

Youth Investment Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 5, 2013 9:00am

Present: Ivan Adorno, Hilda Alonso, Lauren Balkan, David Blevins, Jane Brady, Charoulla Castanos-Beaton, Juan DeJesus, Marge Drozd, Robin Dupiche, Shalise Gonzalez, Stuart Grant, Charles Hager, Ellen Kurtz, Ushindi Lewis, Dawn Lystad, Denisse Martinez, Tracey Montani, Tom O'Connor, Joe Scott, Mary Tarrant, Naomi Vliet, Earl Wiggley

The meeting started with the introduction of the guests present. Denisse Martinez introduced Shalise Gonzalez as a current participant in the youth program who is helping in the youth office in Perth Amboy until her classes begin.

Mr. Earl Wiggley announced the minutes from the last meeting should have been received and any questions or comments can be discussed at this point. (No questions or comments). Minutes will be filed as presented.

Response from Federal Government on Anti-Drop Out Play

Ms. Brady stated that, since last meeting, there has been a concern that we will not be able to continue the Anti-Drop Out Play that NCADD had developed for us. She spoke to Tom Dalton, our representative from the federal government in the U.S. Department of Labor and he suggested that Ms. Brady write a letter to Jane Oates, the Assistant Secretary of Labor, and ask her for her opinion and the right to use youth money for the play. As advised, Ms. Brady contacted Jane Oates and they called back with questions, so at least they are looking into it. However, Ms. Brady received a letter from Ms. Oates denying us the ability to use youth money for the Anti-Drop Out Play due to the same reason the state government has given—there cannot be any youth who are not WIA-eligible in the room and have them receive the benefit of WIA youth money. Therefore, we can't do it as it is in writing from the Assistant Secretary of Labor.

Woodbridge High School has contacted NCADD to do the Anti-Drop Out Play. They will present there twice and the school is paying. When Ms. Brady told them about the play they were very interested and got the contact information. Ms. Brady has since communicated with Steve—per Earl's suggestions and others at the executive session—that possibly we can get companies within the different towns to sponsor the play in their high schools so they would get the benefit of it and WIA money is not used to do those presentations. The cost of the play is about \$800.

One suggestion was to look towards some of the banks that have branches in many of the towns and possibly make it a countywide effort, which would be wonderful.

Mr. Grant asked if they would select the youth who attend the play by their income. Ms. Brady responded yes, it is by income. The schools would have to select the young people who would come into the assembly. It is not good for the youth, telling them they are able to go because they are poor. Ms. Brady knows Steve is looking for other avenues to present the play.

Ms. Castanos-Beaton asked how many schools get the play and Ms. Brady answered that we are trying to do 10 schools per year. The first year United Way gave NCADD the money and it was put on in 10 schools. Ms. Brady would like to continue to do 10 high schools across the county each year because the play is actually for 9th graders so, theoretically, it can be done every year in every high school but that is more money. The way it was going to be done was to put aside approximately \$8,000-\$10,000 per year of the youth money to fund the play for 10 high schools.

Ms. Castanos-Beaton informs that the Alliances are going to meet tomorrow as a network and she can present the idea of the play to them as an activity. If Ms. Brady has anyone specific to target she can let Ms. Castanos-Beaton know so she can reach out to them individually. Ms. Brady says that the target would be the schools in the various towns. She adds that we look at the dropout rate and we get the dropout information from each school, except one, so we know which schools have the most problems with that. Those are the first 10 they looked at. Perth Amboy does not cooperate so they are not among those 10.

If Ms. Castanos-Beaton can find a way to do it, that would be terrific because the play is excellent. Ms. Brady has seen it and she knows Mr. Wiggley and some of the other WIB executive members have seen it as well. It is very well done and done by college students. The impact was very substantial when talking to the teachers afterwards.

Mr. Wiggley stated that we have two companies that said they might be interested in funding it—Sunny Delight and Lee Linear. He asked if we have the funds for the play, are the schools ready and willing to move forward? Ms. Brady replied that she has not spoken to all the schools, but the ones she has contacted, are ready and willing. When United Way first tried to do this, they had

some difficulty, but the county superintendent was a backup. Dr. Stewart helped and once it was explained to the schools, they came around and were fine with it.

Ms. Montani asked about how to donate in case anyone would like to and Ms. Brady said to call Steve Liga at NCADD.

Outreach

Mr. DeJesus stated he has been to all the schools in his area of the county since the beginning of the school year and follows up throughout the year. He leaves enough dropout packets, especially the Youth Yellow Pages and the Youth Career Calendars, so they can inform the students.

Ms. Brady added that Ms. Martinez is responsible for sending e-newsletters to the guidance counselors and we will probably send one out at the end of this month or the beginning of the following one. We send these e-newsletters two to three times a year regarding what we are doing and for information purposes as well as outreach.

Mr. DeJesus commented that he gets in touch with the guidance counselors in regards to the dropout lists sent to the office because some don't include phone numbers to contact the youth.

To follow up, once the youth drop out, we immediately send a letter and call them and try again six months later to encourage them to take advantage of our services. However, very few of them do. Ms. Drozd asked if the school follows up with the youth once they drop out. To Ms. Brady's knowledge, they don't unless the young person returns to the school.

In regards to the dropout packets, there are some schools that call the office regularly to ask for more because they use them. On the other hand, there are other schools who have never called which means they don't use them.

Mr. Hager suggested sending a letter from Ms. Brady to the superintendents of the schools that don't use the dropout packets in order for them to cooperate.

Woodbridge High School

Ms. Brady and Mr. Abner Garcia were invited by the director of guidance at the high school to do a presentation in January. The staff at the school handpicked the students who didn't know what to do in terms of career. The group was divided into two sessions and included a PowerPoint display of the three priority sectors in NJ—healthcare, biotechnology, and transportation, distribution and logistics. Also, the education and job requirements for the respective fields. Ms. Brady and Mr. Garcia have been asked to return in March/April to present to the seniors. The staff also asked for the PowerPoint presentation and it will be sent to them.

Ms. Balkan asked if she can get Ms. Brady in Carteret high school for the same presentation—the answer is yes, of course.

Ms. Montani mentioned that inroads are being made because she also did a presentation of the Youth Work Readiness Program in South Plainfield high school and Dunellen and Colonia also contacted her for more information.

Mr. DeJesus added that North and New Brunswick always ask for more packets and information.

Mr. Wiggley recommended acknowledging/recognizing the schools who are working with us to help the youth. Ms. Brady added that the best to do this would be at the Superintendents' Round Table so that the recognition is seen by other schools and encourage them to help as well.

MCAT Ad

To generate more business, Ms. Brady announced that everyone will be seeing ads on the Middlesex County shuttles in mid-March or beginning of April. The information displayed on the shuttles is a short verbiage describing the essence of the programs and the contact information. The ads will be displayed for a month or a little while longer.

Company Tours

We are currently working with PSE&G for our young people to tour their Edison training facility around April. This is something we do three to four times per year to get our young people into real work situations. Since we are constantly told that utility workers

will be in demand as people retire, PSE&G will be a great site. At the moment, this is the only tour we are working on. We have done Middlesex Water in the past, so the utility facilities are being covered.

Mr. Wiggley suggested we can tour Sunny Delight again and Mr. Stuart also suggests we can tour the Coca Cola facility.

Status of Programs

MC4YOU Perth Amboy

Number served: 29

Lit/Num Improved – 2

Not Basic Skill Deficient – 27

Placed in ITA – 19 / Completed ITA – 8 / Still in ITA – 11

**2 students were not placed in ITA and are on the job training for Daycare Certification. Ms. Brady explained that this is because the staff believed they would not be able to handle an ITA and therefore are working for their Day Care certification, which will meet their needs. Ms. Drozd asked if the certifications are from the state. Ms. Brady answers yes and Ms. Vliet adds that the certification is called CDA (Child Development Associate).

MC4YOU New Brunswick

Number served: 6

Lit/Num Improved: 1

Not Basic Skill Deficient: 5

Placed in ITA: 4 / Completed ITA: 1 (1 waiting on results) / Still in ITA: 3

Ms. Brady expressed the concern with New Brunswick as we are struggling with the numbers. There are no youth and, shockingly, the same is happening with the adults. There is no specific answer for this, but one idea that comes to mind is the large illegal population in New Brunswick. However, that cannot be the whole answer. Mr. DeJesus has been going around recruiting so it's uncertain what the issue is.

Ms. Drozd commented on whether the school demographics in New Brunswick high school is known (legal/illegal students) to see whether that is truly the biggest factor or if there is something else going on. Ms. Brady said that is a good point but it is just a strange situation not only for the youth, but for the adults as well.

This year's goal for youth served is 20 in New Brunswick and 40 for Perth Amboy. Ms. Brady would be surprised if the goal is reached. If there are any suggestions, please send them and they will be taken under advisement. Mr. DeJesus informed that he will attend South Brunswick high school for IEP (Individual Educational Plan) Night to notify them of the program's services.

Ms. Brady stated that there is a tremendous amount of time spent with every youth. Multiple hours to first gain their trust and then to exchange beneficial information as well as tracking them and their progress. Mr. Hager added that what they find in the juvenile corrections is the reverse—most youth there are from New Brunswick. He will get a count from Probation to know exactly how many.

Mr. Grant recommended reaching out to the Youth Advocate Program to which Ms. Brady replied that there is already a connection there through Children Services.

As submitted to the state, the number of youth to be served this year is 175. According to the payroll, right now there are about 126. However, the major concern is the New Brunswick site. Ms. Drozd asked if we have reached out to the high school nurses as they often deal with many of the youth. This is a good suggestion and will be noted.

Mr. Blevins noted that although Mr. DeJesus has been in contact with School Base and related places, we should find a way to connect with those youth who do not go into such facilities. Another suggestion by Ms. Drozd is to target the parents. Ms. Brady added that letters have been sent before to the Welfare families 2 or 3 times last year and only received two responses. Ms. Lystad asked if the letters are in Spanish because in New Brunswick, about 34.5% of the households have Spanish as a primary language. The letters that have been sent are not in Spanish yet.

Ms. Lystad added that New Brunswick also has a 9.1% dropout rate, which is a high dropout rate, and students drop out in the lower grades. Also, the mobility rate is about 30% which means the students are wandering in and out of the school system.

Mr. Wiggley stated that, as a YIC, we need to make New Brunswick a priority to get more youth served. Please keep ideas coming to Mr. DeJesus and Ms. Brady.

MCC Youth Work Readiness

As Ms. Montani presented the statistics for the program, she agreed with the New Brunswick issue because so far, the Youth Work Readiness program only has 1 youth from NB. She said that what seems to work is the word of mouth among the youth, not necessarily the school districts.

Based on 2012-2013—the first cycle has been completed.

13 students total

62% completed their basic skills goal or are not basic skills deficient

38% completed their ITA and there are 3 students still in training

31% are employed

69% have IEP

3 Terminations/Left program

GOAL: 30 per year

Mr. Wiggley asked about those 3 that left. Ms. Montani replied that one youth had acting out issues left the program, one was referred to the MC4YOU Perth Amboy but it wasn't for her, and another one chose to attend college instead.

MCC GED in Perth Amboy

21 students with 8 carryovers**

35% passing rate

75% passed within 6 months –12.5% pass within 9-12 months

GOAL: 40 per year

MCC GED in Carteret

11 students

36% passed

100% passed within 6 months

2 people left—1 relocated and 1 voluntarily withdrew

GOAL: 30 per year

**After an analysis of the carryovers, Ms. Montani found that 73% of these participants had a Pre TABE Reading score less than 5th grade level and 63% had a weekly attendance averaging less 14 hours per week. As a result, Mr. Garcia and Ms. Montani decided to change the standard of admission to Pre TABE scores of 5th grade level and higher and mandatory attendance of 15 hours per week.

The 2013-2014 program year will be different because the GED will change in January 2014. In NJ, nobody knows because the state has to decide whether it will go with Pearson Education who has the federal contract for the GED or it will have its own. Therefore, when planning for next year, the two GED programs mentioned before will not be the same as they are now. If the state goes with Pearson that presents a problem because you can only do it in certain locations that Pearson sets up and it will cost \$150. The GED will also become computerized. This change will have many ramifications, including the planning hold for the following year.

As the YIC is concerned about this, a letter will be sent to the appropriate representatives to inquire about the changes. Mr. Wiggley asked if there should be a meeting with Pearson to which Ms. Brady replied no because the state government has not decided yet. Ms. Vliet states that this is a nationwide change so the national tests and curriculum will undergo the similar changes. Another conflict is that if NJ decides not to go with Pearson, there is nothing to say that the test NJ chooses will be valid outside of the state.

If anyone knows of people taking the GED, please tell them to take it by this year. If they have passed certain subjects, the scores will not carry over to the following year.

Mr. Blevins states that one concern the new GED will bring is screening people out. There is a large percentage of people coming

to New Brunswick from Spanish-speaking countries that are not literate in Spanish, therefore they are automatically eliminated from the beginning.

M.C.W.A.G.

8 participants (from previous report)

1 was hired

4 placed:

1 turned down job offer due to relocation

2 had performance issues

1 found employment on her own

Out of the 3 that were pending placement, 1 will begin at the Edison YMCA as soon as the physical is done and 2 are pending placement.

For the new group:

9 candidates were referred, 2 not accepted (1 low test scores, 1 could not commit 32 hours/week)

7 are currently completing the I.D.E.A.L. curriculum.

For these 7, Ms. Alonso is reaching out to daycare facilities, the Perth Amboy Public Works Dept., industrial electronics industry, Robert Wood Johnson, and The Heldrich hotel for security guards.

Ms. Drozd suggested contacting Saint Peter's University Hospital.

Transportation is a major issue. Ms. Alonso works hard with these youth and connecting with employers. Any referrals and suggestions are welcomed.

Literacy and Numeracy

It is a constant struggle to bring the youths' basic skills levels up. We work with a lot of the IEP clients that struggled in high school and couldn't make it under normal conditions and as mentioned before we will not work with anyone with a TABE test score lower than 5th grade because we cannot spend the time to bring them up to where they need to be. Even with these adjustments, we continue to struggle. We do have tutors from the Rutgers Federal Work Study Program in New Brunswick and the MCC programs have their staff doing tutoring as well. Perhaps making the program hours longer can help so that they have even more tutoring—it's a possibility.

Ms. Montani added that the biggest problem is the lack of attendance. The excuses that have been given in the past (except for court dates and medical) are no longer working for the program. There is lack of commitment and role models because school hasn't been a priority in the youth's lives.

CDM closed

Ms. Brady announced one of the schools closed suddenly and there were 4 youth placed there. It was a chain of 8 schools across the state. Luckily, MCC has picked up 2 of our youth and we were able to continue.

Conference Call with State Regarding Cost Per Issue and Level of Service

Ms. Brady received an email from John Bicia from the state informing her of a conference call regarding the cost per issue will take place. Any help from the state regarding how we can serve 273 youth is welcomed. However, the conference call has not taken place. We have not been told if they are officially accepting our number of 175 youth to serve.

Guest Introduction

Mr. Blevins introduced Ivan Adorno as the Assistant Director of the Youth Services System in New Brunswick.

Mr. Wiggley adjourned the meeting.