

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
YOUTH COMMITTEE  
SCOTT KUCHINSKY, CHAIRMAN  
Wednesday, December 8, 2022, 10:00AM Via Zoom  
MEETING MINUTES

**Committee Members**

1. Scott Kuchinsky - Committee Chair, Plainfield Public Library
2. Sharon Best, American Job Center
3. Jasmine Lee, Simon Youth Academy
4. Juanita Vargas, United Way of Greater Union County
5. LaChelle Thompson, Elizabeth Housing Authority
6. Marisa Caponera, Elizabeth Housing Authority
7. Catherine Hart, Elizabeth Housing Authority
8. Jasmine Sowah, Youth Forward
9. Helen Alvarado, Plainfield Public Schools
10. Elizabeth Ramos, Union College
11. Keith Sheppard, Edison Job Corps
12. Ke'Nesha Jones, Trinitas Hospital
13. Marie Chase, YouthBuild

**UCWDB Staff**

Meredith Barracato

**Meeting Summary**

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

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

**II. Review and approval of the September 28, 2022, Minutes Committee Meeting minutes:**

A motion was made by LaChelle Thompson and seconded by Cathy Hart. Motion carried.

**III. Strategic Planning Update:**

Meredith Barracato reviewed a presentation regarding guidance from NJDOL and SETC regarding the 2022-2026 strategic plan. Meredith Barracato highlighted some of the guidance, which includes the following details:

- Publish Local Plan February 2023
- Local Plan must adhere to all state and local public comment requirements
- Effective Through 2026
- Four-year local plan will be reviewed/modified after two years

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- One-Stop Operators are not allowed to participate in the strategic planning process
- Emphasis on integration of technology into programs/services
- Ensure Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are considered
- Detail impacts of the pandemic and local labor markets, including in-demand occupations and employment and education needs.
- Plan should be a how-to guide verses document on the shelf.

Meredith Barracato asked everyone to complete the partner survey and shared the link with everyone. Meredith Barracato discussed the need for focus groups for partner and youth participants. She mentioned that the partner focus group would be held on January 25 via Zoom and asked that all partners attend to ensure their input is collected. Meredith then asked if any volunteers would be able to assist with coordinating a focus group. Helen Alvarado, Plainfield High School, Jasmine Lee Simon Youth Academy, and Juanita Vargas Youth Corp all volunteered to assist with a youth participant focus group.

Juanita Vargas asked if United Way would be able to receive Workforce180 training that was offered to the American Job Center. Meredith Barracato mentioned she will speak to Director Rivera about offering the training to other partners but in the meantime, there are a number of New Jersey Department of Labor trainings that can be made available that focus on WIOA services.

**IV. Youth Build:**

Marie Chase did a presentation regarding the Youth Build program that is being operated by the Housing Authority of the City of Elizabeth. Marie Chase explained that YouthBuild Elizabeth is a program that helps young adults ages 16-24 from the City of Elizabeth earn their high school diploma equivalency. Participants can receive 6 months of classroom GED® instruction, job placements, and support services. YouthBuild Elizabeth also offers onsite construction training, offsite medical programs, and other types of in-demand training. Stipends are also available for meals, transportation, community service, and job training.

- Serves residents of the City of Elizabeth; we anticipate that at least 30% of the students would be Mravlag Manor residents
- YouthBuild Elizabeth serves both youth who dropped out of school and those with diploma but low basic skills
- High school dropout: YB will assist youth in obtaining their high school equivalency diploma via the GED exam; they will receive 15-20 hours of

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- classroom instructions for up to six months
- High school graduates: YB will assist youth in increasing their skill level in math and reading

Cathy Hart added the House Authority is focusing on mental health and will be partnering with Kean University as part of the university counseling center. The goal is to provide residents access to mental health supportive services onsite. For those who need more intensive services they will refer clients to Bridgeway Services.

The presentation can be located in the Partner Resource folder for December 8, 2022, Youth Committee Meeting.

#### **V. Trinitas CARES Program**

Ke'Nesha Jones, MA did a presentation regarding the Cares Program that is located in Trinitas Hospital. Ke'Nesha explained the following about the Cares Program and it's benefits to youth clients.

- Conduct ER assessments and consultations
- CARES works with individuals, families, staff and providers on psychiatric/behavior management
- Response at the time of crisis in family homes, residential placements, day programs or emergency rooms.
- Consultations and support on psychiatric inpatient units
- Transitional assistance for returning to community living
- Training and technical support to families, guardians, and both I/DD and mental health service providers.
- Connection with ongoing support resources.

The presentation can be located in the Partner Resource folder for December 8, 2022, Youth Committee Meeting.

#### **VI. Partner Updates**

**Job Corps-** Keith Sheppard mentioned they will be starting enrollment in January and will follow up with the partners on the call to drop off resources about the program.

**Union College-** Elizabeth Ramos mentioned they have will be registering for spring semester.

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**American Job Center-** Sharon Best mentioned there were no updates.

**Youth Forward:** Jasmine Sowah mentioned they are starting to look into the summer youth employment program and are focused on having more employers in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math fields.

**Boxwood-** Marie Chase mentioned they have a program starting that is music therapy.

**Elizabeth Housing Authority-** LaChelle Thompson mentioned they will have meet and greet for outreach to new clients; Kean University will be taking referral for clients who need mental health services. They will be doing food drives and flyers will be shared with everyone.

Marie Chase wanted to thank Jasmine Sowah for all the work that the Youth Forward team has been proving.

**Simon Youth Academy-** Jasmine Lee mentioned they have about 26 students and will look to enroll more. She mentioned they are looking for more Science Technology Engineering Math worksites and will like to contact employers who can take youth for the summer.

**Plainfield Public Library:** The chairman mentioned they are still doing GED testing and are still scheduling more testing. The Chairman added they are offering computer course such as North Star and IC3

**Meeting Schedule 2023:**

To be determined and shared with the committee in a few weeks.

**COMMITTEE ADJOURNMENT**