

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR FOSTER CARE YOUTH

UNEDITED SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS

Children's Home Society of Virginia (CHSVA)

(<https://chsva.org/adopt-children/program-overview/>)

Summary of workforce development services provided by CHSVA (My Path Forward Program):

- Obtaining employment – job searching, assistance with applications/resume preparation, preparations for interviews, identifying appropriate attire, connections with potential employers (partnership with The Success Foundation) etc.
- Life skills – understanding the importance of consistently being on time for work
- Financial management skills – building a savings, understanding and improving credit scores
- Long-term career planning – assist youth in identifying their own career goals, assistance obtaining certifications/education or appropriate experience through internships, apprenticeships, etc. to achieve long-term career goal

Fostering Acadia (<https://www.fosteringacadia.org/>)

N/A

Harrisonburg-Rockingham Department of Social Services

(<https://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/206/Social-Services>)

N/A

Juvenile Law Center – Philadelphia (<https://jlc.org/>)

N/A

Medworks (<https://www.medworkssurgical.com/company>)

Background: Medworks is a Surgical Sales and Laser Services Provider. Our company hires highly skilled individuals that give support to surgeons in the Operating Room. Our Admin department is also staffed with people possessing high level skills. Desiring to support the foster community, Medworks has been involved in a number of various wrap-around initiatives. To this end, we have worked with Fostering Acadia, Fostering Hope, The Henrico Faith Partners, The Success Foundation, Virginia's Kids Belong, Henrico DSS, and others.

Medworks has created an entry level position (job description and expectations attached) to offer to a young person in an IL program. Our hope is to provide employment training, mentoring, and an opportunity for youths to excel with the possibilities of transitioning toward bigger goals and higher education.

Our first hire was from Fostering Acadia and we learned a great deal from the experience. The biggest takeaway was that our candidate was not ready for employment, not really understanding what it meant to hold down a job. While we became emotionally attached to this individual (and even now have established "permanency" so as to extend our personal relationship on into the future), the job situation did not go well, even though we worked with this individual for over a year. Making false assumptions at the start, we realize in hindsight that we made a lot of mistakes.

It was during this time that we were introduced to Gary Powers (Executive Director of The Success Foundation) and began working together with he and his team to create better pre-employment training, assessment, and preparedness for these potential candidates. As a part of that work, we created a document

listing our observations concerning our first hire. That list is also attached to this email. Medworks currently has an open employment position, and while it has been offered to multiple candidates, there has not yet been a hire, largely due to available candidates being "job ready."

Job readiness is an important factor for both hiring and a successful outcome. We have a great desire to work on this issue and seek solutions to minimize problems and maximize better outcomes. We recognize the role that trauma plays in each of these individuals and we are onboard and willing to work with youths to help them address their issues as they arise on the job.

In addition to providing employment within Medworks, we would like to promote hiring from this population outwardly to the business community. We foresee this becoming a regular practice, but first we need to work toward improving pre-employment readiness in order to produce successful stories for presenting to potential employers.

A final thought about hiring from the IL population:

Among other "on the job" issues, a recurring theme resonated from our first hire regarding the need for a job. In this person's thinking, the job was not necessary. Defensively, this would come up whenever there were training issues that required correction, i.e., being late, improper cell phone use, not following through with job duties, leaving early, etc., basic job expectations. Our honest observation was that this person was correct. The job was not needed as a means for providing necessary income, as everything was provided in abundance for the individual. Additionally, the employee was not able to see the job as an opportunity to gain skill, experience, and achievement. We saw a clear disconnect between this thinking and the real world that we had hoped to be preparing the individual to enter. It would be our thought for "employment ready candidates" that there be some requirement, consequence (both positive and negative), acknowledgment, and reinforcement regarding the importance and necessity of holding a job.

OBSERVATIONS -- OUR FIRST HIRE FROM IL Medworks, Darrell and Donna Shires

What worked

- Having Fostering Acadia identify a youth
- Learning about our candidate's trauma and coping style (although this came later) • Staying "with it" even when the going was rough, when our youth was:
 - o repeatedly late for work
 - o not managing phone time at work
 - o defensive and angry
 - o negative and complaining
 - o not receiving correction well
 - o not trusting
 - o spending work time eating or having "talks" rather than working
 - o not being thorough with tasks
 - o refusing to take responsibility for actions

What didn't work (or how we were not prepared)

- Our assuming this youth ready to do the job
- Not giving enough structure and accountability from day one
- Our going too "easy" at first

- Our not knowing how to correct the behaviors and lack of work performance
- Our not knowing how to respond to defensiveness
- Not realizing that this youth did not really want the job and in this youth's mind, didn't need it
- Our not understanding the lack of motivation
- Our not understanding the lack of ability to prioritize the job as it related to life

What helped

- Listening - and it took a lot of it!
- Giving our youth a voice - as our youth said, "I did not have a voice growing up." • Not abandoning this youth or the situation just because things weren't working. This was the start of building trust
- Giving space to talk about family issues
- Doing some fun activities together outside of work
- Studying together (driver's test)
- Assigning a supervisor within the company who was closer to the youth's age for accountability, freeing Darrell and myself to be the relational/permanency people in this person's life
- Visiting during COVID lockdown
- Acknowledging accomplishments on social media, validating importance

Important lessons we have learned:

- Need to have better up-front conversations and good two-way dialogue about expectations at time of onboarding to ensure understanding
- Don't compromise on expectations. Be firm, but understanding when failures occur
- Prior to onboarding, create, assign, and prepare internal structures for supporting the employee
- Prepare the supervisor well and include trauma informed training
- Assign a mentor (someone closer to the age of the employee that is strong, but caring)
- It is important to include people that are NOT supervising but are committed to the welfare of the employee.
- From the start, have some background information and an evaluation of the employee's temperament. This along with the YouScience assessment would prepare both employer and employee.

*** Medworks also sent an office assistant position description that they have used. It is a separate attachment.*

Richmond City Department of Social Services (<https://www.rva.gov/>)

In preparation for workforce development, Richmond IL Services assist youth ages 14 – 26 through the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood. The following services are offered through the grant:

The Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood was established to provide youth ages 14 – 26 years of age with opportunities to learn needed skills and increase the likelihood of successful transition from foster care to independence. Youth can be best prepared by learning about both the challenges and the opportunities in the following areas and service evaluation opportunities:

- ▶ Coordinating workforce development trainings facilitated by VA Project LIFE
- ▶ Serving as a conduit for resources and employment opportunities
- ▶ Employment search navigation, resume building, and business dress attire support

- ▶ Transportation (assisting with workplace commute via contracted transportation or car purchases/insurance)
- ▶ Post-Secondary Education supports
- ▶ Establishment of Social Supports and Community Connections
- ▶ Administering the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) is a federally mandated survey program that examines outcomes for teens and young adults in foster care.
- ▶ Administering the Youth Exit Survey is to learn about the relationships, resources, activities, and overall experiences of youth who have been in foster care.

Please find below a few resources for IL Services:

- ▶ <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/independent.cgi>
- ▶ <https://dss.virginia.gov/fmf/>
- ▶ <https://www.casey.org/casey-life-skills-resources/>
- ▶ <https://www.vaprojectlife.org/>
- ▶ <https://greatexpectations.vccs.edu/>

The Success Foundation (TSF) of Virginia (<https://www.successva.org/>)

Executive Director and co-founder: Gary S. Powers, garyspowers@gmail.com, (M) 804.512.576, Board Chair: Sarah B. Williams, sbw8904@gmail.com, Board Vice Chair and co-founder: Don F. DeLaney, Board Member: J. Gordy Rawles, MD.

The Success Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization, whose primary goal is to make a difference in the lives of the young adults who have come through the foster care system. We start by having two-on-one meetings with the young adults: we review prior job and educational experiences, help them identify their gifts and skills, discuss job, and career aspirations and help them learn how to build a foundation to succeed. TSF utilizes the YouScience Assessment tool to help the young adult become aware of their strengths and skills.

Once the young adult completes the required assessment, and TSF has a good understanding of his or her aptitude and interest, as well as job and career aspirations, TSF prepares an individual plan utilizing all available community resources. TSF's ultimate goal while designing and executing the plan is for the young adult to earn a certification or associate's degree and ultimately earn a sustainable living and career wage in order to be able to live independently.

With TSF's mission always in mind, our mentors support the individualized work we do by conducting Soft Skills (i.e., life skills) workshops and Financial Education Training. TSF also assists by updating the young adult's resume when needed and connects the young adults to RVA employers when possible. As of June 2021 TSF had 12 mentors who assist the young adults we serve. All of the services TSF provides are done on a pro bono basis.

TSF currently partners with Fostering Acadia, the largest single-site Independent Living (IL) agency in VA, by mentoring their young adults (ages 18-21) who have come through the foster care system.

TSF also partners with Children's Home Society (CHS), one of the oldest adoption agencies in VA, by mentoring their young adults (ages 18-26) who participate in their My Path Forward program.

Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work (<https://socialwork.vcu.edu/>)

N/A

Virginia Community College System (<https://www.vccs.edu/>)

Workforce Program limited to youth with experience in foster care:

Joe and Linda Daniel Success Fund FastForward Pilot

The purpose of this grant is to support a cohort of at least 40 Great Expectations students over two years with a strong commitment to completing a FastForward workforce credential. Each of 21 participating colleges is to nominate 2 students with the potential to be successful in FastForward programs knowing that student support services, the coach, and additional funds will be available to support them while they attend college. Students will receive an estimated \$750 per month for up to 14 months (with declining support in the final three months) to support living expenses in addition to educational expenses not covered by other financial aid. Students will work individually with their coach to develop a budget and determine support needs for the length of their FastForward program.

Virginia Tuition Grant for Former Foster Youth

In 2000, legislation passed that created the Tuition Grant program to provide tuition and fees at any Virginia community college for high school graduates or GED completers in foster care or the custody of a social services agency, or considered a special needs adoption. This legislation was revised in 2009 and again in 2017 to cover non-credit workforce credentials. http://greatexpectations.vccs.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/vatuitiongrantflyer_rev_2.pdf

Workforce Programs not limited to youth with experience in foster care:

FastForward

FastForward programs are short-term (often 6-12 weeks) training courses for high-demand industries offered through Virginia's Community Colleges. <https://www.fastforwardva.org/>

G3

G3 is a training and education program for students with a family income of less than \$100,000 to help prepare them for high-demand careers in Virginia. This is a "last dollar" program which covers any remaining tuition and fees after other grants are used. <https://www.vccs.edu/g3/>

WIOA

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding is used to coordinate employment and training services across a variety of state and federal agencies resulting in increased access to training, education and support resources for learners/job seekers to succeed in the job market and their careers. WIOA funds are another source of financial aid for students who do not receive Pell Grants, and can be used to assist eligible students with tuition, books and occupational supplies.

Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (<https://www.vadars.org/>)

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Pre-ETS, authorized by section 113 of the Rehabilitation Act and as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), are designed to be an early start at job exploration for students with disabilities. Pre-ETS serve to help students with disabilities begin to identify career

interests. Pre-ETS should enrich, not delay, transition planning, and application to the Vocational Rehabilitation program, which is also administered by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). Students with disabilities do not have to apply to the VR program to receive Pre-ETS. Beginning at age 14, students with disabilities can connect with DARS for Pre-ETS. DARS works with students, their families, their schools and community partners to enrich transition planning and support students with gaining knowledge and experiences necessary so they may make informed decisions about their future.

Topics covered through Pre-ETS include:

- Job exploration counseling,
- Work-based learning experiences,
- Workplace readiness training,
- Counseling on postsecondary education and training opportunities, and
- Instruction in self-advocacy.

Pre-ETS are provided at no cost to the family or to the student through DARS.

Who may receive Pre-ETS?

Students with disabilities who need Pre-ETS may receive Pre-ETS. A student with a disability is an individual aged 14 through 21 (or age 22 if the student is enrolled in a recognized education program and has not reached their 22nd birthday before September 30).

- a. is receiving special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), or
- b. for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, is an individual with a disability.

A student with a disability does not have to be receiving specialized services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or have a Section 504 accommodation in school in order to qualify for Pre-ETS. However, documentation of a disability is necessary in order to assess eligibility for Pre-ETS.

Transition Services under the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program

Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for both students and youth (an individual aged 14 to 24) with disabilities designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities. Post-school activities include postsecondary education, vocational training, competitive integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based upon the individual student's or youth's needs and take into account the individual's preferences and interests. The activities must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school, adult-living objectives and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Transition services must promote or facilitate the achievement of the identified employment outcome in the student's VR Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In addition, transition services include outreach to and engagement of parents or, as appropriate, the representatives of students or youth with disabilities (as set forth in 34 CFR §361.5(c)(55)).

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) (<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/>)

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) supports a variety of initiatives, programs and supports to assist workforce development for students and Virginia public schools.

The VDOE receives support from the federal government to support programs with a focus on career and technical education to assist students in transitioning successfully to post-school outcomes such as vocational training, post-secondary education and competitive employment. For example, the purpose of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) is to develop more fully the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of secondary education students and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs and programs of study. Allocations from this federal grant program are provided directly to local school divisions and are monitored by the VDOE.

The VDOE also supports programming for workforce development for specific student populations. Secondary transition programs are sponsored by the VDOE and focus on preparing students with disabilities for success following their pre-K-12 experience. Transition is the process students and their families use to think about life after high school, to identify their desired outcomes, and to plan their community and school experiences to assure that the students acquire the knowledge and skills to achieve their goals. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included transition components in the legislation with the goal of preparing students with disabilities to access the supports and services they need to become as independent as possible.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, Post-Secondary Programs
(<http://www.djj.virginia.gov/pages/admin/ed-post-secondary.htm>)

N/A

Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) (<https://www.doli.virginia.gov/>)

First, the RA model is an earn while you learn model where an employee can become competent in a specific occupation. We hesitate to define RA as a workforce development program because it is not generic, but specific to the occupation. Our first customer in the RA model is the Employer/Sponsor who chooses to register in our system. Once XYZ corporation registers, we then register their occupation, which must be on the Apprenticesable Occupation listing as provided by the USDOL. Once that is done, the Employer will either select an incumbent worker to be the apprentice, or they might recruit for that. It is the Employer/Sponsor's job to recruit and select their apprentices. Upon selection, the apprentice is registered. DOLI is the State Apprenticeship Agency that administers this nationwide program, but we don't directly have apprenticeship - this is done through participating employers.

Our goal with outreach is to be able to get in front of the aging-out, adults who could benefit from knowing how to search for RA opportunities. The job of the potential apprentice is to add this element to their job searches. Apprenticeship provides mentorship, paycheck, inclusion in the business culture on day one.

Virginia Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services (<https://www.dss.virginia.gov/>)

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) provide the following services for youth in foster care regarding workforce development:

John H. Chafee Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee Program) provides support and flexible funding for youth who experience foster care at age 14 or older in their transition to adulthood. The Chafee Program is a component of the VDSS Foster Care and Fostering Futures program and include those services that are based on a formalized life skills assessment that can determine strengths and needs.

Eligible youth include:

- ages 14-18,
- those participating in Fostering Futures program ages 18-21
- former care recipients ages 18 up to 23 years of age
- those adopted or entered Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) after attaining age 16

Services are designed to help young people make the transition to self-sufficiency. Services include, but are not limited to, academic support; career preparation; employment programs and vocational training; housing education and home management training; budgeting and financial management skills; substance abuse prevention; and preventative health activities.

Chafee funding can be used for employment programs and vocational training designed to build a youth's skills for a specific trade, vocation, or career through classes or on-site training. Employment programs include a youth's participation in an apprenticeship, internship, or summer employment program. Vocational training includes a youth's participation in vocational or trade programs in school or through nonprofit, commercial or private sectors and the receipt of training in occupational classes for such skills as cosmetology, auto mechanics, building trades, nursing, computer science, and other current or emerging employment sectors.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program provides financial assistance to cover expenditures associated with post-secondary education (college/university) and vocational training programs to youth otherwise eligible for services under the Chafee Program. The ETV Program extends eligibility to youth up until their 26th birthday, while placing a five-year limit on the total length of time a youth can receive funding.

Eligible youth include:

- ages 14 to 21 who are currently in Foster Care or the Fostering Futures program
- those who aged out of foster care or left Fostering Futures after turning 18 up to age 26
- those adopted or entered Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) after attaining age 16

Vouchers provided to individuals may be available for the cost of attending an institution of higher education (as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act) and shall not exceed \$5,000 per eligible youth per year, or the total cost of attendance (whichever is less).

ETV funds can be used to covering the following expenses:

- Tuition and fees
- Room and board
- Rental or purchase of required educational equipment, materials, or supplies (including a computer, printer, and needed software for school)
- Allowance for books, supplies and transportation
- Special study projects related to education
- Child care
- Other related expenses

What are the challenges/gaps for older youth?

Workers may not be aware of the workforce development programs, employment opportunities, community resources and funding to assist youth in obtaining meaningful employment.

Youth may lack the skills and support needed to hold a steady job or academic preparation to attend college or vocational training programs.

A strategic coordination of programs in skill development and services is needed for older youth and young adults in and transitioning out of foster care.

Virginia Employment Commission (<https://www.vec.virginia.gov/>)

N/A

Virginia's Kids Belong (<https://www.vakidsbelong.org/>)

N/A

Virginia Poverty Law Center (<https://vplc.org/>)

N/A

Voices for Virginia's Children (<https://vakids.org/>)

N/A