

County of Santa Clara
Board of Supervisors
Supervisory District Four
Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr.



BOSD4.9.27.05

DATE: September 27, 2005

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: *James T. Beall, Jr.*

James T. Beall, Jr.
Supervisor, District 4

SUBJECT: Job Placements for Emancipating Foster Youth

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 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. The report should include the following information:

- ◆ Baseline data that describes: aggregated 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 hours worked per week, and occupational career ladders for foster youth.

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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 ILP Unclassified Position Program or developing a new Special Criteria Employment program that facilitates the hiring of emancipating foster youth by County departments. Report should identify the necessary steps and anticipated timeframe to implement the program.

Administration will provide this information at the November 9, 2005 Children, Seniors and Families Committee.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

As chair of the Children, Seniors and Families Committee, I welcome opportunities to improve County services. Recently, the County received a three year grant from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation and other foundations to create a comprehensive continuum of services for emancipating and emancipated foster youth in Santa Clara County. The grant allocates approximately \$400,000 per year for three years. The Initiative focuses on increasing opportunities for emancipating foster youth to successfully transition from the foster care system to self sufficiency by developing their academic and life skills in the following three components:

1. Employment/Job Training/Post-Secondary Education
2. Housing

3. K-12 Education.

The grant enables the County to redesign the current Independent Living Program. In addition, it provides an opportunity to plan and implement strategies to build a comprehensive continuum of services system that emphasize self sufficiency.

The Department of Family and Children's Services selected the three components of the Initiative, Employment, Education and Housing because they are the most critical components impacting whether emancipating foster youth will experience successful life outcomes. Research demonstrates that the more education an individual has the more likely they are to obtain higher paying jobs. Unfortunately, many of our foster youth are testing well below 10th grade reading and writing level. In addition to pursuing an education, employment is another key element of a successful transition to independence. Unemployment is significant barrier facing our emancipating youth today. Some critical supportive service programs such as subsidized housing require emancipating youth be currently employed. Yet recent reports demonstrate that youth emancipating from the County Independent Living Program are not entering the workforce or pursuing academics in significant numbers.

On December 8, 2004, the Children, Senior and Family Committee (CSFC) reviewed the Annual ILP Statistical Report. The statistical report tracks 18 outcome/client progress indicators. A number of findings demonstrated that our County has failed in providing emancipating foster youth with adequate job readiness skills and job placement. Specifically, the report indicated that of the 554 foster youth who received ILP services in FY 2004, 179 were currently seeking employment. The unfortunate reality is that too many youth do not have a job at the time of their emancipation. Furthermore, different studies have concluded that a significant number of foster youth who leave the system after emancipating end up homeless or in jail within the first two years.

Early discussions with the Department of Family and Children's Services reveal that many of our foster youth lack the necessary academic and social skills to secure a well paying job upon their emancipation. It is my understanding that the Foster Youth Initiative's initially will focus their employment program to keep youth attached to school. Obtaining part time work for foster youth who are enrolled in academic activities will be the primary objective of the Initiative's employment component. I believe the strategy of conditioning employment placement on mandatory academic activities will yield long term employment success for the majority of younger foster youth, age 12-15, for whom the Agency has adequate time to

provide services that will increase their skill. However, this approach excludes a majority of the older foster youth who do not have the current academic ability to attend college and they do not have the appropriate time to participate in new supportive programs. I believe that significant work must also be invested in increasing job placement opportunities for emancipating foster youth for whom education is not a viable option.

Approximately 18% (398 foster youth) of the 2099 foster youth currently in our Child Welfare System are between the ages of 16–18 years old. This number does not represent emancipated foster youth over the age of 18 who still access ILP services, and therefore probably significantly underestimates the total population of foster youth seeking employment.

Clearly more needs to be done to connect emancipating foster youth with quality employment opportunities. The information requested in this referral will allow the Board greater visibility of the supportive services provided to emancipating foster youth. It is my intention to focus as Chairperson in 2006 on this critical need for improved job placement options for emancipating foster youth.

BACKGROUND

One of the responsibilities of the Children, Seniors and Families Committee is to oversee the programs and policies of the Social Services Agency. Over the past several years, the Committee has worked collaboratively with the Agency and our community partners to fundamentally change the way the County supports children and families in, or at risk of entering, the Child Welfare Service system. The focus of service delivery has shifted from intervention to prevention and early intervention. Investing in prevention and early intervention strategies has resulted in greater numbers of families remaining together, and with more children being placed with relatives or in home like settings.

The significant decline in the daily Children's Shelter population is just one example of the many positive impacts resulting from the hard work of our county social workers, community partners and the priority Board members have placed upon children in the Child Welfare system. The daily Children Shelter population has decreased from a monthly average high of 147 in October 2000, to average daily population of 33 in June 2005. The cost of general fund investments in reunification and diversion have been offset by long term operational cost savings at the Children's Shelter. The Children's Shelter's budget has steadily decreased over the past three fiscal years from \$13,764,340 in FY 2004 to \$11,489,374 in FY 06. More

importantly, the County's share of cost for the Shelter has decreased from \$5,479,260 to \$3,211,409 in the current year.