

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD, INC.  
OF  
MAHONING AND COLUMBIANA COUNTIES**

Youth Committee Meeting  
March 7, 2024  
3:00pm  
YJATC Office

Committee Members Present: Theresa Berkenyi for Joe Caruso, Kim Berry, Ed Emerick, Michelle Fitzsimmons, Cody Hilliard, Julie Needs, and Meribeth Noble.  
Committee Members Absent: None  
Board Staff: Mary Ann Kochalko and Sharlene Senediak  
CCMEP Lead Agency Staff: Melissa Alfano, Leigh Samargia-Pflug, and Angela Vollberg.

Ed Emerick, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05pm, and a quorum was established.

**Approve September 7, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Motion: To approve the September 7, 2023 meeting minutes as presented.  
Motion made by: Michelle Fitzsimmons  
Seconded by: Julie Needs  
Discussion: None  
Motion approved.

**Performance Update**

The State recently issued the unadjusted 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter performance reports, and Area 17 has met all success levels except for measurable skills gain, which is a real-time measure. Area 17 usually meets this measure by the end of the program year. The median wage measure is significantly higher than the established successful level.

**Review of CCMEP Activity Report**

The CCMEP Activity Report (July 1, 2023 – February 29, 2024) was provided and reviewed. Total active CCMEP participants is 312; this total has decreased by 79 compared to this time last year due to funding restrictions. Many participants successfully completed the program and have been exited, which is another reason for the decrease in active participants.

Since July 1<sup>st</sup>, Area 17 has received 334 CCMEP referrals, which is half the amount compared to this time last year. Given the limitations in funding, focus is on high school juniors and seniors. The number of participants who completed post-secondary training has increased by 17 compared to last year. This is reflected in the median wages since they are significantly higher. Many participants are obtaining employment in healthcare and truck driving.

**Outreach Strategy**

Testimonials have been added to social media accounts. More display campaigns are being developed. The target populations are students who will be graduating by June 30, 2025, or youth who have dropped out of school. One-on-one appointments are also being scheduled with students at schools to discuss CCMEP services. Staff have also been invited to the drug courts to offer information about CCMEP services. Information has also been left at hospitals to reach young parents.

**County Updates and Success Stories**

Focus remains on reaching out-of-school youth who may be TANF-eligible. Many services are offered through CCMEP to overcome barriers, however, accessing a car for participants to take their driving test remains a challenge. Resources were previously available, however, the primary concern now pertains to insurance and liability issues.

*Success Stories*

*Mahoning County*

A recovering addict, who has a son, left a violent relationship and is working towards her high school equivalency. She struggles a lot with her anxiety, and her ability to follow through with the program is an accomplishment. After she attains her high school equivalency, she plans to pursue a career in nursing.

Another participant was able to utilize resources provided through MCTA to overcome her autism and became a real estate agent. She is doing well on her own, with her son, and she was successfully exited from the program.

A young man came in for services, and he was very dependent on his mother. He was employed for an entire year, received an incentive, and will be pursuing his driver’s license.

*Columbiana County*

A young woman was not very motivated in the beginning of the program, but now she is enrolled in the 22+ program and is on track to obtain her diploma, and doing work experience, while raising two children under the age of 3. Services provided were mentoring, supportive services, work experience with job coaching, and tutoring. She is very grateful for the assistance she has received. She has also agreed to tell others about the benefits of CCMEP.

A young man was in foster care and a detention center. When he turned 18, he enrolled in CCMEP and began working towards his high school equivalency. He came into the OMJ center every day, eventually took the equivalency test, and passed all sections. He enrolled at YSU, began faltering in some classes, but a CCMEP mentor reached out to him to help him get back on track. Since then, he has continued to do well.

Another young man received his diploma and eventually began working with OOD. His mother was holding him back, but he started to attend New Castle School of Trades. This is a significant achievement for him, and he will work on getting his driver’s license.

**Youth Committee Membership**

- Motion: To appoint Kim Berry and Cory Hilliard as members of the Youth Committee.
- Motion made by: Julie Needs
- Seconded by: Meribeth Noble
- Discussion: None
- Motion approved.

**Youth Services Contract Modifications**

The youth services contracts are monitored on an annual basis. The contracts were recently monitored, and all contractors have satisfactorily met the performance standards of their contracts. All five contracts are recommended for extension; the modification for Utica Shale also includes an additional change to include job coaching and job placement services to enhance work experience activities at \$75/hour.

- Motion: To recommend to the Executive Committee the proposed modifications for Compass Family & Community Services, The Counseling Center of Columbiana County, Junior Achievement Mahoning Valley, and Utica Shale Academy.
- Motion made by: Meribeth Noble
- Seconded by: Julie Needs
- Abstention: Theresa Berkenyi
- Discussion: None
- Motion approved.

**Other Business**

CCCTC – CCCTC is having its career fair on Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 9am-2pm, with 74 vendors in attendance.

**Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm.