

HB 1449 -- JUVENILE WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Boykin

This bill creates the "Youth Workforce Development Program" within the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD). The Program will provide participants with opportunities to enter the workforce along with the skills necessary to be successful in the workplace. The Department will work with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to develop the program as specified in the bill.

The bill defines "at-risk youth" as youth who experience social, economic, familial, or behavioral problems that make him or her vulnerable to delinquency or the use of illegal drugs, with identified risk factors that increase vulnerability. The program is specifically for St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis and limited to 500 participants in the first year.

The goals of the program include job training and creating certification programs for high-demand industries, establishing internships with local businesses, educating youth regarding healthy relationships, marriage, and future family roles, and providing training for life skills.

DHEWD will work with juvenile detention facilities to create within the facility a center for vocational training, resume-building workshops, and high school diplomas. The Department will also work with high schools in the region, local businesses, agencies and community leaders, including nonprofits and faith-based organizations to provide for basic needs and workforce opportunities for participants.

The bill specifies that a youth may be referred to the Program by the juvenile court, DSS, or school, if the youth has been identified as high risk. DHEWD will develop a metric to determine the criteria for participation in the program.

The bill creates the "Youth Workforce Development Program Fund" to be used for specified uses including transportation, child care, and mental health services. By October 1, 2026, and each year after, the departments must create and submit a report to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and President Pro Tem of the Senate as specified in the bill.

This program sunsets six years after the effective date.