

Agency: Northwest Private Industry Council/Inter-County Community Council

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 Northwest Private Industry Council and Inter County Community Council staff provide outreach to county Social Service Agencies (this includes Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties), Northwest Community Action, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, two residential foster care facilities (Sanford Health – Pathfinders and the Eagles Nest) and area school districts to assist in transition services. Outreach is conducted through the following methods:

1. Directly contacting Child Protection Workers/County Social Workers to make them aware of our program and the services that are available to foster care youth residing within the seven-county region.
2. Directly contacting foster care residential facilities to make sure program applications are available to all foster care youth who are interested in employment and training services.
3. Working directly with School Districts, Youth Workers and Providers of youth services to identify area foster youth needing services that will assist in the development of the skills needed to live independently in the community.
4. We also inform foster youth of the services provided through our programs. Program staff meet with foster youth to make information available about resources such as the WorkForce Center Resource Area and High Wage, High Demand career information specific to NW Minnesota, etc.
5. If enrolled in one of the youth programs, the Youth Job Training Specialist will assist in coordination of services by attending scheduled IEP meetings, providing ongoing monthly assessment and case management services, and working closely with other agencies involved in helping that youth participant.

Strategies to reach Youth aging out of Foster Care:

1. Mailing to all School Principals outlining our employment and training programs for youth and our target groups. We ask school administrators to forward this information to all staff who have potentially eligible youth.
2. Meeting regularly with County Social Service Workers and Regional Financial Supervisors to review numbers of enrollments, program funding and answer questions that they have about available services.

3. Job Training Specialists maintain regular contact with the Alternative Learning Centers in Warroad, Crookston and Thief River Falls to recruit foster-care youth for employment and training programs.
4. Youth Job Training Specialists serve as speakers in high school classrooms bringing information and applications and answer questions that teachers and students may have.
5. Youth Job Training Specialists serve on Youth Councils and other boards that address homelessness to ensure connections with other agencies that provide services to youth aging out of foster care.

Services that our Region provides to Youth aging out of Foster Care:

1. Career Library with many resources on job search, resume writing, completing applications and salary surveys.
2. Access to current Labor Market Information that is developed by the Department of Labor and the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).
3. Access to information on Financial Aid and other resources which are available to youth aging out of foster care.
4. Access to computers for researching schools, potential employers, using job banks, internet searches, typing tutor, etc.
5. Job postings through bulletin boards, newspapers, on line, etc.
6. On Site tours with potential employers.
7. Interest Assessments are completed for youth who enroll in employment and training programs to identify careers that match the individual interests of that youth participant.
8. Referrals to other programs and community based resources that will assist the youth in overcoming barriers and achieving their employment and training goals.
9. Youth are invited to attend Job Club, a weekly group session that assists in the development of job seeking skills. A variety of topics are covered during these weekly sessions including skills identification, resume development and interview preparation.

BEST PRACTICES: REACHING YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Impact of Youth in Foster Care/Youth Aging out of Foster Care: By working directly with a network of community and social service agencies we aim to ensure that all foster care youth and youth aging out of foster care have access to programs and services that will result in a successful transition into the world of work. Youth are provided with the opportunity to explore careers, define and develop their employment and training goals, explore post-secondary training options, and receive assistance in the development of skills that will enable them to find and retain employment.

Community Impact: Assisting our local youth in developing the skills needed to enter adulthood and the world of work is essential to all communities. Employers need and desire workers who have a strong foundation of basic skills, workplace values, and a solid work history. Youth accessing services through the local employment and training program are learning these skills and the values needed to become reliable, valued employees. Not only do they learn work proficiencies, but also how to better manage their finances and live healthier in their communities for a lifetime. Youth are able to give back to their communities as trained, knowledgeable members of their community workforce.

Identification of partners and resources leveraged: Youth aging out of foster care meet the at-risk eligibility criteria for the Workforce Investment Act and Minnesota Youth Programs. Employment and Training counselors determine the needs of youth through individual assessment and career planning. Services are customized to meet the youth's employment and training goals.

The Partners include:

Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau Social Service Staff
Twenty Five Area School District Counselors, Case Managers and Work Experience Coordinators
WorkForce Centers/ Northwest Private Industry Council Staff
Sanford Health Pathfinders Project
Inter County Community Council
Tri Valley Opportunity Council
Northwest Community Action
Area group homes in our region (Eagles Nest in Crookston serving Polk County residents)

For additional information, contact:

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