

Supporting Out-of-Workforce Individuals

Recruitment and Retention Super Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Who are Out-of-Workforce Individuals?

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act defines an 'out-of-workforce individual' as -

1. an individual who is a displaced homemaker, as defined in section 3 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3102); or
2. an individual who -
 - a. has worked primarily without remuneration to care for a home and family, and for that reason has diminished marketable skills; or
 - i. is a parent whose youngest dependent child will become ineligible to receive assistance under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) not later than 2 years after the date of which the parent applies for assistance under such title; and
 - b. is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.

Did You Know?

In February 2020, the number of unemployed individuals in Illinois totaled 5.8 million with the unemployment rate at 3.4 percent.¹

Recruitment Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruitment efforts for out-of-workforce individuals should focus on a variety of outlets including media, print communications, community involvement, and persistent follow-through.

- Engage community leaders, human service agencies, administrators, and educational entities or organizations in the recruitment process.
 - ✓ Supply organizations with informational material related to your programs or services.
 - ✓ Ask organizations to refer clients they feel would benefit from your programs.
 - ✓ Remember to refer students to partner organizations if they could benefit from services.
- Emphasize nontraditional careers that offer greater earning potential, particularly for females. For many males, nontraditional careers in areas such as health care can offer greater career satisfaction in addition to high wages.
- Provide information on resources available at community colleges, social service, and community agencies.
- Help displaced homemakers and students returning from absences in the labor market identify skills that translate into the workplace. For example, they may have skills in budgeting, scheduling, or conflict resolution.
- Provide instructors with training on giving feedback in respectful, sensitive ways.
- Support students in completing financial aid forms and scholarship applications.
- Emphasize the benefits of Bridge and Integrated Career and Preparation System (ICAPS) models, especially for individuals who have yet to obtain their high school equivalency (HSE).
- Develop marketing materials that feature photos and testimonials. Display materials in strategic locations that have specific relevance to out-of-workforce individuals.
 - ✓ Relevant locations include childcare and educational facilities; common gathering places that facilitate community engagement (churches, community centers, popular businesses that serve as gathering places); or service centers that cater to the target population (i.e., Department of Human Services, non-profits, or public health organizations and clinics).
- Work with local employers on program Advisory Committees to recruit employees in need of upskilling.



Retention Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

Flexibility in course scheduling as well as “fast-track” options for certification and degree attainment are a few key factors in retaining out-of-workforce individuals to completion.

- Build programs of study around local labor market information for in-demand employment.
- Reduce program completion time by continually verifying coursework is relevant to the career pathway.
- Develop class schedules and alternative delivery systems (e.g., distance learning) that allow individuals to work or take care of children while attending school.
- Provide copies of supplementary texts for students to use and/or borrow.
- Link students with clothes closets and “Dress for Success” programs for appropriate interview and work clothes.
- Use a case management approach in which one person monitors and guides the student.
- Match students with mentors.
- Organize support groups. Plan events that provide opportunities for students to meet each other. Encourage them to support other students by developing a network for getting information about classwork, homework, and childcare.
- Offer stress management classes.
- Present parenting classes and connect individuals with respite agencies.
- Identify and link students with community agencies to provide needed support.
- Assist students with fees, transportation expenses, childcare, books, etc.



Retention Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a resource center to increase awareness of CTE programs and help students develop essential employability skills.
 - ✓ Allow for flexible hours.
 - ✓ Give students a chance to explore their interests and aptitudes using computerized career information software.
- Teach students financial responsibility by offering training in setting budgets, using bank accounts and services, and lifestyle choices that have financial consequences.
- Provide job-shadowing and other work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training to further develop students' employability skills.
- Help students with registration for subsequent terms to ensure continued enrollment.
- Offer academic advising services several times per semester.
 - ✓ Track student performance.
 - ✓ Provide academic intervention, when needed.
- Encourage tutoring or study groups for students experiencing difficulty.



Sources:

¹ California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2010). *Make a Difference for Special Population Students: Practical Tips and Tricks for Educators*. [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.jspac.org/files/u/af/61/makeadifferencspecialpopsbrief.pdf>.

² Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS). (2020, April 2). Retrieved April 6, 2020, from https://www2.illinois.gov/ides/Imi/Pages/Local_Area_Unemployment_Statistics.aspx.

³ Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act H.R.2353, 115th Cong., (2018) (enacted). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2353/text?r=2>.