

## **The Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit January 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Sacramento, CA**

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On January 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008, more than 300 foster youth, former foster youth, caretakers, community-based organizations, employers, and professionals from child welfare, workforce development, education, and probation from across California came together in Sacramento to address employment and career development issues and forge solutions for the nearly 85,000 young people in foster care in California. Sponsored by Casey Family Programs, New Ways to Work, and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC), the summit was the first statewide gathering of its kind.

48 counties were represented at the Summit which featured interactive strategic planning and priority setting sessions, cross-disciplinary county team sessions to develop local commitments and define next steps, and a panel of leaders from Child Welfare, Education, Workforce and Philanthropy who identified opportunities and shared the need for program alignment at the state and local levels. Participants at the summit prioritized a set of recommended actions for legislators, state policy-makers, and local practitioners in the following four Policy Areas to improve outcomes for foster youth:

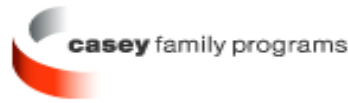
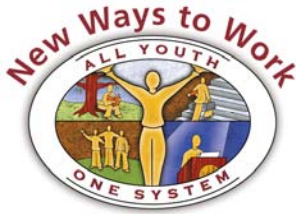
- Prioritize career development and employment for every foster youth
- Connect youth to education and workforce development programs
- Support emancipating and emancipated youth in their transition to adulthood
- Provide work experience and job opportunities that lead to economic success

The Summit culminated with a hearing at the State Capitol, where the sponsoring partners, local practitioners from around the state, and current and former foster youth shared the following priority actions with members and staff of the State Assembly and Senate. In attendance at the hearing were the following members and staff:

Karen Bass – Chair (D- Los Angeles)  
Bill Maze – Co-chair (R- Visalia)  
Patty Berg (D-Eureka)  
Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa)  
Loni Hancock (D-Berkeley)

Shirley Horton (R-San Diego)  
Dave Jones (D- Sacramento)  
Mark Leno (D- San Francisco)  
Roger Niello (D- Sacramento)  
Nicole Parra (D-Hanford)  
Ira Ruskin (D-Redwood City)

Staff representing Senator Pat Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa) and Assemblyman Anthony Portantino (D-Pasadena) were also in attendance,



## **Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit Priority Actions**

### **Prioritize Career Development and Employment for every Foster Youth**

- Develop a consolidation bill that creates a unified vision for transitioning foster youth, brings together the various pieces of existing law that address one or more related foster youth transition issues, and coordinates systems. A cross-disciplinary workgroup including youth should work with the Legislature and create uniform policies and an efficient coordinated service system in which foster youth receive priority for services across departments.
- Ensure that all existing laws directly related to transition issues, career development, and/or employment preparation are fully implemented and resourced appropriately.
- The Child Welfare Council should prioritize the creation of common assessments and outcome measures in the areas of permanency, education, and employment across all systems working with transitioning youth. The Council should formalize Memoranda of Understanding among State Agencies and Departments that define ways to allow for the sharing of data and information about common program participants. Agencies and Departments should be charged with implementing common data systems and reporting cycles to maximize cross-program collaboration.

### **Connect Youth to Education and Workforce Development Programs**

- Actively support cross-program collaboration in order to leverage and link services across systems for foster youth by addressing issues of resource sharing, data alignment and reporting, program design, technical assistance, professional development, oversight, and governance.
- Establish a statewide program in which former foster youth are employed as transition navigators in each county to link foster youth to systems and services and ensure that when youth relocate their services are maintained. (Modeled after the current Disability Navigators)
- Bring together the multiple plans that guide a youth's transition by creating a system for and requiring a common, youth-centered and youth-led transition plan across all agencies, departments, and programs that work with transitioning youth.

# **Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit**

## **Support Emancipating and Emancipated Youth in their Transition to Adulthood**

- Support or establish comprehensive, youth-led transition centers that coordinate existing resources and provide a place for youth to be supported and connected to one another and their community.
- Expand eligibility and resources for career development and employment supportive services and Independent Living Programs to ages 12-25.
- Build on the successes of the THP+ model and create additional transitional housing opportunities. Adjust program eligibility and program participation requirements to allow youth to maintain housing while pursuing the goals of permanence, education (including secondary and post-secondary), and employment. Transitional housing and affordable residential opportunities must be developed on or near community college campuses.

## **Provide Work Experience and Job Opportunities that Lead to Economic Success**

- Encourage the hiring of youth in entry level, career pathway positions through a subsidized, transitional work-experience program in partnership with the private and public sectors, ILP, and Workforce Investment Boards. The program should include the provision of support to worksite supervisors to maximize their participation, youth to build confidence and skills, and foster families to support youth participation.
- Encourage the State Youth Vision Team and the California Workforce Investment Board to develop a statewide “Hire-a-Youth” campaign in partnership with the California Chamber of Commerce and other state-level business groups.

Career development is important for all youth, but it is especially important for foster youth who “age out” of the foster care system at the age of 18. Foster youth are often left to face the transition to adulthood on their own in the face of daunting odds and without the support of family or community. According to a recent study by the Pew Charitable Trust, one in four foster youth is incarcerated within the first two years of leaving foster homes, one in five becomes homeless sometime after the age of 18, only 58% complete high school, and only 3% earn college degrees (compared to 87% and 28% respectively in the general population).

We look forward to working with the Legislature, State and County Agencies, and local practitioners to improve services and programs provided to this group of California’s young people.

For More Information, or to get involved, contact  
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