

## ANNE ARUNDEL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

# Careers Program

In 1997, the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services created the Careers Program in an effort to help Job Center customers secure higher-wage jobs with health benefits.

The Careers Program offers free occupational training to any Job Center customer who is income-eligible for Food Stamps and who is employed but whose hourly wages average \$7.50 or less.

The Job Centers administer the Careers Program and work with employers and training organizations to customize the career plans for each customer.

A training program must meet four criteria to qualify for Careers Program funding: 1) jobs must exist in the sector or profession in the local economy; 2) the training must prepare the participant for those jobs; 3) the training must be strictly occupational, not college degree courses, for example; and, 4) upon completion of the training, the target job must be full-time, pay at least \$8.15 per hour, which is 30 percent more than the current average wage at hire for Up-front Job Search (\$6.27), and offer health benefits within one year.

Several training programs are currently being offered:

- ***Career Enhancement Program:*** The Anne Arundel Community College offers free career planning services on-site in the Job Centers, and the Job Centers sponsor part-time occupational training at the College for customers with approved education plans. Examples include: patient care jobs, hotel/restaurant management jobs, graphics design, real estate appraisal, etc.
- ***Non-Traditional Careers Program:*** The Job Centers sponsor a part-time occupational training course to prepare selected customers for careers in higher-wage jobs that traditionally have been filled by men (such as marine/environmental services and construction/building trades).
  - ***Electrical Trades Training Program,*** which is a part-time, pre-apprenticeship program for 12 weeks, to help trainees understand the basics of the electrical trades industry. It is a hands-on training that incorporates both classroom and in-field, on-the-job training, in preparation for jobs in the electrical trades. Graduates are hired by local electrical companies which then pay for the formal apprenticeship training. Within four years, the average wage is \$16.00 per hour.
  - ***Fiber-optics Training Program,*** which is a part-time, hands-on training to prepare trainees for jobs as technicians in fiber-optics cabling. Local

employers serve as faculty, and recruit graduates for new positions that pay an average of \$10-12 per hour initially.

- ***Building Maintenance Trades Program***, which is a part-time, hands-on training for low-income, high school dropouts who are ages 18-35 and are residents of public housing properties, and who want to learn basic building maintenance (tile repair, a/c unit repair, painting, carpentry, plumbing repair, etc.) while they earn GEDs and a graduated wage.
- ***AdVANTage Van Services Entrepreneur Program***: The Job Centers sponsor full-time training and assistance with capitalization costs for selected customers to begin their own companies to provide transportation services in Anne Arundel County, including rides for Job Center customers.
- ***Job Preparation Services***: The Job Centers offer several preparation programs for customers who need special assistance to find a job:
  - The Learning Centers offers free adult basic education, GED preparation classes, one-on-one tutoring, English as a Second Language, and computer skills training.
  - The Next Step Program offers a Job Club and other job-related support services to help customers who comply with Up-front Job Search but who cannot find a job.
  - The Job Centers permit customers to fulfill their work requirements short-term with “chores” that they must provide in exchange for room and board at several local facilities: Sarah’s House homeless shelter, the YWCA’s domestic violence shelter, and several residential treatment programs for drug abuse.