

# “Putting Youth to Work” Series

Examples of Effective Practice in Distressed Communities

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## **New York, NY**

### **Overview**

New York faces the challenge of addressing barriers for a significant number of disconnected young people. Nearly 42,000 teens are not attending school and not working and around 139,000 young adults 18 to 24 with no high school diploma are also not attending school and not working<sup>1</sup>. To address these barriers, several departments and agencies, which include the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the Board of Education, the New York Police Department, the District Attorney’s Office, the State of New York and many community-based organizations, are working to implement effective strategies to reconnect youth to education and employment.

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is a key agency in New York’s effort to put youth to work and provides high-quality youth and family programming in the city. DCYD administers available city, state, and federal funds to community-based organizations for a wide range of high-quality programming.

The Youth Council/Youth Board advising youth programming in the city. The Youth Council is a subcommittee of the New York City Workforce Investment Board and is housed at the Department of Small Business Services. The Youth Council oversees Workforce Investment Act dollars. The Youth Board is a legislatively mandated body under city and state law and is the advisory board for DYCD. In 2003-04, with the support of the Mayor’s Office, DYCD combined the Youth Council with the Youth Board to share and align resources and strategies. This merger allowed both entities to collaboratively advise and give feedback during the RFP process for the funding and contracts that are allocated to the majority of youth-serving organizations in the city.

The former Youth Council and the former Youth Board memberships were made up of many community-based providers – the majority of whom received funding from the process. To many, this was seen as a potential conflict of interest and called for a reconstitution of membership for the newly created Youth Board/ Youth Council. The current advisory body is now made up of representatives from small business, large business, education and juvenile justice systems, the housing authority, parents, students, churches and community members – all providing a diversity of perspective and expertise. DYCD has a staff person manages meetings, membership issues and facilitates resource exchange.

## ***Major Accomplishments***

### ***Workforce Development***

Within its workforce development initiatives, DYCD offers the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), Out-of-School Youth (OSY) program, and the Summer Youth Employment Program.

DYCD’s Out-of-School Youth (OSY) program is for 16 to 21 year-old young adults who are not connected to school or work, or who need assistance upgrading their occupational skills. Funded through the Workforce Investment Act, these programs offer occupational skills training, assistance with job and college placement, GED preparation, and a wide range of supportive services designed to increase young adults’ success in the workplace and in their personal lives<sup>2</sup>. Participants receive 12 months of follow-up services after completing the program. The program requires that youth earn a certificate. Many contracted providers focus on helping youth earn their GED or the National Retail Federation Credential.

There are 20 OSY programs located in 17 community-based organizations in all five boroughs of New York City. Each offer a range of occupational training in many industries, including construction, food service, tourism, healthcare, and retail. This year’s OSY program budget is \$6.7 million, with next year’s budget increasing by 65 percent to \$11.6 million. This is due to a shift in need from the In-School Youth Program to Out-of-School Program.

Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is DYCD’s largest youth-serving program. SYEP provides New York City youth between the ages of 14 to 24 with summer employment and educational opportunities. Participants work in a variety of entry-level jobs at government agencies, hospitals, summer camps, nonprofits, small businesses, law firms, museums, sports enterprises, and retail organizations. Along with providing opportunities for career instruction, financial literacy training, academic improvement, and social growth, the program emphasizes real-world labor expectations. SYEP also aims to increase the awareness of services offered by the abundance of local community-based organizations in the city<sup>3</sup>. Last summer, the program enrolled more than 42,000 youth.

Young Adult Internships Program (YAIP) - a combination of both the OSY Program and the SYEP - began last October and is a 14-week program for low-income young adults aged 16 to 24 who are not working and not in school. YAIP is composed of a two- to four-week orientation conducted by selected community-based organizations followed by 10- to 12- week paid internships that offer structured work opportunities<sup>4</sup>. YAIP runs about three cycles a year and serves approximately 1,360 young people<sup>5</sup>. YAIP is offered at 15 sites in targeted areas of the city with high numbers of disconnected youth. Youth are placed in jobs and/or sent to school or vocational training. The mayor has a team that oversees the program, approves the placements and is assesses outcomes and service delivery. Community-based providers are required to track and monitor their outcomes for youth, demonstrating that after nine months youth are still participating in one of the activities.

YAIP was initiated as part of the Mayor’s Center for Economic Opportunity<sup>6</sup>, an effort to combat poverty. The program has been spotlighted by the Mayor’s Office and others due to its success. It was made possible because of the success of the WIA Out-of-School program and the Summer Youth Employment Program.

Along with youth workforce development strategies, DCYD also focuses on other youth-related efforts such as the Out-of-School Time Initiative, runaway and homeless youth outreach, adolescent and family literacy programming and Beacon Community Centers.

The Out-of-School Time (OST) Program is the largest after-school initiative in the nation. This free program offers a balanced mix of academic support, sports, recreational activities, and cultural experiences for elementary, middle school, and high school youth<sup>7</sup>. The Beacon Program supports 80 community centers in public schools. These centers operate in the afternoons and evenings, on weekends, during school holidays and vacation periods, and during the summer. Beacons provide a range of activities for young people, including tutoring, college prep, photography, basketball, and martial arts. Services for adults and families include General Education Diploma (GED) training, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, parenting skills workshops, and tenant education and advocacy<sup>8</sup>.

## ***Education***

Also part of the Mayor’s Center for Economic Opportunity, the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation was established in September 2005 with the goal of significantly increasing the graduation rates and college readiness of over-age and under-credited high school students. This office works to support the development of new and enhanced schools and programs designed specifically for older students who may be truant, thinking about dropping out, or are looking for another educational option. They incorporate education components, youth development support as well as career and college preparation<sup>9</sup>.

The types of schools and programs offered by OMPG include the Young Adult Borough Centers, Transfer Schools, GED preparation programs and Learning to Work (LTW), all of which are recognized by school systems across the country as highly effective at recovering, remediating, and graduating over-age and under-credited young people.

Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) are evening academic programs in supportive learning environments with an instructional model that allows students to concentrate only on the credit portfolio they need for graduation through a non-traditional block schedule. YABCs are operated through a collaborative partnership between the Department of Education and a community-based organization that provides services to students, such as youth development support, career and college counseling, and assistance with job placement<sup>10</sup>.

YABCs are designed specifically to meet the needs of high school students who might be considering dropping out because they are behind or because they have adult responsibilities that make attending school in the daytime difficult. Eligible students are at least 17.5 years old, have been in school for four or more years, and have 17 or more credits. Students graduate with a diploma from their home school after they have earned all of their credits and passed all of the required exams.<sup>11</sup>

YABCs incorporate the Learning to Work (LTW) model in their programs to assist students in overcoming some of the obstacles that impede their progress toward a high school diploma and lead them toward rewarding postsecondary employment and educational experiences. LTW is an in-depth job readiness and career exploration program designed to enhance the academic component of select YABCs, transfer high schools and GED programs. LTW offers academic support, career and education exploration, work preparation, skills development, and internships<sup>12</sup>.

Transfer Schools are small, academically rigorous high schools designed to re-engage students who have dropped out or are over-age and under-credited for their grade level. These schools create a personalized learning environment and provide connections to college. Students graduate with a high school diploma from their transfer high school. A home school guidance counselor must contact each prospective school directly to set up an interview for admission or to learn more about the school<sup>13</sup>.

West Brooklyn Community High School (WBCHS) is an example of an OMPG transfer school that also offers the Learning-to-Work program to eligible students. WBCHS is a full-time high school for students who are far from promoting on grade level and offers a personalized learning environment, rigorous academic standards, a student-centered pedagogy, and a focus on connections to college<sup>14</sup>. Along with recovery and academic remediation, a key component at West Brooklyn is the role of the advocate counselor that provides intensive support to help youth meet instructional and developmental goals by employing a highly effective youth development model.

WBCHS advocate counselors help students achieve their academic goals by creating plans that lead them from completion of a high school diploma to entering and succeeding in postsecondary education<sup>15</sup>. Advocate counselors provide intensive services such as attendance outreach, individual counseling, group advisory, conflict mediation, goal setting, linkages to Learning to Work internships, postsecondary planning, individualized programming and referrals to outside services (mental health counseling, housing, medical, etc)<sup>16</sup>. Advocate counselors have a caseload of 25 students and meet with youth as well as with teachers, other faculty and family on a regular basis to ensure all supporting partners in the student’s life are engaged.

**For more information, contact:**

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- <sup>1</sup> Kids Count 2007 Data, the Annie E. Casey Foundation Web site, <http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT.aspx>.
  - <sup>2</sup> Department of Youth and Community Development Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.
  - <sup>3</sup> Department of Youth and Community Development Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.
  - <sup>4</sup> Department of Youth and Community Development Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.
  - <sup>5</sup> Department of Youth and Community Development Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.
  - <sup>6</sup> Department of Youth and Community Development Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.
  - <sup>7</sup> Department of Youth and Community Development Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.
  - <sup>8</sup> Department of Youth and Community Development Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.
  - <sup>9</sup> NYC Center for Economic Success Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ceo/html/programs/ompg.shtml>.
  - <sup>10</sup> NYC Center for Economic Success Web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ceo/html/programs/ompg.shtml>.
  - <sup>11</sup> NYC Department of Education, Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation Web site, <http://schools.nyc.gov>.
  - <sup>12</sup> NYC Department of Education, Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation Web site, <http://schools.nyc.gov>.
  - <sup>13</sup> NYC Department of Education, Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation Web site, <http://schools.nyc.gov>.
  - <sup>14</sup> NYC Department of Education, APA Conference Site Visits document, March 5, 2009.
  - <sup>15</sup> Good Shepherd Services Web site, <http://www.goodshepherds.org/programs/community/transfer-schools/schools/wbchs.html>.
  - <sup>16</sup> Good Shepherd Services Web site, <http://www.goodshepherds.org/programs/community/transfer-schools/schools/wbchs.html>.

*ABOUT THE SERIES: This is the tenth in a series of briefs chronicling the effectiveness of youth employment delivery systems in particular communities. This brief is made possible by the generous support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies.*