



Minnesota Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Orientation Guidebook **for Apprentices**

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For more information contact:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and navigation

This Guidebook is designed to help meet the **orientation** needs of **registered apprentices** in all programs across Minnesota. The Guidebook was shaped by apprentices, employers, sponsors, and Department of Labor and Industry staff, and content was compiled from public sources and graciously contributed by multiple Registered Apprenticeship programs (see Recognition and thanks section below).

Every Minnesota Registered Apprenticeship program provides thorough and rigorous technical and safety information from the beginning to the end of the program. This Guidebook provides a comprehensive and detailed apprentice orientation for *non-technical* orientation content -- topics and issues that are among the most important, and challenging, for apprentices.

Note also the complementary *Orientation Guidebook for Employers/Sponsors*. This includes the same major topic areas but with more detail, and includes more comprehensive guidance on delivering the content to meet the needs of apprentices. Both Guidebooks are for public distribution to apprentices, employers, and sponsors.

1.2 Delivery

All apprentices receive information that is critical for worker and workplace safety or otherwise legally required, along with the essential information on what, when, and where that apprentices need to know on or before their first day.

Orientation also includes enormous amounts of other information that apprentices need to know. Input from registered apprentices throughout Minnesota and across industries suggests important improvements in how this content should be delivered. For example:

- **Learning and evaluating:** Organizing and delivering orientation content will be most successful when the focus is on what apprentices are learning, applying, and retaining. And regular check-ins with apprentices provide guidance for employers/sponsors to modify content or delivery to better meet apprentices' needs.
- **Digitally accessible content:** Orientation content that is accessible and easily searchable in a database, website, or similar, and those links should be regularly shared.
- **Multiple delivery methods:** Verbally, presentations, handouts, text messages, social media posts, email, web pages, online databases, etc.
- **Content "drip":** Sharing orientation content over time, rather than all at once, and regularly repeating and reinforcing key information and links.
- **Tailored communications:** Varied message content, timing, methods, and recipients is more effective, as is a mix of in-person, online, and written formats.
- **Automated communications:** Auto-send features spread content over time, repeat key content, and provide links to online resources.

1.3 Recognition and thanks

This Guidebook was prepared by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry from public sources or contributed by employers, sponsors, agencies, and organizations that have developed their own content and advised on this guide. We thank them all for their generosity and commitment to supporting Minnesota

apprentices and apprenticeship programs. Of particular value were those listed below; we appreciate and thank them all.

- [Healthcare Career Advancement Program](#) (H-CAP), *Apprenticeship Orientation*. H-CAP is a national labor-management organization.
- IBEW, *Frequently Asked Questions by Apprenticeship Applicants*
- Minnesota Rural Electric Association, Maple Grove, Minnesota: New employee information
- MRG Tool and Die, Faribault, Minnesota: Onboarding chart
- Pequot Tool and Manufacturing, Pequot Lakes, Minnesota: Orientation information for new hires, first-day tips, onboarding, and examples.
- Sprinkler Fitters Local Union 417, Minneapolis-St. Paul Sprinkler Fitters Joint Apprenticeship Committee: *2019 Revised Student Handbook/Apprenticeship Standards*.
- The Idea Circle, Brainerd, Minnesota: Information on tailored preparation and support for employees/apprentices.
- Virginia Department of Labor and Industry Workforce and Education Partners, State Apprenticeship Agency, *Orientation for Registered Apprenticeship*, 10/10/2018.

2. Content

Below is summary information on topics that most Minnesota registered apprentices should expect to learn as part of orientation. Each employer and sponsor will provide the information relevant to their program, and likely deliver the content over time and using various methods and formats.

2.1 Welcome and intake

2.1.1 Basic information about the apprenticeship

You may receive some of this in writing before you begin work, and more once you've started, supported by references and links to information available online. *Examples* include:

- Definitions of important terms and concepts
- Details about your apprenticeship position, including expectations or requirements for attendance, conduct, quality, safety, compensation and pay increases, and similar
- Critical dates and required events or activities
- Work schedule and how that may change over time
- How, when, where to complete and turn in timecards, and the importance of always doing so
- Requirements or arrangements for uniforms, tools, equipment, membership (such as with a union), etc.
- Transportation: what is required, expected, provided, and any associated resources or guidance
- First-day tips, such as what to wear, arrangements for lunch and breaks, bringing tools or equipment, what to expect (tour of work area/site, parking, locker, time-tracking, etc.), and similar
- Links to online information and who to contact for more information, answers to your questions, or to get help

2.1.2 Organization and apprenticeship culture, commitments

Each employer/sponsor organization has its own culture that shapes the workplace environment and the work done. Make the effort to ask questions and learn about this for your program. You can also expect an overview of your apprenticeship program, such as apprenticeship standards, expectations, responsibilities, and supports.

2.1.3 Training, instruction, supervision

You can expect to receive detailed information on the apprenticeship program training and instruction, including information such as the following:

- Training/instruction requirements and expectations; enrollment details; costs for tuition, books and materials, and similar; rules, options, and issues for training/instruction in special circumstances such as with layoffs, illness or disability, and similar
- Supervisory structure; required ratios and how that works in your program; and performance review process and timing
- Where and from whom to learn more

2.1.4 Layoffs

If your field regularly experiences either predictable or unpredictable layoffs, you can expect detailed information and support so you can plan ahead and manage during such periods. That may include:

- Definition and description of what layoffs to expect in your field or with this employer or sponsor
- Implications, options, and resources to help you plan ahead prepare for and manage through layoffs -- including what is and isn't expected from and provided to apprentices during layoffs
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

2.1.5 Handling concerns and challenges

In every workplace, employees at all levels may have concerns, questions, and challenges -- and as a newcomer to your field and often to a particular workplace, you will, too. Each person and concern is different, and individuals and workplaces approach these in their own ways.

Most problems can be prevented or quickly resolved when employers and sponsors teach, and you make the effort to learn about the following:

- Program expectations, rules, policies
- Protections in place to help you
- Your rights and responsibilities
- Who can answer your questions
- How to escalate a concern to the next level if needed

Minnesota registered apprentices are able to resolve most personal and workplace challenges themselves and with help from an instructor, supervisor, friend or family member, or another apprentice. At the same time, apprentices and employers/sponsors have identified some persistent challenges and offer advice on how to overcome them, as described below:

- **Lack of work or layoffs:**
 - Ask your supervisor, instructor, or others about layoffs or slow times in your field
 - Find out what layoffs mean for your program, benefits, union dues, etc.
 - Learn about other options for work or education
 - Ask how others plan and save for those times
 - Plan ahead to minimize the impact
- **Low-skill or menial work tasks:**
 - Recognize that *all* tasks are important to the overall job completion, quality, and safety
 - Realize you are likely the best person to do these tasks, just like others did before you
 - Do these and all tasks well so you can earn the opportunity to tackle more complex and meaningful tasks
 - Review your On-the-Job Training Plan with your supervisor to make sure you are getting the number of hours needed to develop your skills and competencies; this is generally found in your apprenticeship agreement
 - Ask for more, step up, and be persistent
- **Time management:**
 - Recognize this as a challenge for most apprentices at some point; common problems are with transportation (breakdowns, lack of public transit, varied work locations), childcare (early and late hours), family obligations, or simple mistakes

- At the same time, remember that from the first day of your apprenticeship you are expected to be at your assigned location, on time, and ready to learn
- While apprentices do get better with time management, be honest about what is and isn't working for you
- Tell your employer when you're having a problem *and* what you're doing to solve it
- Ask for ideas, help, and support from employees and apprentices and your friends/family; and as you solve your problems, turn around and help others do the same
- **Negative workplace environment:**
 - Remember that every situation or interaction has two or more contributors; make sure you are showing up on time, working hard, listening and learning (including from your mistakes), asking questions, trying to resolve issues and problems, and treating others as you want to be treated
 - Understand that state and federal laws require that workplaces be free of harassment, sexism, racism, homophobia, and similar
 - Know that you may file a complaint for a serious issue, *and* you are protected against retribution from your employer or sponsor. You may file a complaint through your employer or sponsor, or with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, which oversees all registered apprenticeship programs. Email dli.apprenticeship@state.mn.us or call 1-651-284-5090 or 1-800-342-5354.

2.1.6 Disciplinary action

Every registered apprenticeship program has a formal set of expectations, policies, rules, and regulations on Related-Technical-Instruction (RTI) and behavior that registered apprentices are required to honor. These are accompanied by a structured process for disciplinary action to address issues of non-compliance with the program's approved standards (these standards are registered with Apprenticeship Minnesota at the Department of Labor and Industry).

Your employer or sponsor should clearly define your obligations, tell you how to ask questions and get help, and explain their disciplinary process for apprentices.

In particular, carefully read your apprenticeship agreement and review it with your apprenticeship coordinator, apprenticeship instructor, supervisor, mentor, or other appropriate staff. Make sure you understand:

- What you must do to be successful
- The implications if you break the rules, don't improve, or don't meet your obligations
- If you are disciplined or cancelled: Your rights within your organization or Apprenticeship Minnesota (at the Department of Labor and Industry), the available process to challenge discipline or cancellation, and what to do if you think you're not being treated fairly (such as to file a complaint)
- The obligations of employers and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry
- How to ask questions and get help

2.2 Human resources, supports, and program changes

2.2.1 Legal, personnel, benefits issues

This kind of information may be included in written employee handbooks, and may be available online for reference. For information that is legally required to be conveyed, you may be expected to periodically sign off as having received that information.

All information that apprentices need to know and apply must be directly taught as part of orientation and repeated as needed over time. Examples of this information include:

- Policies, rules, and laws related to the apprenticeship program and apprentices
- Required forms, documents, and identification
- Guidance, support, and resources for problem-solving and troubleshooting for both workplace and personal issues and challenges
- Information on insurance and other benefits, employee assistance program, wellness/fitness programs, etc.
- Where to find all this information online and who to contact with questions or concerns

2.2.2 Probationary period

Minnesota registered apprenticeship programs are required to have a probationary period, and you can expect to receive details on how that works for your program.

2.2.3 Registered apprentice completions, suspensions, reinstatements, transfers, and cancellation

You should receive information on the rules, rights, and responsibilities around the status change process for your program.

- Rights and responsibilities of all parties
- Status change description, process, requirements (see definitions of these below)
- Notification requirements
- Appeals and options for apprentices
- Roles and responsibilities for all parties (for example, apprentice, employer, sponsor, Joint Apprenticeship Committee, and other entities as relevant)
- Online source for more information
- Contact information for person who can answer questions and help with process

Status change definitions for registered apprentices (RAs):

- **Completed RA:** Completed RAs have finished their on-the-job and classroom training requirements. These apprentices receive a credential from the State Apprenticeship Agency certifying that they have completed their apprenticeship and acquired the necessary skills to be a journey worker.
- **Suspended RA:** An apprenticeship may be suspended due to misconduct by the apprentice, health-related issues, military service, or other circumstances affecting the apprentice's ability to work and participate in training. Suspended RAs are considered active.
- **Reinstated RA:** Reinstated RAs were previously registered in a Registered Apprenticeship program, cancelled, and then re-registered in a program within the same trade. Reinstated apprentices are considered active.
- **Transfers:** Transferred RAs were in a Registered Apprenticeship program and either transferred to another Registered Apprenticeship program or transitioned into another apprenticeable occupation as approved by the United States Department of Labor.
- **Cancelled RA:** Cancelled RAs are those whose training agreement with their sponsoring employer or registered apprenticeship program has ended. Apprentices, employers, apprenticeship sponsors and the State of Minnesota can initiate the process to end the training contract.

2.2.4 Transferring to another registered apprenticeship

In some cases there may be options to transfer to another registered apprenticeship. Employers and sponsors should explain the rules, rights, and responsibilities for your program, plus how to get more information and help.

2.3 Reference

2.3.1 Regulatory and oversight

You should expect to receive and have easy access to information and contacts such as the following:

- Federal registered apprenticeship program oversight, primarily the U.S. Department of Labor
- Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry: State agency governing registered apprenticeships and responsible for managing the apprentice database, fielding concerns and complaints, recruiting and supporting apprenticeship programs, and similar. Email dli.apprenticeship@state.mn.us or call 1-651-284-5090 or 1-800-342-5354.
- The employer or sponsor for your apprenticeship
- Joint Apprenticeship Committee: Description, responsibilities, and contacts; this may be detailed information or a summary and link to learn more
- Veterans agency supporting veterans who are apprentices
- Any laws, priorities, or commitments the organization has made in support of particular demographic groups (women, people of Color, etc.)