

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



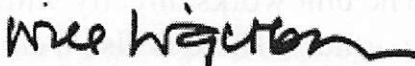
CSFC SSA01 111506

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Director, Department of Family
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DATE: November 15, 2006

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: DFCS Employment Unit Action Plan and CC25 Housing and Employment Status
Update

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Accept status report from the Social Services Agency on the Department of Family and Children Services Employment Unit Action Plan and the CC25 Housing and Employment Status Update.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no fiscal or General Fund impact associated with the action.

CONTRACT HISTORY

Not applicable.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The DFCS Employment Unit Action Plan (Referral #197) and CC25 Housing and Employment Status Update (Referral #196) were requested by Supervisor Beall to be reported to CSFC at the November 2006 meeting.

BACKGROUND

To further implement and support Santa Clara County's California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25), the Employment Services Unit (ESU) was created. One of the main goals of the unit is to further an integrated effort to bring CC25 strategies into mainstream social work practice. Referring youth to CC25 and ESU services will be mandatory for all social workers that have youth emancipating out of the child welfare system.

The ESU has been in place since August 28, 2006. Staffing consists of one Employment Program Supervisor and two Employment Counselors. The unit works directly with youth as well as service providers, stakeholders, and community partners. There is also a close working relationship with the county Independent Living Program (ILP) and contracted ILP providers.

Outlined in this report is an update of progress and pending actions.

1. Career Pathways

Current Cohort (Mission College): The youth have reached the mid-way point of the semester. Those that are having difficulty or are struggling in one or more subjects are being evaluated and supported on a one-to-one basis. Most of the struggling students have needed tutoring or one-to-one instructional assistance and report improved skills and confidence after receiving such attention. One student has more severe difficulty due to learning disabilities. He has been referred to the Disabled Students Program.

Mission College counseling staff have been meeting with students and are in the process of developing educational plans to address the needs of students wishing to continue schooling and/or training.

Work2Future staff have begun creating employment plans and strategies for the students who wish to pursue employment once they have completed Career Pathways.

ESU staff have been providing on-site classroom support and coverage one day per week and as needed by request when Work2Future staff have other commitments. ESU counselors are also in the process of completing Transitional Independent Living Plans (TILPS) with the youth to identify goals, strengths, and eligibility for other supportive services.

Spring 2007 Cohort (San Jose City College): Recruitment for this event is underway. A data run was completed identifying youth that have emancipated from the system since June 2006 or have an expected emancipation date through January 2007. This group totals 111 youth that will be newly eligible for this cohort. Youth will be called and offered/screened for Career Pathways. At that time, youth will also be screened for other opportunities and components.

Social workers and service providers have also been calling and referring youth for the coming cohort. There have even been some self-referrals from youth that have learned about Career Pathways from varied sources. This list totals 10.

In order to address some of the transition issues the youth have experienced, a "progressive orientation" will be held for the youth before they actually begin the cohort. The orientation will be three-part:

- one session with Work2Future to complete required paperwork (mandatory for supportive services eligibility)
- one session run by the college as an introduction to the campus, student services, and the college's policies
- one session with DFCS ESU to outline housing stipend requirements, program expectations, and review good study habits and how to be a successful student

2. DCSS Work Experience Project

Of the 11 youth who had their work hours extended until August 31, 2006, eight have had their assignments re-extended until October 31, 2006. Of those eight, two have been further extended for a period of time to be determined, working 20 hours per week. All continue to receive support from ESU employment counselors and will receive services when their work ends so that they may secure employment or a training/educational program.

3. County Unclassified Program for Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY)

The expanded Unclassified Program for Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) is in place and operational. Youth can apply for the EFY program by attending a recruitment session or by contacting an ESU counselor and making individual arrangements. Recruitment sessions for youth began on October 19th and will continue every other Thursday evening from 5:00–8:00pm. At these sessions youth learn about the program and process as well as receive help, guidance and support with completing the application. At the first session 13 youth were referred, with 7 actually in attendance. Those that were not able to come have been either rescheduled for the next group session or for a one-on-one meeting. To date, 10 youth have submitted applications to EFY and 7 are scheduled for the next evening session. We are pending a report-back from ESA on how many have been called for employment interviews.

An all department letter/memo is being drafted that will outline procedures for social workers to refer youth they feel would be a good match for any of the EFY positions.

4. CC25 Training and Employment Workgroup

The CC25 Training and Employment workgroup continues to meet twice per month. Co-chairing responsibilities have been handed off to the supervisor of the ESU. The group meets to discuss current programs and projects and work to develop new options for former foster youth. Currently, recruitment for the upcoming Career Pathways has been a recurring topic as well as strategies and planning.

A new topic that will be discussed further is the development of partnerships for options in the construction and trades fields, specifically apprenticeship programs. This is a very promising area to explore as it fits in with the vision of providing high wage and high growth opportunity jobs for our youth.

5. Publicity

The CC25 and DFCS administration has worked with the Department of Community Relations and County Executives Office to publicize CC25. The angle was not just to approach the mainstream English language media, but also the ethnic media. CC25 has been publicized via print, television, and radio. On Friday October 13, 2006 media interviews were held with members of the ethnic press representing the Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese language media. This resulted in several published news articles as well as several radio broadcasts.

DFCS Director Norma Doctor Sparks was interviewed for background and status of the program; Daniel Weems, a youth in Career Pathways who is living in the SJSU dorms, was interviewed for his perspective as a participant.

KPIX Channel 5 Eyewitness News and Univision Channel 14 interviewed ESU Supervisor Liza Giron-Espinoza for broadcast on their evening news programs. On October 23, 2006 Liza appeared on the KNTV Bay Area Today Morning Show with Daniel for a live interview about CC25 and Career Pathways.

There are several more interviews, media events and requests pending with the San Jose Mercury News, Channel 7, Radio KLOK, KZSF La Caliente, and several Asian language stations.

To publicize within the agency and department, the ESU supervisor has gone to or will be going to the mandatory all staff trainings to discuss CC25 and the ESU. DFCS managers and supervisors have received the information, and line staff is scheduled for the coming weeks. An internet webpage is also maintained by the unit and all relevant documents, flyers, and activity calendars are posted so that they may be readily available to staff.

6. Financial Literacy Collaboration — IDAs

Because the ESU is in contact with the youth who are employed, or seeking employment, it is a natural fit for there to be collaboration with the Financial Literacy Workgroup, specifically in the area of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). IDAs are the matched savings accounts that youth will have the opportunity to open. ESU will provide the case management for the youth who have IDAs. The case management piece will be developed once a monitoring provider is contracted and the services provided are made clear. ESU will then

base their case management on what is missing from the contractor's monitor

Housing Activities

In addition to employment activities, a major component of CC25 is the development of affordable housing options that help a young adult increase self sufficient by supporting employment, educational, and other developmental growth needs. The Social Services Agency has made progress in implementing options 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. The Workgroup has met twice a month, and for the last 3 months, one of the monthly meetings has been devoted to the development of the "host family" model, where a young adult has the option of living in a supportive family setting. The Workgroup is in the process of drafting a program outline for the model to be used for implementation early next year.

Another aspect of the Housing Workgroup has been to advise the Agency on the implementation of 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 Workgroup was key in developing the County's plan to the State in April and received official acceptance of it in June. Even though the State budget approved 100% State funding for the THP-Plus Program, the allocation was inadequate to fully fund counties starting THP-Plus programs. The five counties are currently operating a Transitional Housing Placement Plus Program received the bulk of the funding and approximately \$312,396 will be distributed on a "first come, first served" basis to all counties with an approved THP-Plus plan until the funds are exhausted.

The Workgroup has worked with the Agency on addressing the THP-Plus funding issue by developing a plan to implement the program this year in order to draw on current available funds in addition to establishing a baseline for future years' allocations. Workgroup participants from Unity Care, EHC Lifebuilders, and Bill Wilson Center have been involved in the Workgroup discussions with DFCS to strategically utilize existing housing stock and service capacity to draw on State funding. It is initially planned that up to 30 units of

Transitional housing may be implemented before the end of the fiscal year.

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. In the last Emancipating Youth Initiatives update to CSFC, the Committee supported the Agency's request for greater flexibility in the use of these funds to directly assist emancipating youth with some housing needs. This funding has been used to support the 19 youth currently in the Career Pathways program, providing a subsidy to 10 of the youth living in shared housing settings, and 9 at the San Jose State University dorms. A second cohort of Career Pathways participants will also have the option of accessing the housing fund in late January when the group begins. This fund is also anticipated to be drawn as a source of bridge funding in implementing the THP-Plus program.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

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

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

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

ATTACHMENTS

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