
MINNESOTA BEST PRACTICES: Reaching Youth Aging Out Of Foster Care

Agency: WorkForce Center/SW MN Private Industry Council (WFC/PIC) – Lyon, Lincoln, and Murray County

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

Outreach: The **Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council** staff outreach to Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray County Social Workers, Western Community Action, and Marshall Group Home serving at-risk youth in Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray counties by:

1. Directly contacting Child Protection Workers of Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray County Human Services, Youth Workers of Western Community Action, Director of Marshall Group Home, and area school districts to make sure referral forms are available to all foster youth who are Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray county residents, either homeless and/or aging out of the foster care system, and interested in meeting transitional milestones that are necessary for a stable foundation in order to live independently in their community. We also inform foster youth of our independent living skills training groups and other available services in their community.
2. Collaborating with the County Independent Living Skills (ILS) program (SELF Independent Living Skills) to recruit eligible youth. SELF and WorkForce Center/SW MN Private Industry Council staff hold Independent Living Skills training jointly so as not to confuse the youth between SELF services and Healthy Transitions services. If a SELF participant is in need of Healthy Transitions services and is eligible, s/he contacts our WFC/PIC Youth Staff to set up an 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 WorkForce Center/SW MN Private Industry Council. At this meeting the WFC/PIC youth staff review services that are available to youth, including a tour of the Resource Area, hands-on tutorial of MCIS (Minnesota Career Information System), hands on training of MN Job Bank (on line job listings) and review of the current Minnesota Careers Booklet that outlines current labor market trends and outlooks and required education.
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 Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray County Youth Aging Out of Foster Care:

MINNESOTA BEST PRACTICES: Reaching Youth Aging Out Of Foster Care

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 have potentially eligible youth.
2. Mailings to Lyon, Lincoln, and Murray County Social Services staff outlining youth programs and target groups.
3. Youth employment counselors have direct contact with Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray County Alternative School programs 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. Lyon County WFC/PIC publicizes 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 and homeless and hungry boards in order to keep connections up in Lyon, Lincoln, and Murray county communities.

Services that our WorkForce Center/SW MN Private Industry Council Provides 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.
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/PIC 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 FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) applications on line and assist with any questions regarding financial aid.

MINNESOTA BEST PRACTICES: Reaching Youth Aging Out Of Foster Care

5. Access to Computers for: researching schools, researching potential employers, using job banks, resume writing, internet searches, typing tutor, etc.
6. Job Postings (bulletin boards, newspapers, on-line, etc.)
7. On Site Tours with Potential Employers
8. Independent Living Skills Training
9. Information Regarding Job Search Related Websites

Staff is 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/Youth Workers/Agency Directors in Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray Counties 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 a 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 independent living skills training the first and third Wednesday of every month, 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 educational and hands-on life skills have a chance to work on skills deemed essential for becoming upstanding 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. 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. Community crime levels, public assistance payments, and a youth's chances of becoming pregnant/a parent, homeless, and abusing drugs and/or alcohol are decreased.

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Identification of Partners And Resources Leveraged: Youth aging out of foster care are eligible for enrollment in the Healthy Transition to Adulthood & Homeless Prevention program. Youth workers determine the needs of youth through individualized assessment and planning. Services are customized to meet the youth's transition goals. SELF Independent Living Skills Program provides major support for 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/SW MN Private Industry Council and through Education and Training Vouchers (ETV). WFC/PIC would like to expand the use of ETVs in this area, becoming a more active partner in helping youth in Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray counties who are eligible for an ETV complete career exploration and assist with college applications.

The partners include:

Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray County Social Services Staff
Area School District Case Managers and Work Experience Coordinators
WorkForce Center/SW MN Private Industry Council Staff
Lyon, Lincoln, & Murray County Human Services Staff
Marshall Group Home facilitated by Sheriffs Youth Programs of MN
Western Community Action

For additional information, contact:

Eriann Faris
Youth Program Coordinator
SW MN Private Industry Council
607 West Main St, Third Floor
Marshall, MN 56258
Telephone: (800) 818-9295
Eriann.Faris@state.mn.us