



**Department of
Job and Family Services**

John R. Kasich, Governor
Michael B. Colbert, Director

TO: Workforce Investment Board Directors, County Job and Family Services Directors, Public Children Services Agency Directors, and Interested Partners

FROM: Michael B. Colbert, Director, 
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

SUBJECT: **New Initiative for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**

DATE: October 14, 2011

Every year in Ohio approximately 1,000 to 1,300 youth age out of our foster care system, and the futures they face are often grim. According to national statistics:

- 54 percent report having at least one mental health problem
- 33 percent receive neither a high school diploma nor a GED, compared to fewer than 10 percent of their same-age peers
- 33 percent have household incomes below the poverty level, which is three times the national rate
- 28 percent have been arrested
- 25 percent have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder, compared to 15 percent of Vietnam War veterans and 12 percent of Iraqi War veterans
- 22 percent experience homelessness

Those statistics are unacceptable, as I'm sure you will agree. However, I believe that by working together we can dramatically improve the educational and employment outcomes for the youth in our care. Please join me and Assistant Directors Michael McCreight and Bruce Madson as we work to turn these statistics around. I am asking for your review and support of the initiative described in the attached briefing document. Each one of you is responsible for one or more programs for youth. Individually, these programs do good work. Together, they can be transformational in the lives of these young people.

The first phase of the initiative is a series of training webinars for you, your staff, service providers, foster care youth and foster parents. The first two webinars will cross-train program staff on the WIA youth program and on the foster care independent living services. The remaining webinars will provide training on the many self-service career exploration and job search tools available to foster care youth and those assisting them with independent living plans. You will receive a schedule of these trainings within the next few weeks. I encourage you and your staff who serve youth to participate in all of them.

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I welcome your thoughts about this initiative and would like to hear about any challenges or successes you have experienced serving older youth in foster care. To provide input, please contact the project manager for this initiative, Alice Worrell, at (614) 644-0351 or Alice.Worrell@ifs.ohio.gov.

I would like to end with a quote that summarizes my hope for this effort. Joel A. Barker, the noted author who popularized the notion of "paradigm shifts," once said: "Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes time. Vision with action can change the world."

I think we can all embrace the vision of a better future for the young people in our care. Now let's work together to take action. Thank you.

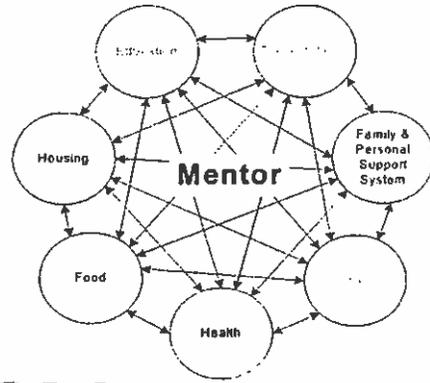
Briefing Paper on the Aging Out of Foster Care Initiative

- WHO:** The 1,000-1,300 Ohio youth who age out of foster care each year; foster care case workers and One-Stop Career Center staff members throughout Ohio; and the ODJFS Offices of Families and Children and Workforce Development.
- WHY:** To dramatically improve the educational and employment outcomes for Ohio youth aging out of foster care, better supporting their transition to adulthood.
- HOW:** By collaborating and using mentors at the heart of a service-delivery model that “connects the dots” between foster care and employment services, we will be able to better address all the needs of transitioning foster youth: their needs related to family and personal support systems, education, employment, health, food, housing and transportation. We will pursue ideas that are innovative, transformational and that could potentially become national models.
- WHAT:** Through a four-tiered approach, this initiative will include:
1. Statewide training to build common, foundational knowledge
 - Cross-program training for foster care case managers and One-Stop youth program staff
 - Training on self-service career exploration and employment assistance tools for One-Stop youth staff, service providers, and foster care youth, parents and case managers
 2. Pilot programs at the state and local levels
 - Two or more local pilots integrating employment and foster care independent living services
 - State-level pilots to include the following:
 - A mentoring partnership with a major university, with training provided for undergraduate and graduate students
 - A major Ohio corporate/foundation sponsorship
 - An awareness campaign with U.S. Army guidance counselors and recruiters
 - Possible new tax incentives and the offering of Work Opportunity Tax Credits for hiring and/or housing foster youth
 3. A comprehensive website providing access to self-service tools and resources
 4. The integration of programs statewide in a phased approach
- WHEN:**
- Early November: Program briefing and cross-training webinars for foster care and One-Stop youth staff
 - Mid-November: Training webinars on the self-service career exploration and job search tools for One-Stop youth staff, service providers, and foster care youth, parents and case managers.
 - Mid-December: Solicitation of Workforce Investment Board and public children services agency directors to submit joint letters of interest regarding hosting local pilot programs

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OhioMeansJobs

Connecting the Dots from Foster Care to Employment and Independent Living Training Webinar Series

Description of Webinars for Youth

Ohio Career Information System (OCIS)

This webinar will provide an overview of the comprehensive OCIS academic and career planning website to help you make the transition to adulthood. You will get easy, step-by-step instructions in how to use the site to:

- Discover your interests and skills
- Find occupations and jobs that match your interests and skills
- Find out about the types of colleges, schools and certificates available so you can learn the skills you need in the occupations that interest you
- Find out the costs of each school and financial aid opportunities
- Hear real-world interviews with people in careers that interests you
- Make an academic and career plan
- Use www.OhioMeansJobs.com to find job opportunities
- Create a portfolio to electronically store your important documents and accomplishments

Reality Check

This webinar will provide an overview of Reality Check, an online tool that can help you determine:

- How much money you'll need to earn to live on your own and pay for the things you need
- All the types of expenses you'll pay when you live on your own
- The types of housing and housing costs in each region of Ohio
- The average cost of utilities, such as electricity and gas, in each region of Ohio
- A realistic personal budget that matches your location and lifestyle preferences

Reality Check also can help you answer the following questions:

- What jobs pay enough for everything in my budget?
- How much time in school will it take to prepare for that job?
- What schools offer the type of training needed?
- What are the highest paying jobs that do not require a college degree?

Career Exploration

This webinar will show you all the online tools and information available to help you decide which career you'd like to pursue and the training you'll need, so you can make good choices that match your unique interests and skills.

Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ)

This webinar will show you how to use www.OhioMeansJobs.com, which is powered by Monster and is the best tool for finding job and internship opportunities in Ohio. OMJ pulls tens of thousands of job postings from numerous other websites and puts them in one convenient location. You can search for jobs by job title, industry, company or location. You can also use the site's resume feature to quickly and easily build a resume. If you post your resume on OMJ, thousands of employers will have access to it, improving your chances of landing a job.

Ohio Here to Help

This webinar will review www.OhioHereToHelp.com, a one-stop source of information about where you can find help with:

- Money
- Housing
- Food
- Health care
- Education and training
- Employment
- Child support
- Much more

A section devoted exclusively for youth – <http://ohioheretohelp.ohio.gov/youth.stm> – has information on skill building through the “Learning Express Library” from the State Library of Ohio. It features tutorials, class-specific learning tools, practice tests, software applications, skill-building courses, and a job and career accelerator. It also has information on jobs and employment resources for youth, teen health, work permits, interviewing techniques, and a student guide with information about the rights of students as consumers.