FOSTER & ADOPTIVE CARE COALITION

FOR EVERY CHILD... A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Employment Specialist for Older Youth in Foster Care			
Department:	Specialized Support	**HR Approval:**	November 5, 2026
FSLA Status:	Full-Time, Exempt	**Reports to:**	Director of Employment and Housing for Older Youth in Foster Care

Summary of Position

The Employment Specialist for Older Youth in Foster Care is responsible for replicating the Works Wonders® employment model for youth in foster care and young adults transitioning out of foster care. The position adapts the Works Wonders® approach to meet the unique needs of older youth involved in the child welfare system through individualized, relationship-based employment and career development services.

The Specialist works directly with youth to explore career interests, develop workplace skills, prepare for employment, connect with employers, obtain jobs, and receive ongoing support to maintain employment and advance their careers. This role goes beyond helping youth find a job. It focuses on helping each young person build a meaningful career path that supports financial stability, personal growth, and a successful transition to adulthood.

Using a trauma-informed, strengths-based, and positive youth development approach, the Specialist helps youth identify and overcome barriers that may affect their ability to obtain or maintain employment. These may include housing, transportation, education, limited work experience, financial needs, physical or mental health, disability-related needs, and a lack of supportive resources or relationships.

The Specialist collaborates with youth, caregivers, and the Coalition's Older Youth Readiness Navigators to coordinate services, create employment opportunities, and connect youth with resources and supportive adults. Youth lead their own employment planning by identifying their interests, strengths, and goals, while the Navigator provides consistent guidance, encouragement, accountability, and hands-on support.

Services are individualized based on each youth's needs, developmental readiness, and progress. The Specialist must be flexible and willing to meet youth where they are, providing support in homes, schools, workplaces, and community settings.

Ultimately, the goal is to help youth obtain and sustain meaningful employment while developing the financial literacy, self-advocacy, decision-making, problem-solving, and independent living skills needed to achieve long-term economic stability, build supportive relationships, and become successful, independent and interdependent adults. Maintaining fidelity to the Works Wonders® model is required.

Essential Functions & Responsibilities:

Youth Engagement, Assessment, and Individualized Planning

- Build trusting relationships with youth using trauma-informed, strengths-based, and positive youth development approaches.
- Complete program intake, eligibility, enrollment, and assessments while identifying each youth's strengths, interests, educational and employment background, goals, and barriers.
- Develop and regularly update individualized CareerEd plans with measurable employment and education goals, ensuring youth have an active voice in their planning.
- Provide flexible, individualized support in homes, schools, workplaces, and community settings, meeting youth where they are.

Employment Readiness and Career Development

- Become proficient in and implement the Works Wonders® E2 Training Curriculum, facilitating individual and group training.
- Provide career exploration and employment preparation, including résumé development, job applications, interview skills, and workplace expectations.
- Develop essential workplace skills, including communication, professionalism, attendance, time management, teamwork, problem-solving, and conflict resolution.
- Connect youth with career pathways, vocational training, apprenticeships, internships, work-based learning, and postsecondary education while strengthening confidence, self-advocacy, and decision-making.

Job Development, Placement, and Employment Retention

- Help youth identify, obtain, and maintain meaningful employment aligned with their interests, strengths, and career goals.
- Develop employer relationships and provide hands-on job search, application, interview, job matching, and placement assistance.
- Provide ongoing employment coaching and follow-up, helping youth navigate workplace challenges, build positive relationships, and maintain successful employment.
- Collaborate with employers to address support needs, reasonable accommodations, workplace inclusion, and opportunities for career advancement.

Older Youth Readiness and Systems Navigation

- Apply an understanding of adolescent development, trauma, foster care experiences, and the transition to adulthood when providing employment services.
- Identify and help youth navigate barriers related to housing, transportation, education, health, disabilities, and other needs that may affect employment success.

- Coordinate with Older Youth Readiness Navigators, caregivers, case managers, and community partners to connect youth with resources, referrals, supportive adults, and services that complement broader transition plans.
- Participate in multidisciplinary and collaborative planning meetings while ensuring employment services align with, and do not duplicate, existing supports.

Housing Stability and Financial Literacy

- Recognize and address how housing instability or unsafe living arrangements may affect employment readiness and retention.
- Collaborate with the Coalition's housing program, Older Youth Readiness Navigators, and community partners to connect youth with housing resources and address related barriers.
- Help youth understand the connection between employment, income, budgeting, saving, housing expenses, and long-term financial stability.

Employer Engagement and Community Partnerships

- Develop and maintain relationships with employers, businesses, educational institutions, workforce agencies, and community organizations to expand employment and training opportunities.
- Promote the strengths and abilities of youth with foster care experience while collaborating with employers to support inclusive and successful workplace experiences.
- Stay informed about labor market trends and workforce resources and represent the Coalition at community meetings, job fairs, and employment-related events.

Case Coordination, Documentation, and Program Accountability

- Maintain accurate and timely participant records, including intake, assessments, CareerEd plans, progress notes, services, and employment outcomes.
- Use Salesforce and other designated systems to document services, monitor progress, and track employment readiness, training, job placement, and retention outcomes.
- Complete required reports and documentation in accordance with agency policies, program protocols, and funder requirements.
- Participate in supervision, case consultations, file reviews, and quality improvement activities; communicate concerns and service barriers to the Director of Employment and Housing.
- Maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality while following established procedures for service delivery, case management, and program accountability.

Agency Accountability:

- Completes daily activity log.
- Maintains an up-to-date Outlook calendar.
- Adheres to the Coalition’s Shared Values, Employee Code of Conduct, and Employee Code of Ethics.

Non-Essential Functions

- Other duties as assigned with or without accommodation.

- Supports the Coalition's mission – attends special events, training events, and other "all hands-on deck" activities.

Qualifications & Requirements

Education

Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Human Services, Education, Employment Services, Workforce Development, Psychology, or a closely related field required.

Experience

- Minimum of five years of professional experience in employment services, workforce development, youth services, education, child welfare, or a related field preferred.
- Experience working with adolescents and young adults, particularly youth in foster care or transitioning to adulthood, strongly preferred.
- Knowledge of career development, employment readiness, job placement, employment retention, and workforce training.
- Experience facilitating individual or group training and collaborating with multidisciplinary teams and community partners preferred.
- Familiarity with trauma-informed practices, positive youth development, child welfare systems, and resources for youth with disabilities or other barriers to employment.

Skills and Competencies

- Ability to build trusting relationships with youth using empathy, patience, cultural responsiveness, and strengths-based approaches while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
- Strong understanding of youth development, trauma-informed care, and the challenges youth may experience transitioning from foster care to adulthood.
- Ability to provide individualized career coaching, facilitate employment readiness training, develop employer relationships, and connect youth with meaningful employment opportunities.
- Strong advocacy, problem-solving, and systems navigation skills, including the ability to identify and address barriers related to housing, transportation, education, health, and other support needs.
- Ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with youth, caregivers, employers, colleagues, and community partners.
- Strong organizational, time management, and documentation skills, including the ability to manage multiple participants and competing priorities.
- Adaptability, creativity, persistence, sound judgment, and the ability to work independently while maintaining effective communication with supervisors and team members.
- Commitment to culturally responsive services that respect each youth's background, abilities, experiences, and individual goals.

Additional Skills/Competencies necessary to carry out services to the service population's culture and socio-economic characteristics

- Requires an understanding of differences (racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, etc.) as well as sensitivity to the situations of the children and families the organization serves.
- Stresses a respect for the confidentiality of the children and families the organization serves.
- Requires a clean criminal history.
- Must fulfill the responsibility as a mandated reporter in the State of Missouri.
- Behaves with integrity, demonstrates high ethical standards, and displays a positive image of the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition.
- Demonstrates accountability for results and keeps commitments to others.

Organizational Relationships/Scope

- This position reports to the Director of Employment and Housing Services for Older Youth in Foster Care. Collaborative consultation will be sought from all agency teams, especially Older Youth Readiness.

Working Conditions

- This position entails work in the community and office.
- While performing the duties of this job, the employee is required to communicate effectively.
- The physical requirements of this job include sitting, standing, walking, climbing stairs, lifting up to 25 lbs., pulling and/or pushing on occasion.
  Use of automobiles for local travel to multiple sites may be required.
- The Coalition office at 1220 North Lindbergh is considered home-base with primary office hours Monday-Friday 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM CST.
- This position requires flexibility. Evening and weekend hours may be required to meet the expectations of this position.

Agency Shared Values

Employees of the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition agree to hold themselves and colleagues to the following values:

- We respond to individual needs, histories, and obstacles with intention, dignity, and urgency. By remaining adaptive and attuned to lived experiences, we ensure our policies and practices provide pathways to support, safety, opportunity, and a voice for all.
- We are family. We are connected and support one another in meeting the needs of our own families and the families we serve. We assume the best and are committed to each other.
- Together, we thrive by respecting, valuing, embracing, and celebrating each person's unique strengths, experiences, perspectives, and abilities. We empower every individual to contribute to their full potential.

- We are intentional about knowing better and doing better, using innovative and solution-focused approaches with courageous passion and excellence.
- We are an agency built on integrity, maintaining a culture of trust, respect, transparency, and honesty. We walk in our truth and uphold ethical standards.
- We stand up for each other and what is right for our clients and stakeholders with truth, vulnerability, and accountability.
- We develop and maintain authentic relationships by being flexible and open-minded and maximizing the talents of each individual in the team to accomplish the best outcome for our children and families.

Disclaimer

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by employees assigned to this classification. They are not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and skills required of employees assigned to this position.

Job Description Acknowledgment

I have received, reviewed, and fully understand the job description for this position. I further understand that I am responsible for the satisfactory execution of the essential functions described therein, under any and all conditions as described.

Printed Employee Name:		**Date:**	
Employee Signature:			

Chief Program Officer Printed Name:	Denise Kelley	**Date:**	
Chief Program Officer Signature:			

Chief Human Resources Officer Printed Name:	Sharon Winfield	**Date:**	

Chief Human Resources Officer Signature:	