

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



CSFC SSA02 081606

Prepared by: James Anderson
CC25I Program Manager

Reviewed by: Norma Doctor Sparks
Director, Department of Family
and Children's Services

DATE: August 16, 2006

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

FROM: *Will Lightbourne*
Will Lightbourne
Agency Director, Social Services Agency

SUBJECT: Status Report on Foster Youth Initiative

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Accept Status Report on Foster Youth Initiative.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no fiscal impact associated with acceptance of the recommended action.

CONTRACT HISTORY

Not applicable.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Children, Seniors and Families Committee requested this Status Report on the Foster Youth Initiative, including housing and employment, and a report back on the possibility of funding for Individual Development Accounts by the Silicon Valley Children's Trust Fund. Attached please find the Foster Youth Initiative Implementation Plan.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The Children, Seniors and Families Committee would not be informed about the status of the Foster Youth Initiative.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

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

ATTACHMENTS

- Foster Youth Initiative Implementation Plan

FOSTER YOUTH INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Submitted to

THE CHILDREN, SENIORS AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

August 16, 2006

BACKGROUND

In collaboration with the Board of Supervisors, the Social Services Agency's Department of Family and Children's Services has worked with two concurrent processes to lead to enhancements and improvements in programs to assist foster youth transition successfully to independent living. The two processes are the Foster Youth Employment Blue Ribbon Task Force, convened by Supervisor James Beall, Jr. and Deputy County Executive Nathan, and the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25) in which Santa Clara is a participant along with four other California counties.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force convened meetings in Spring 2006 and developed a series of overall guiding principles that will be used to establish broad goals for the effort, while the CC25 process involved multiple workgroups of subject matter experts and stakeholders that are developing specific multi-year action plans that will begin implementation in Fiscal Year 2008.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force has concluded its findings and the Department of Family and Children's Services has been in the process of reviewing the guiding principles and integrating them into their current CC25 efforts.

This report, for the Committee's information, is the first year actions and recommendations with specific regards to the two primary CC25 strategies – Training and Employment and Housing. DFCS will report on the educational component of CC25 on September 20th, and will again report on housing and employment on November 15th.

I. Training and Employment

Many foster youth currently exit the foster care system ill equipped for their future in that they do not have skills to obtain and maintain a sustainable wage job. The Blue Ribbon Task Force has developed recommendations to ameliorate the situation, some of which are listed as follows:

- Funding Streams
 1. Create Consortia which can pool resources
 2. Create incentives for collaboration
 3. Look at federal and state waivers
 4. Expand the use of technology such as with case management information
 5. Federal funds must be maximized and leveraged
 6. Prioritize County general funds that may be maximized and leveraged
 7. Create flexible county funds spending accounts
 8. Establish a point person in funding management, prioritization, and coordination
- Uncoordinated Efforts

1. Decide who takes responsibility for emancipated youth
 2. Centralized information system of youth with DFCS
 3. Public Health approach
- Encourage staff to value and be empowered to engage in collaboration
 - Early transition plans for emancipating youth that is clear and specific, and will establish a foundation of understanding amongst all involved with that transition
 - Conduct a study to identify viable, short term living wage vocations
 - Create supportive centers for youth which will provide practical assistance on becoming connected and self sufficient
 - Each youth must have 24/7 access to safe and sanitary housing

The Santa Clara County CC25 Training and Employment Workgroup has incorporated the Task Force recommendations and plans to implement a program to improve foster youths' overall employability. As part of this program development DFCS is collaborating with many community based organizations, including:

- a) work2future
- b) NOVA
- c) Mission College
- d) San Jose City College
- e) Evergreen Valley Community College
- f) Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)
- g) Employment Services Agency
- h) MACSA in Gilroy

There are various training and employment activities already underway as follows:

DFCS Training and Employment Unit

DFCS has established an Employment Services Unit. This unit will consist of an Employment Program Supervisor and two Employment Counselors. The focus of the unit's work will be to address and support job training and career development for current and former DFCS foster youth.

DFCS Work Experience Project

1. **Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) Employment Program –** DFCS has developed an employment experience program in partnership with DCSS in which 41 former foster youth were referred and ultimately 30 were hire into full time unclassified Office Specialist II positions. Of the 30 youth hired, 25 successfully completed the program and 11 of the 25 had their work hours extended until August 31st. Of the 14 youth that have completed and exited the program, 4 have returned to college, 7 have secured employment and 3 are currently seeking employment. DFCS employment counselors will continue to provide intensive support services for all youth until they have secured suitable employment or a training/educational program.
2. **Work2future –** Work2future Workforce Investment Network has contracted with Henkels and McCoy Inc. to provide hands on vocational and

employment training for former foster youth. To date 4 youth have enrolled in the program. Two youth completed the Customer Service Program and received a National Retail Federation certificate. One youth is currently working part time earning \$7.75 an hour. One youth was employed through DCSS but was terminated due to attendance issues. The youth has since returned to college. One youth completed the Customer Service Program and did not receive a NRF certificate. The youth was employed with DCSS but was terminated due to attendance. The youth is currently working part time at RGIS Inventory earning \$9.00 an hour. One youth did not complete the Medical Administration Assistant program and is not employed at this time.

3. **Unity Care Group** – This program is in progress. Unity Care Group will work directly with youth who are academically at risk and help them not only graduate from high school but also help them obtain employment.
4. **Starbucks Inc.** – DFCS is exploring partnerships with Starbucks Inc. to provide training and employment programs for former foster youth.
5. **Forever After** – DFCS has made initial contact with the Foothill-De Anza Community College District Forever After Program designed to provide community college students who are former foster youth with two years of structured internships and counseling support. This program attempts to provide structure, positive reinforcement for acceptable behavior in the workplace, and a community college education. The goal is that with continuous guidance from college counselors, meeting in group sessions every other week, and 1-2 year internships in the areas related to their majors, these students will be motivated to continue the higher educational goals and eventually transfer to 4 – year universities if that is their dream.

County Unclassified Program for Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY)

In December 2005, the County Board of Supervisors decided to expand the County's Unclassified Program for Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY). The EFY program is designed to assist emancipating and emancipated foster youth between the ages of 16 – 24 leaving the foster care system through employment with the County. Currently these positions are limited to SA Office Specialist II and Office Specialist III positions.

In order to enhance program success Employee Services Agency has proposed expansion of the program countywide, to include:

- Account Clerk I / Account Clerk I - U
- Automotive Attendant / Automotive Attendant - U
- Custody Support Assistant / Custody Support Assistant - U
- Food Service Worker I / Food Service Worker I - U
- Food Service Worker - Correction / Food Service Worker - Correction - U
- Health Information Clerk I / Health Information Clerk I - U
- Janitor / Janitor - U
- Kennel Attendant / Kennel Attendant - U
- Laboratory Assistant / Laboratory Assistant - U
- Laundry Worker I / Laundry Worker I - U
- Library Clerk I / Library Clerk I - U
- Library Page / Library Page - U
- Messenger Driver / Messenger Driver - U
- Office Specialist I / Office Specialist I - U
- Office Specialist II / Office Specialist II - U

- Park Services Attendant / Park Services Attendant - U
- Stock Clerk / Stock Clerk - U
- Storekeeper / Storekeeper - U
- Unit Support Assistant / Unit Support Assistant - U
- Utility Worker / Utility Worker - U

Employee Services Agency will provide the hiring manager the names of up to three EFY participants, in addition to the top seven names from the regular referred list for interview. The department will also receive up to three EFY participants to interview when placing a vacant position on the transfer line. The EFY participant must meet the minimum qualifications for the referred classification.

Career Pathways

With the financial support of the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, DFCS has partnered with work2future (formerly Silicon Valley WIN), Mission College, and San Jose City College to create the Career Pathways Project. The pilot project will create a sustainable college and career pathway for 80 disadvantaged foster care and out of school youth, and disadvantaged adults leading to high wage, high growth career sectors including software, public administration and financial services. There are three key objectives to the project:

1. To develop a new "Bridge" program that will provide disadvantaged youth and adults with the skills, social and financial support needed to succeed in post-secondary education and training.
2. To provide a direct transition for Bridge graduates to community college certificate, degree and training programs leading to careers in high wage, high growth industries including health, hospitality management, software, public sector and bio-technology.
3. To sustain and institutionalize the Career Pathways program through integrating post secondary, workforce and social service resources to create a systemic approach to preparing disadvantaged youth for economic self-sufficiency. The program will be institutionalized through integrating community college per capita support funding (FTES), Workforce Investment Act (WIA) resources, and DFCS support funding.

The project builds on developing regional training programs targeted to key industries such as health, software, public administration and government, and bio-technology with fit the work2future focus on the region's growing employment sectors.

The Career Pathways project includes 3 key components

- **A one semester credited college preparatory program conducted by Mission and San Jose City Colleges**, designed to ready students for college success and for transition into continuing career pathways. As in other counties, the Bridge will be organized as a learning community. Over the course of one semester, students will receive English, reading, math and counseling; along with lab courses in all three skill areas. Counseling will emphasize career pathway sequences and training available at both colleges. The program will also include in/class counseling, case management and social service support. The Bridge is designed to ready youth performing at the 7th/8th-grade level for success in college through achievement of 10th grade English and math levels and enhanced college readiness.

As matriculated college students, Bridge program participants will have access to federal and state post-secondary aid providing grants estimated at \$ 4,000-6,000 per year for non-foster care youth and up to \$9,000 for foster care youth, depending on availability of state Chafee funding. Students completing the program will receive an individualized education plan (IEP) and be prepared to move into credit-bearing career pathway programs at each college

- **Transition to career pathways and employment in regional high wage, high growth sectors.** Students completing the Bridge program will have access to a full spectrum of opportunities including degree and transfer programs, as well as long and short-term vocational training offered by the colleges.
- **Sustainability strategy.** A key program objective is to sustain the college and career pathway following the initial grant funded programs and services. The Santa Clara Career Pathways program will be institutionalized through integrating funding and resources from three now separate institutions:
 - **Workforce Investment Boards:** The work2future WIN will provide continuing case management to students in the Bridge program and provide \$2,000 per enrolled student to support costs for an in/class counselor and other learning community support costs.
 - **Post-secondary resources:** Community colleges can sustain and support Bridge programs through using state post-secondary funding to support the ongoing costs of Bridge programs. San Jose City and Mission colleges will sustain the costs of instruction for follow-up Bridge cohorts through use of state FTES funding. Both colleges will also provide youth, as eligible, with cash grants drawn from state and federal resources including Pell, Chafee, State Equal Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and other resources. As above these resources can total \$4,000-\$9,000 per student.
 - **Social service resources:** The Department of Family and Children's Services currently provides foster youth and emancipated foster youth with supportive counseling, transitional assistance and emergency financial support. The agency will use these same resources to support those emancipated foster youth participating in the Career Pathways and subsequent college programs.

The first Career Pathways cohort will commence August 28, 2006 at Mission College, followed by the 2nd cohort at San Jose City College in the Spring of 2007. Targeted recruitment and assessment of potential candidates for the first cohort is currently underway.

CC25 Training and Employment Workgroup

In addition to the aforementioned goals and strategies, the CC25 Training and Employment workgroup continues to meet twice per month to forge new relationships in the community with prospective partners who are willing and committed to provide training and employment opportunities to foster youth.

II. Housing

A major component of CC25 is the development of affordable housing options that help a young adult increase self-sufficiency by supporting employment, educational, and other developmental growth needs. The Social Services Agency has made progress in securing significant resources and developing important partnerships for the development of transitional and permanent housing for emancipating youth.

Since February DFCS has convened a "Continuum of Care Housing Workgroup" where participating representatives from the community, foster families, group homes, county departments, DFCS staff, and youth have discussed housing needs facing emancipating youth as well as some promising solutions to the need.

A major accomplishment of the Housing Workgroup was its contribution in developing the County's Transitional Housing Placement Plus plan (THP-Plus), which provides 24 months of transitional housing to emancipated youth from the ages of 18 to 24. The County's submitted its plan to the State in April and received official acceptance of it in June. The THP-Plus plan permits implementing three types of transitional housing under the program: host family, scattered-site apartments, and single-site congregate based developments.

One of the more significant innovations proposed in the THP-Plus plan is the County's proposed implementation of a "host family" model, where a young adult has the option of living in a supportive family setting while working on educational and employment goals. The Housing Workgroup has discussed this model at some depth, outlining important aspects of a successful host family model.

The State's budget allocation allows for the County to implement of 25 host family and 12-18 scattered-site or single-site units. One of the next major steps for the Housing workgroup will be to provide input and guidance into the service design that will be requested through the procurement process SSA will be using to select a provider.

In June, the County Board of Supervisors allocated \$318,821 for the intended purpose of creating a first, last, and security deposit program for emancipating youth. The Agency would like to request from CSFC and the Board flexibility in the use of these funds to directly assist emancipating youth with some housing needs. These types of needs would include:

- First, last, and security deposit
- A "bridge," or temporary subsidy program to meet immediate housing needs of emancipating youth until THP-Plus is implemented or other types of affordable housing is secured.
- A short to medium length subsidy program for youth working, in a training program, or going to school.
- For dorm fees, where student aid does not cover all housing expenses.

These subsidies will be made available to youth in order to support educational, employment, or other age-appropriate goals in becoming self-sufficient. This means the use of this housing fund will not be linked to a single program or initiative, but will be a resource available to youth participating in any county initiative to promote education, employment, and self-sufficiency.

The Housing Authority of Santa Clara has agreed to help emancipating youth, especially homeless former foster youth access housing subsidies. While safe, stable and affordable housing is needed to support a young adult in meeting, the Agency proposes long-term housing subsidies to a limited degree in supporting youth who will be facing some long-term affordability issues. Many of these young adults may be on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), may have had episodes of homelessness, and facing other issues. The Housing Authority has committed to work with the Agency in improving access to the Shelter Plus Care subsidy program for homeless who have mental health or substance use histories, or diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. These subsidies are recognized as being limited and targeted, and the Housing Authority will continue to work with Agency toward a means to secure additional resources.

The City of San Jose's Housing Department has agreed to help the Agency develop a strategy to secure or give a preference to emancipating youth in the City's affordable housing developments. The City will pursue the process for having housing which targets emancipating youth named as a preference for its capital development fund. This preference would greatly contribute to a not-for-profit developer in securing funds to acquire and rehabilitate property that could be used as shared housing, apartments, or a transitional housing site. Furthermore, the City will be exploring a means by where housing under development for extremely low-income (ELI) households and individuals can be "set-aside" for emancipating youth. This set-aside would greatly improve access for youth to affordable rental housing who may be pursuing educational or employment goals, or may be facing longer term housing affordability issues due to limited fixed income, disability, or other issues.

The County's Office of Affordable Housing has also agreed to identify emancipating youth as a priority for its housing development fund. As with the City of San Jose's development fund, this can greatly expand emancipating youth's access to housing.

III. Additional California Connected by 25 Strategies

DFCS will focus on the following additional strategies that will complement and further support foster youth and their transition into adulthood:

- **Building Financial Literacy**
Teach youth to build assets, how to save money, and spend wisely. Individual development accounts and Debit Account Programs will help create and manage the best money savings plan for them.
- **Strengthening Education**
Improve reading literacy and math skills for foster youth ages 14 to 18 years.
- **Improving Independent Living Program (ILP)**
Improve services to prepare youth to be productive adults.
- **Enhancing Personal/Social Asset Development**
Develop a model of best practices to connect emancipating youth with life-long adults

- **Create a Data Management and Information System**

Create a data management and information system that collects comprehensive data for emancipating and emancipated foster youth. Use the data to improve youth outcomes and integrate data collection into program planning and evaluation.

The following workgroups have been developed to plan and implement the supportive strategies: (Year one benchmarks listed)

- 1. Financial Literacy – Goals:**

- Attend Opportunity Passport technical assistance developed by Jim Casey Foundation (completed)
- Develop Financial Education Curriculum
- Implement Individual Development Accounts program and create 30 accounts for youth
- Establish banking partnerships
- Develop a youth mentor program
- Establish Youth and Community Boards (presently partnering with DFCS Youth Advisory Board and Community Action Teams)
- Establish five initial “door opener” opportunities

Additionally, the Children, Seniors and Families Committee has requested an update on the County match portion of Individualized Development Accounts (IDA), and whether the Silicon Valley Children's Fund may be a potential funding source. There are no plans for the Children's Fund to fund the IDA match at this time. The Children's Fund is working closely with SSA on the educational strategies and objectives related to CC25.

- 2. K- 12 – Goals:**

- Implement pilot program with Eastside Union High School District to assist 30 youth to improve math and reading skills. The individualized interventions will include but not be limited to intensive remediation, Tutoring, and mentoring.
- In collaboration with Connect, Motivate and Educate Society (CME) at San Jose State University, provide orientation program for incoming high school students and caretakers
- Develop, test and implement educational needs assessments for foster youth ages 14-24 years old
- Partner with School Linked Services to maximize services to foster youth in certain schools.
- Implement DFCS policies and procedures to improve CWS/CMS educational data for foster youth
- Address confidentiality issues and facilitate communication between schools and DFCS
- Develop procedures to facilitate timely enrollment and transfer of student's records when foster youths move.

- 3. Resource Development and Utilization -- Goals:**

- Insure that all eligible youth are connected to and participate in an Independent Living Program

- Strengthen integration of services and communication among present ILP providers, youth's social workers, and caregivers
- Develop education and training for caregivers and court advocates of existing foster youth ages 14 – 18 years old
- Provide access and services for 14 – 15 year olds that will help them develop independent living skills

4. Joint Decision-Making -- Goals:

- Require Emancipation Conference Plans for all foster youth ages 14-18 to ensure that all foster youth have periodic conferences to help the youth successfully acquire life skills required for productive adulthood
- Creation of a Foster Youth Resource Center which will provide practical assistance on becoming connected and self-sufficient.
- Development of a support team of both current and former foster youth charged with supporting and advocating for youth presently working towards emancipation

5. Family Finding -- Goals:

- Identify best practices to ensure permanency for youth
- Link 40 foster youth ages 14-18 years old with caring committed adults
- Develop permanency and resiliency training for DFCS staff and other CC25 partners

6. DFCS Initiatives Data Group -- Goals:

- Implement new web-based data system to be used by the five participating CC25 counties to enter more comprehensive data concerning education, employment and housing on emancipated foster youth up to the age of 25
- Manage the data system and use data to drive decisions and improve outcomes