

To: **Alfredo Mendoza:** Department of Workforce Investment
From: **Rebecca Lincoln:** Merced County Office of Education
Re: **Merced County Youth Council Quarterly Report:** Empower Program
Date: **Program Year 08/09 first quarter report:** July, August, and September 2008

A. Overall status of the program:

There are presently 117 active participants in EMPOWER at the end of the first quarter; this past quarter the program had eight new enrollments and forty-five exits. 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 WIA-Client action reports for goals, activities, exits and follow-ups (phase II) remain up to date.

B. Past Quarter Highlights:

- 1) **EMPOWER Workshops:** Staff updated and restructured the EMPOWER Workshops over the summer. The EMPOWER Workshops were provided to youth only in the month of September this quarter. The following is an accounting of workshops offered and number attended:
 - a) **EMPOWER Orientation:** Conducted on Friday September 12th had an attendance of forty-three youth;
 - b) **EMPOWER Workshop I:** ‘*Gettin’ Ready for the Job*’ conducted on Friday, September 19 had sixteen youth in attendance;
 - c) **EMPOWER Workshop II:** ‘*The Real Game California*’ was conducted on September 22, 24 & 26 had an average attendance of fifteen participants per session;
 - d) **EMPOWER Workshop III:** ‘*Gettin’ a Job*’ was conducted on September 24, 26 and 28 with an average attendance of twelve participants per session.

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

- 3) **Cell Phones for Soldiers-** The YOP and EMPOWER programs are proud to support our U.S. Troops by being a drop-off site for unused cell phones at the Merced County Office of Education, Bldg K. More than 150,000 troops are serving overseas and away from their families. *Cell Phones for Soldiers* and Merced County Office of Education are calling on Merced communities to support our brave men and women by donating unused cell phones. It is a goal to collect over 50,000 cell phones to keep our troops connected with their families.

Cell Phones for Soldiers was created by Brittany and Bobbie Bergquist of Norwell, MA. After reading a story about a soldier who ran up a huge phone bill calling home from Iraq, these two teenagers decided to help and came up with the idea of collecting old cell phones. The cell phones are recycled for cash and the proceeds are used to buy prepaid calling cards for our soldiers serving in the Middle East. For more information, please visit www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com

- 4) **Common Measure Training:** YOP and EMPOWER staff along with DWI staff participated in a six hour training at Merced County Office of Education, Newbold Room on August 20,2008. The implementation of the Common Measure Policy from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), where one set of measures will be used for common measure reporting purposes and WIA Section 136 performance accountability purposes for all youth programs. The training included an overview of the Ten WIA elements for youth services; definitions of the youth common measures; and how the measures can be successfully obtained. The new Common Youth Measures as are follows:

Placement in Employment or Education: the number of in-school and out-of-school youth who are in employment (including military) or enrolled in post-secondary education and / or advanced training / occupational training in the first quarter after exit.

Attainment of a Degree or Certificate: the number of in-school and out-of-school youth who attained a diploma, GED or Certificate by the end of the third quarter after the exit quarter.

Literacy and Numeracy Gains: number of out –of-school youth, basic skills deficient who increase one or more educational functioning levels with in a year.

- 5) **EMPOWER Success Story:** (*no picture available*)

Jaime Berlanga entered the Empower Program on June 3, 2005; an out of school youth, high school graduate with employment difficulties. He completed the ROP Marketing Working Professional Workshop, where he learned budgeting skills, group interaction, time management, career exploration, and completed an employment portfolio. After the workshops, Jaime was placed on a work experience site to gain experience with hopes of getting a job. After completing the work experience hours, Jamie decided to enroll in Merced College at the Los Banos Campus where the Empower program assisted him with purchasing his school books. Jaime was doing very well and was an excellent student.

In his second semester at Merced College, Jaime became involved in gang activities and ended up serving time in jail. This caused Jaime to lose his financial aid for college, and without a job and no income, he was unable to go back to college when he was released. He started to do some job search, but with little work experience, he was unable to obtain employment. Unfortunately, Jaime continued to be involved with gangs in the year 2007 - 2008, and ended up serving time again.

In April 2008, Jaime was released and contacted his EMPOWER advisor to work on setting achievable goals that would help him get back on track. Jamie decided he was done with the gang life and was ready to begin a new productive life. He had to enroll in Drug and Alcohol class for Prop 36, which he still attends today and is doing very well. Since his release, he has obtained his driver's license and with the job leads given him; Jaime was able to obtain employment. He is now employed full time with full benefits at Kagome as a certified forklift driver. He has his own apartment, cell phone and a bank account. Jaime now enjoys his life as contributing member of society.

C. Past Quarter Deficiencies: none

D. Past Quarter recruiting and marketing efforts:

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

E. Next quarter challenges:

G. Technical assistance needed:

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

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