



PROMISING FOSTER YOUTH TRANSITION PRACTICE

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

Santa Clara County Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) Employment Program

Submitted by: Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, Department of Family and Children's Services

Community: Santa Clara County

Key Partners: Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, Department of Family and Children's Services; Santa Clara County Employee Services Agency (ESA)/Human Resources

Subject: Career Preparation, Paid Work Experience, Occupational Skills Training

All Youth – One System Element: Career Preparation

Function: Build Awareness, Create Linkages & Connect Systems

The Challenge:

Between 130 and 150 youth "age out" of foster care in the Santa Clara County each year, usually at age 18. These youth often have no safety net, are unemployed, become unemployed, and/or fall into the hidden homeless population. Studies and regional evidence have also shown that a significant number of these young adults end up in more expensive systems of care, such as jail and welfare.

Prior to the development of the Emancipated Foster Youth Employment Program, the county had limited job opportunities for qualified emancipated foster youth, and the existing job opportunities were only available within the Social Services Agency. In early 2006, three county departments came together to develop a pilot employment program for youth to have temporary, paid assignments that included on the job training.

The pilot program was a success with 24 of the 30 youth hired, completing their temporary assignment. The county wanted to use the momentum to create a permanent, larger scale program to offer employment opportunities to former foster youth.

The Practice and Evidence:

The practice:

The EFY program serves former foster youth ages 17 ¾ to 24 years old that emancipated from Santa Clara County. The program allows eligible youth the opportunity to be considered for entry-level County jobs. Eligible youth must attend an EFY Application Workshop and submit an on-line County application. Applications are reviewed by Santa Clara County Human Resources. Those meeting the minimum qualifications for entry level County jobs receive a letter stating that they have been accepted to the applicant pool. Applications are kept on file for one year. During that time, when there is an opening for a position that the youth has indicated they would be interested in, they may receive a letter inviting them to an interview. The youth then has three days to respond to Human Resources to schedule an interview. Youth who are hired will be hired as unclassified employees with full health benefits. After a three month period of successful job performance, they are eligible for recommendation by their supervisor to become a permanent employee. At that time, they are required to take the employment test for their job classification. If they pass the test, they then become a probationary County employee. Once they successfully complete their probationary period, they become a permanent and coded County employee.

The program has now been expanded to include 22 entry-level classifications representing more than 1000 alternately staffed entry-level positions county wide.

The Details:

The process for establishing the program:

Santa Clara County's EFY Program stems from a project with Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) that had one-time funding to spend on hiring temporary employees for a large project. The program received support from the Board of Supervisors to explore how to make a temporary program that was successful in employing former foster youth into a permanent one. Precedent had been set by a program for economically disadvantaged individuals in our welfare-to-work program. DFCS (child welfare department) and ESA (county level human resources) collaborated to bring the program to fruition. ESA identified the entry level positions and cleared the process through the labor unions. DFCS identified and recruited qualified candidates. DFCS Employment Services Unit (ESU) Staff continues to recruit youth and verify program eligibility. DFCS ESU staff received access to the online HR program (NEOGOV) to be able to "pass/no pass" applicants based on program eligibility standards and criteria. DFCS ESU works directly with ESA to screen youth and administer program on a daily basis.

The strategy and practice:

The program is designed to assist emancipated or emancipating youth with opportunities to work for the County. It allows youth to apply for benefited, entry level positions, with the possibility of becoming permanent employees. Applicants can apply online or attend a recruitment session, receiving help from an Employment Counselor. Youth complete one application and can indicate interest in multiple positions. Their applications go directly to County's Employee Services Agency for review and approval. There is a continuous job announcement on the county's hiring page and specific supplemental questions were designed for candidates to indicate their job interest and to screen for appropriate applicants. DFCS and ESA partner to encourage utilization of EFY program by hiring managers, encouraging them to request EFY candidates for interviews.

Evaluation:

ESA tracks interview results to capture hires, reasons for non-selection, and track waivers or non-responders so that they can identify trends and characteristics of the program and applicants. ESA checks in with the employee's manager or supervisor to follow up on progress and address any questions. ESU does the same with the EFY candidate to assist on the employee's end.

Lessons Learned:

“We must continue with on-going efforts to identify departments with entry level positions and encourage hiring managers to utilize the program by educating them about it. The current hiring freeze requirements also affect our ability to refer candidates for interviews. It is important to keep in touch with candidates to maintain interest and current contact info. Sometimes EFY Candidates do not respond to calls/letters for interviews or their addresses or telephone numbers change and they are not reachable,” says Liza Giron-Espinoza, Employment Program Supervisor.

What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?

They are always striving to get more hires! Liza states that they are working to meet with each department's management team to ensure all hiring authorities know of the EFY Program, understand how to access the applicant pool, and know who to contact for questions or support.

Where to go for more information:

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For more information go to <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/santaclara/default.cfm> and click on “positions for emancipated foster youth”