
MINNESOTA BEST PRACTICES: Reaching Youth Aging Out Of Foster Care

Agency: Anoka County WorkForce Center (WFC)

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

Outreach: The Employment and Training staff outreach to Anoka County Social Workers by:

1. Directly contacting the Foster Unit Lead Worker to make sure applications are available to all foster youth who are Anoka County residents and are interested in employment and training services. We also inform foster youth of our priority groups and available services.
2. Directly contacting the County Social Worker/SILS worker (Self Independent Living Skills) to recruit. If the Social Worker has a client with an employment and training need, s/he contacts our WFC Youth Staff to set up an interview/intake.
3. Quarterly, the SILS worker schedules a tour for the ILS group at the Workforce Center. At this meeting the WFC youth staff review services that are available to youth which includes: tour of Resource Area, hands-on tutorial of Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS), hands on training of MinnesotaWorks (on line job listings) and review of the current Minnesota Career Booklet that outlines current labor market trends and outlooks and required education.
4. If enrolled in one of the youth programs, the employment and training counselor will attend IEP meetings and ongoing monthly assessment and case management (if youth has disability) and work with a team of professionals helping that youth.

Strategies to Reach Anoka County Youth Aging Out of Foster Care:

1. Mailings to all school administrators in our County outlining our employment programs for youth and our target groups (currently low income youth and foster youth). We ask school administrators to forward this information to all staff who have potentially eligible youth.
2. Mailings to Anoka County staff in Social Services also outlining youth programs and target groups.

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3. E-mails, group announcements, unit meeting presentations and application distribution to all Anoka County Income Maintenance Workers (serving families on welfare assistance) who work with families and individuals in Anoka County.
4. Youth employment counselors have direct contact with Anoka County Alternative School programs to recruit for youth programs.
5. Youth Staff continually connect with the local school district Case Managers and Work Coordinators to inform them about our programs and connect with their youth.
6. Youth Staff have also been asked to be guest speakers for high school classrooms that are focusing on career and employment related topics.
7. For any potential youth applicant, Anoka County WFC provides a contact name and number in our Resource Center to screen for eligibility and to talk about available services.

Services Provided to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care through our Resource Center:

1. Career Library: Many resources on job search, writing a resume, filling out applications, salary negotiations, etc. Also a Career Library specifically for youth called "Next Step" which is supplied with materials which address the unique job search and career exploration needs of youth.
2. Current Labor Market Information: Job outlooks put out by Department of Labor and Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).
3. Post Secondary Information: The WFC provides current catalogs of all state, private, public, 2-year, 4-year colleges and universities.
4. Financial Aid Information: Packets of information about Financial Aid and scholarships are also available. We also have staff housed on site from EOC (Educational Opportunity Center) who will help youth complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on-line and assist with any questions regarding Financial Aid.
5. Access to Computers For: Researching schools, researching potential employers, job banks, resume writing, internet searches, typing tutor, etc.

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6. Job Postings (bulletin boards, newspapers, on-line, etc.)
7. On Site Interviews with Potential Employers – “Employer of the Day”.
8. Creative Job Search Workshop – classes offered free of charge to any job searcher to increase and improve their job search techniques and skills.
9. Information Regarding Job Search Related Websites.

Staff are available to help with all the above resources.

Impact on Youth in Foster Care/Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: By working directly with the Social Workers in Anoka County who work with youth aging out of foster care, we strive to ensure that no foster youth gets overlooked. As part of their transition plan, they address employment and post-secondary education, and if needs are apparent, they connect with the WFC.

In addition, by having the quarterly tour at the WFC, we are able to show the youth how to use the tools available to them and help them start thinking about their future and options available, both for post secondary and employment goals.

We have EOC staff on site to assist youth with applying for financial aid for post-secondary education. If the foster youth does not have a knowledgeable adult mentor in this area, this can be very beneficial.

Community Impact: Youth who are lacking in both academic and “applied” skills have an opportunity to work on skills considered critical for current and future workplace needs, information technology, team work and diversity. Youth not only learn work skills, but also build lasting adult relationships that build on their support network and also grow into positive mentoring situations.

The community benefits from the work young people do. Employers get the benefit of the work that youth do, and also get the very real benefit of knowing they are helping to build the workforce of the future.

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Identification of Partners And Resources Leveraged: Youth aging out of foster care are eligible for enrollment in the state and federal Youth programs (e.g. the Minnesota Youth Program and the Workforce Investment Act Youth Program). Employment and training counselors determine the needs of youth through individual assessment and individual plans and determine which services are appropriate to meet their employment and training goals.

Youth are also served in the Resource Center of the WorkForce Center, supported by various grants.

Foster Youth are also eligible for the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV). WFC would like to expand in this area, becoming a more active partner in helping youth in Anoka County who are eligible for an ETV complete career exploration and assist with college applications.

The partners include:

- Anoka County Social Services Staff
- Area School District Case Managers and Work Experience Coordinators
- Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) Staff
- WorkForce Center Staff
- Anoka County Human Services Staff

For additional information, contact:

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