

MWCA Best Practices

WIB Name/WSA **Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council**

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Through the PIC's Healthy Transitions Grant we have been able to provide supportive services to our area youth who have or are in out-of-home placement and/or are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Our primary goal is to prevent homelessness for at risk youth ages sixteen to twenty-one. A primary way of helping to prevent homelessness is to assist these youth in seeking gainful employment and teaching them how to secure employment permanently. Once employment is gained, finding stable housing is the next step (that is, if obtaining stable housing wasn't the first essential step to preventing homelessness). We are able to get around the employment piece as the Healthy Transitions program allows some rental assistance for those youth. Going along, another great aspect of this program is there is monies allowed to help at risk youth gain a work experience similar to that of the Minnesota Youth Program. The employment allowance is a wonderful piece as a majority of these youth have had no work experience nor do they have those opportunities available which are available to non-at-risk youth as they are for the most part trying to work out all the problems they have endured through their lifetime (lack of parental supervision either due to being deceased or incarcerated bringing upon many problems for the child).

The youth are finding gainful employment in their communities (Marshall, Tracy, Canby, and Dawson) and progressing very well thus employers in the area are also obtaining productive employees in which they can develop for the better. Post-secondary training is also an option for these youth; certified nursing assistant classes have been paid for and a customized welding class will also be paid for a young man. Community impact is the greatest. This program is able to allow those court involved youth to decrease their criminal activity and become productive citizens in their community. The Healthy Transitions program not only finds stable housing and employment but it also assists youth in learning both tangible and intangible independent living skills such as, home management, money management, job skills, career planning, relationship/conflict resolution, self-esteem, etc. Independent living skills are taught both one-on-one and as a group. Our groups are held twice a month and involve the community quite a bit as they are many individuals from a variety of agencies/organizations that are more than happy to come and speak to the youth about how their agency/organization can benefit them while on their own, some examples, are Western Community Action, The Schwan Food Company, Lutheran Social Services in Willmar, Landlords, among many other businesses in the Lyon County area. The independent living skills group has collaborated with the county's SELF grant which has created a strong relationship between the PIC and Lincoln, Lyon, and Murray Human Services creating strong ties for those youth resulting in a decrease of youth falling through the cracks due to referral processes. Between the primary services available through the Healthy Transitions grant the greatest facet is the ability to work on those barriers that fall in between gaining employment and obtaining stable housing such as obtaining transportation (demonstrating how to utilize public transportation and obtaining their permit/license), vital documents (birth certificate, social security card, and/or state identification card), and monitoring their school stability. Overall, the Healthy Transitions program has been a wonderful program for those youth aging out of care or about to age out of care especially as there are a lot of youth in out of home placement and in need of supportive services in order to build stable foundations for themselves while on their own. This population tends to grow each year and without great programs such as the Healthy Transitions at risk youth would not have the opportunities to achieve goals in which every youth has evident or not.

