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## **MINNESOTA BEST PRACTICES: Reaching Youth Aging Out Of Foster Care**

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**Agency: Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc.**

**Service area: Nineteen Counties in Northwestern Minnesota**

(Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clay, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomen, Morrison, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin counties)

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

**Overview of Program:** Rural MN CEP provides quality employment and training services to individuals in our communities. We introduce individuals to career options and the skills necessary for successful employment. We provide help to individuals in finding, getting and keeping jobs and growing in their careers. We also help employers find and keep workers and assist them in the development of their existing workforce.

### **Impact On Youth In Foster Care/Youth Aging Out Of Foster Care:**

#### **Outreach:**

1. Direct contact is made with County Social Service Workers to keep them aware of our program, services offered and opportunities for youth to apply for openings.
2. Presentations are made at group foster care facilities to explain services and opportunities to youth.
3. Mailings are sent out to area schools, social services, and agencies working with youth to inform them of program services and application process.
4. Youth Coordinators meet with area schools and alternative schools to present information to students on programs.
5. Booths are set up at schools, parent fairs, and relevant youth trainings explaining services that are available for area youth.
6. Youth Coordinators are represented on advisory boards for alternative schools, group homes, county services, juvenile probation and re-entry projects.

#### **Services Provided:**

1. Youth Coordinators and Foster Care Social Workers or referring agencies work together to address needs of the youth. We will meet together with the youth to set up a plan that addresses goals of the youth and barriers they may face in completing high school, finding employment or planning for their careers. Referral to SELF

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funds and additional scholarships are coordinated among agencies so all are aware of resources that are available. Throughout participation meetings are scheduled to follow up on the progress of the plan and make any needed changes in services. If concerns arise about the youth's behavior or living situations, partners meet to discuss options available and brainstorm solutions.

2. Youth in group foster care facilities are invited to attend workshops on resume writing, job seeking, application completion, and are provided resource room orientations.
3. Assessments on interests are completed on enrolled youth to identify careers that match their interest.
4. Referral to secondary and alternative school settings for the completion of a high school diploma is part of their participation plan. Support is given during this training to assist youth in completion of the program.
5. Information on demand occupations is provided to youth in mailings, through resource room displays and verbally to encourage youth to consider high demand jobs.
6. Career planning is provided in groups and one on one to assist youth in developing their career plan using current labor market information, non-traditional occupations, in demand occupations and helping them explore training opportunities available to them both short-term and long-term.
7. Assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) and applying for scholarships for further training is provided to enrolled youth and through our resource room services. Job postings on computers, kiosks, and hard-copies are available in our resource room. Handouts are available on employers and job seeking agencies websites available within the community. Assistance in completion of applications is given one-on-one and in group presentations.
8. Resume writing services are available through the Resource Room, group presentations and one-on-one as needed.
9. Youth attend a job search class to assist in how to use techniques that will help them find work and improve upon their skills are offered. Classes are also available through our Resource Room services monthly.
10. On-site interviews, job fairs, and employers "meet and greets" are available in our Resource Room on a bi-weekly basis.

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11. A new curriculum “Skills for Adult Living” was designed to address needs of foster care youth transitioning out of placement. The curriculum covers: Transportation and Driver’s License, Money Management, Housing and Independent Living, Health and Relationships. Youth Coordinators have provided training in groups and individually as needed to enrolled youth. The curriculum was shared with area education partners and the Minnesota DEED’s Office of Youth Development.
12. Youth Coordinators work with enrolled youth to coordinate services by attending IEP meetings, wrap-around meetings with agencies, and communicate on an on-going basis with service providers to provide coordinated services for foster care youth.
13. Youth are provided information on SELF program services and foster care post-secondary scholarships. Youth are able to ask Youth Coordinators for assistance in completing applications and accessing services.
14. Friendly and helpful staff are always available in our Resource Room for anyone to access whether or not they are enrolled.

**Community Impact:** Providing a workforce that has necessary basic skills, employer needed soft skills, and a demonstrated work history is important to any community. Foster Care Youth, who may otherwise be left behind, are given an opportunity to build these skills and help plan their future with a caring adult mentor, our Youth Coordinators and Resource Room Staff. They are provided with an opportunity to explore careers, develop a career plan, evaluate training programs and receive assistance in completing scholarship applications to obtain training. On-going support is provided to enrolled youth during their training period and support in finding a job upon completion is part of their plan. They in turn will be able to give back to their community as a trained, knowledgeable and capable worker to compete in the workforce of tomorrow.

**Identification of partners and resources leveraged:** Foster care youth meet an at-risk category for the Minnesota Youth Program and the Workforce Investment Act program. Youth Coordinators meet with youth to complete an assessment and determine the need for services based on the youth’s employment and training goals and availability of funding. All youth are encouraged to access services in the Resource Room whether or not they are enrolled in the program.

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### **Partners:**

- County Social Services staff
- Area School District Guidance Counselors, Case Managers and Work Experience Coordinators, and IEP Managers
- WorkForce Center Staff
- Group Home Case Managers
- Mental Health Case Managers
- Solutions and Other Behavioral Healthcare Specialists

**Agency Information:** Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. is a private nonprofit agency and partner in the WorkForce Centers in Northwestern Minnesota, Daniel J. Wenner, Executive Director

For additional information on program services, contact:

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