

# Memo

**To:** Willard Boyd  
**From:** Cory Lasker  
**Date:** 10/25/09  
**Re:** Iowa Non-Profit Job Training

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A number of non-profit organizations in Iowa currently offer programs that enable underprivileged and historically underrepresented individuals enter the workforce. Many of these programs focus on vocational training, while others offer ancillary services that allow individuals to receive necessary training. This memo gives examples of services that Iowa non-profits currently offer with the goal of helping individuals overcome employment obstacles and become more independent.

## **VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS**

### **Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa Training Programs**

The Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa offers a number of comprehensive training programs geared towards preparing individuals for specific employment opportunities. These programs are particularly applicable in situations where limitations based on disabilities or other barriers to employment exist. In addition to teaching skills, these programs focus on developing attitudes and personal characteristics to help individuals become more successful members of society. Each program has a specific mission and expected outcomes for the participants. The training programs include: cash register training, janitorial training, retail training, food service training, bank skills training, and manufacturing training. Each program prepares individuals with the basic skills necessary to gain work in the indicated job sector. The programs vary from a five-day, 15-hour course to a six-week, 180-hour course. In addition to the hard skills needed for these jobs, the Goodwill programs focus on soft skills such as: interpersonal communication skills, attitude, decision-making, problem solving, conflict resolution, and customer service.

In these courses, instructors teach the skills by demonstration, instruction, and examples. Then participants practice the particular skills in simulated conditions. Trainers provide feedback and, if necessary, allow the participant additional opportunities to practice the skills. In addition to demonstrations and simulations, course teaching aids include: classroom discussion, small/large group activities, worksheets, handouts, video/Power Point presentations, field trips, role-play, job fairs, and on location work.

The Retail Training program is an excellent example of the Goodwill training programs. The program's mission is to provide basic skills, so that the participants can gain work in the retail industry. The program is six weeks long and classes and training are held Monday through Friday for six hours each day. On completion of the program, participants should be able to demonstrate proficiency in retail skills such as: sales, merchandising, balancing cash drawer, money/credit/debit card management, customer service, and inventory control. Participants should also have an increased awareness of

customer service skills and knowledge of safety skills. Finally, the program is intended to help participants to understand employment readiness skills and job retention.

#### Goodwill Industries of Southeast Iowa

Goodwill Industries of Southeast Iowa also have programs designed for veterans. Services available to veterans include: paid training at Goodwill stores, basic computer skills training, forklift training, job search training, resume writing, career counseling, budgeting assistance, referrals to housing and medical services, and referrals for Benefits Counseling.

#### Iowa Workforce Development

Iowa Workforce has partnered with Experience Works, a national, charitable, community-based organization, to provide additional services to men and women 55 years of age and older. The services offered help ease the process of gaining additional skills so that older participants can reenter the workforce or enter a new field. The program pays tuition for classes at educational institutions and private vendor training. Additionally, job coaching and employment searching services are available. In addition, the Iowa Workforce works with veterans to help them find employment and to place them in federally funded employment and training programs.

#### North Iowa Vocational Center (NIVC Services, Inc.)

Another Iowa non-profit offering vocational training to underprivileged individuals is NIVC Services, Inc. The NIVC Production Services Department employs and trains individuals with disabilities. Its program gives disabled individuals the opportunity to work with NIVC as contracted labor for local businesses. NIVC offers a number of services to the community. In its assembly division, NIVC employees can do everything from the high tech task of scanning documents for data storage to "low tech" collating, sorting and packaging. In the Recycling Division, individuals sort and process containers and reclaim other types of recyclable materials. Individuals working in the Woodshop Division utilize pneumatic nail guns to build pallets and shipping crates.

#### Urban Dreams

In conjunction with its H.E.R.O. program, Urban Dreams offers the Beneficiary Choice program which provides job readiness training and job placement for individuals (18 to 29 years of age) coming out of federal or state prisons. Urban Dreams also offers pre-employment training programs. This program includes summer employment and internships that prepare students for future careers and define academic pathways.

#### Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (iJAG)

iJAG is another Iowa non-profit that focuses on enabling disadvantaged individuals. The program was formed to develop a statewide system of school-to-work transition and dropout prevention for Iowa's youth facing multiple barriers to success. iJAG is funded by the Iowa legislature, corporate and foundation contributions, public sector grants and participating school funds. The program currently serves more than 1,500 students per year in more than 27 school-based sites across Iowa. Through innovated partnerships with businesses and industries, iJAG helps young people find success in high school and in the world beyond.

The iJAG program helps high-school and middle-school students discover their individual talents, develop skills, and seize opportunities to achieve their personal potential. The programs offered by iJAG operate as "for-credit" elective courses during the regular school day. In each program there is an iJAG specialist, serving as adjunct faculty, that offers support to students in developing leadership, employment and academic skills. Each specialist works with students in small groups and plays a unique role of teacher, advocate, guidance counselor and mentor. The program also offers

opportunities for students to interact with employers and other community-based organizations. The iJAG program also focuses on teaching students 37 core competencies necessary for employment success. These competencies are comprised of six skill sets: personal skills, leadership skills, communication skills, job attainment skills, job success skills and career development skills.

iJAG has four types of program applications and the primary process objectives differ from program to program. The *High School Model* keeps participants in high school through graduation and improves the rate of success in achieving educational and career goals. The *GEAR UP Middle School Model* significantly increases the number of low-income students that are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. The *Out of School Model* helps dropouts attain graduation of GED requirements and also teaches occupational related skills. Finally, the *Early College Success Model* helps students in the completion of a degree-seeking program at the community college level. These programs have been implemented to provide Iowa educators and communities with a viable solution to high school dropout rates, low academic performance, youth unemployment and the increased demand for quality employees.

iJAG provides an effective strategy to strengthen education systems by serving youth needing additional assistance in completing a secondary education, pursuing post-secondary education or training, and/or entering the workforce in a quality job leading to a career. The program has proven to be a cost-effective and successful program by increasing: graduation rates, academic performance, attendance, job placement and continued education/training. iJAG is located in 24 sites and serves a diverse population of students across the state of Iowa.

#### Kirkwood Community College – VITAL program

Kirkwood Community College offers the Vocational Individualized Training and Learning (VITAL) program to assist high school special education students in the transition from high school to a vocational/technical major at Kirkwood. During early high school, the program is discussed as an option for special education students who desire post-secondary vocational training. VITAL provides students with individualized support, such as tutoring, testing accommodations, tape-recorded textbooks, assistance with writing assignments, study skills instruction, progress follow-up with instructors, or note taking accommodations. Students also learn to use campus and community services to develop self-reliance and become successful college students. VITAL students may select programs in agricultural technologies, business, industrial technologies or health sciences.

#### **ANCILLARY SERVICES**

In addition to the vocational training programs, Iowa non-profits offer a number of other services that aid underprivileged and historically underrepresented individuals in becoming more independent through employment opportunities.

#### Employment Search Assistance

Various non-profits in Iowa currently offer services that aid individuals in finding employment. An excellent example is a program offered by the Goodwill Industries of Southeast Iowa called Career Exploration. This program assists individuals in making decisions about the type of work that they would like to do, and then offers supporting in obtaining that type of work. The purpose of the program is to expose individuals to what different kinds of jobs require, what benefits are offered, and what steps are needed to prepare for a career in the desired job. Opportunities are available to familiarize individuals with specific jobs through job shadowing, job site visits, or Internet research. After a desired job is determined, Goodwill Employment Specialists assist individuals in finding a job. Specialists help in completing applications and preparing for interviews. After employment is obtained, specialists continue to work with the individuals on maintaining their jobs. This job coaching entails learning new tasks and learning to work in the new work environment and feel comfortable.

The Iowa Workforce also offers programs designed to help individuals develop career and job search tools. These services include assistance with resumes and cover letters. The Iowa Workforce also helps individuals that qualify for hiring incentives, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit, market these incentives to potential employers.

### Life Training Programs

Another important service Iowa non-profits offer that enables underprivileged individuals to become more independent and gain employment is life training. The Iowa Workforce's PROMISE (**P**romoting Independence and **S**elf-Sufficiency through **E**mployment **J**ob **O**pportunities and **B**asic **S**kills) program assists individuals in becoming self-sufficient. The program outlines a plan to help families leave public assistance. It also includes training in job seeking skills, assistance with academic and vocational training and job coaching. The Goodwill Industries of Southeast Iowa offer similar programs that focus on life skills development. These skills include: meal planning and preparation, household chore planning and completion, emergency situations, planning and scheduling, transportation, shopping, recreation and socialization activities, advocacy and services coordination, budgeting and assistance with paying bills. These services are important because individuals seeking necessary training and employment need to have their personal affairs in order.

### Childcare

Another barrier that underprivileged individuals face in gaining employment and necessary training is childcare. Often they are not able to afford expensive daycare services while they gain the training they need to be employable. The YMCA of Greater Des Moines is meeting this need by offering safe, affordable, high-quality childcare.

### Housing, Nutrition, and Other Needs

Often, the need for housing and nutrition prevents individuals from receiving vocational training because it is difficult for underprivileged individuals to focus on job skills training when those needs are not met. The Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity helps to strengthen families by meeting the need for housing. Individuals currently living in unsafe, unhealthy, or overcrowded housing are invited to apply. The program is also available to those spending an excessive proportion of their income on rent or living subsidized housing or with friend or family. In exchange for a predetermined number of hours of sweat equity, these individuals are given the opportunity of homeownership. Habitat for Humanity is not the only housing option that is available. The YMCA of Greater Des Moines' Men's Residence Transitional Housing program helps to address the needs of homeless men by offering a 188 bed facility.

Throughout Iowa are numerous soup kitchens that provide one, two or three meals a day. Meals are available to all at specific meal times. Additionally the Johnson County Crisis Center offers meal assistance to those in need. Prepared food bags are available once a week. The amount of food provided depends on the size of the family. Bags can be tailored to meet dietary restrictions and concerns or serve those who have limited ability to prepare food. Additionally, some perishable food items are available in the Food Bank lobby on a daily basis. During the summer months, fresh produce is available from our Community Garden.

The Johnson County Crisis Center also works in partnership with Goodwill and Crowded Closet to provide clothing and household items for those in need. Vouchers are available to families every six months and can be traded in at either store. In addition, the Crisis Center collects children's clothing that can be picked up on request at the Food Bank. Additionally, each month the Crisis Center provides a limited number of free single ride bus tickets for the Iowa City Transit system.

### Other Ancillary Services

Representative Wayne Ford's Urban Dreams offers a number of programs that assist in securing job training. The Drop-Out Re-Engagement Program is available for individuals ages 14 to 24. It is a referral and advocacy service to get youth back in school or an alternative educational setting. Urban Dreams also offers the H.E.R.O. (Habilitation and Empowerment for Returning Offenders) program to assist ex-offenders in reintegrating into society through job counseling and an array of developmental life skills. Urban Dreams also offers a number of programs that focus on lowering dropout rates and refer underprivileged individuals to public benefits.