



# Employer Partner Resource Handbook

## **Houston Alumni & Youth Center**

A Program of Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults

1906 Cochran Street

Houston, Texas 77009

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[www.HAYCenter.org](http://www.HAYCenter.org)

*Mission: Empowering current and former foster youth to become productive successful adults*

# General Contact Information

## Mailing Address:

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## Workforce Development Team

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## Program Overview

Nationwide, 513,000 young people live in foster care. The state of Texas ranks fourth highest with 28,883 youth currently in foster care. In the Greater Houston community alone, 6,613 youth currently live in foster care, and almost 10% “age out” of the system each year.

The typical young person aging out of foster care in Houston will have been in the system for more than 5-and-a-half years and will have moved more than 8 times to different foster homes, group facilities, shelters, or residential treatment centers. These youth lack the traditional family and social supports to successfully transition to adulthood. Youth exiting the foster care system are twice as likely as their peers to drop out of high school; suffer from unemployment rates as high as 50%; experience high rates of homelessness; and are at greater risk of arrest and incarceration. The social and economic costs are too extreme to ignore.

The Houston Alumni & Youth (HAY) Center is a one-stop center where current and former foster youth, ages 16-25, can acquire a variety of transition resources, services, and support designed to help them transition from the child welfare system to productive, successful adults in the community. The HAY Center offers services associated with the Harris County Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program and the Texas Workforce Commission, as well as a wealth of free resources and services.

A major focus of the HAY Center is to assist youth in obtaining meaningful, sustainable employment. Youth receive life skills training while still in foster care, and work closely with foster parents, case managers, and partners to develop individualized plans to help them achieve their goal of independence. In addition to job readiness training, youth have the opportunity to participate in the **Summer Jobs Program** to gain valuable work experience, financial literacy, and mentorship. While the majority of youth return to full-time educational programs at the close of the summer program, some employer partners elect to hire youth on a regular basis either part or full-time. Our young people report that their summer job was a valuable experience and helped shape their future career choices.

For older youth who are no longer in foster care, the center continues to provide *Aftercare and Transition Services*. Many of these youth are ready to begin full-time regular jobs as their



primary means of support. The HAY Center offers additional career guidance, training, and referrals to vocational/post-secondary education to help prepare them for the workforce. The **Sustainable Jobs Program** is designed to help prepare youth for full-time careers. A workforce coordinator is assigned to individual youth to help develop their resume and conduct a job search. As an employer partner you may be contacted by the workforce coordinator to suggest a youth candidate for your company. We will only refer youth who we believe are job ready and an appropriate match for your worksite. An introductory subsidized employment period may be available to “try on” the candidate prior to making the full hire decision. During the initial probationary period the HAY Center remains your partner to help assist the youth in making any work adjustments necessary to become a successful and contributing member of your team. This includes transportation assistance, clothing assistance, and special equipment that the employee must provide. Basically, we want to do whatever it takes to ensure a successful, long-term work experience for the youth and employer.





# Summer Jobs Program 2016

The majority of youth growing up in foster care never have the opportunity to gain employment experience. The aim of the Summer Jobs Program is to afford foster youth the opportunity to gain employment experience and job readiness skills, learn financial literacy, and mentorship. Each youth has been screened, drug tested, and has completed a career orientation and job readiness classes prior to being placed at a worksite. Youth are then placed in an open position with a participating worksite (employer) and is expected to learn and perform all job duties assigned to them by their employer to the best of his/her abilities. The HAY Center pays 100% of the youth's salary; the employer provides the job and supervision. The Center's Employment Coordinator and case management team follow-up with youth and employers and are available to provide assistance as needed. Over the past three years both employers and youth have reported great satisfaction with the experience. More than 80% of previous participants continued to work full-time, or returned to school following the youth employment program.

*I learned how to manage my time and my money, and how to keep a job. Summer jobs program was a positive experience I would recommend to others. Juan O. (age 17)*

## **Benefits Include:**

- Providing job opportunities that enables foster youth to acquire a variety of skills that will help them make future educational and career decisions
- Supporting the local community
- Bringing diversity to the work place
- Avoiding personnel issues – all youth are paid and employed by the HAY Center through our contracted temporary staffing agency. Your company pays no taxes, healthcare, workers compensation, or other employee expenditures
- All youth are drug tested and have criminal background checks prior to employment
- Identifying a pool of qualified individuals with a known work history with your company to hire from for future part-time/full-time positions

## **The Process:**

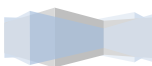
Youth between the ages of 16 and 21 are referred by their foster care counselors to participate in the summer jobs program. Referred youth will have already completed a 30 hour basic life skills curriculum including: personal/inter-personal skills, workforce readiness, transportation and housing, personal health and safety. Each candidate is individually assessed and tested for basic skills level (math, reading, clerical skills, organizational skills, logical reasoning), and are interviewed by our workforce Coordinators. Once selected, the youth's foster parent or caregiver completes an orientation regarding program requirements, expectations, and how they can help support their youth's summer employment. Prior to worksite assignment and final selection youth are drug screened, background checked, and complete a full day orientation.

Once final selections have been made, our Workforce Coordinator will begin the matching process. The youth/worksite match is critical to the success of the employment experience for both youth and employer. Many variables are considered when making this match including: needs of the employer partner, youth's interests and skills, experience, background, and location. Our workforce team will notify the employer and youth of the worksite selection, including a full disclosure of any issues that may be identified. Sometimes an employer/youth match just does not work out as planned. This is when the employer should contact the assigned Workforce Coordinator as soon as possible to discuss the issue. The HAY Center manages the Youth/Employer relationship. If necessary we will make changes in the youth workplace assignment after consultation with the employer partner. We are the employer's and youth's resource to help ensure a successful employment experience.

Prior to your youth reporting to the worksite we will make sure they have appropriate clothing, and transportation to get to and from the worksite. Very often youth are driven by their foster parent or take public transportation to the worksite. Please let us know right away if your youth employee has any needs.

## **On the Job**

Summer jobs youth should be treated like any other new hire. They will need a clear understanding of your expectations for them, who will train and supervise them, break times, lunch times, work schedule, and attendance/dress code policies. They should be held



accountable for assigned tasks as well as any required meetings/trainings during the course of the summer.

### **Employer Partner Responsibilities**

- Provide youth with a safe, positive work environment
- Identify a direct supervisor for the youth who is willing to train, supervise, and model good workforce behaviors
- Assign meaningful work to the youth
- Complete a time sheet every Friday and fax or email to the HAY Center
- Provide regular feedback regarding performance to the youth and the HAY Center workforce coordinator
- Immediately contact the HAY Center if there is a workplace incident
- Participate in a 2 week youth/employer initial evaluation (via telephone)
- Participate in a worksite visit by the HAY Center’s workforce coordinator
- Allow youth to participate in mandatory in-service trainings/workshops (arranged and conducted by the HAY Center)
- Complete final program survey evaluation

*It felt so good with my first paycheck ... feels so good to know I’m really worth something. I opened my first bank account – learned a lot, and I’m saving for my own place one day. – Kendria F. (Age 18)*

### **Time Sheets**

A time sheet must be submitted weekly in order for youth to be paid. The employer is responsible for submitting time sheets and ensuring that time is recorded on a daily basis and accurately reflects hours worked. **The youth’s immediate supervisor should hold the time sheet and the youth report directly to them to record their time of arrival, lunches, and departure.** It is very important that time sheets be completed in a legible manner. Many times faxed or poorly copied/scanned time sheets are not legible once they are received at the HAY Center.

- Time sheets are due to the HAY Center by close of business each Friday, and no later than 10:00 am on the following Monday morning
- Fax time sheets to: 713/223-5073, or email them to [Richard.funderburk@cps.hctx.net](mailto:Richard.funderburk@cps.hctx.net)



- If you are out of time sheets, or have a question regarding completing the time sheet please contact a member of the HAY Center’s workforce team

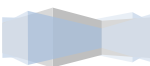
### **Attendance and Leave**

Youth are expected to adhere to your workplace attendance policy. Youth have been instructed that if they are sick, or must miss work for any other reason they are to immediately notify their worksite supervisor, and contact the workforce coordinator assigned to them at the HAY Center. As a courtesy, if a youth misses an assigned work date please call or email the assigned HAY Center workforce coordinator. Youth are also instructed to notify their immediate supervisor if they are going to be more than 15 minutes late for an assigned work shift. Employers are expected to notify the HAY Center if there are any problems with excessive attendance issues so we can help remedy the situation. Please note that youth utilizing public transportation may need some accommodations to their work hours.

While the majority of our youth participating in the summer jobs program understand that the program is their summer activity, some youth may be involved with other required activities including doctor’s appointments, family trips, etc. Our hope is to identify these as part of the workplace assignment process and make you aware of these before the start of the project. However, if youth have scheduled activities which require missing work hours they have been instructed to notify their immediate supervisor with as much advance notice as possible. If a youth is taking excessive leave time during the project, please contact the HAY Center workforce coordinator to assist in remedying the problem.

### **Incidents on the Job**

Youth are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Since for most of the participants this will be their first exposure to the workplace, it is important that employers give youth clear direction as to what is acceptable workplace conduct. Regular feedback, both positive and constructive, is critical to this learning process. It is important to remember that the HAY Center is available to help assist with any issues that may arise during the course of the summer jobs program. The major goal is that both employers are satisfied with the performance of their summer jobs youth, and that youth have a positive learning experience. Workplace incidents should be reported to the HAY Center immediately.







## Key Dates – Summer Jobs 2016:

- May 12<sup>th</sup> , 11:30am – 1:00pm Employer Orientation, Youth Services Center, Suite B204, 6300 Chimney Rock Road, Houston, TX (lunch provided)
- May 28<sup>th</sup> , 11:00am – 12:30pm – Caregiver Orientation, HAY Center location
- June 6<sup>th</sup> Youth Participant Start Dates
- June 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> (First start group)– 2 Week Youth/Employer Evaluation
- June 29<sup>th</sup> - Mandatory Youth In-Service Workshop - Murworth D36A, 10:00am – 2:00pm
- July 20<sup>th</sup> - Mandatory Youth In-Service Workshop - Murworth D36A, 10:00am – 2:00pm
- July 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> – Worksite Visits
- July 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> – Worksite Visits
- August 10<sup>th</sup> End of Program Appreciation Luncheon, 2525 Murworth Rd., Houston, Texas - Suite D36A&B, 11:00am – 1:00pm
- August 12<sup>th</sup> – Last day of work
- August 28<sup>th</sup> – Employer Survey Evaluation Due





## Tips on Working with Current and Former Foster Youth Workers

The fact that youth have experienced the foster care system means that they have been removed from their families due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment and placed in state custody. Many of the older youth have been in foster care for several years and have often experienced numerous moves to different foster/group homes and various facilities. While being very resilient, many youth face challenges as they mature and prepare to make the transition to adulthood. Just like many non-foster youth, they are faced with making key decisions regarding their future education, employment, and living arrangements. Since current and former foster youth lack the traditional family supports, the HAY Center strives to help empower them to achieve this transition to adulthood. These youth need the same support, experiences, and opportunities all young adults need to be successful. This is especially true as they are introduced to the workforce.

Based on previous employment experiences these are some key elements to consider while working with foster youth:

**Structure and Clear Expectations** – any young person will perform much better on their first employment experience if there are clear and established structures and expectations.

**Hands on Supervision** – ideally youth should have one primary supervisor to report to on a daily basis. This person should be familiar with the program and who to contact at the HAY Center should they have any questions or issues. The supervisor should be able to provide positive and constructive feedback on a regular basis, and be supportive to the youth to help guide them through their first job experience.

**Be Mindful of the Youth's Foster Care Experience** – while we want you to treat your youth employee as any other new hire, it is still important to be mindful that current and former foster youth have had some unique experiences which may manifest in some coping behaviors which are not usual. An example of this is that many foster youth are moved anytime there is a



problem. They are accustomed to mistakes leading to the worse possible outcomes. It is not uncommon for foster youth to react to a workplace criticism by not coming back to work because they just assumed they are fired.

As a part of their workforce readiness training we stress the importance of proper workplace conduct. This includes how to dress appropriately, use of personal electronics, and workplace etiquette – foster youth as with any young first time worker may make mistakes. Please try to keep this in mind when dealing with youth and be sure to contact the HAY Center to help with any of these issues as soon as they come up.

**Doing Whatever it Takes** – it is very important to us that every employer and youth has a positive employment experience. The workforce coordinators at the HAY Center are committed to “doing whatever it takes”, to ensure a successful placement. Depending on the employer and youth’s individual needs we have resources available to assist with work clothing, transportation vouchers, tools/special items. Please let us know if you become aware of a need.





## Sustainable Employment Program

For older youth who are no longer in foster care the center continues to provide *Aftercare and Transition Services*. Many of these youth are ready to begin full-time regular jobs as the primary means of support. The HAY Center offers additional career guidance, training, and referrals to vocational/post-secondary education to help prepare them for the workforce. The **Sustainable Jobs Program** is designed to help prepare youth for full-time careers. A workforce coordinator is assigned to individual youth to help develop their resume and conduct a job search. As an employer partner you may be contacted by the sustainable workforce coordinator to suggest a youth candidate for your company. We will only refer youth whom we feel are job ready and appropriate match for your worksite. During the initial probationary period the HAY Center remains your partner to help assist the youth in making any work adjustments necessary to become a successful and contributing member of your team. This includes transportation assistance, clothing assistance, and special equipment that the employee must provide. Basically, we want to do whatever it takes to ensure a successful, long-term work experience for the youth and employer.

*I'm so proud to have a real job this time with a future! They helped me set up day care, with work clothing, and transportation. Now I can start taking care of my children. This is what I've dreamed of. Jessica A. (Age 23)*

### **Benefits Include:**

- Providing job opportunities that enables former foster youth to start their careers and achieve independence
- Supporting the local community
- Bringing diversity to the work place
- An opportunity to be an informal mentor to a young adult
- Youth have all received job readiness training
- The HAY Center is available as a resource to help ensure successful workplace transition by assisting the young person with clothing, transportation, and other resources needed



## **Employer Partner Responsibilities**

- Provide youth with a safe, positive work environment
- Identify a direct supervisor for the young adult who is willing to train, supervise, and model good workforce behaviors
- Provide regular feedback regarding performance to the young adult and the HAY Center sustainable workforce coordinator
- Understand potential challenges former foster youth may encounter and contact the HAY Center for support

## **Placement**

Prior to the HAY Center sustainable workforce coordinator contacting the employer, each young adult is assessed and screened to determine their work readiness, skills, and interests. Other factors including the youth's location, means of transportation, and child care needs are taken into account and planned for. We work with the individual to develop their resume and job search strategy. We only make recommendations for you to consider and interview. It is very important to us that the youth is a good match for your worksite.

## **Retention**

We want to be your partner in attaining and keeping good workers. We will contact you by phone the first day to make sure that the young adult had a successful first day and has everything they need. By the end of the second week we will conduct a site visit to meet with the youth and their immediate supervisor to discuss how things are going. Please, at any time, during the probationary period contact the HAY Center sustainable workforce coordinator if there are any issues which need to be addressed.

During the first 90 days of employment we want to have periodic contact with the young adult and their immediate supervisor. We have found when issues are addressed immediately the work placement is much more likely to remain successful. We will arrange a schedule to call the immediate supervisor periodically and will conduct at least one site visit during the probationary period. At the end of the 90 day period will conduct a very short exit survey interview with both the employer and employee. At any time during the retention period, please do not hesitate to contact the HAY Center as a resource. Following the 90 follow-up period we will consider the placement stable and retain a case only to provide services on an as needed basis. The young adult or employer can feel free to contact us as a resource at any time during or following the retention period.

