
SNIPPET

Year-Round Life Skills Workshops to Support At-Risk Youth

The Youth Council: Kings County Youth Council

Element: Youth Development and Support

Function: Coordinating Services

Subjects: Innovative Programs, Serving Special Populations

The Challenge: Kings County has a high number of homeless and poverty-stricken youth who need help and guidance. The Youth Council was sponsoring Life Skills workshops through summer school programs, but the Council members felt that the at-risk youth they served needed assistance throughout the year.

The Practice and Evidence: Kings County Youth Council developed year-round Life Skills Workshops modeled after those in their summer school program.

Because the topics are particularly relevant to youth facing difficult life situations, the workshops are always filled to capacity. One Workshop speaker was a County Mental Health representative whose presentation educated youth on managing their own mental health and identifying issues. Another popular class, taught by college dietician interns, teaches youth how to make six meals out of just 12 food staples. The youth were given recipes, a food budget, and the 12 staples, encouraging them to cook their own nutritious meals. Other workshops, such as those that teach parenting skills, give students the informational foundation they need to help them overcome current difficulties.

The workshops are now also conducted in locations other than the One-Stop. Career Advisors go to the court school and teach on topics such as job preparedness and dress for success.

The Details: The workshops were created by WIA-funded Career Advisors based in five mini-One-Stop career centers located in high schools throughout the county. Each month up to 20 at-risk youth attend these evening workshops at their local One-Stop and obtain help with specific issues. The career advisors coordinate transportation, providing a way for each student to attend. In all the workshops, youth evaluate and rate the speakers to ensure their value and impact. According to Becky Hudson, Staff to Youth Council, “Finding the right speaker is the key. There are many knowledgeable people who are willing to help, but only a few can connect with the youth. Be flexible – if you want young parents to attend, provide child care. Gimmicks attract; use food, drawings, or require a minimum number to be attended per year. If it’s a good workshop but not well attended, have a repeat performance; the youth will sell it. Let the youth know far enough in advance, then remind them.”

(continued)



Breakthrough Moment: When the workshop in sexually transmitted diseases was scheduled, a low youth turnout was predicted by the adults. However, much to the adults' surprise, a large group attended. The speaker was humorous but tasteful and put the students at ease. The youth asked lots of questions, many of which shocked the Career Advisors. "It became very apparent that the youth want answers," said Hudson. Another eye-opening workshop was sponsored by Family Support. The youth present were very surprised to realize that if you parent a child, the father and mother are responsible for that child and that Family Support Services will go to great lengths to make sure that responsibility is maintained.

What's Next for this YCidea? Once the lines of communication are opened, youth typically begin to work with the One-Stop Career Centers and are then linked with additional supportive services. The Youth Council anticipates continued growth of the number workshops offered as well as the number of youth attending the classes.

Where to Go for More Information

Kings County Youth Council

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Tool

Please contact the Kings County Youth Council:

Programs Descriptions Brochure