



PROMISING FOSTER YOUTH TRANSITION PRACTICE

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

San Diego County Develops Joint RFP

Submitted by: San Diego Workforce Partnership and San Diego County Department of Health and Human Services

Community: San Diego County

Key Partners: County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services; San Diego Workforce Partnership for Independent Living Skills and WIA Foster Youth Workforce Programs

Subject: Cross System Collaboration, Systems Improvement

All Youth – One System Element: Community Services and Support

Function: Improve Program Practice, Create Linkages and Connect Systems, Convene Leaders and Promote Policy

The Challenge:

In 2004, the San Diego Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) and the San Diego Independent Living Services workgroup joined to become the YTAT/Tiger Team after discovering that there were roughly 15 different groups serving adolescent foster youth in San Diego County. Through these meetings the following challenges became apparent:

- A need for intentional preparation of vulnerable adolescents for self sufficiency
- The need for collaborative program designs to avoid duplication of services

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice:

An opportunity to utilize funding from both the San Diego Workforce Partnership and county Child Welfare Services came when the procurement cycle for both ILP and WIA programs was ending at nearly the same time. The end of the cycle meant that San Diego's Independent Living Program and the Workforce Partnership would both have to issue new RFPs for their respective programs. They seized the opportunity to craft an RFP for a jointly funded Independent Living Skills and youth workforce, education, and training program. Contracts were awarded in Fall of 2007 to two service providers through one contract that would serve the entire County (6 sites), through the implementation of a single program with two tiers. Tier 1 offers all foster youth supports to enhance life and work skills. Tier 2 offers appropriate youth needing more long term, intensive, individualized opportunities and support in building work and life skills.

The Details:

The process for establishing the program:

Key members from each group understood that they had common goals and used their similar perspectives on service delivery to build a foundation for their work together. They began by visiting the *Achieving Independence Center* in Philadelphia to develop ideas about how the program might operate. They continued to meet for about three months after the site visit to focus on developing a quality program design. Once the program was designed, they asked legal and fiscal staff for other logistical and technical advice.

The team met two key challenges through the process of completing the RFP:

- Blending funding streams which required different reporting systems and different payment systems (WIA preferred a Pay for Performance System and CWS preferred a cost-reimbursement System)
- Meeting the high standards of accountability for WIA funded programs

They addressed the challenge of blending funding streams by having the service provider enter into a separate contract with each funder, and by designing a two tiered program wherein each tier is funded separately. They also agreed to utilize a Cost-Reimbursement system for the first six months and then switch to a Pay for Performance system. Additionally, service providers will enter data into two separate systems to meet the reporting requirements of each funder. The authors of the RFP are currently requesting that the state waive (WIA and CWS) requirements that specific databases be used for client information so that data will only need to be entered once by the service provider.

Because WIA programs receive funding based on the success of their participants, the team designed the program with two tiers. WIA funding will be used for Tier 2 of the program which will only enroll youth who are most appropriate and committed to this more intensive level of services. In this way, the two tiered system overcomes both challenges of blending funding streams and of meeting WIA's standards.

The strategy and practice:

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Department will contribute \$900,000 to fund the program, and the San Diego Workforce Partnership will contribute between \$500,000 and \$600,000. The Joint RFP requires that bidders offer both tiers of service to foster youth at a single location. The Tier 1 services include classes and workshops on life skills, transportation and emergency food and housing, job search resources, workshops on career and college preparation, and tutoring.

Tier 2 services require a longer term commitment from selected participants. The service provider determines which youth are eligible for Tier 2 services. This level of service involves intensive, individualized services such as subsidized work based learning, supportive services for job placement (work clothing, equipment, etc.), job readiness II (concurrent with work based learning and employment- also includes post work based learning), career and college preparation (occupational/certificate training, campus tours, career exploration, remedial educational services and tutoring), and personalized development and support.

Evaluation:

Too soon to tell.

Lessons Learned:

Members of the design team offered advice to others wanting to begin this process:

- Have the right people on board. Support from administrators and elected officials in influential positions was invaluable.
- Have the right attitude. The design team's 'can do' attitude set the expectation for less enthusiastic players that the joint RFP could and would be completed.
- Take advantage of opportunities to work together where all partners will benefit. The need for both partners to issue RFPs around the same time motivated many stakeholders to push the process forward.
- Build on commonalities. San Diego County has a strong history of collaboration and team members identified a common vision of what the program would look like then built from this foundation.

What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?

Teams hold standing meetings with all contractors to improve collaboration between them. They also hope that the process of issuing this joint RFP will serve as a model of collaboration for service providers, and result in more consistent service delivery throughout San Diego County. The designers of this RFP would like to utilize a single contract and a single data reporting system in the future as well.

Where to go for more information:

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