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On the Web: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/news.htm>

Secretary Gassman Announces Job Readiness Training & Certificate Program Now Available Statewide to Job Seekers and Employers

Under Recovery Act funded initiative, workers demonstrate job skill mastery

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced that a nationally recognized training and certificate program is now available, free of charge, to all Wisconsin job seekers and employers looking to recruit new workers, thanks in part to the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) program helps individuals show mastery in basic workplace skills for current and potential employers.

"Most jobs require basic skills in reading, math and computer use, and the NCRC program helps job seekers demonstrate proof that they have skills," Secretary Gassman said. "Also, employers can use the program to measure applicants' skills and obtain the information they need to make the best possible hiring decisions. Through this free service, we are helping to make sure workers have the skills they need to be job ready, while helping employers find the skilled workers they need."

The NCRC is a nationally recognized credential demonstrating that a job seeker has workplace employability skills in areas such as reading and math. Participants use an online training system to build skills and measure their progress. To earn their NCRC credential, participants can take WorkKeys tests at local Job Centers and other locations throughout Wisconsin. They can earn a Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum certificate, depending on their level of achievement.

Typically, interested job seekers must pay a fee for testing. DWD is now making the NCRC program free to job seekers who enroll through Wisconsin Job Service, as well as to employers that contact the Job Service in search of additional tools to assess prospective hires. This expansion is being funded in part by the \$7 million in ARRA funds Wisconsin received for Re-employment Services and provided by Job Service staff working with regional partners in Job Centers. To date, over 3,500 WorkKeys tests have been given in Wisconsin, and more than 1,000 individuals have earned their NCRC.

Johnsonville Sausage, of Sheboygan Falls, hosted NCRC on a pilot-basis, and the company is now integrating the system in its manufacturing recruiting process.

"As we recruit new members, we're always focused on finding the best candidates -- those who will be a good fit with the company for the long-term," said John Schwantes, Senior Business Partner for Johnsonville Sausage. "The NCRC process is something we're now beginning to implement as one part of our recruiting process, as we feel it will help bring in the most qualified and strongest candidates to our company. Additionally, we see this as another tool we can utilize to help maintain standardized hiring practices across our company and reduce turnover."

Job seekers can learn more about WorkKeys and NCRC at www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/ncrc/jobseeker.

Employers can learn about the benefits of NCRC at www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/ncrc/employer.