



FOSTERING SUCCESS
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2023



Department for Community Based Services
Division of Protection and Permanency

Introduction

Fostering Success is a ten-week workforce development initiative sponsored by the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) that educates and empowers current and former foster youth through internships, vocational training, and professional development. Fostering Success provides current and former foster youth an opportunity to participate in a paid internship while receiving professional development and career planning support. Fostering Success includes the Earn and Learn initiative, which supports current and former foster youth in boosting their earning potential through the completion of short-term training programs or earning their GED. Fostering Success also includes the Summer Skill Series, which provides foster youth the opportunity to expand their knowledge and develop critical soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, work ethic, and personal responsibility.

Program Participation

The seventh year of Fostering Success began on August 15, 2022. Applicants for the program were screened and interviewed to determine their eligibility for the program. Youth selected for the program were matched with internships in their community based upon their strengths and vocational goals. The program contracted with Adecco Staffing for payroll services, allowing the program to collaborate with public and private businesses as worksite providers.

The program's initial screening identified potential barriers to successfully completing the program, such as lack of child care, professional clothing, or transportation. Support and resources were provided to participants to address these concerns. Support services included assistance with the purchase of work clothes and shoes; connection to mental health providers; assistance in applying for family support services including the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly referred to as food stamps), and child care payment assistance through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The program coordinator also assisted participants in accessing the available pandemic relief resources for foster youth for needs, such as rental and utility assistance and car repairs.

Thirty-eight (38) youth registered for the program with seven (7) youth ultimately participating. All seven youth were given the opportunity to continue their employment through the end of the calendar year. The program coordinator and job coaches worked closely with the youth to create resumes, cover letters, and seek employment. They also assisted youth with applying for college and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other associated documents. Participants worked with their job coach to identify strengths and develop a plan to achieve their vocational goals. The job coaches also served as liaisons between the youth and their worksite supervisor to address any issues with work performance, utilizing real life situations as teaching moments to promote professional development.

The program encompasses over fifty (50) businesses and nonprofit organizations that partner as worksite providers. The program coordinator continues to expand partnerships and recruit more businesses as worksite providers to increase the number and variance of work options available to participants across the state. During this season of the program, there were six (6) employers who partnered with Fostering Success to serve as worksite providers. These employers included both public and private entities. Specific employers included Greenwood Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Bowling Green, Side by Side Studio in Louisville, West Kentucky Community & Technical College in Paducah, the Bath County DCBS office, the YMCA in Frankfort, and Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green.

Earn and Learn

Included in the Fostering Success program, the fall cohort of the Earn and Learn initiative launched on August 15, 2022, supporting current and former foster youth in boosting their earning potential through the completion of short-term vocational training programs or their GED. Participants received support in selecting a vocational program for a high-demand job that matched their skill set and interests. Participants were able to select a program through the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) that could be completed in one year or less. Youth without a high school diploma were still able to participate in Earn and Learn while pursuing their GED through their local adult education center.

The Earn and Learn Initiative provides participants with weekly wages while they pursue the credential. Participants also receive a significant level of support and guidance from their education success coach and the program coordinator. This support is an integral part of the program and instrumental in assisting the participants in successfully navigating life challenges and barriers that traditionally derail their completion of a post-secondary program. The education success coaches guide participants through the college enrollment and registration process. The coaches are also integral in assisting the participants through any challenges they may face, such as financial aid. The tuition and mandatory fees to complete the vocational program are waived for the participants through the tuition waiver for foster and adopted children, pursuant to KRS 164.2847. The program also covers any other costs associated with pursuing the certificate including books, supplies, etc.

Twenty (20) youth participated in the fall 2022 semester of the Earn and Learn program, with 65% of them successfully completing the term. Eight (8) youth earned at least one credential and one (1) youth earned her GED. Twenty-two (22) youth participated in the spring 2023 semester of the Earn and Learn program, with 64% of them successfully completing the term. Five (5) youth earned at least one credential and one (1) youth earned her GED. Five (5) youth are currently participating in the summer 2023 semester of Earn and Learn.

Earn and Learn is now the primary component of Fostering Success, as it increases the number of current and former foster youth earning post-secondary credentials across the state. These credentials will increase youth capacity to earn a living wage and live independently. Post-secondary education and employment are integral to reducing the likelihood of homelessness and poverty among former foster youth. Future enhancements to the program include a partnership with Goodwill Industries to provide Earn and Learn participants with supports around resume building, interview skills, and job searching as they transition to the workforce. The program is also partnering with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and the Kentucky Workforce Development districts across the state to match participants with employers seeking qualified candidates. Earn and Learn graduates also benefit from paid internships, providing them real world, relevant experience in their field.

Summer Skill Series

Also included in the Fostering Success program, the Summer Skill Series provides current and former foster youth an opportunity to expand their skill set utilizing the cloud-based assessment and skill building platform, Conover. There were forty-one (41) participants who completed the Summer Skills Series this year. Participants have the option to complete three virtual programs: Success Profiler, Workplace Readiness, and Personal Responsibility. The Success Profiler curriculum focuses on emotional intelligence components including empathy, motivation, decision making, self-esteem, interpersonal awareness, and commitment ethics. The Employment Readiness curriculum focuses on soft skills components including respecting others, active listening, demonstrating reliability, communication, and problem-solving skills, etc. The Personal Responsibility curriculum focuses on core skills related to goal achievement including self-efficacy, achievement drive, problem-solving and resiliency, and self-esteem.

As part of the program, the education success coaches guided participants through the college enrollment and registration process. The coaches were also integral in assisting the participants through any challenges they may have faced, such as financial aid. The tuition and mandatory fees to complete the vocational program were waived for the participants through the tuition waiver for foster and adopted children, pursuant to KRS 164.2847. The program covered any other costs associated with pursuing the certificate including books and supplies.