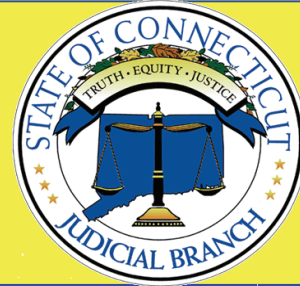


CSSD Chronicle

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Court Support Services Division

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New Vocational Service Aids Recidivism Reduction Efforts in YES!

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Youth Equipped for Success! (YES!) programs provide services to medium risk juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system, and their families. YES! programs offer evidence-based, cognitive-behavioral groups and in-home interventions that target identified risk factors, criminogenic needs, and work to strengthen and reinforce protective factors.

A recent appropriation through Connecticut's *Raise the Age* legislation has enabled the expansion of the YES! program to now offer a vocational initiative called "Employment, Motivation, Preparation & Learning for Outstanding Youth" (EMPLOY). YES! program participants will soon have the opportunity to incorporate EMPLOY as part of their treatment plan. The goal of EMPLOY is to reduce recidivism by preparing juveniles and youth for meaningful work, and helping them establish employment in their communities. There are three tiers in the EMPLOY vocational program.

Tier One – Motivation and Interest Exploration

Available to nearly all juveniles in YES!, participants in Tier One will explore their interest in employment. A career inventory test, "Self-Directed Search Career Explorer (SDS-CE), developed by nationally recognized career expert Dr. John L. Holland, PhD, will be completed. At the end of Tier One, vocational staff will collaborate with probation and evaluate clients based on their achievement of several explicit criteria. Successful clients will be recommended to Tier 2 for additional vocational preparatory service.

Tier Two – Soft Skills Development

Juveniles in Tier Two will participate in a "Competency Learning Plan" (CLP). The CLP ensures that youth have basic knowledge in the following six competencies: Basic Skills, Job Seeking Skills, Interpersonal & Communication Skills, Personal Qualities, Problem Making & Decision Making, and Computer Literacy.

These competencies will be developed in clients via a "soft skills" curriculum, which prepares and equips youth for the world of employment. Much like a center-based group, this class will run two times per week for five weeks. Vocational staff will facilitate the group, which will be semi-open and gender mixed to get clients accustomed to a real "work environment." Resume writing will also be

introduced in this tier and at the end of the curriculum.

Tier Three- Job Placement

In tier three, clients who have effectively addressed their criminogenic needs by participating fully in their primary intervention, and who also are attending school and meeting other court orders, will be assisted in finding a job. Vocational staff will have canvassed the local business community and created relationships with those employers who are willing to work with the youth, with the support of the program. Vocational advocates will support the youth in getting to work on time, dressed appropriately and prepared to be productive in the workplace, and will help trouble-shoot any problems that might arise by checking in with employers, and the young employee, on a regular basis. If paying jobs are not available or appropriate, the vocational advocate will assist the youth to find internship or meaningful volunteer experience that will demonstrate the young adult's readiness for employment.

Consistent with most new initiatives in CSSD, Results Based Accountability will be the framework by which performance will be measured and reported. Baseline data will be collected for one year and upon review of the data, concrete and achievable goals will be determined and the program will be examined for needed changes and improvements.

For more information on the EMPLOY vocational program, please contact
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The CSSD Chronicle is a regular publication of information and news about the Court Support Services Division. Questions or comments can be directed to Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov