



STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



CalWORKs PROMISING PRACTICES WEBSITE SUBMITTAL

I. Title	
Job Club and Job Search with Integrated Life Skills: The Employment Zone (EZONE) Workshop	
II. County or Provider Characteristics	
County/Organization: Kern County Department of Human Services	Region: South
Contact Name: Debbie Davis	Telephone Number and email address: (661) 633-7115, david@dco.kern.ca.us
Demographic: Urban	Size: X-Large
III. Categories	
WTW activities	
IV. Type	
Promising Practices	
V. Purpose	
<p>The Employment Zone (EZONE) is an exciting, reality-based workshop offered to CalWORKs customers who are seeking employment. The purpose of EZONE is to empower customers to address and overcome employment barriers. What makes EZONE unique is that it covers topics that typically are not addressed in a job search/job club class. For example, attitude, decision-making, goals-setting, communication, self-esteem, money management, stress management, stages of change and nutrition are usually not blended with a class that is teaching interviewing, master applications and resumes. Typically, counties separate these topics into 2 or more different workshops. EZONE blends the soft skills issues and the job search techniques in such a way to show how connected they really are. EZONE classes are offered in English and Spanish and EZONE staff strives to address the specific cultural needs of the CalWORKs population.</p>	
VI. Summary	
<p>EZONE is an intense four-week workshop designed to provide customers with employment information and strategies to secure entry-level employment and careers. EZONE workshop is facilitated by Social Service Workers (SSW) and Program Specialists (PS) who are committed and compassionate about the work they perform and customers they serve. EZONE staff is often required to customize the tools and information according to customer's needs.</p> <p>During the first week of EZONE, the following core curriculum topics are presented: Developing a Positive Attitude, Identifying Personal Strengths and Values, Setting and Following Through on Goals, Effective Decision Making, Handling Change and Transition, Problem Solving and Conflict</p>	

Management, Interpersonal Communication, Stress Management, Time Management and Setting Priorities, Networking and Strategic Job Strategies, Developing a Professional Resume, Successful Interviewing Techniques, Job Retention, Career Advancement, and Community Resources.

After successful completion of the core curriculum, customers are ready to implement the acquired job search tools. Customers are required to continue to meet with SSW and PS, and their job search progress is monitored closely during the four-week course. Throughout the Ezone workshop, EZONE staff continues to evaluate and observe customers to identify possible issues and assist customers in problem solving to eliminate employment barriers. EZONE staff makes recommendations for referrals to mental health services or counseling for cases involving domestic violence.

VII. Date Implemented

EZONE was implemented in April 2006.

VIII. Recipient Reactions

Customers are provided with feedback surveys at the end of the first week, after completion of the core curriculum, where they have an opportunity to provide valuable information that brings about improvement in the instruction and delivery of the information. In most cases, customers have expressed how the recorded job interview allowed them to identify the areas where they needed most improvement, such as communication skills and projecting a good first impression to potential employers. Many customers have stated that they go home and share the information pertaining to life skills with their families, which has inspired them on their journey to success.

IX. Employee/Staff Reactions

EZONE encourages other county staff to sit in and participate in any of the workshop modules, with proper notice to the EZONE supervisor. County staff members who have participated in the EZONE workshop indicate they have obtained a better understanding of the purpose, goals, and benefits of the workshop. EZONE Staff continues to obtain positive feedback from customers. EZONE Staff feels this EZONE workshop improves customers' confidence and motivation to pursue employment.

X. Supporting Research (Best Practices Only)

XI. Funding

EZONE start up costs included equipment such as, a video camera, tripod, and TV or monitor for mock interviews. These start up costs totaled approximately \$1,300 per classroom. EZONE staff attended "Train the Trainer" instruction through UC Davis so there were training costs related to this. The Jobs First Resource Room expansion costs totaled approximately \$1,500 since the county needed additional office equipment to meet the demands of the increased traffic due to EZONE participants.

Ongoing costs include the following items; healthy snacks provided during the class and participant folders and handouts, which total approximately \$500 each month countywide. All materials are produced and copied internally to help keep costs down. The only other costs pertain to staff salaries, which include Social Service Workers, Program Specialists, and one Office Service Assistant for résumé preparation.

XII. Implementation

EZONE received strong support from department administration throughout the implementation process. EZONE was provided with a designated classroom, which is essential. Establishing a space that is exclusive to the EZONE function is critical so materials and equipment can be properly

maintained and do not have to be constantly transported.	
XIII. Additional Information	
The biggest challenge for EZONE has been the lack of classroom space for expansion.	
XIV. Results	
<p>On a daily basis, EZONE staff collaborates with local Career Services Centers (One Stops), Domestic Violence counselors, Community Connection for Child Care and Behavioral Health staff, and case carrying Social Service Workers to ensure that workshop participants are provided the necessary resources to maintain their successful participation in the class. This not only helps the customers, but has assisted in strengthening inter-agency relationships as well.</p> <p><i>In 2010, 2,422 customers were scheduled to attend EZONE. Of those scheduled, 59 percent attended; of those attending 77 percent completed the entire workshop. Of those completing, 55 percent secured employment. To date, EZONE has assisted over 2,707 CalWORKs clients secure employment.</i></p> <p>The statistics for this activity are impressive, but most important are the individuals and families that are impacted in a positive way as a direct result of EZONE. It is both rewarding and uplifting to look participants in the eye and know that the workshop has assisted them in a very real way on their journey toward self-sufficiency.</p>	
XV. Outcome Measures	
<p>The 77 percent completion rate has contributed significantly to WTW outcomes for Kern County. Customers that have participated in the EZONE Workshop seem to be more motivated, report being encouraged by the positive attitudes of others around them, and demonstrate improved self-esteem. On several occasions, former EZONE customers who have started a business or who have positions where they are able to make hiring decisions, have returned to EZONE facilitators for job seeker referrals when they have positions to fill. This was an unexpected “full-circle” result for the county.</p>	
XVI. Replication Advice or Drawbacks	
<p>It is critical that appropriate staff be selected to facilitate the workshops. It is recommended that staff possess excellent people skills, motivation, great attitude, and accountability. Staff members must be able to keep customers interested and engaged in the curriculum.</p>	
XVII. Lesson Learned Only: Place an “X” below to keep your submission anonymous for posting, if desired:	
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