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**ODEP**

Office of Disability  
Employment Policy



## Youth with Disabilities Entering the Workplace through Apprenticeship **Establishing New Apprenticeship Programs**



## An Overview:

A lack of available apprenticeship openings should not deter interested private and nonprofit agencies and organizations or individuals from pursuing apprenticeship as a post-secondary option for young adults with disabilities. New programs are continually being added to the apprenticeship program rolls, and with over 950 occupations recognized as apprenticeable by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) the possibilities are almost endless. Starting new apprenticeship programs, however, requires a willing employer and the technical support from local apprenticeship staff to make it happen.

## What You Need to Know:

Registered apprenticeship is a voluntary industry-driven employment and training program. Apprenticeship programs are operated by a partnership between a business or industry, and organized labor, individual employers, or employer associations. The operator of an apprenticeship program is called a program sponsor. Potential program sponsors need to identify the benefits of apprenticeship to their organization or business before expending the effort and expense involved in establishing and administering an apprenticeship program.

**A well-planned apprenticeship program yields many advantages to the employer, and can:**

- Attract highly qualified applicants;
- Reduce absenteeism and turnover;
- Increase productivity;
- Ensure employees are trained to industry standards; and
- Provide employers with a competitive edge through a well-trained and flexible workforce.

Some apprenticeship programs are registered with DOL while others, located in 25 states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, are registered through a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA). Federal or state apprenticeship staff are located throughout the country and are available to provide technical assistance to all program sponsors. Services provided include the identification of training needs, the development of apprenticeship standards, the development of apprentice recordkeeping systems, and the coordination of services that may be provided through other federal, state, and private employment and training programs, such as Vocational Rehabilitation and its community rehabilitation providers, the One-Stop Career Center System, Job Corps, and school-based preparatory programs.

Federal regulations contain the standards for establishing and registering apprenticeship programs. Currently, there are 23 different standards for recognition of apprenticeship programs that relate to:

- Types of occupations and terms of training (e.g. duration);
- Methods of training and the contents of the training agreement between the apprentice and program sponsor;
- Employment and supervision of apprentices, including requirements for wage progression;
- Registration, record maintenance, reporting and certification; and
- Compliance with equal employment opportunity requirements.



**Traditionally, training programs had to be at least one year in length to be eligible for registration, and most were between two and four years. Recent federal rule changes, however, allow programs to be competency-based rather than for a specific time period, or they can be a combination of competency and time-based. Federal regulations also recommend at least 144 hours of related instruction, which is usually classroom based.**

A good place to start in developing an apprenticeship program is to look at the criteria used to establish an apprenticeship occupation. These criteria include both the on-the-job competencies that an individual must master (along with an approximate number of hours of work experience) and areas of knowledge that an individual should acquire through related training. Some employers, employer associations and labor-management partnerships have established what are called national standards for their apprenticeship occupations. These national standards are guidelines for apprenticeship programs that facilitate development of registered apprenticeship programs for specific occupations. Federal and state apprenticeship staff can provide assistance in accessing the criteria for an apprenticeship occupation and any available national guideline standards.

Federal and state apprenticeship staff can also help identify those program sponsors that include interim credentialing within their program standards, a concept that may be particularly useful for some individuals with disabilities. Interim credentials are certificates that are issued by the registration agency at the request of the program sponsor

as certification of an apprentice's attainment of competency for industry-recognized components of an apprentice's occupation. These credentials provide incentives for apprentices to complete their apprenticeship and are useful in pursuing career goals.

Funding is an important consideration for employers looking at apprenticeship. Agencies and organizations interested in working with employers to establish apprenticeship programs should therefore identify potential funding sources that can be used to defray the costs of apprenticeship. Agencies that work with individuals with disabilities should also determine whether and how their own program resources can be used to help defray training costs. There are many other sources of grants, tax credits and training funds that can be used. These funding sources vary among states since many are state-based. A brochure on Funding Opportunities for Apprenticeship Programs is available through the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Web site at: [www.doleta.gov/OA/pdf/funding\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/OA/pdf/funding_fact_sheet.pdf).





## **Here are some tips for developing apprenticeship programs:**

### **Create partnerships with other agencies and organizations to facilitate the process.**

These partnerships might include other service providing agencies and organizations, schools, community colleges, and employer organizations. Enlist the support of state or federal apprenticeship staff. Designate individuals to form a working group to explore opportunities, work with employers, and identify funding resources.

**Labor market information is crucial for focusing efforts.** Try to answer the following questions: What are the emerging demand occupations in the area? Who are the employers for these demand occupations? Where are they located?

**Identify potential employers.** Consider larger employers, employer associations, and employers with multiple locations. Also, be sure to include public agencies and nonprofit organizations, as they are often an overlooked, but potentially willing source for apprenticeship programs. Target employers who are known to be “disability-friendly.” Also, consider working with employers to make them more “disability-friendly” through internships and exposure to people with disabilities in the workplace.

**Develop a marketing and outreach strategy to attract potential program sponsors.** Include in your plan any available financial resources that can be used as incentives for employers to participate. Be sure to include public sector and nonprofit employers as they are the source of many jobs in apprenticeship occupations.

Once you have secured a commitment from an interested employer, your next steps are to:

- Obtain buy-in from workers and management for the idea and organize an apprenticeship committee of skilled workers and management.
- Determine the type of training to be

delivered, both on-the-job and related instruction, and identify sources for delivering the related training. This can be done through a community college or other training providers. Larger employers may also have in-house capabilities to deliver training.

- Develop the standards for training, including: occupations; length of training; selection procedure; affirmative action plan; wages; and number of apprentices to be trained. Make sure that all federal (and where applicable, state) requirements are addressed.
- Recruit potential journey-level mentors and offer training in mentoring an apprentice with a disability to dispel concerns about working with people with disabilities and to help ensure a successful placement.
- Identify an individual to be the program coordinator. This is generally someone within the employer’s organization. However, providing someone to serve as program coordinator for at least the first year of the program, or subsidizing the costs of an individual chosen by the apprenticeship committee can serve as an incentive for employers to participate.
- Present the program standards to federal or state apprenticeship agencies for registration. The same staff can be of assistance in developing the standards for training.
- Once the standards are approved, work with the employer to refer qualified applicants. It is also important to continue to provide support to both applicants and to employers, especially around disability related issues about which employers may not be familiar. (See Fact Sheet 3 in this series: “Increasing The Participation Of Young Adults With Disabilities In Apprenticeship Programs”).
- Work closely with the program sponsor and program coordinator to monitor progress, to resolve any issues that may arise, and track results.

## Where to Go For More Information:

For comprehensive information on registered apprenticeship in the U.S., including the steps for setting up an apprenticeship program, visit: [www.doleta.gov/OA/eta\\_default.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/OA/eta_default.cfm). The complete standards for the registration of apprenticeship programs are available through the U.S. Department of Labor at: [www.doleta.gov/OA/characte.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/OA/characte.cfm).

State apprenticeship agencies are a crucial local resource if you are developing a new apprenticeship program. Find the contact information for your state at: [www.doleta.gov/OA/stateagencies.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/OA/stateagencies.cfm).

The **National Association of State and Territorial Apprenticeship Directors (NASTAD)** seeks to promote the expansion of registered apprenticeship, and will work in conjunction with employers and labor organizations: [nastad.us/overview.html](http://nastad.us/overview.html).

**Apprenticeship: It Makes Good Business Sense** is a toolkit produced by the Wisconsin Apprenticeship Advisory Council that specifically informs employers of the steps necessary to create a new apprenticeship program: [dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/pdf/06\\_EmployerToolkit.pdf](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/pdf/06_EmployerToolkit.pdf).

Small businesses may qualify for financial assistance from the **Small Business Administration (SBA)** when implementing an apprenticeship program: [www.sba.gov/services/financialassistance/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/services/financialassistance/index.html).

## Learn More

1. Understanding Apprenticeship Basics
2. Preparing Youth and Young Adults for Apprenticeship Programs
3. Increasing Participation of Young Adults with Disabilities In Apprenticeship Programs
4. Establishing New Apprenticeship Programs
5. What Apprenticeship Employers Need to Know About Working with Young Adults with Disabilities
6. Looking to Future Opportunities in Apprenticeship



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