



Connecting Foster Youth to Summer Employment Summer Jobs 2009 Update

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President Obama's new stimulus package, titled the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, provides 1.2 billion dollars to support youth workforce programs under the Workforce Investment Act, including summer employment for youth. This creates a great opportunity for every current or former foster youth that wants and needs a job this summer to have one.

When summer programs were a vibrant part of the country's youth workforce development system, summer youth programs typically included a six to eight week program combining subsidized work experience with an educational component focused on basic skills and the development of general work readiness skills. Youth were placed at individual worksites in the public or non-profit sectors or on environmental work crews for 20 to 30 hours per week, with approximately four hours per week being spent in classroom settings. The system has all but disappeared over the past decade, and this summer's investment offers a tremendous opportunity for youth and the organizations that work with them.

What will this year's summer jobs program look like?

The Training and Employment Guidance Letter released on March 18th by the Federal Training and Employment Administration outlines the following as components of WIA Youth Programs:

1. Dollars will flow through the state to local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs).
2. Local Youth Councils and WIBs will determine priority populations for participation, local program design, the selection of sub-contractors to deliver the program, and the balance between allocations to summer and year round programming. *(Note: while the Act does not limit the use of Recovery Act funds to summer employment, states and local areas are being strongly encouraged to use as much of these funds as possible to operate expanded summer youth employment opportunities during the summer of 2009.)*
3. Eligibility criteria will be consistent with existing WIA youth programs (legal right to work, economically disadvantaged, additional barriers to employment) with the exception that the upper age limit will be extended to age 24.
4. Performance measures for the summer component will be limited to work readiness as defined by the Act and the U.S. Department of Labor, States, and the local areas.
5. Placements will include a combination of public sector, private sector, and non-profit summer employment opportunities.

What you can do to make sure foster youth get connected

- **Connect with your local Youth Council, Workforce Investment Board, and WIA service providers**

Work with your Youth Council and WIB to ensure that current and former foster youth have access to opportunities this summer. Let them know you are ready to help, and are already working with a group of young people that would benefit from the experience. You can find out which subcontractors are coordinating WIA programs in your area by

contacting your local WIB and Youth Council. Go to the following link <http://www.calworkforce.org/LWIADir.html> to be directed to the California Workforce Association's website where you can search WIB contacts by local area. You may also search the California Workforce Investment Board's website at <http://www.calwia.org/lwia/index.cfm>

- **Make sure youth have the required eligibility documentation**

The Workforce Investment Act includes eligibility requirements as well as documentation to prove the individual has the right to work in the United States. Check your WIB on the eligibility screening process in your community. All youth must show they have the right to work. They may provide a passport (which proves both identity and U.S. citizenship), or their birth certificate or driver's license as well as a social security card. Non-citizens must provide documents demonstrating the right to work (green card). Other documentation that demonstrates specific barriers to success may be requested by the local area. In most cases, a case manager or counselor conducts an intake assessment with each youth to review documentation prior to the eligibility screening. Under WIA guidelines, foster youth automatically meet one of the six identified barriers and are considered a family of one when calculating income eligibility. You can streamline the process by ensuring that the youth you refer have the necessary documents in hand prior to enrolling in the program.

- **Prepare youth for employment**

Typically, those subcontractors providing WIA services are responsible for recruitment and placement of eligible youth in summer experiences as well as the development of appropriate worksite placements for youth and providing educational enhancements during the summer experience. Youth need to be ready for work and able to demonstrate appropriate workplace behavior. If you are working with foster youth, you can help them get a leg up on the summer experience by spending some time developing work maturity skills and a plan for dealing with barriers such as transportation. You can also help youth identify the types of opportunities they are interested in most by conducting career interest assessments, and helping them think about how the summer work experience can contribute to their career and educational goals.

- **Identify possible worksite placements for youth**

The development of meaningful placement opportunities for young people can be challenging. If you work in a public or non-profit office, department, or organization that is youth friendly, or have connections with private, public, or non-profit partners who enjoy working with young people, inform your local WIB and service providers that you have some potential worksite leads to follow up on. You can help lay the groundwork for positive worksite experiences, host a youth in your organization, and assist your local partners in developing quality worksites.

If you have questions about this information or need assistance in making these connections, please contact **Lisa Elliott** at lelliott@newwaystowork.org or at **(707) 824-4000 ext. 27**.

Understanding Youth Workforce Funding under the Stimulus Package

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (HR 1)
(pps 58 and 59 excerpt)
Youth Activities under the Workforce Investment Act

(2) \$1,200,000,000 for grants to the States for youth activities, including summer employment for youth:
.....*Provided further*, That with respect to the youth activities provided with such funds, section 101(13)(A) of the WIA shall be applied by substituting “age 24” for “age 21”: *Provided further*, That the work readiness performance indicator described in section 136(b)(2)(A)(ii)(I) of the WIA shall be the only measure of performance used to assess the effectiveness of summer employment for youth provided with such funds;

Historically, through federal workforce programs such as CETA and JTPA, youth workforce funding included year round job training opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth that included summer employment programs. The authorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998 significantly reduced the funds available to subsidize wages for youth employment and focused on year round programs - the result being a steady decline or elimination of a discreet, subsidized summer jobs program for youth around the country. The new stimulus package not only provides resources for youth employment, it also extends the age limit to 24 (from 21), and dramatically lessens the stringent performance measures that have often discouraged service providers from enrolling foster youth in their programs.

WIA funds flow through the state to local areas (many of which, but not all, are counties in California) through Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). The WIBs are comprised of representatives from the private sector, organized labor, community-based organizations, local government agencies, and local education agencies. Local WIBs provide policy guidance, designate operators for their area’s One-Stop Career Centers, distribute funds, and oversee the job training activities within their local areas.

Each WIB also has a Youth Council composed of WIB members, community organizations, youth, parents, educators and others to advise the WIB on local youth programs. WIBs typically sub-contract with local community based organizations and or schools to provide direct services to eligible youth. The system is locally driven, with local WIBs tailoring the resources to meet local need within their local area.