

## El Dorado County Department of Human Services Workforce Investment Act Program Summary

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides services to individuals who require assistance in obtaining education and occupational skills in order to become self sufficient. The El Dorado County Department of Human Services (DHS) WIA Program serves the counties of El Dorado and Alpine through our offices in Placerville and South Lake Tahoe. There are many services available to assist individuals in obtaining their goals. Services are available through the Adult program to those who are low income, underemployed or unemployed. Dislocated Workers are individuals who have been laid off through a plant closure or are unlikely to return to their current field due a downturn their industry. Veterans and persons with disabilities are also served through the program.

The Youth program offers services to prepare young people for additional education, vocational training and/or employment. Youth are considered to be between the ages of 14 and 21. To qualify for the program, youth must meet the low income eligibility requirement and have an obstacle to employment, which may include: pregnant or parenting, high school dropout, involved with the court systems, homeless or runaway, current foster youth, have low math or reading skills, or lack significant work history.

Many more participants request services than are able to be served through these programs. Eligibility alone does not guarantee acceptance. Based on a set of criteria, case managers must determine the persons most likely to benefit from vocational training. A maximum of \$8000 can be used to provide training services and/or supportive services for each participant. When determining which participants should be chosen, a variety of methods are utilized such as testing, Individual Employment Plans (IEP) and Individual Service Strategies (ISS). An overall assessment of individual needs, skills and goals is used to determine whether vocational training will increase the client's chances of success.

In the approximate 3 years since DHS began administering the WIA program for El Dorado and Alpine counties, there have been 143 adults/dislocated workers and 140 youth enrolled. This demonstrates a great increase in enrollment from the previous WIA local operator.

Of the 143 adults/dislocated workers who were enrolled and provided vocational training:

- 73 % obtained employment,
- Of those who obtained employment 72% maintained that employment throughout the 9 months following their exit from program.

Of the 140 youth who were enrolled:

- 10 obtained their GED
- 10 obtained their High School Diploma
- 8 obtained Regional Occupational Program (ROP) certificated of completion
- 14 completed Work Experience (WEX) trainings, many are still involved in training
- 33 obtained employment
- 80 are employed through the Summer Youth Employment Program

**The four types of vocational training requiring contracts are:**

**On-the-Job Training (OJT)–paid On-the-Job Training for youth or adults/dislocated workers**

An OJT contract is established with an outside employer. It is designed for participants to gain the necessary job skills for permanent employment during a limited time period. The OJT participant is

an employee of participating employer and WIA only reimburses the employer 50% of the wages paid to the participant. The employer provides Workers Compensation coverage, pays the appropriate employer related taxes and is expected to retain the employee at the conclusion of the contract (training period).

**Work Experience (WEX) – paid work experience for youth or adults/dislocated workers**

The purpose of a WEX position is to provide basic work skills and experience for participants who have a limited work history. WEX participants earn minimum wage and the assignments last anywhere from six weeks to six months. The goal is to improve the participant’s ability to obtain unsubsidized employment, many times enabling the participant to discontinue public assistance. A contract can be entered into with an internal County government office, an outside employer or an Alpine County office. DHS-WIA staff monitors progress and follows-up after the client obtains unsubsidized employment outside the program. Outside employers and Alpine County are only reimbursed for the hourly minimum wage amount. As the employer of record, the outside employer and Alpine County provide Workers’ Compensation and pay employer related taxes.

**Individual Referral (IR)–vocational training for youth**

An IR is intended for youth who need vocational training in order to obtain employment and reach self sufficiency. Training vendors must be selected from an approved list.

**Individual Training Account (ITA)–vocational training for adults/dislocated workers**

An ITA is intended for adults/dislocated workers who cannot obtain work in their usual field, and who need vocational training in order to return to an employed status. Training vendors must be selected from an approved list. Some examples of people seeking assistance include many who were in the residential construction, real estate and the mortgage industry.

**Examples of successful WIA participants:**

- A CalWORKs participant who had not worked in several years began attending Job Club at the One Stop. She was enrolled in the WIA program and began a Work Experience (WEX) assignment working in an El Dorado County government office. She obtained experience on the job, while earning minimum wage. After completing her WEX, the department was so impressed with her contribution that she was hired as an extra help Office Assistant I. This participant was later hired into a permanent Social Services Aide position and successfully completed her probationary period. She has become a valuable employee within the department and is no longer receiving public assistance.
- A participant who had been incarcerated for 6 years and had little work experience (only 3 months of packing fruit) was enrolled in WIA after having difficulty getting a job. He completed a Class A Truck Driving Course and obtained employment as a Commercial Driver. The participant was able to maintain employment during the nine month follow up period.
- An unemployed youth was enrolled in the WIA program. He was referred to the Forest Service to apply for a Wild Land Firefighter Apprenticeship. He was hired and began working for \$11 per hour. He worked for nine months in that position, and was then recommended for a job as a heavy equipment operator. He received the promotion and is now making \$22 per hour. This youth met his goals and has successfully completed the program.