

MIDDLESEX COUNTY WIB

**YOUTH INVESTMENT COUNCIL: STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY
AT- RISK OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH**

The Middlesex County Workforce Investment Board's Youth Investment Council (YIC) has approved this Strategic Plan to focus efforts to serve our at-risk out-of-school youth in an efficient and effective manner. This plan was developed by the knowledge gained from the experiences of the YIC members, from assessment summaries of other agencies and/or institutions, from the WIA youth program staff and from surveys completed by youth. While this is not an exhaustive plan, it does include activities we expect will achieve the goal and objectives the YIC believes will positively impact the youth in career development, training and employment. The YIC will continue to monitor the results and adjust the plan as necessary to ensure the at- risk out-of-school youth is being served.

Goal

Develop a comprehensive, coordinated network of services to assist WIA eligible youth toward achieving financial independence through employment by obtaining education and skills that are in demand in the labor market of today and for the future.

Objective One: *Increase opportunities for out-of-school youth to access career information and skills training*

Create a One Stop Career System for youth in Middlesex County by staffing a Youth One-Stop Career Center in Perth Amboy and in New Brunswick.

These centers will be known as the MC4YOU (Middlesex County 4 Youth Opportunities Unlimited) program. WIA eligible youth will be offered an opportunity, through WIA funding, to attend school for their GED, to participant in an ITA to develop specific skills training, to receive assistance with employment, as well as the required elements for a WIA youth program. Non-eligible out-of-school youth will be offered career counseling and referral to other services they may need that are available in the County.

These centers will be open 9-5, Monday through Friday. The staff at the centers will be resource to other agencies and institutions as well as receive referrals from the same. The Perth Amboy Center will be expected to enroll at least 40 youth 2010-2011, and the new site in New Brunswick will be expected to enroll at least 20 youth. Both sites should be able to assist at least 50 additional youth.

Continue to develop a general recruitment strategy to assist youth programs in finding eligible out-of-school youth

The WIA Youth staff will assist Middlesex County College (MCC) in enrolling at least 30 at-risk youth in each of the two (2) WIA funded programs they offer: one (1) on the Edison campus for out-of-school youth with high school diplomas and one (1) at the YMCA in Perth Amboy for out-of-school youth without a high school diploma. While the immediate goal for the youth is different in each program, the overall goal is to assist them to be prepared to enter the workforce.

The Youth staff will also outreach to all communities in Middlesex County so all eligible youth are aware of the opportunities available through either MC4YOU or the MCC programs. This outreach will include attending community events, speaking with youth leaders, distributing information in appropriate venues, being available as speakers, helping to keep the website up-to-date on the youth 411 page and building relationships with adult high schools.

Continue to monitor and improve the service delivery system for youth through collaboration and cooperation among all appropriate agencies and institutions.

Surveys will be used to obtain feedback from at-risk youth as well as those individuals/institutions that work with these young people. The results of the surveys will be used for planning and evaluation of programs.

Youth staff will be part of the appropriate committees and task forces throughout the county to enable them to understand the needs and inventory the available services. This effort will also avoid duplication of services and point out the gaps in services so plans can avoid both.

At a minimum, the staff will attend at least ten (10) community group meetings/year.

Once a year, the YIC will organize an Annual Youth Conference, with other appropriate agencies, to advance the service delivery system for at-risk youth.

Ensure the development and distribution of information regarding assets/resources/services available to out-of-school youth.

The Youth Yellow Pages will be updated as needed and distributed throughout the youth network and through the Youth One-Stops and Youth Programs.

The youth portion of the department website will be maintained in a manner appropriate for the audience.

When possible, a Facebook page will be established to reach even more at-risk youth with information.

Strengthen linkages among workforce development and juvenile justice agencies/institutions.

Youth staff will provide services as required in the signed agreements we have with the Juvenile Justice Commission; one (1) for Jamesburg and one (1) for Bordentown.

Staff will continue to assist formerly incarcerated youth until stability and financial independence is achieved by each program participant.

Objective Two: *Decrease the dropout rate for high school students to ensure a more productive workforce and self-sustaining individuals.*

Provide secondary schools with accurate/timely career information.

Yearly distribution of Career Awareness Calendar to 9th grade students.

Provide anti-dropout activities such as NCADD's anti-dropout play.

Provide our packets of service information to be given by the guidance counselors to any student dropping out.

Provide all districts with the appropriate linkage information so users of their websites can link to ours for more information.

Enhance linkages with high schools and the guidance counselors

Attend county guidance counselor meetings twice a year.

Provide quarterly newsletters to guidance counselors with labor market information data.

Provide information on county Youth Career website and njnextstop.org

Objective Three: *Increase opportunities for out-of-school youth to interact directly with employers*

Organize networks of employers for both employment opportunities and feedback on needs.

Promote and provide appropriate speakers from the private sector to schools.

Provide two (2) to three (3) Career Expos each year for all enrolled WIA youth with employers providing the workshops/information booths, etc. If possible, work through the Vo-Techs and college for these functions.

Have sector specific employer meetings (three (3) per year) to better understand their employee needs/skills/barriers.

Develop opportunities with employers to expose youth to options and opportunities they might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience.

Seek job shadowing/intern opportunities for out-of-school youth.

Seek mentors for enrolled youth through involved employers.