

Employment/Career Development

Nationally, approximately 10 percent of all young people ages 16-24 are unemployed. But the unemployment rate for young people aging out of foster care is 47 percent to 69 percent depending on age and gender. Working and having a job carries benefits beyond wages--such as learning responsibility, organization and time management skills. Some research estimates that 22 percent of employed young people who experienced foster care do not earn enough to rise out of poverty, and 71 percent earn less than \$25,000 a year.

All transition age youth in DCF care should have the opportunity to work and receive career exploration/assessment and skill development services. **Transitional Specialists serve a critical role in helping youth secure employment. Please see the V.I.T.A.L. Resources website for resources and tips that may help young adults.** DCF has contracted services to assist youth in gaining the skills needed to obtain and sustain employment as well as receive education and vocational skill assessments. For example, statewide Work to Learn programs offer vocational and educational skill assessment and training, provides resume writing, job interviewing, career awareness and other skill development activities for our young people. These Work to Learn programs assign a youth coach to our young people. The youth coach helps to develop an Individual Service Plan that is specifically designed with the young person's Input to identify goals, services, time frames, and activities. The Work to Learn programs offer both in house and community-based internships as well as job placement for qualified participants.

DCF also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Labor to facilitate placement for DCF young people age 14 and up to participate in the Statewide Year Round Youth Employment Program. Some of these jobs are seasonal and some are for the entire year. The American Job Centers are DOL run employment and training centers located throughout the state. These centers operate the youth employment program and offer many other job training and skill development services. Youth can also find work opportunities through assistance from team members--scanning job ads, applying at local businesses.

Another opportunity for young adults is to fill out the master state of Connecticut job application. This application can be completed online. The American Job Centers can assist our youth with completing this. Having the ability to qualify, interview and even obtain a state job would provide a substantial opportunity for a young adult launching from DCF care.

The LIST assessment also provides employment readiness, skill assessment, and training recommendations that can be conducted by various services including Community Based Life Skills, CHAP/CHEER case management, Transitional Supports Emerging Adults, and foster parents.

It is important for the future of our transitional age youth that all available resources are utilized in preparing them for successful long- term employment. For Central Office assistance

please contact the Transitional Supports and Success Division. Also please see that accompanying V.I.T.A.L. Tip Sheet on Employment.

Resources

Maciag, M. (2016). Where youth unemployment is highest and lowest. Governing. Retrieved from www.governing.com/topics/mgmt/gov-youth-unemployment-states.html/

The Annie E. Casey Foundation and Child Trends (2017). The Economic Wellbeing of Youth Transitioning from Foster Care Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-theeconomicwellbeingofyouth/>

Tip Sheet

V.I.T.A.L. Steps Applied to Case Practice

Focus: Employment/Career Development

Best Practice Summary: For every young person, a job offering is an important step in completing the transition to adulthood, a milestone towards independence and self-reliance. Work not only provides a means to secure basic supports a job experience can influence future choices in education and training and in relationships.

In preparing young persons for employment, strengthening executive skills is also critical. Executive skills are needed to set goals, develop plans and follow through on them. Key brain development occurs in childhood and early adolescents and executive skills such as organization, time management and emotional control, can be improved with practice and time.

Growing and persistent youth unemployment has a negative impact on social development. Youth unemployment, long-term youth unemployment, can generate frustration, lower self-esteem, and can lead to increased vulnerability among some young people to drugs, disease and crime. Youth unemployment can also lead to the marginalization and exclusion of young people. There is evidence that unemployment can expose youth to greater risks of lower future wages, repeated periods of unemployment, longer unemployment spells as adults, and income poverty. In preparing young adults to transition from care, having them understand the benefits of how employment impacts their long-term success needs to be part of their on-going case plan. Unemployment rates are typically higher for young women than for men, while youth in rural areas face different challenges from their urban peers. In addition, young people with developing abilities continue to face enormous challenges in the labor market.

All transitional age youth should have the opportunity to work and receive career exploration/assessment and skill development services. DCF has contracted services to assist youth in gaining the skills needed to obtain and sustain employment as well as receive education and vocational skill assessments. **The services augment support given by regional team members.** The LIST life skill assessment also provides employment readiness, skill assessment, and training recommendations to assist our youth in preparing for employment.

There are national, statewide and local resources for youth employment and training. For example the U.S. Department of Labor's [Employment and Training Administration](#) (ETA) supports a wide variety of programs to ensure that all youth have the skills and training they need to successfully make the transition to adulthood and careers. These programs include:

- **Apprenticeship** - Apprenticeship is a combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation.
- **Job Corps** - Job Corps is the nation's largest and most comprehensive residential education and job training program for at-risk youth, ages 16 through 24.
- **YouthBuild** - YouthBuild programs give at-risk youth ages 16-24 the opportunity to transform their lives by earning their high school diploma or state-recognized equivalency degree, learning to be community leaders, and preparing for college and other post-secondary training opportunities.
- **Youth Connections** - The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 enacted a comprehensive youth employment program for serving eligible youth, ages 14-24, who face barriers to education, training, and employment.

In Connecticut and DCF, some of the youth employment programs include:

- Work To Learn
- Year-Round Employment (with seasonal slots as well as full year slots)
- Support through American Job Centers

The DCF V.I.T.A.L Resources webpage has a list of these and other employment, training, and job preparation resources. For assistance or brainstorming on how to assist a young adult in this area, please feel free to contact the Transitional Supports and Success Division.

This material was modified from:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-core-skills-youth/>
<https://www2.deloitte.com/>

Goals for activity: Case planning and finding resources

Finding and sustaining employment should be a high priority for all transitional age youth. The DCF Transitional Specialist and all those whom work and interact with the youth should reinforce, model and support the importance of employment.

It is important to remember that the average young person holds 6.3 jobs between 18-25 years. So, it is most likely that youth will experience more than one job/employment opportunity during the time they are with the Department.

The youth should participate in the decision-making process regarding their employment. This helps promote their self-esteem, a greater sense of control and the acquisition of new skills.

V.I.T.A.L. Values and/or Essential Practice Principles in Action

- **Voice and choice** by including the youth in the job seeking process and listening/supporting them as they manage the employment world.

- V.I.T.A.L. principles of **relationships** and maintaining relationships that is a key component to successful employment.
- Increasing the youth's **self-confidence** as they navigate job readiness, job interviews, work demands and work success.

For coaching and support of skill development in supervision

In reviewing the employment opportunities and history of the youth, what else can be done to prepare him/her for employment success?

Are there obstacles that needed to be addressed that are interfering with the youth's ability to maintain a job?

Does the youth connect that employment leads to economic independence? That he/she needs to be able to listen and follow the directions of their boss in order to be stay employed and receive their paycheck?

Suggested CQI Checklist

Employment/Career Development

[] Did the case plan incorporate a comprehensive plan to prepare the youth for employment and utilize the best resources to support their employment/career interests?

[] Does the youth know how to seek out employment opportunities in their local community? If not, can assistance be provided in scanning local advertisements?

[] Were the contracted providers able to meet the needs of the youth and facilitate the school to work transition?

[] Did the staff encourage youth to complete a state job application template?

[] Does the youth need a vocational/career assessment?

[] How did the youth utilize their paycheck in meeting their financial obligations? Are they prepared to transition from care and able to sustain long term employment?

Level of Mastery Demonstrated: Consider the level of skill demonstrated with the core practices (Engage & Exchange, Assess & Understand Strengths, Fortify and Support, Reflect and Adjust) on these tasks.

Foundational: The team member is at an early stage of core practice and skill acquisition. The team member is supported in learning the skills. The team member has an opportunity to develop skills. Coaching agendas may target specific skills for development. The skills are demonstrated and actively coached by team leaders.

Rising: The team member occasionally applies the practices and skills independently. Coaching agendas focus on generalizing skills. The team member demonstrates increasing understanding of the practices. Skills are demonstrated and coached by team leaders.

Secure: The team member consistently applies skills independently to a wide range of settings and aspires to apply knowledge and understanding. There is a range of evidence that shows a deeper understanding of concepts and that skills are sustained over time.