



County of Santa Clara  
Foster Youth Employment  
Task Force

## **Foster Youth Employment Task Force**

### **Agenda 5/4/06**

- I. Introductions & Overview (5 Minutes)
- II. Large Group Identification of Policies and Recommendations (45 Minutes)
  - A. Creating a Supportive Environment for both Youth & Employers
  - B. Establishing Linkages with Employers Pre, During, and Post Placement
- III. Summary of All Developed Recommendations (15 Minutes)
- IV. Clarification, Questions, & Discussion of Recommendations (10 Minutes)
- V. Prioritization by Category (20 Minutes)
- VI. Review of Missing Recommendations (5 Minutes)
- VII. Closing, Overview of Next Steps (5 Minutes)

## **PROCESS OVERVIEW & GOAL**

To develop a sustainable program in a collaboration of input between Supervisor Beall, the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, and the community, which creates comprehensive and encompassing foster youth employment.

### **I. Process Overview**

#### **A. FYETF Role Defined**

The purpose of the Task Force is to function as a brain trust in collaboration with the Office of Jim Beall and the Social Services Agency/Department of Family and Children Services (hereinafter Agency). Per this role, the Task Force will be asked to develop guiding principles and formulate policy on the issue of a comprehensive foster youth employment program.

#### **B. Overview of Process**

For informational purposes, a broad overview of the process will follow.

1. **April 14, 26, May 3:** The Task Force will be asked to provide strategic information and give input on ideas which will be incorporated into and be indispensable to the design of the project as a whole.
2. **April 15 to May 4:** The input of the Task Force will be incorporated with the directions and feedback from the Agency workgroup. The Agency will establish the outlines of considerations & recommendations by early May 2006 to submit to Supervisor Beall to incorporate and take under consideration by May 11, 2006 for County budgetary decisions.
3. **May to August:** The Agency will collaborate with the Office of Supervisor Beall to create a recommendation for the establishment of a program or systems to address comprehensive foster youth employment.
4. **August:** Supervisor Beall and County Board of Supervisors to review plan for implementation of sustainable, encompassing initiatives.

#### **C. Task Force Work Plan**

The Task Force will be asked, particularly in the early phases of this project, to function as a group of subject educated professionals to provide policy input on the type of items which must necessarily be incorporated in the design and creation of a new program(s) whose aim is to provide employment for the most inclusive range of foster youth. This initial task is therefore primarily:

1. **Troubleshooting:** (completed 3-21-06) Identify and brainstorm both the positive factors and the areas of needed improvement vis-à-vis the creation of a successful foster youth employment program.
2. **Issue Spotting:** (4-14-06) How do the identified areas of most needed improvement manifest? In other words, in what specific, functional, day-to-day ways do the areas we identified prevent comprehensive foster youth employment? What is missing? Who are the indispensable parties? What are the timelines? What youth skills are necessary? How do resources impact foster youth employment?
3. **Recommendations:** (4-26-06, 5-04-06) In the past two sessions, we've focused on those areas which have served as barriers to a successful, comprehensive foster youth employment program. In this session, we will address those areas which, when developed by the Agency from ideas into programmatic initiatives, will help to ensure sustainability and the inclusion of the greatest number of youth. The role of the Task Force is to develop a set of (S.M.A.R.T.) guiding principles in the form of bullet points which will be integrated as policy by the Agency in the development of a foster youth employment program. Moreover, during the second session, the Task Force will invite a speaker on the issue of foster youth legislation in order to assist in the development of policy considerations.

## **Foster Youth Employment Task Force**

### **Agenda 3-21-06**

- I. Introductions (10 Minutes)**
- II. Troubleshooting Small Group Work (40 Minutes):** Identify and brainstorm both the positive factors and the areas of needed improvement vis-à-vis the creation of a successful foster youth employment program.
- III. Gathering and Grouping (30 Minutes):**
- IV. Closing & Outcome Naming (10 Minutes)**

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Brainstorm and identify both the positive factors and the areas of needed improvement vis-à-vis the creation of "a successful" foster youth employment program.

**AREAS OF NEEDED IMPROVEMENT & FOCUS**

<b>SYSTEM APPROACH</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRE-EMPLOYMENT SKILLS</b>	<b>SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>FOLLOW UP SERVICES</b>
Lack of clarity as to the definition of success.	The need for transportation (discounts to ILP/FYEP youth).	The need for education or assistance in appearance with regard to those seeking employment (professional, appropriate, casual).	Some youth need a lot of support prior to employment linkage.	The need to ensure job retention support such as counseling and replacement.
Lack of coordination (the absence of the systemic/wholistic approach).	The need for housing.	How to overcome the fact that employers want at least one year of community college (the new H.S. diploma).	The issue of retention in the foster home/THPP (work experience).	
Lack of adequate competence in relation to foster youth amongst employment agencies.	Lack of adequate services in the south County.	How to instill relevant job skills: i.e. technical training, communication skills, social skills.	The need to create one on one working relationships vs. a mass based employment counseling approach.	
The need for better tracking of emancipated youth.	Difficult access to Chaffee \$\$ for training CET.	The need to instill writing skills, specifically vis-à-vis applications & responding to supplementals.		
The need for better marketing/communication & an apprentice program.	The need to improve funding availability for vocational education and job placement of high risk youth.			
There exists no access to youth by way of ILP providers for training services.				
The need to create greater access to meaningful work.				

## **AREAS OF POSITIVE PROGRESS**

There are employers willing to employ the youth.

It is encouraging to witness kids helping kids to get jobs.

The social worker staff and agencies are well trained.

Resources: SJ One Stop; SV Win; NOVA

The relationship between current ILP providers and the youth.

The prospects for a TEAM approach vs. a case manager (one on one) system.

The Walter Johnson Project with SVWIN.

For emancipated youth there exists EYS funds available (18-21).

CET; Housing, training , counseling and other support service availability.

Kids demonstrate high aspirations for employment.

There is a high focus and political attention being placed on foster youth (political leadership).

There exists a commitment from service providers to prepare foster youth; support/growth/ dev., life skills.

Emancipating foster youth are receiving national and state focus.

The budget with regards to these issues are somewhat protected from cuts.

There exist positive programs.

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## **Foster Youth Employment Task Force**

### **Agenda 4-16-06**

- I. Review of Goal, Process, Workplan (Above, 10 minutes)
- II. Questions (10 minutes)
- III. Issue Spotting: How do the identified areas of most needed improvement manifest? In other words, in what specific, functional, day-to-day ways do the areas we identified prevent comprehensive foster youth employment? NOT "LACK OF," but rather CONTRADICTIONS.
  - A. Handout: explanation of "contradictions" and task. (10 minutes)
  - B. (5) Groups: broken by areas of focus; include 1 note taker, 1 presenter, 1 facilitator (25 minutes)
  - C. Group: return and debrief subgroups to whole (40 minutes)
  - D. Discussion & Questions (15 minutes)
- IV. Closing & Next Steps (10 minutes)



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**All Group Considerations:**

- Diverse mandates create unique focus with small areas of overlap.
- Supervisor and line staff staying on specific tasks.
- Systems don't lend well to central coordinated role organized around the youth.
- Connectivity takes extra work and happens on an ad hoc basis rather than institutionalized.
- Organizations who know about the needs of youth aren't systemically capable of sharing that knowledge.
- The need to identify major areas of impact to foster youth employment.
- Possible "Director's Fund" for housing, look at issues impacting mental health.
- Identify organizations which can provide pre-emancipation internship programs: government, school, private.
- In care youth dislike programs that are perceived as labeling of them as somehow in special "need."
- Impacted tutors/educators.
- The need to assess youth in order to know what the needs are. Community collaborators identified who can perform the assessments before the youth reaches 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Linking in care youth with adult mentoring such as CASA. Succession planning (assess core capabilities and identify skills and areas of needed development).
- The need to lend support to in care youth is not completed when the youth finds a job, support to both the employer and the youth must continue.

**Group 5: Follow Up Services**

- Need to ensure job retention support such as counseling and replacement.
- Connect with mental health and other.
- Education of community employers about the issues they may face (in order to bridge and provide mutual linkages and support to youth and employer).
- Manage Expectations of the youth.
- Placement is not enough, there needs to be counselors, advocates, support, mentors.

**Group 4: Creating a Supportive Environment**

- Identify a link of existing in care youth.
- Level and type of living support must be identified.
- Failure to understand the particulars of an employment culture will lead to confusion and mutual frustration.

**Group 3: Pre Employment**

- There is a difficulty finding technical training, apprenticeships that are appropriate for foster youth.
- There needs to be opportunity to practice "soft" skills.
- Access to tutoring for basic education skills for GED and CHSEE.
- Access to professional clothes.
- Standardize ILP employment curriculum.

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**Group 2: Resources & Allocation of Funds**

*GROUP CONVERSATION: There needs to be a discussion about how decisions are currently made regarding the resources and whether those decisions can be made differently, i.e. how is the decision prioritized (what is the criteria) and how can groups be effective about sharing their ideas.*

**Transportation**

- Bus passes.
- Carpooling with adult drivers.
- Dollar incentive for driver or youth (to own a car).
- EE shuttles.

**Housing**

- Continuum of housing, from transitional to own apartments.
- Unexplored funding resources (non-traditional).

**South County**

- Need more resources allocated there (generally).
- There exist fewer providers.
- Sporadic services.
- Disorganized.
- Staff turnover high.

**CHAFFEE Funds**

- Spread thin

**Improve Funding**

- The need for quick vocational certification.

**Group 1: Systemic Approach**

**High**

- Funding streams and mandates discourage agencies serving foster youth from collaborating and coordinating.

**Mid**

- Uncoordinated efforts to meet each agencies mandate to serve in care youth (MH, WIB, community college, DFCS)

**Lower**

- Staff need to value and be empowered to do collaborative planning.
- Unclear awareness of caregivers and youths' needs and interests.

## **Foster Youth Employment Task Force**

### **Agenda 4-26-06**

"I do not go to a committee meeting merely to give my own ideas. If that were all, I might write my fellow members a letter. But neither do I go to learn other people's ideas. If that were all, I might ask each to write me a letter. I go to a committee meeting in order that all together we may create a group idea, an idea which will be better than any of our ideas alone, moreover which will be better than all of our ideas added together. For this group idea will not be produced by any process of addition, but by the interpenetration of us all."

-Mary Parker Follett, *The New State*

- I. Overview of Day, Review of Past Sessions, (5 minutes)
- II. Questions/Proposed Revisions (5 minutes)
- III. Development of Guiding Principles (S.M.A.R.T.) Bullet Points: In the past two sessions, we've focused on those areas that have served as barriers to a successful, comprehensive foster youth employment program. In this session, we will formulate strategic guiding principles which, when developed by the Agency into programmatic action, will help to ensure sustainability and the inclusion of the greatest number of youth in the project.
- IV. Explanation of S.M.A.R.T. (5 minutes)
- V. Handout on Strategic Thinking (brainstorm policy/guiding principles) (5 minutes)
  - A. Strategies are guiding principles, not actions
  - B. They overcome specific contradictions
  - C. They act as rudder and catalyst for change and create mutual buy in by overcoming previously identified contradictions
- VI. Break Out Small Group: 3 Groups (30 minutes)
  - A. Review the notes from the last session wherein we identified underlying contradictions. Based upon those notes, and/or your recollection of the past two sessions, develop S.M.A.R.T. strategic guiding principles for contradictions 1 and 2.

"Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things...A powerful new idea can kick around unused in a company for years, not because its merits are not recognized, but because nobody has assumed the responsibility for converting it from words into action. Ideas are useless unless used. The proof of their value is only in their implementation."

-Theodore Levitt, from 'Inc' Magazine

- VII. Review & Discussion Group Work (30 minutes)
- VIII. Close & Next Steps

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**Recommendations on Developing a “Systemic Approach”**

- **Funding Streams**
  1. Create Consortiums 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. There must be a point person in funding management, prioritization, and coordination
- **Uncoordinated Efforts**
  1. There needs to be a decision made about who takes responsibility (i.e. “who owns”) emancipated youth
  2. There should be a public health approach
  3. There should be a centralized information system such as a state registry of in care youth with DFCS
- Structure change should be encouraged which allows staff to value and be empowered to engage in collaboration
- There should be an early transition plan for emancipating youth with is clear, specific, and provided to everyone so as to establish a foundation of understanding amongst all involved with that transition.
- There needs to be a study done to identify viable, short term, living wage vocations, and then to identify major and minor employment agencies and streams within each of those
- Create supportive centers for youth which provide for the home/parent atmosphere and a place where youth can get practical, connected, everyday assistance on tasks, questions, etc.; i.e. Housing Choices, Catholic Charities, others

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**Recommendations for Examining the “Resources and Allocation of Funds”**

**1. Transportation**

- Explore and implement an Eco Pass for Emancipated Youth
- Levy a hotel or parking tax to pay for transportation issues for in care youth
- Collaborate with cities to ensure transportation
- Effective programs MUST provide access to transportation (one way or another)
- All children will have bus passes
- Reduce the need to be dependent on transportation (by developing distance learning, e-learning, telecommuting, free internet access)
- Support and design ridesharing and carpooling options with existing agency employees
- Develop individual ride planning options
- Provide for discounted and subsidized transportation
- Develop the willingness to apply creative approaches and application of rules to find transportation
- Develop group collaborations such as those with foundations or partnerships in order to accomplish tasks normally prevented of government agencies (such as with the VTA bus pass initiative)
- Each child shall have transportation

**2. Housing**

- There needs to be a centralized transition coordinator
- Each child MUST have 24/7 access to safe and sanitary housing (with in and out privileges)
- Each child shall have housing which meets the needs of the average working individual.
- Increasing affordable housing ranges and options
- Look at Proposition 46 funds, Section 8 Housing, collaborations with Habitat, faith based, and incentives for development
- Use political initiative as a hot current issue to target funding from State, private sources

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**3. South County**

- Develop specific plans for increased collaborations between agencies in the south county vis-à-vis other parts of the county
- Each child must have equal access to ALL services
- Allocate resources geographically based on need level
- All youth have equal access to funds
- Raise the visibility of funding service levels in the South County, including: identifying south county "leaders," identifying more south county partners, developing the voice of the south County.

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**Recommendations for “Creating a Supportive Environment”**

**1. For Youth**

- Youth are in need of interpersonal communication skills, such as could be offered by workshop, or similar method.
- The importance of a mentor or coach to help the youth cope, adjust, and deal with problems, adjustments, to serve as intermediary and by generally building the youth’s internal capacity.
- Foster Parents themselves are in need of training to assist them and educate them on issues which may arise in relation to in care youth transitioning into employment and self sufficiency. The training is to foster awareness, issue spotting, and therefore, support by parents for youth.
- Youth treated as a leader, with recognition of the youth’s assets, strengths, and skills.

**2. For Employers**

- Establish a mentor relationship for employers to help in transitions, periods of conflict, education about foster youth issues, and to serve generally as a point of contact.
- The possibility of utilizing a model (such as Catholic Charities or others) which provides space within the working environment for the mentor.

**3. Systemically**

- Ensure that programs are established with clearly articulated goals, outcome measures, definitions of success, etc.
- Consider the possibility of a tool, such as an all encompassing reference book and resource guide which gathers and organizes all the information for all likely and reasonable participants within a foster youth employment program.
- There should be a method and logistics for centralizing, capturing, and organizing all individuals.
- Consider the use of electronic formats for the creation of a repository of information.
- Consider making a “career assessment” for in care youth who are preparing to seek employment; not only to help to determine a “minimum standard of skills” so as to help employers feel more comfortable about the employment of a youth, but also to determine skill sets of the youth in relation to what kind of work or internship may be most suitable, or whether work experience should be considered as a means to another end, such as continuing education.
- Ensure employer preparedness by helping to identify likely issues to arise in the course of the employment relationship, and help by providing information and/or resources.