



Key Action Steps Apprenticeship Programs Can Take for Effective Retention of Female and Diverse Male Apprentices

The following action steps are designed to help apprenticeship training providers retain more women and diverse men in trades apprenticeship.

1. Hold a New Apprentice Orientation

Provide an orientation or “boot camp” for new apprentices that helps them prepare for industry expectations and culture around attendance, performance, appropriate work behavior and work ethic, as well as deepen their understanding of the trade and job site environment.

2. Work with Employers to Create A Welcoming Job Site Environment

Assist your employers to create a respectful and welcoming job site environment, including defining expectations of employers who have the privilege of using apprentices, teaching about best practices for training all apprentices with a full range of skills, and providing employers with information about the economic costs of apprentice termination. (A 2009 study of apprentice retention in the Cincinnati area estimated that apprentice attrition was costing local industry over \$7 million annually). A job site that helps new apprentices feel welcome, confident in what is expected of them, a part of the crew, and knowledgeable about how to work safely, gains a more productive worker.

3. Ensure that Women & Diverse Male Apprentices Receive Equitable Skills Training

Make sure your employers provide apprentices with the opportunity to learn more technical aspects of the trade on the job; carefully monitor to make sure women and diverse male apprentices don't solely do “grunt work” and are learning the practical on-the-job skills that lead to being a valued worker. Diverse apprentices may find themselves relegated to sweeping up, moving materials or doing simple repetitive tasks. In order for apprentices to become good hands, employable, and confident in their skills, they need to learn more technical aspects of the trade. While it may not be practical to train every apprentice on every aspect of the trade on the job, apprenticeship programs can set the standard for on-the-job training and carefully plan with their employers for all apprentices to grow in their skills.

4. Create a Clear Way for Apprentices to Get Help for Issues or Concerns

Make sure apprentices know where to get help for issues or concerns that might arise. Apprentices need to know who to go to if they experience difficulties. This could be an apprentice rep, the apprenticeship



coordinator, an apprentice liaison, apprenticeship instructors, a job steward, an employee assistance program or a mentorship program. In general, women and diverse male apprentices have trouble speaking up for themselves and don't want to rock the boat by complaining. It helps them to clearly spell out the safe and proper channels to receive help when the need arises.

5. Monitor Inconsistent Work for Women Apprentices

With lay-off choices sometimes being the responsibility of a mid-level foreman or superintendent, unintended biases or personal friendships may influence unknowingly their lay-off choices, resulting in fewer work hours for apprentices from underrepresented groups. Monitor the amount of work that diverse apprentices are assigned. If you find that female and diverse male apprentices are getting laid off sooner and thus not getting the hours to advance, have a discussion with your employers about equitable work.

6. Foster Relationships & Mentoring for Women Apprentices

Most apprentices work in a teamwork or crew environment. Thus, an apprentice's ability to have a good working relationship with their co-workers is critical for the apprentice to learn, perform and be successful. When the relationship-building is left to chance or to the apprentice, barriers of race and gender may get in the way of the apprentice becoming a true part of the work crew.

7. Connect Apprentices to Supportive Services

If they have children, female apprentices are more likely than their male peers to shoulder the majority of childcare responsibilities. Similarly, women entering the trades are more likely to be coming from lower wage jobs than new male apprentices. In general, women have less free time and money at their disposal and can benefit immensely from supportive services such as lodging, per diem, ground transportation, child care provision or reimbursement, book and class fees, and necessary work clothing and tools of the trade. Collaborating with workforce development organizations to connect apprentices to existing supportive services can be a valuable retention tool.