

To: **Alfredo Mendoza:** Staff Services Analyst, Department of Workforce Investment
From: **Rebecca Lincoln:** Career Educator, Merced County Office of Education
Re: **Merced County Youth Council Quarterly Report-** Empower Program
Date: **May 2009** (January, February & March 09)

A. Overall status of the program:

The EMPOWER program enrolled 23 new participants this quarter; this brings the total active to one-hundred and thirty-four (134) EMPOWER participants. The Empower advisors continue to track the number of participants enrolled in structured program activities to ensure that the majority of youth are receiving intensive services (as opposed to case management services). The status on all WIA-Client action reports for goals, activities, exits and follow-ups (phase II) remain up to date.

B. Past Quarter Highlights:

- 1) **EMPOWER Workshops:** The EMPOWER Workshops were provided to youth in the months of January and March this quarter. The following is an accounting of workshops offered and number attended:
 - a) **EMPOWER Orientation:** Conducted on Friday January 9 and March 13, with an average of 25-40 attendees per session;
 - b) **EMPOWER Workshop I:** ‘*Gettin’ Ready for the Job*’ conducted on Friday, January 15, and March 20 with an average of thirty youth in attendance;
 - c) **EMPOWER Workshop II:** ‘*The Real Game California*’ was conducted on January 26, 28, and 30 and on March 23rd and 24th with an average attendance of twenty participants in attendance per session;
 - d) **EMPOWER Workshop III:** ‘*Gettin’ a Job*’ was conducted on February 2, 4 & 6 and on March 25, 26 & 27 with an average attendance of 25 participants per session.

- 2) **Bldg K-Computer Lab** is available to EMPOWER participants at the Merced County Office of Education Campus in Bldg K to work on résumés, portfolios, and conduct job search. *PLATO* is educational software designed to increase math and reading skills, it is also available for the participants use in the computer lab. Sign-in sheets are used to track the number of participants using the computer lab daily.

3) California Workforce Association Ninth Annual Youth Conference “Smart Moves in Turbulent Times” was held on January 20-22, 2009 at the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel, in Long Beach, CA. YOP and EMPOWER staff attended the three-day conference that was designed to help local Youth Providers, Youth Councils members and policy makers run better programs, connect to other systems, and learn about the latest innovative strategies on youth development.

On Tuesday afternoon, DWI Grant Coordinator, Alfredo Mendoza; MCOE Career Educator, Rebecca Garcia; Merced County Probation Officer, Nancy Silva and Gabriel Morales from the Center of Employment Training in Santa Marie provided an interactive session titled *CalGRIP Project- Increasing Opportunities for Gang Involved Youth*. This presentation was an overview on the Merced County CalGRIP Project, current gang statistics were provided; insights were shared from other counties in this session along with short video of current Merced County Cal-Grip participant’s experiences.

4) EMPOWER Success Story: Dean Harmon

Dean Harmon enrolled into the EMPOWER program on 12/10/04. When Dean was approached by Toula Moua, a Career Educator with EMPOWER; he was walking the streets on his way to Merced College. Toula stopped him to explain the benefits of Empower Program and gave him her business card. Dean called back and was invited to attend the EMPOWER workshops where he completed an employability portfolio. Dean was provided monthly bus passes so he continued to attend Merced College, but unable to maintain a satisfactory GPA. Dean had many barriers and challenges to overcome. He floated around his circle of friends and due to his physical limitations; many times he was left homeless.

Dean soon quit Merced College; so he was immediately placed on a work experience site at Annberry Rehabilitation Center as a cafeteria assistant to help him financially. He quickly learned the job duties that was required of him and got along well with the staff. Dean quickly learned from his work experience that he wanted to get into a culinary school.

In September 2008, Dean was introduced to Job Corps. It was explained to him that Job Corps can provide housing and training for him and they also have a culinary program. Dean was very excited to hear about the program; his advisor assisted him in-filing out his application to Job Corps and faxed it over to the recruiter. His application was approved, and within three months,

Job Corps sent Dean a ticket to Utah. Dean is attending training in Job Corp's culinary program and will be earning his culinary certificate within the year.

5) EMPOWER Success Story: Bricela Romero



Bricela enrolled into the EMPOWER program in September 12th 2008. When Bricela first enrolled in the program she had very little work experience and uncertain about her future. Then in November 2008, she enrolled in the Customer Service course through MCOE Adult ROP where she gain more skills and was placed on work experience at

J.C. Penney as a sales associate. Bricela found this to be the perfect fit with her social skills. She enjoys working with people and became an excellent employee; she applied for a position and was hired to begin on March 30th 2009. Bricela is currently finishing the Customer Service training, and planning to continue her education.

6) EMPOWER Success Story: Yarid Arellanes



Yarid Arellanes enrolled into EMPOWER on September 7, 2007. She attended and completed the all the EMPOWER workshops and immediately decided that she wanted to enroll into the Medical Assistant Program offered through the Merced College Extension. She attended the college orientation and began the Medical Assisting Program in October 2007. Throughout the program she faced several barriers but overcame them; completed the class hours and completed her externship

on July 2008. Yarid made such a good impression at her externship site that she was call back and on September 4, 2008 she was offered a position with Dr. Georgiou in Los Banos.

C. Past Quarter Deficiencies: none

D. Past Quarter recruiting and marketing efforts:

Recruiting efforts for EMPOWER are limited. The contract specified that as participants exit, new participants will be enrolled in the following quarter after exits, upon availability of funds.

However, Lizcett Romero Career Educator from the EMPOWER Westside attended an Open House at the Dos Palos High School on February 2, 2009. A table with EMPOWER Brochures, flyers and MCOE maps were passed out to students to advise them on the next available EMPOWER Orientation workshop. A sign-in sheet was available for interested students and they were sent an invitation in the mail to advise them of the next EMPOWER Orientation date.

E. Next quarter challenges: none

F. Technical assistance needed:

G. Number of clients receiving social services and examples of services received.

Numerous referrals were made to agencies to assist with food, clothing, housing and transportation.