

## BEST PRACTICES: REACHING YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

**Agency: Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc. (CMJTS)**

**Service Area: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Pine, Renville, Sherburne, and Wright Counties**

### **Coordination of Activities between Employment and Training Staff and Human and Health Services Staff to Improve Services to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**

**Overview of CMJTS Youth Program:** CMJTS prepares at-risk teens and young adults for future success through education, work experience, and leadership training. Positive experiences turn into self-confidence, job skills, and healthy working relationships for youth ages 14 to 21 (or up to age 24, depending on grant sources).

### **OUTREACH**

- County Social Services Department: CMJTS Youth Program employment specialists are in regular contact with county social services staff and do periodic presentations to county social services Youth Departments to educate them on CMJTS Youth Programs and to provide them with CMJTS referral forms and Youth Program applications.
- Secondary Schools: CMJTS Youth Program employment specialists work closely with school social workers and counselors. Employment specialists frequently meet with enrolled youth in their school, which makes CMJTS staff very visible and accessible to school staff. CMJTS specifically requests referrals of youth in foster care.
- Alternative Learning Centers: CMJTS Youth Program employment specialists have ongoing relationships with Alternative Learning Centers in WSA 5 and specifically request referrals for youth in foster care.
- Group Homes: CMJTS Youth Program employment specialists have ongoing relationship with group homes located within WSA 5. Group home staff call and request youth applications as soon as new youth enter their group home. CMJTS staff screen for appropriate youth enrollments and monitor youth as they make progress towards their wellness goals (ready for employment). CMJTS continues to serve group home youth as the transition to foster homes or back to their home of origin.

### **YOUTH SERVICES PROVIDED BASED ON INDIVIDUAL SERVICE STRATEGY:**

- Individualized case management, which may include counseling and post-secondary exploration, guidance and support, work-readiness training, and referral to additional resources;
- Financial or non-financial support to implement the individual service strategy;
- Training in writing résumés and cover letters, soft skills, work-readiness skills, financial self-sufficiency, job search resources, interviewing, and networking opportunities;
- Training activities and events;
- Credentialed training activities;
- Justified stipends and incentives;

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- Leadership opportunities and community service projects;
- Paid work experience, Workforce Protégé Program, and on-the-job training;
- Education and/or job placement assistance; and
- Follow-up services.

### COMMUNITY IMPACT:

- At-risk youth gain knowledge of their own work skills, abilities, values, awareness of careers, education and labor market, have a professional résumé, and understand steps to getting and upgrading skills training
- Youth learn the connection between working and earning a wage
- Youth are employed in entry-level career pathway occupations
- Youth unemployment decreases
- Youth age into advanced jobs, find financial stability, and self-sufficiency
- Youth form positive relationships with community leaders
- Civic engagement is fostered
- Employers have access to a pool of qualified workers
- Local economy stimulated by working youth

### LEVERAGED RESOURCES:

- WIA Youth Program;
- Minnesota Youth Program;
- Minnesota Youthbuild Program;
- Great Lakes Community Investments – College Ready Grant;
- Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Grant;
- Minnesota FY 2014-15 Competitive Youth Summer-based Programs; and
- Other special state/federal/private grants awarded on a competitive basis.

### PARTNERS:

- Adult Basic Education;
- Community-based organizations;
- County Social Services;
- Secondary schools;
- Private/public employers;
- Post-secondary institutions; and
- WorkForce Center partners.

**AGENCY INFORMATION:** CMJTS, a nonprofit employment and training agency, provides leadership in building a skilled workforce—workers who can do the jobs of today and learn the jobs of tomorrow. Since 1984, through career counseling, job training, and strong business

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relationships, CMJTS helps entry-level to experienced workers—youth to senior citizens—train for and gain meaningful employment.

### **FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Eric Day  
Youth Programs/South Regional Manager  
Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services, Inc.  
P.O. Box 720  
Monticello, MN 55362  
Telephone: 763-271-3706  
Fax: 763-271-3701  
[eday@cmjts.org](mailto:eday@cmjts.org)

Web: [www.cmjts.org](http://www.cmjts.org)