

# Career EMPOWERMENT Curriculum

**Taking Control of  
Your Career**

***Getting Started in  
Your Career***



# Getting Started in Your Career

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## ***Introduction***

### **Welcome!**

This module was created to help you prepare for and get started in the career you want.

Prerequisite: Participants in this training must come prepared with a target career in mind.

### **Intended Outcomes**

This workshop is designed so that you will leave being able to:

- Prepare for a Career
- Understand the Starter Job
- Understand the Impact of Education
- Choose a Strategy for Your Career

### ***What other information do you want to get?***

### **Ground Rules**

The following ground rules create the environment for an effective workshop:

- Everything will be kept confidential in this group.
- You will be encouraged to participate, but not called upon in class.
- Your questions are valid and if they cannot be addressed in class, we will put you in touch with the right resources after class.

### ***What other ground rules would you like to include?***

## Getting Started in Your Career

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### Prepare for a Career

#### Your Target Career

Write out what you know currently about your target career.

*Note: It's okay if you're not certain about your target career; just use this as an exercise. You can change your mind later.*

Career: \_\_\_\_\_

Skill requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

Salary: \_\_\_\_\_

Job description: \_\_\_\_\_

Working conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Employment opportunities: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

If you don't know some of these details, then the first steps you want to take are to determine this information.

#### What Preparation Will You Do?

Researching

*Research online and/or talk to career counselors and teachers, or relatives and friends who work in the same field*

Job Shadowing

*observe someone in your target career field in their daily work*

Volunteering

*volunteer in a field to get a better understanding of the work*

Informational Interviews

*talk to someone already working in the same career field*

Internship

*work in an short-term position in the same career field (might be paid or unpaid)*

Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Read about Raquel's Target Career and how she'll get there.

*Raquel is a survivor of domestic violence and the mother of two. She would like to become a respiratory therapist and feels overwhelmed about what it would take to move into that career. She understands the skills and education needed for this career. She has taken a GED class, but hasn't taken her test yet. In order to become a respiratory therapist, she needs to get an associate degree and get some experience working with patients.*

What is Raquel's Target Career? \_\_\_\_\_

How will Raquel prepare for her Target Career? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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### **Understand the Starter Job**

#### **The Starter Job**

A starter job is a job in the same field or place as your career goal. At a starter job, you build contacts, experience, and skills, while working with or near people who have the job you want.

*Examples:*

- *If you want to be in the medical field, you can work in a hospital kitchen or as a receptionist for a doctor's office.*
- *If you want to work in business, you can work as a janitor or security guard in a building with a business in your industry, or even at a store or restaurant in the building where the businesspeople go.*

*Other examples:*

<b>Target Career</b>	<b>Starter Job</b>
Registered Nurse .....	Medical Assistant
Real Estate Broker .....	Receptionist in a real estate agency
Computer Technician .....	Data Entry Clerk
Loan Officer .....	Bank Teller
Project Manager .....	Administrative Assistant

#### **Hear about Raquel's next career moves.**

*Currently, Raquel works at a fast food restaurant in the kitchen. Raquel's GED teacher at the community center tells her that she might be able to get a job in or near her career field. She explains that one way to do so is to think about people who can help her find jobs in her field. After making a list, Raquel realizes her cousin's husband is a manager in a hospital kitchen. She feels comfortable contacting him, so she does and finds out they are hiring for food service workers. She applies for the job with the support of her contact and she gets it! Now Raquel is in a job where she continues to build her skills and contacts.*

Does Raquel have a starter job?  Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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### *Understand the Starter Job*

#### **Possible Starter Jobs**

Write down your current target career. Then get ideas from others about possible starter jobs.

Your Target Career: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Pass this page to the person to your right and have them write down any Starter Job ideas (you'll do the same for the person on your left).
2. Pass this page to the next person to receive more ideas.
3. Then, get your page back and write down any additional Starter Job ideas you have.

Possible Starter Jobs:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Circle the possible Starter Jobs that most interest you.

## Getting Started in Your Career

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### *Understand the Impact of Education*

## Types of Educational Programs

### Educational Foundation

- **ABE (Adult Basic Education):** These classes build reading, math, and writing skills. Many students take these classes before studying for the GED. You can find them at community colleges and community organizations.
- **GED:** These classes help you pass the GED, the test for a high school equivalency diploma. To find out where to take GED classes, you can call the national GED hotline (1-800-626-9433) or your local community college.
- **ESL (English as a Second Language):** These classes help improve English speaking, reading, and writing skills. You can find them at community colleges and community organizations.

Review the Educational Foundation programs. Will you need to attend classes before you move onto a Career Education program?  Yes  No

If Yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

### Career Education

- **Union apprenticeship program:** These are most often for jobs in construction, like carpenter or electrician. There are also apprenticeships in manufacturing and transportation.
- **Certificate Programs:** These are usually shorter programs. They can last from eight weeks to one year. They are for people who want credentials more quickly. You may have to pass an exam to get a license in some fields.
- **Associate of Arts (A.A.) and Associate of Science (A.S.) Degrees:** These are two-year programs (completion will take longer for part-time students). These degrees are equal to the first two years of a four-year college. Credits earned usually transfer to four-year colleges, but not always. Check with your college for details.
- **Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) Degrees:** These are two-year technical or vocational programs. They are in fields such as electronics, nursing, and heating and air conditioning. Credits earned usually do not transfer to four-year colleges. You may have to pass an exam to get a license in some fields.
- **Bachelor's (baccalaureate) Degree:** A four-year college degree. Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science Degrees are available in a variety of fields.

Look at the Career Education programs. Which is best for you? \_\_\_\_\_

## Getting Started in Your Career

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### *Understand the Impact of Education*

#### Why is Education Important?

Furthering your education takes time and money. It may not seem like you have a lot of time and money to dedicate to education right now. Let's discuss as a group: Why is it important to identify and to begin to pursue your educational goals any way?



Why?

#### Learn More Before You Enroll

Here are the best ways to get the information you need to make a good decision about a school or educational program.

- Ask questions.**  
Education institutions are more than happy to help you, answer questions, and arrange a visit.
- Visit the school or program.**  
You won't know how much you like the school or training program – or whether you feel comfortable there – until you take a walk around and ask questions.
- Sit in on classes.**  
Call and make arrangements with the admissions office.
- Talk with a teacher in your department.**  
This is a great way to get a better sense of what goes on inside the classroom. Ask about the workload and class difficulty. You can also ask if students find work in their field after they graduate.
- Talk with students.**  
Students give the best information about what it's like to attend a particular school or program. Ask if they would choose this school/program again and how they feel about their chances of getting a good job when they graduate/complete the program.
- Talk to someone in the financial aid office.**  
You can do this in person or over the phone. It's important you understand all the terms and conditions before you make any commitments to join a school or program – or to make any financial commitments.

If you're still not sure this it's the right choice for you, visit other schools and programs on your list to find a better match.

## Getting Started in Your Career

### Choose a Strategy for Your Career

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You have some Starter Job options. You know the education that you need for this target career. Now the question is...

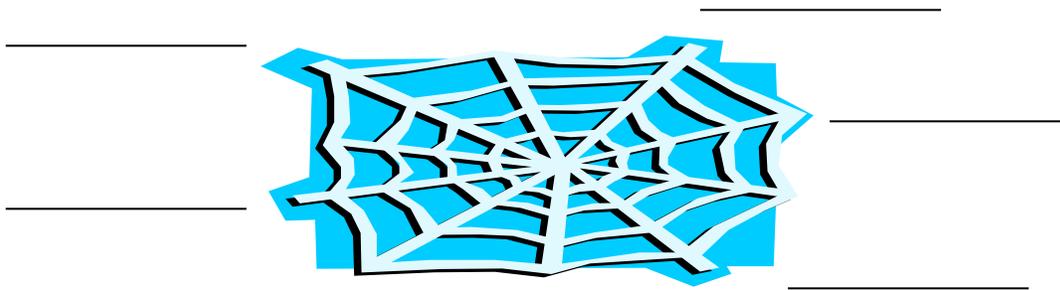
### How Will You Get There?

#### Using Your Network

People in your network can help you find work in your desired field, help you determine what skills and education you need in your target career, help you get jobs, and help get the word out that you are looking for a job.

With your Discussion Group, brainstorm the different types of people with whom you can network. Write below the names of the people in your network with whom you feel confident and safe.

Who are people in your network?



**Hint:** Consider family members, neighborhood groups, church/synagogue members, case managers, teachers, co-workers.

#### Other Ways to Move Forward

While your network is an important part of any career strategy, there are also other ways to move forward.

- Search for jobs online
- Ask help from advisors or other resources
- Call and ask a business directly if they have openings
- Check the newspaper for job openings
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

✓ Check the strategies that you will use.

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### Choose a Strategy for Your Career

#### Short-term and Long-term Planning

Let's talk about the difference between short-term and long-term goals before you write an action plan for 3 of your short-term goals on the next page.

**Short-term goals** are those that take less than a year to complete and are stepping stones to long-term plans.

Examples of short-term goals:

Develop employability skills

Work in a starter job

Get a certificate in your field

**Long-term goals** are those that take more than a year to complete or are those that you won't be able to start taking action on until after your short-term goals are achieved.

Examples of long-term goals:

Get a bachelor's degree

Start working at your dream job

#### Hear about Raquel's career goals.

*Raquel's educational goals are to take and pass her GED test and apply to a college for her associate degree. While Raquel is meeting contacts and working around others in her field at the hospital, she still needs to learn more about respiratory science and working with patients. She plans to volunteer at an asthma association and talk to a respiratory therapist. She also plans to complete her associate degree at a local community college and then move into a four-year university. Eventually Raquel hopes to complete her bachelor's degree in respiratory therapy.*

What are Raquel's short-term goals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are Raquel's long-term goals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Using Action Steps

- Action steps are tasks you complete in order to reach a goal.
- Identifying action steps will keep you on track and help you to not get overwhelmed or confused about what to do next.
- Checking off smaller steps that lead to your goals will help you see your progress.

Let's brainstorm! Given Raquel's short-term goals, what are action steps she could take?

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### Choose a Strategy for Your Career

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#### Your Action Plan

Write 3 of your short-term goals in the charts below.

*Consider: Preparation needed to clearly understand your target career (p.3), Securing a Starter Job (p.5), Educational needs (p.6), Educational research (p.7), and Using your network and other ways to move forward (p.8).*

Then, identify the action steps you will take to achieve each short-term goal.

<b>Short-term goal:</b>	
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Completed by</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>Short-term goal:</b>	
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Completed by</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>Short-term goal:</b>	
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Completed by</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	

**-- Share your Action Plan with a Partner --**

## **Getting Started in Your Career**

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### ***Applying the Learning***

This module covered the following topics:

- Prepare for a Career
- Understand the Starter Job
- Understand the Impact of Education
- Choose a Strategy for Your Career

What was the most valuable part of this module for me?

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What will I do differently as a result of this training?

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What is my biggest obstacle to getting started in my desired career and how will I handle it?

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### **Resources**

The Allstate Foundation

[www.allstate.com/foundation](http://www.allstate.com/foundation)

*The foundation provides practical, proven programs for individuals and families to help them overcome personal challenges and uncertainties - leading to better, safer lives.*

[www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)

*View free salary information organized by position and location.*

Women Employed

<http://www.womenemployed.org>

*An organization dedicated to improving the economic status of women and removing barriers to economic equality. The authors of the free online Career Coach.*

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### ***Appendix***

#### **Questions to Ask Schools**

Ask these questions to get the rest of the information you need to make a good decision about a school or educational program.

##### **Programs and Courses**

- Does the class or program you're interested in offer credit toward a degree or certificate?
- Do the instructors have recent experience in your field?
- Do the classes allow students to apply what they've learned, including work experiences and internships?
- Does the school provide credit for what you've learned on a job or at other schools?

Who do you ask? Admissions office, teachers, students

##### **Reputation**

- What are the job placement rates for recent graduates in your field?
- What types of positions do graduates get?
- How many students continue with further education? What kinds of schools or programs do they go to?
- How do current and former students rate the program or course?

Who do you ask? Admissions office, teachers, students

##### **Cost**

- What is the total cost of the program or course, including tuition, fees, books, and supplies?
- How does the cost of this program compare with costs at other schools with similar programs?
- If you're choosing a community or state college, do you get reduced tuition if you live in the school district?
- Does the school help you apply for financial aid, including grants, tuition waivers, and work-study jobs?

Who do you ask? Financial aid office

##### **Schedule**

- Does the program you're interested in have classes at times that are convenient for you?
- How often are classes offered at times that are convenient for you?

Who do you ask? Admissions office

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### ***Appendix***

#### **Questions to Ask Schools (cont.)**

##### **Student Support Services**

- Are counseling or advising services available to help you choose the right classes and develop a learning/career plan?
- Is child care available?
- Are job placement services available?
- Are office hours or study groups available at convenient times?
- Does the school help students who need to improve basic skills like math, reading, and writing?
- Can the school or program help you if you have problems attending class or meeting class requirements?
- Can you get help finding affordable housing?

Who do you ask? Admissions office, teachers, students