

Center for an Urban Future

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SUMMER HELP

New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program gives thousands of city teens a leg up in the job market. But limited resources keep thousands more who want summer jobs on the outside looking in.

THIS SUMMER, MORE THAN 40,000 NEW YORKERS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 14 TO 21 WILL spend the better part of July and August participating in New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), holding positions with employers ranging from JPMorgan Chase to the local library. As it has for decades, the program will provide the teens with structure, spending money and an invaluable introduction to the world of work that, according to leading workforce development experts, will greatly improve their chances of success in the labor market later on in life. New York businesses also stand to profit from the initiative since it helps ensure a better-prepared local workforce down the road.

The Summer Youth Employment Program has a lot going for it these days. Mayor Bloomberg recently committed to a baseline budget for the program, and Governor Spitzer included funding in the state executive budget for the first time in years, putting the program's finances on solid ground following several years when supporters had to fight to stave off proposed cutbacks. And under the Bloomberg administration, the city's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has identified administrative savings, made the program run more efficiently and introduced a new paid corporate internship program for teens.

But despite these positive developments, the program now serves 21 percent fewer young people than it did in 1999, when more than 30,000 city youth worked in SYEP jobs. Meanwhile, 30,000 applicants were turned away last year; experts say the number could be even greater this summer.

These gaps are troubling at a time when New York's teen employment rate is the lowest of any of the nation's 50 largest cities and the city has an alarmingly high number of "disconnected youth," young people that are neither working nor in school.

"Communities that provide jobs for kids have a much better employment record for their young adults. You're always ahead of the game when they're 20 to 24 years old if you get them working from ages 16 to 19"

Report - June 2007

Summer Help

This report finds that NYC's Summer Youth Employment Program will serve 21 percent fewer young people this summer than in 1999, a troubling decline since the city's teen employment rate is half the national average.

by David Jason Fischer

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The New York Daily News, by Errol Louis, May 05, 2006



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