

THE STRUGGLE REPORT

Findings and Recommendations by NYC Youth
for New York Job Development Programs



URBAN
JUSTICE
CENTER



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



FUREEous Youth is the youth-led organizing program of Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), located in Downtown Brooklyn. It builds youth power through grassroots organizing, coalition building and leadership development. FUREEous Youth provides a safe space for youth to access training and political education, challenge decision-makers, and address internalized oppression through positive youth organizing and youth development themes. Its current campaign,

the *No Money, Mo' Problems Campaign*, organizes young people of color around access to sustainable employment.



Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center (CDP) strengthens the impact of grassroots organizations in New York City's low-income and other excluded communities. CDP partners with community organizations to win legal cases, publish community-driven research reports, assist with the formation of new organizations and cooperatives, and provide technical and transactional assistance in support of their work towards social justice.

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I. INTRODUCTION

“In certain times you’re going to wonder, ‘If I can’t get this job how am I going to support myself when it’s time...to leave the house?’ I’m already predicting a future that isn’t going to end well. And that scares me.” This is a quote from a Brooklyn youth named Isaiah Phillip. He struggled to find a job for a few years, applying for countless jobs in various fields, simply looking for any place that would hire him. The trials of the job search took their toll on Isaiah and he began to wonder what would happen if he could not find work in the next year or two. “If I can’t have a job to support or help myself or my family then I’m thinking that it’s going to end in a result where we are homeless or there’s going to be choices that shouldn’t be made and we could regret.”

Unfortunately, Isaiah’s story is not unique among NYC youth, who have the highest unemployment rate among all age groups in New York City at 19 percent.¹ The situation is even worse for youth of color: Black youth have an unemployment rate of 26 percent compared to 13 percent for their White counterparts.² These staggeringly high unemployment rates are the lingering effects of the Great Recession, which disproportionately affected youth and people of color.³

To assist NYC youth in finding jobs, New York State and City have several job development programs that focus specifically on the needs of youth. The programs are overseen by city and state agencies and operated by contracted organizations. However, insufficient government funding limits the number of participant slots, while, at the same time, the still struggling job market increases demand for job placement programs. As a result, the vast majority of youth that need these programs are turned away and left to fend for themselves.

In fact, Isaiah is one of the lucky ones. Recently, he was able to get into a trade school where he is learning specialized skills in food preparation, which will help him secure a quality job at a high end restaurant. Best of all, Isaiah is on the path to accomplishing his goal of working in the upscale restaurant industry or opening his own restaurant. All of this would not have been possible without a training program for Isaiah to learn these specialized skills.

This is just one story of many across the city. Each day, members of FUREEous Youth – an organizing program that builds youth power among low-income youth of color through grassroots organizing, coalition building and leadership development – live out this reality. Time and again, FUREEous Youth and their friends struggle to find employment.

To better understand the challenges and opportunities all youth face in finding employment, FUREEous Youth and the Community Development Project (CDP) at the Urban Justice Center developed a participatory action research project. Using surveys, a focus group, and secondary data, this research shows that youth encounter many challenges when looking for jobs. Furthermore, the job development programs that exist to serve youth in gaining employment, while generally providing a positive experience, are not sufficient to meet the high demand and need to be retooled to better serve the youth of New York City.

II. BACKGROUND

Young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working are commonly referred to as “disconnected youth”. While it is important to focus on the needs and structural barriers to opportunity facing these youth, this label implies that youth are not attempting to find employment and/or pursue educational opportunities. In fact, many of those labeled “disconnected youth” are actively seeking employment or further education but are simply unable to access opportunities. However, the term will be used sporadically in this report because it is commonly used and referenced in the industry literature.

About 350,000 disconnected youth live in the New York metro area. This is 15 percent of the total youth population. This is even higher among Black and Latino youth, rising above 20 percent.⁴ Among respondents to our survey, 22 percent would be classified as disconnected youth. Again, this high number says more about the lack of employment and educational opportunities than a lack of effort from youth to engage in their communities.

About 50 percent of disconnected youth do not have a high school diploma or GED, which severely limits their employment options. Jobs for people without high school diplomas have been decreasing rapidly over the past several years.⁵ Thus, many youth are simply unable to find jobs due to their lack of experience, training, and education. Without employment or further educational opportunities, these youth are unable to gain the skills they need to be able to become economically successful adults, with hopes of breaking the cycle of poverty.

Some government agencies recognize the need for youth job training and educational programs and have made attempts to respond with programs designed to assist youth. These programs vary widely, but most include an educational (either teaching specialized skills or general job search skills) and a working (providing on-the-job experience) component. These programs often give youth their first job, which can act as a launch point for long-term careers and help them to build a resume. Research shows that work experience at a young age is a predictor of later success in the labor force.⁶ Youth also often get a much needed paycheck for their work. Many youth that participate in these programs report that they would not have a job otherwise.⁷ Though these programs are far from perfect, they do ensure employment and education for youth and start them on a path for future success.

Making sure youth have access to jobs also ensures a more robust economy for everyone. According to one source, there is a \$325,000 benefit, on average, to the City of New York in one individual receiving a high school diploma or GED. This comes about through tax revenues and not having to pay public benefits and institutional costs that otherwise could have occurred.⁸

Employing disconnected youth specifically, and providing all youth with opportunities for work experiences and further education generally, should be a key goal of government. Fortunately, youth job development programs are able to give young people these opportunities. Our data, from surveys, focus groups, and secondary research, clearly show the positive effects job development programs can have upon youth if they are managed properly, tailored to meet the needs and interests of youth and receive sufficient funding.

III. SPOTLIGHT ON THREE POPULAR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

While New York State and City governments offer several youth job development programs, this report will only focus on three; the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), the Career and Technical Educational Programs (CTE), and the New York Youth Works Program (NYYW). These three programs represent a mix of state and city programs, are operated by different agencies, and represent both long standing programs and newer initiatives. More specifically, this report highlights SYEP because it is well-known and popular amongst youth, and FUREE has been a SYEP worksite in past years. CTE is another well-known program and serves as an example of how education and hands-on training can be combined to enrich the academic experiences of youth while providing them with practical skills. Youth Works focuses on “vulnerable youth,” and is a new program developed to meet an immediate, specific need but only as a short-term solution. A brief overview of these programs is below. Each of these programs represents a step in the right direction for state and local governments in providing youth with the training and job opportunities they need to succeed. However, dwindling government funding and a lack of alignment with the needs of youth mean that these programs are not living up to their potential.

Summer Youth Employment Program

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is a jobs program that provides youth between the ages of 14 and 24 with work experience, life skills training, and income. Operated by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), SYEP allows youth who would otherwise not have summer employment to gain valuable work experience and make money. In 2012, DYCD received \$45.8 million in federal, state, city, and private funds to operate SYEP, \$28.7 million of which was used to pay the wages of youth.⁹ As Table 1 shows, the number of participant slots has been decreasing as funding has been cut (see p. 7 for more information about the impact of government disinvestment).

Table 1: SYEP by the Numbers

Calendar Year	2012 ¹⁰	2011 ¹¹	2010 ¹²	2009 ¹³
Annual Government Funding	\$43 million	\$43.5 million	\$51.5 million	\$67.5 million
Number of Applicants	132,593	131,119	143,169	139,597
Number of Participants	29,416	30,628	35,725	52,255
Number of Providers	63	62	65	65
Number of Worksites	5,677	5,732	5,780	8,688

Throughout the Research Findings section of this report there are sections that highlight specific aspects of SYEP. Particular attention is paid to SYEP due to its popularity – among survey respondents over 80 percent had heard of SYEP and 41 percent had participated in it – and the significant changes that DYCD is implementing in the summer of 2013 (see Political Context on p.19).

DYCD contracts with providers who agree to run the SYEP program for a certain number of participants, some of which may be in the special *vulnerable youth* category. Vulnerable youth are defined as youth who are homeless and runaway, court-involved, in or aging out of foster care, and in families receiving preventative services through ACS. Youth apply directly to the program through the providers who then place the youth that have been selected via lottery at various worksites for most of the program. Youth are paid minimum wage and work up to 25 hours a week at entry level jobs at government agencies, hospitals, summer camps, non-profits, small businesses, law firms, museums, sports enterprises and retail organizations. In previous years, the program ran seven weeks, but in 2013 it will run for six weeks. Providers are contracted to support youth throughout the program and provide approved educational training for participants, though the amount and quality of these trainings varies dramatically.

Table 2: Demographics of SYEP Participants

		2012 SYEP Participants ¹⁴	NYC Youth (14 - 24) ¹⁵
Gender	Male	45%	54%
	Female	55%	46%
Age	14 - 15	28%	15%
	16 - 17	36%	16%
	18 - 19	22%	17%
	20 - 21	10%	21%
	22 - 24	4%	31%
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian	1%	0%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	8%	12%
	Black	46%	25%
	Hispanic	28%	34%
	White	13%	25%
	Other	5%	3%

SYEP has been shown to have many positive effects for youth academically, developmentally, and economically. DYCD’s own survey of participants found that 75 percent reported they would not have had a summer job without SYEP.¹⁶ A report by New York University’s Institute for Education and Social Policy found that SYEP increased school attendance, particularly for participants with risk factors for low attendance. SYEP participants also saw an increase in Regents exams passing rate.¹⁷

Career and Technical Education Program

Founded in 2001, New York State’s Career and Technical Education (CTE) program aims to advance academic study, technical knowledge and professional skills in a specific career through classroom education and hands-on work-based experiences. CTE curriculum covers industries such as agricultural education, business and marketing, family and consumer sciences, health occupations, technology and trade, technical and industrial education. High school students have access to CTE programs through CTE classes at regular high schools or CTE-specific high schools they can choose to attend.

The CTE programs are authorized by the New York State Department of Education and received about \$8 million in CTE program-specific funding for the 2012-2013 school year. This money is used solely for operation of CTE programs, not to pay normal school operating expenses. In New York City, a CTE Advisory Committee, made up of business representatives, union leaders, community leaders, parents, and students, oversees the program through a variety of responsibilities, including ensuring the program remains relevant to the employment climate and in line with industry standards.¹⁸

Table 3: CTE by the Numbers¹⁹

	2012 - 2013 School Year
Number of Program Topics	More than 420
Schools offering CTE Programs	140
CTE Specific Schools	39
Students taking CTE classes	Approximately 140,000

In the 2008 State of the City address, Mayor Bloomberg highlighted the importance of CTE programs and launched an effort to expand and improve the program by creating a Mayoral Taskforce on Career and Technical Education Innovation. Since then, CTE education has greatly expanded in the city, increasing from 21 CTE-specific schools to 39.

Table 4: Demographics of High School Students (2011 – 2012 School Year)²⁰

		CTE High Schools (N = 25,954)	NYC High Schools (N = 303,496)
Gender	Male	60%	51%
	Female	40%	49%
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	11%	16%
	Black/African American	40%	31%
	Hispanic/Latino	43%	39%
	White	6%	13%
Other	Special Education	16%	13%
	Free and Reduced Price Lunch	66%	60%
	English Language Learners	6%	12%

CTE programs fill an important need for students in New York City. Effective programs give students the hands-on training and education they need to succeed following graduation, whether that involves higher education, post-secondary training, or entering the workforce.

However, a 2012 report by the Public Advocate for the City of New York found that 50 percent of the CTE-designated high schools that were analyzed were characterized as Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) at some point since 2008.²¹ The gap in student outcomes between CTE high schools in good standing to those considered PLA is startling. Schools in good standing have a four year graduation rate over 75 percent and 53 percent of students enroll in college. Meanwhile, just over 50 percent of students in PLA schools graduate in four years and only 25 percent enroll in college.²² Since the creation of the Mayoral Taskforce on Career and Technical Education Innovation, new CTE schools and programs have received consistently more attention and funding than older schools and programs. This difference in attention is one reason for the large variations in achievement between CTE schools and something that should be addressed.²³

New York Youth Works

On December 9, 2011, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed into law the New York Youth Works (NYYW) Program, which gave tax credits to businesses that hired disadvantaged youth and created funding to support work by non-profits to train and place youth in these jobs. A total of \$33 million was allocated to the program; \$25 million in tax credits for businesses and \$8 million for job training programs.²⁴ NYYW was a one-year program run by the New York State Department of Labor to address the ongoing high youth unemployment rate of the past few years.

Table 5: NYYW by the Numbers²⁵

Funding	\$33 million
Number of Participants	1,030
Number of Jobs Created	2,950
Approved Training and Job Placement Providers	38
Businesses Involved	122

NYYW was specifically designed for disadvantaged youth ages 16 to 24 years old that were unemployed. To qualify for the program, participants must have met one of the following criteria: receive public assistance, live in public housing or receive housing assistance, be a veteran, be pregnant or parenting, be homeless, be in the foster care system, and have served in jail or prison or be on probation or parole.²⁶ Although other job development programs serve disadvantaged youth, Youth Works was unique in that the entire program was tailored towards disadvantaged youth and that it had more expansive criteria for defining “disadvantaged” compared to many other youth programs.

Since Youth Works just finished its first and only year there is currently no data available on participant demographics or outcomes. Although there is no hard data, conclusions can be drawn by extrapolating from the fact that 122 businesses participated in the program and offered over 2,900 positions for disadvantaged youth in the areas of New York State that were most economically depressed by the recession. Youth Works hired youth most at risk of becoming disconnected and provided them with income, training, and work experience.



IV. THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT DISINVESTMENT ON YOUTH JOB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Over the past several years, funding for youth job development programs has been declining. This has led officials to cut the number of participant slots, increasing the competition among youth for the programs and making programs difficult for youth to access.

Table 6: SYEP Funding and Applicants

Year	Applicants	Total Government Funding	City Sources	State Sources	Federal Sources	Private Donations
2012 (FY13) ²⁷	132,593	\$43.0 million	\$20.6 million	\$13.5 million	\$8.9 million	\$2.8 million
2011(FY12) ²⁸	131,119	\$43.5 million	\$20.6 million	\$8.5 million	\$14.4 million	\$6.1 million
2010 (FY11) ²⁹	143,169	\$51.5 million	\$23.9 million	\$8.5 million	\$19.1 million	\$2.0 million
2009 (FY10) ³⁰	139,597	\$67.5 million	\$13.8 million	\$19.5 million	\$34.2 million	\$0
2008 (FY09) ³¹	103,189	\$54.0 million	\$30.9 million	\$19.7 million	\$3.4 million	\$0
2007 (FY08) ³²	93,750	\$56.5 million	\$32.4 million	\$20.3 million	\$3.8 million	\$0
2006 (FY07) ³³	71,670	\$50.4 million	\$26.9 million	\$18.1 million	\$5.4 million	\$0

Table 6 shows that demand for SYEP is increasing just as funding is decreasing. The spike in funding in 2010 was due to \$34.2 million in stimulus dollars from the federal government, a one-time event. Money from the federal government and private sources has helped to hide the state and city disinvestment in youth job development programs. From 2007 to 2012, city and state funding for SYEP decreased by 36% and 58%, respectively.

CTE programs have also seen a slight decrease in funding in recent years. This comes even as CTE education is expanding in the city and more schools are being built. Since the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year, 13 new CTE schools have been established in New York City. During this period of expansion, funding has stayed at around \$10.5 million per year. With the same amount of funding and more schools, the number of students attending CTE high schools has decreased.

Table 7: CTE Funding and Enrollment

School year	Funding	Number of Schools ³⁴	Number of Students ³⁵
2011 - 2012	\$10.4 million ³⁶	34	25,954
2010 - 2011	\$10.9 million ³⁷	30	26,747
2009 - 2010	\$10.4 million ³⁸	28	27,752
2008 - 2009	\$10.4 million ³⁹	24	27,567
2007 - 2008	\$12.7 million ⁴⁰	21	28,029
2006 - 2007	\$13.9 million ⁴¹	21	28,179



Spotlight on SYEP – Slots vs. Applicants

SYEP is a key example of how changes in funding affect the amount of slots that are offered to youth. Over the past five years, while total funding appears to have dropped only slightly, city and state funding for SYEP have decreased significantly, leaving progressively more youth without a job during the summer months. For three consecutive years, SYEP has turned away over 100,000 youth who applied, leaving them to face the arduous job market on their own. From 2009 to 2012 the number of participants has decreased by 56 percent. Only 22 percent of applicants were accepted to the program in 2012 compared to 58 percent in 2006.⁴²

Table 8: SYEP Facts and Figures

Calendar Year	Total Funding	Applicants	Participants	Difference	Acceptance Rate
2012	\$43.0 million	132,593	29,416	103,177	22.2%
2011	\$43.5 million	131,119	30,628	100,491	23.4%
2010	\$51.5 million	143,169	35,725	107,444	25.0%
2009	\$67.5 million	139,597	52,255	87,342	37.4%
2008	\$54.0 million	103,189	43,113	60,076	41.8%
2007	\$56.5 million	93,750	41,804	51,946	44.6%
2006	\$50.4 million	71,670	41,650	30,020	58.1%

As Table 8 shows, the percentage of applicants who are able to participate in SYEP has dropped precipitously over the past several years. SYEP uses a lottery to choose participants. With less youth being accepted each year, this has led to some frustration among youth who are not accepted. One of the focus group participants expressed this frustration:

“I also think the lottery should change too. It shouldn’t be a lottery... People really need that job, but don’t get picked because you wasn’t chosen.” – Focus Group Participant #3

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

FUREEous Youth and CDP used a participatory action research methodology to gather data about access to jobs for youth, challenges youth face in finding jobs, and the effectiveness of youth job development programs. FUREEous Youth members participated in the research project, after being trained by CDP, by assisting in designing the project, administering surveys, and developing research findings and policy recommendations. FUREEous Youth and CDP collected data from 320 surveys, one focus group, and secondary research.

Surveys: Members and summer volunteers at FUREEous Youth administered 320 short surveys during July and August 2012 to youth ages 14 to 24 that live in the greater Downtown Brooklyn area, focusing on Community Boards 2 and 6 and Assembly District 32. Survey respondents were approached randomly on the street by surveyors. The survey focused on collecting data on the need for job and workforce development programs aimed at youth, the specific job skills youth would like to develop and the type of trainings in which youth would like to participate.

Focus Group: FUREEous Youth conducted a focus group with youth who had participated in SYEP to collect their stories and document their experiences in the program. To ensure anonymity, focus group participants' names are not used in this report

Secondary Research: CDP conducted secondary research on federal, state, and local job and workforce development programs geared towards NYC youth, including programs administered by the NYS Department of Labor, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, and the NYC Department of Education. This research included identifying possible agency data relevant to the research questions and attempting to acquire that data through a FOIL request. CDP also analyzed census data to estimate relevant demographic information about youth in Downtown Brooklyn and New York City.

Table 9: Demographics of Survey Respondents Compared to Youth Ages 13 to 24 in Brooklyn and NYC

		Survey Respondents	Brooklyn Youth ⁴³	New York City Youth ⁴⁴
Gender	Female	50%	49%	49%
	Male	50%	51%	51%
Race/Ethnicity	African-American/Black	60%	35%	25%
	Caucasian or White	6%	29%	25%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	5%	11%	12%
	Asian/Indian	6%		
	Latino/a	31%	23%	34%
	Other	4%	2%	3%
Languages you speak	English	95%	53%	51%
	Spanish	19%	18%	28%
Currently in middle or high school		52%	41%	40%

VI. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data from this research indicate that while jobs are extremely important for young people's development and future economic success, youth encounter many challenges when trying to find work due to a lack of experience, education, and training. City and State youth job development programs do exist to assist youth in the job search process, but these programs are insufficient to adequately address youth unemployment in New York City. The programs are underfunded, under-advertised, and underutilized. The data clearly show that youth benefit from having jobs but the programs that exist to help youth obtain jobs need to be used more effectively and given more funding.

1. Youth desperately want and need jobs but can't find them on their own.

- 34.9% was the unemployment rate for youth ages 16 – 19 in New York City in March 2012;⁴⁵
- 54% of all survey respondents reported they did not have a job;
- 77% of all survey respondents reported they were looking for a job;
- Of those who did not have a job, 97% were looking for one.

Approximately 200,000 youth aged 17 to 24 in New York City live in households that fall below the poverty line.⁴⁶ In Fort Greene and Downtown Brooklyn the situation is even worse; about 32 percent of youth are living in poverty.⁴⁷ The financial constraints of their parents are felt by many youth, as two of the focus group participants stated:

“As young people ... like me I also pay my own bills ... I try to pay everything for myself, you know give my parents a break.” - Focus Group Participant #2

“I was working with my family and I wasn't making money at first that's why...I decided to go to SYEP because I wanted to make money that summer.” – Focus Group Participant #3

Youth in these situations recognize the economic need of their families and attempt to find jobs, but have difficulty securing employment. High unemployment rates among youth indicate the immense challenges that youth face in trying to find a job. As a result of this difficulty, many youth are searching for any job they can get.

2. It is difficult for youth to find good jobs that pay well and provide a quality work experience.

In searching for any job they can get, youth often end up working jobs that do not pay well and that generally provide a poor working experience with little opportunity for career advancement.

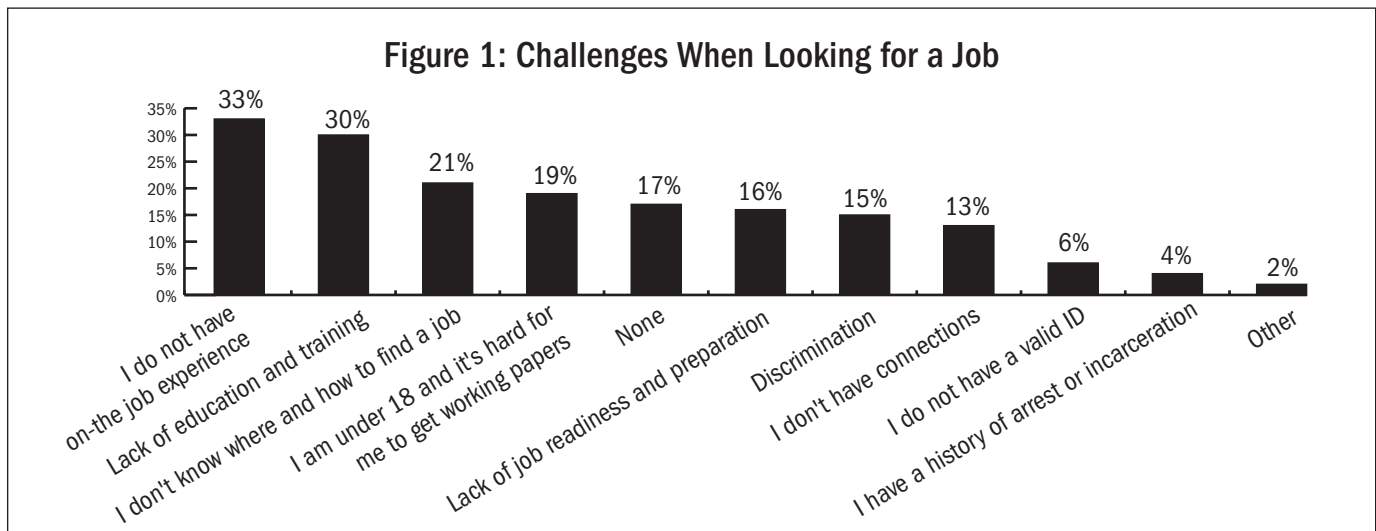
- \$13.43/hour is the self-sufficiency standard for one person living in Brooklyn;⁴⁸
- 43% of survey respondents were paid at or below the minimum wage of \$7.25/hour;
- 16% of survey respondents said they were underpaid and/or didn't get enough hours;
- 52% of youth that we surveyed had a job but were still looking for another job, indicating some level of dissatisfaction with their current job.

The low pay from these jobs does little to help youth improve their economic situation. In addition to low pay, these jobs do not provide youth with a quality work experience. Youth reported being discriminated against in their current jobs for a variety of reasons. Age discrimination was the most common form of discrimination young people reported facing.

3. Youth face many challenges when trying to find jobs.

In attempting to find work, youth must overcome many barriers and challenges. In our survey, youth identified lack of education and training and not having on-the-job experience as the greatest of these challenges (see Figure 1).

- 33% of survey respondents reported they do not have on-the-job experience;
- 30% of survey respondents reported they lack education and training;
- 21% of survey respondents reported they don't know where and how to find a job;
- 19% of survey respondents reported they are under 18 and it's hard for them to get working papers.



Without prior experience youth have a difficult time proving they have the basic skills needed in the workplace. Accordingly, employers believe youth do not have the critical thinking, communication, and professional skills necessary to thrive in the workplace, and are thus reluctant to hire young people.⁴⁹ Youth want opportunities to prove themselves to employers, but are often not given the chance.

“I’m willing to ask that they give me a chance. Instead of telling them what I can do, show them. Because in some ways, actions always speak louder than words.” – Focus Group Participant #4

Youth believe that if they were just given the chance they could show that they have the skills to function in the workplace. But with little prior experience, many barriers are placed in front of youth in the search for a job.

4. To compete for the quality jobs that are available, youth want basic job readiness skills and training.

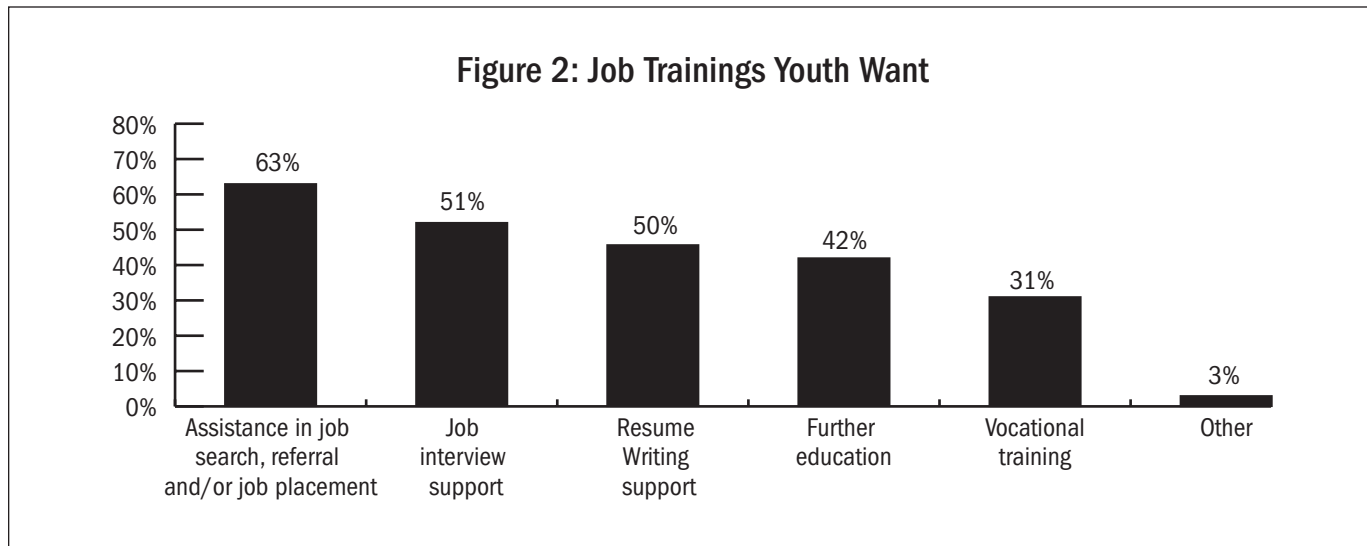
Youth recognize that they have barriers to employment and want the skills and training to overcome these challenges so they can compete for quality jobs. Unfortunately, there are few opportunities for youth to gain the training and skills they need.

- 65% of survey respondents reported they did not have any training or certification.

This theme also came out in the focus group when a participant, explaining why he participated in SYEP, stated:

“I applied for FUREE [SYEP placement] because I was trying to get experience for my resume and for my college.” – Focus Group Participant #2

Youth also want help with the job search process. Due to a lack of experience, youth need help with finding, applying, and interviewing for jobs. For the survey, youth identified several services they thought would be most helpful in getting them a job.



Spotlight on SYEP – *The education and training components of SYEP need to be modified*

In SYEP, a total of 17.5 hours are devoted to education and training focusing on topics such as work readiness, financial literacy, career exploration, post-secondary education options, and health education.⁵⁰ While these topics are what youth want, they have not proven to be very useful or helpful because of the manner in which they are presented. Youth are crowded into large rooms, making it difficult to hear and gain much benefit from the activities presented.

“We were in a big auditorium...but I couldn’t really hear what the person was saying because it was a lot of kids being very loud.” – Focus Group Participant #3

If youth are to benefit from the educational component of SYEP, providers need to take a more active role in ensuring that the hours are spent in a productive manner that engage the participants. Currently, youth tend to find these hours tiresome and repetitive rather than valuable.

5. Job development programs are the best shot youth have at getting jobs, but they aren’t reaching enough people.

Given the challenges youth face when trying to find work, job development programs provide youth with the best opportunity for finding employment. In our survey, youth were asked what method they used to look for jobs. Youth who used job placement programs were more likely to have jobs than youth who used other methods, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Youth Job Search Methods and Their Effectiveness

	Have job
Job Placement Program	52%
Employment Agencies	50%
Family members or friends	40%
Fliers or “Now Hiring” Signs	37%
School	35%
Contact the employer directly	35%
Job Fairs	31%
Postings online and in newspapers	21%

Short-term and Long-term Impacts of Job Development Programs

Youth who participate in job development programs enjoy the experience and gain valuable knowledge and skills for later in life. In the short-term, a study by NYU shows that participation in SYEP increased school attendance, especially among youth who had lower previous levels of attendance.⁵¹ Furthermore, SYEP participants were more likely to attempt and pass the Regents exams for English and Math.⁵² Research also shows that job experience before the age of 25 is an important indicator of later workforce success and financial stability.⁵³ In the CTE programs, 97 percent of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that their students indicated increased skills as a result of CTE.⁵⁴ There are, of course, significant long-term economic benefits from this type of academic improvement.

The immediate economic benefits of a job are also very important to youth and their families. Youth in SYEP used the money from their summer jobs to buy clothes and food, collect savings, and help with household expenses.⁵⁵ Most youth are spending the money they earn in the communities in which they live, bringing immediate economic benefit to their neighborhoods. One focus group participant described the economic benefits – among others – of youth employment stating:

“It [expanding SYEP] would definitely help out, guaranteed crime rates would drop, guaranteed productivity, and guaranteed sneaker sales off the maps.” – Focus Group Participant #1

The academic and economic benefits of providing employment opportunities to youth clearly benefit not only the youth themselves, but society as a whole. Jobs keep youth productively engaged in their communities and schools, leading to greater economic success and financial stability later in life.

In our survey, 52 percent of youth who had jobs used job placement programs as one of their search methods. This is a higher rate than any other job search method that youth used. Although job placement programs are the most effective method youth can use to search for jobs, more young people look for employment through their family or friends (47%) and through their schools (29%) than through job placement programs (22%). The most common methods of how youth look for jobs are:

- 47% - through family members or friends;
- 29% - through my school;
- 22% - job placement program;
- 22% - job fairs;
- 19% - fliers or “Now Hiring” signs.

Part of the reason youth are more likely to use methods other than job placement programs to look for work is that they do not know the job placement programs exist. Less than 50 percent of survey respondent had heard of six of the seven job programs listed on our survey (84 percent had heard of SYEP) and 41 percent had only heard of SYEP (see Table 11).

Table 11: Youth Job Development Programs

	Heard of Program
Summer Youth Employment Program	84%
Job Corps	44%
Youth Adult Internship Program	14%
Youth Works	14%
Career and Technical Educational Programs (CTE)	10%
YouthBuild	10%
One-stop Career Center	7%

While youth like job placement programs and want to participate in them (see Spotlight on SYEP below), they simply do not know they exist. Not enough is done to advertise the existence of the programs and outreach and advertising do not reach enough youth. Most of those who had heard of these programs, did so through their schools and family or friends, not through advertising or outreach. If more youth were aware of these programs, they would have more tools to help them in their search for meaningful employment.

Spotlight on SYEP – *What people like about the program*

SYEP is one of the most popular of the youth job development programs in New York City. Our survey respondents confirmed this fact: 84 percent had heard of SYEP and 41 percent participated in it. Both of these numbers are significantly larger than any of the other programs offered by the government. SYEP is not only well known, but is well liked among youth as well. DYCD reports that 98 percent of participants in 2012 rated their experience with SYEP ‘excellent’ or ‘good.’⁵⁶ Participants in the focus group echoed this sentiment:

“I would definitely recommend SYEP, it’s a good program overall... Definitely, time management, responsibility, money control, self evaluations. That’s what it does for you so it’s a great program...” – Focus Group Participant #1

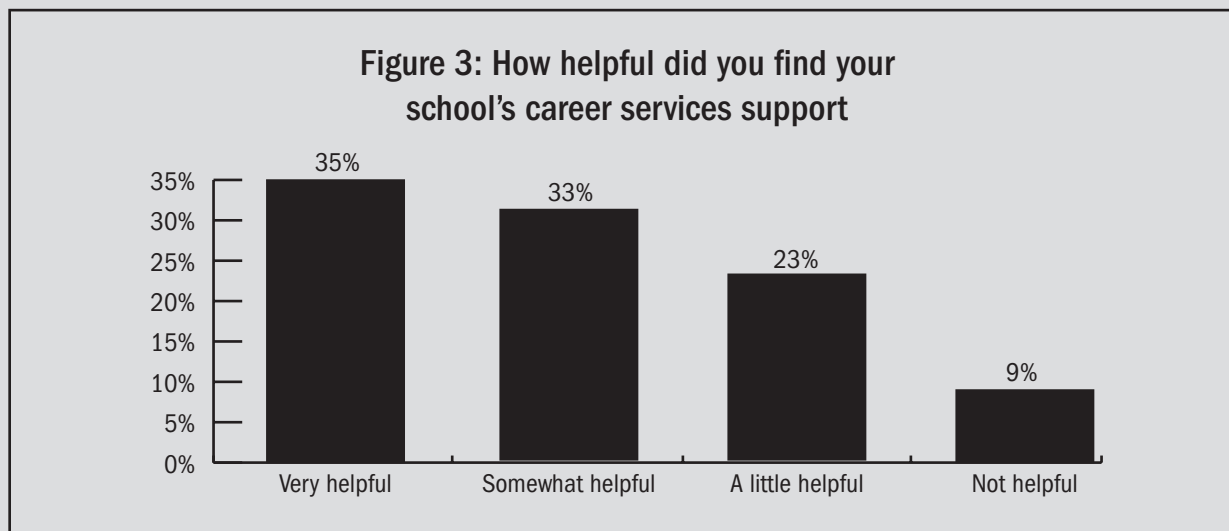
“It was helpful for me because I’m not a person who likes to get up when I’m told to get up or when I need to get up so that summer I actually woke up thinking like, ‘gotta get up, gotta make this money, gotta get up.’” – Focus Group Participant #3

Participants enjoy SYEP because it gives them immediate benefits such as money and self-confidence. They also recognize that the skills and experience they gain at their worksites will be useful for finding jobs in the future. Although SYEP could use some changes to make it more useful and relevant for youth, those who participate in the program enjoy the experience.

Schools Not Doing Enough

Schools are a key source from which youth learn about the opportunities available to them. Unfortunately, NYC public schools are not doing an adequate job of providing counseling or career services to support students. However, when students do use the services, they generally find them to be helpful.

- 43% of survey respondents reported their school did not provide any type of job counseling or career services support;
- 35% and 33% of survey respondents who used these services said they were very helpful and somewhat helpful, respectively.



Schools have the ability to significantly assist youth in their job search, but are not taking enough initiative to make students aware of the opportunities available to them.

6. Job programs are not tailored to meet the needs or interests of youth and are not connected to growth sectors.

Youth want to gain the skills they need to help them attain their dream jobs, or at least a career in which they can be successful. Yet the jobs and trainings offered by job development programs are divorced from both the interests of youth and patterns of economic growth. A recent report on CTE programs in New York City found that the programs are not focused on industries that are growing. In fact, CTE programs over-represent fields with small anticipated growth rates and under-represent fields with high growth rates.⁵⁷

- There will be 7,450 average annual openings in the office and administrative support sector in NYC;
 - Only 14% of CTE programs provide training in office and administrative support;
- There will be 6,880 average annual openings in the retail trade sector in NYC;
 - No CTE programs provide training in the retail trade sector;
- There will be 5,980 average annual openings in the hospitality sector in NYC;
 - Only 6% of CTE programs provide training in the hospitality sector.

Table 12: Percent of Programs Offered in Growth Sectors

Promising Sectors ⁵⁸	Annual Average Openings in NYC ⁵⁹	CTE Programs ⁶⁰
Office and administrative support	7,450	14%
Retail trade	6,880	N/A
Hospitality	5,980	6%
Property maintenance	2,630	N/A
Healthcare	1,410	9%
Transportation	1,060	4%
Telecommunications and Utilities	460	11%

Table 12 shows sectors in NYC that have high anticipated growth rates for the next decade, especially for those without a degree beyond a high school diploma. As shown above, CTE programs do not line up with these sectors. There is also a disconnect between the interests of youth and the types of jobs and opportunities that are available through job programs. This is most readily seen in SYEP, but applies to most, if not all, youth jobs programs.

Spotlight on SYEP – *Worksites are not relevant for what students want to do long-term*

While SYEP has been successful in providing youth with paying jobs during the summer, the worksites where youth are placed are usually not relevant to their current interests or long-term career goals. According to DYCD, SYEP is intended to “emphasize real-world labor expectations.”⁶¹ Unfortunately, it seems that this goal is not being accomplished. Youth do not feel they are getting real-world labor experiences because the worksites are divorced from their interests and goals. Participants in the focus group stressed this point multiple times:

“I think it was irrelevant too because all we did was pack up the papers – and place the papers in the printer and check if the bathroom has tissue and that’s pretty much it. That’s all we did.” – Focus Group Participant #2

“The job, it wasn’t really relevant for me. It was taking care of kids and we were teaching them and stuff but it’s not really what I was like – I didn’t even really want to do that at that time.” – Focus Group Participant #3

In 2012, 33 percent of SYEP worksites were at day care or day camps.⁶² But when asked what their dream job was, less than 10 percent of surveyed youth responded with professions or careers that specifically involve kids. This points to a disconnect between the types of jobs and careers youth want and what jobs are offered in SYEP.

Figure 4: Types of SYEP Worksites

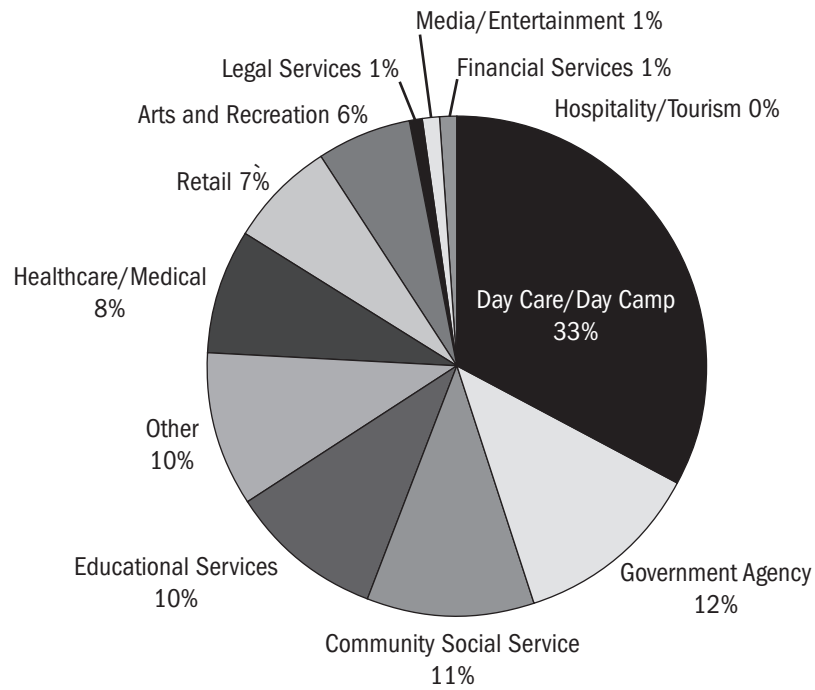
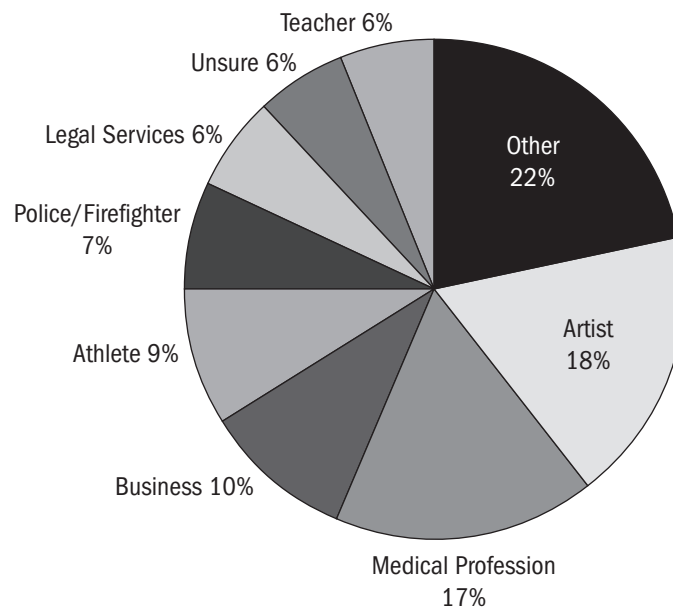


Figure 5: Youth Dream Jobs



Conclusion

This research documents youth experiences and challenges finding and utilizing opportunities for employment, training and education. Overall, we found:

- **Need for Employment:** Youth unemployment is still sky-high at 19 percent, leaving many youth searching for jobs to make ends meet.
- **Huge Barriers:** It can be hard for youth to find jobs because of their lack of experience, training and education.
- **Job Programs Help:** Job development programs play an integral role in helping youth to find jobs and become economically stable later in life.
- **Job Programs Need Reform:** However, youth job programs need to be expanded and tailored to engage a higher number of youth and meet their employment needs more effectively.

These findings demand action to expand and improve employment, training and education opportunities for youth. Like everyone, youth deserve opportunities to support themselves and their families, but are simply unable to in the current economic climate. Big changes are needed to ensure sufficient opportunities for youth.



VII. POLITICAL CONTEXT

Any changes to existing youth jobs programs must take into account the larger political and policy landscape. A look at the recent funding allocations, administrative changes and the election cycle offers a glimpse at the main obstacles and opportunities for improving youth job development programs.

Insufficient Government Allocations

The federal stimulus package notwithstanding, government divestment of NYC youth employment programs has been rampant over the last decade – just as the demand for such programs has been increasing. This has limited the impact of key youth job programs that have a history of jumpstarting youth careers.

Unfortunately, this trend is poised to continue (see Table 6 on p.7). SYEP funding, in particular, has been targeted by federal funding cuts over the past several years, dropping \$10 million since FY11. More recently, federal funding for SYEP through the Community Service Block Grant and the Workforce Investment Act saw a 5% cut as a result of the sweeping federal budget cuts known as the sequester.⁶³ State funding for SYEP had been similarly declining until FY13 when funding increased to \$13.5 million, though still far below the 2007 allocation of \$20 million. Thus, the City has footed the bill for much of SYEP in recent years, but even City officials have been slowly cutting funds as City coffers shrink. The City now allocates \$20 million to SYEP, more than the State and Federal governments, but still about \$10 million less than the FY09 allocation.

These funding cuts have led DYCD officials to decrease the number of SYEP participants by 6,000 slots since 2010. As the anemic recovery continues, youth unemployment is still staggeringly high at 19 percent and many youth vie for the few SYEP slots that are still available.⁶⁴ Thankfully, there is still time. On the city level, the final allocations are still being made for FY14, so City officials still have the opportunity to invest in youth job programs.

Impact of Minimum Wage Increase

The NYS legislature recently passed historic legislation to increase the NYS minimum wage to \$8.00 per hour in 2014, \$8.75 in 2015 and \$9.00 in 2016. This is a much needed wage hike for low-wage workers, many of whom are youth, and brings the City more in line with national minimum- and living wage trends. However, against the backdrop of decreasing government funding for youth employment programs, it has the impact of further increasing the costs of running youth job development programs, which usually pay participants minimum wage. Much of the value of this important legislation may be lost for young workers unless elected officials reverse funding cuts and increase program allocations accordingly, in order to offer the same number of participant slots at the higher wage.

Recent DYCD Reforms of SYEP

Shrinking government funding has led DYCD officials to propose changes to SYEP including reducing the length of the program by a week, decreasing the number of educational hours, and making the orientation unpaid. DYCD also proposed to break the program up into 4 different service options: for youth aged 14-15; for youth aged 16-24; for vulnerable youth, and for youth who already have work experience. These changes have been met with varying views, though many are disappointed that the changes will decrease youth earnings and hours of on-the-job experience. Some providers have also argued that splitting up younger and older youth will make placing youth in worksites more difficult, since in the past worksites have only agreed to employ younger youth if they are also able to hire older youth.

Elected Officials Turnover Creates Moment for Change

This year will also see a significant changing of the guard through elections for most local offices in New York City. As always, these elections have dominated the political landscape in recent months and indicate an opportunity for changes to funding and programming for youth job development. The highly contested mayoral election, with its crowded field of candidates, highlights that this is a moment when shifts in youth job programs and funding are possible.

All of the newly drawn City Council districts are also up for grabs this year. While many City Council members are simply seeking re-election, at least 20 new council members will be sworn in as a result of term limits, resulting in the most turn-over in the City Council in more than a decade. It is also expected that there will be 4 new borough presidents, all of whom have significant resources at their disposal that could be funneled to programs for youth. This staggering upheaval of leadership could translate into a big change in funding priorities.



VIII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings indicate that while the City and State do provide some employment and training opportunities for youth, these programs are insufficient to meet the needs of youth in New York City and need to be expanded and refined. FUREEous Youth members developed the following recommendations to increase access to jobs for young people in New York City.

Recommendation 1: Increase the number of slots available for youth in job development programs. A slot should be available for at least one out of every three youth who applies to one of these programs in NYC. To make this fiscally possible, the NYC Mayor and City Council should shift budget priorities to increase funding for youth job programs and advocate for more funds from State, Federal and private sources.

Recommendation 2: The City and State should advertise the employment opportunities that are available to youth. This can be done by:

- A. Creating a website that consolidates job programs, employment services and training opportunities that the City and State provide. This website should have a single application for the programs offered by the City and State, so youth do not have to do guesswork about which programs they are eligible for.
- B. Developing a joint advertising campaign between the City and State for this website. This would include online, TV, subway and bus ads.

Recommendation 3: The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) should expand the length of SYEP to 8 paid weeks: 7 weeks at the worksite so young people get a full work experience, and one week devoted to program orientation, job readiness trainings facilitated by the provider or worksite (i.e. resume writing, mock interview) and education hours facilitated by the provider, so they are more prepared for future employment.

Recommendation 4: Worksite assignments in various job development programs should be based on the interests of the young people participating in these programs, as well as on the current and projected trends in job opportunities and growth sectors.

Recommendation 5: The Department of Education should provide a work study program in high schools to allow young people to get more work experience. Students could intern in a work area of the school (office management, maintenance, teacher's assistant, etc.) for class credit towards graduation.

Recommendation 6: DYCD should provide free job readiness trainings. These trainings, separate from job development programs, would be on topics such as resume writing, the job search, and job interviewing which would allow young people to compete for high paying, quality jobs in the future.

Recommendation 7: The Department of Education should provide a career advisor in high schools. This would help young people to find internships and job development programs for which they are eligible. For young people not in school, there should be an advisor available at local libraries. Volunteers from nearby colleges, graduate schools and businesses should act as the advisors and run the program.

IX. CALL TO ACTION

This report highlights the critical importance that job experience and training has for youth. However, the data also show that there are many barriers preventing youth from finding quality jobs. While the government programs that exist to address these barriers have proven to be successful, they are shrinking rather than expanding and are not tailored to meet the interests and needs of youth participants.

We call on elected officials and government agencies to immediately increase funding – in the Fiscal Year 2014 budget cycle – towards programs that focus on youth employment and implement our straightforward recommendations.

We also call on elected officials and government agencies to pro-actively seek guidance from the young people who participate in these programs. These youth are a vital resource because they are directly impacted by program changes and are the true experts on what youth want and need. FUREEous Youth believes that young people should be at the decision-making table, helping to improve these programs, rather than being left out of the conversation.

Taking these basic steps will help build a better future for our city and help ensure economic success for young people.



X. ENDNOTES

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York, New Rochelle, Yonkers, Mount Vernon, Buffalo, Albany, Rochester, Syracuse, Schenectady, Utica, Hempstead and Brookhaven. 16 – 18 years old applicants must be in school or attending GED class, and must obtain guardian permission. 18 – 24 years old applicants must no longer be in school and not have a HSD or GED. In addition applicants must meet at least one of the following eligibility criteria: family receives TANF assistance, SNAP benefits or Supplementary Security Income (SSI); be a veteran; receive a free or reduced school lunch; referred by a rehabilitation agency approved by the state, or an employment network under the Ticket to Work Program; served in jail or prison, or be on probation or parole; be pregnant or parenting; be homeless; has been a foster child; be the child of a parent who is currently in jail or prison, or has been within the past two years or collecting unemployment insurance benefits; live in public housing or receive housing assistance, such as a Section 8 voucher; and other kinds of public assistance are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

**A Report by FUREEous Youth and the Community Development Project (CDP)
at the Urban Justice Center**

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