



NEWS RELEASE

Workforce Development Board

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\$3 million in funds for youth work experience program



National Association of Counties Recognizes Program with a 2015 Achievement Award

A \$3 million program has been approved to help hundreds of young, unemployed people in San Bernardino County obtain jobs.

The CalWORKS Youth Employment Program, operated through a partnership of the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board and the Transitional Assistance Department, was initially launched in May 2014. Funding was extended for an additional year.

"The participants in the program receive up to 485 hours and/or six months of paid work experience at a local company, but quite often these young workers perform the job so well they become full-time employees," explained Emily Petrus of the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board. "As a result, we are always looking for more companies to offer job placements. We encourage local businesses to support the program."

This partnership was developed to help introduce young people to the workforce so they can begin to establish careers. Participating youth are paired with a professional career counselor to ensure they are striving to reach their highest potential as well as gaining valuable work experience. Salary is paid directly by the program at no cost to the participating business.

James Ramos, Chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, says the CalWORKs Youth Employment Program provides a foundation for youth to become competitive in the labor market and develop much-needed career skills.

"The program addresses the unemployment rate in San Bernardino County among youth, ages 16 to 24, which stands at almost 25 percent. It is fulfilling our Countywide Vision of contributing to the economic stability of the County by providing young people the opportunity to gain valuable work experience," said Ramos. "This program also illustrates the importance of collaboration between agencies to achieve shared goals."

Through the program, Kiara Brown, a single mother of two, was given the opportunity to work at Staples, which has since become a permanent job.

"I don't believe I would have been hired at Staples had I just walked into the store and filled out an application. I really appreciate the help I received," said Brown. "This program gave me a jump start, and provided me with an opportunity to land a job based on my abilities. This position gives me work experience that I need to start building a career."

The CalWORKs Youth Employment Program was recognized by the National Association of Counties with a 2015 Achievement Award in the category of Employment and Training for County Residents.

"Youth are an under-skilled population competing for vacancies in a highly competitive job market," said Sandy Harmsen, Executive Director of the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board. "In the first full year of the CalWORKs Youth Employment Program, a total of 701 youth completed work experience in San Bernardino County. These young people now possess an invaluable advantage as they develop and pursue their careers."

Participants are employed in a variety of industries including retail, manufacturing, logistics, automotive, and healthcare. The young employees receive work readiness training in the form of workshops in communication skills, interview training and more.

Any businesses that would like to learn more about the CalWORKs Youth Employment Program may contact Emily Petrus at (909) 387-9869, or epetrus@wdd.sbcounty.gov.