

TO: Health & Community Services Committee

FROM: Dr. Terri Berryman, Director, Workforce Development
Jennifer Everett, Manager, Youth Division
Gary Gibson, Board Manager

SUBJECT: Summer Youth Employment Program Modifications

DATE: December 29, 2010

Over the past several months, the issue of reviewing the ages served by the Summer Youth Employment Program has been a topic of discussion. At the direction of Youth Council Chairwoman Velma Gordon, an Ad Hoc Group (AHG) comprised of Chairwoman Sylvia Johnson, Rosa Prosen-Reyes, Germain Castellanos and Dr. Terri Berryman, was established to review the issue and make recommendations for consideration by the Youth Council and Executive Committee. Staff assisting in this process included Jennifer Everett and Gary Gibson.

The Ad Hoc Group looked at four (4) criteria including:

- Age to be served;
- Eligibility criteria;
- Length of program; and
- Method of selection.

Age to be served: The Summer Youth Employment Program has had a long-standing tradition of employing 14 to 15 year olds, with in-school youth up to 21 years old with an Individual Education Program (IEP) eligible for possible employment. Based on comments back from various employers about the desirability of employing older youth (due to ability to undertake more tasks) and the high unemployment rate for young people due to current economic conditions, the AHG recommended that the age group be modified slightly so that 14 to 18 year olds would be eligible for the program. The AHG also recommended no change in eligibility for in-school youth up to 21 years old with an IEP.

Eligibility criteria: The current program provides that in order to be considered for employment, the youth be low-income, WIA eligible. The only exception is in-school youth with an IEP. The AHG discussed the possibility of opening eligibility to those individuals who qualify for the free lunch program. Following discussion, the AHG did not recommend any modifications to the existing requirement.

Length of program: The AHG also was discussed the length of employment. Ms. Everett provided details regarding the allocation provided by the County Board. Under the scenario outlined – using the minimum wage (\$8.25 per hour), 25 hours per week for six (6) weeks – Ms. Everett indicated that approximately 150 young people could be employed. The AHG approved the parameters as put forward by Ms. Everett.

Method of selection: The program historically has made use of a phone bank opening on February 1st at midnight and the development of a waitlist based on the order in which a message was left in the system. The AHG discussed the possibility of using a lottery system whereby an individual would file preliminary information with the Youth Division and be assigned a number. The applications would be accepted for a specified period of time – at least one (1) month. At the end of the application period, a random number generator would then be used to establish the order for employment consideration. Following extensive discussion, the AHG recommended that use of a lottery system be instituted.

Summary of Recommendations: The following recommendations from the Ad Hoc Group have been reviewed and approved by the Youth Council and the Executive Committee of the Workforce Investment Board.

- Age range – Open to 14 to 18 years old, with in-school youth with an IEP eligible up to 21 years old.
- Eligibility criteria – Low income, WIA eligible, with the exception of in-school youth with an IEP up to 21 years old. (No change)
- Length of program – Provide employment at minimum wage (\$8.25 per hour), 25 hours per week for six (6) weeks. (No change)
- Method of selection – Establish lottery system. Staff to develop marketing, length of application period, application and will forward at a later date.