stop center. “If we could put information on the web, if they had access to it, they could see all the resources that are available to them,” explained David Allee, Employment Manager for the HRA.

The Practice:
The result of the regional effort was a foster youth–friendly website called BustNOut.com, on line since 2004. The site features information from each of the participating counties. Employment information is showcased in each county as well as agency contact information to assist with health and safety issues. Topics include the following subjects:

- personal survival
- health
- housing
- rights
- One-Stop Centers in their region
- Records
- the courts
- education and training
- jobs and careers
- money and budgeting
- transportation
- entertainment
- service directories
- fostering community
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

A message board is provided. Former foster youth who have made the transition to adulthood successfully offer advice in an advice column. Discussion forums are also available for peer support, foster youth alumni, and former foster youth (youth who returned to their families before emancipating).

The Details:
The process used to establish the practice: Scott Gruendl, Administrative Deputy Director for the HRA, initiated the collaborative. The website was developed in stages with stakeholder input gathered from throughout the region. Glenn County HRA extended invitations to the 15 other northernmost counties in California to participate. Most of the counties and/or the ILP providers took part at some point in the process as did Yuba College.

The strategy and practice: Designing and establishing the web site was accomplished in three phases: 1) gathering design input from stakeholders; 2) populating the website with content from the various counties, marketing the website to ILP providers, and installing the server; and 3) completing the content and training county staffs to carry out the administrative functions.

The first phase involved getting stakeholder input. “We asked people who provide services and who work in ILP to sit down with us and begin designing a web-based product,” explained Allee. “We also asked current and former foster youth.” In January of 2003 they started holding focus groups, brainstorming sessions, and some workshops to help in the design and standards. They chose four locations throughout the region - Susanville, Redding, Williams, and Chico - to make it easier for stakeholders to participate. Approximately 90 people attended in total, including foster youth. In all the meetings, the approach was to hear from the youth and those who serve them about what was wanted.

At the end of the first phase, the initial funders—Glenn County’s HRA and Butte County—put out a call for bids for someone to create the product. They chose a provider from Chico to create the web site and provide message board moderating services. Glenn and Butte shared initial responsibility for maintenance and updates. They also supplied training for all the participating counties so the administering staff would know how to update and maintain their county-specific portion. The training took place during the spring of 2004. The cost for this highly useful, regional support effort for foster youth is very modest, totaling only $85,000 from inception to now. To date the HRA of Glenn County has not passed on any costs to other counties. “We are paying for the maintenance and upkeep at this point, primarily through HRA,” said Allee.

What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
The next step is to enhance access to other counties by marketing the site. This could be managed through any media such as television ads, radio announcements, and/or public service announcements on cable access television. The plan could also include potential billboard advertising and for branding a number of materials.

Where to go for more information
GLENN COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY
420 East Laurel Street
Willows CA 95988
(530) 865-6128
www.hra.co.glenn.ca.us

David Allee
Employment Services Manager
Glenn County Human Resources Agency
420 East Laurel Street
Willows CA 95988
(530) 865-6128
mailto:dallee@hra.co.glenn.ca.us
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

Links:
BustNOut website  www.bustnout.com

BustNOut PowerPoint  www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/bustnout.com
California Connected by 25 Initiative
Is Helping Counties Expand Services and Supports

Submitted by: Crystal Luffberry, Program Manager, California Connected by 25 Initiative

Communities: Alameda, Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus Counties, California

Key Partners: Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative, Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, Walter S. Johnson foundation, Stuart Foundation, and William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Subjects: Systems Improvement, Education, Career Preparation, Community Services and Support

All Youth - One System Elements: Education, Career Preparation, Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
More than 83,000 children are in foster care in California today – all of whom have been removed from their homes to protect them from harm. For these children and youth, the State of California assumes the responsibilities associated with parenting, including preparing older youth to function successfully on their own. However, discharging foster youth at age 18, or shortly thereafter, from state-provided supports and services results in many of these youth having no place to live, no job, and no family safety net or lifelong committed adults to support their transition.

Adolescence is a time of discovery, growth, and developing independence; however, few young people at age 18 are prepared to be wholly alone and independent, especially foster youth who are already overcoming difficult circumstances and have had their homes and family lives disrupted. The 4,000 foster youth who transition out of California’s foster care system every year face daunting odds. National and other research have shown that 46% of foster youth drop out of high school, 25% become homeless and 51% are unemployed.

Many valuable programs are in place, but still more support is needed. Public investments in three key programs - Independent Living Program (ILP), Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP+), and Chafee Educational Training Voucher Program (ETV) - totaled $51.4 million in FY 05-06, but served only a portion of the foster youth who could benefit from these services. Philanthropic investments have been important in building upon and expanding these resources for youth in programs such as Guardian Scholars, California Permanency for Youth Project, etc. Ensuring that youth who age out of care have the means and the motivation to become successful adults requires expanding the focus of supports and services to include significant new investments and innovative approaches to support these youth to explore their unique talents.
and interests; develop knowledge, skills and aspirations; and establish the relationships and connections that they will depend on for a lifetime.

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice: The California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) was developed with this expansion of supports and services in mind. A pilot program of California’s Family to Family Initiative (F2F), CC25I is a foster youth transitions reform initiative targeted towards youth ages 14 to 24. The purpose of CC25I is to develop a comprehensive continuum of services supporting positive youth development and successful foster youth transition to adulthood. CC25I is part of the national Connected by 25 Initiative established by the Youth Transition funders Group, a network of grant makers whose mission is to help vulnerable youth connect by age 25 to the opportunities, experiences, and support systems that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. Five California Family to Family counties have been participating in CC25I since it began in 2005: Alameda, Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus. Each is building upon the F2F and Youth Transitions and Permanency work they have already accomplished. CC25I counties receive up to $480,000 in grant assistance over three years to implement plans developed as a result of a self-assessment process and technical assistance.

The Evidence: County planning and implementation of CC25I proposals is on track and sites are very excited by their work and progress. Partnerships are being expanded and promising programs and practices are developing within the counties. This includes new partnerships with local education agencies, financial institutions, local Workforce Investment Boards, and the start-up of three new Gateway programs and three new Transitional Housing Plus programs (THP+). The increased focus on K-12 education outcomes and post-secondary education has resulted in several CC25I counties considering development of Guardian Scholar programs. In addition, several counties are implementing matched savings accounts (Individual Development Accounts) to encourage financial competency, savings, and asset development.

A database and outcomes framework has been developed for county self-evaluation and program improvement regarding youth transition. Though no data are available yet, counties have reported that developing their capacity to track outcomes for this population of youth and providing the database needed to do so is very important step in their transition system reform efforts.

The Details:

Process for establishing the program: Two key funders of California foster youth programs and youth transition programs - Teri Kook of Stuart Foundation and Denis Udall of Walter S. Johnson Foundation - partnered with California’s Family to Family site team leader, Bill Bettencourt. Together they developed a vision in 2004 for a comprehensive initiative to help county agencies partner with their communities, integrate systems, and build local continuums of supports and services that would improve the outcomes for emancipating/emancipated foster youth. Through information sharing, peer exchange, and coordinated grant making, funding was expanded. The extensive collaboration by Stuart Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and California’s Family to Family Initiative were key to laying the foundation that made this initiative possible. By aligning the Initiative with the work of the Youth Transition Funders Group’s Foster Care Work Group and establishing this Initiative as part of the national Connected by 25 demonstration sites, funding was further expanded by grants from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as well as the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation; additional in-kind resources were made available from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

In addition to grants to participating counties, funding is supporting training and technical assistance to counties and their partners, development and implementation of a CC25I outcomes framework and database, and a systems evaluation by UC Berkeley. Through the CC25I grants made to the county agencies participating in the initiative, further local, state, and federal funds are leveraged for this work.

**Strategy and practice:** Counties are building their CC25I programs on the partnership, team decision-making, and self-evaluation already well established in their F2F programs. CC25I benefits from the momentum and visibility of F2F in the state, and ensures CC25I is understood and recognized as a reform and system improvement initiative in public child welfare.

Several requirements are made of each CC25I county. Because of the lack of data regarding this population and the inability of counties to evaluate their transition programs based on outcome data and trends, CC25I counties must agree to implement the CC25I database and gather and enter transition outcome data for all in-care foster youth 16 to 19 years old, and for a random sample of emancipated foster youth 18 to 21 years old. In addition, counties must participate with their local community partners in assessment of their current transition system in order to identify gaps, prioritize needs, and determine strategies for building a comprehensive continuum of supports and services for transitioning foster youth ages 14 to 24. Their assessment, planning, and proposal must address 7 focus areas critical to youth transition: K-12 education, housing, employment/job training/postsecondary education, personal and social asset development, financial literacy/savings and assets, and permanency, as all are necessary and interrelated for success in adulthood. Outreach, youth engagement, community partnership, training and technical assistance, and twice-yearly convenings have been critical to county success, not only in implementation of the initiative, but also in planning and development of local CC25I proposals.

**Evaluation:** An outcomes framework consisting of data indicators across the 7 focus areas (K-12 education, housing, employment/job training/postsecondary education, personal and social asset development, financial literacy/savings and assets, and permanency) has been developed. This framework can be utilized for youth 14 to 24, but it is only required to be used for in-care youth aged 16 to 19, and aftercare youth 18 to 21. Child welfare, probation and/or ILP workers conduct an assessment questionnaire with in-care youth or their caregiver every six months (generally at the time of court or administrative review and case-plan/TILP development). An assessment questionnaire is also completed at the point of each youth’s emancipation, as well as on or near the 19th, 20th, and 21st birthday for a random sample of emancipated youth. The assessment questionnaire includes information on the required data/outcomes indicators and data gathered by the workers is then entered into the CC25I database, which has been developed in web-based Efforts to Outcome software (ETO). The CC25I database also includes fields, mailing labels, etc. for ILP program case management. A Custom report is being developed for the required Independent Living Program Annual Statistical Report (SOC 405) and the Annual Narrative Report. Many reports are available in ETO and others can be created through use of a Query Wizard. See Links, below, to view a copy of the CC25I outcomes framework. (Note: Those indicators that are in bold are required to be gathered and entered in CC25I ETO.)

**Lessons learned:**
Crystal Luffberry, Project Manager for CC25I, shared three strategies for improving practices:

- It is critical for child welfare and their partners to engage together in a broad-based assessment and planning process in order to identify gaps, prioritize needs, align their goals, and develop strategies for integrating systems and meeting the comprehensive needs of
transitioning foster youth. See Links, below, to access a copy of the CC25I assessment document.

- The state and county context is ever-changing and affects planning, implementation, and marketing/outreach. See opportunities in those changes, network and brainstorm regarding how to use those changes to your advantage. Partner with others working on transition-age youth issues through alignment of goals, activities, and funding whenever possible. A strong collaborative philosophy and network of resources will bring the most flexibility and adaptability to any situation.

- Build in opportunities to step back from planning and/or implementation and consider whether or how peer support and/or technical assistance might be helpful. Getting a fresh perspective and some targeted information can really help.

**What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**

“We hope to add three new CC25I counties next year [2007] and will work during the coming year with our counties on sustainability of their Connected by 25 work,” said Luffberry. “We are in the early stages of planning a short video or DVD encouraging donation/investment in opportunities for emancipated youth such as funds to support housing, postsecondary education, matched savings accounts, etc. Our vision is for this DVD to be available to and potentially utilized by community or children’s foundations across the state to seek donor-advised funds or other community donations to help former foster youth achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations.”

**Where to go for more information:**
CALIFORNIA CONNECTED BY 25 INITIATIVE
Crystal Luffberry
Project Manager
670 Twilight Court
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 533-3867
(209) 533-3890 (fax)
ca.connectedby25@sbcglobal.net

**Links:**
CC25I Logic Model

CC25I Outcomes Framework

CC25I Assessment Document

CC25I “Initiative in Brief”
[www.f2f.ca.gov/res/CAConnected.pdf](http://www.f2f.ca.gov/res/CAConnected.pdf)
Contra Costa County Foster Youth Services Program Helps Transitioning Youth

Submitted by: Catherine Giacalone, Contra Costa County Office of Education, Youth Development Services

Community: Contra Costa County, California

Key Partners: Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD), Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP), Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCOE), Contra Costa County Workforce Investment Board (WIB), Contra Costa County Probation Department

Subject: Education, Career Preparation, and Transition Support

All Youth – One System Element: Education; Career Preparation; Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
The fragmented system of services in Contra Costa County was not preparing foster youth to transition to employment. Part of the problem was that many foster youth were frequently changing schools, which made it difficult for them to complete high school before they emancipated. The correlation between a high school diploma and meaningful, sustaining employment is well documented. High school completion or a GED is a minimal requirement for employment with a viable living wage. There was a realization that preparing for a successful career began long before one's 18th birthday.

The Practice and Evidence:
The practice: Representatives from the education, workforce development, and social service systems in Contra Costa County met to address education, transition, and career readiness. The partners made a commitment to help transitioning foster youth and out-of-home youth get necessary support and services. The approach was to address a common need: to keep foster youth enrolled in school. Education liaisons were hired to facilitate the location of school records, timely enrollment in school, and ultimately to improve academic performance.

The evidence: In the 2005-2006 program year 550 group home youth and 950 foster and kinship families received services through the Foster Youth Service Program. Five hundred fifty-seven school records were transferred to other schools. The average number of days between entering placement and enrolling in school was two days. Eight hundred foster youth received an Education Plan and post-secondary educational support services through the Independent Living Skills program.
The Details:

Process for establishing the program: The Contra Costa County Office of Education received a grant to convene countywide foster youth service providers in order to better address educational outcomes for group home youth. The Employment and Human Services Department was interested in expanding the program to address the needs of all youth in out-of-home placement and provided additional funding to expand the role of the Education Liaisons. Probation joined to seek resources for the young people in the juvenile justice system. Many of the agencies were motivated by legislative mandates and the need to develop a system to track educational records and to support school performance for foster youth. The Workforce Investment Board also focused resources on foster youth, directing funding toward high school completion, career assessment, job internships, and post-secondary school opportunities and/or careers.

Strategy and practice: The strategy that was developed centered on the co-location of Education Liaisons, who are employed by CCCOE and housed at Employment and Human Services offices as well as Probation. Having Liaisons on-site provided social workers with easy access to educators familiar with school processes and procedures and created an environment that fostered collaboration. Each school district in Contra Costa County identified a Foster Youth Services Liaison who works with the County Liaison to assist with enrollment, record location, and school success. The Education Liaisons also participate in the Team Decision Making process. All transitioning youth meet with a team of professionals prior to emancipation to help them plan for a successful transition. EHSD partially funds the Education Liaisons.

The Workforce Investment Act Counselors work closely with the Independent Living Skills program to further support high school completion, post-secondary school opportunities, and career preparation. The WIA counselors are located at school districts and at One Stops throughout the county. Strategic planning took place through a Foster Youth Services Advisory group that developed the co-location plan and provides oversight. The Advisory Group meets quarterly.

Evaluation: Currently the program is monitoring the number of Health and Education passports completed at EHSD and at Probation. Additionally each CCCOE/WIA counselor develops Individual Service Strategy plans for the foster youth enrolled in the WIA program. Twenty percent of each counselor caseload is reserved for foster youth. Each youth has an education and employment goal. Goal attainment for each youth is tracked.

Lessons Learned:
Locating CCCOE staff within Employment and Human Services has helped to eliminate institutional barriers and created opportunities for meaningful collaboration that has benefited foster youth.

What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
The Foster Youth Services Advisory Board is expanding to include new partners. This year the Education Liaisons will also be located at the Children’s Residential Placement Unit (the unit that places group home youth) and on high school campuses with large numbers of foster youth.
Where to go for more information
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
77 Santa Barbara Road
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
(925) 942-3388
www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/

Catherine Giacalone
Youth Development Services Manager
Contra Costa County Office of Education
77 Santa Barbara Road
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
(925) 942-3308
(925) 942-3490 (fax)
cgiacalone@cccoe.k12.ca.us
www.cocoschools.org

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY EMPLOYMENT & HUMAN SERVICES
Debi Moss
Division Manager
40 Douglas Drive
Martinez, CA 94553
(925) 313-1588
www.ehsd.org/sitemap.html

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
2425 Bisso Lane
Concord, CA
Teri Shields
Workforce Development Board Staff
(925) 646-5254
tshields@ehsd.cccounty.us
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative
Leveraging Community Resources to Ensure Successful Transitions for Foster Youth

Humboldt County Peer Counselors Help Foster Youth Navigate Employment Referral Options

Submitted by: Humboldt County Department of Social Services

Community: Humboldt County, California

Key Partners: Thirty to Forty people are participating in efforts to improve career preparation and employment supports for foster youth through the Humboldt County Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT). Beverly Morgan Lewis, Director of the Social Services Branch of the Humboldt County Health and Human Services Department, is leading the effort. Members of the YTAT include the Chair of the Humboldt County Youth Council, the District Attorney, the Director of Public Health, and the Chief Probation Officer, as well as youth.

Subject: Work Preparation

All Youth - One System Element: Career Preparation

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
The Job Market in Eureka, the county seat, is the focus of workforce development services in Humboldt County. It serves as the One-Stop Center for the largest area of the county. “We try to focus all employment efforts through the One-Stop,” said Stephen Hughes, Employment and Training Program Coordinator with the County. Seven partners are co-located in the One-Stop, and it has proven to be a very effective model for employers and for adult job seekers. The weak area was serving youth. Youth were not finding the Eureka One-Stop to be friendly, and the self-service model wasn’t effective. As a result, “We weren’t serving the numbers of youth that we wanted to,” noted Hughes. Some youth are being served through Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs in the schools - operated by 5 local education agencies throughout the county - but the services offered at the five sites were not always comprehensive.

The Practice and Evidence:
The Practice: The Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Social Services Branch, made two changes that are helping to make the Eureka One-Stop more youth friendly. First, responding to a suggestion from young people themselves, the partners decided to have youth counselors automatically meet with any youth who walk into the One-Stop and help them get connected to services. In addition, the partners decided to describe the available services along a continuum, from the least intrusive self-service options through peer counseling and on to high intervention services. A brochure for youth to highlight these options has been developed.

The Evidence: The plan has been in process for several months, and “officially” in place for three months, and the numbers of youth aged 14 – 18 has risen 50% over the 1st quarter of
2006. Hughes said that people think it’s working well, and other foster youth-serving programs are including the One-Stop in their trainings. “We’ve been included in Independent Living Skills (ILS) trainings and school curriculum, said Hughes. “The One-Stop center is now a piece of the ILS training as a result of this paradigm shift. People come and take tours and teach classes on site. “On the whole”, said Hughes, “this adjustment improved services to youth quite a bit.”

Staff at the One-Stop have also responded positively to having youth counselors meet with youth customers. “This model where youth serve youth is also better for the adults working at the One-Stop,” added Hughes. Adult staff sometimes don’t know what to do with the youth [who may come in looking and talking differently]. It’s great to have the youth “ambassadors” intervene and help everyone get to know one another.”

Hughes noted that while the number of youth they are serving has risen during the past three months, more specific evaluation will be forthcoming. (See Evaluation Approach under The Details as well as Next Steps, below, for more information about evaluation.)

The Details:  
Process used to establish the practice: ‘Oddly enough it was very simple,” said Hughes. The solution came from the youth themselves. The Humboldt County YTAT had formed a subcommittee on youth employment to ask what are the [employment] services for youth? The young people serving on the subcommittee said the One-Stop was not youth friendly. They knew some youth who would not go there because the word was out that it was not welcoming. The adults on the subcommittee then asked the youth serving with them why the One-Stop was not a place they would go. They also spoke with youth in the Independent Living Skills (ILS) program and elsewhere, asking them the same question. Everything was considered, including the way the One-Stop looked.

The most significant barrier turned out to be the fact that nobody was really speaking “youthspeak.” As soon as this problem was identified, the Youth Employment Opportunity Program (YEOP) counselors, who were on the subcommittee, suggested they be the ones to talk with youth coming into the One-Stop.

The YEOP is a state program run by the Employment Development Department (EDD) to serve youth at risk of dropping out of school through youth employment, peer counseling, and referrals to supportive services and training. It involves recruiting and training youth to serve as mentors to other youth in county employment development programs. Peer counselors, who are themselves at risk youth, receive intensive EDD training that enables them to perform career development and job placement services for participants. They are trained to be mentors and an experienced job representative mentors them.

Strategy and practice: Hughes noted that in all the successful strategies for serving youth they reviewed, a common element was the idea that youth often find it easier to talk with other youth. Based on the subcommittee’s findings, the partners decided to use the YEOP peer counselors who were already working at the One-Stop Center to meet with any youth who comes to the center. “We have particularly good YEOP counselors, and they are willing to accept new clients,” said Hughes. Emilia Bartolomeu, EDD Manager, agreed it was a good idea to have them meet with any youth that drop in. “Emilia has been a staunch supporter of the YTAT”, said Hughes, “we could not have done this without her”. When youth come in to the One-Stop, they are guided to the YEOP person, who helps them get connected to services.
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As part of the effort to improve outreach, a Youth Brochure of the services was put together. It highlights three main, consistent levels of service: 1) self service information and workshops open to everyone without any counseling; 2) YEOP peer counseling for youth ages 15-21 at risk of dropping out; and 3) WIA programs with intensive case management that also includes individual planning and basic skills remediation when needed. “Those three levels of service need to be linked, and we hope we’ve done that through this approach”, Hughes said. “People move through the system until they get a job. People who don’t get a job at the WIA level should be involved in a case review between WIA and the original referring agency.” Hughes pointed out that some youth don’t need the intensive level of intervention provided by WIA, which “is generally intended to be a long-term program.”

The Youth Brochure is part of the effort to link foster youth to the level of service they need and also to make sure youth don’t fall through the cracks if the level they first enter doesn’t entirely meet their needs. The YTAT is keeping the brochure “dynamic” by printing only a small number of copies at a time so they can make changes as needed and can include new programs and training providers. Social Services is providing funding for the brochure and is willing to adjust it to meet changing needs.

Evaluation: Humboldt County’s Social Services Branch will be working with the Independent Living Skills (ILS) program and with Probation to identify youth interested in employment. The tracking of these cases will help to determine what is working well and what needs to be changed. Customer satisfaction surveys, already in use at the One-Stop, will also be used to assess effectiveness.

Lessons learned:
Hughes identified four lessons:
1. Having decision makers at the table makes all the difference. Interagency cooperation is essential at the top level. No matter how well meaning your staff is, unless the person who holds purse strings is engaged, things won’t happen.
2. Youth must be involved in youth services to make them more effective.
3. Improving outcomes doesn’t necessarily cost a lot of money because a lot of the services are already available to youth.
4. Any youth who are interested in participating in leadership or in youth services have lots to offer. Youth don’t necessarily have to be foster youth or emancipated foster youth.

What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
Three steps are planned:
1. Monitor and refine the practice, finding and fixing weak links.
2. Implement the tracking (see Evaluation, above).
3. Marketing the peer counseling. When they are ready for a full roll out, they will market it to the schools, social services, juvenile justice, and community-based organizations by distribution of the Youth Brochure, email, website links, etc.

There are also future plans (hopes) for an electronic connection, which will consist of real time online access to counselors.
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Where to go for more information
HUMBOLDT COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Social Services Branch
Employment Training Division
930 Sixth Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Joe Davey
Program Manager
Employment Training Division
930 Sixth Street
Eureka, 95501
(707) 441-4607
jdavey@co.humboldt.ca.us

Links:
Web site for The Job Market, Humboldt County’s system of One-Stops
www.thejobmarket.org

October 2006 Youth Employment Resources brochure
www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/HumboldtBrochure.pdf

YEOP web site
www.edd.ca.gov/jsrep/jshow.htm#YouthEmploymentOpportunityProgram
Imperial County Establishes a Centralized Case Management System

Submitted by: Imperial County Youth Council

Community: Imperial County, California

Key Partners: Workforce Investment Board of Imperial County, Imperial County Youth Council, Imperial County, Imperial County Office of Employment Training Program Compliance

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services

All Youth - One System Element: Community Services and Support

Function: Create Linkages and Connect Systems

The Challenge: Imperial County is located in the southeast corner of California and is a rural, desert community. The county consistently has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, ranging from 22 percent in winter to 35 percent in the summer months. The population is about 150,000 (70 percent Hispanic) and has been identified by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) as having one of the highest concentrations of Workforce Investment Act (WIA)–eligible youth in the state (33 percent). Imperial County struggled with efficiently connecting youth with services due to a shortage of resources that strained their system, and a lack of connectivity between providers and leadership in other social service systems. Because of these inefficiencies and concerns with loss of services, the local Youth Council and Workforce Investment Board worked to identify systemic challenges and develop strategies and solutions.

The Practice and Evidence:

The Practice: In October 2003, the Workforce Investment Board of Imperial County (the WIB) made two changes to improve their efficiency when connecting youth with work. First, they transitioned to a centralized case management system in order to maximize resources. Second, they created controls for the new system to prevent loss of services. By centralizing case management, they were able to better coordinate with other service providers and more fully serve the comprehensive needs of youth. Helen Palomino, Program Analyst for the WIB, says, "By merging each other’s strengths and allowing organizations to focus on what they did best, local providers were able to support youth through their services while one body focused on the administrative case management function."

The Evidence: Since they transitioned to centralized case management, their overall performance has increased despite budget reductions of 60 percent. In fact, performance is 34 percent above their benchmark. In addition, they’ve seen minimal changes in the number of youth served. In 1999, they were serving an average of 570 youth with a budget of 2.5 million dollars. By 2004, their funding had declined to 1 million dollars for youth, yet they were able to serve 550 youth and exceed their performance agreements. Palomino says of the transition to centralized case management, "The timing could not have been better because of the
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reduction.... By centralizing case management, we were able to stay afloat and increase our performance.”

Recently their local One-Stop system underwent an efficiency study that evaluated the effectiveness and process of the whole system and found that Youth Services was given much credit. The study also favorably assessed the local Youth Services system and the partnerships that exist among the WIB, Youth Council, the County, and youth contractors for implementing an exceptional program in such early stages.

The Details:

The Process used to establish the practice: Several factors contributed to the successful merging of the centralized case management system. Youth Council members actively lobbied for a new implementation system and supported the transition. As a result, the WIB recognized that the Youth Council was a resource for implementing change. Members and WIB leadership also made it a priority to network with other individuals/organizations that were doing similar work. Developing relationships with key decision makers led to a new conversation about what was possible, culminating in agreements among the Youth Council, WIB, and Interagency Administrators.

Assuring players on all sides that their needs were being met was a challenge during the initiative. The breakthrough occurred when Swing and Palomino saw the results of creating a safe forum where contractor managers, compliance staff, and case managers could all discuss needs and opinions. Palomino says that during the course of the meetings, they were able to “just listen and get an idea about the problems and weakness, and build and create a strengthened process from it.... We were able to create ease in an environment that was previously very territorial.” What this afforded for leadership, Swing states, was for a clear “establishment of protocols. By agreeing to a give and take on all sides, a smooth and regulated process was structured.” Front line staff felt heard, and saw their ideas implemented into system change. They approached these meetings with “win-win as the message,” which Palomino says allowed participants to “experience the willingness of other players. It really just comes down to having dialogue, knowing where the challenges are, and responding accordingly.”

The strategy and practice: The Imperial County WIB was inspired by the Daisy Wheel model presented at a Youth Council Institute (YCi) workshop. Since the WIB and Youth Council had adopted the All Youth-One System approach and had participated actively in YCi, they were able to access information and resources to assist them in their transition. Palomino says that they used “YCi as a credible base for trying something new.”

After spending time exploring procurement strategies, Imperial County decided to implement a service model that was a hybrid. They integrated the Daisy Wheel model in which their local youth programs centralize case management services with services delivered via a network of youth service providers. Their model featured a combination of cost reimbursement contracts and fee for service contracts. They also established a Youth Service Provider Network made up of fee for service and cost reimbursement contractors as well as non-WIA services.

The centralized case management approach entails certain contractual requirements for their service providers. First, they must identify leveraged in-kind contributions with other youth service agencies. Second, youth contracts require an MOU-type agreement between service partners. As a result, strong collaborative and cooperative relationships with schools, social services, behavioral health, employers, and One-Stops have led to an abundance of complementary services and great fiscal savings.
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Imperial County found networking critical to meeting their goals. Palomino reflects that the "key is really building relationships so it is a win-win situation for all involved. Everyone has their own perspective about what problems are [affecting youth]. The secret to our success has been to build relationships with people who are willing to stretch beyond their personal perspective." She added that "partnerships must emphasize mutual benefit, non-duplicative effort, and commitment to excellence." Creative collaborations with the community college, CBOs, San Diego Labor Council, Literacy Volunteers of America, and other local organizations have led to leveraged funding and services. Palomino reflects that the key to her success with the networking has been to "really put myself on the line and build relationships with people working at all levels and connect them to others" who she knows can serve their needs.

Palomino and her project partner, Terry Swing, Program Compliance Coordinator for Imperial County Office of Employment Training, have worked together to establish strong protocols for improving the system. They started out by creating a safe space for the exchange of ideas and feedback among front line contractors, management, and monitors. "It really paid off," says Palomino. "We were able to create a system where everyone was able to standardize and monitor the service providers" and front line staff felt as though their concerns were heard and implemented into the system. Based on feedback from all partners, Swing created several new protocols and worksheets that clarified "who gets what when and where. We established a new system that involves all players—fee for service and contractors—and the documentation allows everyone to track where they are at a certain place in time so that they know what needs to be submitted. Documentation comes in at the front end and the back end."

In May 2005, the Imperial County WIB established a pilot project to leverage resources to help meet the needs of foster youth. Building on the success of centralized case management, this pilot was made possible due in large part to strong relationships between the WIB and the Department of Social Services. They have developed a work agreement to support foster youth connecting them with the right people from the Department of Social Services (DSS) and WIA Case Management providers. This agreement supports all existing MOUs and expands upon them. As a result, partners are able to establish cooperative work relationships with all parties. As Palomino says, they are “tapping in from both sides to support the comprehensive needs of all youth.”

In June of 2005, the Imperial County WIB is exploring the development of similar relationships between the County Office of Education and the Department of Rehabilitation with an eye towards merging services within their systems. For the first time, a representative serving youth with special needs has sought membership on the Youth Council. The agreement was highlighted in a federal Training and Employment Notice (TEN) issued this past January ’06, whose subject was the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

They are also planning to work with WIA Adult programs by looking at providing services to 18- to 21-year olds.

Lessons learned:
Imperial County has found many advantages to having a centralized case management system. Most notably, they’ve had great program performance, an overall savings in program costs, improved quality services, as well as improvement to existing and establishment of new program controls. The new model has also afforded them an opportunity to promote and establish several new effective practices including exit committee reviews and a system-wide standardization. They have also seen an increase in understanding of performance, new focus on quality vs. quantity, a maximized use of EDD Capacity Building Unit’s trainings, and a centralized brokering role for framework services.
What’s Next for this Promising Practice?

Imperial County is transitioning into another stage of youth services. System challenges and continuous funding reductions have forced everyone to work more creatively and resourcefully. They are moving forward with open communication, improved coordination of resources, and strong commitment to goals. They are actively seeking connection with agencies and organizations willing to merge activities and systems. Currently they are piloting cross-system activities with the Department of Social Services, Department of Rehabilitation, and WIA adult services.

Palomino says, “Centralized case management is a transition system for us. We have not yet arrived at the optimal system, and there’s a lot more room for even better collaboration and coordination among systems and services.” She adds that this project is in “continuous improvement. That’s what most people fail to understand - you never arrive, you never really get there, you just continue to work on your process and find weak areas and strengthen them.”

Where to Go for More Information

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD OF IMPERIAL COUNTY
Imperial County Youth Council
P.O. Box 618
El Centro, CA 92244-0618
(760) 353-6594
www.wibic.org/ WIB site
www.wibic.org/ site for youth seeking employment

Helen Palomino
Workforce Investment Board of Imperial County
Program Analyst - Youth Services
(760) 353-5050
hpalomino@wibic.org
http://www.wibic.org

Terry Swing
Imperial County Office of Employment Training Program Compliance Coordinator
(760) 337-1318
tswing@icoet.org

Links:
Daisy Wheel Model
Contact New Ways to Work:
clarsen@newwaystowork.org

Youth Council Institute
www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/yci.html

Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 18-05
www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/ImperialTEN.pdf
I n San Mateo County, Fostering the Future Develops Model to Support Transitioning Youth and to Change Local System

Submitted by: Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s Center for Venture Philanthropy

Communities: San Mateo County, California

Key Partners: Center for Venture Philanthropy, Youth and Family Enrichment Services, Edgewood Center for Children and Families, Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, San Mateo County Office of Education, Human Services Agency of San Mateo County (Adolescent Services and Workforce Development divisions), San Mateo County Community College District and San Mateo County Health Department (Mental Health Services).

Subjects: Transition Support, Education, Career Preparation, Asset Development and Community Service

All Youth - One System Elements: Community Services and Support, Education, Career Preparation

Function: Improve Program Practice and Encourage Systemic Change

The Challenge:
As young people in foster or kinship care move toward adulthood, they are having greater challenges than the general population with employment, housing, education and health care. These challenges result in increased homelessness, incarceration, suicide rates, reliance on public assistance programs and poor health status. Due to these challenges, many young people do not see themselves as succeeding in adulthood and they often lack a sense of belonging to community. Many of them have no aspirations or dreams and cannot envision a healthy future for themselves.

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice: Fostering the Future (FTF) is a collaboration of nonprofits, governmental agencies and Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s Center for Venture Philanthropy. Launched in 2005 after two years of extensive planning, FTF is creating a model of transition support for youth ages 11 to 25 who are in foster or kinship care or who have emancipated. At the base is the asset team approach, which offers three distinct support services:

- Asset coaches work with youth one-on-one and in groups to help them create goals and objectives that will lead toward attainment of their dreams. The coaches help youth build a strong base of educational and developmental assets by pulling on their strengths and
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

talents, while developing skills and connections with the community. At this early stage of the pilot there are three full-time asset coaches working with close to 100 youth.

- A housing advocate works directly with emancipating youth and kinship youth moving out of the home of a relative caregiver. She works one-on-one and in groups to help young people learn how to determine the best housing situation, how to locate housing and build the skills to retain the housing. She is also working with landlords and associations in the region to make more housing available to the youth.

- A legal advocate works with youth, caregivers, social workers, and school personnel on educational rights. She provides training opportunities for these audiences and direct intervention where needed. If other legal needs arise, she will assist the youth or refer them to the appropriate person for help.

In addition to providing direct service to young people, the program also addresses local systems change. Many services formerly available only to foster youth are now available to youth in kinship care. This is seen as a strong effort to protect the viability of at-risk families and keep young people out of foster care.

The evidence: As of December 2006, FTF has three well-qualified asset coaches working directly with 51 youth and another 22 were pending enrollment.

A key component of the FTF program is a Youth Consulting Council (YCC), a group of youth representing the wide range of ages 11-25, that meets monthly to plan group activities and advise the program. This council has created a mural art project for all FTF youth and advised the leadership team on a satisfaction survey. They provide extremely valuable feedback and input.

FTF also sponsored a San Mateo County chapter of the California Youth Connection, a policy advocacy organization whose members are current and former foster youth. Chapter members led a training for adults across the county. The group included the sheriff, the director of the health department and many nonprofit leaders. Entitled “How to Encourage Meaningful Youth Involvement”, the training helped the adults learn how to successfully solicit and listen to youth voice.

More than $2 million has been invested in or pledged to FTF. Contributors include fourteen individuals, three foundations and one governmental agency.

The Details:
Process for establishing the program: A branch of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, CVP has developed a model of venture philanthropy based upon selected principles effectively used by venture capitalists. It is defined by a spirit of opportunity and by the willingness to seek out and support new solutions to long-standing challenges. While CVP’s social venture funds focus on large issues affecting communities in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, the Center is well-positioned to draw upon national cutting edge approaches, focus on system change, use long-established connections with other community players, monitor the progress of any project closely, and build a strategy for sustainability.

In January of 2004, the CVP met with the San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA) leadership “to see how we could best work together,” according to Margot Rawlins, CVP initiative officer. “We saw a place where our kind of philanthropy could be helpful and they were very
excited to see philanthropy at the table. As a community foundation, we know all the players and
the leadership, both in government agencies and local nonprofits. It seemed that we could
effectively help the County move forward as they worked on their System Improvement Plan.”
This and subsequent meetings helped the CVP staff see where the County was concentrating its
efforts, and where CVP could offer support. “During the first few years of their improvement
plan, HSA needs to focus on safety. We all saw that. We decided we would concentrate our
efforts on helping young people transition well when they ‘age out’ of the system at around age
18,” said Rawlins.

After these and hundreds of hours of other discussions, CVP launched its six-year social venture
fund, Fostering the Future: Successful Transitions for Youth in Foster and Kin Care. Fostering the
Future (FTF) is a pooled investment fund with dollars supplied by the community foundation’s
endowment fund, individual donors and grants from other foundations. Its primary goal is to
create a model that will not only help young people in foster and kinship care become successful
adults but also effect changes in the current youth-serving systems that will support transitioning
youth for many years to come.

FTF has set a target of enrolling 520 youth at a minimum over the six-year period. They have
established the following benchmarks:

Eighty percent of those served by the program for six months or more will have improved
outcomes in one or more of the following areas:

- Academic performance
- Independent living skills
- Work skills and/or employment
- Self-advocacy
- Knowledge and comfort with personal financial issues
- Housing
- Sense of belonging to community
- A permanent relationship with at least one caring adult

Establishing a sustainable program is an important criterion for each CVP fund, including FTF.
Recognizing that long-term program success requires more than direct support of youth, the fund
is pursuing five goals intended to help make a lasting, systemic change in transition supports:

**Goal 1: The Asset Team Model**
FTF initiates, pilots, and refines a new asset team model of youth support.

**Goal 2: Training for Youth and Adult Support Network**
Of school-aged FTF youth, 100% are offered and at least 80% receive training on their
educational rights. A minimum of 50% of the caregivers supporting youth enrolled in FTF
receive training on parenting, educational rights or other topics as identified by the adults
and the youth. Other adults (e.g., social workers and teachers) receive selected training on
educational rights.

**Goal 3: Local Systems Change**
Fostering the Future has systemic impact in San Mateo County as measured by new,
Improved ways of doing business that deliver improved outcomes for youth. This systemic
change will include new ways of collecting and analyzing data, new forms of cooperation and
communication, and new alignment of resources that encourage breakthrough strategies.

**Goal 4: Scaling Impact**
**Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice**

*Fostering the Future engages in regional and statewide collaborations to inform policy and practice. The venture fund pursues innovative ways to sustain positive results.*

**Goal 5: Financial Resources**

*Private, foundation, and government funding is combined to support the goals of the plan.*

(FTF October-December 2006 Report)

**Strategy and practice:** At the core of Fostering the Future’s work with youth is an asset coach model. Assets are defined as the elements needed for full, healthy youth development. According to the Search Institute, developer of the Asset model, these elements “address support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.” The Search Institute refers to research that shows “every child needs between 31-40 assets before there is a significant drop in at-risk behavior.” The FTF collaborative partners, CVP staff, and the participating funders support the goal of developing self-sufficiency, and have confidence in the asset concept as a vehicle for reaching that goal.

Three new staff members joined partner nonprofits to work with youth who are in either foster or kinship care (or who have already emancipated from the foster care system). These coaches are not case workers, but focus on helping each young person develop his or her personal plan for forward movement over the next period of time in that youth’s life. Emphasis is placed on each young person’s developmental assets and strengths rather than deficits and weaknesses. As a natural outgrowth of the work, the asset coaches support permanency planning, helping particularly the older youth develop a sense of belonging to a community and having a lifelong relationship with at least one caring adult.

A housing advocate and a legal advocate are working with the asset coaches to help youth gain access to housing and to their rightful educational and mental health services. The attorney, who is with the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, connects youth to other civil legal services as well.

Training for the youth and adult support network (Goal 2) is being developed with partners and put in place as needs and opportunities arise. To date, an independent living program has been offered at Cañada College and a chapter of the California Youth Connection (CYC) has been sponsored. Youth in the CYC chapter designed and ran a training for adult allies on involving youth effectively in leadership.

The FTF staff is working on local systems change (Goal 3) by continuing to “explore ways to share student educational records within legal protections preserving confidentiality.” FTF has “secured an enterprise license with Social Solutions for their web-based software Efforts to Outcomes (ETO). Partners working directly with the youth are able to enter data and have limited need-to-know access to each young person’s file. Other partners may have other access to aggregated information” (FTF March–April 2006 Report).

**Evaluation:** A distinctive feature of the Center for Venture Philanthropy’s approach is the close monitoring of the program. Instead of looking at results on an annual basis, CVP reviews data quarterly. They have found that the more frequent assessments help them to make course corrections more effectively and provide investors with accountability. Rawlins explains, “A quarterly report is sent out to the partnering nonprofits and investors. We pull the data, put some of it in a graphic format, and analyze it, comparing it to the targets and milestones that we all agree to in our annual memorandum of understanding.”
Lessons learned:
Two lessons were identified in the March–April 2006 Report. First, recruiting of some youth took longer than anticipated. Kinship youth came on board more rapidly than foster youth for a couple of reasons: 1) contact with them and their caregiver was easier to make through one of the partner nonprofits; and, 2) kinship youth have very few programs available to them in comparison to those available to foster youth, making this more attractive to them. Middle school youth in foster care were difficult to reach because their social workers need to be involved, and they are decentralized, which made sharing information about the program a challenge. In general, social workers were unclear about confidentiality guidelines and differentiation of the services being offered by the asset coaches. Also, locating and recruiting youth who have emancipated from kin care has proven challenging, since they are not connected with any system. FTF staff are developing outreach strategies that address these situations.

Working with caregivers requires more time than staff had anticipated. The middle school and high school asset coaches reported that over 50% of their time was spent working with caregivers on alternative discipline approaches, such as positive parenting. A family conferencing model is proving to be very effective. Youth do not operate in a vacuum; caregivers must be involved.

The importance of sharing information was apparent. The April 2006 report states, “It is important that the asset coaches, housing advocate, and legal advocate be able to share information about the young people in their communities not only with each other but also with the people from the county’s Human Services Agency who provide services.” Members of the asset team regularly attend TDM (team decision making) conferences and are considered members of the multi-disciplinary team. This did not happen overnight, however.

What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
In late April, members of the collaboration are convening for a half-day retreat to examine the pilot’s results-to-date and determine next steps.

Where to go for more information:
Margot Mailliard Rawlins
Initiative Officer, Center for Venture Philanthropy
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
2730 Sand Hill Road, Suite 250
Menlo Park, CA 94025-7069
(650) 854-5566 ext. 248
mmrwilins@siliconvalleycf.org

Links:
Silicon Valley Community Foundation web site
www.siliconvalleycf.org

Search Institute web site
www.search-institute.org

Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets introduction
www.search-institute.org/assets
Kern County Adolescent Career Transition (ACT) Provides Paid Work Experience

Submitted by: Kern High School District/Career Resource Department

Community: Kern County, California

Key Partners: Kern High School District/Career Resource Department, Kern County Workforce Investment Board

Subject: Career Preparation, Subsidized Employment, Work Experience

All Youth - One System Element: Career Preparation

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge: Beginning in 2001, the Career Resource Department staff of the Kern High School District began hearing more about the needs of foster youth while attending conferences, including the National Youth Employment Coalition. This increased awareness, coupled with the changes in the Workforce Investment Act that made serving foster youth a top priority, led the staff to realize they needed to provide services expressly for foster youth. At issue, though, was what services could they provide that were not already being met by other agencies in Kern County.

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice: In 2002, the Kern High School District Career Resource Department staff decided to send in a separate proposal to the WIB to work with emancipated foster youth. The WIB approved the proposal and has funded the program, known as Adolescent Career Transition (ACT), since that time. ACT offers 500 hours of paid work experience, geared to individual needs. ACT uses a tiered system of work experience, geared to meet each youth’s level of work experience and skills. The goal is for each young person to get an unsubsidized, private sector job by the end of their time in the program.

The evidence: The following chart presents some of the recent data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT - Adolescent Career Transition</th>
<th>Serving emancipated foster youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number Served (inc. CE)</td>
<td>Currently Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart was supplied by Karine Kanikkeberg.
The Details:

The process used to establish the practice: The first order of business was determining what services were already being provided. Karine Kanikkeberg, resource teacher for career and workforce development in the Kern High School District’s Career Resource Department, said that she spoke with “everyone who would listen,” including people at the Kern Human Services Agency, public housing, in secondary education, at the community college, and former foster youth themselves. Kanikkeberg discovered that subsidized housing and job search programs were already in place. "Subsidized employment was the piece that was missing,” she said, so they focused there.

The Kern High School District Career Resource Department staff were already partnering with the Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Workforce Investment Board (WIB) to serve youth who had dropped out. They developed a separate WIA proposal for working with emancipated foster youth, and in 2002, the WIB approved it to support ACT. Finding participants the first year was challenging, but the ACT staff were able to get referrals from the Independent Living Programs and the Department of Human Services.

The strategy and practice: Establishing trust with each youth is an important cornerstone of the program. A project specialist meets with every young adult three to four times before making a worksite placement. This strategy works especially well with the young people who “are coming with zero: no experience and no skills,” said Kanikkeberg. When this is the case, “We place them in safe work sites where we know the supervisor has empathy, tolerance, and will work with them. These work sites tend to be public agencies,” she added. The youth will typically work a hundred hours in the safe sites and then have an evaluation to determine if they are ready for more real world work.

Because the Career Resource Department staff run both ACT and Project Success, a work preparation program for youth still in care, they sometimes encourage Project Success participants to move to ACT if they still need help. “Now, having been around, we have a pretty good network,” said Kanikkeberg. Word has gotten out about the program and they get many personal referrals. “The best marketers are the youth,” said Kanikkeberg.

Evaluation: The program is evaluated using the WIA criteria: Improving basic skills, completing certificate program or high school, gaining employment, etc.

What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
According to Kanikkeberg, they want to do more independent-living-program-reinforcement activities in a group setting, so the youth form a sense of community among themselves. “It seems to help them to know there are others going through what they’re going through.” The challenge is finding a time that works for everyone. Most of the ACT youth are both attending community college and working, so coordinating schedules is difficult. Currently the ACT project specialist is working with the youth, exploring different dates and times. Pay day workshops or Saturday workshops are two options they are exploring.

Where to go for more information
KERN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Career Resource Department
2727 F Street
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661-322-7492

Resource Teacher, Career and Workforce Development
Career Resource Department
(661) 322-7492
Karine_Kanikkeberg@khsd.k12.ca.us

Karine Kanikkeberg
Kern County’s Project Success
Offers Career Preparation and Paid Work Experience for In-School Foster Youth

Submitted by: Kern High School District/Career Resource Department

Community: Kern County, California

Key Partners: Kern High School District/Career Resource Department, Kern County Workforce Investment Board

Subject: Career Preparation

All Youth – One System Element: Career Preparation; Education

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge: The Career Resource Department staff received feedback from participants in the district’s paid work experience program for emancipated foster youth (Adolescent Career Transitions, or ACT) that the program was great, but they needed work experience sooner.

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice: After hearing from the ACT participants, the Career Resource Center (CRC) staff decided to take some of their existing in-school Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant money to provide work preparation classes, one-on-one counseling, and paid work experience for foster youth who were in school. The CRD staff named this cluster of services Project Success.

The evidence: The program is evaluated using the WIA criteria: Improving basic skills, gaining employment, etc. The following chart shows data for foster youth being served in October of 2006:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number Served (inc. CE)</th>
<th>Currently Enrolled</th>
<th>Number Completed / Possible Completers</th>
<th>Diploma Attained / Diplomas Possible</th>
<th>HS Certificate of Completion</th>
<th>Hired (at WEX site)</th>
<th>WIA Goals Attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>89/129</td>
<td>21/31</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart was supplied by Karine Kanikkeberg, Resource Teacher, Career and Workforce Development, Career Resource Department of the Kern County High School District.
The Details:

**The Strategy and practice:** The program is tailored to meet the education and work preparation needs of transitioning foster youth. According to Karine Kanikkeberg, resource teacher for career and workforce development in the Kern High School District's Career Resource Department, "[We saw that] we could not just plop them into the workforce because so many have moved so much and need school credits. We wanted to get them some school credit, and we decided we need to provide both [credits and paid work experience]." The program consists of an after-school class lasting six to eight weeks, followed by 100 hours of paid work experience. The class is taught by a credentialed teacher and the program is supported by an eligibility staff person who takes care of paperwork, provides transportation, attends many of the classes, and meets with students one-on-one at several junctures during the program to make sure that the work placements are appropriate.

When they looked at barriers to the youths' continuing employment, they discovered that retention was more of an issue than job acquisition. In the classes they focus on skills that promote job retention: conflict resolution, problem solving, balancing school and work. They also cover some aspects of work readiness and they reinforce skills learned in Independent Living Programs (ILP).

Project Success staff also work closely with each youth to establish trust and to place him or her in a work experience situation that will assure success. With younger youth, ages 14 and 15, placements are frequently in day care or after-school programs on elementary school campuses. The goal with older youth is to place them in private sector jobs that may lead to ongoing employment. However, not all youth are ready to work outside of a relatively protected environment. In these cases they might be placed in a job on a high school campus.

Project Success is designed to serve 60 to 75 youth a year. The staff runs three sessions during the school year. Students can enroll multiple times. "Some youth enroll in one session and they have gotten what they need. Others have so many emotional issues that they [choose to return,"]" said Kanikkeberg. "We've been lucky to have a stable staff." The continuity in staff has made it easier to establish trust with youth.

Lessons Learned:

The program was started in February of 2004, and the staff has continued to refine the program since that time. One of the biggest lessons they learned during the first year was to spread the sessions out during the year and with each session to focus on serving youth in two schools that are near to each other and have similar schedules. The first year they ran four sessions simultaneously in locations that were far apart. "It was a logistical nightmare," said Kanikkeberg. The current session includes 19 students from two neighboring high schools—Golden Valley and South. The school days end at very close to the same time, so the eligibility specialist can easily pick up students at Golden Valley and get them to South High School for the class.

What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?

According to Kanikkeberg, they plan next steps based on feedback from the youth and on their own observations. This means that next steps can change after each session. Currently, the plan is to incorporate workshops for youth nearing completion of their 100-hour work experience. These workshops will focus on job acquisition skills like filling out job applications. The youth and the staff feel that these workshops could help them transition out of the paid work experience and into a private sector job.
PROMISING FOSTER YOUTH TRANSITION PRACTICE

Where to go for more information
KERN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Career Resource Department
2727 F Street
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661-322-7492

Karine Kanikkeberg
Resource Teacher, Career and Workforce Development
Career Resource Department
(661) 322-7492
Karine_Kanikkeberg@khsd.k12.ca.us

Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative
New Ways to Work
www.newwaystowork.org
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice
Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative
Leveraging Community Resources to Ensure Successful Transitions for Foster Youth

Merced’s North Star Community
Housing and Transition Support Services

Submitted by: Merced County Youth Council

Community: Merced County, California

Key Partners: Merced County Youth Council, Central Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing, the Merced County Human Services Agency and a collaboration among a group of local business leaders, non-profit organizations, and government agencies

Subject: Transition Supportive Services, Transitional Housing

All Youth - One System Element: Community Services and Supports, Career Preparation

Function: To provide housing and needed supportive services to youth aging-out of the Foster Care System

The Challenge:
Foster care youth who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment become wards of the county and are placed in the foster care system until their 18th birthdays when they are emancipated. Oftentimes, many of these vulnerable young adults leave the system without adequate skills and are unprepared for life’s challenges. Without a firm plan for success, which includes housing and employment, these young people often end up unemployed, homeless, and without those permanent, lifelong connections that are critical to a healthy life. In order to facilitate successful transitions for these young adults, adequate housing with supportive services must be in place. The challenge is to design a transition support program that is time limited, with established goals, and with the outcome to be healthy, successful, independent transitions to adulthood.

The Practice:
The Youth Council, through the efforts of Mark Gregory, Staff Services Analyst II of the Merced County Human Services Agency, has designed a program that will provide housing, supportive services, and permanent connections to a caring adult. This solution is a unique collaborative operating under the name of “North Star Community” and is aimed at meeting the critical needs presented each day by the emancipating foster youth in Merced County.

The Details:
Process used to establish the practice: The North Star Community is a collaboration among a group of local business leaders, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. Each collaborator fulfills a unique and vital role in the overall development and success of the project and the residents. The business leaders bring particular expertise in the identification and development of housing resources as well as the financial means to make this project a reality. The Central Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing is the central point for the development of the program.
community. Government agencies will provide counseling, transportation, ongoing financial commitments, and administrative expertise to the North Star Community and its residents.

The breakthrough moment came when the Merced County Human Services Agency was able to partner with the Central Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing and developed the partnerships with the business and non-profit communities to “buy in” and commit to participating and supporting this project.

When this article was written (May 2005), the location for the North Star Community had yet to be determined, largely due to the lack of available property. Several offers on property have been submitted but were turned down largely due to the prospect of placement of the facility near other properties currently owned by the sellers. It is hoped that with falling land prices some developers may be looking to sell their property rather than build on it and that this project will become a reality.

The Community will consist of approximately 72 four-unit complexes that are primarily one-bedroom apartments with a few two-bedroom units for young women with children. The Community will be designed for expansion to allow for future growth. There will also be an on-site Administration building with classrooms for providing the necessary real-life training to the residents, a medical area to conduct physical examinations and deal with routine medical emergencies, a day-care area for small children residing in the Community, and may include a recreational complex that will also serve as the Community’s social area.

**The strategy and practice:** Young adults who are accepted into the North Star Community will become part of a caring program where they work with a case manager who will assist them in developing and managing a plan to achieve their goals; receive an apartment, which must be maintained as though the resident were in a non-subsidized environment; match with a trained mentor; and receive assistance in finding a livable-wage job. Once employed, residents will place up to 30% of their earned income in a trust fund that will be available to the resident to access permanent housing upon preparing to leave the North Star Community. Each resident may live in the community for up to two years; during this time, they will have access to a broad range of professional supportive services. Residents will be provided with the opportunity to participate in civic work and become a part of the North Star Community by participating in regular meetings, meals, outings, and trips.

Housing is a key component of making the North Star Community program work. The North Star Community has developed a unique strategy that creates affordable housing opportunities for young adults and provides a funding stream to help support the program. Each four-unit complex will house a senior mentor who will be contributing monthly rent that will be used toward the operational costs of the Community. Additional operational costs will be borne by the collaborators, either through direct contributions or services provided through their regular allocations; fundraising by the non-profit and community business leaders; and grants. Effective property management, savings on financial costs, and a partial exemption from property taxes will also decrease the operational costs of the Community.

The Community will consist of approximately 72 four-unit complexes that are primarily one-bedroom apartments with a few two-bedroom units for young women with children. The Community will be designed for expansion to allow for future growth. There will also be an on-site Administration building with classrooms, a medical area to conduct physical examinations and deal with routine medical emergencies, a day-care area for small children residing in the Community, and may include a recreational complex that will also serve as the Community’s social area.
What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
As of December 2006, the funding and partners were in place, but they had yet to find a suitable property near the college and other services. The partners are committed to creating the North Star community, and are continuing in their efforts to secure property.

Where to go for more information
MERCED COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
Child Welfare Services
2115 West Wardrobe Ave.
Merced, Ca. 95340
(209) 385-3000
(209) 725-3988 (fax)

Mark R. Gregory
Staff Services Analyst II
Merced County Human Services Agency
Child Welfare Services
2115 West Wardrobe Ave.
Merced, Ca. 95340
(209) 385-3000 ext. 5456
(209) 725-3988 (fax)
mggregory@hsa.co.merced.ca.us
Napa V.O.I.C.E.S: A Foster Youth One-Stop
Initiated and Run by Youth

Submitted by: Voice our Independent Choices for Emancipation Support

Community: Napa County, California

Key Partners: On the Move, Progress Foundation, Child Welfare, Probation, Behavioral Health, and Education

Subject: Youth Leadership, Community Services and Support, Friendly Youth One-Stop

All Youth - One System Element: Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
Many foster youth in Napa County were reaching age 18 unprepared for adulthood. Most were losing the support services they had received while in foster care, and they were not ready to take on full adult responsibilities without additional support. In 2005, the Napa County social service agency directors knew that something had to be done, and they established a task force to address the needs of transitioning foster youth.

The Practice and Evidence:
The practice: Voice Our Independent Choices for Emancipation Support (V.O.I.C.E.S.) Emancipation Center of Napa County, California, opened its doors on Tuesday, November 22, 2005, and became - as far as the leaders know - the first-ever youth-led emancipation center in the United States. The center provides a place for youth to gather and get connected to a range of services. The following description is offered at the center’s website: “V.O.I.C.E.S. provides emancipating foster youth with a comprehensive array of individual support services, opportunities for leadership and community development and structured initiatives that require a commitment over time and are focused on meeting a specific set of needs.”

The Evidence: The Center has been open for over a year, operated by youth and adults working together. One hundred and forty-five youth have been served. Partnering agencies have extended their commitment to co-locate staff there.

The youth staff have taken ownership of the center, and the inter-generational leadership remains strong. The following example of youth leadership was reported in the Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development eUpdate for March 2006:

On December 31, 2005, just over one month after V.O.I.C.E.S. opened its doors, the city of Napa was hit by a major thunderstorm. The Center was left flooded with at least one foot of standing water. The next morning the youth showed up at 8:00 am to begin removing
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

Youth V.O.I.C.E.S. staff have been invited to speak throughout the country about their success.

The Details:

**Process for establishing the program:** The adult task force members secured support from the Gasser Foundation, Community Foundation of Napa Valley, and Auction Napa Valley to help fund their exploration of needs and possibilities in Napa County. Initially, the committee planned to open a service center designed and run by adults. However, they wanted to involve youth more. They formed a partnership with the nonprofit agency On the Move, which promotes the development of youth leaders working with adult allies. As a result, the committee shifted to a youth-driven process. In a *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial praising the V.O.I.C.E.S. youth, Leslie Medine, executive director of On the Move, explained the shift. “Until that point, the committee was going to create a service center, but there were no youth driving the process. We proposed that if they really wanted this to be innovative, what about putting the youth at the center of this and have them co-staff and co-lead the organization?” (November 28, 2005)

Ten current and former foster youth, along with adult partners, took on the work needed to create the center. As the committee proceeded, they and Medine recruited young people to join. The youth, all of whom were from the Napa Valley, included Nicole Felton, Matthew Knox, Katie and Mitch Findley, Richard Kyle Petrini, Forrest Miller, and Marissa Hawkins. On the Move located coaches who mentored the youth to raise funds and create the center. The coaches were recent graduates of On the Move’s "On the Verge," an intensive leadership development program for people in their twenties and early thirties. The key elements of On the Verge are collective learning (teams of 15-20), continuous involvement (a one-year commitment), and contextual approach (hands-on work on a community project). Integration of personal, interpersonal, and professional development is also central to the program.

In order to gain input from more youth, task force members went to foster care group homes around Napa County and held focus groups. Based on this information, the task force identified the most needed services. Youth on the task force then approached agencies that could provide the services, asking them to place a staff member at the center part time. They were successful in making these arrangements. For example, the County Welfare Department has assigned one of its staff to the center to help young people with independent living skills.

Youth involved in establishing the center created a place where other young people want to go. "Lots of foster youth have lost hope in finding things," co-founder Marissa Hawkins was quoted as saying by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "We just wanted teens to feel supported and know that people just like them are here to help." (November 28, 2005) They also developed strong leadership skills.

The Progress Foundation, a non-profit agency dedicated to providing alternative community treatment options to seriously mentally disabled individuals, also partnered. In all, the Center has made alliances with 17 funding organizations, engaged 50 business partners, and recruited 100 volunteers.

**Strategy and practice:** The committee focused on three interwoven strategies: 1) create a comprehensive, youth-friendly One-Stop, 2) have all efforts be youth driven, and 3) support youth through strong intergenerational partnerships. The goal was to create a center where
current and former foster youth could not just come for help but where they would feel comfortable and meet other youth in the same situation. Second, the task force decided that the most empowering—and effective—approach they could adopt was to support youth in making decisions about the center and taking the steps needed to develop and run it.

Youth staff members help transitioning foster youth get connected with the supports and services they need to establish a viable life after foster care. The center helps young people who are aging out of foster care gain access to all the assistance they need: health services, housing, job training, employment, transportation, education needs, social development, family support, and everything in between.

The V.O.I.C.E.S. website provides the following examples of current initiatives (December 2006):

**SOURCES – Youth Employment Initiative**
Fifteen young people between the ages of 16 and 24 are currently employed as V.O.I.C.E.S. staff at three different levels of responsibility. At an entry level, seven youth are employed as interns to work 10 hours per month, staffing and coordinating a range of ongoing events; at the mid-level, five youth are employed 10 hours per week to perform secretarial and administrative duties; at the highest level, three youth are employed for 25 hours per week as Staff Assistants. In addition to opportunities for 15 V.O.I.C.E.S. youth staff, V.O.I.C.E.S. is partnering with local government and non-profit agencies and with Job Connection, the Napa County job placement agency, to develop a range of training and placement opportunities for up to 75 transitional youth. Through these partnerships, youth learn about the world of non-profit work, hold internships and receive job training and employment support services geared to people ages 16 to 24.

**PLACES – Youth Housing Initiative**
On The Move and the Progress Foundation are collaborating to provide PLACES, a transitional youth housing initiative. This initiative is designed to support emancipated foster youth, ages 18-24, in their transition into self-sufficiency. Over the course of two years, PLACES participants will be responsible for a growing amount of rent and living expenses, until housing subsidies expire at the end of their 24th month. PLACES participants have access to food aid, a micro-loan for moving and daily living expenses, and monthly rent subsidies beginning at 80%. To ensure that participants are prepared to stand on their own after two years, all participants will develop a detailed Transitional Independent Living Plan, meet regularly with an individual Life Skills Coach, and participate in weekly facilitated Roommate Communication sessions. In addition, PLACES participants will receive independent living skills training, college and vocational counseling, personal finance and money management training, job placement support, mental health services, and ongoing peer and professional support.

The Napa Valley Register reported that “[The PLACES] program . . . creates a support network for them at the same time. Each teen lives with a roommate, then meets with two other groups of roommates to make sure everyone is on track to living independently.” (November 21, 2006)

A third initiative supports youth who pursue post-secondary education:

**CHOICES – Continuing Post-High School Education Initiative**
Through the CHOICES program, V.O.I.C.E.S. staff and partners encourage and support foster youth through each stage of the higher education experience. This process begins by helping these young adults to think beyond survival and to recognize that college is a genuine option.
and is critical to future employment. Through a strong partnership with Napa Valley College, V.O.I.C.E.S. members can access staff on-site to simplify the enrollment process. A V.O.I.C.E.S. college counselor is available to help youth apply for scholarships and devise a viable financial plan. Once enrolled, youth continue to receive support, including assistance navigating the community college system and tutoring in a range of subjects. Though many V.O.I.C.E.S. members will ultimately require four-year degrees to reach their personal and professional goals, CHOICES is built upon the completion of a two-year Associate Arts degree from Napa Valley College. In addition, CHOICES participants benefit from opportunities to gain college credit through partnerships with the Napa County R.O.P. Program and the Napa County Department of Rehabilitation. (V.O.I.C.E.S. web site)

V.O.I.C.E.S. has also piloted two discussion groups this year:

- Parent and Child Education and Support (P.A.C.E.S.). P.A.C.E.S. was created to maintain a safe space where expecting and current young parents can get resources, support, and parenting knowledge.

- Communication and Relationship Education Support (C.A.R.E.S.). C.A.R.E.S. provides peer support to assist Napa youth in building effective communication skills and healthy relationship skills. C.A.R.E.S. is a place where young people can determine their needs, discover personal boundaries, and gain knowledge on communication and dating.

**Evaluation:** V.O.I.C.E.S. participates in the Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) Bay Area Cohort. Through CBI and a process called Participatory Evaluation Research (PER), V.O.I.C.E.S. youth and adult staff explore and discover what they do, why they do it, and how to do it better. Also, youth who access V.O.I.C.E.S. are regularly asked for feedback. In addition, partnering agencies track outcomes mandated by their funding sources.

**Lessons Learned:**
The youth leaders of V.O.I.C.E.S., working with their adult partners, demonstrated that youth who have been involved in the foster care system could realize a shared dream. In fact, they demonstrated that youth could sometimes be more effective than adults in bringing together community resources and creating a center where youth’s real needs are met.

**What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**
V.O.I.C.E.S. is planning on adding the following programs in early 2007:

- Wellness Program. This program will be geared towards helping youth members navigate through systems such as medical, dental, and mental health. The Wellness program will assist foster youth, emancipating foster, probation youth, and group home youth to address and combat drug and alcohol abuse, to connect them with existing support services, and to provide personal and peer mentoring to develop their skills to become productive members of society. The Wellness program will also work to develop identity, assets, and personal strengths of foster youth so they will be able to avoid substance abuse, gang involvement, and other at-risk behaviors, while making positive lifestyle choices for themselves.

- Auto and Credit Establishment and Support (A.C.E.S.) A.C.E.S. is aimed at helping youth establish credit and receive support when looking into purchasing a car.

In addition, an internal youth empowerment program for youth staff—to foster personal, interpersonal, and professional learning, skill building, and career development—is being...
developed. The goal is to create a sustainable employment model to address the need for youth participation in all levels of the operation and visioning of V.O.I.C.E.S.

Where to go for more information
V.O.I.C.E.S.
1830 B Soscol Avenue
Napa, CA
(707) 251-9432
voices.napavalley@sbcglobal.net
www.onthemovebayarea.org/node/303
North Central Counties Consortium’s
Foster Care Youth Project Helps Improves Transition Outcomes

Submitted by: North Central Counties Consortium (NCCC)

Community: Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Sutter, and Yuba Counties, California

Key Partners: Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Sutter, and Yuba Counties, California working through the NCCC; California Employment Development Department (EDD)

Subject: Youth-friendly One-Stops

All Youth - One System Element: Career Preparation

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
The five counties that make up the North Central Counties Consortium (NCCC)—Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Sutter, and Yuba—all have large areas that are rural. The scattered population, combined with inadequate funding for social services and few community-based or faith-based organizations, have historically led to significant gaps in services for current and emancipated foster youth. The NCCC found that there was no bridging system for transitioning foster youth: no housing, no emergency homeless shelters for emancipated youth, no access to ongoing education, and in fact no bridge to independence aside from the Independent Living Program (ILP) courses that were offered. The NCCC needed to do something about this dearth of services.

The NCCC found that some of the five counties were doing a good job coordinating services with the County Health and Human Services Department, as well as with their ILP; however, others were not. The NCCC felt it was imperative to educate all parties about the needs of foster youth and to begin to get the lines of communication open across agencies. The necessary communication topics included what the parties could do, whom they could serve, and how they could get referrals moving so that foster youth could access services.

Two other challenges were helping One-Stop staff understand the needs of foster youth and facilitating communication among the One-Stops, youth, and the Department of Health and Human Services. NCCC members recognized that it is difficult to make a government program into one that appeals to the current and former foster youth it is intended to serve. The programs in place operate under the constraints of the WIA and their rules, so the need to conform can deter youth from being involved. There is a tremendous amount of institutionalization of youth in foster care. They are used to having people tell them what to do, when to do it, and why to do it. At a certain point, though, youth do not want to hear this anymore.
The Practice and Evidence:

The Practice: The NCCC embarked on the Foster Care Youth Project, one of three pilot EDD programs supported by the governor’s WIA fifteen percent funds. The goal of the project is to improve transition services for foster youth. The NCCC wanted to educate partners located in the One-Stops on serving foster youth, educate the target population about how to use the One-Stops, and educate agencies that are working with current and emancipated foster youth on the services available at the One-Stops. They began with trainings for all involved staff, provided by Rick Rickord of the EDD. The next step entailed marketing the One-Stop system to current and emancipated foster youth.

The Evidence: The county One-Stop operators were successful in accomplishing their outreach goals not only to the target population but to other organizations as well. They recorded increased service levels of both current and emancipated foster youth; improved relationships between the Departments of Social Services and One-Stops; increases in population coming in to One-Stop, whether they are being enrolled or not; and development of trust between youth and One-Stop staff so that youth are using the One-Stop system.

The Details:

Process used to establish the practice: The NCCC was actually approached by the EDD to participate in this pilot project because they serve a rural area. Before beginning the program, the NCCC interviewed One-Stop operators and managers from the departments of health and human services in the five counties and verified that foster youth were being underserved. The NCCC realized they needed to improve services for this population, and they wholeheartedly accepted this challenge.

Strategy and practice: The NCCC brought the county programs and One-Stop staff together and developed a plan for educating all One-Stop partners (besides WIA partners) about how to work with foster youth. The specific focus was on the combining of efforts to serve foster youth and emancipated foster youth. The NCCC also realized they could educate the agencies within the counties that work with foster youth about what the One-Stop could provide.

Evaluation: The NCCC has used the data that One-Stops are required to collect on service levels, and numbers of current and former foster youth coming to the centers to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
The members of the NCCC have made a commitment to the One-Stops and to other involved administrative entities to continue the efforts beyond the pilot funding. They will use WIA funding. In addition, the NCCC will continue to write grant proposals and continue to look for funding and housing for high-risk youth.

Where to go for more information
NORTH CENTRAL COUNTIES CONSORTIUM
1215 Plumas Street, Suite 1800
Yuba City, CA 95991
(530) 822-7145
(530) 822-7150 (fax)
www.northcentralcounties.org

Cindy Newton
Program Director
Administrative Entity
North Central Counties Consortium
1215 Plumas Street, Suite 1800
Yuba City, CA 95991
(530) 751-8202
cnewton@ncen.org

Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative
New Ways to Work
www.newwaystowork.org
Tools

BustNOut Web site for foster youth in the area developed by the Glenn County Human Resource Agency
www.bustnout.com
Orange County Miscellaneous Court Order Supports Cross-Agency Cooperation

Submitted by: Orange County Social Services Agency (OCSSA), Children and Family Services Division

Community: Orange County, California

Key Partners: Orange County Social Services Agency (OCSSA), Children and Family Services Division; Orange County Workforce Investment Board (OCWIB) (Note: The Orange County Workforce Investment Board is now housed under the parent organization known as Orange County Housing and Community Development Agency - Workforce Investment Board.); Orange County Probation Department; City of Santa Ana, Workforce Investment Board; and City of Anaheim, Workforce Investment Board.

Subject: Court-ordered information sharing

All Youth – One System Element: Comprehensive Youth Development Approach

Function: Create Linkages and Connect Systems

The Challenge:
Orange County serves 2800 foster and dependent youth. For workforce development agencies, there’s an increased focus on serving foster youth through workforce investment act-funded programs. Leaders of both social services and workforce development in Orange County have made serving foster youth a high priority. Furthermore, since November 2005, social services agencies have been required by the State to connect youth to WIA-funded programs. However, leaders in the OCSSA and OCWIB knew that getting court-mandated information sharing would further enhance their efforts to serve the foster youth of Orange County.

The Practice and Evidence:
The practice OCWIB and OCSSA staffs have secured court-ordered information sharing. They worked together to secure a miscellaneous court order that allows five agencies to share information. The court order permits them to share “all relevant information and recordings including, but not limited to, Transitional Independent Living Plans, Vocational Assessments, WIA contract progress reports, and outcome reports among the members of multidisciplinary services teams.”

The evidence: Bob Malmberg, OCSSA Program Manager, Emancipation Services/ILP and Foster Care Investigations Program, said the miscellaneous court order “has been very helpful to us to move the process more quickly to the three WIBs in Orange County.” However, he also said the process is not without challenges. “The biggest problems so far have been to get information to the case carrying worker . . . and to support the workers by letting them know what [the court order] means.”
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

The Details:
The process used to establish the practice: Malmberg and his department had a previous working relationship with Judge Robert Hutson, the Presiding Juvenile Court Judge for Orange County. In Malmberg’s view, the best way to expedite a miscellaneous court order was to strengthen their relationship with the Judge Hutson. “Judge Hutson was very willing to work with us,” said Malmberg. “It helped keep the process moving.” The court order was issued in April of 2005, in anticipation of the finalizing of the state order to include referrals to WIA services in each TILP.

The strategy and practice: Malmberg pointed out that they believed a miscellaneous court order was necessary for Orange County because “our bench is very conservative when it comes to sharing services.”

The agencies covered under the miscellaneous court order include the OCSSA; Orange County Probation Department; Orange County Housing and Community Services Department; Workforce Investment Board; City of Santa Ana, Workforce Investment Board; and City of Anaheim, Workforce Investment Board.

Lessons Learned:
The cooperative relationship with Judge Hutson verified the value of establishing and maintaining good working relations with juvenile court judges, and in fact with all other partners.

Where to go for more information:
ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
800 N. Eckhoff Street
Orange, CA 92868

Bob Malmberg, Program Manager Emancipation Services/ILP and Foster Care Investigations Program
(714) 940-3935
Bob.Malmberg@ssa.ocgov.com

Orange County Social Services Agency – Youth Services
www.ssa.ocgov.com/Youth/Default.asp

ORANGE COUNTY WIB
1300 S. Grand Bldg. B 3rd Floor
Santa Ana, CA. 92705

Mercedes Julian, Workforce Development Analyst and WIB Youth Programs Manager
(714) 567-7522
Mercedes.Julian@csa.ocgov.com

Orange County WIB Youth Services web site
www.ocwib.org/Youth.aspx

Link:
Miscellaneous Court Order
Pasadena’s Foothill Workforce Investment Board Runs Department of Labor Pilot for Foster Youth

Submitted by: Foothill Workforce Investment Board (FHWIB)

Community: Pasadena, California, Planning Area 3 (PLAD 3)

Key Partners: Foothill Workforce Investment Board, CommunityBuild, California Employment Development Department, and the Jackie Robinson Center

Subject: Transition Support, Career Preparation

All Youth – One System Element: Career Preparation, Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
The Pasadena/San Gabriel area of Los Angeles County - the Department of Labor’s Planning Area 3 - is one of the two California Counties with the largest number of youth entering and emancipating from foster care. Dianne Glean of the Foothill Workforce Investment Board (FWIB) wrote the following description of the challenges foster youth face:

To date there are approximately 100,000 young people between 16 to 21 who are leaving or have left foster care. Thrust into adulthood, after years of being babysat by a system - state or county agencies, these young people face an inordinate amount of barriers and challenges that their peers [do not face]. When they become 18, the state is no longer obligated to provide assistance of any kind. Many of these youth leave the system with no more than a list of apartments or rental agencies, and a few necessities for living on their own. Consequently most “age out” only to fall out – mentally, emotionally, and physically, while struggling to transition into adulthood.

Self-sufficiency is not an expectation in the case of an emancipated youth, but a demand. Time is of the essence as transitional help is almost null and void after 21. Therefore this is an unreasonable demand when compared with youth from intact families. Families provide a support net when they fall financially and emotionally, with no time restraint.

Helping youth in foster care is the most difficult task in youth work. Transitional programs for young people leaving Foster Care are very important if they are to successfully transition to adulthood. The Foothill WIB has, however, risen to the challenge, the challenge of helping youth in the Foster Care System make a successful transition into adulthood.
The Practice and Evidence:

The practice: In March of 2005 FWIB secured the Foster Youth Self Sufficiency Demonstration Grant. “It is our goal to bring together the people and resources needed to make their transition from a system to being a productive member of society as smoothly as possible,” wrote Glean. The FWIB partnered with Community Build in the Los Angeles area to serve 100 youths as established by the grant. The FWIB program serves 50 youth in the San Gabriel area and its partner serves another 50 in the Los Angeles area.

The evidence: According to Glean, the 13 youth enrolled between May and June of 2005 benefited immediately from 155 hours of work experience in the Pasadena Summer Rose program from June to August 31, 2005 in various city departments. These youth were offered contracts for an additional four months with various city departments. The FWIB saw this extension as an excellent opportunity because it provided participants with the six months’ work experience that most employers require for full-time jobs. In the first two months of the program, three of the youth secured full-time employment with the City of Pasadena Recreation Department, Pasadena City College, and the Employment Development Department.

Another success grew out of the financial management class. As part of this class, FWIB was able to open savings accounts for 11 participants with the Pasadena Federal Credit Union (PFCU) by making the initial deposit of $5.00, giving them a start to saving.

The program reported the following successes in the first six months of 2006:

The Foothill Youth Self Sufficiency Program (FYSSP) had the opportunity to take part in a recruitment process for foster youth two-year internship positions with the County of Los Angeles. On March 17, 2006, we completed the applications in a group setting and submitted 19 applications. Eleven (11) of our youth were contacted for testing. Six (6) of our youth were successful in the testing process, and went on to be interviewed. Three (3) of them were offered the opportunity to work with the Internal Services Department. It must be noted that six (6) youth were accepted by the county for this program and three (3) of those accepted were from the FYSSP. This is a full-time job with benefits, and very high probability of permanent employment at the end of the internship. The Program Coordinator for the Intern program also called to personally comment on the standard of the applications submitted by our youth.

In May of 2006, six (6) of our youth participated in the Central Arroyo Seco Trail restoration. The trail is part of Brookside Park, in Pasadena. This project was sponsored by the City of Pasadena’s Department of Public works. Through a partnership between Parks and Natural Resources, MASH, and Career Services of the City of Pasadena a major step in the Central Arroyo Seco Trail restoration project was completed. Our young adults were recognized in the City of Pasadena’s official Newsletter of the Department of Public Works for their part in uncovering the beauty of the arroyo stone walls and the original drainage system of the Brookside trails.

In The month of June of 2006 we were happy to see 12 of our youth successfully complete High School and graduate. Staff attended several of the graduations in support of our youth. FYSSP hosted a graduation party at the Jackie Robinson Center, which was attended by mentors, graduates, fellow participants and FYSSP staff. Additionally in June three (3) of our youth were accepted for summer intern positions with Kaiser Permanente.
The Details:

*The process for establishing the program:* The FWIB has been able to house the FYSSP at the Jackie Robinson Center in Pasadena, which is also home to a senior center. This affords the program a unique position to provide needed mentors and positive interactions for the youth, partnering them with seniors for various activities. "This is a nice fit to fill a void in both the lives of the seniors and the foster youth population," noted Glean.

*The strategy and practice:* The FYSSP staff emphasize the fact that few youth from intact families are expected to be completely self-sufficient at age 18. "We subscribe to, and adopt the realistic view of current professionals working with disconnected youth that self-sufficiency for the general population does not occur until about age 26," Glean writes. "In addition, learning to live independently is really a life-long process for this particular population. These young people deal with drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, and incarceration, mental health disorders, combined with neglect and rejection issues, as well as abuse. Many are on a self-destructive path due to frustrations trying to 'make it' on their own. The resiliency they mustered as a child to survive living in the system often fails them on emancipation."

The FWIB is committed to the demonstration program, to reengaging disconnected youth by providing the services that will meet their needs as individuals. This is not a cookie cutter approach. "It is imperative for programs to deal with each youth as his or her own unique person, with his or her own set of individual issues and circumstances. We strongly believe in this individualistic approach," Glean explained. "This approach requires time - time that our dedicated staff is eager and willing to spend directing and overseeing the progress of each participant."

The Foothill program has a "very passionate staff" of 2 case managers, 2 peer advocates, 1 career advisor and 1 academic advisor. Participants are recruited through referrals from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department as well as through direct recruitment through community involvement. "FWIB works closely with Casey Foundation’s Alumni Center in Pasadena," added Glean. "The program is about jobs, education, and money. It is about finding and keeping a place to live." Participants learn financial management and gain access to educational, training, work experience, and vocational and employment opportunities.

For youth leaving foster care, the risk of long term disconnection from school, work, and community are extremely high. Inadequate education and workforce preparation are common challenges. To combat this situation, FWIB has every participant enrolled in career preparation classes designed to teach how to get and retain a job. There are scheduled workshops, but in keeping with the individualistic approach, every participant does not necessarily attend each workshop; they take part only in those that will meet their needs in preparing for and maintaining employment, as well as workshops designed to enhance the healthy development of the whole person.

FWIB has partnered with Toastmasters to facilitate a leadership workshop. Public speaking skills aid not only in developing public speakers, but assist in building youth’s self confidence and self esteem. Public speaking practice also helps with interviewing and communication skills for teamwork in the work place. In addition, this workshop also indirectly addresses anger management issues that many participants face, teaching them how to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. "The leadership workshop has been a hit with the youth," Glean writes.
In addition to working directly with youth, the staff makes efforts to develop jobs outside of the work experience program by involving the community. Positive contacts have been established with Mervyn's, Target, Home Depot, Office Depot, and Ross.

**Evaluation:**
The FYSSP tracks the WIA-mandated criteria.

**Lessons Learned:**
The staff has learned that pre-established relationships with other community members have enabled them to help support youth with immediate needs. According to Glean, "The program has been able to come to the immediate assistance of several youth entering college in the fall semester with books and supplies. A relationship developed with a local bookstore allows the youth to receive books and supplies and the FWIB is invoiced. This proved to be a great support service for those who had not yet received their financial aid check and alleviates some of the stress of starting college. The FWIB's long history of working relationships and partners in the community is a definite plus to the program."

**What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**
FWIB plans to continue working with foster youth currently enrolled in the program, as they are in constant need of case management and crisis intervention. FWIB also hopes that relationships with the various partners continue to grow and strengthen despite the absence of additional funding. These partnerships have proven critical for the delivery of a holistic, comprehensive service delivery system for foster youth.

**Where to go for more information:**
FOOTHILL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD YOUTH SERVICES
1207 East Green Street
Pasadena, CA 91106
(626) 796-5627
fetchinfo@foothilletc.org

Sarah Mendoza
1207 East Green Street
Pasadena, CA 91106
(626) 584-8383
Smendoz@foothilletc.org

**Links:**
Foothill Workforce Investment Board Youth Services web site
www.foothilletc.org/youth_services.html
Sacramento County Youth Organize

Attitude Explosion Leadership Conferences

for Emancipating Foster Youth

Submitted by: San Juan Unified School District

Community: Sacramento County, California

Key Partners: San Juan Unified School District, American River College, Grant Joint Union High School District, Casey Family Programs, Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services/ILP

Subject: Youth Leadership

All Youth - One System Element: Education; Career Preparation; Community Services and Support; Youth leadership

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge: Many of the foster youth in Sacramento County were not finding or maintaining sustainable employment after emancipation. According to Cheryl Powell, Program Specialist for the San Juan Unified School District, "We held discussions with our Independent Living classes to elicit from them areas that they felt they wanted more information. Many students and care providers felt that they were particularly unaware of community resources."

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice: The partners decided to support a conference designed and produced by youth where information could be shared about community resources and about other topics that youth felt were important. The conference targeted foster youth nearing emancipation from the foster care system and was designed to help them transition successfully to life on their own. The resulting conference was called the Attitude Explosion Leadership Conference.

The topics presented were all selected by the youth and included the role that a positive attitude plays in one’s success, accepting personal responsibility for appropriate behavior, career decision-making, and a host of other relevant topics. "The conference is about the fundamentals and the enduring impact of a positive attitude," said Powell. "By offering these annual conferences, we are encouraging young people to think about their future and to take responsibility for making appropriate decisions." It is also a venue designed to familiarize youth with community resources as well as let them know that there are support sources available. The presenters offer suggestions as to how the youth can enhance their attitudes at home, on the job, and in their community. There were also sessions geared to the needs and interests of the caregivers.

The Evidence: The Attitude Explosion Leadership Conference was held annually for four years. On average, approximately 300 youth and 50 care providers attended each conference. The response was positive each time. "Every year we would receive calls asking when the next event
would be,” Powell said. “Our vendors and supporters continued to assist us. We also had a positive response from social workers, probation officers, and staff at nonpublic schools.”

The Details:
**Process for establishing the program:** The leaders of this event were the San Juan Unified School District’s and Grant Join Union High School District’s Foster Youth and Workforce Investment Act programs, American River College (ARC), Casey Family Programs, and Sacramento Department of Health and Human Services/Independent Living Program. According to Powell, the partners had a good working relationship and a shared vision for the youth they serve. “We all knew and trusted each other and had similar goals for our youth. We also had the buy-in from our staffs to embark on this idea.”

**Strategy and practice:** The strategy was to involve youth in as many areas of the project’s development as possible. No youth or caregiver that wanted to participate was turned away. They took several steps to implement this strategy designed to make it possible—and inviting—for youth and caregivers to participate:
- Meetings were scheduled monthly, alternating between the two school districts and ARC.
- No youth or caregiver had to pay anything to participate.
- Food was provided for the youth leaders who attended the meetings.
- Continuing education hours were available for participating foster parents.
- Transportation was provided either by group home staff or by the partners’ staff.

Participants formed committees to divide the work of designing and planning the conference into manageable pieces. For example, marketing was one of the committees that the students were involved with, and they designed their own marketing strategies.

Powell pointed out that the conference is very staff intensive and that youth needed guidance in becoming leaders. “We had to learn techniques to bring students to the point where they were truly taking ownership of the project,” she said.

**Evaluation:** The partners used three kinds of information to evaluate the conference: participant evaluations filled out at the end of each conference, leadership debriefings, and the numbers of attendees. “We used an evaluation form at the conclusion of the event. We gave out Tootsie Pops to every caregiver and youth who handed us a completed evaluation,” Powell explained. “We held a ‘debriefing’ with the leadership group about a week or so after the event. At this time, we critiqued step-by-step the entire event. From those notes, we would redesign the subsequent event. We also felt that the numbers of youth and caregivers that we were able to draw to this event on a Saturday was an indication of the worthiness of our efforts.”

**Lessons learned:** Powell said that staff commitment is very important because putting on the conference requires a lot of work but is very rewarding. She advised others planning a similar event to choose their partners carefully and to look to partners with whom they already have a history. Powell also encouraged people to tap all of the talent that youth have to offer.

In addition, Powell said they learned through experience to use the following guidelines:
- A six hour event is about all the youth can handle.
- Presenters should have an engaging personality and present relevant, up-to-date information.
- The size of the event should be limited to something the partners know they can manage.
The date for the conference should not be too close to end of school or to other foster care activities.

**What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**
While the conferences were successful, the partners are planning to do some sort of other leadership activity for the 2006-07 school year to enhance the employment outcomes for their youth. They are still working on what form the activity will take.

**Where to go for more information**
SAN JUAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
3738 Walnut Avenue
Carmichael, CA 95608
(916) 971-7157
www.sanjuan.edu

Cheryl Powell
Program Specialist
3738 Walnut Avenue
Carmichael, CA 95608
(916) 971-7157
c.powell@sanjuan.edu
Sacramento’s Casey Great Start Young Adult Program Helps Youth Meet Needs and Make Plans

Submitted by: Casey Great Start (CGS)

Community: Sacramento County, California

Key Partners: Casey Family Programs, Sacramento County Independent Living Program, Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA), The Department of Human Assistance (DHA) and Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA)

Subject: Transition Support, Youth Friendly One-Stop

All Youth - One System Element: Community Services and Support, Career Development

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
Approximately 400 youth were expected to exit the foster care system in Sacramento during 2006. Because they have reached the age of 18 years, these youth will be considered adults and as such will no longer be eligible for public foster care support. Still teenagers, more than one-half of those in foster care left the system alone, without family or other positive role models to help them as they transition to adulthood.

As a result, a very high percentage of “aged out” foster youth in Sacramento County have ended up either homeless or living in very high-risk environments. They have limited skills, so obtaining employment and an income eludes them. Survival is paramount and these youth are forced into behaviors that put their long-term survival in jeopardy.

The following research indicates that within 12 to 18 months of leaving the system,
- 40% of foster youth will suffer serious physical victimization, including sexual assault;
- 30% will be homeless at least once;
- 37% will be incarcerated; and
- 33% will be forced to rely on long-term public assistance.

The Practice and Evidence:
Practice: The Casey Great Start Young Adult Program provides self-sufficiency transitional services to emancipating foster youth in the areas of employment, housing, education, physical and mental health, as well as peer and adult support. These services are offered at two of the One-Stop Career Centers in the areas where foster youth concentrations are the highest. The goal is to help current and former foster youth aged 12 – 24 years old make a successful transition into adulthood.

Evidence: In 2006 Casey Great Start provided direct service to 160 youth. They received
245 referrals from the Independent Living Program and they connected these youth to resources. They connected 230 foster youth to employment.

**The Details:**

**The strategy and practice:** The Casey Great Start Young Adult Program provides employment focused self-sufficiency transitional services to transition-aged foster youth, foster care alumni, and group home youth. The Young Adult Program is a collaborative program with the sole purpose of helping foster youth make a successful transition from the foster care system to an independent, self-sufficient adult life. Casey Great Start builds self-esteem and counsels and coaches youth to enter post-high school training and employment.

Each youth is assigned to one of two CGS Youth Specialist case managers. Because many youth need help with all of their basic needs, the Youth Specialists are available to assist youth with everything from job training and interview tips to apartment hunting and life skills assessments. If a Youth Specialist does not offer a specific “youth need,” he or she will assist the youth in finding and collaborating with other programs that better meet their needs, while continuing to manage the case. The Youth Specialists have referred youth to the following services as needed: Independent Living Program, transitional housing, mental health, alcohol and other drug treatment services, GED prep/testing, health care, parenting classes, child care, faith-based support, youth empowerment, clubs, and after-school activities.

Current and former foster youth ages 16 - 24 residing in Sacramento County are eligible. This includes young people who were in kinship care, group home settings, adoption and guardianship, as well as probation youth. Youth can enter the program through social worker referral, but walk-ins are always welcome.

Casey Great Start closely collaborates with Sacramento County Independent Living Program (ILP). All youth eligible for ILP services are referred, and ILP Social Workers remain the lead case managers. CGS supports ILP eligible youth by offering employment training, career development, education and financial aid information and “gap-services.”

**Evaluation:** The employment data is collected by Sacramento Employment Agency (SETA). They collect data in the following areas: total visits by foster youth, age breakdown, ethnic breakdown, gender breakdown, employment characteristics, education status, and the percentage change in foster youth numbers. This data is collected at all of the Sacramento One-Stop Career Centers. According to Casey Great Start Manager, DeWayne Norris, collecting this data enables them to determine the number of youth they serve and identify the most needed resources. “It also enables us determine if we have seen an increase in the number of youth accessing the One Stops since we began focusing on making all One Stops ‘youth friendly,’ Norris explained. “We have seen an increase at all 12 of the One-Stops.”

**Lessons learned:** Norris shared the following insights:

> We have found that collaboration is extremely important. It gives you the ability to maximize resources without duplication. The more partners you have the chances of eliminating gaps in services are much better. The most challenging aspect of working with the youth is maintaining contact. They are extremely mobile. Many come to us dealing with emergency situations that require immediate response. Many times we don’t hear from the youth until they have a need.
What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?
The program will also offer support services to foster parents, grandparents raising grand children, and Foster Family Agencies.

Where to go for more information:
CASEY GREAT START
925 Del Paso Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95815
916-263-0570
fmyers@delpaso.seta.net

DeWayne Norris
Casey Great Start Manager
Systems Improvement
925 Del Paso Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95815
(916) 263-1887
dnorris@casey.org

Link:
Casey Family Programs web site:
www.casey.org
San Diego Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Offers Connections to Range of Services

Submitted by: ACCESS, Inc.

Community: San Diego County, California

Key Partners: ACCESS, Inc., Casey Family Programs, and the San Diego Workforce Partnership (San Diego Workforce Investment Board)

Subject: Education, Career Preparation, and Housing

All Youth - One System Element: Education; Career Preparation; Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge: In the County of San Diego, approximately 7,000 to 8,000 youth are in foster and group home care. About 200 to 300 of these youth are emancipated from the system each year. In 2000, it was clear that many of these young people were ill prepared to become productive, self-sufficient adults. At that time, 50% of the youth were leaving the system without a high school diploma. A startling number of those who had a high school diploma were basic-skill deficient, with many reading at the 4th or 5th grade level.

Casey Family Programs and the San Diego Workforce Partnership decided to develop a program that would address some of the needs of these youth such as remedial education, work readiness skills, housing, etc.

The Practice and Evidence: The practice: in 2000 the key partners—Casey Family Programs (Casey), San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP), and ACCESS, Inc.—developed the Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Program. The YES Program, now called the YES Transition Network, provides services that address the unmet needs of many emancipating foster youth, especially in the areas of remedial education, housing, work readiness skills, and connections to employment opportunities.

The YES Transition Network serves current and former foster youth as well as other at-risk youth from 13 through 24. YES has a strong and active employment services component, but staff recognize the fact that youth cannot successfully deal with employment and career issues until they have addressed other life challenges as well. To that end, they work with youth on a continuum of services and activities that blend employment with the other transition issues they must handle.
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

**The Evidence:** Casey Family Programs has continuously reviewed the YES Program and has expressed a high level of satisfaction with the services and strategies employed, according to Marilyn Stewart, Director of the YES Transition Network. Casey Family Programs have established the YES Program as one of the two models of transition services to be developed within their system of service. “As a result, we have renamed the program the YES Transition Network,” said Stewart. “[In addition], the SDWP has consistently reviewed our files and has given us high marks not only for numbers achieved but services provided.”

**The Details:**
**Process for establishing the program:** The plan to develop the YES Program was welcomed by SDWP and the County of San Diego Children’s Services since neither the county services nor the partnership services seemed to be sufficient to address all of the needs of the youth.

A collaborative was developed among Casey, SDWP, and ACCESS, with Casey and ACCESS having the direct responsibility for the development and implementation of the program. Funding was the first issue. Staff from the SDWP located some state discretionary funds, which needed a match. Casey Family Programs stepped up and provided the match. The combined funds became the first budget.

**Strategy and practice:** All three organizations in the collaboration formed a team to assure that the program was moving along as planned. Weekly team meetings were held then and continue to this day. As with all components of the YES Transition Network, the employment services pieces are under a continuous quality improvement process. “To keep our services fresh and effective, it is important to stay on top of employment trends, best practices, and continue to build and develop strong relationships in the employment community,” said Stewart.

Networking and developing employment resources are as important as the work training skills, said Stewart. She elaborated on the YES Transition Network’s efforts to create and maintain relationships with organizations that can offer work opportunities to young people:

> For example, we are working with Randstad Temp-to-Hire organization. While clients are working in temporary positions and waiting to be hired permanently, Randstad pays benefits, an important factor for our youth.

> Many of our youth are 16+ and have few if any work skills. We have identified and work with several employers who will hire these younger youth with no skills and train them on the job.

> Internship and employment agreements with a number of San Diego employers have helped to get our youth placed. Chula Vista Scripps Hospital, the YMCA, Paradise Valley Hospital, and others are willing to work with us and give our young people a chance to break into the employment market. This requires lots of careful relationship building to develop and maintain these agreements.

> Our relationship with the California Conservation Corp is an excellent example of a partnership that has had many benefits to our young participants. The corp provides skill training, room and board and a real chance for our youth to experience new life opportunities. YES provides the work readiness training, leadership training, case management, and other supports as needed.
The YES Transition Network was marketed through relationships with county foster care programs. “We also received referrals directly from the Juvenile Court with whom we also had a positive relationship,” Stewart said. YES staff also participate in conferences and job fairs, which gives them the opportunity to extend their reach to youth outside the YES Transition Network. These convenings also give YES staff the opportunity to hone their skills and learn from other service providers.

Some of the employment/career services and activities provided by the YES Transition Network are as follows:

- Work readiness skills training (resumes, interviewing, job retention, etc.)
- Job shadow opportunities (provides exposure to a wide variety of opportunities)
- Job tours (provides exposure to opportunities)
- Job search (in person and via computer resources)
- Paid internships (opportunity to try out the world of work and some of their new skills in a safe environment)
- Intensive case management to mentor and coach youth
- Pre-Employment Traineeships (P-E-T) for youth 13, 14, and 15 to help younger youth begin the process of learning and experiencing the work of work)
- Youth One-Stop Career Center (provides all of the same employment/career resources that are available through the adult career centers but they are more youth friendly.....staffed by former foster youth Career Advisors who work with their young participants)
- Monthly “Career Day” activity (brings a variety of employers in to work with the youth and help them understand about opportunities for employment....Q&A sessions so youth can ask for more information)
- Incentives for youth who hit certain benchmarks in their work readiness activities and training
- Follow-up training and coaching for youth who need the extra boost and support.

Stewart explained the level and length of support services the YES Transition network offers: “We serve youth with one year of active/intensive service and a second year of follow-up services per our WIA contract regulations. YES never turns down a youth who needs our help after the contract period. Youth return to us frequently and know that ours is a safe environment and that they will be welcome and help is available.”

**Evaluation:** The YES Program conducts three different sets of evaluations, Stewart explained. One is for WIA. “The Workforce Investment Act has stringent requirements for programs funded with their resources. Regular evaluation of data entry and direct case reviews are part of the process of tracking the success of the programs.” Casey Family Programs collect program data that are reviewed at their program review meetings. In addition they use “periodic customer surveys and focus groups with participating youth to take a reading on our service delivery.”
Lessons learned:
According to Stewart, open communication, sharing ideas and strategies, successes as well as setbacks have produced a strong collaborative relationship. "Developing a collaborative has been the best way for us to implement and advance our program," said Stewart. "It does take a lot of time and patience, but it is worth it to leverage funds and resources for our youth. Open communication is key to a strong partnership and a lasting relationship. If that also sounds like the recipe for a good marriage, the concept certainly is similar! I recently changed employers from Casey to ACCESS. Because of our strong relationship, it hardly caused a ripple since the staff and partners are so used to working together. The agency lines have been blurred and almost forgotten.”

What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice? The YES Transition Network is a work in progress, Stewart noted. "We participate in a process of continuous quality improvement that reviews not only existing services and programs but planned enhancements as well. We are expanding our program to additional work sites so that youth will have easier access to our programs. We have opened an additional office in our South Bay area of [San Diego] County, one in the Southeast area, and in the new year we will be moving into the Casey Family Programs office in the central part of San Diego.”

Stewart said that they will also be working with the staff in children's services that serve the deaf foster youth population. "We also are working with public health to have the mobile health clinic available for our youth and other community residents at our primary location,” she added.

Where to go for more information
ACCESS, INC.
2612 Daniel Ave.
San Diego, CA 92111
(858) 560-0871
www.access2jobs.org

Marilyn Stewart
Director
YES Transition Network
2612 Daniel Ave.
San Diego, CA 92111
(858) 560-0871
mstewart@access2jobs.org
San Pasqual Academy Emphasizes Cross-Agency Collaboration

Submitted by: San Pasqual Academy, San Diego Workforce Partnership

Community: County of San Diego County, California

Key Partners: San Pasqual Academy; San Diego County Office of Education; New Alternatives, Inc.; San Diego Workforce Partnership; Casey Family Programs; ACCESS, and (partners in the YES Program); County of San Diego County Health and Human Services Department

Subject: Cross-System Collaboration, Education, and Career Preparation

All Youth - One System Elements: Education; Career Preparation; Community Services and Support

Functions: Create Linkages and Connect Systems and Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
At a conference spearheaded by the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors in the late 1990s, foster youth explained that moving from foster home to foster home and group home to group home, made it difficult to obtain a consistent education. Every change in foster or group home also brought a change in schools. Employment preparation was also a challenge because it was difficult to access job training and work opportunities. The County of San Diego and the City of San Diego have a history of strong support for youth workforce development and for foster youth, so leaders across the spectrum of community services and supports wanted to address these related problems. They worked together to develop a stable living situation with access to all needed services.

The Practice and Evidence:
The practice: San Pasqual Academy is a first-in-the-nation residential education campus designed specifically for foster teens. Located in Escondido, CA, the Academy provides foster teens with a stable, caring home, a quality, individualized education, and preparation for independent living. San Pasqual Academy offers an alternative placement option in the continuum of care for San Diego County foster teens.

San Pasqual Academy opened in October 2001 with four major partners involved in the operation of the Academy: New Alternatives, Inc. manages the residential component; the San Diego County Office of Education oversees the high school; the San Diego Workforce Partnership (the San Diego WIB) manages the work-readiness component called the YES Program; and the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency manages child welfare services.

The evidence: San Pasqual Academy is in the middle of its sixth academic year. Currently (December 2006) there are 130 students residing at the Academy; the majority attend the on-
site high school and approximately ten attend the local middle school. An additional 20 youth are enrolled in the Academy’s transitional living program. “Graduation is one of the steps in facilitating their successful integration into the world and college,” said Dan Radojevic, Employment Services Coordinator for the YES Program at San Pasqual Academy. In the class of 2005, 22 youth graduated; 16 went directly on to college. The other six enrolled in the Academy’s transitional living program, which requires them to enroll in college and get a job within a certain time frame.

**The Details:**

**Process for establishing the program:** Responding to the foster youth at the 1999 conference, San Diego leaders decided to create a residential educational program that also offered other needed support services. The County of San Diego Board of Supervisors, led by Supervisors Greg Cox and Ron Roberts, along with the Honorable James Milliken, Presiding judge of the Juvenile Court, spearheaded the effort. Thus, the Board of Supervisors allocated twenty-four million dollars to purchase and renovate a 238-acre former boarding school site.

Private partners played a big role as well. Robert K. Ross, former Director of the County’s Health and Human Services Agency, told the Action Alliance for Children, "In San Diego, a notoriously conservative county . . . there was no way we were going to advance a children’s agenda by a call for bigger government. Public-private collaboration was ‘mission critical.’" Within the political climate described by Dr. Ross, more than $12 million in private donations was raised and 400 stakeholders from child welfare, academic, business, judicial, foster care and law enforcement backgrounds took part in a 2-day conference to lay the foundation of the Academy. The four components of care - housing, education, work readiness, and child welfare - were incorporated into the foundation and multiple funding streams were channeled.

Each of the partners came to the Academy with its own system, so collaboration and coordination were crucial. According to Radojevic, "We had to have a common language, [so] we got together and created a Memorandum of Understanding of all the roles and responsibilities of the partners on the campus. [We also hold] a lot of meetings using similar tools for assessment and determining needs of students on campus. So we all work together.”

**Strategy and practice:** Leaders in the County of San Diego recognized the need to provide adolescent foster youth alternative, stable housing and an opportunity to keep attending the same school. They saw this need extending beyond completion of high school and/or the age of 18.

San Pasqual Academy is built around a unique partnership of public and private agencies. New Alternatives, Inc., a non-profit agency, administers the residential component of the Academy. Foster youth, who live in homes with up to seven peers and house parents, learn how to run a household, including preparing meals and managing household functions and finances. In addition to the care and supervision provided by the residential program, New Alternatives, Inc. offers services through the on-campus Health and Wellness Center, a Day Rehabilitation Clinic, an Intergenerational Mentoring Program, and an Alumni Housing Program.

The San Diego County Office of Education provides the on-site high school program. Class sizes are kept small to ensure personal attention and individual access to computers. (Each youth receives a privately donated computer upon graduation). Extra-curricular programs include sports, music, culinary arts instruction, and yoga. The Academy also incorporates businesses, a cyber café, pool, farm, and gym, with the whole campus wired to state-of-the-art standards.
The YES Program, a collaborative composed of San Diego Workforce Partnership, Casey Family Programs and ACCESS, Inc. offers a Work Readiness and Self-Sufficiency Program on campus at the Qualcomm Technology and Career Information Center. “We’ve made it a foster youth One-stop,” Radojevic said. The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency manages the child welfare services of the dependent youth placed at San Pasqual Academy and advocates on their behalf in Juvenile Court.

Each youth must request placement at the Academy, and Radojevic pointed out that voluntary participation makes a big difference in the youths’ attitudes about being there. Since youth choose to be at the Academy, they take ownership of their home and school.

**Evaluation:** Each partner tracks the outcomes mandated by its funding source.

**Lessons Learned:**
Support from all the partners has been critical to San Pasqual Academy’s success. “We would not work if we didn’t have the total buy-in of the governmental leaders and leadership in the various systems,” said Radojevic.

**What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**
The Academy is planning to increase its capacity so that it will serve 250 youth.

**Where to go for more information:**
SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY
17701 San Pasqual Valley Road
760. 233-4028
kbuckley@access2jobs.org

Dan Radojevic
Employment Services Coordinator
San Pasqual Academy YES Program
17701 San Pasqual Valley Road
Escondido CA 920025]
(760) 233-4028 ext. 301
dan@workforce.org

**Links:**
San Pasqual Academy website
[www.sanpasqualacademy.org](http://www.sanpasqualacademy.org)

Promising Practice article on the San Diego YES Program:
“San Diego Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Offers Connections to Range of Services”
Shasta County Independent Living Program
Builds Enduring Relationships with Transitioning Youth

Submitted by: Shasta County Independent Living Program

Community: Shasta County, California

Key Partners: Youth and Family Programs, Shasta County Independent Living Program, Shasta College Independent Living Skills Program, Shasta County Department of Social Services

Subject: Comprehensive Transition Support

All Youth – One System Element: Community Services and Supports

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
Shasta County foster youth, like other youth in care around California, face a difficult transition into the world of adult life. As many as 50% experienced homelessness; only 50% graduated from high school. More than one third of them experienced joblessness at some time during their first post-emancipation year. Even though Shasta County had the state-mandated Independent Living Program (ILP) in place, Shasta County youth were still facing difficulties. As Lisa Goza, Program Manager for the Shasta County ILP, pointed out, youth leaving foster care do not have adults to whom they can turn. In contrast, youth who grow up at home are often on their family’s health care plan until age 24, and many can call their parents to ask for advice or financial help if they run into a problem.

The Practice and Evidence:
The Practice: Beginning in 2005, the Youth & Family Programs Agency has contracted with Shasta County to run the Independent Living Program (ILP) for youth ages 16 to 21. Youth & Family has created an ILP that combines experiential learning with a relationship-based approach; each youth is assigned a permanent caseworker.

Evidence that the practice or program is working: When Youth & Family Programs took over Shasta County’s ILP in 2004, enrollment was low. In 2005, enrollment had increased significantly; 220 youth took part over the course of the year, and currently (December 2006) 120 youth are participating. In addition, caseworkers have reported anecdotally that certain youth in their caseload call them for advice on matters small and large.

The Details:
Process used to establish the practice: Youth & Family Programs had a foster care agency in Shasta County, so they were aware of the difficulties transitioning youth were having. They put in a bid to run the ILP as well. Once they received the contract, they rebuilt the program from
Scratch, incorporating the relationship-centered philosophy that the agency uses in all their programs.

**Strategy and practice:** Shasta ILP has structured their program to provide personal support as a main function of the Independent Living Program. The long-term, one-on-one relationship between the caseworker and the youth is central. Caseworkers are assigned to each young person when he or she turns 16. The caseworker serves as a mentor, and the goal is to establish a lasting relationship. "We really try not to change caseworkers with the youth," said Goza. "We want to [provide a] stable connection since their social workers and placements often change." So far they have been able to keep each youth with the same staff person. "We haven’t had one of the caseworkers leave yet," Goza said.

In each youth’s initial transition plan, the ILP staff hope to establish a support network as they help him or her plan short- and long-term goals. Other services include assessment of initial needs, referral to needed services, after care services, Transition Housing Placement Program (THPP), and outcome tracking.

Participants must be 16 to 21 years old, currently in foster care or previously in care at age 16 or over, and accept services voluntarily. Youth in the program join small groups and participate in experiential learning activities such as trips into the community to car sales lots, property management offices, and employers. For example, the local Les Schwab Tires dealership offers classes in changing tires and other car maintenance basics. Guest speakers provide information about health, domestic violence, and self-defense. The Shasta County Independent Living Program collaborates with Shasta College Independent Living Skills Program on social events.

The Shasta County Independent Living Program provides an active support system that prepares current and former foster youth in a wide range of survival skills:

- employment skills
- health, safety, and hygiene
- banking, money management, and budgeting
- consumer purchasing, loans, and contracts
- home maintenance
- time management
- interpersonal skills
- knowledge of community resources

Opportunities exist for youth to save for emancipation, participate in a paid volunteer program, to receive incentive earnings based on participation, and earn scholarships. Staff help youth under 18 build a resume. For young people over 18, caseworkers help connect them to the Smart Center, which has a program that pays youth to prepare for jobs. They also connect youth with the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing program.

Caseworkers also help individual youth cope with problems as they arise. Resources are available to help in emergencies with utility payments and rent, and staff arrange for a bus pass if a youth can use one. Perhaps the most important assistance is offered on an as-needed basis. Each youth is given cell phone numbers for two or more caseworkers so they can get help when they need it. Goza explained, "They call us for all those things that other youth call home for: tiny things from ‘I left my keys at the Laundromat. What now?’ to big things like ‘I got arrested. What should I do?’” A year before emancipation, quite a few foster parents said the young people could stay as long as they needed to, but it hasn’t always worked out. Last year, for example,
they had five youth say they had to leave their foster homes even though their foster parents had initially said they could stay. ILP staff helped these youth find housing.

The Shasta ILP has mutual agreements with Independent Living Programs in other counties so that teens in out-of-county placements receive services. They make scheduled home visits to all foster youth in the program. For youth living in outlying areas, case managers travel to meet with them and offer assistance. The Program Coordinator determines eligibility upon receiving the referral from the county social worker or probation officer. Foster parents and group homes play an important role by providing transportation to appointments and group meetings as well as offering encouragement and guidance.

**Evaluation criteria used:** The Shasta County ILP generates the state-mandated annual report that tracks placements, jobs, and education. They also create quarterly reports on each in-care youth for his or her social worker. They pay particular attention to whether after care youth go on to attend college. Quarterly reports are created for after-care youth as well. Recently they began researching employment more closely; they are now tracking how many youth stay on a job for 3 months, 6 months, a year.

**Lessons learned:**
According to Goza, the most difficult time for the youth occurs when they first emancipate. “It’s very, very hard between the ages of 18 and 19. They have an extremely giant hole to fill as they transition. There’s a huge gap to fill, and they’re tired of it [being part of the system]. They want everyone to go away. They want to do it on their own.”

It’s a challenge for the ILP staff too, Goza pointed out. “We want to help them make the transition as smooth as possible. I say, ‘Let us be there for you,’ but we have to let go and let them come back when they are ready.”

That’s why the ILP staff is focusing on establishing the connections with younger youth. “It’s critical to establish the secure relationship with youth between 16 and 18, so there’s someone there for them,” explained Goza. “With the youth who have been with us, it’s getting better. They trust that person to walk with them through the transition. The first youth who have been with ILP since age 16 are now getting ready to emancipate, and Goza is hopeful that more of them will stay connected throughout their first year.

**What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**
The next goal is to start bringing in after-care youth to do peer mentoring and other work with the younger youth. This program would match 20- to 21-year old youth with 16-year olds. The ILP staff think the younger youth will listen more readily to the older youth than they will to the adults. The staff are also working with the City of Redding to come up with more housing for 18-to 21-year olds.
Where to go for more information
SHASTA COUNTY INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM
2877 Childress Drive
Anderson, CA 96007
(530) 365-9260 Ext. 120
(530) 365-9268 fax

Lisa Goza
Program Coordinator
2877 Childress Drive
Anderson, CA 96007
(530) 365-9260 ext. 120
(530) 521-6743 cell
lgoza@youthandfamily.info

Links:
Youth & Family Programs web site
www.youthandfamily.info
The Fresno County Foster Bridge Program Provides Transition Support

Submitted by: Fresno City College; the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I), Fresno County, Department of Children and Family Services

Community: Fresno County, California, with some participants coming from nearby Madera County

Key Partners: County of Fresno Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Fresno Workforce Investment Board, Fresno City College (FCC), Stuart Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation

Subject: Career Pathways, Postsecondary Education, Community Services and Support

All Youth - One System Element: Education, Career Preparation, Community Services and Support

Function: Create Linkages and Connect Systems

The Challenge:
For a number of years, the County of Fresno, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has been subcontracting a large portion of Independent Living Program (ILP) to Fresno City College (FCC). The classes are run through the Social Sciences Division of the college. According to Carol Smith Davies, ILP Coordinator at FCC, the county liked the concept of youth taking ILP classes on the college campus so they would not be so fearful of postsecondary education. Students came to FCC for 6 to 8 weeks of classes, putting in about 50 hours. During those courses, which included a lot of team building, the students established camaraderie, worked together, and by the end, developed into a cohort that wanted to continue working together. However, there was nowhere else to send them. The challenge was how to keep the youth together and keep the excitement going.

The Practice and Evidence:
The practice: In the summer of 2006, the DCFS, Fresno Workforce Investment Board, FCC, Stuart Foundation, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation launched the Fresno County Foster Bridge Program (the Bridge), an education and career pathway program for emancipated foster youth. “The Foster Bridge Program is an intensive program designed to offer current and former foster youth the support and guidance they need in order to make a smooth transition into college and/or vocational training, explained Lisa Nichols, CC25I Coordinator at the Fresno County, Department of Children and Family Services.

The Bridge is conducted at Fresno City College and supported by the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Twenty youth are enrolled in the first cohort, and 20 to 25 additional youth will be enrolled in each succeeding semester over the next three years. Currently, one academic counselor, Alexandra Gonzales, is fully funded to serve the youth, and a second counselor is being recruited. WIB case managers are also assigned to the program to work with WIA-eligible youth. In addition, some youth are receiving work-study aid (if they are able to handle working while studying), and they get
the full range of financial aid. WIA eligible youth receive a stipend for attendance. The county can supply money for a deposit on an apartment.

**The Evidence:** The first cohort participated in a math “spa” over the summer, two weeks of remedial math work taught by an FCC math professor. The skill levels ranged from below third grade math level to higher than 10th grade. “We saw that all of them got a jump start,” said Davies, who appreciated the creativeness of the FCC faculty.

While outcome data is not yet available for the first cohort, which is midway through its first semester, Davies shared some anecdotal evidence. As an ILP instructor, she had worked with many of the students previously. “I have a history with many of the students. I see their excitement, the smiles on their faces,” Davies said. “[Their expressions say] ‘Look what I’m doing and how I’m succeeding. I’ve got a future. I kind of see what you were talking about three years ago.’” A second aspect of the youths’ work together is the way they are starting to advocate for one another. Finally, said Davies, they are putting aside their preconceived notions about college. They have come to see that for many of them, they will have to do extensive remedial work. They have decided to slow their studies down a little bit, to invest in their skill levels. Davies noted that this step “is not an easy thing to do. They have some expectations. I admire them for having the wisdom to do that.”

**The Details:**

**The process used to establish the practice:** An opportunity to build on the ILP classes arose about five years ago when Davies began to coordinate a small state grant to provide basic skills for foster youth. When Davies began managing the ILP for Fresno, she went to the county, which was participating in the Family to Family initiative, and said, “FCC has some money. What are you doing? Let’s look together and collaborate.” They began looking for and discussing options that fit both the ILP and the CC25I goals. Both programs are committed to helping foster youth make a successful transition to adulthood.

Nichols described the California Connected by 25 Initiative:

*The California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) is an initiative that is being tested by five counties as a fifth strategy under the Family to Family Initiative to develop and implement strategies to help emancipating foster and probation youth transition to adulthood successfully. CC25I is generously supported by the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Stuart Foundation Charles M. Schwab Foundation and the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation. Fresno County, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is one of five counties that have been given the opportunity to receive grant funding to help provide a continuum of supportive services for foster and probation youth. One of specific areas Fresno County, DCFS has chosen to target is Employment/Post-Secondary Education. Foster and probation youth graduating from high school still require significant training/mentoring to be successful in employment or higher education. The CC25I focus matched well with the purpose of the state grant money that the ILP had received.*
convenings with the Fresno Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the County of Fresno, the Housing Authority, and the juvenile justice system to discuss pathway options and develop the proposal.

The specifics of the Bridge Program grew out of the workgroup that was part of the California Connected by 25 Initiative. The process for working together to develop the plan comes out of the Family to Family model of pulling groups together that share a location or other common interest. (The Family to Family model is organized by neighborhood.) All the participants were focused on youth who are emancipating. They were asking how they could make sure the young people are getting housing, education, career preparation, and mental health services. The organizers of the convenings did some planning to help enhance the group’s work. They pulled people together at the shared table and then divided them up by workgroups. The result was 45 people working on six teams. Davies credits the Department of Children and Family Services for directing the group's efforts so effectively.

In the process of setting up the program, the partners discovered that many of the youth were not yet eligible for WIA services, or for the program that Walter S. Johnson Foundation wanted to fund, due to the low level of their academic skills. “We wanted to use Walter S. Johnson Foundation and the WIB to create educational cohorts coming from the system and have them take post-secondary classes as a group, but we knew we had issues with CAHSEE and basic skills. We knew there would have to be remediation, addressing their needs,” said Davies. “We were really shocked with how low they tested. WIA targets a 10th grade level. It was rare that the targeted youth were at the 10th grade level.” As a result, the partners have had to redefine the thresholds, invest more time and money on remediation, take a close look on the mix of skill levels for each cohort, and slow down the process for many of the students.

The most challenging part of developing the program was coordinating the workforce development piece with child welfare services. According to Davies, “The WIB has different requirements and standards, and they think and serve differently [from child welfare services]. [Furthermore], foster youth tend to think of workforce development as just another system, and they don't navigate well in systems.” Davies said that the key was getting members of the WIB governing board behind the Bridge; once the board members were in favor of the program, then many of the traditional WIB barriers evaporated. She also stressed that the Fresno County WIB really stretched to work on the program. “I really applaud them for their efforts,” she said.

The strategy and practice: Davies described two strategies she and the other partners have used in their work together. First was to engage more agencies in working directly with youth. She explained, “I love putting this compilation together in front of new audiences because until people have experienced [the connections with these special youth], they don’t know the depth of the students’ attachment to you personally. It’s nice to see others attached and care.”

Second, the partners have emphasized collaboration in their work together. They have recognized that collaborating requires stepping out of comfort zones and at times breaking the mold, which has brought fresh ideas to their work. A cornerstone of the collaboration is the weekly meeting involving the Bridge academic counselor, the WIB case manager, the college, and the county. They perform triage on the cases before them, with each agency bringing its resources. For example, a youth might need help with a security deposit on an apartment. The model is similar to the wraparound approach employed in mental health services.

Both Davies and Nichols recalled one instance when a student stated he had no food in the home. “The situation was brought up during one of the triage meetings and it was decided that we would help get the student money for groceries,” said Nichols. Our job specialist, who attends the
meetings, took the student shopping and helped teach him how to budget and shop smart. The meetings are helpful and great asset to the Bridge program.”

Dalvin Baker, ILP Supervisor for Fresno County, Department of Children and Family Services, explained the weekly meetings this way:

The goal of the Foster Bridge Program is to provide the necessary supports to ensure the success of each youth who enters this program. A “behind the scenes” support the Bridge Youth don’t see is the weekly Bridge Triage meetings that occur. Fresno County Independent Living Program, Fresno County Workforce Connection, and Fresno City College participate in these Triage meetings. The purpose of this meeting is to debrief about each youth. The Triage Team talks about each youth and the weekly progress they are making in college, as well as in other aspects of their life. Triage identifies the successes as well as the weaknesses each youth encounters on a weekly basis. We applaud the successes and identify what worked in order for that youth to reach that success. For the weaknesses, we work on developing a plan to overcome that obstacle so that youth could be successful in their continued growth. This is the perfect opportunity for the entire team to sit down and get on the same page with every youth. Each Triage member brings a different “piece” of that youth to the table, as we each work with the youth in a different capacity. As such, we begin working on the successful growth of the “entire” youth, not just one aspect of the youth. Each Triage member attends these meetings with one purpose in mind...to help each youth reach their full potential!

The Bridge is in the middle of working with its first cohort of 20 youth. The plan is for each cohort to be in the program for at least two years. The academic counselor not only serves youth in the Bridge program but also provides the foster youth community with a person at the campus they can go to for educational counseling issues. The counselor will serve as a touch point for the youth, a person they can go to who will be there consistently throughout their time in the program. The first semester has been intensive for the youth. "Lots of emotional stuff is coming up for them as they shift from being cared for to being independent,” said Davies. “We anticipate a little less of that in the second semester.”

The first Bridge cohort will continue taking general education courses in the spring, but once they identify a career interest, they may move into a certificate program. If they are eligible, they will do so with guidance from the WIB case manager. For example, if a youth wants to go into auto mechanics, the WIB case manager makes sure the young person has the math and reading skills at the level required for that certificate program. If a participant wants to become a lab technician, the case manager will make sure she has the core essential skills. Other WIA services can include career explorations, job shadowing, and/or internships.

Even when individual Bridge participants embark on a career preparation path of their choosing, they will still be connected to their cohort and Bridge supports. “I would suspect after a year or two they’ll be off on their own career pathway, but they can still check in,” said Davies.

The goal is to start another 20-25 youth next semester and each semester thereafter for the two following years. However, it has been difficult to recruit youth whose test scores match the requirements. "One of our biggest challenges at this time is recruiting the youth that fit the criteria. Some of youth are testing way below the 7th and 8th level and others are testing high above the 7th and 8th grade level,” Nichols said. “But we are most definitely planning a cohort for Fall [2007].”

Evaluation: The main objective for the project is retention. In addition, the partners are using the outcomes measurements required by their funding sources. They are tracking how many youth are enrolled, staying enrolled, passing classes, and making progress toward a certificate or a degree,
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

receiving a certificate, completing benchmarks. Along with certificate outcomes, the WIB is also tracking employment and wages. The county is looking to see if the youth are staying independent, not getting involved in the criminal justice system, and they are tracking any mental health issues.

Lessons Learned:
Some of the lessons have come from challenges. The first has been the pervasive low skill levels youth bring, which has shown the partners that they must be prepared to provide a great deal of remediation. Second, the partners are finding the program isn't necessarily for everyone, so they are looking at the marketing. The outreach has presented its own difficulties. It has been hard to locate and attract a pool of youth coming out of a diversity of caregiving environments, i.e., kin care or long-term foster care placements in private homes. This challenge has led the partners to realize that they need multiple approaches to recruitment (See “What’s next” below.)

Other lessons have emerged from successes. The partners discovered that youth who are enrolled in the county’s transitional living program have done quite well. “It helps us keep track of them,” said Davies. On another front, cross-agency collaboration has shown Davies and the partners that understanding each other a little better is powerful. “When you can understand [other agencies] and their goals, it helps current and future interactions,” Davies explained.

What’s next for this promising practice?
The next step is fine-tuning the recruitment process. The county has been taking the recruitment lead because they work with the youth. A handbook has been developed that targets a youth market, and provides a clear description of the program and commitments. The county is also recruiting aggressively, targeting youth in placements that have in the past been overlooked because they traditionally do not seek ILP services. The recruitment effort has also entered the ILP classes on campus, which approximately 400 students attend each year. Davies said they would also be making sure they keep putting the message out repeatedly so the youth start to get the idea that the Bridge might be a good opportunity for them.

Where to go for more information
Carol Smith Davies
ILP Coordinator
Fresno City College
1101 East University
Fresno, CA 93704
(559) 442 8210 (Social Sciences Division)
(559) 265- 5776 fax
carol.davies@fresnocitycollege.edu

Alexandra Gonzales
Counselor, Career Pathways Project
Fresno City College
1101 East University
Fresno, CA 93704
alexandra.gonzales@fresnocitycollege.edu

Lisa Nichols, CC25I Coordinator
Department of Children and Family Services
2011 Fresno Street, Fresno, Ca 93721
559.453.5095
nichol@co.fresno.ca.us

Dalvin Baker, ILP Supervisor
Department of Children and Family Services
2135 Fresno Street, Suite 335A, Fresno, Ca 93721
559.262.4012
DIBaker@co.fresno.ca.us

Links:
Fresno County, Department of Children and Family Services
www.fresnohumanservices.org/ChildrenandFamilyServices/FamilyToFamilies/CC25I.htm

Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative
New Ways to Work
www.newwaystowork.org
Tulare County Youth Transitions Program
Offers Paid Work Experience

Submitted by: Tulare County Workforce Investment Board

Community: Tulare County, California

Key Partners: Tulare County Workforce Investment Board, Community Services and Employment Training, Inc., Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, Tulare County Probation Department, and Tulare County Board of Supervisors

Subjects: Paid Work Experience, Cross-system Partnerships

All Youth - One System Elements: Career Preparation, Youth Leadership

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge: In Tulare County many youth were leaving foster care without any work experience or a good sense of employers' expectations. The Tulare County partners: Tulare County Workforce Investment Board, Community Services and Employment Training, Inc., Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, Tulare County Probation Department, and Tulare County Board of Supervisors, saw a need to provide transitioning foster youth with paid work experience combined with guidance to help them enter the workforce and prepare to support themselves. At the same time, Tulare County Health and Human Services had experienced a huge staffing need for entry-level positions.

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice: In the fall of 2006, the partners began the Youth Transitions Program (YTP). The YTP "places students and trainees in clerical jobs with Tulare County at Health and Human Services Agency locations," explained Jed Chernabaeff, staff writer for the Tulare Advance-

The evidence: As of November 2006, the program was just getting under way, so no hard data was available. However, the partners expressed confidence that the program would prove valuable. As reported by Chernabaeff, the deputy health and human services director of Tulare WORKS, David Crawford, thinks the program will provide the work experience that the youth lack and employers want and need. "It will also give them a skill set and work ethic that employers want," Crawford said. In fact, by the time youth finish the program, they should be prepared to apply for a County job. The financial support from the Board of Supervisors is benefiting not only
the youth but also the County Department of Health and Human Services, which is able to fill more positions.

**The Details:**

**Process for establishing the program:** The Youth Transitions Program operates year round, but it grew out of a program that placed foster youth in summer jobs with the Department of Health and Human Services. Eldonna Caudill, Senior Analyst for the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board, explained that the partners worked on the summer program for a couple of years, promoting it at Workforce Investment Board’s One-Stop orientations. This program was supported with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars, and the successful outcomes demonstrated the value of the approach.

According Caudill, the year-round program “had buy-in from the very top. The Director of Health and Human Services, the Board of Supervisors, and the Workforce Investment Board all supported it.” The program is a joint effort among four partners: Community Services & Employment Training Inc., the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board, Tulare County Health and Human Services, and the Tulare County Probation Department. The Tulare County Board of Supervisors allocated $228,000 to be used for wages for youth enrolled in the program.

**Strategy and practice:** The strategy for serving youth is to combine the actual work experience with mentoring so that youth receive guidance in work preparation and life skills as they are working. The program implementation strategy is to pool resources to assist foster youth who are eligible for support not only through Health and Human Services, but also through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Youth are hired to fill training positions. Mentors work with youth to help them acquire a good work ethic and to learn how to conduct themselves on the job. Mentors also guide them in creating a resume that includes their work experience and in preparing job applications when they are ready to look for unsubsidized employment.

Encouraging youth to continue their education is also a key goal. WIA programs have educational outcomes, and it was a condition of the partnership with HHS that the program not interfere with schooling. According to Caudill, HHS readily agreed to this stipulation and has been very supportive of the youth. HHS works with participants to create a schedule that doesn’t interfere with their schooling. Caudill said the message to youth is, “Tell us what you need and what your hours are going to be.”

Providing opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills is a third important component of YTP. A number of the participating youth have been recruited to take part in Tulare County Youth Council committee work. The Tulare County Youth Council has adopted a strategy of inviting youth to serve on committees rather than to sit on the Council. Much of the Youth Council’s work is conducted in committees, which are formed to guide specific projects such as creating a youth-friendly web site or developing a series of youth-led trainings for WIA-eligible young people. Youth are recruited to join a particular committee to help with a particular project. The YTP participants who serve on the committees are paid to take part in committee work since they are County staff and, like other staff, they do this work as part of their job.

Several YTP participants are serving on the Transitional Housing Committee, where they are helping to write a grant proposal for transitional housing support. Caudill said, “They know they probably won’t benefit from the transitional housing, but they like helping the next generation of foster youth.”
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

**Evaluation:** The Youth Transitions Program will use the Workforce Investment Act requirements for evaluation as well as the evaluation criteria mandated by the other partners.

**Lessons learned:**
Thus far, the YTP appears to be a promising strategy for recruiting young people into human service careers, and the committee work has been the catalyst. Caudill reported that a number of the youth are seriously thinking about human services as a career even though they know they can make more money doing something else. Caudill also maintains that the committee work is helping the youth to develop as leaders; she has seen the young people grow from meeting to meeting.

**What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**
The partners will continue to select participants, connect them with mentors, and place them in positions with the Health and Human Services Agency.

**Where to go for more information**
TULARE COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
4025 West Noble Avenue, Suite A
Visalia, CA 93277
(559) 713-5200
(559) 713-5262 (fax)

Eldonna Caudill
Tulare County Workforce Investment Board
Senior Analyst
4025 West Noble Avenue, Suite A
Visalia, CA 93277
(559) 713-5200
ecaudill@tcwid.org

**Links:**
Tulare County workforce Investment Board website:
www.co.tulare.ca.us/government/workforce/default.asp
Ventura County Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S.
Coordinated Services across Systems

Submitted by: Ventura County Youth Council

Community: Ventura County, California

Key Partners: Ventura County Youth Council, County of Ventura Children and Family Services, Ventura College Foster Youth Program, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools, Independent Living Program, County of Ventura Probation Agency, Interface Children Family Services, and County of Ventura Business and Employment Services Department

Subject: Career Preparation, Transition Support

All Youth - One System Element: Career Preparation; Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
In 2003, roughly 3,500 youth aged out of foster care in California. The Ventura County Children and Family Services and the Ventura County Youth Council staff knew that within two to four years of emancipation, 51 percent of the emancipated youth were likely to be unemployed and 40 percent would have been on public assistance or incarcerated. The staff of the two agencies recognized that a lack of collaboration between their systems was preventing some youth from getting services that would help them avoid these hardships.

The Practice and Evidence:
The practice: Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S., a pilot project operated between July of 2003 and June of 2004 by the Ventura County Youth Council, expanded and enhanced services available to foster youth. T.R.E.N.D.S.S. stands for Teens Reaching for Employment Now and Developing Self-Sufficiency, the result of a “Name-the-Project” contest that exemplified the program’s commitment to involving youth in the design and implementation of services. The project targeted foster youth ages 16-21, with a primary focus on emancipating or recently emancipated youth ages 18-19. Services included career counseling, information on local employers and occupations, vocational training, subsidized work experience, job preparation workshops, job placement assistance, and follow-up support to ensure long-term success.

Even though Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. ended, self-sustaining networks were established to continue to connect workforce and child welfare services in the county.

The Evidence: Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. provided at least 35 foster youth throughout Ventura County with career counseling, information on local employers and occupations, vocational training, subsidized work experience, job preparation workshops, job placement assistance, and follow-up support to ensure long-term success. Most stayed with the required activities. "We
[saw] that when youth connect to the activities we have going for them, it helps them to focus and stay out of trouble,” commented Frank Ramirez, Youth Services Manager for Ventura County.

**The Details:**

**Process for establishing the practice:** Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. was funded through a grant from the state. The county subsidized the training programs by offering employers a contract that defrayed up to 50 percent of their expenses for running the training programs. The grant monies also helped establish a common database to track participants and mentoring/leadership activities.

When marketing the idea, staff developed a flyer and distributed it to anyone who came into contact with foster youth, including people at nonprofits and faith-based organizations. They also spread the word through presentations and mini-workshops on Career Days.

**Strategy and practice:** As part of the Youth Council’s overall menu of youth services, Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. built on an existing “All Youth-One System” infrastructure and networking process. Memos kept everyone in the network involved in each youth’s situation and progress. Youth Service staff attended the emancipation conference when a youth “aged out” of the county’s system, and informed him or her about the range of services that were available.

Serving youth between the ages of 16 and 22, Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. aimed to add structure and flexibility to the process of weaning youth from foster care by coordinating services that had not previously been integrated. Youth workers identified each participant’s “support system” – all the people involved with that youth, such as the case manager and probation officer – and fostered communication and cooperation among them. Strategies included meetings, networking, youth ownership of the program, and shared software.

Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. offered work-readiness workshops and comprehensive employment and training services. Youth who completed the work-experience component could also get on-the-job training. Some did enter the job training programs while others received ongoing services at One-Stops or at local Girls and Boys Clubs.

Some employers expressed interest in retaining participants for regular jobs after the training ended. An account executive helped the others find jobs. Regardless of whether the young people secured an unsubsidized job by the end of the program, all of them acquired the necessary work readiness skills.

Until Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S., no practical link existed between services offered by the offices of Children and Family Services and employment and training programs. “That’s where there needs to be linkage to One-Stops or to other entities that provide that expertise. That’s what made this program stand out as a good solution,” said Ramirez.

**Lessons learned:**

People got excited about Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. when the youth actually started the career preparation activities “because then they finally saw the results of youth getting connected to services. It had never happened before,” said Ramirez. He gave a lot of credit to the workshops youth attended before being offered work activities. Those introductory workshops made it easier for youth to build relationships with project staff and get used to a structured environment, which in turn made it easier for participants to make the transition into program activities – and actual employment.
Youth Employment Services (YES) Provides Work-Preparation Services to Foster Youth

Submitted by: Glenn County Human Resources Agency (HRA)

Community: Glenn County, California

Key Partners: Glenn County HRA (a combined county Social Services and Community Action Partnership); Glenn County Office of Education; Glenn County Probation; Glenn County Health Services Department; Glenn County Business-To-Education Council

Subject: Work Preparation

All Youth - One System Element: Career Preparation

Function: Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:
Glenn County had multiple youth programs, which meant that multiple job developers were knocking on employers’ doors trying to find work experiences for youth. Leaders of the various programs came to the conclusion they were overburdening their community with the requests for work experience opportunities. According to David Allee, Employment Services Manager of the HRA, agency leaders were convinced they would get better results if they organized under one program.

The Practice and Evidence:
Practiced: The leaders of youth employment in different organizations brought the concept of organizing under one program to the Children’s Interagency Coordinating Council (CICC). They wanted to establish a youth employment clearinghouse for the various county programs for the CICC. For the most part, the group agreed to include programs that have similar missions: to deal with employment for youth ages 14–18, take all their funding sources, and roll them into one entity known as the Youth Employment Services (YES) Program. Foster youth are among the populations served and are given priority enrollment status each semester.

Regardless of the door through which youth enter, they are all placed in the same two-phase program. The first phase involves classroom instruction in job readiness, pre-employment skills, life skills, and work-based training preparation. The second phase entails 100 hours of paid work experience with a local employer (public and private).

Evidence: YES is in its seventh year. Administratively, the agencies involved have moved beyond the transition to the partnership, and they regularly coordinate all their efforts, including the development of work experience opportunities.
Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

As many as 250 youth have participated in the program annually. However, beginning in the 2002-03 school year, the numbers began to decline “due strictly to reduced funding,” said Allee. During the 2005-2006 school year, 172 youth participated.

YES tracks outcomes required for their funding sources. Included among the data they collect are the numbers of participants, number who obtain an unsubsidized job (a closely watched figure), and participant demographics. They also track where youth live to make sure they are serving youth from all their communities, rural areas, and school districts.

Successful completion rates for both phases range in the high 90’s percent. In addition, since the program stresses the importance of academics, many youth, who are not high school seniors, continue in school, often taking advantage of an unsubsidized part time job that fits their school schedule. When graduating seniors, who are not college-bound, do their paid work experience during the summer, they frequently “take the opportunity to take a first real job,” said Allee.

The Details:

The process used to establish the practice: According to Allee, the partnership that formed YES had to overcome a few hurdles in the beginning as they gave up their usual turf and switched to collaborating. They were able to work through these challenges and have kept YES going for seven years. The partnering agencies combine several funding sources: Workforce Investment Act (WIA), CalWORKs, Workability, the Glenn County Probation Department’s Personal Pathways Program, and the ROP program. The Glenn County Health Services Agency has also funded one position. Allee said, “Utilizing WIA dollars, I staff [YES] with case managers serving as classroom aides. The Probation Department does the same thing. [The case managers] also do the job development portions, find the opportunities, and case manage the youth while they are going through.”

The strategy and practice: Even though YES doesn’t have a tangible existence per se, YES has a single identity, with its own logo and title. The youth understand they are going through one program.

The classroom phase of YES consists of one day a week in a given school semester. The course is offered after school hours—from 3:30 to 5:30, but students earn academic credit because the class is coordinated with the local Regional Occupational Program (ROP) and it is taught by an ROP instructor, under a diversified occupations offering. The class is offered in three locations throughout Glenn County. During the 2006-07 school year, classes are being held in Willows, the Office of Education facility in Orland, and the high school in Hamilton City.

More youth want to participate than available funding can serve. Therefore, youth compete for limited spots in the full program. Priority spots are set aside for foster youth, and other spaces are reserved for youth on probation. However, due to the success of the classroom portion, students have begun asking to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in the class portion alone when they are short on credits. “[Young people] who are literally begging to enroll in

Once youth complete phase one, they move on to the paid work experience. This second phase involves 100 hours of work earning minimum wage in the community. Some of the placements are in the private sector, but many are in the public sector.
Another important feature of YES is its very strong marketing component. YES sponsors recognition events for youth who complete the classroom and work phase. The staff invite parents, local area employers, as well as those agencies which provided the funding for the paid work experience to an award ceremony in each community and these events are always successful.

**Evaluation:** The participating agencies use the evaluation criteria and methods required by their funding sources. For more details, see the link to the YES Collaborative 4-Year Statistics Report, under Links, below.

**What’s Next for this Promising Transition Practice?**
The YES program is at a juncture because of the reduction in funding, particularly with WIA, so the partnership leaders are in the process of looking for private sector partners. They have been working with a local 501(c)3 non-profit entity, to adopt the program, in addition to the public agencies which staff and fund it. They have recently laid the groundwork for making any private sector contributions tax deductible. Instead of paying youth directly, participating businesses or benefactors can make contributions towards funding work experience through the non-profit. Now that this structure is in place, the YES managers are planning public outreach. “We’re hoping to take this show on the road to the private sector,” said Allee. We’ve established a fixed cost [per youth] served and to promote it as a way [to contribute to the community] as a part of their identity.”

**Where to go for more information**
GLENN COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY
420 East Laurel Street
Willows CA 95988
(530) 934-6514
www.hra.co.glenn.ca.us/

David Allee
Employment Services Manager
Glenn County Human Resources Agency
420 East Laurel Street
Willows CA 95988
(530) 865-6128
dallee@hra.co.glenn.ca.us

**Links:**
Glenn County Youth Employment Services Partnership
www.hra.co.glenn.ca.us/mainSections/employServ/employServMain.htm

Youth Employment Services (YES) Collaborative 4-Year Statistics (PowerPoint)
www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/YESStatistics.ppt

YES Powerpoint Revised November 2005
www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/YESRevised112005.ppt
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Napa V.O.I.C.E.S: A Foster Youth One-Stop Initiated and Run by Youth

Pasadena’s Foothill Workforce Investment Board Runs Department of Labor Pilot for Foster Youth

The Fresno County Foster Bridge Program Provides Transition Support

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www.newwaystowork.org
### Cross-System Partnerships

| Alameda County Project HOPE Connects Social Services with WIA Services | Tulare County Youth Transitions Program Offers Paid Work Experience |
| San Pasqual Academy Emphasizes Cross-Agency Collaboration |

### Education

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### Youth-Friendly-One-Stops

| Napa V.O.I.C.E.S: A Foster Youth One-Stop Initiated and Run by Youth | Sacramento’s Casey Great Start Young Adult Program Helps Youth Meet Needs and Make Plans |
| North Central Counties Consortium’s Foster Care Youth Project Helps Improve Transition Outcomes |

### Housing

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### Paid Work Experience

| Tulare County Youth Transitions Program Offers Paid Work Experience |

### Postsecondary Education

| The Fresno County Foster Bridge Program Provides Transition Support |

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Sacramento’s Casey Great Start Young Adult Program Helps Youth Meet Needs and Make Plans

Shasta County Independent Living Program Builds Enduring Relationships with Transitioning Youth

Ventura County Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. Coordinated Services Across Systems

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WORK EXPERIENCE

Kern County Adolescent Career Transition (ACT) Provides Paid Work Experience

WORK PREPARATION

Youth Employment Services (YES) Provides Work-Preparation Services to Foster Youth

Humboldt County Peer Counselors Help Foster Youth Navigate Employment Referral Options

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Napa V.O.I.C.E.S: A Foster Youth One-Stop Initiated and Run by Youth

Sacramento County Youth Organize Attitude Explosion Leadership Conferences for Emancipating Foster Youth

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