

Union County Workforce Development Board
Youth Committee
Scott Kuchinsky- Committee Chair
Meeting Minutes- December 14, 2020, 10am Zoom

Attendees

Scott Kuchinsky, Committee Chair, Plainfield Public Library
Lisa Hiscano, Union County College
Syreeta McClain, UCVTS, Simon Youth Academy
Meredith Barracato, UC American Job Center
Susana Mateo, Union County College, Youth Corp
Marcela Nunez, Youth Forward

UCWDB Staff

Lisa Bonanno
Gina Tuesta
Elizabeth Paskewich

Meeting Summary

I. Strategic Planning Sub-Strategies

The Committee will focus on Sub-Strategy SS-40: Support Services.

SS-40: Considering the success of the Workforce System in addressing its customers training and employment needs, the System will increase its outreach efforts with state and regional agencies to resolve obstacles faced by its trainees around transportation, housing, and childcare.

Committee Discussion

The Committee agreed that at this time Technology is the Support Service overall that is lacking. Specifically, the funding for technology and the quality of technology provided.

- Union County College-Lisa Hiscano- Covid isn't going to be just a couple weeks, this is going to continue and we need to plan our programs as such. Availability of technology is the main issue our students are experiencing.
- Union County Workforce Development Board-Lisa Bonanno- Unfortunately we have been told that no COVID dollars can be used toward technology. Job Corp has been able to access funding for technology and might be worth learning what they did. Before COVID, if a household had one device it was sufficient, now every member of the household is in need of one. We are still advocating for increased funding for technology. Its every age- school age to seniors, a connection is important.

II. Client Services- Issues and Concerns

The need for consistent and reliable internet was the overall consensus.

Committee Discussion

- Simon Youth Academy- Syreeta McClain- We are currently all remote for students, and some staff if necessary. This is a challenge in itself because once the schedule changes it creates a new dynamic, and the chase to ensure student participation begins. We have become good at the remote teaching aspect, but for the students, and it being conducive for their learning style and the social-emotional aspect, it is not the best for them. Some students also have a shift in priorities by some getting a job, so the balance has changed.
- Union County College-Lisa Hiscano- We are trying to meet the technology divide by providing all full-time students a laptop. We have a laptop loaner program for all part-time students. We are also doing Remote-live, so students are able to log-in and experience instruction in real time.
- Union County College Youth Corp Susana Mateo - The family dynamics is also hard. Before someone would watch the children while the parent was in school, now that childcare isn't there. The constant changing schedule is difficult. Even keeping staff moral is difficult, we are just doing the best we can. While our students have laptops, they often have unstable internet. Elizabeth school district had free-Wifi, but it was very unreliable due to the overburdened network.
- **Plainfield Public Library Scott Kuchinsky- Has there been any discuss with service providers about discount internet? Potential research item at future date.**
- Simon Youth Academy- Syreeta McClain - We did hotspots as a district as we already have a contract with Verizon. We ordered hotspots based on need. All students have laptops, but hotspots are on a need basis.

III. Youth and Disabilities- Issues and Concerns

Committee Discussion

- Union County College Youth Corp Susana Mateo- I currently do in-home therapy, and see the family struggle. Those who have IEPs may have a situation where sitting in front of a computer for an extended period time is almost impossible, then add it potential health issues the guardian themselves might be dealing with makes for a difficult situation.
- Simon Youth Academy- Syreeta McClain-We have continued all group and one on one counseling groups remotely. These groups have addressed the issues that have come up since the pandemic, time management, isolation, etc. We have extended this to parents as well, as they need to discuss their frustrations and concerns as well.
- Youth Forward- Marcela Nunez- Office of Youth Services we have programs to help the youth, all our services have continued. We are still taking referrals all of our providers are still providing services. All have tailored to needs of youth and parents.

IV. PROGRAM UPDATES:

- SIMON YOUTH ACADEMY- 23 certified students currently. Currently all students are remote. Many students are working in seasonal retail jobs. District has provided technology. We are working with the county to certify all students. It's hard not to do the fun activities with the students, but we are doing our best to make the best experience for our students.
- YOUTH FORWARD- 23 youth are active. Currently working closely with Simon Youth. We have updated our website to make things easier for youth to access. We are doing what we can to make things easy for our Youth. We are available for youth to come to our office on a case by case basis.
- PLAINFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY- We are open for in-person testing. If you are seeing an uptick in requests or have a group of individuals that need tested, please reach out.

V. COMMITTEE ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting January 11, 10am via Zoom.