Summer Youth Employment Programs:

Best Practices and Recommendations[1]

CONTIBUTORS

Abberton,Timothy J
Aieskoll,Alice
Bergantine,Crystal L
Boyd,Jameson J
Doumaney,Travis E
Duclos,Leslie
Grele,Christine
Ilcisko,Amber
Joseph,Marie Y

CONTIBUTORS

Kostadinova,Gloria S
Lessard,Scott P
Modica,Glenn R.
Morelli,Alexandra E
Murray,Lucas W
Perkins,Zachary A
Pimentel,Ana N
Serrano,Itza M
Welinsky,Tara L

PROFESSOR

Dr. Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz

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Introduction and Overview of Current SYEPs

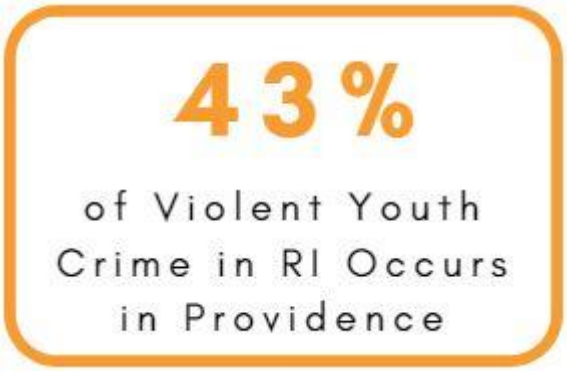
Traditional SYEPs generally run for 6-8 weeks during the summer months. They employ youth between the ages of 14-24 and utilize a single program model for all participants, regardless of age. Job placements for participants are generally at public, private and non-profit institutions. Traditional SYEPs focus on short-term employment with a variety of partners providing the available positions; most participants are hired into subsidized jobs in government and nonprofit organizations. SYEPs generally originate at the city level but are often operated by a variety of organizations, including workforce investment boards, employment service agencies, human services agencies, and workforce intermediaries.[2]

Based on a thorough review of the academic literature on summer youth employment programs and the components included to support youth transitioning into the workforce, program evaluations from cities around the country, and an analysis of the available literature and the current issues facing the City of Providence and the state, we recommend a program specifically focusing on youth between the ages of 14 and 19 years old and who are at-risk of violence and dropping out of high school. Due to this focus we suggest incorporating a variety of supportive best practices including: creating a tiered program in which the number of hours worked varies with the age of the youth, as well as including supportive services including social emotional learning education, mentoring, case management, soft skills education. We also recommend focusing on long-term employment opportunities, extending the program time frame beyond the limited summer months, and allowing youth to participate many years in a row automatically after their first successful summer.

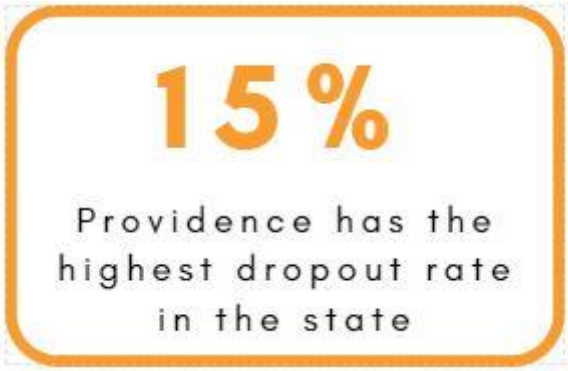
[2] Ross, M., & Kazis, R. (2016). *Youth summer jobs programs: Aligning ends and means.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

Challenges for Providence and Providence Youth

Providence youth face many challenges, including high child poverty and violence rates, and low high school graduation rates. The Providence metropolitan area has the 56th highest rate of concentrated poverty in the United States:[3] Thirty nine percent of all children and 46 percent of Hispanic children under 18 live below the poverty line, a number that has been increasing since 2007.[4] Further, Providence youth have a high likelihood of being exposed to violence and lured into violent activities.[5]



Providence high school students also fair worse educationally and economically than their statewide peers. Most Providence high schools have a chronic absenteeism rate well above the state average. The district-wide high school attendance rate is 86 percent compared to 91 percent for the state.[6] Many students fail to graduate which dramatically impacts their ability to compete in the workforce.[7] In Rhode Island between 2012 and 2016, adults who did not have a high school degree were four times more likely



[3] Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. (2016). *2016 Rhode Island kids count factbook.* Providence, RI: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

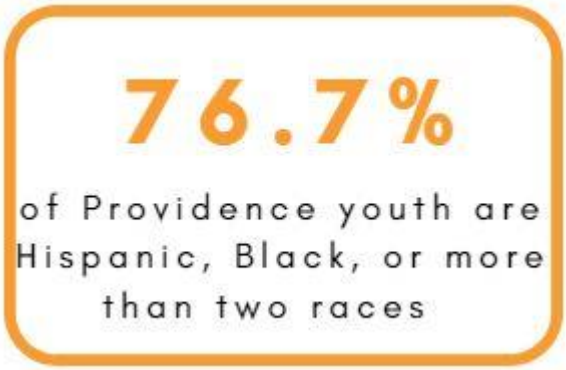
[4] U.S. Census Bureau. (2016, July 1). Population Division. Annual Estimate of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk.

[5] Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. (2017). *2017 Rhode Island kids count factbook.* Providence: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

[6] Rhode Island Department of Education. (2018, March 22). *InfoWorks for families*. Retrieved from http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/AdditionalResources/InfoWorks-DataAboutPublicSchools.aspx

[7] McGowan, D. (2018, April 20). *RI high school graduation rate hits 84.1%*. Retrieved from http://www.wpri.com/top-stories/ri-high-school-graduation-rate-hits-841/1130676116.

to be unemployed when compared to adults who had achieved a bachelor's degree.[8] As a result of these circumstances, the City suffers from a high unemployment rate, particularly among Latino and African-American populations. This follows a national trend of low employment rates among these two groups, especially among teens and young adults.[9] Because high unemployment rates directly correlate to higher rates of incarceration and/or illegal means of earning income,[10] Providence would be well-served by exploring solutions that will both increase employment among young adults and decrease incarceration as these problems impose economic costs on the City and State in addition to the individual residents. It costs approximately $186,000 per year for a single juvenile to be incarcerated at The Rhode Island Training School.[11] As Providence youth make up a large majority of the school's attendees,[12] there is a potentially large payoff for the state and the City if programming can reduce incarceration and



[8] Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. (2018). *2018 Rhode Island kids count factbook.* Providence: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

[9] Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. (2018). *2018 Rhode Island kids count factbook.* Providence: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

[10] Steven R. & Winter-Ebmer, R. (2001). Identifying the effect of unemployment on crime. *The Journal of Law and Economics*, *44*(1), 259-283.

[11] The FY 2013 average annual cost per youth for Rhode Island's only training school was $186,381, and it assumes an average daily placement of 110. The cost per youth increased from the FY 2012 average cost of $174,129 because of fixed teacher costs. Department of Children, Youth and Families. (2013, March 28). FY 2013 Revised & FY 2014 Operating Budgets; FY 2014 - FY 2018 Capital Budget [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/housefinance/bnp/2013/DCYF%20FY%202014.pdf

[12] Steven R. & Winter-Ebmer, R. (2001). Identifying the effect of unemployment on crime. *The Journal of Law and Economics*, *44*(1), 259-283.

recidivism.[13] Even though housing incarcerated youth is not a direct City expense, reducing incarceration rates can lead to increased economic gains for the City and state because incarceration is negatively associated with employment, spending and reinvesting in the local economy.[14]

In addition, Rhode Island also spends more on direct and indirect behavioral healthcare than most other states. Overall, Rhode Island spent $853 million on behavioral health treatment in 2013.[15] From 2011 to 2013, the proportion of spending on behavioral healthcare services from Medicaid has been between 31 and 32 percent, with private insurance covering around 20 percent and Medicare covering about 9 percent.[16] The state also spends millions of dollars on criminal justice services, disability services, and other human services that relate to behavioral health conditions. It is estimated that nearly 10 percent of the Rhode Island state budget can be attributed to the consequences of behavioral health conditions.[17] Behavioral health is an inclusive term that encompasses mental health issues likes depression and anxiety, as well as substance abuse and addictive disorders.[18] Behavioral health studies emphasize preventive

[13] Justice Policy Institute. (2014). *Sticker shock: Calculating the full price tag for youth incarceration*. Washington, D.C.: Justice Policy Institute.

[14] Huebner, B. M. (2005). The effect of incarceration on marriage and work over the life course. *Justice Quarterly 22*(3), 281-303.

[15] Truven Health Analytics. (2015). *Rhode Island behavioral health project: Final Report*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

[16] Truven Health Analytics. (2015). *Rhode Island behavioral health project: Final Report*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

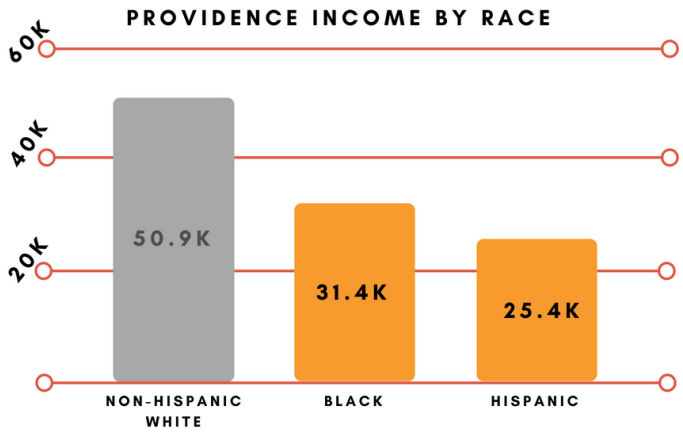
[17] Truven Health Analytics. (2015). *Rhode Island behavioral health project: Final Report*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

[18] National Association of Social Workers. (2018). *Behavioral health*. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/practice/behavioral-health.

intervention methods and the continuum of care, which represents a comprehensive approach to addressing behavioral and mental health issues.[19] SYEPs can serve as comprehensive intervention resources for at-risk youth that could decrease behavioral health problems and associated expenditures.

Further Barriers to Employment for Providence Youth

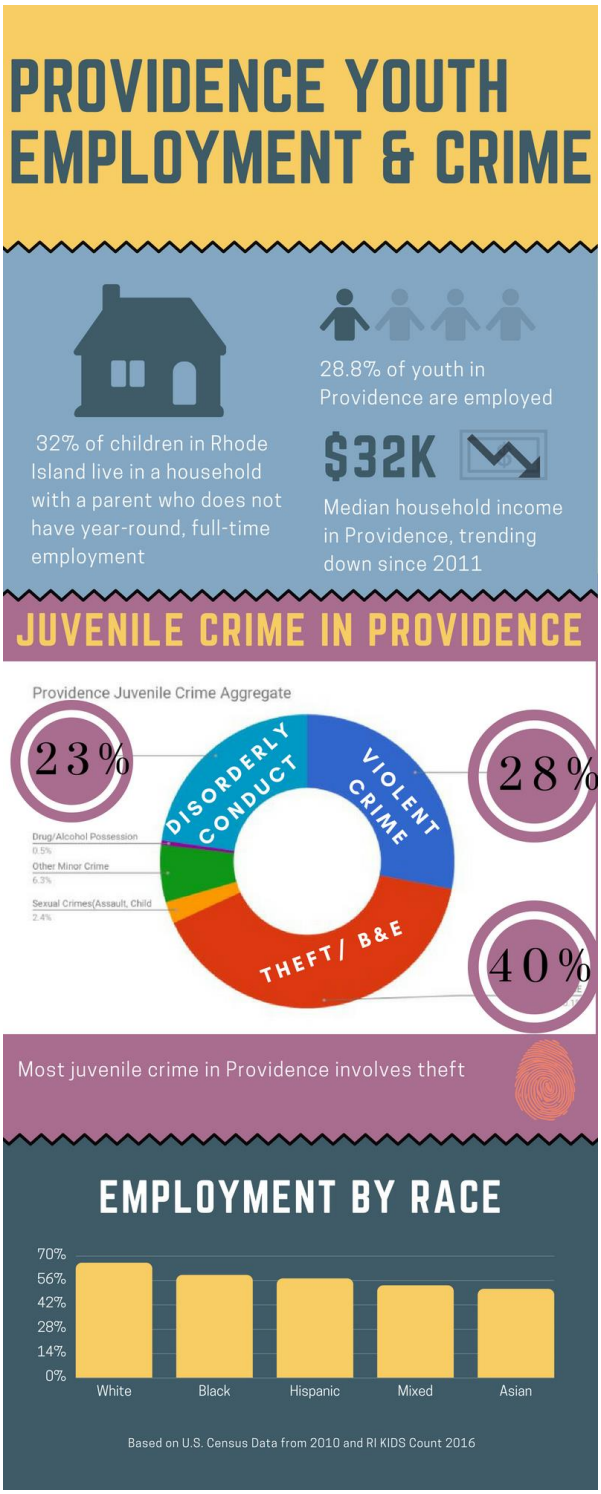
Providence youth face several barriers to successful employment including residential segregation, language and cultural barriers, and legal and policy obstacles. Youth of color have a higher tendency to reside in racially-isolated, low-income neighborhoods, which can lead to an increased likelihood of attending lower quality schools, facing disciplinary actions in school, and being involved in crime or targeted for arrest.[20] Additionally, immigrant families, of which there are many in Providence, may face challenges in helping youth access employment due to language barriers or cultural differences.[21] This can lead to difficulties for the ability of immigrant parents to participate in their child's career. Youth from segregated low-income areas also need role models who can help them navigate the job market, expand their networks, prepare for them employment, and



[19] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2016). *Prevention and behavioral health*. Retrieved from https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/practicing-effective-prevention/prevention-behavioral-health

[20] Proano, L., Shah, A., & Partridge, R. (2010). Demographic characteristics of Rhode Island immigrants. *Medicine and Health, Rhode Island 93*(3), 68-70.

[21] Bird, K. & Okoh, C. (2016). *Employment pathways for boys and young men of color: Solutions and strategies that can make a difference*. Retrieved from http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication1/BMOC_Employment.pdf; Schneider, B., Martinez, S., & Ownes, A. (2006). Barriers to educational opportunities for Hispanics in the United States. In M. Tienda & F. Mitchell (Eds.), *Hispanics and the future of America* (pp. 179-227). Washington, DC: National Research Council.



help them develop life skills.[22] Youth in marginalized neighborhoods are often unable to reach their workplaces in a timely or affordable manner due to inadequate transportation lines and lack of private vehicles.[23]According to the National Household Travel Survey, a majority of households in poverty own fewer cars per household than the national average.[24] Access to a reliable vehicle is a strong predictor of employment in low-income households.[25]

Are Providence Youth Looking for Work?

While many young people are not looking for work, many who are in need of employment are unable to find a job. The youth unemployment rate in Rhode Island in 2016 was 11.3 percent for ages 16 to 24, 16.2 percent for ages 16 to 19, and nine percent for ages 20 to

[22] Civic Action. (2014). *Escalator jobs for youth facing barriers.* Toronto: Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance.
[23] Gardecki, R. (2001). Racial differences in youth employment. *Monthly Labor Review 124*(8), 50-67.
[24] National Household Travel Survey. (2014). *FHWA NHTS Brief: Mobility challenges for households in poverty: 2009 National Household Travel Survey*. Retrieved from https://nhts.ornl.gov/briefs/PovertyBrief.pdf
[25] Garasky, S., Fletcher, C., & Jensen, H. (2006). Transiting to work: The role of private transportation for low-income households. *Journal of Consumer Affairs, 40*(1), 64-89.

24.[26] This may be due to the fact that it can be more complicated for businesses to employ youth than adults, and given their lack of experience, employers may not want to risk scarce resources on training and employing youth.

Youth ages 14-15 are restricted to working between the hours of 6:00 am and 7:00 pm, can work no more than eight hours per day, and are limited to working 18 hours per week during school weeks and 40 hours per week in non-school weeks. These restrictions limit the ability of employers to rely on youth to have the same flexibility as other workers, complicating scheduling and employer flexibility. State law also prohibits youths from working in certain hazardous occupations such as coal mining, roofing operations, logging and sawmilling, and excavation operations.[27] Youth under the age of 16 must acquire a "Special Limited Permit to Work" in order to be employed and employers must maintain a record of the permit and a "Certificate of Age" form. Given these restrictions, there is a need for youth services that help acquiring the correct documentation and identifying employers interested in hiring them.

National Trends in Summer Youth Employment Programming

SYEP is a popular way for cities to address high unemployment rates and lack of structure for working age youth during the summer. Most SYEPs run for an average of six weeks and focus on youth ages 14-24, with varying age restrictions depending on the city/state running the program. Major cities such as Boston,[28] Washington D.C.,[29] New York[30] and Chicago[31] have

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[26] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). *Youth employment rates by state: 2016 annual data*. Retrieved from http://www.governing.com/gov-data/economy-finance/youth-employment-unemployment-rate-data.

[27] Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. (2017). *RI Child Labor Laws*. Retrieved from http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ls/childlabor.htm.

[28] Modestino, A.S. & Nguyen, T. (2016, June 3). *The potential for summer youth employment programs to reduce inequality: What do we know?* Boston, MA: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

[29] Office of Youth Programs. (2016). *Mayor Marion S. Barry summer youth employment program*. Washington, DC: Department of Employment Services.

[30] Youth Employment Task Force. (2017). Youth employment task force report. New York, NY: Youth Employment Task Force.

[31] One Summer Chicago. (2016). *Annual Report*. Retrieved from

programs that exceed 10,000 participants, whereas smaller counties such as Washtenaw, MI,[32] and Boulder, CO[33] have more limited programs targeting less than 200 participants. All programs typically offer placement in both private and public sector employment. New York and Boston utilize a lottery system since demand is higher than capacity, which allows for extensive program evaluation and the ability to isolate how much the program helps (or hurts) participants across a range of outcomes. Participants in these programs typically work 20 to 40 hours/week. However, beyond these basics, programs differ drastically in terms of what they include and how they run their programs.

What do we know about the effects of SYEP?

Several cities have employed lottery systems for SYEP participation which allows researchers to compare participants who applied for a SYEP slot and were awarded one to the youth who were denied a slot. As a result, empirical studies demonstrate the causal effect of SYEP on participant outcomes in a way similar to controlled medical trials. Here, we review the findings of this literature which informs our recommendations.

While academic researchers and think tanks have investigated the impact of SYEP on academic engagement, career employment, wages, and many other potential beneficial outcomes, the literature suggests that most programs fail to achieve goals outside of simply employing youth for the summer.

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http://documents.mccormickfoundation.org/pdf/OSC_AnnualReport_2016_vF1_version3.pdf.

[32] University of Michigan. (2018). *Summer17 youth employment program*. Retrieved from https://poverty.umich.edu/projects/summer-youth-employment-program/summer17/

[33] Boulder County. (2017). *Boulder County Youth Corps*. Retrieved from https://www.bouldercounty.org/jobs/youth-corps/

While these studies seem to paint a grim picture for summer youth employment program outcomes, several programs have successfully improved both the life prospects of participants and the overall outcomes for the city. Most particularly, SYEP participation has been found to meaningfully reduce incarceration rates,[34] violent and property crime,[35] and to increase academic engagement.[36] For example, a study of New York City SYEP participants from 2005–2008 found that SYEP participants had a substantial 10.36 percent reduction in incarceration rates compared to those who applied for the program but did not get a slot.[37] The results showed a reduction in incarcerations for four key population segments: (1) males, (2) those without prior work experience, (3) African Americans and whites (particularly African Americans) and (4) younger participants.[38]

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[34] Gelber, A., Isen, A. & Kessler, J.B. (2014). *The effects of youth employment: Evidence from New York City summer youth employment program lotteries*. National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA.

[35] Heller, Sara B. (2014). Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth. *Science 346*(6214), 1,219-1,223.

[36] Leos-Urbel, J. (2014). What is a summer job worth? The impact of summer youth employment on academic outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33*(4), 891-911. Schwartz, A.E., Leos-Urbel, J., & Wiswall, M. (2015). *Making summer matter: the impact of youth employment on academic performance.* New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy. Blue Path Labs. (2017, December 29). Independent Evaluation, Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program. Retrieved from https://does.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/does/page_content/attachments/2017%20MBSYEP%20Independent%20Evaluation.pdf.

[37] Gelber, A., Isen, A. & Kessler, J.B. (2014). *The effects of youth employment: Evidence from New York City summer youth employment program lotteries*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

[38] Gelber, A., Isen, A. & Kessler, J.B. (2014). *The effects of youth employment: Evidence from New York City summer youth employment program lotteries*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Evidence also demonstrated that participation in SYEP (in New York) induced a substantial 19.92 percent decrease in mortality rates by external causes.[39] Researchers associate the SYEP with saving 86 lives within 3 years of the program's start.[40] The effects of participation in SYEP on decreased mortality were highest among males, African Americans and Latinos, participants with no previous work experience, and younger participants. The City of Boston also found a correlation between SYEP participation and a reduction in the number of arraignments for violent and property crimes among youth.[41] Chicago has seen perhaps the most striking results with a reduction in violence of over 43 percent among program participants over the 16 months after the program ended.[42]

Data from these programs has also shown positive impacts for academic outcomes. The controlled studies of New York City's SYEP found that high schoolers who had less than a 95 percent school attendance rate who participated in a summer employment program had better attendance the following year. Those under 16 attended school 1-2 more days. Those 16 and over attended school 4-5 more days.[43] Most districts in the country only allow 10-15 absences, so this increase is quite meaningful. When students miss more than 10 percent of the school year (~16-18 days) their test scores, graduation rate, and likelihood of attending post-secondary school

[39] Gelber, A., Isen, A. & Kessler, J.B. (2014). T*he effects of youth employment: Evidence from New York City summer youth employment program lotteries*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

[40] Gelber, A., Isen, A. & Kessler, J.B. (2014). T*he effects of youth employment: Evidence from New York City summer youth employment program lotteries*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

[41] Modestino, A.S. (2017). *How can summer jobs reduce crime among youth?* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

[42] Heller, Sara B. (2014). Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth. *Science 346*(6214), 1,219-1,223.

[43] Leos-Urbel, J. (2014). What is a summer job worth? The impact of summer youth employment on academic outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33*(4), 891-911.

suffer,[44] so participation in an SYEP can increase graduation rates and test scores by increasing attendance.

Furthermore, high schoolers approaching graduation who had participated in at least two years of NYC's SYEP were slightly more likely to attempt their statewide graduation exam, tested considerably better, and had an increased likelihood of passing them.[45] An increase in the likelihood of attempting a graduation exam may seem negligible, but NYC has had tremendous difficulty encouraging academically at-risk students to take these tests in the past. Although one year of participation in NYC's SYEP showed no significant graduation test changes, participation in the program for two years improved both the chance to take the test *and* the chance to pass is extremely important, especially considering that previous city programs have failed to reach these goals.[46]

Finally, recent research on Washington, DC's SYEP found that high schoolers who participated were 26 percent more likely to pursue post-secondary education.[47] Given the results from the studies in New York, Chicago and Boston,[48] as well as other cities, it is clear that offering a well-designed SYEP can reduce costs for the City and state in areas such as incarceration, as well as increase revenue as participants long-term earnings translate into tax

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[44] Ginsburg, A. Jordan, J. & Chang, H. (2014). Absences add up: How school attendance influences student success. Retrieved from http://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Abscenses-Add-Up_September-3rd-2014.pdf

[45] Leos-Urbel, J. (2014). What is a summer job worth? The impact of summer youth employment on academic outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33*(4), 891-911.

[46] Leos-Urbel, J. (2014). What is a summer job worth? The impact of summer youth employment on academic outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33*(4), 891-911.

[47] Blue Path Labs. (2017, December 29). Independent Evaluation, Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program. Retrieved from https://does.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/does/page_content/attachments/2017%20MBSYEP%20Independent%20Evaluation.pdf.

[48] Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., McLaughlin, J., & Palma, S. (2009). *The consequences of dropping out of high school: Joblessness and jailing for high school dropouts and the high cost for taxpayers*. Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

dollars, improve educational outcomes, and provide pathways to reduce youth unemployment, crime, and violence.

What does a well-designed program look like?

Over the past decade cities have increased their efforts to reduce youth unemployment rates and have invested more money in summer youth employment programs.[49] Based on a range of research, the key to long-term youth development appears to lie "in a continuum of summer youth employment experiences as a component of a comprehensive fabric of education, supportive programs, mentoring experiences and wrap-around services."[50] The best practices that follow synthesize the most successful youth development program components and provide a model for Providence. Learning from what has worked in other cities, and how other cities have used SYEP to reduce violence, crime, and increase academic outcomes will provide a clearer path for Providence as it decides how best to design its program.

Recommendations

Component 1: Target At-Risk 14-19 Year Olds in a Cohort (Repeated Involvement) Model

An at-risk youth is defined as an adolescent who is less likely to transition successfully into adulthood.[51] Adolescence is a time of identity development, attainment of critical educational credentials and work skills, and the fostering of important relationships.[52] Research

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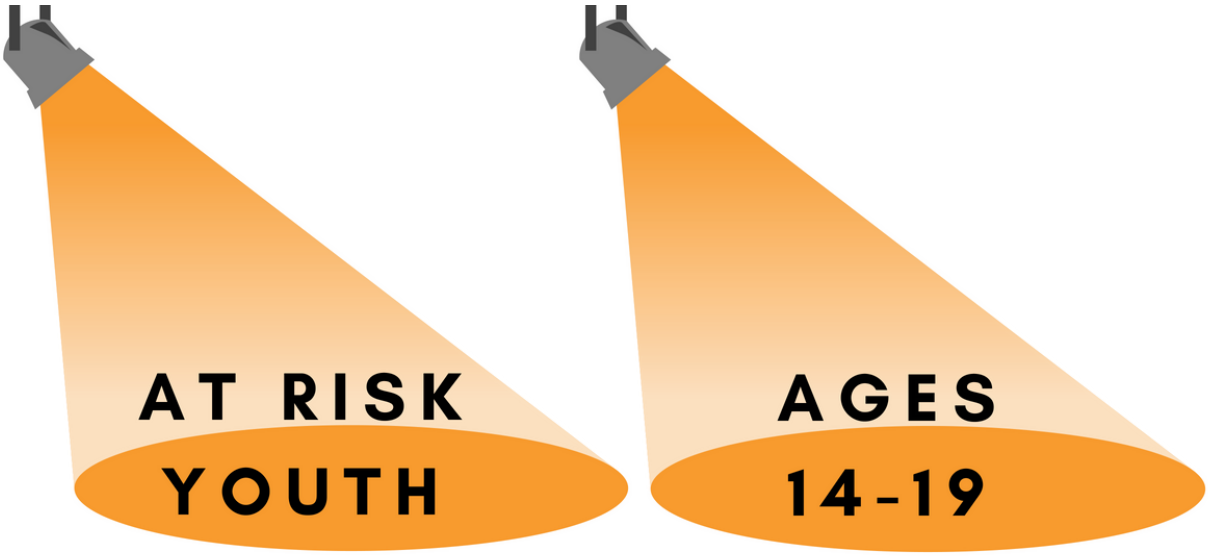
[49] Ross, M., & Kazis, R. (2016). *Youth Summer Jobs Programs: Aligning Ends and Means.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

[50] Robinson, C., Shanks, T. & Meehan, P. (2017). *Hallmarks of effective youth employment programs from research and programs across the United States: Implications for Detroit*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.

[51] Who is at risk youth? Definition and statistics (n.d.) Retrieved from https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-at-risk-youth-definition-statistics.html

[52] Mathematica Policy Research. (2011, June 21). *Synthesis of research and resources to support at-risk youth*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.

shows that this age group has higher rates of chronic absenteeism, unemployment, poverty and dropping out of school, especially for youth from low income families.[53]



The literature to date suggests that the youngest participants in SYEPs and those most at risk are those who get the most benefit from city-sponsored SYEPs. One best practice, therefore, is to start entry to a SYEP at the earliest age possible (e.g., 13-14) and to restrict it to a younger age group than is the norm (16-24).[54] We suggest ages 14-19, and up to 21 for youth with disabilities who are still in school. Of this age group, at-risk youth appear to get the most out of SYEPs. At-risk youth attendance rates increase, and while graduation exam attempts and results initially seem to negligibly change after a SYEP, repeat participation can improve them.[55] [56]

Further, other results suggest that younger participants receive more meaningful outcomes due to the ability to form long-term relationships and focus on the development of

[53] Who is at risk youth? Definition and statistics (n.d.) Retrieved from https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-at-risk-youth-definition-statistics.html

[54] Office of Youth Programs. (2016). *Mayor Marion S. Barry summer youth employment program*. Washington, DC: Department of Employment Services.

[55] Leos-Urbel, J. (2014). What is a summer job worth? The impact of summer youth employment on academic outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33*(4), 891-911.

[56] Schwartz, A.E., Leos-Urbel, J., & Wiswall, M. (2015). *Making summer matter: the impact of youth employment on academic performance*. New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy.

foundational skills, such as soft skills and work etiquette. Outcomes from SYEPs in NYC as described above found greater improvements in incarceration and mortality rates among its younger participants. Additionally, it is important to note that programs exist for youth over the age of 19 who have fewer school-related time constraints, legal barriers, and are eligible for adult programs. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention supports current literature that effective programs are those aiming to act as early as possible and focus on known risk factors and the behavioral development of juveniles.[57]

However, the literature has shown that the best results for youth are isolated to those who repeat the program for a number of years.[58] This important distinction means that targeting youth in their early high school years and then encouraging continued participation in the SYEP each summer can maximize the academic benefit to participants. A "cohort model" would likely work well for the city in which each year a cohort of young participants (~14 years old) join the program and then remain in it until they age out (19 years old).

Component 2: Create a Tiered Structure for The Number of Hours Youth Work

Research shows that youth ages 14-16 need to learn basic norms and social behaviors for the workplace by placing less emphasis on working long hours and more emphasis on soft skills compared to youth ages 17-19 who tend to be more mature, equipped to manage behaviors for the workplace, and are prepared to perform work and learn new

[57] Prevention and Early Intervention. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://youth.gov/youth-topics/juvenile-justice/prevention-and-early-intervention

[58] Schwartz, A.E., Leos-Urbel, J., & Wiswall, M. (2015). *Making summer matter: the impact of youth employment on academic performance*. New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy.

skills.[59] As a result, we recommend the development of a tiered age structure in which youth are employed at varying hours based on their age. Specifically, youth ages 14-16 should work fewer than 20 hours a week with a less intensive workload, while focusing on developing foundational skills and potentially receiving more out-of-work attention in other supports. Youth ages 16-19 should work 20 hours or more a week with more responsibility and career focus on advanced tasks.[60]

Component 3: Soft Skills Training Before Employment Begins

Providing training to young people and giving them the opportunity to learn new skills is key to professional development and allows young people to go into a workplace prepared to succeed. Soft skills are qualities that can be quickly observed in an initial meeting like a positive attitude, well-groomed appearance and trustworthy nature. They also include more complex attributes that can be carefully assessed through conversation and examples provided by the job candidate.[61] These include things like reliability, efficiency, adaptability, flexibility, and self-motivation. Finally, good leadership, an ability to work in a team structure, clear oral communication and listening skills, and the ability to plan, organize, and prioritize are highly sought-after skills.[62] Soft skills are best transferred in a controlled socialized setting with peers so that trust is developed.[63] Spending time to analyze social interactions in a controlled setting, like a classroom, before *and* after employment would be the ideal way to enhance critical

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[59] Harrington, P., Snyder, N., Berrigan, A., & Knoll, L. (2013, April). Signaling success: Boosting teen employment prospects. Boston, MA: Commonwealth Corporation.

[60] Ross, M., & Kazis, R. (2016). *Youth summer jobs programs: Aligning ends and means.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

[61] Lindstrom, L., Doren, B. & Miesch, J. (2011). Waging a living: career development and long-term employment outcomes for young adults. *Exceptional Children 77*(4), 423-434.

[62] Duffaut, T. (2018, March 27). Skills for Rhode Island's future. Retrieved from http://www.skillsforri.com/employers/service-offerings/

[63] Ying L., & Wang, W. (2012). Development and evaluation of a learner-centered educational summer camp program on soft skills for baccalaureate nursing students. *Nurse Educator 39(*5), 246-251.

thinking about employee socialization. “Codeswitching,” or the act of changing mannerisms and behaviors based on contexts, especially racial ones, as a focus of training can be a way to close racial wage gaps.[64]

However, soft skills can also be considered the psychological profiles and traits outside of traditional methods, like grade point average or intelligence quotient, that predict future success.[65] Successful programs also incorporate a behavioral component of soft skills such as self-efficacy, impulse control, and conflict resolution.[66]

One of the most important attributes of work experience is gaining these soft skills. However, youth need to learn soft skills before they enter the workforce so that they can “practice” the skills in their work setting instead of learning them as a result of failure. As a result, we suggest implementing soft skills training prior to youth beginning their employment.

[64] Moss, P. & Tilly, C. (1996). Soft skills and race: An investigation of black men's employment problems. *Work and Occupations 23*(3), 252-276.

[65] Heckman, J. J. & Kautz, T. (2012). Hard evidence on soft skills. *Labour Economics 19*(4), 451-464.

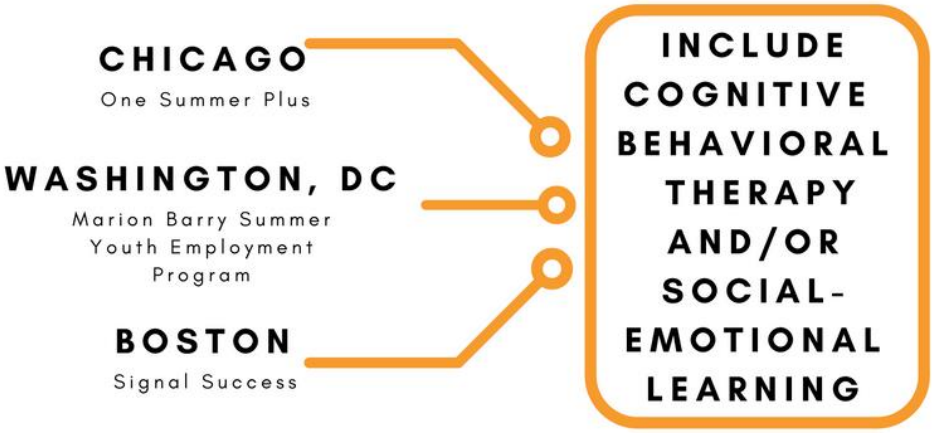
[66] Korrie A., Kim A., Milliken, T., Lorek, E. & Tamu, T.W. (2011) Improving the pro-social skills of transitioning urban youth: A summer camp approach. *Middle School Journal 42*(4), 14-22.

Component 4: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy/Social-Emotional Learning

Cognitive behavioral therapy and social-emotional learning (SEL) are considered to be one of the primary reasons for the large change in violent crime rates in Chicago and Washington, DC following the summer youth employment program. Chicago's One Summer Plus (OSP) program included 15 hours a week of paid work, and 10 hours of paid Social Emotional Learning weekly (for a total of 25 hours of pay, split between work and instruction).[67] The social-emotional learning component covered life skills, such as coping and dealing with adversity, that offered youth the tools needed to deal more effectively with dangerous situations that may arise in their own lives. Although in studies of Chicago researchers found reductions in violence between those who participated in the SEL and those who only worked,[68] Chicago now has all of their participants complete the SEL component. Many other cities have also chosen to adopt behavioral management and SEL as additional components of their programs. For example, the District of Columbia's Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP) focuses on conflict resolution, with the MBSYEP worksite staff aiming to help young people resolve behavioral problems and issues between themselves and others as a part of the program.[69] Boston's SYEP similarly incorporates a behavioral component of soft skills such as self-efficacy,

[67] Heller, S. B. (2014). Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth. *Science 346*(6214), 1,219-1,223.
[68] Heller, S. B. (2014). Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth. *Science 346*(6214), 1,219-1,223.
[69] Blue Path Labs. (2017, December 29). Independent evaluation, Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program. Retrieved from https://does.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/does/page_content/attachments/2017%20MBSYEP%20Independent%20Evaluation.pdf.

impulse control, and conflict resolution, into its curriculum.[70] These activities enable youth to develop the sense of agency, identity, and competency necessary for adult roles and success. In addition, Boston's SYEP provides youth with a work-readiness curriculum called Signal Success, in addition to 25 hours per week of employment. Signal Success provides job-readiness training using a hands-on, competency-based work-readiness curriculum. The curriculum consists of 13 required and eight elective 75-minute sessions. Topics include evaluating learning strengths and skills/interests, practicing skills such as dependability, communication, collaboration, and initiative, understanding workplace safety, and learning how to find and apply for jobs and be successful in an interview. Forty percent of those in the treatment group of a 2015 study of the Boston SYEP strongly agreed that they had learned how to manage their emotions and temper, how to ask for help when they needed it, and how to constructively resolve a conflict with a peer.[71]

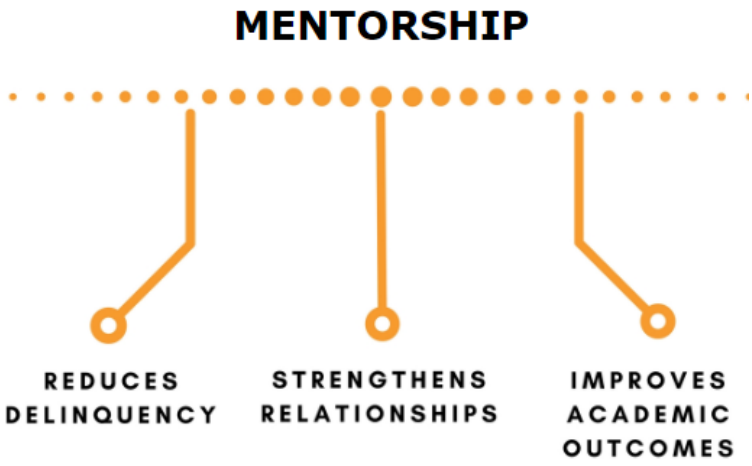


Component 5: Mentoring

[70] Modestino, A. S. (2017). *How do summer youth employment programs improve criminal justice outcomes, and for whom?* Boston, MA: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

[71] Modestino, A. S. (2017). *How do summer youth employment programs improve criminal justice outcomes, and for whom?* Boston, MA: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

Mentoring is a proactive intervention strategy, focused on holistic youth development, that decreases the likelihood of negative outcomes for at-risk-youth, including the likelihood of mental illness[72] and behavioral problems.[73] Mentoring has also proven to increase positive outcomes, such as academic achievement and relationship building with adults. It is important to note that despite being used interchangeably, the terms "mentoring" and "coaching" have different meanings. Mentoring is a long-term relationship that focuses on supporting growth and development,[74] whereas coaching is often a short-term relationship that focuses on specific skill building. Youth who participate in a mentorship program benefit from an ongoing supportive relationship that enhances their social relationships and emotional well-being, improved cognitive skills through instruction and conversation, and positive identity development.[75]



Moreover, mentoring connects at-risk youth with positive adult role models who can help youth with basic employment skills, networking, self-discovery, and career paths.[76] Connecting

[72] Rosenthal, S. (2015). *Substance use and mental health in Rhode Island*. Providence, RI: Brown University School of Public Health, Center for Population Health and Clinical Epidemiology, State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup.

[73] Erdem, G., DuBois, D. L., Larose, S., Wit, D., & Lipman, E. L. (2016). Mentoring relationships, positive development, youth emotional and behavioral problems: Investigation of a mediational model. *Journal of Community Psychology 44*(4), 464-483.

[74] Reh, F. J. (2017, August 8). How a great mentor could boost your career and life. Retrieved from https://www.thebalance.com/a-guide-to-understanding-the-role-of-a-mentor-2275318.

[75] Rhodes, J. E., Spencer, R., Keller, T. E., Liang, B., & Noam, G. (2006). A model for the influence of mentoring relationships on youth development. *Journal of Community Psychology 34*(6), 691-707.

[76] Civic Action. (2014). *Escalator jobs for youth facing barriers.* Toronto: Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance.

youth to support services, such as mentoring and positive youth development, reduces problem behaviors.[77] Program evaluations of SYEP have found "a sharp reduction in violent crime arrests as a result of providing youth from high-crime neighborhoods with intensive mentoring and other supports."[78] Youth who participate in mentorship programs attend more days of school and are more likely to attend college, have academic goals, and have a more positive attitude about education than their non-mentored peers.[79,80] Participating in a mentor program has also shown to reduce symptoms of depression, increase positive attitudes, and improve relationships with adults.[81]

Mentor Qualifiers

The most common method of recruitment for mentors is through volunteers in the community who undergo a rigorous screening and training process. Employees from the organization sponsoring the SYEP can also serve as mentors. Regardless of the recruitment process, studies have shown it is important that mentoring remain between youth and adults, as peer mentors are less effective and youth perceive their peers as less trustworthy. Adult mentors improve youth emotional well-being, and teach them skills that allow youth to confront issues such as peer pressure and dealing with difficult emotions.[82] Intergenerational mentoring and the

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[77] Sum, A., Trubskyy, M., & McHugh, W. (2013). The summer employment experiences and the personal/social behaviors of youth violence prevention employment program participants and those of a comparison group. Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Research Studies, Northeast.

[78] Juffras, J. (2016). *Review of summer youth employment programs in eight major cities and the District of Columbia*. Washington, DC: Office of the District of Columbia Auditor.

[79] Grossman, J. B. & Garry, E. M. (1997). *Mentoring: A proven delinquency prevention strategy*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

[80] Herrera, C., DuBois, D. L., & Grossman, J. (2013). *The role of risk: Mentoring experiences and outcomes for youth with varying risk profiles*. New York, NY: MDRC.

[81] Herrera, C., DuBois, D. L., & Grossman, J. (2013). *The role of risk: Mentoring experiences and outcomes for youth with varying risk profiles*. New York, NY: MDRC.

[82] Kendal, S., Keeley, P., & Callery, P. (2011). Young people's preferences for emotional well-being support in high school – a focus group study. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing 24*(4), 245-253.

recruitment of older mentors should be emphasized in the program. In fact, older adults have shown to be some of the most successful mentors, offering a lifetime of experience in work and caregiving.[83]

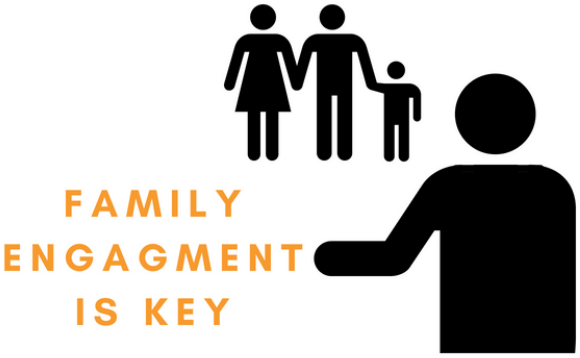
Mentor training also contributes to the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship as a whole. Length, content, and modality of training have been identified as three important factors for effective mentor training.[84] Moreover, the more hours of training a mentor receives the better the outcomes for the mentor-mentee relationship. In fact, research suggests mentors who receive less than two hours of training have less positive mentoring relationships and report less closeness with youth mentees.[85] On the other hand, mentors who receive a minimum of six hours of training report the highest levels of closeness with their youth mentees.[86] The timing of

[83] Wiley, T. & Schineller, K. (2015). *The wisdom of age: A guide for staff*. Washington, DC: MENTOR.
[84] DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
[85] Successful Relationships & Programs. (2000). Retrieved from https://youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/best-practices-mentoring-relationships-and-programs.
[86] DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

training can also impact the relationship outcomes. Studies recommend that mentors receive ongoing training, in addition to pre-match training and orientation for optimal mentoring success.[87]

Finally, having mentors reflect participants' life experiences, such as gender, socioeconomic status and ethnic background, helps build stronger mentor-mentee relationships.[88] This concept of reflecting shared experiences, also known as descriptive representation, helps youth identify with both mentors and potential employers, and promotes a healthy program environment where youth are more likely to succeed. Descriptive representation at the supervisor level increases the job satisfaction and retention of minority frontline workers.[89] Several studies suggest the use of descriptive representation by increasing the number of qualified minority teachers as a strategy for addressing gaps in academic outcomes.[90] Providence could benefit greatly by employing this strategy when recruiting mentors for a SYEP. Youth, particularly black and Latino youth and young men, are unlikely to experience descriptive representation in Providence schools as 79.5% of teachers are white and 74.9% are female.[91] Thus, having this experience in a summer youth employment program could serve as particularly important.

iii) Family involvement



[87] DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[88] Treskon, L. (2016). *What works for disconnected young people: A scan of the evidence*. New York, NY: MDRC.

[89] Grissom, J. A., & Keiser, L. R. (2011). A supervisor like me: Race, representation, and the satisfaction and turnover decisions of public sector employees. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 30*(3), 557-580.

[90] Fryer, R. G., Jr., & Levitt, S. D. (2004). Understanding the black-white test score gap in the first two years of school. *Review of Economics and Statistics 86*(2), 447–464.

[91] Providence City Council. (2016). *Final Report.* Providence, RI: Special Commission on Diversity in City Government.

Programs are more likely to see positive changes in youth and improved program outcomes when parents, guardians, and other caregivers work in concert with mentors and program staff. Moreover, frequent communication and getting to know a student's family creates strong relationships and improves student performance.[92] At a more practical level, parental involvement also impacts youth participation. Mentoring relationships are more likely to succeed in programs that reach out to parents, solicit their feedback and address their concerns.[93] Getting "buy-in" from parents can provide mentor-mentee relationships with the stability and support needed for youth to flourish.

In the case of Providence, it is also important to consider language barriers for Spanish-speaking parents and guardians. Mentors and case managers must find effective ways of bridging language gaps either through translators or translated material to ensure clear communication with parents and family members.

Component 6: Engage and Empower Youth

Importantly, programs that incorporate shared decision-making to develop programming and activities have seen very beneficial results.[94] With this approach, youth are equal partners with adults in the decision-making process: programs and activities are developed *with* youth, rather than *for* youth. In this way, decisions are more likely to be accepted and adopted.

[92] Jekielek, S., Moore, K. A., & Hair, E. C. (2002). *Mentoring programs and youth development: A synthesis*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

[93] DuBois, D. L., Holloway, B. E., Valentine, J. C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology 30*(2), 157-197.

[94] Positive youth development. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://youth.gov/youth-topics/effectiveness-positive-youth-development-programs

Implementing empowerment theory practices engages youth in meaningful, community-based social activities and helps them gain the vital skills, responsibilities, and confidence necessary to become productive and healthy adults.[95] Empowerment differs from traditional skills-based youth development because it focuses on creating a greater community change through the development of individual capacity. As empowerment researcher Marc Zimmerman states, "Empowerment theory connects individual well-being with the larger social and political environment, and suggests that people need opportunities to become active in community decision making in order to improve their lives, organizations, and communities."[96] Recent program evaluations of SYEP in major U.S. cities suggest that summer youth employment positively affects empowerment assets such as self-efficacy and self-esteem. In order to attain empowerment objectives in youth-based programs, we recommend the following strategies:

1. Involve adolescents in the development of programming. This could include setting up a youth advisory board, assigning educational coordinators, and allowing older adolescents the autonomy to run aspects of the program.
2. Develop engagement strategies that involve youth in solving problems within their community. Challenge them to solve problems and provide clear paths for long-term improvement. Encourage "out-of-the box" thinking.
3. Incorporate "team-building" activities that can focus youth on problem solving and achievement.[97]

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[95] Reischl, T. M., Zimmerman, M. A., Morrel-Samuels, S.; Franzen, S. P., Faulk, M., Eisman, A.B., & Roberts, E. (2011). Youth empowerment solutions for violence prevention. *Adolescent Medicine*: *State of the Art Reviews 22*(3), 581–600.

[96] Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 43-63). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

[97] Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A. K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). Y*outh in decision making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations*. University of Wisconsin-Madison: Innovation Center for Community Youth and Development and National 4-H Council.

Component 7: Support Services and Case Management

Case managers play a critical role in building a successful SYEP by providing administrative and support services to the program and its participants.[98] Case managers are generally paid employees that are dedicated to working on the SYEP program either part-time or full-time depending on the size and needs of the program. Despite the added program cost created by case manager positions, case managers are well worth the investment and pay dividends toward creating a successful SYEP.

The case manager's work starts in the fall when he or she performs community outreach to recruit youth, employers and mentors within the target demographic set by the SYEP. Once this process is complete the case manager then switches gears to match participants with employers and mentors, and guides each participating youth through the application and hiring process. If needed, the case manager has the ability to provide program participants with the necessary resources to be successful such as child care[99] and transportation.[100] Child care is particularly important in Providence where the teen birth rate in 2015 was 24.4 per thousand[101] and is often critical to ensuring that the target population is able to participate in the program without barriers. Additionally, a randomized study reported that transit subsidies, in the form of a $50 subsidy for train and bus trips and reduced fares, increased job search intensity and indirectly reduced unemployment durations for low-income workers.[102] This suggests that

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[98] Brown, D., DeJesus, E., Maxwell, S., & Schiraldi, V. (2003). Workforce and youth development for court-involved youth. In F.A. Villarruel, D.E. Perkins, L.M. Borden & J.G. Keith (Eds.) *Community Youth Development: Programs, Policies, and Practices* (p. 224). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

[99] Ekstrom, R., Freeberg, N., & Rock, D. (1987). The effects of youth employment program participation on later employment. *Evaluation Review 11*(1), 84-101.

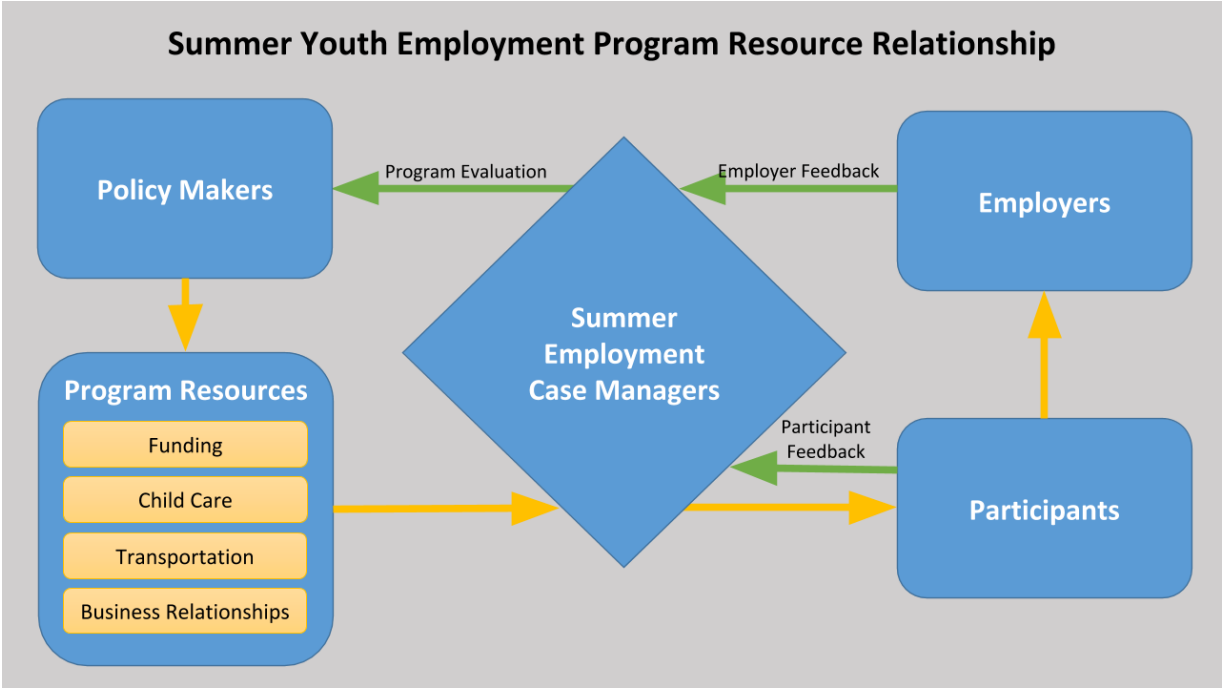
[100] Gardecki, R. (2001). Racial differences in youth employment. *Monthly Labor Review 124*(8), 51-67.

[101] Gardecki, R. (2001). Racial differences in youth employment. *Monthly Labor Review 124*(8), 51-67.

[102] Phillips, D. (2014). Getting to work: Experimental evidence on job search and transportation costs. *Labour*

transportation costs can influence decisions on whether or not to even apply to a position or participate in the program.

Throughout the course of the program the case managers have several ongoing tasks. The first is to troubleshoot problems that arise between youth and employers so that they can be corrected quickly before becoming negative outcomes. The second is to collect data and provide program feedback to inform program evaluation, improvement and ensure accountability. These program evaluations can then be provided to policy makers so that program resources can be adjusted as needed.

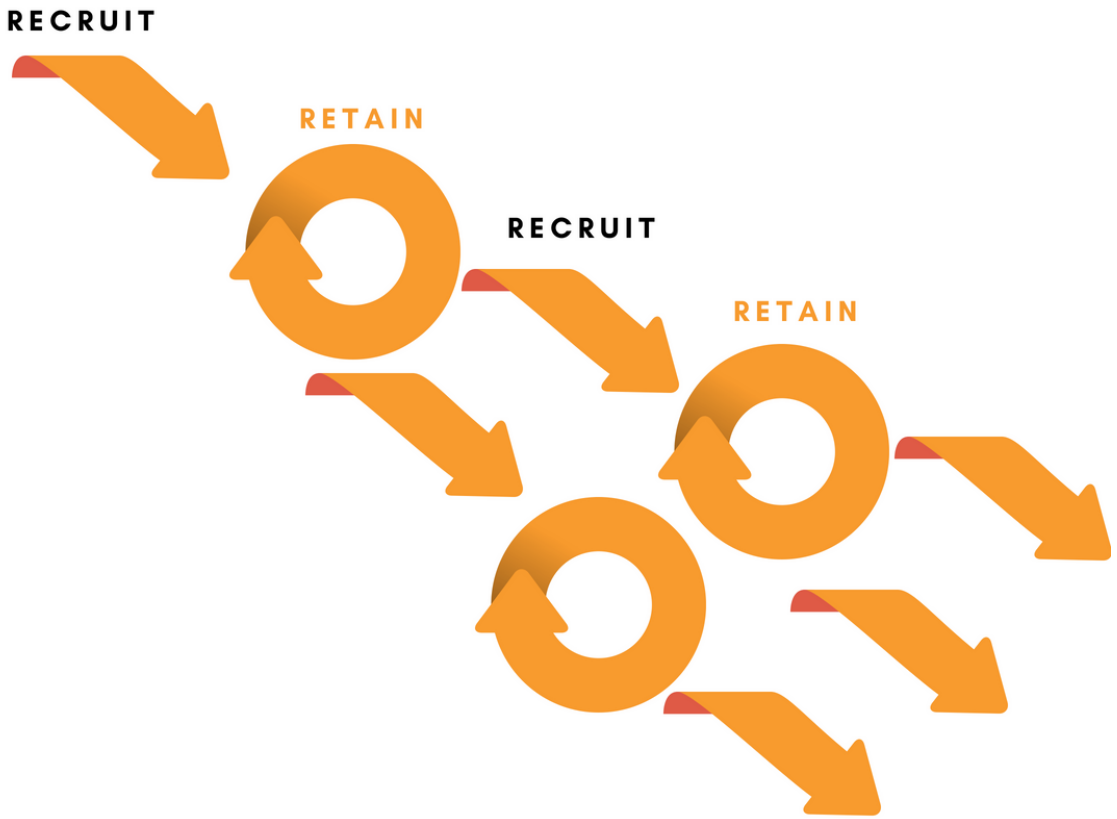


Component 8: Recruit Employers and Match Young People with Appropriate Job Opportunities

Economics, *29*(C), 72-82.

As federal government funding for SYEPs have been declining over time, some cities, in order to continue helping youth with employment during the summer, partner with the private-sector to include un- or semi-subsidized positions where the youth employed will receive some type of salary for his or her time that is not fully paid for by the City.[103]

One key aspect of an effective summer youth employment program is the ability to recruit employers and sustain their participation to maximize the number of job opportunities for young people. Maintaining strong relationships with employers throughout the year means actively understanding employer needs, which allows program leaders to make better job



matches.[104] Moreover, successful summer employment programs match young people with

[103] Ross, M., & Kazis, R. (2016). *Youth summer jobs programs: Aligning ends and means.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

[104] Ross, M., & Kazis, R. (2016). *Youth summer jobs programs: Aligning ends and means.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

appropriate job opportunities based on age and skill level. It is important that young people are matched with jobs of varying levels of responsibility and skill based on their age and work readiness.[105] The most successful summer programs ensure that youth are placed in positions for which they are ready.

Research shows that employment that is age-appropriate, with clear linkages to school and opportunities to learn new skills, reduces delinquency and substance use.[106] For instance, teenage jobs in fast-food restaurants and retail settings do not provide skills, workplace knowledge, or opportunities for meaningful interaction with adult mentors and supervisors. The absence of adults in these workplace settings may heighten the risk of crime and misconduct. Actions such as giving away products, providing free services, fabricating hours on a timecard, or vandalizing company property become more likely in such occupational settings; the workplace is no longer a stepping-stone to future adult roles through mentorship and skill acquisition.[107] In contrast, jobs in an office and clerical positions offer youth low job stress, older coworkers and supervisors, little interference with school and family roles, and opportunities to learn new skills or build a career. Adult presence and involvement is important in SYEP; the absence of adults in some workplace settings may heighten the risk of crime and misconduct.[108] Youth from neighborhoods with few opportunities can particularly benefit from the interaction with working professionals, and these jobs inspire career aspirations and create opportunities to which they may otherwise lack access.[109]

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[105] Ross, M., & Kazis, R. (2016). *Youth summer jobs programs: Aligning ends and means.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

[106] Staff, J., & Schulenberg, J. (2010). Millennials and the world of work: Experiences in paid work during adolescence. *Journal of Business and Psychology 25*(2), 247-255.

[107] Staff, J., & Schulenberg, J. (2010). Millennials and the world of work: Experiences in paid work during adolescence. *Journal of Business and Psychology 25*(2), 247-255.

[108] Staff, J., & Schulenberg, J. (2010). Millennials and the world of work: Experiences in paid work during adolescence. *Journal of Business and Psychology 25*(2), 247-255.

[109] Wilson, W.J. (2011). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Moreover, placement in summer-only jobs such as summer camps, and daycares who rely on the subsidy to provide employment, cannot be extended into the rest of the year or provide career employment. Further, the technical skills gained at these jobs do not apply to non-camp and for-profit environments.[110] Many non-profit organizations also often lack the financial ability to provide jobs even if the youth is a valued member of the staff once the City subsidy ends at the end of the summer. In both cases, youth who are interested in staying on, are prevented from doing so.[111] As a result, it is best to place youth in jobs that have the potential to have both a career ladder and that continue beyond the summer if the employer sees the youth as a good match.

Boston delivers a STEP program that places most of its participants in jobs with community-based organizations in neighborhoods in which the at-risk youth live. Research suggests this provides the youth with the opportunity to positively engage in their communities. A recent study of the program showed that participants attitudes of their communities shifted significantly toward better social outcomes. Youth in the program performing these projects were far more likely (15.6 percentage points) to report that they had a lot to contribute on the basis of his or her participation, were far more likely (21.2 percentage points) to feel connected to the people in their neighborhood and (19.3 percentage points) to feel safe walking in their neighborhood, than those who were not in the program.[112] As a result, we suggest that particularly for youth in their first year of the program, following the Boston model of placing

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[110] Valentine, E. J., Anderson, C., Hossain, F., & Unterman, R. (2017). *An introduction to the world of work: A study of the implementation and impacts of New York City's summer youth employment program*. New York, NY: MDRC.

[111] Valentine, E. J., Anderson, C., Hossain, F., & Unterman, R. (2017). *An introduction to the world of work: A study of the implementation and impacts of New York City's summer youth employment program*. New York, NY: MDRC.

[112] Modestino, A. S. (2017). *How do summer youth employment programs improve criminal justice outcomes, and for whom?* Boston, MA: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

participants with CBOs could be beneficial. In their later years, and as they are nearing high school graduation, youth participants can then be placed with private sector employers offering career opportunities and ladders.

Component 9: Focus on High Growth Industries

Private sector employment for youth should focus on partnering with companies in high-growth business sectors. Introducing youth to career pathways in high-growth industries creates a worker pipeline for positions that offer higher than average wages and creates a pool of middle-skill workers needed by employers. Most SYEPs reserve private sector employment opportunities for youth 18 and older who have already developed job-ready skills,[113] while exposing youth earlier to these jobs could lead to better employment prospects and opportunities to determine if they are interested in certain careers.

A model program targeting high-growth industries is Capital Workforce Partners (CWP), serving north-central Connecticut. The CWP's aim is to create a "workforce of the future," by exposing youth to careers in the region that have sustainable wages and high-growth potential. The work program is designed to develop in youth participants the skills needed by regional

[113] Orrell, B. and Ouellette, M. (2008). *Building effective summer youth employment programs*. Fairfax, VA: ICF International.

growth industries. This "work and learn program" provides participants with career development skills through subsidized work placement and operates from five to six weeks during the summer.[114] [115]

Rhode Island industry sectors that provide above-average wages and will benefit from public-private training investments include biomedical innovation, technology, maritime, advanced business services, and design and custom manufacturing, among others.[116] The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training has targeted these sectors for its SYEP, administered by two local Workforce Investment Boards. Last year, Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston engaged 366 youth in its SYEP.[117] Appendix A includes a brief list of potential private sector employers that have demonstrated summer youth employment, along with partners of the Providence/Cranston WIB.

Component 10: Extend Program Length to Include Year Round Engagement

The success of a SYEP relies in large part on the engagement of the participants. Keeping young people engaged in a program long enough to see the benefits is a central challenge. Research shows that financial incentives, using cohorts to build a sense of community, and having staff members who reflect participants' experiences, promotes engagement in disadvantaged youth.[118] Programs that assist youth in translating school-based and neighborhood-based skills and

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[114] Robinson, C., Shanks, T. & Meehan, P. (2017). *Hallmarks of effective youth employment programs from research and programs across the United States*: Implications for Detroit. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.

[115] Capital Workforce Partners. (2016). *Capital workforce partners strategic plan: July 1, 2016-June 30, 2020*. Hartford, CT: Capital Workforce Partners.

[116] Battelle Technology Partnership Practice. (2016). *Rhode Island innovates: A competitive strategy for the ocean state*. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

[117] Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. (2017, May 18). Program Puts More than 1,200 RI Youth in Summer Jobs, Work-Based Learning Aligned with Employers' Skills Needs. Retrieved from https://gwb.ri.gov/test-content-3-2.

[118] Treskon, L. (2016). *What works for disconnected young people: A scan of the evidence*. New York, NY: MDRC.

behaviors into the workplace engage youth and greatly benefit those with limited exposure to cultural norms.[119]

SYEPs can vary in length, ranging from 6 to 12 weeks. However, one of the reasons there are so few long-term outcomes associated with traditional SYEP programs is that they are too short to make a meaningful difference to participants' skills and work preparedness. Studies indicate that short-term youth employment programs do not sufficiently overcome the impact of background, limited education, and the poor local employment climate faced by at-risk youths. The most successful programs emphasize consistent participation and long-term relationship building with employers and mentors.[120]

Mentoring and program length also have strong correlations. Studies have indicated that short-lived mentoring matches can have detrimental effects on youth, and that the impact of mentoring grows as the relationship matures. In fact, a study conducted on 1,138 youth in the Big Brother/Big Sister program found that youth who were in a mentoring relationship that ended within the first three months "suffered significant declines in their global self-worth and their perceived scholastic competence."[121] On the other hand, youth who were mentored for more than

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[119] Ross, M., & Kazis, R. (2016). *Youth summer jobs programs: Aligning ends and Means.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.

[120] Ekstrom, R., Freeberg, N., & Rock, D. (1987). The effects of youth employment program participation on later employment. *Evaluation Review 11*(1), 84-101.

[121] Grossman, J. B., & Rhodes, J. E. (2002). The test of time: Predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships. *American Journal of Community Psychology 30*(2), 199-219.

twelve months reported significant increases in self-worth, perceived social acceptance, perceived scholastic competence, parental relationship quality, school value, and decreases in both drug and alcohol use.[122]

Enduring relationships with adult role models are especially critical for the emotional support and positive feedback of at-risk youth who often struggle with challenges associated with abandonment and unsatisfactory relationships with adults in their lives.[123] An analysis of the Big Brother/Big Sister program shows that, compared with non-mentored youth, mentored youth in relationships lasting *more than twelve months* felt more confident about doing their schoolwork, skipped fewer school days, had higher grades, and were less likely to start using drugs or alcohol.[124] Youth satisfaction in mentoring relationships doubled when youth participated with mentors for more than a year, confirming the notion that longer relationships are stronger relationships.[125] Overall, youth outcomes continue to improve with an ongoing mentoring relationship. Furthermore, long-term follow-up after program completion allows for meaningful and sustained relationships between mentor and mentee. Research indicates that in order for a mentor relationship to be successful, it must be an ongoing relationship. Therefore, if the participants are only attending 6-8 weeks of summer employment they must continue their mentoring relationship once the employment portion has ended.[126]

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[122] Grossman, J. B., & Rhodes, J. E. (2002). The test of time: Predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships. *American Journal of Community Psychology 30*(2), 199-219.

[123] Grossman, J. B., & Rhodes, J. E. (2002). The test of time: Predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships. *American Journal of Community Psychology 30*(2), 199-219.

[124] Jekielek, S., Moore, K. A., & Hair, E. C. (2002). *Mentoring programs and youth development: A synthesis*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

[125] Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2014). *The mentoring effect: Young people's perspectives on the outcomes and availability of mentoring*. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research Associates for MENTOR.

[126] Cavell, T., DuBois, D., Karcher, M., Keller, T., & Rhodes, J. (2009). *Policy brief: Strengthening mentoring opportunities for at-risk youth*. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center.

Additionally, program repetition (participating multiple summers in a row), can compound the beneficial results in youth.[127] Studies find that youth participants' performance on high school graduation exams improved significantly with each additional year they participated in the program: after one year of the SYEP, students had a very slightly improved chance of attempting and passing their graduation exam; however, after two years of the SYEP, these improvements grew significantly and with each year that students repeated participation, the likelihood of attempting and passing graduation exams increased.[128] [129] This suggests that a model that encourages and makes possible youth participation for many years in a row should be utilized to improve outcomes, especially given that results in several large cities have found that SYEP are effective in engaging young people in short-term work, but generally do not increase employment, earnings, or educational attainment beyond the summer.[130] [131]

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[127] Schwartz, A.E., Leos-Urbel, J., & Wiswall, M. (2015). *Making summer matter: The impact of youth employment on academic performance.* New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy.

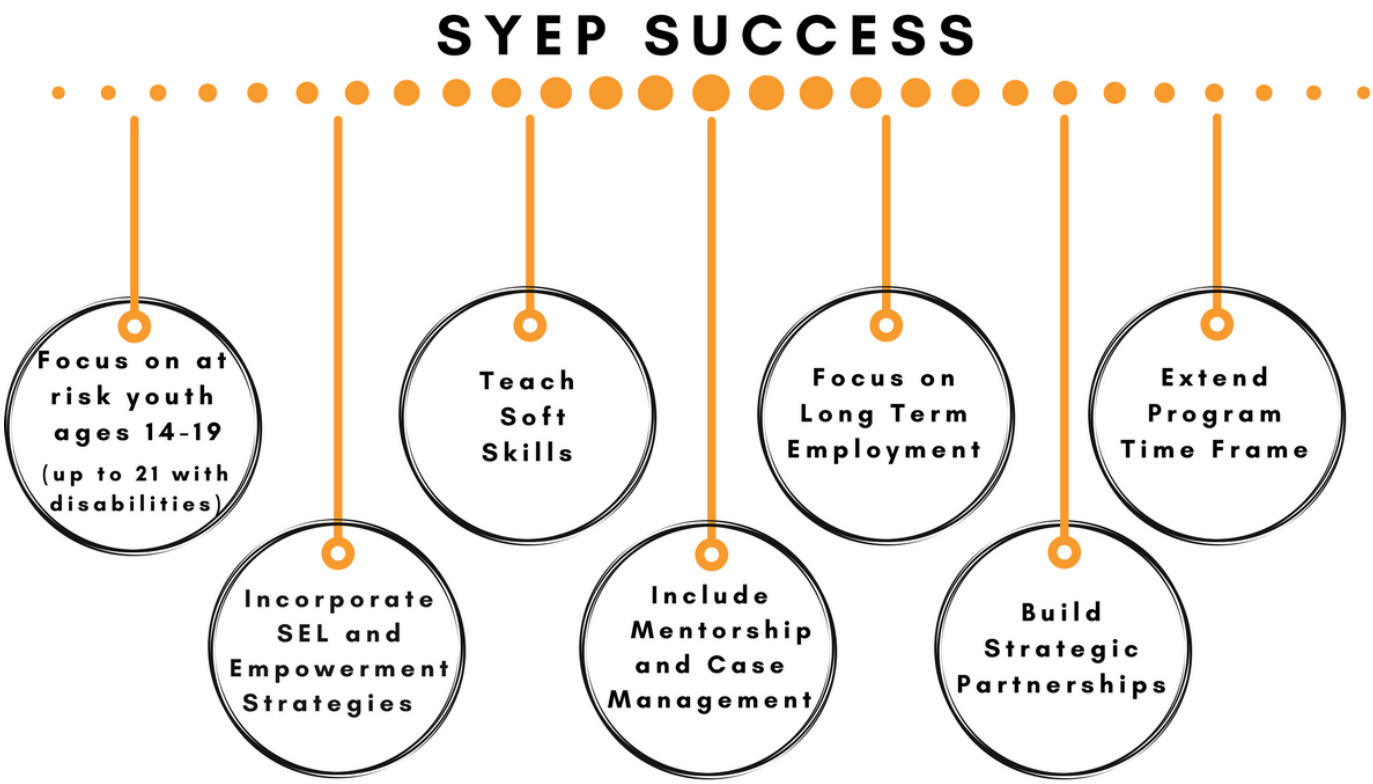
[128] Schwartz, A.E., Leos-Urbel, J., & Wiswall, M. (2015). *Making summer matter: The impact of youth employment on academic performance.* New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy.

[129] Leos-Urbel, J. (2014). What is a summer job worth? The impact of summer youth employment on academic outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33*(4), 891-911.

[130] Valentine, E. J., Anderson, C., Hossain, F., & Unterman, R. (2017). *An introduction to the world of work: A study of the implementation and impacts of New York City's summer youth employment program*. New York, NY: MDRC.

[131] Schwartz, A.E., Leos-Urbel, J., & Wiswall, M. (2015). *Making summer matter: The impact of youth employment on academic performance.* New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy.

Conclusion and Summary

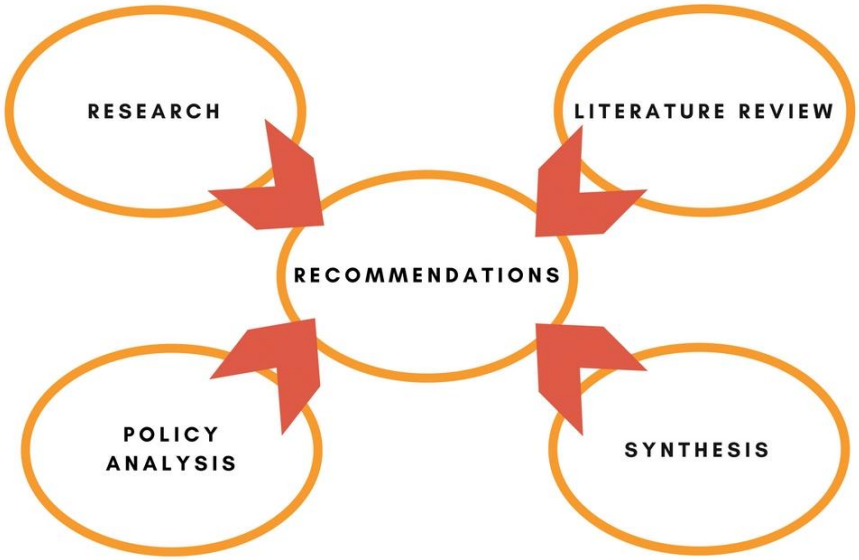


Research shows that traditional SYEPs do not have major impacts on issues such as delinquency, academic achievement, or long-term employment and wages. However, non-traditional programs employing a variety of innovative support methods and best practices can have meaningful effects for both participants and the City—in particular a large reduction in violent crime. Relatively short summer employment programs can generate important behavioral changes among youth while still maintaining a relatively low per participant cost. In order to maximize these benefits, the City should consider a non-traditional summer youth employment program utilizing these best practices:

- Target at-risk youth ages 14-19 (or up to age 21 for youth with disabilities) who are still in school.

- Create a tiered program based upon participants' age. Youth ages 14-16 should work 20 hours a week or less and focus on developing soft skills, and workplace behaviors. Older youth, ages 17-19 should participate in 20 or more hours a week, with the opportunity to learn advanced skills for the workplace.
- Incorporate Social Emotional Learning, empowerment, and soft skills training.
- Include mentors who share backgrounds with the youth.
- Establish a case manager position to administer and manage the program and assist with child care, transportation and other barriers youth face while accessing employment.
- Partner with employers in growth industries to improve the likelihood of long-term employment for participating youth.
- Extend the program beyond the traditional 6-8 weeks of summer to include engagement over the course of the year. At a minimum, mentorship should continue and when appropriate youth could also work less than 13 hours a week during the year if an employer wanted to keep them on at their own cost.

Methodology



The above policy report was overseen by Professor Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz and produced by nineteen graduate-level students at the University of Rhode Island in the Master of Public Administration program.

Students began the project by reviewing hundreds of articles, program evaluations and reports relating to SYEPs. From this literature review, we posed a number of research questions regarding SYEPs, youth employment in general, and youth in the City of Providence.

Four sub-groups formed to evaluate these questions. The sub-groups shared and analyzed their findings through comparison and group discussion amongst themselves and the class at large. The results funneled down into a condensed format that outlined the best and most effective practices of an SYEP based on the evidence presented in program and policy evaluations, plus a review of the extant literature on these practices when used both within and outside of SYEPs.

Based on desired outcomes, the demographics and needs of the participants, the needs of the City, potential partners, our recommendations on how to run a Summer Youth Employment Program were tailored to the City of Providence

APPENDIX

A. Potential Private Sector Partners

The companies listed below are either a major Providence employer or have demonstrated an interest in supporting youth employment programs.

- **Bank of America**: Through its Charitable Foundation, Bank of America supports local youth workforce development programs though local nonprofit organizations.
- **Coastway Community Bank**: Employees who volunteer as part of Coastway's Community Involvement program conduct mock interviews with young adults to assist in job placement and conduct regular youth mentoring. The company also offers a free financial literacy program designed for teens and young adults called "Money Smart Youth," which focuses on budgeting, saving, and building credit.
- **CVS Health**: Participates in 100,000 Opportunities Initiative that provides jobs to out-of-school youth aged 16-24.
- **Citizens Financial Group**: Provides funding to programs that support financial literacy and job training. Last year, Citizens Bank provided $40,000 to Central Falls and Pawtucket for various projects, including youth programming and job training. This *Growing Communities* program, part of "Citizens Helping Citizens Strengthen Communities," was carried out in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation Rhode Island.
- **Fidelity**: The Fidelity Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Fidelity Investments that provides funding to nonprofit organizations. Their sector focus includes youth development and financial literacy for youth.
- **GTECH/IGT**: Their "After School Advantage Program" provides funding to non-profit community agencies and public schools to create digital learning centers for underprivileged and at-risk youth ages 5-18 who do not have access to computers.
- **Rhode Island Public Transit Authority**: Offer frees or reduced fare transit passes.
- **Save the Bay**: Offers unpaid internship opportunities.
- **Starbucks**: Participates in 100,000 Opportunities Initiative.
- **The Steelyard**: Hosts weeklong summer camps in metals, ceramics and jewelry for youth 14-18.
- **Textron:** The Textron Charitable Trust provides philanthropic support for nonprofit agencies. Provides grants for youth "job training for underserved audiences."
- **Walmart**: Participates in 100,000 Opportunities Initiative.
- **WaterFire Providence**: Offers various internships during the spring, summer and fall.
- **Yushin-America**: Participates in Youth Council of Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston.

B. Potential Academic and School Partners

The majority of the Potential Academic Partners identified below are also involved or have participated with the Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board, the Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston, the Local Workforce Development Plan, prepared for Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board.

Academy for Career Exploration
College Unbound
CCRI, Center for Workforce and Community Education
The College Crusade of Rhode Island
Foster Forward
Junior Achievement RI, Warwick
Met School (Metropolitan Career and Technical Center)
Nowell Leadership Academy
Providence Afterschool Alliance
Providence Student Union
Rhode Island College Outreach Program
Rhode Island Marine Trades Association
Rhode Island Mentoring Partnership
RWU-School of Continuing Studies
School One
Swearer Center at Brown University
UPD Consulting
United Way of Rhode Island
Year Up Providence
Youth Build Providence

C. Current Partners with One Providence for Youth

AAA
Armory Management Company
Center for Women and Enterprise
Cornish Associates
Crossroads Rhode Island
Darrow Everett LLP
Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island Evolis
Family Service of RI
Federal Hill House, Global View Communications
Goodwin-Bradley, Co.
Foods, Inc.
Vistaprint
Ximedica.
Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, KITE Architects
Lifespan
Marriott Hotels
New England Medical Innovation Center Providence Foundation
Providence Promise
Rhode Island Foundation
Roger Williams Park Zoo
Stages of Freedom
The Mullings Group
United Natural