

TRANSITION: TEAMS IN ACTION



The Newsletter of the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative

Volume 6 August 2008

INSIDE

- 2008 Foster Youth Education Summit was a great success
- California Independent Living Program Transformation Breakthrough Series Collaborative
- Content Conference Call Summary: Connecting Youth to Employment in Rural Settings
- Report Focuses on Employment Outcomes for Foster Youth
- Final Draft: Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit Policy Framework.
- Tools and Resources
- Promising Practice Highlight: Santa Clara County
- Policy Update: Fostering Connections to Success Act
- Learn more about YTAT
- Tell us about your promising practice.

2008 California Foster Youth Education Summit

This year's California Foster Care Month Kick-Off Event at the Capitol began with the second annual state-wide Foster Youth Education Summit sponsored by the California Foster Youth Education Task Force (CFYETF), a broad collaboration of advocates and other professionals dedicated to education success for California's nearly 75,000 foster youth.

More than three hundred child welfare, education, judicial, and policy-making professionals joined with foster youth, families and caregivers to build upon the innovative, ground-breaking work that began as a result of the 2007 Foster Youth Education Summit. Critical policy recommendations were developed during that first statewide convening in 2007. This year, the "Building on Our Successes" Summit held on May 5th, highlighted innovative programs and practices that represent "pockets of excellence" for improved educational outcomes throughout the state. 49 counties and Canada were represented, each bringing a multi-disciplinary team committed to learning about and adopting new approaches to support foster youth education success.

Each of California's state legislators received a report of the 2007 Education Summit Recommendations with an announcement about the 2008 Summit and the Foster Care Month Kick-Off. They were also invited to learn more about how they can help improve educational opportunities and outcomes for our foster youth.

[Click here](#) to download the 2007 California Foster Youth Education Summit Report.

California Independent Living Program Transformation Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)

The BSC on California ILP began July 1, 2008, in order to help California counties put into action the new ILP vision of Permanence, Education, and Employment. This BSC is sponsored by the California Co-Investment Partnership, a collaboration between California Department of Social Services, County Welfare Directors Association, Administrative Office of the Courts, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Stuart Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and Zellerbach Family Foundation.

Following a formal application process, up to twenty California counties will be selected to participate in this Collaborative. County teams will be comprised of youth and representatives from public child welfare, probation, education, workforce, and caregivers.

Each county team will work individually, guided by the project staff, faculty, and co-chairs. They will begin the BSC by collecting and reviewing baseline data, completing a self-assessment, and determining their primary goals and priorities. Over the course of the 2 years of the BSC, there will be a total of four in-person trainings called "Learning Sessions," bringing together project staff, faculty, and co-chairs with members of all teams. Learning Sessions serve as forums to provide instruction on the rapid-cycle change model for improvement and the framework for change. Each Learning Session

provides teams with an opportunity to report on their progress, share lessons learned, and do collaborative problem solving with colleagues from other systems and counties. The most critical part of each Learning Session is the time each team spends together, planning for real changes within its system, coached and facilitated by the experts in content and process.

Between each Learning Session, the teams are involved in testing and making actual changes within their systems. This is the time for each team to test approaches discussed during the prior Learning Session and to document the results. These periods of intense work and applied learning are supported by ongoing communication between teams and experts via all-collaborative conference calls and an interactive website. The teams also submit monthly reports to track their progress and share knowledge in close to real time.

A final component of the BSC methodology is ensuring that positive changes are spread and sustained. To this end, a high-level senior leader supports each core team and the work of an "extended" county team. Extended teams allow a broader representation from caregivers, youth, employment/workforce, education, probation, the courts, and others, expanding the partners engaged in testing ideas, spreading successes, and working on sustainability. Through training and facilitated conversations, the senior leaders from the participating teams work together to identify and address challenges, learnings, and successes related to replicability and sustainability.

For more information about this BSC contact Karen Lofts Jarboe, MSW at Karen.loftsjarboe@cfpic.org.

Connecting Youth To Employment In Rural Settings: Two Local Programs Talk About How It Can Be Done

In May, New Ways to Work hosted a content conference call to address the issues faced by many rural counties in connecting youth to employment opportunities. The challenges often identified in rural areas are geographic isolation, lack of public transportation, limited number of programs available, limited diversity of programming, significantly low concentrations of workplace partners and scarce opportunities for youth employment. [Click here](#) for the official content call summary.

To address these challenges New Ways enlisted the help of two local programs that have been able to find success despite the obstacles. The presenters on the call were Linda Joseph, Employment Training Supervisor for the Glenn County Youth Employment Services (YES) Program as well as Joe Davey and Jose Quezada with the Humboldt County StepUp Program.

The Programs

In Glenn County there is a multi-agency collaboration. The YES Collaborative came into being when it was discovered that multiple agencies were providing programs with overlapping services and common goals. Funding changes among all of the agencies and programs that care about foster youth forced them to look at how they could better serve young people in their county. Business partners were getting confused by multiple programs trying to develop employment opportunities and a local needs assessment demonstrated that youth wanted additional training and “jobs.”

The YES program consists of a 16 week Regional Occupational Program (ROP) classroom. The first 8 weeks are classroom training, career planning, decision making, work attitudes, basic skills assessment, labor market

knowledge, job applications, and interviewing. The second 8 weeks consists of paid work experience. During this time, youth do continue to attend classes focused around life skills, job retention, and worksite safety.

In the beginning, there were some challenges in incorporating the foster youth population. Issues such as transience, difficulty obtaining required documents in a timely manner, scheduling restraints, lack of home support, and low priority placed on employment of foster youth prior to their transition, made serving this population difficult and frustrating for staff. Increased communication between ILP staff, case managers and YES program staff in addition to some flexible programming, has allowed for the creation of a more effective way of serving foster youth in a semester based program. ILP staff and case managers inform foster youth about upcoming classes, and assist in collecting required paperwork. Foster youth are given priority registration and access to open enrollment which is outside of the normal YES program framework. While there is targeted outreach to foster youth and some program flexibility, the YES program serves all youth. Youth are not identified as WIA, Foster Youth, TPP, etc. Furthermore, the business community does not know who is funding the program for the youth they are working with. They just know it as the YES program. The success rate for obtaining part time jobs for the youth who complete their work experience hours, is 10-15%. The YES program serves approximately 130 youth per year. [Click here](#) to review the YES Program Promising Practice on the New Ways to Work website.

In Humboldt County, there is excitement about the movement that has been made within their community to provide opportunities for youth.

Like Glenn County, funding changes in Humboldt caused them to look at how they could continue to serve youth well in their community. Partners came together to create something unique which includes both private and public partnerships that MATCH youth to jobs. They do not provide jobs or promise jobs. They match kids to employers with specific needs. Transition Age foster youth are their priority. The eligibility criteria for the StepUp program is simple says Jose Quezada, “if they want to work, they are eligible.” The only requirement is that they have to put in some time to get the job that makes the most sense for them.

YTAT and the local Workforce Investment Board Youth Council together, have encouraged Humboldt youth organizations to blur lines between program silo funding. The WIB YC acted as the catalyst that led to a new partnership between public and private sectors of the community with the strategic goal of serving as a convener for ALL youth programs (providing a “Big Tent”), that unites the common goal of increasing youth exposure to the workplace.

Through a Memorandum of Agreement, the Youth Council, DHHS Social Services Branch, and the Probation Department, have joined together to leverage resources to institutionalize the StepUp Program throughout Humboldt County. The result is \$150,000 per year for three years, half going to fund a work experience coordinator, the other half going to youth wages. [Click Here](#) to view the StepUp Program promising practice on the New Ways to Work website.

Reaching Youth In Remote Areas

Humboldt communities are spread throughout the county. They have localized WIA operators

in each of the regions. Youth are targeted for employment with employers in their region.

In Glenn County they have the YES classroom in Willows, Orland and Hamilton City which encompasses 90% of the county. They make provisions for youth in outlying areas.

Collaboration

Joe Davey states that in Humboldt, partnerships came together and jelled when YTAT came into the county. It was the catalyst. It was the right time in their county. It brought a lot of agencies to the table and helped them to expand their probation and foster youth focus to an all youth focus. “Partnerships and strong community connections is the way all issues are addressed in Humboldt,” says Joe.

In Glenn County the concept of partnering started years ago with JTPA summer programs that offered academic enrichment and supportive work environments. This encouraged a partnership between HRA and the Office of Education that still stands today. These organizations share a vision that they cannot do it alone. They have had various partners come to the table since then and they continue to have classroom support relationships that go back many years.

Employer Engagement

Jose says it is easy to create enthusiasm among employers in Humboldt County because they cater to employers who are clambering for entry level workers with work maturity skills. Employers are their customer. It has been easy to engage employers because they are making business sense for them. Employers have to spend less time interviewing and assessing the skills and abilities of those youth referred through the StepUp program.

Linda says it is the same for them. A couple of their business partners have referred youth to the YES program, stating, “that is how I get my youth.” YES program staff provide support for employers when problems arise.

In addition, the YES program coordinates with the case managers so if, for example, three youth served by different programs such as WIA, TPP, ILP, are working at one worksite, they have one case manager who communicates with the Business manager. Youth serving agencies try to use common evaluation forms and other common measures whenever possible. The business community seems to appreciate this effort to collaborate and reduce confusion.

Process for Connecting Youth to Employment

In Glenn County there are various assessments in phase one of the YES program. In phase two, youth are matched with employers based on interests, age, previous experience, maturity level etc.

Youth are matched to jobs in Humboldt. A common assessment is shared with all youth programs and agencies working with youth. [Click here](#) to download the StepUp Youth Assessment form. They match youth with jobs based on three different levels of job readiness, not necessarily age determined. Level one is for youth who have little to no work experience. They have the opportunity to earn \$100 to participate in a one day event while gaining experience and learning about appropriate workplace behavior. Level two places youth in 10-20 hours of part-time work experience, usually in the public sector and allows employers to evaluate work maturity. Level three is for youth with 6 months or more of successful work experience and one or two letters of recommendation for placement in jobs that match their interests.

Jose Quezada’s advice for helping to prepare youth for the workplace is to “stop enabling youth to perform behaviors we do not like.” For example, in Humboldt, youth have to make their own appointment to attend the StepUp workshop. They must show a desire to work. Jose says, “Empower youth to make these first steps themselves!” [Click here](#) for a Link to the powerpoint presentation from this call.

“Partnerships and strong community connections is the way all issues are addressed in Humboldt.”

Joe Davey

Schedule of Up-coming YTAT Content Calls:

- **September 17, 2008: 11:00-12:00**
Topic: Youth Involvement in Case Planning
- **November 5, 2008: 11:00-12:00**
Topic: School-Based Career Technical Education Preparation
- **February 11, 2009: 11:00-12:00**
Topic: Marketing Youth Career Development and Employment Programs

If you would like to inquire about any of these conference call topics, be a presenter on one of these calls, know of an innovative practice in one of these areas or would like to register as a participant, please contact Heidi Peyser at hpeyser@newwaystowork.org or 707-824-4000

Report on Employment Outcomes for Foster Youth

Coming of Age: Employment Outcomes for Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care Through Their Middle Twenties

The Urban Institute has published "Coming of Age: Employment Outcomes for Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care Through Their Middle Twenties," a six-year longitudinal study of employment rates and earnings for 24-year-olds that aged out of foster care in three states. The study compared the findings in those three states to national figures for employment and earnings for all 24-year-olds. The authors of the study found that while 92 percent of all 24-year-olds

with previous work experience are employed, only three-fifths of 24-year-olds that aged out of foster care with equivalent experience are employed. To remedy this inequality, the study suggests extending services for children aging out of foster care through age twenty-four, focusing on initial employment among 16 to 18-year-old foster children, and helping aged out youth based upon individual level of connectedness. Additionally, the authors recommended further research to consider the effects of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which was enacted after the study began.

Highlight: YTAT Promising Practice Santa Clara County's Emancipated Foster Youth Program

Between 130 and 150 youth "age out" of foster care in the Santa Clara County each year, usually at age 18. These youth often have no safety net, are unemployed, become unemployed, and/or fall into the hidden homeless population. Studies and regional evidence have also shown that a significant number of these young adults end up in more expensive systems of care, such as jail and welfare.

The EFY program serves former foster youth ages 17 ³/₄ to 24 years old that emancipated from Santa Clara County. The program allows eligible youth the opportunity to be considered for entry-level County jobs. Eligible youth must attend an EFY Application Workshop and submit an on-line County application. Those meeting the minimum qualifications for entry level County jobs receive a letter stating that they have been accepted to the applicant pool. Applications are kept on file for one year.

During that time, when there is an opening for a position that the youth has indicated they would be interested in, they may receive a letter inviting them to an interview. Youth who are hired will be hired as unclassified employees with full health benefits. After a three month period of successful job performance, they are eligible for recommendation by their supervisor to become a permanent employee. At that time, they are required to take the employment test for their job classification. If they pass the test, they then become a probationary County employee. Once they successfully complete their probationary period, they become a permanent and coded County employee.

The program has now been expanded to include 22 entry-level classifications representing more than 1000 alternately staffed entry-level positions county wide. [Click here](#) to read the full promising practice.

Policy Update Fostering Connections to Success Act H.R. 6307

In June, the [Fostering Connections to Success Act, H.R. 6307](#), passed. Representatives Jim McDermott (D-WA) and Jerry Weller (R-IL) introduced the bill. This bipartisan bill will ensure more foster children have safe, permanent families, and will improve their long-term health, education and well-being.

The Fostering Connections to Success Act will:

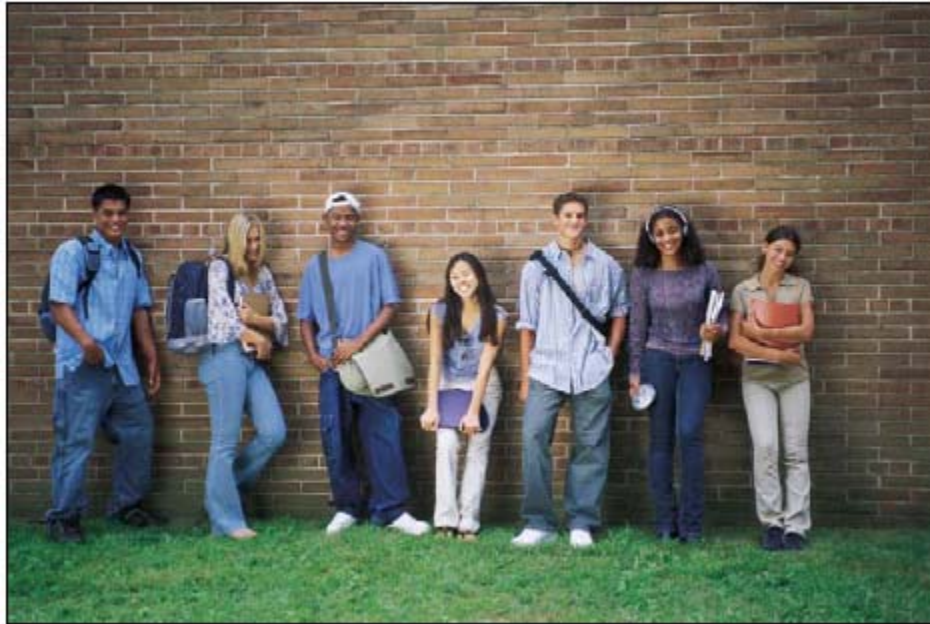
- Provide critical support for kinship caregivers;
- Make available a state option to extend assistance to foster youth up to age 21;
- Provide access to Title IV-E funds for training of private agency workforce and relative caregivers;
- Increase tribal access to foster care and adoption funds;
- Improve the oversight of health care services,
- Promote educational stability and encourage sibling placements;
- Extend and improve adoption incentives, promote the Adoption Tax Credit; and
- Modify the foster care reimbursement rate for the District of Columbia to equal the Medicaid rate.

Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit Follow-Up

A final draft of the policy paper, that includes the regulatory and legislative recommendations prioritized at the Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit in January, is now available. [Click here](#) for the revised Policy Framework with Executive Summary.

Tools and Resources

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book is now available! The annual *Data Book* is a national and state-by-state profile of the well-being of America's children that seeks to enrich discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all kids. The *Data Book* ranks states on 10 key measures and provides data on the economic, health, education, and social conditions of America's children and families. This year, the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* essay, "A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform," looks at the nearly 100,000 children confined to juvenile facilities on any given night in the United States, and what can be done to reduce unnecessary and inappropriate detention and incarceration and increase opportunities for positive youth development and community safety. The 2008 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* materials can be accessed and downloaded by visiting www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/databook.jsp.



About the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative

Over the past year, the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative has partnered with Casey Family Programs to invite additional counties to join the YTAT network. The network has grown from 12 teams in 2004 to 19 teams statewide this year. YTAT has provided teams with a wide range of supportive services ranging from individualized coaching to statewide facilitated events. All teams are working proactively to partner across systems in order to provide excellent services to foster youth transitioning out of care. To see a list of all the current YTAT teams, see the [YTAT Highlights](#). For more information about the YTAT initiative, contact Lisa Elliott at (707) 824-4000 or l Elliott@newwaystowork.org.

Help Us To Share Your Work With Others:

Tell Us About Your Promising Practice. We want to share your wisdom and lessons learned with other counties. Please help us by nominating an innovative program or practice that you think should be featured in our newsletter and/or on our website. [Click here](#) for an on-line submission form or contact Lisa Elliott at l Elliott@newwaystowork.org or (707) 824-4000.