



Promising Foster Youth Transition Practice

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

Cross System Collaboration in Glenn County Better Prepares Foster Youth for Independence

Submitted by: Glenn County Human Resource Agency

Community: Glenn County

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services, Cross System Partnerships, Transition Support, Systems Improvement

All Youth–One System Element: Career Development

Function: Create Linkages and Connect Systems, Improve Program Practice

The Challenge:

Approximately five years ago, Glenn County received 15% discretionary funding from the Department of Labor to provide focused Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services to foster youth. This funding encouraged a stronger connection between workforce development and child welfare services. Through that piloted cross-system collaboration, it became clear that it was necessary for foster youth to gain work experience and develop employability skills prior to aging out and that those youth who do not acquire those skills typically do not transition successfully.

The Details:

In 2005, Glenn County became a redesign county using the Family to Family model. One component of this model is team decision making (TDM) meetings where everyone who has an interest in the child comes together, most commonly regarding placement issues. Emancipation TDMs began around this time as well. Typically, youth identify and invite the people that they would like to have present at their emancipation conference. Unfortunately, employment is not always something that young people think about. With this in mind, the Glenn County Workforce Investment Act (WIA) staff, as well as the Child Welfare Services staff decided that because employment is such an important element of a successful transition, there should be a WIA representative present at every emancipation conference to offer employment support. WIA staff usually begin attending TDMs for foster youth at the end of their junior or senior year as a direct result of WIA's common measures which created a focus, almost exclusively, on serving older youth.

Generally, youth are not enrolled in the WIA services at the time of their emancipation conference. Once they hear about the services that are offered through WIA, youth can decide whether or not it is something they are interested in. Currently, 50-60% of the

emancipating foster youth who participate in emancipation TDM conferences choose to get involved in WIA so that they can take advantage of the opportunity to receive employment support as they prepare to transition.

Collaboration between the child welfare services and workforce development staff has been a crucial element in being able to provide a well rounded support team for transitioning youth. Independent Living Skills (ILS) case managers meet monthly with WIA case managers and transitional housing providers to discuss cases and work on a plan together. The Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) is used as a way of tracking a foster youth's achievements and benchmarks. A plan for employment preparation and experience is now written into the TILP as a matter of common practice. In addition, when youth enroll in the ILS program initially, they are given an introduction to and a tour of the County's one stop. According to Lucy Hernandez, ILS Coordinator, the WIA case managers are a key stakeholder in providing services to transitioning youth. Referrals from the ILS Program to WIA happen immediately. When a youth is resistant to receiving services from ILS, the ILS and WIA case managers work together as a team to figure out a strategy for providing that youth with the services they need. Employment is a focus among ILS, WIA, social workers, and foster parents in Glenn County. Together, they have created a web of services with youth in the center.

Evaluation:

Evidence that this practice has been effective is demonstrated through the numbers of foster youth aging out with a plan that incorporates employment. All those around the table to serve foster youth agree that youth must obtain job skills and work experience prior to aging out of the system in order to transition successfully.

Key Partners:

Glenn County Human Resource Agency, Social Services Division (Child Welfare Services), and the Community Action Division (Employment Services Unit (WIA) and Community Services Unit (ILP)).

Lessons Learned:

This coordinated approach of understanding how each other's system works has resulted in staff becoming more aware of transitional issues and doing a better job of making sure that everyone, who needs to be, is in the loop. Youth who have some work experience prior to their emancipation (as opposed to those who have never had any work experience of any kind prior to emancipation) are more successful in their transition into adulthood.

What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?

As a part of the County's Child Welfare Service's systems improvement program, and their involvement in the California Connected by 25 Initiative, the County will begin collecting data on employment outcomes for foster youth and will be doing so through a central database. Current practice will continue. A longitudinal study *may* be conducted to track foster youth who have had some work experience prior to emancipation against those who have not.

Where to go for more information:

David Allee

Employment Services Manager, Glenn County HRA

dallee@hra.co.glenn.ca.us

Cheryl Harrison

Child Welfare Services Manager, Glenn County HRA

charrison@hra.co.glenn.ca.us

Lucy Hernandez

Community Services Manager, Glenn County HRA

lhernandez@hra.co.glenn.ca.us