

“Work In Progress”
Curriculum for Unemployed Offenders
U.S. Probation Office
District of Minnesota



PROGRAM SUMMARY:

The “Work In Progress” curriculum is designed to provide unemployed offenders with the tools to assist them in obtaining meaningful employment. The eight-week, 16-hour classroom instructional program takes offenders through all phases of their job search, addresses the unique barriers they face and results in an individualized action plan for success. The curriculum utilizes a variety of instructional techniques, including lecture, group activities, skills practice and homework assignments.

The “Work In Progress” curriculum is required for all offenders on active supervision who are unemployed for at least 30 consecutive days.

Other cases will be considered on a case by case basis. If an offender demonstrates chronic instability in the area of employment or is persistently unemployed, and requires additional intervention, the supervising officer should staff the case with the employment specialist.

Offenders participate in the program until program completion or employed, whichever comes first. The group meets once per week for eight weeks. Offenders are expected to attend all sessions unless excused in advance by the group facilitator.

REQUIREMENTS:

- On active supervision with the U.S. Probation Office, District of Minnesota.
- Unemployed for at least 30 consecutive days.
- Modification of conditions to include the District of Minnesota employment policy must be completed prior to referral.
- No pending criminal cases or revocation hearings for which incarceration is a possible disposition.
- Drug free for at least 30 days prior to referral.
- Must have copies of a social security card, birth certificate, and driver’s license/photo identification. Immigrants must have a work permit.

Exceptions to these requirements will be considered on a case by case basis and should be staffed with the employment specialist.

REFERRAL:

After reviewing the entrance criteria, officers wishing to refer an individual to the “Work in Progress” program, should complete the referral form located in the supervision templates. The form should be provided to the district employment specialist. The employment specialist will provide the supervising officer a start date. It is the supervising officer’s responsibility to ensure the offender is notified of the start date, time and location.

COMPLETION:

Upon successful completion of the program or upon employment, the supervising officer will be notified by the employment specialist. If not employed at the time of completion, the offender will participate in an individual action planning session with the supervising officer and the employment specialist. The resulting action plan will be provided to the supervising officer for follow-through.

PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS:

Because the curriculum is intended to provide group participants the tools and practice to make them successful in the workforce, it is important that participants be expected to meet certain minimum standards. These standards are in place to ensure a comfortable learning environment and maximum learning opportunity for all participants. These include, but are not limited to:

- Show up at each scheduled class session.
- Show up on time.
- Complete all homework assignments.
- Complete daily job search logs as required.
- Participate in assigned community service work each week.
- Cell phones and pagers are to be turned off during class.
- Be respectful of other participants.
- Be respectful of the group facilitators.

Instances of poor attendance, participation, or behavior will be dealt with directly by the group facilitator(s). Repeated problems will result in the individual(s) being terminated from the group. Those cases will be referred to the supervising officer for appropriate action.

OUTCOMES:

The employment specialist will track certain information to help assess the effectiveness of the program. Information to be tracked will include:

- Number of participants.
- Start and end dates.
- Number of successful completions.
- Number employed upon completion of the group.
- Number unemployed upon conclusion of the group.
- If unemployed upon conclusion of the group, number of days required to obtain employment.
- Number of offenders still employed six months following successful completion of the group.
- Impact of group on overall district employment rate.

CURRICULUM SUMMARY:

Week One: “Reality Check”

Many offenders have unrealistic expectations about how much they can earn and what jobs are available. The program starts with providing participants a realistic view about where the jobs are, what they pay, and what it will take to get there - a critical part of career planning.

- High growth/high demand industries in Minnesota.
- Show me the money! - What you can expect to earn.
- Education and it's impact on job choices.
- Impact of criminal history on licensing and other restrictions.
- How to get from here to there.
- Introduction to career planning.

Week Two: Career Assessment

This module will help individuals identify their work-related interests, what they consider important on the job, and their abilities in order to explore those occupations that relate most closely to those attributes. This allows individuals to make a transition from assessing their interests, work values, and abilities to matching their job skills with the requirements of occupations in their local labor market.

1. Importance of career assessment.
2. O*Net Interest Profiler.
3. O*Net Work Importance Profiler.
4. Making career choices based upon the results.
5. Conducting a labor market survey/informational interviewing

Week Three: Skill Identification

Skills identification is essential to a successful job search. Employers want to know what it is you can do for them -- not just what you've done for someone else. A knowledge of your unique skills is needed to successfully complete an application, write a resume or answer interview questions. Skills identification is the first step toward new employment.

- Job skills.
- Self-Management skills.
- Transferrable skills.
- Duties.
- Writing your skills.

Week Four: Job Applications

Employment applications are an important part of the hiring process. The application is an important job search tool. It's used to judge you as a prospective employee and is an opportunity

to sell your qualifications. The reality is employers screen out most applications and read only those that catch their attention. Therefore, you need to do everything possible to create the perfect application.

Week Five: Resumes and Cover Letters

A resume is a marketing tool. It sells a product — you. It's sole purpose is to get you an interview. Without one, you are at a complete disadvantage with respect to your competition. A good resume is your ticket to an interview. On the other hand, the wording, layout and design of your resume can often sabotage your chances of an interview. A winning resume generates a positive message about your experience and doesn't raise questions or confuse the reader. If you are qualified for the job, a well-written resume should get you an interview.

Week Six: Job Hunting 101

Looking for work is a full-time job and is the hardest work a person may ever do! A serious job search requires as much time looking for work as will be spent on the job. A 40-hour week job equals a 40-hour week job search.

Now you are ready to begin seeking that new job. The job market is constantly changing. During one period of time job opportunities may be scarce, during another period they may be plentiful. Regardless of job market conditions, there's always strong competition for the better jobs. Successful candidates are those who use up-to-date job search techniques.

Week Seven: Interview Techniques

The interview is a critical step toward the goal of employment. It's at the interview that the job is won or lost. Interviews can be stressful, but when you're well prepared there is no reason to panic.

Week Eight: It's All About Attitude

Employers do not want to hire job seekers that demonstrate negative attitudes. Your attitude is the most important factor to job success. You can have the best education, experience, resume, and skills in the world, but if your attitude is wrong, it will be difficult to get hired.

Week eight will culminate in mock job interviews to allow participants to practice the skills they have learned to date.