



SCOTT WALKER

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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For Immediate Release

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Wisconsin Awarded \$32.5 Million Federal Grant to Prepare Youth with Special Needs to Succeed in Workforce

Program will bring together innovative practices shown to increase employment outcomes

Madison – Governor Scott Walker today announced Wisconsin received a \$32.5 million federal grant over five years to connect 1,000 youths with special needs to resources that transition them towards economic self-sufficiency and independence.

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs awarded Wisconsin the Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) Grant. The grant seeks to increase the education, career, and income outcomes of children with special needs receiving federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families.

“The PROMISE Grant will help individuals and families across the state move from dependence to the independence of paid work experience, which will improve lives and brighten our state’s future,” Governor Walker said. “The grant supports increased financial literacy, improved job readiness, and reduced reliance on public assistance. It also includes career development plans to ensure today’s youths with disabilities receive the support they need to be integral members of tomorrow’s adult workforce.”

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) will work with the Department of Health Services, Department of Children and Families, and Department of Public Instruction to coordinate services and use best practices to prepare young adults for the workplace.

“Wisconsin’s public schools are working hard to make sure every child graduates well prepared for career or college,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “This federal funding will allow us to coordinate services for children and young adults with special needs, better preparing them for transition and success after high school.”

The agencies will evaluate factors impeding participants’ abilities to find employment and then design a program that removes such barriers and helps individuals successfully find jobs.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute will help recruit participants and help them enroll in DVR services. Services will include career exploration, community work experience, financial literacy training, social and soft skills training, and family training on employment expectations.

Governor Walker has made workforce development a top priority of his administration, investing more than \$100 million in new resources in the 2013–15 budget to expand options for businesses seeking workers and to ensure individuals can access resources to find a good-paying job. Last week, he announced additional workforce development legislation that will form the core of his workforce agenda in the fall legislative session. The proposed legislation includes:

- An additional \$1 million investment in youth apprenticeship over the biennium, bringing the total available to more than \$4.6 million to train high school students for an entry-level job in an emerging employment sector;
- An apprenticeship tuition reimbursement available to employers or workers for 25% of the tuition for apprentice-related instruction up to \$1,000;
- \$4 million in additional state funds for vocational rehabilitation, which will be matched with up to \$14 million in federal funds, enabling DWD to serve 3,000 additional disabled individuals over the next two years; and
- An update to the Wisconsin Workers Win program, which helped 166 workers to transition off Unemployment Insurance benefits during a pilot conducted in 2012.

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