

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee Meeting
10:00 AM July 16, 2019

Committee Members Present

James Horne, Jr., United Way of Greater Union County (Chair)
Juanita Vargas, United Way of Greater Union County
Rishabh Madan, United Way of Greater Union County
Ahmed Green, Urban League of Union County
Donna Alexander, Urban League of Union County
Jashun Lee, Simon Youth Academy
Meredith Barracato, American Job Centers
Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library
Marshall Christie, Community Access Unlimited
Marie Thelusma, Boxwood
Sosano Mateo, New Jersey Youth Corps
Donald Stewart, Elizabeth Public Schools
Barbara Johnson, Housing Authority of the City of Elizabeth
Jensine Wright, Plainfield Action Services
Nedia Morsy, Make the Road New Jersey

Staff

Elizabeth Paskewich
Christopher Leon
Robert Rachlin

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 AM by Chairman James Horne, Jr.

Mr. Horne began the meeting by asking everyone around the table to introduce themselves. Subsequently, he introduced himself as well as describing what he does with the United Way as it relates to the Workforce Development Board. He stated that his goal was to bring together the partners that work with the United Way, to discuss activities as well as provide information regarding Youth Programs. Additionally, he stated the desire to meet on a quarterly basis with the partners. He also mentioned that the purpose of this meeting was to focus on two topics. They are the Summer Youth Employment Pilot Program as well as WIOA ISY and OSY programs. He also wished to provide performance updates on these programs. He added that he would like to provide guidance on how the group will move forward tracking the performance for these young people. James added that the state provided grant money to provide summer youth employment. In Union County its aim was to serve one hundred youth. There is a difference between this grant and the normal requirements for youth served by UWGUC. The youth in this program do not need to meet WIOA requirements.

Prior to turning the meeting over to Juanita Vargas for her presentation, James offered praise for her and Rishabh Madan regarding the task they have undertaken.

Juanita and Nedia Morsy spoke first regarding the program Make the Road New Jersey has undertaken. The program is called the Student Success Program. There are ten WIOA Youth participating. It is anticipated that the program will have a full-time home in the Elizabeth Public Schools System.

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee Meeting
10:00 AM July 16, 2019

Juanita began her update by announcing 157 youth had filed an application for the SYEPP. She spoke of the difficulty in getting documentation for many of the applicants. She added that there have been 118 completed applications. 101 are working. 9 started on July 1st. 40 started on July 8th. 44 started on July 15th. 8 will start work on July 22nd.

The 101 participants are spread out amongst 12 employers. Juanita went on to add that she is hopeful that there will be at least 10 more youth who will be employed for a total of 110-115 non WIOA Summer Youth employed.

She is grateful to the Elizabeth High School IT Program. They are currently employing 11 of the youth. 9 of the youth are supplying tech support to the school. 2 others are providing administrative support. Additionally, the YM-YWHA of Union County is employing 7 of the youth. The Rahway JFK Family Success Center employs 10. Community Investment Strategies currently employs 5 of the youth. The Gateway Family YMCA employs 4. Neighborhood House, Temple CDC Daycare, and the Scotch Plains Municipal department each employ 3. New Brunswick Counseling Center and Plainfield Golf Club each employ 2 of the youth, while the United Way of Greater Union County employs 1.

Under WIOA, there are currently 140 youth working. There are 44 employers. They include Trinitas Hospital, various daycare centers, police departments, libraries as well as a number of nonprofits. Elizabeth High School and the Union County Department of Social Services employ some of the youth. Additionally, there are senior centers, recreation centers, other educational facilities, an ambulance network and golf course that employ youth. Advanced Spine Surgery, the Union County Child Advocacy Center, the Plainfield WIC Program offices, as well as the Plainfield Rescue Squad all employ WIOA eligible youth.

Juanita also described the various programs that are used to assist the youths who are part of the program. There are programs that assist the youth with their health habits. Specifically, smoking, drinking, drugs and not eating well. A psychiatrist who uses hip hop as a communication tool has been brought in. This helps to destigmatize mental health issues. Juanita noted that the spoken word is well received by youth. Boxwood provides health and fitness assistance in a series of workshops. Time management will be moving into an electronic format. Geo-mapping will be used to ensure that participants are at the location they are supposed to be. Additionally, Juanita spoke of the need to incentivize youth to remain as clients. There was also discussion about free and reduced cost lunches as one of the incentives.

Wells Fargo is teaching a Financial Literacy Course. The course runs for 8 weeks. There are 2 sessions a week.

Subsequently, there was discussion of setting up direct deposit accounts for the youth. Each youth would receive \$50. If there was 10% of a participant's income saved, there would be an additional \$50 bonus at the end of the program.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding what might be done to address the problems that youth face in their lives. If one is certified in AOSOS there needs to be

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee Meeting
10:00 AM July 16, 2019

guidance given. Traumatic incidents need to be chronicled in a youth's file. WIOA guidance states that we should be sharing information with the WDB and AJC.

There is also concern with regards to issues of confidentiality. Case management notes seem to lack a clear understanding as to what is happening. They are inadequate in detail. We need to provide a full picture of what is happening. We need more transparency.

James started his presentation by mentioning that there are conditions of receiving a grant from WIOA. Performance measures must be tracked and guidelines met. Tracking that information comes from the partners to the UWGUC and Rishabh and then is forwarded to the AJC. The AJC uses the AOSOS database that tracks all the activities and performance measures that need to be captured. Part of the obligation that the partners have is to provide follow-up to the young people after they exit the program. Exit is determined based upon a participant not receiving services for ninety days. Once the process has been completed, the participant is entitled to one year of follow-up. At this point in the meeting, James asked for Rishabh to distribute the ISS which lays out the fourteen elements to those in attendance. He added that we need to focus on some of the gaps in services.

James stated that the biggest challenge facing UWGUC is follow up with OSY. He also mentioned that they are in the process of digitizing all case notes and will be sending them to the AJC.

James continues his presentation by speaking about performance updates. He referenced that the contract period for the UWGUC has been three years. During that period, according to the AJC 48 of the 75 attributed to UWGUC contracts on the AJC list were exited. James disputes that and feels that the number is significantly more and must be reconciled.

Juanita stated the possibility that some of the youth should not have been exited.

James added that of the 48 that had exited 18 had shown a skills gain. This may be an improvement in TABE score or some other indicator such as an in program performance gain. 5 have gained certifications in a DOL Program. Q2 performance measures that indicate if a program is successful are when a client has a job or is still in school. When we reach Q4, we want to go back and see if they are still working or in school. In terms of young people working, it would be really helpful to us if as partners you can capture information that lets us know that they are working. We will need documentation. As partners, if someone is still in school it might be a report card. If someone is working, it will be a paystub. Public schools in various communities are assisting with this. Additionally, the State Database of Employment will let the AJC know who is working.

Of ISY who have not received services in the last 90 days there are 116. Of those 116, 75 have had a program skills gain. Of the total certifications secured while in the program 40 have secured a high school diploma. The rest are still actively in school. We know this information. We are in the process of gathering all the data to forward it to the AJC so that the AOSOS will reflect this information for transparency sake. This is not where we are today.

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee Meeting
10:00 AM July 16, 2019

At this point there was a back and forth between Scott and James regarding the accuracy of Q2 and Q4 data.

Mr. Horne went on to state that in the summer of 2018 a number of ISY came through UWGUC for subsidized training and employment. At the end of the summer that was their last service. As part of the follow up we need to know if they graduated, or are still in school. We need to transfer the data to the AJC to say that 8/31/2018 was the exit date for the 116 youth and retroactively capture the Q2 as well as the Q4 data.

Juanita added that the real challenge is going to the youth or the partner and being able to gain the documentation that will prove that they are still enrolled in school or have graduated. Additionally, she spoke of the need to be able to incentivize the youth to remain in school or employment. She added that there have been mailings and phone calls. However, the offer of a bus pass is not enough of an incentive to remain in employment or school.

James returned to his report. Of 106 active ISY who are exited, 55 of those have had an in program skills gain. 50 have either a diploma or a certification. The biggest challenge is collecting information on OSY. We need the partnership's help. Understanding the OSY's journey is critical for us. We have had conversations with the AJC concerning what is not here. We have discussed how we move data from the UWGUC to them. How do we do it more effectively and efficiently?

James then added that over the last 3 or 4 months the UWGUC has hired temporary employees. They have the responsibility of taking all the case notes and making them digital. The UWGUC is getting to the point where they will be able to send the digitized information to the AJC via Google Drive. We are going to use a template so that our partners will be able to type in the data. This will enable us to avoid having an extra step to transpose handwritten notes.

He then spoke about the Individual Service Strategies. They require a monthly case management update for each youth. There is a template and each activity should be documented. The barriers and successes must be documented. Struggles and behavioral issues need to be chronicled. The full story and journey should be included. We need to know who somebody is. We need to be able to see how someone is progressing. We haven't been as descriptive in terms of what the expectations look like. Quarterly updates should be added to ISS and Case Management notes.

Juanita interjected that we have been collecting monthly activity participation in an Excel spreadsheet format. We have not been collecting the case notes. We have been asked to provide the case management notes in a digital format have created case management notes that form. We know that all the partners are providing case management services to all the youth. They tell you stories of problems that have arisen in their home lives. These stories have not been included in the case management notes. We need to get better at this so that there is a clearer understanding of what is taking place that is impeding them and preventing them from being successful in their lives. But, more importantly, that the ISS based on the needs that you have identified. For example, someone is not at the reading level they need to be in order to become a phlebotomist. The partner can then identify what type of tutoring the youth needs, so that they may be able to enroll in a phlebotomy class. The process and progress needs

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee Meeting
10:00 AM July 16, 2019

to be documented in the notes. We see a lot of actions that are taken for an individual, but we are not seeing why. We are not providing the AJC with a full picture of every participant. We are not being narrative enough to be completely transparent. Case management was not originally one of the fourteen elements. We have since been corrected and need to include them. Case management is really the basis of everything you do with a young person. The miscommunication is really the reason that we are where we are today.

The question of what should be included in case management notes led to a lengthy dialogue regarding privacy issues.

A question was asked as to how you can summarize information without being too specific.

James responded to the question. He stated that there is a need to clarify what our relationships are as well as what we can share and what we can't. There is some WIOA guidance regarding that. There is language in the ISS that states that we are able to share information. In this space because of our contractual relationship to the AJC and WDB we should be sharing information. If someone is certified in AOSOS as a youth there are requirements to provide information to all sub-contractors of the AJC that touch that young person. We are giving you that guidance because it is part of the obligation and ultimately as the holder of the contract and we are audited there is information that we need to be able to provide. We need to understand what those requirements are. A traumatic event that happens to one of the youth needs to be documented in their case file. Additionally, if there are situations such as gang activity that might endanger one of the youth if they need to travel to another municipality for employment we must be aware of that activity. We could be putting that young person in harm's way. That might seem extreme, but it is a real life example. Because a young person may leave one program and go to another, we need to document that experience. If they are certified, we need to think through how we are going to do this. This is new to us and we have encountered experiences like this before. There is an example of someone from the Simon Youth Academy, where we were sub-contractors, who acted out and we did not have access to his records. That is a problem. How can we collectively manage our young people, understanding that as they evolve, there may be other people touching that young person's life and they need to have the information regarding the challenges that the young person is facing. We need to come up with standards that ensure that we are sharing information.

Meredith Barracato stated that the State of New Jersey recently created a Youth Program. They are tasked with overseeing these programs. Upon commencement of this the state requested ten AOSOS files from each county. What is in AOSOS should match what is in the case files. Based upon a sidebar conversation it appears that the state observed that there was insufficient data in the files. Meredith added that any information that was gathered would be available to provide technical assistance to any county. In AOSOS there is a section that is confidential and only certain people have access to that information. She also stated that a sensitive medical as well as family history must be censored.

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee Meeting
10:00 AM July 16, 2019

James stated that there is a Union County release of information form that must be signed off by every participant or a legal guardian.

Juanita spoke of a case where a youth had serious mental health issues that UWGUC was not capable of dealing with. At the request of the agency a mental health specialist was brought in. The notes of this specialist were not shared with UWGUC. We need to come back to the entire group with clear guidelines of what is required. Juanita went on to state that she is working with Meredith to come up with a set of rules and a process that will follow guidelines.

There were some suggestions from other committee members as to what to do in these situations.

There was mention of the fact that there are some DACA Youths involved, there should be minimal disclosure so as not to jeopardize their renewal for TPS or DACA and ultimately make them a priority for deportation.

James stated that the goal of an ISS is to understand the young people. When a young person is WIOA certified an ISS is created. The ISS says it is pre day one. When we are four months in, how relevant is the ISS? The goal is to have the ISS reflect any changes in the mindset of the young person as he or she changes. We know that they are young people and they will change their mind. What was said in week one might be different in what was said four months out?

Juanita interjected that it could change seven times in four months. It is important to remind everybody that we need to change moving forward. We are required to submit an ISS when someone is WIOA certified, yet it doesn't make sense because you are just meeting that young person. However, the initial ISS is a requirement. It is something you are putting together quick and fast. There has to be a point after the person is certified and you can go back and revisit the ISS. Juanita also stated that you cannot spend a lot of time putting together that initial ISS when there is the possibility that the young person is not eligible for the program. You are in a weird place when you have to put together this initial ISS and don't revisit it. That is where there is a disconnect. We need to figure out a better way of managing.

In closing, James announced that they will be sending out communications as to what the monthly input needs to look like as well as the quarterly updates. In the end program skills gains are wonderful. However, the success of the program is really predicated upon gains in performance measures after exit. If you have an ISY your goal is to make sure that the youth is still in school and making progress towards graduation. If you have an OSY your goal is to either get that young person back into school or get a job and make sure that they are sustaining that job Q2 and Q4 after they leave you. That is what will make our program be viewed as a success. Every county that has a WDB is measured by the state in terms of performance. Right now our performance is relatively good. It can be better, particularly as it pertains to our OSY. We can do a better job of getting our youth into certification programs. This is why the linkage to Union County College is so critical for us because they have a lot of opportunities to get certified skills that will lead to employment. Clearly, helping young people get employment is critical in being able to sustain themselves and their families. We want to spend much more time talking about that and talking about the trends

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee Meeting
10:00 AM July 16, 2019

that are creating barriers for our young people. We see where we are successful and where we have work to do. We want to make our performance the best in the state. That is the goal. It is because of the work that we have done that we were awarded the Summer Youth Employment Pilot Program.

Meredith added that the AJC is talking to the state regarding the information that is in the case files as well as AOSOS.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 AM.

Verbatim dialogue is available through recording.

