Supporting Adult Learners with Apprenticeship Exploration

This guide helps adult education staff support learners as they explore registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities. You do not need to be an apprenticeship expert. Use this guide alongside the Apprenticeship How-To Guide for Adult Learners to help learners research options, identify preparation and support needs, and plan next steps.

Work Together to Support Learners

Responsibilities may vary by program. Staff should work together and agree on who will support each step, with adult learners actively involved in researching opportunities and making decisions. Below are some suggestions:

- **Instructors:** Help learners identify and strengthen academic, digital literacy, and transferable skills connected to their career goals.
- **Student Support Coordinators (SSC):** Help learners research opportunities, identify barriers, plan next steps, and connect with workforce partners and community resources.
- **Workforce Partners and Apprenticeship Sponsors:** Provide or confirm information about program requirements, applications, training, and employment services. Refer program-specific questions to the sponsor or organization offering the opportunity.

Explore Opportunities and Connect with Partners

Adult learners can research opportunities with support from the SSC. Connect with the local PA CareerLink® early, even before a learner is ready to apply, to learn about local options, available services, and preparation steps.

The SSC can help learners create or access their PA CareerLink® account, navigate resources, and prepare questions to ask workforce partners or apprenticeship sponsors. Instructors can reinforce digital skills needed to use these resources.

Resources to Explore

- PA CareerLink®: Connect with local staff for career guidance, apprenticeship information, employment services, and connections to available training resources.
- O*NET® OnLine: Explore occupations, job tasks, skills, education requirements, and career interests.
- Occupational Outlook Handbook: Explore occupations, typical entry requirements, training, and important qualities.
- Apprenticeship USA™: Learn about registered apprenticeships and explore career pathways and opportunities.
- Apprenticeship Advantage for Job Seekers Workshop: An introduction to apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship. Encourage staff to attend as well as learners.

Work with your local PA CareerLink® partners to connect with the Apprenticeship and Training Office, employers offering apprenticeship opportunities, and other partner programs that help learners explore options and understand program requirements.

Research Program Requirements

Every apprenticeship is different. Help learners determine whether the occupation, training expectations, and entry requirements are a good fit before they apply.

How you can help: The SSC can support learners in completing the research worksheet in the Apprenticeship How-To Guide for Adult Learners. Learners should confirm specific requirements with the employer, union, or organization offering the program. Research:

- Application dates and deadlines
- Minimum age and education requirements
- Math, reading, and other skill requirements
- Entrance exams or assessments
- Required documents
- Application or testing costs
- Transportation or driver's license requirements
- Starting wages and work schedules
- Classroom instruction and training commitments
- Workplace expectations and program-specific requirements

Share relevant findings with the instructor to identify academic, digital literacy, and transferable skills to address through instruction. The SSC can work with partners to identify specific resources, such as transportation assistance, childcare referrals, or assessment preparation.

Identify Skills and Support Needs

Discuss preparation and support needs early. Recognize the skills learners already have and identify who on the team can help with each next step.

Instructors can: Support math and reading skills for entrance assessments and technical instruction; digital literacy for online applications and workplace tasks; and transferable skills connected to workplace expectations. Examples include arriving on time, following safety directions, asking questions, communicating with supervisors and coworkers, accepting feedback, and working as part of a team.

SSCs can: Help learners identify barriers and connect with appropriate resources. Discuss needs such as transportation, childcare, housing stability, and substance use or recovery support. Help learners identify appropriate contact and follow up on referrals.

Workforce partners can: Help learners clarify available training and employment services, connect learners with appropriate sponsors, and identify other preparation options.

Develop a Plan and Follow Up

Use the research worksheet in the Apprenticeship How-To Guide for Adult Learners for practical next steps. Encourage learners to use the information they have gathered to identify next steps, prepare for apprenticeship opportunities, and consider alternative career pathways.

- Review the learner's worksheet to identify action steps, skills to strengthen, and support needed.
- Help learners prioritize next steps and connect with appropriate resources or workforce partners.
- Follow up on progress and adjust plans as needed.
- Encourage learners to explore other apprenticeship, training, or employment opportunities if their first choice is not available or is not the right fit.
- Check in regularly, celebrate progress, and help learners adjust their plans as they gain new information or experience.