Henry Street Settlement's Youth Employment Training Program

Funded by: Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), U.S. Department of Labor

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HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAM PROPOSAL

by Donna Bonem Rich

The Henry Street Settlement was founded in 1893 and today offers over twenty innovative programs including day care, mental health services, housing, and a variety of arts programs. The Settlement has been working in the field of youth employment for many years. Henry Street began by providing summer and year-round jobs that ranged from low skill activities—such as delivering interagency mail—to the more skilled positions of day camp counselor and clerical assistant. In the past five years, Henry Street has been enlarging its Youth Employment Service Program to pay attention to the development of work readiness skills in youngsters and to the provision of skill training and on-the-job work experience.

Henry Street has pioneered in the field of youth employment; it has also pioneered in many areas of social service (e.g., Mobilization for Youth began in 1959 at Henry Street). In 1975, long before most community-based agencies received government funding to operate youth employment programs, the Settlement ran a demonstration program called Supported Employment for Adolescents (SEA). Funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), the SEA Program combined on-the-job training of court-involved youth (ages 14–16) with educational and counseling supports. The program served as an alternative to institutionalization for many young people.

The success of the SEA Program demonstrated the effectiveness of combining a mix of services with supervised supported employment in order to help young people make positive adjustments to school, work, their families and community. Using the SEA model, Henry Street then developed a program focused on work readiness—for a general population of minority youth (ages 16–21) to help them make positive adjustments to the world of work.

In all, more than 100 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 are currently employed part-time or full-time (not including the summer employment programs) at the Settlement through...
a variety of governmental and privately-funded programs. All these youngsters have access to the educational, recreational, developmental, and health services offered at Henry Street. The Settlement provides an excellent base of support services for youth engaged in learning the skills and attitudes required by most work settings.

Since August 1979 Henry Street has been operating a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Youth Employment and Training Program (YETP) funded through the New York City Department of Employment (a CETA prime sponsor). The program involves the training of 60 young men and women – 40 in secretarial skills and 20 in technical theater skills. Targeted to serve out-of-school youth, the program provides vocational skills that will then open up unsubsidized job opportunities by the end of the training cycle. Several of the graduates of the clerical component have already accepted permanent employment and technical theater participants are working on actual productions of Henry Street’s nationally acclaimed professional company, New Federal Theater.

YETP projects are funded locally throughout the country. These programs seek to enhance the job prospects and career opportunities of young persons – through employment and training services designed locally and adapted to local needs.

Background

In 1973 Congress passed legislation consolidating many of the existing employment and training programs. This legislation – the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) – supports a variety of federal efforts through a network of local governments known as prime sponsors (for the most part cities or counties). New York City is such a prime sponsor and its CETA programs are administered by the Department of Employment. Localities are given control of a large portion of CETA funds, thereby enabling programs to be planned and administered according to the needs of local jurisdictions. Prime sponsors, in turn, look for organizations with the ability to deliver job services to those needing them.

One of the newest CETA programs is YETP (Youth Employment and Training Program), which was developed in 1977 as one of several parts of the President’s Youth Employment Demonstrations Projects Act (YEDPA). Others are YCCIP (Youth Community Conservation and Improvement Projects); YIEP (Youth Incentive Entitlement Projects); and YACC (Youth Adult Conservations Corps). YEDPA was signed into law by the President in August of 1977 and was added to the original 1973 legislation as CETA Title III Part C. It is now CETA Title IV.

YETP projects concentrate on youngsters (ages 16–21) having the most difficulty in obtaining employment. The legislation mandates that special consideration be given to community-based organizations “with demonstrated effectiveness in the delivery of employment services.” Congress emphasized the use of community-based organizations (CBOs) as it was felt they could reach individuals unlikely to be served by more traditional approaches. The end result of YETP projects must be job development and placement to secure unsubsidized employment, to the maximum extent possible, for participants. YETP programs require that comprehensive services be provided to youth.

New York City funds YETP projects once a year through an RFP (Request For Proposal) mechanism. In mid-October 1978 Henry Street learned that YETP applications would be due to the prime sponsor, the Department of Employment, by November 30. We called the department and ascertained that application kits and program guidelines could be picked up and that a technical assistance workshop on how to fill out the application forms was scheduled for November 1. We let them know Henry Street would be attending.

Development of the Proposal

At the November 1 training session on how to prepare the application we met YETP officials