



## Important Topics to Cover During Apprenticeship Orientation

Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship are often not well understood by women attending orientation sessions. Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. (OTI) provides pre-apprenticeship training for women looking to get into the construction trades. Our program is rigorous and we have found that it is essential to present a balanced picture of what is exciting and what is challenging about working in the trades, the very high expectations are for being successful in our program, and the requirements both for getting into our program and for getting into registered apprenticeships.

Below are topics that should be covered when conducting orientations for women interested in entering the trades:

- **Visuals/Images:** The most important thing that needs to be included in orientations is pictures and/or videos of tradeswomen working – not just standing and posing in their gear – but actually doing the work. Women need to be able to picture themselves in the field and working hard. The bottom line is they can't be it if they can't see it so it is up to us to help them begin visualizing themselves as tradeswomen.
- **Pros and Cons of Trades Work:** Present an accurate picture about what is great about working in the trades and what is challenging. Positive aspects of the trades we discuss: family wage jobs; good benefits; satisfaction of building things; physicality of the work; that criminal history is not as relevant as in other career paths; and that trades work is transformative and empowering for women. Challenges we address include: layoffs; working in inclement weather; the time it takes to develop the physical strength it takes to do the job; having to be at work very early; feedback about the job you are doing is not always provided in a constructive of friendly manner. Women need to have a realistic and honest picture of what trades work will require of them.
- **Structure of Apprenticeship:** Discuss apprenticeship, especially the perks about getting paid to learn through on the job training, potential benefits, regular pay increases, classroom learning, etc. We do not go more in-depth at the orientation because we devote class time to discussing apprenticeship, both union and open shop, during our training program.
- **Punctuality Expectations:** Start drilling into attendees the importance of punctuality and attendance in the trades. We model this by closing and locking the door at orientation the second it is scheduled to start. Late arrivals are turned away and told to re-register for a future orientation.
- **Physical Fitness Requirements:** Stress the need to be physically fit and to begin working on building core muscle strength and stamina as soon as possible. OTI requires that potential students pass a fitness test before being admitted to our program. We explain what the test is and that they will be required to pass it at the time of their intake interview.



- **Drug Use and Testing:** Explain that the trades have zero tolerance for drug use, even if it is legal in your state, even if you have a medical marijuana card, it is still not permitted in the construction industry. We inform students that we drug test in our program and let them know that if they are serious about working in the trades, they have to be willing to give up drugs if that is something they are into.
- **Details about the Program:** Describe the components of your program, the time commitment it requires, and what it takes to successfully complete your program.
- **Training Timeline:** Provide a sample calendar for your training.
- **Other Program Entrance Requirements:** Provide a checklist of requirements for getting into your program.