



PROMISING FOSTER YOUTH TRANSITION PRACTICE

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

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:

Practice: 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.

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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 get in the program ask if they can attend the ROP class. [and we tell them yes],” said Allee. “It’s a relatively new phenomenon. They know they will not get a paid work experience at the end of the class, but they matriculate anyway.”

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.

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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