



Connecting youth with meaningful vocational training and employment is critical to long-term positive outcomes. Last year's Annie E. Casey Kids Count publication "*Youth and Work*" reported that "6.5 million people ages 16 to 24 are both out of school and out of work, statistics that suggest dire consequences for financial stability and employment prospects in that population." Youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems often face additional challenges and barriers to obtaining and maintaining jobs, making YAP's "Supported Work" model an essential intervention for many youth.

What is "Supported Work"?

Supported work is a component of the YAP model that provides clients with opportunities to develop job skills and positive work habits through transitional job experience that may lead to long-term employment. YAP Supported Work clients are classified as work-training or work-relief trainees, not employees, and their wages are subsidized by YAP. Along with the support of YAP direct service workers, these subsidies encourage employers to offer apprentice-like positions to YAP clients who may otherwise face insurmountable obstacles to landing a job because of their background, life circumstances, or developmental challenges. Supported work trainees are covered by workers compensation insurance but do not become eligible for unemployment benefits based on their supported work experiences.

Benefits to Youth

The Supported Work program provides YAP clients with basic job skills and pathways to competitive or permanent employment. Participating in supported work provides youth with an opportunity to engage in pro-social activities safely within their community and learn new skills. It gives the young person access to regular income intended to deter them from engaging in illegal activity to meet economic needs: money can go toward fines/restitution or towards helping his family. Additional increases in pay are offered as reinforcement for demonstrating the positive work behaviors that are necessary to successfully maintain future employment, such as arriving on time and wearing proper attire. Moreover, positive mentoring relationships often develop between business owners/managers and YAP youth that last beyond the supported work initiative.

Benefits to Local Businesses

By providing both subsidized wages and the on-site assistance of YAP direct service workers, the Supported Work program provides employers with great reasons to "take a chance" on hiring young people who may otherwise appear to be too "high risk" because of a lack of employment history, a criminal record, or other personal characteristics. When supported work experiences work as intended, businesses may ultimately decide to hire YAP youth at the end of the supported work period. When this happens, everyone wins: Young people get what is often their first meaningful job and employers find devoted employees without the need for advertising or associated expenses.

