



PROMISING FOSTER YOUTH TRANSITION PRACTICE

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

San Francisco County Connecting Foster Youth with Employers Through the Local One-Stop

Submitted by: San Francisco Workforce Development Department (WDD)-Workforce Solutions, One-Stop Center

Community: San Francisco

Key Partners: San Francisco Human Services Agency, Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP), Jobs For Youth, Honoring Emancipated Youth, Larkin Street Youth Services, First Place for Youth, Treasure Island Job Corps Center, San Francisco Conservation Corps (SFCC).

Subject: Employer engagement, youth friendly one-stop

All Youth – One System Element: Career Preparation

Function: Improve Program Practice and Build Awareness

The Challenge:

WDD operates within a community where there are numerous youth service providers, however, many of them were not aware of the services provided by WDD, and therefore did not refer their youth. One of their greatest challenges was to engage both community based organizations as well as youth. While WDD was able to identify employers to hire youth, they had very few youth being referred to the One-Stop. As an agency, they recognized that they needed to increase their outreach efforts to the community. Last year, 133 youth received intensive job placement services; 62 were placed in unsubsidized jobs.

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice:

In San Francisco, WDD/Workforce Solutions has developed a comprehensive strategy of addressing the needs of employers and matching those needs with the best services their local One-Stops have to offer. Over the last few years, they have developed and sustained partnerships with major corporate employers to provide jobs for youth in their programs and specifically, foster youth.

The Details:

The process for establishing the program:

In order to engage their community partners, they invited them to an open house event. Specific stations were set up to describe the different services offered at their One-Stop facility. They allowed time for networking and served lunch. They asked their partners what they needed from the One-Stop to better serve youth. Additionally, they have made it a priority to meet with other youth stakeholders and learn of their efforts to serve youth throughout the City. Historically, the One-Stop has been viewed as not being youth friendly. They wanted to change this image, while allowing CBOs to have input in the transition.

The strategy and practice:

A letter was mailed to all the attendees requesting that they become part of a workgroup to facilitate a movement for better communication and services of youth providers. The workgroup participated in planning a large hiring fair. Each CBO was responsible for providing a resource specific to the population they served. WDD also joined and participated in other youth focused groups in the community (i.e., Youth Employment Coalition, Mayor's Youth Transitional Task Force). Their plan of action was to be more visible in the community. It was important to let their partners know that they were putting forth the effort to include them in the process to become more "youth friendly." There are two new youth agencies setting up a satellite location at the One-Stop Center, and Workforce Development hired a Business Account Representative whose primary responsibility would be to case manage youth referred for intensive services and other resources for youth job seekers. (Note: A second case manager will be hired in the very near future to compliment this effort of ensuring that youth receive as much support as possible. WDD recognizes that outreach and communication are paramount to the success of their program.

Evaluation:

WDD's success is defined by the progress they are making in changing the way people view youth in the workplace. This is an important experience for the youth service providers, youth, and even the employer. Their success does not come with only placements, but with the idea that a community is working together to provide choices, appropriate resources, and valuable work experiences. They are also considering using satisfaction surveys for their partners (CBOs, youth and employers) feedback. The One-Stop's numbers have increased since their efforts to engage their partners, their employers continue to come back, and the youth refer their friends. The goal is to keep *all* of their customers happy.

Employers' repeated requests to work with the One-Stop, is the best indication that the process is effective. For example, this year, they recruited for over 85% of the vacancies in the San Francisco Safeway stores. Their collaboration with the community-based organizations afforded them the opportunity to refer a large number of job ready applicants to employers. Capitalizing on their outreach efforts has nearly doubled their placements from last year. It has been a win-win situation for their partners, employers, and of course the youth.

Lessons Learned:

WDD staff have learned that it is important to have the ear and voice of the community. While WDD had a great product to offer the youth and the CBOs (jobs!), they were not familiar with WDD services. Employers are now willing to work with the One-Stop to hire

youth. It is important to get the buy in from your partners. Marketing services through continuous outreach is critical.

What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?

WDD's One-Stop will continue to identify employers that will hire youth. Quarterly hiring fairs allow partners to get the youth "job ready" so that they may be placed in jobs that offer careers and advancement opportunities. The goal is to expand outreach efforts to any agency, group home, or school that is a youth service provider. They want to educate and inform all youth-serving organizations of the many resources available through the One-Stop Centers.

Where to go for more information:

Harold C. Walker
Business Services Manager
Career Link - Mission One Stop Center
3120 Mission Street
San Francisco CA 94110
Harold.Walker@sfgov.org