

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTH COMMITTEE
SCOTT KUCHINSKY, CHAIRMAN
Wednesday, May 25th, 2022 10:00AM Via Zoom
MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members

1. Scott Kuchinsky - Committee Chair, Plainfield Public Library
2. Evenide Fanfan-Vilcean, Roselle Public Schools
3. Crystal Ahearn, Elizabeth Public Schools
4. Cathy Hart- HACE (Elizabeth Housing Authority)
5. Nasrene Mondol, American Job Center
6. Jasmine Lee, Simon Youth Academy
7. Youth Advocate from Simon Youth Academy- Natalie
8. Gino Elmarassy, American Job Center
9. Vanessa De Jesus Guzman, Free to Be Mindful
10. Kyree Robinson, State Employment and Training Commission
11. Marissa Caponera, Elizabeth Housing Authority
12. Kelly Smith, Elizabeth Development Company
13. Ayesha Howard, Plainfield Public School
14. Juanita Vargas, United Way of Greater Union County
15. LaChelle Thompson, Elizabeth Housing Authority
16. Jasmine Sowah, Youth Forward

UCWDB Staff

Meredith Barracato
Antonio Rivera

Meeting Summary

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Kuchinsky welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if everyone could add their name and organization in the Zoom screen.

II. Review and approval of the March 30th 2022 Minutes Committee Meeting minutes:

A motion was made by Jasmine Lee and seconded by Gino Elmarassy. Motion carried.

III. Mental Health Discussion:

Vanessa De Jesus Guzman is the owner and CEO of [Free to Be Mindful](#) - a private practice located in Ridgely, New Jersey - focused on providing children and mothers help on mental health, mindful living and personal growth through a variety of services and offerings. Vanessa discussed various youth topics such as:

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- In 2020 young adults aged 18-25 years had the highest prevalence of a serious mental illness compared to adults 26-79%.
- Trauma faced at the developmental stage of young adults may have long-term consequences across their lifespan.
- Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people aged 10-34 in the US, and the 10th leading cause of death in the US.
- The average delay between onset of mental illness symptoms and treatment is 11 years.
- While all families have been greatly impacted by the pandemic, families of color have experienced a greater disparity.
- More children and families of color have lost a parent, grandparent or caregiver due to the pandemic.
- In efforts to help decrease the inequities experienced by BIPOC families, programs and providers have a responsibility to educate others and engage children, young adults and families.

IV. Shared Youth Vision Council:

Kyree Robinson from the State Employment and Training Commission discussed Youth Voice Framework resolution which states: The New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission strongly urges the local workforce development areas to develop, effectuate, and include a Youth Voice framework that utilizes the direct input of the target population to be served and that their input be used in the design, development, implementation and delivery of youth services.

V. Youth Report “Entry Level Work as a Stepping Stone not an End Point”

Meredith Barracato reviewed slides from the Burning Glass report from January 2021 that discussed the experience of entry level workers and the jobs that youth could fill. Report attached to presentation. Some of the major topics included:

- **Hiring:** How often are opportunity youth hired to fill entry-level vacancies?
- **Promotion and Advancement:** What is the career progression of opportunity youth following initial employment? How do they fare over five years in terms of occupational trajectory, salary, and achieving at least \$15hr wage?
- **Retention:** How long do opportunity youth work at their first listed employer?

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- **Leapfrogging:** 44% of young workers progress from entry level job into better paying jobs different from their first employment.
- **Levelling Up:** 8% of young workers progress to better paying jobs within the career area of their entry level role.
- **Spinning Wheels:** 48% of young workers tend to stay in the same occupation or move to one that is typically lower paying.

Meredith Barracato then presented the recommendations which included:

- Highlight next steps for youth and support skills development and credentialing,
- Incentives can be designed to spur investments in employer led workforce training and development,
- Intentional career awareness and retraining efforts aimed at youth in entry level food, retail, and hospitality for positive job transitions.

Director Rivera mentioned the report analysis supports the various programs that are offered through the American Job Center. The following are opportunities the youth have access to:

- Skill Up/Metrix Learning- Online self-pace skills training
- On the Job Training Program
- Apprenticeship Program

Nasrene Mondol mentioned the American Job Center can provide Youth with the programs offered in the Workforce Learning Link such as GED.

VI. Summer Work Experience:

Jasmine Sowah provided committee members an update on the summer youth employment program. She mentioned the program is currently enrolling 55 students and are expected to have more enroll. Evenide Fanfan-Vilcean mentioned the youth in Roselle school district were very happy to have receive this information and were looking forward to the being employed during the summer. Meredith Barracato asked Jasmine Sowah to explain the process of enrolling youth beyond the summer employment program. Chairman Kuchinsky asked Jasmine to explain the process for employers to sign up to participate in the program. Juanita Vargas asked when the employers would be notified how many students would be available to work at their site. Jasmine said the job site matching will happen after the assessment and enrollment process.

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VII. On the Job Training Policy:

Meredith Barracato reviewed the slides on the new Workforce Development Board On the Job Training Policy. One the Job training OJT provides reimbursements to employers up to 50% of wages (not to exceed \$10,000 over six months) to help compensate for the costs associated with skills upgrade training for newly hired employees. Chairwoman mentioned the OJT program sounds like a great opportunity for many employers to take advantage especially those employers who have had some challenges during COVID.

Meeting Schedule 2022:

- a. Wednesday July 20th 10:00am
- b. Wednesday September 28th 10:00am
- c. Thursday December 8th 10:00am

Jasmine Lee introduced Simon Youth Academy graduate Natalie who talked about her experience at the Academy and discuss some of the challenges and opportunities she has experienced.

COMMITTEE ADJOURMENT