

## Programs Help Displaced Homemakers Re-enter the Labor Force

The labor market in Illinois is among the best in the nation, with countless opportunities in many diverse fields. With options such as agriculture, construction, skilled trades, manufacturing, health care, and so much more, there is undoubtedly a rewarding career waiting for every Illinois job-seeker. However, choosing a brand new career path can be a daunting prospect, especially for those who have not recently been an active part of the labor force.

This scenario describes many potential job-seekers who find themselves in a position where, due to a major change in the circumstances of their lives, they must re-enter the job force after a long period of absence. Many of these people are women who have been out of the labor market in order to stay at home and care for children, and who were financially supported by a spouse or other family member. Due to circumstances such as divorce, separation, or the death or disability of a spouse, these women now find themselves in need of outside employment, but often find that their past absence from the job force is a barrier to obtaining adequate employment.

Such individuals are referred to as “displaced homemakers,” and there are many programs in place in Illinois that can help these individuals to gain employment in a field where they can support themselves and their families. These programs are a fantastic resource for job-seekers, and local branches of this program are found in every area of Illinois, mainly in community and junior colleges. This program can be a life-changing opportunity for qualified job-seekers, and can enable them to gain independence and a better quality of life through job training and education focused on the goal of obtaining a rewarding and prosperous career.

The services offered vary depending on the community college or career center at which a participant enrolls in the program. However, all institutions that provide the Displaced Homemakers Program share the same basic mission: to enable learners to gain the skills that they need to enter the skilled workforce, and to connect learners with resources in the community that can give them a leg up in the competitive job market.

Some of these services include:

- Assisting participants in programs to obtain the GED, skills certificates, and college degrees
- Connecting participants with local employment opportunities, and offering job retention services
- Educating program participants on the earning potential and benefits of various career fields, including nontraditional careers, such as skilled trades
- Providing a strategy including writing a resume and cover letter, help in setting and achieving goals, managing stressors and challenges, finding job shadowing opportunities, and dressing for success
- Providing free and low-cost support services, such as transportation, books, tuition, and uniforms
- Connecting program participants with helpful community resources such as child care, food stamps, medical benefits, etc.
- Ensuring that program participants are able to learn in an environment that promotes a welcoming and understanding atmosphere
- Providing participants with multiple assessment tests, interest inventories, mock interviews, and other opportunities to connect them with the right career and improve their marketability
- Connecting program participants to agencies that can assist them in finding professional attire to wear to interviews and jobs

(Cited at Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Services web site  
<http://www.icpsps.ilstu.edu/info/resources/parents/displaced.html> )

Clearly, these programs offer many channels through which participants can achieve success. If you match the description of a displaced homemaker and you are encountering obstacles when trying to enter the workforce, you may want to enter one of these programs in your area. With specialized services geared toward job-seekers in your exact position, you will be able to find the resources and assistance you need to continue your education, achieve your goals, find a rewarding job, and support yourself and your family.