

Welcome

Chair Matthew Verney welcomed attendees, asked for round table introductions and called the meeting to order at 9:11am. Lauren Williams, Senior Program Coordinator at CASA of Camden County was a guest and will be joining the committee. She explained the meaning and mission of CASA which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. The volunteer advocates serve as an extra set of eyes in the court system when it comes to child custody, or foster care issues and make sure youth do not fall between the cracks. She wants to get some of their youth that are aging out of the system involved with some of the One-Stop services.

YOUTH MONTHLY LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) REPORT

Matt Verney reviewed the Youth Monthly Level of Service (LOS) Report. This report is being forwarded to Matt by the Youth One-Stop (YOS). The report shows the number of youth-served (compounded by month) has reached a total of 147 as of May 31, 2016. While a majority of the youth were either still in school or employed at the time of registration, Matt said in order to maintain a certain level of funding dedicated to serving out-of-school youth, we want to target and find ways to boost the rate of service to this sector of youth. There were 11 youth dropouts that signed up as of May. Leslie Williams, WDB comptroller asked where these youth are coming from. Marisol Vasquez, YOS Counselor, said they are walk-ins from around the county. Out of the 147 youth, 134 signed up for such services as TABE Testing, Career Planning, Pre-Assessment or Life Skills. 39 were employed at the time of registration, looking to upgrade their career and 6 obtained their GED. The committee discussed ways the YOS could attract or engage more out-of-school/dropout youth population.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Marisol gave updates to the committee about how the YOS is focusing on attracting youth dropouts. She said we are seeing more High School graduates than dropouts. In an effort to reach our target market, we are reaching out to coordinate with other programs. Marisol has spoken with David Goodman from the Youth Build program. The YOS will schedule a day to work with this agency to sign up youth. Marisol also said she will be meeting with Lori Godorov, Executive Director of The Work Group next month about being present at her orientation so we can coordinate services with them as well. Marisol also updated the committee about the progress Arthur Barclay, new community liaison, is making. Assemblyman Arthur Barclay has started to develop a good working relationship with the Camden City Schools and their counselors that work with the dropout population. Matt expressed concern that while volunteers like Arthur Barclay are capable of opening the doors of communication to the high schools and youth, the services of the YOS are best explained by its staff. He recommended coming up with a game plan that encourages volunteers to make outreach introductions and then be able to turn it back to David McKee and Marisol Vasquez who are YOS counselors.

The committee was pleased with these recent developments and discussed the positive outcomes that will come from introducing the YOS services to school administrators and coordinators of the programs such as Youth Build and The Work Group. Marisol said she can really focus on recruiting youth from Youth Build and The Work Group. Personal contact is the best way to develop these kinds of relationships that will help to capture and increase registrations by youth who have dropped out of school.

Matt Riggins asked if there were any summer youth programs around the city and if these programs could provide referral sources. Matt V. asked about high school counselors and how to reach counselors while school is out. Now that school is out, High School counselors may have more time to meet with YOS counselors. Marisol noted that the YOS is usually busier during the school year. The YOS holds an orientation every Tuesday and Thursday all year. She said Camden City recently held a summer youth hiring event. We also work with the Boys and Girls Club. PowerCorps is another program that may produce additional youth referrals. PowerCorps Camden is recruiting young people from Camden City to serve full-time in a six month

AmeriCorps program to revitalize public land in the city. PowerCorps members work with city partners to tackle pressing environmental challenges. Their projects aim to improve storm water management, clean and green vacant lots, improve community space and parks for Camden's youth, and revitalize public land in the city. Youth that do not qualify for this program can naturally be referred to the YOS. They also have funds to transport the youth to the One-Stop.

SUCCESS STORIES

The committee discussed ways of highlighting and getting the success stories of youth helped by the YOS to the media. This might attract youth to sign up for programs. The committee reviewed a success story submitted by David McKee. This young man dropped out of high school in the 11th grade. He was working a temporary job when he experienced a horrific work related injury. This young man came to us seeking his High School diploma. He attended our workforce learning link to help raise his TABE levels and prepare him for the test. He passed the test with flying colors and was then eligible for occupational training. He attended CDL training and received his license. Matt said having success stories available when speaking to high school counselors is an important tool to promote YOS services. The committee discussed ways of obtaining referrals through individuals that have successfully completed GED, job training and have obtained a job. Everyone on the committee agreed to seek to obtain more success stories that could be shared through social media and school outreach efforts.

CAMDEN CORPS PLUS UPDATE

The Camden Corps Plus grant promises upwards of 120 referrals to the YOS. It is a requirement that youth must sign up with the YOS in order to participate in this program. The coordinators are still fine tuning the details of the program. Over the course of one year, youth will have an opportunity to take classes on a college campus and study for the high school completion test. Participants will receive occupational training in one of six areas, including:

- Website Design
- Certified Nursing Assistance
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Culinary Arts
- Carpentry Construction
- Cisco Networking

To support the youth, Camden Corps Plus will offer mentoring and stipends for community service activities, job sampling, and paid internships.

OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH DISCUSSION

Marisol stated that issues such as documentation and transportation effect YOS participation. Some youth are not motivated to obtain the necessary ID or documents required for eligibility. This documentation must be on file in order to process applications. Other youth simply lack the initiative to get engaged or be helped. She gave an example of one such youth where counselors accompanied her to court, followed up and showed up for the youth, yet she remained disinterested and unresponsive. Matt said trust is another issue. Counselors also find it challenging to build trust with youth who have been exposed to life or family trauma. There are challenges to finding out what the needs are for each particular youth that comes to the YOS. Some have had work experience, some need training, some have worked yet need training to develop an additional skill set, some have graduated and have no work experience and some need to obtain their GED.

The committee further discussed the value of success stories, more media attention and perhaps offering incentives for participating youth who refer other youth to help extend our reach to the out-of-school populations. Outreach to barber shops and hair salons was also mentioned as this is a common gathering area for our target market.

Matt thanked the committee for their continued time and effort. He reminded the committee of the priority which is to collect success stories and find ways to refer out-of-school youth, particularly high school dropouts.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:22 am.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for July 28th, 2016 at the WDB office at 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by,

Kathleen Varallo

Administrative Assistant