

County of Santa Clara
Social Services Agency
Department of Family and Children's Services



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DATE: December 14, 2005

TO: Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr., Chairperson
Supervisor Don Gage, Vice-Chairperson
Children, Seniors & Families Committee

FROM: 
Will Lightbourne
Agency Director, Social Services Agency

SUBJECT: Foster Youth Initiative Update

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Accept the Foster Youth Initiative Update.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no impact to the General Fund associated with the recommended action.

CONTRACT HISTORY

Not applicable.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

On September 27, 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved Supervisor Beall's request that the Social Services Administration provide the following reports at the November 9, 2005 Children, Seniors and Families Committee:

- a. Assess the effectiveness of the County's existing job placement/job preparedness program for emancipating foster youth and identify the necessary steps to develop a quality Job Placement Program for emancipating and emancipated foster youth, to include:
 - Baseline data that describes: aggregate data on educational attainment and skills assessment; illustrates existing job placement capacity such as how many foster youth were placed in jobs last year; average salary, retention rate, average house worked per week, and occupational career ladders for foster youth.
 - Determination of how many emancipating foster youth are likely to pursue higher education, how many are currently seeking employment and what factors affect their choice.
 - Determination of potential partners and opportunity/barriers to collaboration.
 - Determination of what funding sources could be used to develop a job placement program and identify how the funds can be used.
- b. Prepare a report, jointly with the Employee Services Agency, that discusses the benefits and disadvantages of reactivating the Independent Living Program (ILP) Unclassified Position Program or developing a new Special Criteria Employment program that facilitates the hiring of emancipating foster youth by County departments. The Report should identify the necessary steps and anticipated timeframe to implement the program.

On November 9, 2005, the Children, Seniors and Families Committee received a Foster Youth Initiative Update and requested additional analysis relating to the current structure and capacity of DFCS employment services offered to emancipating foster youth. In addition, Social Services Agency is to convene a meeting with the Silicon Valley Children's Trust Fund to discuss a potential partnership for an employment program for emancipated youth.

The Foster Youth Initiative Update is attached.

BACKGROUND

On May 3, 2005, the Board accepted the recommendations relating to the Foster Youth Transition Project (now renamed Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative by the Foundation sponsors). The Connected by 25 initiative is to address employment, education, housing, and independent living skill needs of emancipating Foster Care youth.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Negative action would result in the Children, Seniors and Families Committee not accepting the report.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The Clerk of the Board will follow the usual procedures for a report of this type.

ATTACHMENTS

- Foster Youth Initiative Update

County of Santa Clara
SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES



333 West Julian Street
San Jose, California 95110-2335

**FOSTER YOUTH INITIATIVE UPDATE
SUBMITTED TO
THE CHILDREN, SENIORS AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE**

DECEMBER 14, 2005

On September 27, 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr.'s recommendations that the Social Services Administration provide the following reports at the November 9, 2005 Children, Seniors and Families Committee:

- a. Direct Social Services Administration to prepare a report to assess the effectiveness of the County's existing job placement/job preparedness program for emancipating foster youth and identify the necessary steps to develop a quality Job Placement Program for emancipating and emancipated foster youth.
 - Baseline data that describes: aggregate data on educational attainment and skills assessment; illustrates existing job placement capacity such as how many foster youth were placed in jobs last year; average salary, retention rate, average house worked per week, and occupational career ladders for foster youth.
 - Determine how many emancipating foster youth are likely to pursue higher education, how many are currently seeking employment and what factors affect their choice.
 - Determine potential partners and opportunity/barriers to collaboration.
 - Determine what funding sources could be used to develop a job placement program and identify how the funds can be used.
- b. Direct Social Services Administration, in collaboration with the Employee Services Agency, to prepare a report that discusses the benefits and disadvantages of reactivating the Independent Living Program (ILP) Unclassified Position Program or developing a new Special Criteria Employment program that facilitates the hiring of emancipating foster youth by County departments. The Report should identify the necessary steps and anticipated timeframe to implement the program.

On November 9, 2005, the Children, Seniors and Families Committee received a Foster Youth Initiative Update but deferred the report back to the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) for more analysis relating to the current structure and capacity of DFCS employment services to emancipating foster youth and directed Social Services to convene a meeting with the Silicon Valley Children's Trust Fund to discuss a potential partnership for an employment program for emancipated youth.

Effectiveness of County's Existing Job Placement/Job Preparedness Program

In Santa Clara County, there is a lack of employment training programs for emancipating foster youth that lead to high wage, high growth careers. There is a lack of coordination and partnerships between DFCS and local employment training service providers and funders. There is also very little foster youth participation in existing employment and training programs offered through the County's One-Stop Centers.

For the current school year, 77% of foster youth in Santa Clara County ages 14 years and up are planning to graduate from high school or complete their G.E.D. 32% plan to attend a community college and 13% plan to attend a 4-year post-secondary educational institution. 7% plan to attend a vocational training program and 16% plan to need employment and training services out-of-County. For foster youth who emancipated within the last County fiscal year, 58% graduated from high school or completed their G.E.D. 60% are employed and 20% are in vocational training. 39% are attending community college and 5% are attending 4-year post-secondary education institutions. 19.5% are receiving employment and training services out-of-County. 279 in Santa Clara youth participated in employment readiness in 2004. 183 youth were employed in 2004 and 109 youth were employed in 2005.

Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative

In collaboration with youth, caregivers, community partners, and technical assistance from consultants, DFCS is beginning to build a range of transition services and improve outcomes for emancipating and emancipated foster youth with funding from the Walter S. Johnson Fund. DFCS will continue the redesign of its service delivery and its System Improvement Plan activities to integrate the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative focus into existing initiatives and projects.

Based on a review of the gaps in services for emancipating and emancipated youth in the County, the two primary strategies Santa Clara County will focus on over the next three years are:

- Development of a work experience, training, and employment program that would coordinate Santa Clara County's Workforce Investment Boards, area community colleges, school districts, and employers to help foster youth prepare for and obtain jobs with high wage and high growth careers.
- Development of a transitional housing program that would provide emancipated foster youth a continuum of housing opportunities, including maintaining emancipated foster youth to continue to reside with caring, supportive, and significant adults in a family environment.

Complementary strategies are to create a data management and information system to collect comprehensive data on youth 14 - 24 years old; plan and implement a K-12 educational strategy to improve reading literacy and math skills of foster youth ages 14 -18 years old; develop a model of best practices to increase life-long connections and to develop individual resiliency; improve the integration of the Independent Living Program curriculum services into DFCS casework and develop an early ILP education and outreach program for 14-15 year olds; and

establish Individual Development Accounts and Debit Accounts program to develop literacy skills.

DFCS has begun efforts to establish the Career Pathways Program that is planned to begin in 2006. DFCS expects that the Walter S. Johnson Foundation will specifically fund the first year pilot. The Career Pathways Program will create a sustainable college and career pathway for 40 foster care and disadvantaged youth leading to post-secondary education and employment in high wage, high growth career sectors. Foster care students would not need to have a GED or graduate from high school to participate. A pilot program to prepare lower skilled disadvantaged and transitioning foster care youth for the Career Pathway Program will also be developed.

The Career Pathway Program builds on growing regional experience, including a parallel San Mateo County partnership of the Workforce Investment Board, Skyline and Canada community colleges, social service agencies, and employers. DFCS' partnership includes NOVA, SVWIN, Evergreen/San Jose Community College and Mission Community College. In addition, California School Age Consortium, the Career Ladders Project, and Gruber & Pereira Associates are providing technical assistance, expanding on work done by these organizations in developing Career Pathway programs in San Mateo and Alameda Counties. In seeking to create a pathway to college and career for foster youth, the partners have three key project objectives: 1) Develop a Career Pathway Program that will provide foster youth with the skills, social, and financial support needed to succeed in post-secondary education and training; 2) Provide a direct transition for Career Pathway Program graduates to community college certificate, degree and training programs leading to careers in high wage, high growth industries such as bio-tech, health, education, construction, manufacturing and refining – traditionally aimed at dislocated adults; and, 3) Sustain and institutionalize the Career Pathway Program by integrating post-secondary, workforce, and social service resources and funding to create a systemic approach to preparing foster youth for economic self-sufficiency.

DFCS will also work with DEBS to develop strategies to enable emancipating and emancipated foster youth access One-Stop Centers and other County programs. The DFCS Work Experience Project will also continue to be developed and will be integrated and augmented by the employment resources identified through the Career Pathways Pilot Project's partnerships with employer collaboratives such as the California School-Age Consortium.

DFCS Work Experience Project

At the request of Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr., Office of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, the DFCS Work Experience Project was established. The DFCS Work Experience Project is a part of the comprehensive Connected by 25 Foster Youth Transition Initiative that DFCS is presently undertaking. The primary objective of the DFCS Work Experience Project is to find work experience for 30 current or former foster youth ages 16 to 21 years of age beginning January 1, 2006. The Work Experience Program consists of assessment testing, job search techniques, career interest testing, and work experience placement. NOVA's program will also address literacy issues for youth that are below the ninth grade reading and math level. The Silicon Valley Workforce Investment Network's "In School" Program will serve youth between the ages of 17 and 19 years old. This program is designed to assist youth to obtain their high school diploma or the equivalent and job internship is part of the program. About 11 foster youth have been identified for this program.

North Valley Job Training Consortium (NOVA) and the Silicon Valley Workforce Investment Network (SVWIN)

The NOVA and SVWIN are the two not-for-profit, primarily federally funded workforce development agencies in the local Workforce Investment Area (WIA). Both agencies are governed by local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) and receive funding from state grants and private industry, in addition to primary funding authorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Both agencies work collaboratively with one another, businesses and various government agencies to provide comprehensive workforce development services, and to increase employment, job retention and economic development. Any foster youth in Santa Clara automatically qualifies for NOVA or SVWIN services, depending on where the foster youth lives.

NOVA served 26 foster youth last year. Due to an anticipated 20% reduction in funding this fiscal year, NOVA Youth Programs for job training and employment placement services plan to serve only 50 older youth. NOVA will reserve 5 to 10 slots for foster youth. NOVA provides employment and training services to youth ages 16 to 21 to youth residing in Milpitas, Santa Clara, Mountain View, Los Altos, Sunnyvale, Cupertino and Palo Alto at no charge. Both age groups participate in a 6 to 12 months program, which may include obtaining a high school diploma or the equivalent. Youth@Work is an on-line jobs database, workshops and a career planning and education program for youths of low income families. Youth@Work job preparation workshops are offered to all youth. The workshops include applications, interview preparation, resumé preparation and retention skills. NOVA also offers "soft skills" workshop for youth that includes effective workplace communication, customer service, resolving conflicts professionally and qualities of a successful employee. If necessary, NOVA offers intensive job preparation for youth by career advisors. NOVA career advisors offer assistance in identifying career ladders for various occupational interests and the qualifications for the various levels. This assistance involves career assessment and exploration to assist youth in identifying a career choice or multiple choices that can be further explored. Services include Work Place Readiness, Job Search, Educational planning, Career Planning, Job Shadowing, Informational interviews, Vocational assessment, Job Placement, and Follow-up up to one year.

SVWIN served 63 youth between July 1, 2002 and November 22, 2005. Of the 63 youth, 3 youth were ages 19 to 21 years and 60 youth were ages 16 to 18 years. Current and former foster youth represented approximately 4% of the 1445 youth referred to SVWIN in the time period. (The SVWIN data does not distinguish whether the youth was a foster child in Santa Clara County or elsewhere, or during what period(s) the youth experienced foster care. Only youth who self-reported at the time of application that they were foster youth was included in the data.) The eight agencies and the percentage of foster youth served are as follows: Second Start (66.7%), Center for Employment and Training (1.6%), ROHI Alternative Community Outreach (3.2%), Mexican American Community Service Agency, Inc. (20.6%), Henkels and McCoy (3.2%), San Jose Conservation Corps 1.6%) and Center for Training and Careers (3.2%). Second Start, which primarily provides 6-week summer internships, is in bankruptcy but still provides services. Most youth (66.7%) were served between July 2, 2002 and December 31, 2003. Since January 1, 2004, 2 younger foster youth have been placed in jobs and 15 younger foster youth were placed in summer internships. Since July 1, 2002, 1 of the 3 older youths served were employed at \$12 an hour, working 40 hours a week, and 6 of 60 younger youths were employed at an average of \$12.62 an hour, working an average of 34.2 hours a

week. 22 foster youth started 6-week summer internships at \$6.75 an hour for up to 25 hours a week. 86% of the youth participated in 2004 and 2005. These internships are considered job training opportunities, rather than employment. 9 youth obtained a certificate, diploma or degree and 21 youth returned to secondary education. For 2005 and 2006, SVWIN has committed 10 slots for the 16 to 18 year old age group. There is no limit of slots for foster youth ages 19 and older.

SVWIN operates 3 One-Stop Career Centers located in San Jose, Campbell and South County, providing workforce development services to all cities and unincorporated areas in the Central and Southern County. SVWIN is expanding to a new San Jose site in early 2006. This new One-Stop center will include expanded space for Youth One-Stop services including a Youth Café. SVWIN offers employment counseling, job preparation and job placement services, orientation to available services and free workshops in computer basics, resume and labor market information, resume follow-up, interviewing skills, and networking. For younger foster youth ages 16 to 18 years old, employment and training services in Hospitality and Customer Services are provided in Andrew Hill School, Mt. Ma Donna High School, and Gilroy High School. For older youth ages 19 to 21 years old, employment and training services in Telecommunications, Customer Services, Medical Administrative Office, and Hospitality are provided at Evergreen Valley College, Tech Bridge-Henkels & McCoy, Job Corps, Conservation Corps, and MACSA

Henkels & McCoy - Tech Bridge

Henkels & McCoy, a major engineering, network development and construction firm, offers employment and training services through their TechBridge program to youths ages 16 to 18 and 19 to 21 in San Jose, Campbell, and Gilroy. Henkels & McCoy provides the same training services that are provided by SVWIN in the fields of Hospitality, Customer Service, Telecommunications, and Medical Administrative Assistant. Job search for jobs that pay \$10 to \$12 an hour begins at the mid-way point of the individual training component. The youth will not receive stipends for the work experience. However, upon completion of their training, the youth would receive incentives up to \$400 and a bus pass, if they achieve the goals of the work experience. TechBridge's goal is to place all participants in jobs when training is completed. Henkels & McCoy has committed 12 slots for 19 to 21 year old emancipated foster youth.

Unclassified Positions Program, Santa Clara County

The Santa Clara County Unclassified Positions Program provides an employment opportunity for emancipated foster youth in the County while also filling the County's growing employment needs. The Program provides a sustainable living wage for foster youth up to the age of 21. DFCS has recommended that the age limit be extended to 25 years old for foster youth. To date, 6 youth who participated in the Independent Living Program and were identified for Unclassified Positions Program are currently employed with the Santa Clara County. In 2005, 4 youth who participated in the Independent Living Program have applied for OSI or OSII positions, 3 qualified for the Unclassified Program, and 3 are currently being coached to pass the minimum qualifications.

The Santa Clara County Employment Services Agency submitted a separate report to the Children, Seniors and Families Committee concerning the benefits and disadvantages of reactivating the Unclassified Position Program or developing a new Special Criteria Employment

program that facilitates the hiring of emancipating foster youth by County departments, and which identifies the necessary steps and anticipated timeframe to implement the program.

Independent Living Skills Curriculum

Five community-based youth service agencies provide life skills training, workshops, direct assistance and referrals to resources to foster youth. The agencies are Bill Wilson Center, Community Solutions, Family and Children's Services, Social Advocates for Youth and Unity Care Group. A sixth agency, the Emergency Housing Consortium, provides Independent Living Program services to emancipated former foster youth. These agencies assess youth for job preparedness and connect them with job placement and preparedness resources, such as the Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) and Career Centers at Community Colleges.

NASA/Ames Internship Program

The NASA/Ames Internship Program is finalizing a grant for an internship program at Foothill College planned to start in April 2006. The program would reserve 5 slots for foster youth who finished high school or earned a GED, perform at a "C" level, and have oral and social skills necessary to function at a college level. A total of 100 slots are planned for this program. The program would include support for the foster youth from a college counselor to enroll in the college. The foster youth would be assisted to apply for a Pell Grant up to \$4000 a year. Once the foster youth is enrolled, the youth would receive a \$10 stipend per hour for up to 20 hours a week for as long as 2 years while studying their course of interest at Foothill College. If the foster youth is successful in a course related to NASA, the internship may take place at NASA. NASA does not guarantee that interns will be hired; however, some interns have been hired in the past.

Volunteer Center

The Volunteer Center was approached to explore a possible partnership for the DFCS Work Experience Project. However, while the Volunteer Center is willing to create a work experience, it does not have an existing work experience program. The Volunteer Center believes that a full-time program manager would be essential to create a successful work experience program and a match for stipends would be required. The Volunteer Center estimated that the cost of a work experience program for 30 youth for one year would be approximately \$300,000. The Volunteer Center is also interested in participating in the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Transition workgroups and exploring providing volunteer adult mentors to foster youth in various employment sectors.

CalWORKs

The CalWORKs program has determined that it is not feasible at this time to serve emancipating or emancipated foster youth at CalWORKs Employment Connection Centers. Currently, all Centers are at maximum space and participant capacity. The vast majority of CalWORKs participants have multiple barriers to employment that need personal attention. CalWORKs participants have complex needs and behaviors that are also different from foster youth. The CalWORKs program is concerned that including foster youth would reduce the quality of service to CalWORKs participants because of the lack of staff. CalWORKs program staff must time study to the CalWORKs Single Allocation. If the CalWORKs program were required to serve

emancipating foster youth, these costs would not be covered by the Single Allocation. From 1998 to 2001, the Independent Living Program Employment Counselor was co-located at the 1888 Senter Road office and served a limited number of foster youth. Currently, there is no space for additional staff at any of the four Employment Connection Centers.

Potential Partners

Partners that have been involved in preliminary discussions and will continue to be involved in establishing comprehensive and integrated education, employment, and housing services for transitioning foster youth under the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative include: Advent Group Ministries; Bill Wilson Center; Board of Supervisors, Districts 1 through 5; California School-age Consortium; California State University Consortium; Corporation for Supportive Housing; Daybreak; DFCS Foster Youth Advisory Board; EMQ Child and Family Services; EHC Lifebuilders; Evelyn Cox Foster Family Agency; Families First; Foster and Adoptive Parents Association; Foster and Adoptive Parents Association Resource Center; Future Families; JT Residential; MACSA; Mission Community College; NOVA WIB; Project READ; Rebekah Children's Services; San Jose City/Evergreen Valley College; San Jose WIN; Santa Clara County Department of Alcohol and Drug Services; Santa Clara County Department of Employment and Benefits Services; Santa Clara County Employee Services Agency; Santa Clara County Mental Health Services; Santa Clara Office of the County Counsel; Santa Clara County School Districts; Silicon Valley Children's Fund; STAR Foster Family Star House; Unity Care Group; Villa Rosanne; Vision Literacy; Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley; and West Valley College. Representatives of the Silicon Valley Children's Fund have been active participants in preliminary meetings and will continue to be involved in the Connected by 20 Foster Youth Initiative.

Opportunities and Barriers to Collaboration

In collaboration with youth, caregivers, community partners, and technical assistance from consultants, DFCS has the opportunity to build a range of transition services and improve outcomes for emancipating and emancipated foster youth. DFCS will continue the redesign of its service delivery and its System Improvement Plan activities to integrate the California Connected by 25 Initiative focus into existing initiatives and projects. DFCS will continue to engage youth, caregivers, and community-based organizations in workgroups to plan, develop, and implement responsive services. Key to all of the different workgroups would be the integration of all workgroups and ongoing discussion of crossover issues, much like what DFCS has done with the integration of the Family to Family strategies and the SIP into practice in the last few years.

Funding Resources

DFCS requested \$300,000 over the next three years in annual installments of \$100,000 a year from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation to plan and implement the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative. The Walter S. Johnson Foundation has given preliminary approval and final approval by the Board should be given by January 2006. DFCS will use the Foundation's funding as the County's match to draw additional Title IV-E and other federal/state funding, if possible. The funding will pay for a project coordinator, training, and administrative costs related to meetings. DFCS also requested an additional \$30,000 over the next three years in annual installments of \$10,000 a year for Foster Youth Savings Accounts and will be seeking a

match for the funds through community-based organizations and the Jim Casey Foundation. DFCS will be requesting a one-time grant of \$200,000 from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation for the first year cost of implementing the Career Pathways Program. DFCS will also be requesting an additional \$150,000 over the next three years in annual installments of \$50,000 a year from the Hewlett Foundation to fund foster youth Individual Development Accounts. DFCS also intends to use housing resources funded through the Hewlett Foundation Housing Initiatives' grant of over \$1 million that will be given to direct service housing providers in Santa Clara County.

DFCS is seeking sustainable funding for the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative after the Foundation's funding ends. In relation to the Career Pathways Program, DFCS has had discussions with NOVA and SVWIN to discuss the possible redirection of individual training resources of about \$2500-\$3500 per student. DFCS also has had discussions with the San Jose/Evergreen and Mission Community Colleges to use state post-secondary funding to support ongoing costs, draw down state community college per capita student funding, and provide cash grants for students drawn from state and federal resources including Pell, Chafee, State Equal Opportunity Grants and other resources that can total about \$6,250-\$11,250. DFCS currently provides foster youth and emancipated foster youth with supportive counseling, transitional assistance and emergency financial support. DFCS will continue to use these same resources to support those emancipated foster youth participating in the Career Pathways Program and college programs.