

FOSTERING SUCCESS STATE FISCAL YEAR 2021

Department for Community Based Services
DIVISION OF PROTECTION AND PERMANENCY

Fostering Success State Fiscal Year 2021

Fostering Success is a ten-week workforce development initiative sponsored by the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) through General Funds appropriated for this program. Fostering Success provides current and former foster youth an opportunity to participate in a paid internship while receiving professional development and career planning support.

In State Fiscal Year 2021, the program faced many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. DCBS offices across the state, traditionally one of the program's largest worksite providers, were not available to an in-person workforce for a manner of months. Many of the program's private business partners, including long-term care facilities, etc., were also not available to be worksite providers during this time. In addition, program staff were not able to meet in-person with applicants due to necessary safety protocols put in place. Despite these challenges, DCBS was determined to offer current and former foster youth professional development opportunities. The Fostering Success program was able to quickly shift and adapt to meet the needs of foster youth during the pandemic by modifying components of the program and offering new opportunities.

The fifth year of Fostering Success began on August 17, 2020. Applicants for the program were screened and interviewed virtually via Zoom 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 maintained a contract with Management Registry, Inc., for payroll services, allowing the program to collaborate with public and private businesses as worksite providers.

The program's initial screening helped identify potential barriers the participants may experience to successfully completing the program, such as lack of child care, professional clothing, or transportation. Support and resources were provided to participants to alleviate these concerns.

The program continued to contract with the University of Kentucky (UK) to provide professional development and career planning support through a program coordinator who facilitated employment readiness training and program orientation with participants. The program coordinator also provided ongoing coaching throughout the ten weeks to support participants' success at the worksite. Participants identified their strengths and developed a plan to achieve their vocational goals. The program coordinator served as a liaison 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.

Seven employers partnered with Fostering Success to serve as worksite providers. These employers included both public and private entities, such as nonprofit social service agencies, automobile service centers, and hospitality chains. Specific employers included Community Action Council, Hilton Hotel and Resorts, UK Horticulture Research Farm, Midas, Inc., New Vista, YouthBuild, and Choice Inc.

Eighty-eight (88) youth registered for the program with seven youth participating and completing the program. The decline in participation was due to multiple reasons associated with the pandemic, including placement providers not allowing youth to have external employment, the youths' fear of exposure to COVID-19, and inability to interview virtually due to inadequate internet service. Two of the seven youth who participated were given the opportunity to continue their employment through the end of the calendar year. The program coordinator worked very closely with the youth to create resumes, draft cover letters, and seek employment. They also assisted youth with applying for college and completing FAFSAs and associated documents.

The program coordinator continues to expand partnerships and recruit more businesses to act as worksite providers to increase the number and variety of worksite options available to participants across the state.

This year, Fostering Success also added another component: Earn and Learn, which supports current and former foster youth in boosting their earning potential through the completion of short-term vocational training programs. Earn and Learn provided guidance and support to participants in the selection of a vocational program for a high-demand job that matches their skill set and interests. Programs typically can be completed in a year or less from the wide selection available through the Kentucky Community and Technical College Systems (KCTCS).

Earn and Learn partnered with KCTCS to provide pre-employment specialists to assist participants through the college enrollment and registration process. The tuition and mandatory fees were waived through the tuition waiver for foster and adopted children pursuant to KRS 164.2847. The program covered any other costs associated with pursuing certifications including books, supplies, etc. Participants also received weekly wages while completing their vocational program.

Thirty-nine (39) youth registered for Earn and Learn with five ultimately participating in the program. Two youth earned short-term training credentials. Youth without a high school diploma were still able to participate in the Earn and Learn program through Skills U at KCTCS that allows students to earn a vocational certificate while working on their GED.

Fostering Success also partnered with Louisville-based TrueUp to offer the Summer Skill series. The two-part series provided current and former foster youth an opportunity to expand their skill set utilizing the cloud-based assessment and skill building platform, Conover. Participants had the option to complete two virtual courses: Success Profiler and Work Place Readiness. The Success Profiler course was offered in June and focused on emotional intelligence, including empathy, motivation, decision-making, self-esteem, interpersonal awareness, and commitment ethic. The Workplace Readiness course was offered in July and focused on soft skills, including respecting others, active listening, demonstrating reliability, communication, and problem-solving skills. An informational flyer on the Workplace Readiness component is included at the end of this report.

Participants who completed the TrueUp curriculum received a financial incentive, as well as a Conover Credential that can be highlighted on their resume. Fifty-three (53) youth registered for the Summer Skill Series with forty-five (45) youth participating. Eleven youth completed the June Success Profiler course and seven youth completed the Employment Readiness Course. Participants who completed the courses reported that the courses were easy to navigate and extremely useful and applicable to both their professional and personal development.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated safety precautions created many barriers to youth participation and completion of the Fostering Success program. However, Earn and Learn is an opportunity to increase the number of current and former foster youth earning post-secondary credentials and will remain a key component of Fostering Success moving forward.

Skill Intervention Systems

The Workplace Readiness program currently has three components: Job Readiness Series, Job Seeking Series, and Job Keeping Series. Upon successful completion of any or all three series, a Conover Credential™ can be printed. The credential can be customized to include your organization's name. Each program takes approximately 1-2 hours to complete.

Job Readiness Series

ATTITUDE - is where it all begins. This program addresses: The Importance of Having a Positive Attitude, Keeping Your Focus, Doing Your Best, Responding to Guidance or Direction, Controlling Your Emotions, Being Flexible

COMMUNICATION - is something we often take for granted. This program covers: Listening Skills, Verbal Communication, Non-Verbal Communication, Emotional Awareness, Written Communication, Communicating in Difficult Situations

PLANNING & ORGANIZING - leads to success if given the proper amount of time and effort. This program covers: Prioritizing, Time Management, Coordinating Resources, Delegating, Creating Systems, Being Proactive by Planning Ahead

CRITICAL THINKING - is an essential skill that all employers agree is critical for success in any workplace. This program covers: Gathering Information, Analyzing Information, Applying Information, Forming a Hypothesis, Problem Solving, Decision Making

INTERPERSONAL/SOCIAL SKILLS - teaches users how to interact with other people and present themselves in an acceptable manner by covering the following topics: Interpersonal Skills, Controlling Your Emotions, Socializing at Work, Networking, Responding to Conflict, Helping Customers

TEAMWORK - is not just about sports, it is about succeeding in the workplace. Topics include: Respecting Others, Active Listening, Being Reliable, Participating, Communicating Constructively, Solving Problems

PROFESSIONALISM - teaches employees the high standards of professionalism and how to live up to those standards. Includes: Following Workplace Rules and Expectations, Personal Responsibility, Workplace Ethics, Physical Appearance, Appropriate Language, Minding Your Manners

MEDIA RULES - teaches the new, seldom-taught guidelines on how to properly and safely use technology. The rules covered include: Cell Phone Rules, Email Rules, Laptop and Tablet Rules, Internet Use, Internet Safety, Video Conferencing Rules, Social Media

Job Seeking Series

JOB SEARCH - is about finding a job. The program covers: Know What Type of Job You Want, Know What Type of Job You Are Qualified To Do, How To Begin Looking, Networking, Job Ads and Websites, Social Media

RESUMES - teaches about resumes that get the job. The program includes: Resume Overview, Resume Format, Professionalism, Resume Content, Submitting a Resume

JOB APPLICATIONS - covers the basics for applying for a job. Includes: Getting an Application, Filling Out the Application, Personal Strengths, References

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW - covers the basics on how to prepare for an interview. Includes: Getting an Interview, Learning About the Organization, Learning About the Job, Prepare to Answer Questions, Practice Answering Questions, Prepare to Ask Questions

INTERVIEWING - teaches the basics of how to properly conduct yourself in an interview. Covers: Physical appearance, What to Bring to the Interview, Interviewing Etiquette, Answer Questions, Ask Questions, Wrapping Up the Interview

AFTER THE INTERVIEW - teaches the proper post-interview things to do. Covers: Following Up, Accepting a position, Quitting a Job, Facing Rejection

Job Keeping Series

GETTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT - covers the basics of job keeping. Includes: Meet Your Manager, Take Responsibility, Follow Company Rules and Policies, Stay Positive, Listen and Follow Instructions, Start Fresh

GETTING ALONG IN THE WORKPLACE - covers basic interpersonal skills: Building a Relationship With Your Supervisor, Getting Along with Your Peers, Talking to Customers, Practice Good Social Skills, Balancing Work and Personal Life, Handling Conflict

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS - teaches how to handle performance reviews. Includes: Exceed Expectations, Handling Criticism, Responding to Compliments, Using Feedback to Improve Performance, Evaluating Your Performance, Making Continuous Improvements

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