

BEST PRACTICES: REACHING YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Agency: WorkForce Center/Southwest Private Industry Council (WFC/PIC)

Coordination of activities between Employment and Training Staff and Human and Health Services Staff to Improve Services to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care.

Outreach: The **Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC)** youth staff reaches out to County Health and Human Services (HHS) by:

1. Directly contacting Child Protective Workers of County HHS and other youth serving organizations, as well as area school districts to make sure referral forms are available to all foster youth who reside in our 14 work service area (WSA) and are either homeless and/or aging out of the foster care system interested in meeting transitional milestones that are necessary for a stable foundation in order to live independently in their community. We also inform these foster youth of our services and available services in their community.
2. Collaborating with the County Independence Living Skills (ILS) program (SELF Independent Living Skills) to recruit eligible youth. SELF and WFC/PIC staff hold Independent Living Skills training jointly so as not to confuse the youth between SELF services and PIC services. If a SELF participant is in need of employment training services and is eligible, s/he contacts our WFC/PIC youth staff to set up and interview/intake and vice versa. By holding these trainings jointly the youth is able to identify easier who the correct contact individual is.
3. Annually providing a tour for the ILS group at the WFC/ PIC. At this meeting the WFC/PIC youth staff review services that are available to youth, including a tour of the Resource Area hands on training of the MN job Bank (on line job listings) and review of the current Minnesota Careers Booklet that outlines current labor market trends and outlooks and requires education as demonstrated though ISEEK our WorkForce Councils Website; www.swmncareers.org.
4. If enrolled in one of the youth programs, the WFC/PIC youth worker will attend ongoing monthly assessments, case management and work with a team of professionals helping that youth.

Strategies to reach Youth Aging out of Foster Care in our 14 county WSA:

1. Mailings to all school administrators in our counties outlining our employment programs for youth and our target groups (currently at-risk and foster youth). We ask school administrators to forward this information to all staff who potentially have eligible youth.
2. Mailings to County HHS staff outlining youth programs and target groups.

BEST PRACTICES: REACHING YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

3. Youth staff have direct contact with the Alternative School programs located in the 14 county WSA to recruit for youth programs.
4. Youth staff serves as guest speakers for high school classrooms that are focusing on career and employment related topics.
5. WFC/ PIC publicize a contact name and number to screen potential youth program applicants for eligibility and talk about available services.
6. Youth staff serves on Youth Councils, homeless and hungry boards in order to keep connections up in our WSA communities.

Services that our WorkForce Center/PIC provides to Youth Aging out of Foster Care through our Resource Center:

1. Career Library: resources on job search, writing a resume, filling out applications, salary negotiations, etc.
2. Current Labor Market Information: job outlooks put by Department of Labor and Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), ISEEK, and www.swmncareers.org.
3. Post-Secondary Information: ACCESS- The ACCESS Program consists of five separate entities that are all passionate about one goal which is to encourage post high school, "college" attainment at any age. Our goal is to provide a program that will impact and improve the way one views their future opportunities. We would like to see more people in the SW region get some kind of training beyond high school to break the cycle of poverty in the area. When this happens we believe it will also increase community involvement, produce more business leaders, improve health and increase voting to mention a few improvements. We are operating under the definition of college as follows; any post-high school training opportunity resulting in an earned credential, from a certificate to a bachelor's degree and beyond.
4. Financial Aid Information: packets of information about financial aid and scholarships are also available. We also have staff housed on site that will help youth complete FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) applications on the line and assist or connect with local post-secondary Financial Aid offices with any questions regarding financial aid.
5. Access to Computers for: researching schools, researching potential employers, using job banks, resume writing, internet searches, typing tutor, etc.

BEST PRACTICES: REACHING YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

6. Job Postings (bulletin boards, newspapers, online, etc.)
7. On Site Tours with Potential Employers
8. Employment and Training: The SW MN Private Industry Council Young Adult Career Pathways Program has been selected for funding by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. The \$250,000, 2-year grant will offer comprehensive training to eligible participants who traditionally face barriers to successful employment. The fundamental career and technical skills training will concentrate on healthcare, a high demand, high pay industry in Southwest Minnesota. Our target audience is foster youth and youth who belong to communities of color.
9. Information Regarding Job Search Related Websites

Staff is available to help with all of the above resources.

Impact on Youth in Foster Care/Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: By working directly with the Social Workers/Youth Workers/Agencies Directors in our WSA who work with youth aging out of foster care, we make every effort to make sure no foster youth is unnoticed. As part of their transition plan, the professional teams are able to address transportation concerns, housing issues, money management matters, connections with family and community concerns, access to vital documents (birth certificates, Social Security cards, school transcripts, resume, state identification card, etc.) employment (interview skills, how to dress for an interview, resume skills, how to fill out an application, etc.) and post-secondary education (FAFSA, education and training vouchers, college applications, virtual tours, campus visits, etc.).

In addition, through the annual tour at the WFC/PIC and the independent living skills training, we are able to show the youth how to utilize tools/resources available to them and assist them to start thinking about their future options, both post-secondary and employment goals.

Community Impact: Youth who lack education and hands-on life skills have a chance to work on skills deemed essential for becoming understanding citizens in their communities. Youth not only learn work proficiencies, but also how to better manage their finances, live healthier within their home/families and their communities for a lifetime.

The community benefits from the work young people do. The employers get the benefit of the work that the youth do, and also get the real benefit of knowing they are helping to build the workforce of the future. Community crime levels, public assistance payments, and a youth chances of becoming pregnant/ a parent, homeless and abusing drugs and or alcohol are decreased.

Identification of Partners and Resource Leveraged: Youth workers determine the needs of youth through individualized assessments and planning. Services are customized to meet the youth's transition goals. SELF Independent Living Skills Program provides major support for

BEST PRACTICES: REACHING YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

youth aging out of foster care by increasing their knowledge of the life skills needed in order to be successful. Youth are also served in the Resource Center of the WorkForce Center/ PIC and through Education and Training Vouchers (ETV). WFC/PIC would like to expand the use of ETV's in this area, becoming a more active partner in helping youth who are eligible for an ETV complete career exploration and assist with college applications.

The partners include:

County Social Services Staff
Area School District Case Managers and Work Experience Coordinators
WorkForce Center/ SW MN Private Industry Council Staff
Community Action Agencies

For additional information Contact:

Eriann Faris
Youth Program Manager
SW MN Private Industry Council
607 W Main St. Third Floor
Marshall, MN 56258
Telephone: (800) 818-9295
efaris@swmnpic.org