

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONER

### VISION

To maximize our investment in young people, youth programming and the workforce development system, the Department of Labor will recognize the occupation of Youth Development Practitioner as apprenticeable. The recognition of the occupation will provide quality training for youth workers as they deliver comprehensive services to young people. Currently, we fail to officially acknowledge the occupation and profession of youth workers, as well as define appropriate standards of practice.

### GOALS

To strengthen the field of youth work

- < Provide a career path for youth workers
- < Provide training and mentoring for youth workers
- < Increase the numbers of youth workers who remain in the field and can serve as mentors

To Improve the quality of youth services

- < Provide training standards for the occupation
- < Increase the number of youth workers receiving extensive, quality training
- < Provide national recognition for those successfully completing training as Youth Development Practitioners by awarding a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship
- < Increase retention of youth programs

### WHY NOW?

The enactment of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Secretary Herman's prioritizing of youth and the launching of the Youth Opportunities Movement, and the creation of OYS--the first youth office in some 20 years, provide a unique opportunity to strongly impact the youth workforce development system.

WIA's emphasis upon youth development and its augmentation of youth formula funds with \$250 million in Youth Opportunity Grants(YOGs) represents an unparalleled alignment of resources committed to youth programming. We anticipate that the roll out of the YOGs alone will result in approximately 1,500 front-line staff positions nationwide.

Success in delivering the extensive services outlined by WIA depends not only on the quality of program design, but on the delivery of services to youth by front-line staff. WIA legislates a different approach to serving young people. The law places youth development principles at the heart of serving youth. The strategy requires comprehensive services and moves from short term interventions to a systematic, consolidated approach geared towards long-term workforce preparation. Because youth services are designed and governed at the local level and implemented by front-line youth workers, the role of youth workers is critical in this context as they develop relationships with young people and provide crucial expertise and support to youth as they transition to adulthood and careers. Successful implementation of the youth programming--both the YOGs and formula funded activities, and the long term success of the youth workforce development system, requires a human capital strategy. We are seeking to upgrade the field of youth work through accreditation, training opportunities, apprenticeship and certification.

### WHY REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP?

Registered Apprenticeship is an effective and time-honored way to build a skilled, knowledgeable and loyal workforce. The combination of structured on-the-job training(OJT) and related technical instruction will offer Youth Development Practitioners a recognizable career path that includes high quality training and educational opportunities, while offering the field recognizable occupational standards. The process of

determining OJT and related instruction and the development of National Guideline Standards presents the opportunity to systematically examine the needs of the field and then address those needs in a structured way that represents the field's own expertise. Quality and adaptability characterize apprenticeship and thus provides a good match for the diverse landscape of youth programs.

The Office of Apprentice Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS) has a long history of facilitating flagship apprenticeship programs in traditional areas. OATELS has assumed a leadership position through its expansive role in certifying emerging occupations. OATELS has been instrumental in implementing a Quality Child Care Initiative that will assist with building a national system for the education and training of professional child care providers by providing a credentialed career path for the development of professional child care providers through the utilization of the National Registered Apprenticeship System. Ten states and the District of Columbia were recently awarded grants to develop state-wide systems that will help train child care workers. These grants are the first step in applying apprenticeship to train professional child care workers. The Quality Child Care Initiative incorporates diversification of occupations which can be learned through registered apprenticeship and develops a new and innovative strategy for increasing participation among the child care industry. Building upon OATELS efforts in the Child Care Initiative, we are proposing accreditation, training opportunities, apprenticeship and certification as vehicles to further upgrade and support the field of youth work in the area of employment and training.

#### BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS

- < Well trained staff equates to quality service delivery
- < Structured, consistent training and content that is already developed
- < OATELS field staff monitors quality and reviews training
- < No cost technical assistance offered locally through OATELS to assist with coordination, development and tailoring of OJT and related instruction program
- < Marketability to prospective youth workers-- your program is more appealing to prospective youth workers who are assured developmental opportunities, marketable skills and certification
- < Marketability to funders-- you can tout your apprenticeship program to demonstrate the quality of staff and services offered by your program, as well as, your role in promoting the field
- < Opportunities for staff and a quality program increases staff retention
- < Participating in the professionalization of the field--benefits youth workers and the young people

#### BENEFITS TO YOUTH WORKERS

- < Formal, structured training and development opportunities
- < A career path that includes educational credits that can be linked to local associate and bachelor degree programs
- < Receipt of Certificate of Completion from the Apprenticeship Registration Agency
- < Certification that is nationally recognized and tied to Registered Apprenticeship Standards
- < Participation in quality education and training that is locally monitored
- < Earning while you are learning

#### BENEFITS TO YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN YOUTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- < High quality services delivered by a well trained staff
- < Programs that can boast a supported staff who are more likely to stay on board because they are offered a career path with substantive educational and training opportunities
- < Benefit from the environment created by an organization that prioritizes learning and development