

Camden County Workforce Investment Board Youth Investment Council

Youth Strategic Plan

“...Approximately 35 percent of the city’s residents are under 18 years old, and nearly 50 percent of Camden’s children live in poverty. Single parent women head 60 percent of Camden households with children...

Only 68 percent of Camden’s students complete high school, and less than 10% go on to college... on standardized tests for 11th graders, only 49% of Camden students passed the reading component, compared to 85 percent statewide... national figures show that 49% of the people in Camden are considered “functionally illiterate”, compared with an average of 21 percent in New Jersey...

Students who drop out of school often enter the workforce without the basic skills required in today’s job market... according to the County Prosecutor’s office, homicide is the leading cause of death for residents ages 15 to 24. Much of this crime can be attributed to the open drug trade that employs approximately 2,200 Camden residents... children are not just victims in this environment... young children serve as “scouts”... and... “catchers”. The fact that there were more arrests of 13 year olds than of 17 year olds (2001) is of particular concern...

Excerpted from *A Path Forward for Camden*
A report of the Annie E. Casey Foundation
June 2001

I. Overview

The Annie E. Casey report published two years ago paints a grim picture of the options and alternatives available to youth in Camden, and presents a daunting challenge to organizations and agencies that provide services to the County’s youth. The Camden County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and its Youth Investment Council (YIC) has an established history of embracing this challenge. Since the inception of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) the WIB and YIC have facilitated the development of comprehensive youth services by convening forums as a venue for providing technical assistance to youth providers as they wrestle with identifying plausible options for addressing the needs of in-school and out-of-school youth and the challenges associated with successfully transitioning youth into the workplace. A hallmark of these efforts was the 2001 collaboration with the Camden City Prosecutor’s Office in successfully competing for a US Department of Labor (USDOL) Youth Offender grant.

In looking forward to the goals set forth by the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission's (SETC) in serving New Jersey's most vulnerable youth, the WIB is once more ready to tackle these challenges. This strategic plan addresses how the WIB intends to serve the targeted youth populations. The targeted youth are affiliated with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), and/or the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC), who are residing in Camden County both through its existing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds for 2003-2004 as well as exploring options for funding from other state-identified sources.

II. Camden County Programs Serving SETC Targeted Youth Populations

Not surprisingly, the statistics provided at the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission's (SETC) Youth Planning Session were similarly staggering as those articulated in the Annie E. Casey Foundation Report. Statistics for the targeted populations (TANF, DYFS and JJC-affiliated) indicate that:

- Camden County has the second highest overall number of youth (including foster care, residential treatment, group homes and youth shelters) within the State of New Jersey with 245, which is only 38 less than Essex and more than double any other county within the State,
- The third highest overall number of TANF (child only) youth cases (701) reside in Camden County,
- Camden County has the second highest number of dropouts 5755, (contrary to the trend of decreased dropouts, 700 in 00/01 after an overall 3 year decrease of approximately 100).
- Finally, the profile of JJC affiliated youth shows that Camden is the highest committing municipality in the State.

Youth within these targeted populations have traditionally been served in WIB sponsored programs. For Program Year 2002/2003, records indicate that 32.4 percent were out-of-school youth; 12.9 percent were TANF youth; and 51.4% were JJC youth.

However, the Camden WIB asserts that even more youth representing these targeted populations are being served because current practices documenting WIA eligibility do not necessarily capture a youth's attachment to multiple eligibility categories. The process appears to be limited to identifying a single eligibility category e.g. TANF, DYFS, JJC, rather than capturing all eligibility categories. Furthermore, given the statistics noted above, a case can be made that especially in Camden, crossovers exist with individual youth participants attached to multiple categories, e.g. TANF, drop out and an offender. Further compounding the lack of reliable data is that no statistical information on the percentage of DYFS youth within WIA

funded programs is tracked. All of these practices impede the WIB in providing an accurate picture on the extent to which the targeted populations are presently being served.

Having noted those limitations, Camden County as indicated above, is carrying out a number of important programs targeted to these populations. The profiles provided below highlight these activities both through WIA funding as well as other funding sources.

U.S. Department of Labor Competitive Grant

- **Camden Community Connections:** *USDOL \$1,500,000.00 funded Youth Offender Grant serving 230 in school and out of school older and younger youth.*

Camden County, one of seven communities in the Northeast, secured this grant through a highly competitive process uniquely positioning Camden in the forefront of urban areas addressing the myriad needs of its youth offender population. The grant leverages and enhances existing services and resources of 23 partners to implement prevention strategies, expand services to youth in alternative sentences and on probation, and aftercare services to youth who are committed to local residential programs. The grant enables the coalition to connect at risk youth and young offenders while they are still part of the arrest or juvenile justice process.

Two faith-based community anchor sites were established through the grant with all participating youth linked through one of the anchors. The anchors serve as a conduit for youth to access the services of the entire faith-based community for continued support and engagement in a comprehensive program of work and youth development activities. Participating youth receive intensive employment services, counseling, educational support, and mentoring through this grant.

WIA Funded Programs

- **The Juvenile Justice Commission:** *funding level \$55,235 serving 100 younger and older out of school youth who have been adjudicated, on probation or parole and assigned to the Campus program, Camden Community Service Center, and Camden Day and Residential Treatment Program.*

The program provides employment readiness classes and linkages to academic and occupational training.

- **The Work Group Youth Corp Program:** *funding level \$556,440 (WIA) serving 40 younger and older out of school youth, and \$278,220 (WFNJ) serving 20 TANF younger and older out of school youth.*

The Work Group is a nationally certified U.S. Department of Labor PEPNet youth provider, which recognizes exemplary youth programs. The Youth Corp program

combines literacy training, community service work projects and work readiness skill training.

- **Genesis Counseling Center—Comprehensive Addiction Recovery for Youth Program:** *funding level \$248,437 serving 35 out of school younger and older youth released from a juvenile correction facility to community supervision, or parolees who are in danger of being charged with a violation of parole.*

This is an intensive day treatment program that provides literacy, mentoring, support services, work readiness training, community work experience, pre-apprenticeship, work experience and job placement

- **Goodwill Industries:** *funding level \$420,450 serving 50 younger in-school youth.*

The Goodwill Retail Institute combines educational, academic, life skills and work skills activities to prepare youth for entry-level employment positions in the retail industries. The work experience component of this program is year round.

Juvenile Justice Initiatives

- **The Camden County Juvenile Drug Court:** *Camden County Prosecutor's Office & Camden City Police Department.*

In 1998 the Camden County One-Stop system, the Drug Court and the Juvenile Supervision section of the Camden County Probation Division entered a unique partnership to extend and target core employment services including job placement, counseling, literacy and occupational training to youth involved in the Juvenile Drug Court program.

- **Police M.A.L.L.:** *Camden City Police Department (Multi-Agency Life Line).*

Established in 1997, the program provides police with community diversion alternatives for first time offenders. Triage is provided to direct youth to the most appropriate service option and services include a family and therapeutic assessment for each youth.

- **Violent Serious Offender Re-Entry Grant:** *USDOL funded to the NJ Department of Corrections.*

The focus in Camden City of this newly funded grant is providing wrap around services to youth 17 to 22 years of age and particularly with a connection to the One-Stop as these youth transition back into the mainstream.

- **Yes Residential & Shelter Treatment Facility:** *Juvenile Justice Commission funded \$13,138.*

This summer youth program provides 26 residential youth with exposure to the arts. Over this summer the youth participating in the program will have access to a variety of art related experiences culminating in the development of two stage productions.

- **Hopeworks 'N Camden:** *Juvenile Justice Commission funded \$12,195.*

This summer program provides 15 youth with technology training and a practical application of the skills developed in a work simulation. This is a two part project with youth receiving training in GIS software and Internet website development as well as a work simulation surveying the community to locate youth services within Camden City.

- **Juvenile Resource Center Entrepreneurial Program:** *Juvenile Justice Commission funded \$19,188.*

This summer program exposes 25 youth to the development elements of a small business. The youth participating in the program will be developing vending opportunities in partnership with the local minor league baseball team.

Education Initiatives—The Academies

- **Camden City Creative Arts High School:** *NJ Department of Education funded.*

The school serves over 200 hundred students, providing a comprehensive academic curriculum that promotes academic excellence and cultural awareness through the arts. The school has a structured college preparatory academic program with extensive instruction in the arts. Students participate in community service projects throughout the year and participate in a higher learning and/or internship programs during the summers. Highlights of these higher learning and internships include the GEMS program at Rutgers University designed for girls interested in the engineering field, internships in city government jobs and students completing a mural at the Camden Board of Education building.

- **Dr. Charles E. Brimm Medical Arts High School:** *NJ Department of Education funded.*

The school serves a diverse population of 264 students with a comprehensive high school education that integrates community service and state of the art technology, focusing on the full range of health care careers. The school has a structured college preparatory academic program with a dual emphasis of preparing students for a two and four year college experience or to gain employment in the health care field upon graduation. Three area health systems are involved with the students attending this high school; Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Cooper Medical Center, and Virtual Health

Systems. Students are able to tour the departments of the facilities and also volunteer at the facilities in a variety of positions.

Department of Human Services Initiative

- **School Based Youth Services Program:** *NJ Department of Human Services funded.*

This program provides adolescents and children, especially at-risk youth, the opportunity to complete their education and obtain skills that lead to employment or additional education. The program is focused on assisting at-risk youth lead a mentally and physically healthy life. Each site offers a comprehensive range of services including; crisis intervention, individual and family counseling, primary and preventive health services, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, training and placement, summer and part-time job development, referrals to health and social services and recreation services.

School-Based Youth Services have been provided at Woodrow Wilson and Camden High School's since the inception of the program in 1988, and the program recently expanded to establish services in five Middle Schools. The expanded services are now available at Cooper B. Hatch Middle School, Morgan Village Middle School, Pyne Poynt Middle School, Veterans Memorial Middle School, and East Camden Middle School.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development Initiative

- **YouthBuild:** *The Housing Authority of Camden City and Generations, Inc.*

Camden City currently has two YouthBuild programs under development through the auspices of The Housing Authority of Camden City and Generations, Inc. These two programs target high school dropouts between the ages of 18 and 24. Both programs include academic enrichment, leadership development, vocational education and work experience in the construction trades.

In addition to the outlined programs there are a myriad of organizations and agencies that serve the needs of at-risk youth within Camden County including government agencies, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations. Attached is a listing which will provide a more complete profile on the multiple organizations and strategies in place in Camden County. (See agency and organization list at end of this plan).

III. Camden County WIB & YIC Strategies for PY 2003/2004

The Camden County WIB & YIC is prepared to adjust its plans for this year's WIA program as well as launch several new YIC sponsored initiatives to insure that the targeted populations are served, to the extent possible, with existing funds.

However, before proceeding to describe these initiatives, it is important to note that Camden County is experiencing a twenty-four (24%) percent reduction in this year's WIA allocation for youth programming. This translates to a loss of approximately \$300,000. This will significantly hamper the WIB & YIC's ability to sustain existing programs at their current level and, therefore, underscores the critical need to identify additional programs and services for youth as is addressed in Section IV of this plan.

WIA Youth RFP

The Camden County WIB has not yet released its Request for Youth Programming (RFP) for this year's WIA funding. To address the state's request to increase services to the targeted population, the YIC will review the existing RFP structure and make adjustments as follows:

- The RFP will require a recruitment plan that describes how respondents will recruit applicants from the targeted populations.
- Respondents will be required to describe how they presently provide services to the targeted population and their performance/success in serving these populations segments.
- Respondents will be required to describe their case management services and how they support youth as they transition through the program and connecting services.
- An emphasis will be placed on program designs that include the program components most needed by the targeted populations.

Increased Collaboration

The YIC will take a two-pronged approach in further developing the support system for the targeted youth.

- Prior to the start of programs funded through this year's RFP, the YIC, in partnership with the One Stop, will sponsor a recruitment conference. The conference will include representatives of organizations who historically serve the targeted population. The agenda will focus on building partnerships between the organizations and the specific programs.

- A longer term agenda will be the facilitation of several strategy sessions that will include One Stop Partners, youth program providers and organizations who serve the targeted populations. The purpose of the strategy session will be to strengthen the collaborative of existing organizations. As part of this process, existing protocols between and among the organizations will be examined to determine best practices and interagency mechanisms that through collaborative efforts will provide additional supportive services to the targeted populations.

Improved Data Collection and Analysis

Recognizing the difficulty in identifying the levels of services provided to the targeted populations, the YIC will identify concrete methods to improve the collection of data and information about a youth's TANF, DYFS, and JJC status.

- An analysis will be conducted to ensure that they are proportionally represented in WIA funded programs.
- The WIB & YIC will facilitate the development of a systematic approach to the collection and dissemination of data and information regarding these youth populations among youth providers.

IV. Expansion of WIA Funded Youth Programs

The grim reality facing Camden County is its ability to adequately serve the targeted population. Three conditions exist that deserve recognition:

- Funding for Camden County is being reduced by twenty-four (24) percent.
- Research shows that the most vulnerable youth at risk are prone to co-occurring disorders, which by their nature will require coordinated case management services at a higher cost than traditional youth programs.
- Existing youth organizations and programs do not have the resources to expand services or levels of service without additional funding.

The WIB and YIC have identified two major approaches should additional funds be made available. Obviously, Camden County strongly encourages the state to restore Camden County to its previous funding level of 2002-2003.

Should funds become available, the Camden WIB & YIC, are proposing two strategies for utilizing the funds:

Strategy 1:

Establish a Youth Literacy Lab through the One-Stop system. Youth provider organizations have shared with the YIC that there are insufficient options to meet the literacy needs of the targeted youth and frankly, no options to meet the needs of low level functioning targeted youth. Therefore, the YIC has identified as a priority the need to provide comprehensive, measurable literacy services to Camden's targeted youth. The dropout statistics previously cited support this direction.

Targeted youth in need of literacy services generally fall into the following four categories:

- Out of school youth with an incomplete education and sufficient literacy skills to participate in a GED program.
- Out of school youth with an incomplete education without sufficient literacy skills to participate in a GED program.
- Out of school youth with a high school diploma without sufficient literacy skills to enter post-secondary education institutions.
- Out of school youth with low level functioning skills that are an impediment to pursuing completing high school, post-secondary education, and or gaining employment.

During the past year, a few out of school youth in the target populations were referred to the Camden County Resource Center from agencies and programs (including the Drug Court program) incapable of meeting their literacy needs. These youth possessed extremely low literacy levels, which were an impediment to gaining employment and/or a deterrent to enrolling in a training program. The only alternative was placement in the Workplace Literacy Labs where they showed a measurable increase in their literacy levels. However, this is not a long-term solution, because the Workplace Literacy Labs are at their capacity with adult students, and they do not have the resources to provide the wrap around services that youth need to be successful.

Designed well, a Youth Literacy Lab would combine work readiness skills, life skills, computer skills, reading, math, and writing skills for out of school youth in the target populations who lack the skills necessary to successfully obtain employment and/or are lacking in the literacy skills necessary to participate in GED, post secondary education and/or occupational training programs. The Youth Literacy Lab will serve as a portal to employment, post secondary education and or occupational skill training programs. The Youth Literacy Lab then becomes a gateway for youth to self-sufficient and successful lives.

The Youth Literacy Lab will utilize a combination of strategies, appropriate to meet the diverse literacy, work readiness, and life preparation needs of the out of school youth in the target populations.

The programs and services at the Youth Literacy Lab will be structured to meet clearly defined objectives as follows:

Objective 1: *Provide a comprehensive assessment of the literacy, work readiness, and life preparation skills of out of school youth in the target populations.*

A comprehensive assessment of each youth's existing skills is critical to ensuring success. The Youth Literacy Lab will employ a variety of assessment methods and instruments grounded in the competencies and proficiencies identified in Equipped for the Future (EFF). The results of the comprehensive assessment will be used to determine the literacy skills development plan, and develop the measurable outcomes to be achieved by each youth.

Objective 2: *Provide basic literacy, work readiness, and life preparation skill development with clearly defined and measurable outcomes.*

The Youth Literacy Lab will replicate the Camden County Resource Center's successful Workplace Literacy Lab model that incorporates computer based and classroom instruction. The Lab will utilize proven literacy platforms i.e. Destinations, as the literacy platform, Rosetta Stone for English as a Second language, and the NJN package. The NJN package includes computer based programs and classroom instruction materials.

The measurable outcomes of participation in literacy services will vary and depend on an individual youth's existing literacy level. For a low level functioning youth the measurable outcome may be to increase his or her literacy level sufficiently to function in an entry-level employment position. For a school dropout the measurable outcome may be to sufficiently increase his or her literacy levels to participate in a GED preparation program with the ultimate goal of attaining a GED. For the high school graduate with insufficient literacy skills the measurable outcome may be to sufficiently increase his or her literacy skills with the goal of enrolling in a post secondary education or training program.

Objective 3: *Provide employment and wrap around services that will direct youth on a path to self-sufficiency.*

Recognizing that youth in the targeted populations have multiple development needs the Youth Literacy Lab will endeavor to provide ancillary services to meet those needs. Youth within the targeted populations need more than literacy, work readiness, and life preparation skill development. In most cases, they need positive experiences to reinforce the fact that they can lead successful and productive adult lives. Therefore, critical ingredients of the Youth Literacy Lab will be to include avenues such as

mentoring and community service projects to provide positive experiences, build their self-esteem and confidence and instill a sense of hope into their lives.

Strategy 2

Historically, the youth RFP process results in more program proposals than funding can support. Therefore, increased funding could support additional programs. The YIC recommends that only those programs that proportionately serve the targeted youth or meet the primary program designs desired (i.e. school-based youth services, youth corps, etc.) be supported by the additional funds.

In Conclusion ...

The Camden County WIB & YIC recognize that the issues and challenges to serving the most vulnerable youth in Camden are significant but not insurmountable. The Camden County WIB & YIC are committed to expanding their efforts in a meaningful and purposeful way to strengthen youth based organizations within the County in providing the services youth need to successfully transition to self-sufficient adulthood.

Youth Literacy Lab Budget

Category	Leveraged Funds	Requested Funds
Facility & Equipment		
Facility Costs		\$20,000.00
Equipment (15 workstations)	\$38,265.00	
Sub-Total	\$38,265.00	\$20,000.00
Instruction Materials		
Instructional Software (Destinations)	\$22,500.00	
Workplace Literacy License	\$11,250.00	
Assessment Software Licenses		\$8,500.00
Instructional Materials (Books, Materials, Supplies)	\$2,300.00	\$10,000.00
Sub-Total	\$36,050.00	\$18,500.00
Staffing		
Instructor (1) + Benefits		\$58,500.00
Assistant Instructor (1) + Benefits		\$52,000.00
Counselor (1) + Benefits		\$48,000.00
Sub-Total		\$158,500.00
Administrative Cost	\$2,718.00	\$21,889.00
Total Funds	\$77,033.00	\$218,889.00

AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS SERVING AT-RISK YOUTH IN CAMDEN COUNTY

Alcove	Camden Transitional Program
Bethany Baptist Church	Camwerccs Program
Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Camden County	CAP Plus Program
Boys & Girls Club of Camden County	Center for Family Services
Camden Community Connections	Division of Youth and Family Services
Camden Juvenile Drug Court	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Camden County Probation Office	Genesis Counseling Center
Camden County Housing Authority	Genesis School of Business
Camden County Board of Social Services	Goodwill Industries
Camden House	Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey
Camden One-Stop Center	Hope Works' N Camden
Camden County Resource Center	Jacob's Chapel AME Church
Camden County Prosecutor's Office	Jerothea Riggs
Camden County Board Of Education	JJC Campus Connection Program
Camden County Faith Based Community	Juvenile Resource Center
Camden County Workforce Investment Board	Mt. Calvary Baptist Church
Camden County Youth Services Commission	My Father's House
Camden County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Inc.	Police M.A.L.L.
Camden County Council on Economic Opportunity-OEO	Respond, Inc.
Camden County Division for Children	YMCA of Camden County
Camden City Police Department	YWCA of Camden County
Camden Urban Ministries	Youth Build
Camden Bible Tabernacle	Youth On The Move Inc.

UNITED WAY OF CAMDEN COUNTY LIST OF AGENCIES FUNDED FOR YOUTH SERVICES

Community Care Fund

ORGANIZATION	SERVICE
Big Brothers & Big Sisters	Youth Mentoring
Boy Scouts of America, Southern NJ Council	Comprehensive Youth Development
BPUM Child Development Centers	Childcare
Camden Day Nursery	Childcare
Camden Eye Center	Eye Care Services
CONTACT Community HelpLines	TeenLine
Girl Scouts of Camden County	Membership Services
Hispanic Family Center of Southern NJ	Substance Abuse treatment Program
Junior Achievement of South Jersey	K-12 Programs
Katz Jewish Community Center	Infant/Toddler Programs, Kidz Korner After School Program, Teen Lounge Program,
LARC School	Respite for Caregivers of Disabled Youth
Mary H. Thomas Day Care Center	Childcare
Mental Health Association, Southwestern NJ	Juvenile Screening
New Visions	Youth Services
Planned Parenthood of Southern NJ	Education & Training
Respond, Inc.	Childcare
Robin's Nest	Group Home, Behavioral Supports for Adoptive/Foster Children
Ronald McDonald House	Youth Support Services
The Bridge	Support & Enrichment Program
YMCA of Camden County	Youth Programs, School Age/Day Care, Camps, Early Childhood Education
YWCA of Camden County	Youth Programs, School Age/Day Care, Camps, Early Childhood Education

Special Response Fund

ORGANIZATION	SERVICE
Boat People S.O.S.	After School Program
Boys & Girls Club of Camden County	Youth Development
Camden City Youth Services Commission	Youth Leadership Development Program
Center for Family Services	Youth Essay Contest
Cooper Health System	Violence Prevention Program
Delaware River Sailing School	Teen leadership Program
Genesis School of Business	Support Services to Young High-Risk Fathers
Samaritan Hospice	School Based Support and Grief Counseling
Settlement Music School	School Based Music Education
Woodland Community Development Corp.	Homework Centers
YWCA of Camden County	Computer Education

JAWS Youth Fund

ORGANIZATION	SERVICE
Camden County Council OEO	Summer Day Camp
Center for Family Services	YES Youth Residential & Shelter Facility
Delaware River Sailing School	Summer Day Camp
Kennedy Health Systems	Outreach Education on Youth Eating Disorders
LARC	Walkable Gait Program
SJ Interfaith Coalition for Literacy	BookMates Literacy Improvement Program
St Joseph's Pro-Cathedral	Summer Day Camp
Urban Promises Ministries	Summer Day Camp

Planning Work Group

Name	Agency
Denise Basserman	Case Management Supervisor, Camden County Board of Social Services
Dayna DeFalco	Youth Coordinator, Camden County Resource Center
Lori Godorov	Vice President, The Work Group
Jane Guillard	Juvenile Justice Commission
Patrick Healey	Director, McCann Funeral Home
Carla Janoff	Chair, Systems Performance Committee Careers USA
Tom Jenkins	President, Jenkinstaffing
Michael Moran	Chair, Youth Investment Council PSE&G
Robert Weil	Account Executive, Commerce National Insurance
Linda Winfield	Chair, Special Projects Committee PNC Bank