

---

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

---

**Agency:** Workforce Development, Inc.

**Service area:** Goodhue and Wabasha 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:** Reality Bites (see attached brochure) is a twelve-week Independent Living Skills Program designed to improve outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. The curriculum is designed for male and female participants ages 16 to 21. The concept and design are collaborations between Workforce Development Inc., Social Services and Corrections. The following partners have funded the project:

- Workforce Development, Inc
- Social Services
- Court Services
- Family Services Collaborative
- Minnesota SELF funds
- Target Stores
- Women's Cents

Social Workers, Probation officers, teachers or foster parents refer youth to the program. The program is designed to help youth as they prepare to go out into the real world. Topics address the relevant issues that youth are facing like housing, finding employment, transportation or health and nutrition. Youth become actively engaged in the learning process in ways that help them to not only learn new skills but to develop a relationship with peers and adult mentors while at the same time having lots of fun. Youth willingly attend the weekly meetings; they learn to be open to learning new ideas and to respect the rights of others in the program.

**Outreach to Youth Aging Out Of Care:** Outreach is done through directly contacting Social Services, Court Services and school administration on a regular basis. Brochures and fact sheets are mailed to these agencies prior to the start up of each new class. WDI youth staff becomes part of the individual youth transition team, which results in a long term mentoring relationship with a caring adult for the youth. Youth view this relationship as separate from the "system" and one that will transcend their time in foster care. This relationship becomes a valued resource to the youth as they seek employment and training to move them into independence and the workforce. Many times youth who have completed the program successfully return to assist staff with new classes of youth.

---

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

---

**Job Seeker Impact:** Reality Bites has significant impact on the youthful job seeker. As mentioned, youth benefit from the relationship with the WDI employment and training staff as they assess their marketable work skills and prepare to offer themselves to employers in the community. The resources available through the WorkForce Centers help to guide them as they prepare for employment. Youth learn of the "Youth Zone" that is located at the WorkForce Center. This career center/library has resources targeted directly to young adults. Participants are assisted in the use of job banks, resume writing programs, Internet career searches, and typing tutor. In addition, youth have access to numerous career resources and Labor Market Information prepared and made available by the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

**Community Impact:** Many foster youth come from families that have not been exposed to the demands of employment or post secondary training. This new information can benefit other family members as well as themselves. This information helps to shape an initial adult identity that includes necessary resources and the hope for a successful future. As youth participate with partners in the community, they identify and own skills that make them a valued and contributing member of the community. Each youth who transitions successfully into adulthood and the workplace becomes a resource to others in his or her life.

It is important for the community to participate in the development of the emerging workforce. The input of business, industry and post secondary education professionals help to shape the young adult into one who can have success in the ever-changing global workforce.

**Alignment of Resources:** Workforce Development, Inc (WDI) implements the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Minnesota Youth (MYP) programs in the counties served, and provides access to these resources for youth aging out of foster care. Services include a full range of employment and training activities, access to the WorkForce Center and all of its resources and career counseling/case management services to assist in transition to post secondary education. Training dollars are also made available through WDI resources.

Social Services - provides referrals to the program from Social Workers serving the target population, as well as support staff for specific focus groups and topics covered that are issues for youth in the program. In addition, they provide some funding for focus group activities and mailing of brochures and fact sheets to youth, parents and professionals serving the target population.

Court Services - provides referrals of appropriate youth and offers staff or probation officers as advisors and guest speakers at focus groups. They also contact many families to notify of the availability of the program for appropriate youth.

---

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

---

Family Services Collaborative - provides funding to support the cost of focus groups and activities. These funds have been used for supplies, copying, travel expenses, curriculum materials and resources needed by individual youth.

Minnesota SELF Funds (DHS) - help to cover the cost of class activities, transportation to learning sites, food (most classes take place over the evening supper hour), access to individual scholarship accounts and various other individual needs of the youth.

Target Stores - provides vouchers for individual needs for youth such as clothing needed for job search activities, food and supplies for focus groups and activities.

For additional information, contact:

Jinny Rietmann  
Youth Counselor  
Workforce Development, Inc.  
1606 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Red Wing, MN 55066  
Telephone: 651/385-6372  
TTY: 651/285-6480  
E-mail: [jrietmann@wfdi.ws](mailto:jrietmann@wfdi.ws)

**WHO DO I CALL TO GET AN APPLICATION FOR "REALITY BITES"?**

Call Rhonda VanSchoonhoven, Probation Officer for Goodhue County Court Services, at 651-267-4907,

or

Jinny Rietmann, Youth Counselor for Workforce Development, Inc., at 651-385-6372 or TTY 651-385-6480.

We look forward to discussing the program with you.

**'REALITY BITES' LEADERS:**

Rhonda VanSchoonhoven  
Jinny Rietmann

**THE NITTY-GRITTY:**

Meetings are held at the United Lutheran Church 5th and Dakota Streets  
Please enter in the

Dakota Street door  
Red Wing, MN 55066

Tuesdays, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

An equal opportunity program. Auxiliary aids and service available upon request.

**WHAT IS THE COST OF THE PROGRAM?**

There is no cost.



**REALITY BITES**

HAVE FUN  
LEARNING HOW TO  
MAKE IT IN THE  
'REAL WORLD' WITH  
JINNY AND  
RHONDA!



**FUNDED BY:**

- Goodhue County Court Services
- Goodhue County Family Services Collaborative
- Goodhue County Social Services
- Workforce Development, Inc.
- Minnesota SELF Funds
- Target Stores
- Women's Cents

## WHAT IS "REALITY BITES":

Youth should have all the opportunities available for them to succeed. "Reality Bites" is a 12-week Independent Living Skills Training Program that will provide youth with information to help them as they go out into the world.

The course is designed for female and male participants, 16-21 years old. The program is limited to 12 participants. Sessions will run approximately three times per year.



## WE Believe.....

Given the necessary tools and support, youth can accomplish whatever they want in life.

Youth are our best asset.

Youth want to succeed.

Youth can be empowered

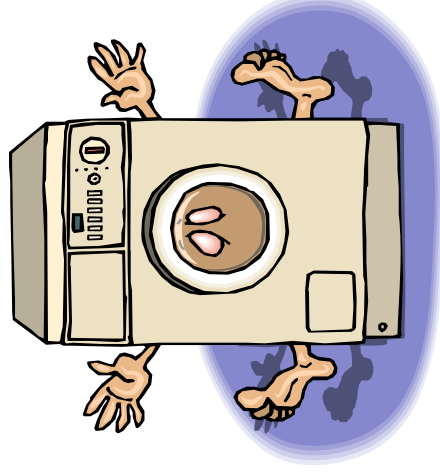
Youth deserve a chance to shine.

Youth should have the opportunity to serve, lead, and make decisions.

## WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED

### OF THE PARTICIPANT:

- ◆ Attend the weekly meetings
- ◆ Be open to learning new ideas
- ◆ Respect the rights of others in the program
- ◆ Have FUN!!!!!!!!



## WHAT TOPICS ARE COVERED IN "REALITY BITES":

- ⇧ Housing and Landlord/Tenant Rights/Home Maintenance
- ⇧ Transportation/Car Buying/Car Insurance
- ⇧ Child Care
- ⇧ Education/Employment/Career
- ⇧ Leisure Time/Time Management
- ⇧ Money Management
- ⇧ Social Skills and Personal Relationships
- ⇧ Nutrition and Grocery Shopping
- ⇧ Healthy Choices Education
- ⇧ Social Responsibility
- ⇧ Diversity Training
- ⇧ Personal Appearance and Hygiene



## WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

Any Goodhue County youth who is recommended for the program, who has been in foster care or placement since age 14, or any youth who wants to learn more about independent living skills.