



Minnesota Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Orientation Guidebook for Employers and Sponsors

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For more information contact:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and navigation

This Guidebook is to help employers and sponsors 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.

Further, because the content is geared toward what **apprentices** need to know as part of their orientation, this Guidebook does *not* include content that is solely the work of employers, sponsors, or government agencies -- such as registering apprentices with the state or changing their status, entering them into your own personnel system, and similar.

Note also the complementary *Orientation Guidebook for Apprentices*. This includes the same major topic areas but with less detail, along with some specific guidance around key issues important to apprentices. Both Guidebooks are for public distribution to apprentices, employers, and sponsors.

Following this Introduction, the Guidebook has two major sections:

- **Delivery Guidance:** Ideas and guidance on how to successfully communicate orientation information with apprentices so that they understand, learn, and remember what's most critical, and know where to find more information and get answers to their questions.
- **Content Guidance:** Orientation topics that programs should consider including in their own teaching, information, and reference materials. This Guidebook is downloadable in **editable Word format** for easier access and use.

1.2 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.

2. Delivery Guidance

Information that is critical for worker and workplace safety or otherwise legally required *must* be delivered at the beginning of any registered apprenticeship. So must the essential basics of the program: the what, when, where that apprentices need to know on or before their first day.

Beyond those requirements, however, apprentices throughout the state and across industries have told the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry that they are getting too much information, too fast, and via methods and formats that aren't meeting their needs. Based on feedback from apprentices and some employers and sponsors, we encourage you to consider the following approaches to communicating your orientation content.

2.1 Focus on teaching, learning, and evaluating

Below are tips to support successful orientation efforts.

- As you plan and develop what you are teaching, focus specifically on how and what apprentices are learning. With their learning as your primary purpose, review your content, materials, methods, formats, platforms, timeline, and who is delivering orientation information. Then make the changes necessary to ensure your apprentices see, read, understand, and learn what you're teaching.
- As you deliver the orientation content, remember to put it into the context of their apprenticeship *and* their larger career. Explaining why it's relevant incentivizes learning, deepens understanding, and improves retention.
- Close learning sessions with a summary of the key points or takeaways.
- Add quick learning checks throughout the orientation delivery process, and use those results to quickly determine what content needs to be retaught or reinforced, to whom, how, and when. Over time, you can also use those results to adjust your orientation program to be more effective.

2.2 Make all orientation information digitally accessible

Most apprentices have grown up in an all-digital world; many move frequently, making paper copies of anything tough to keep/find; and most apprentices need this information multiple times over the course of their apprenticeship and often during work hours.

- Maintain all content in an accessible and easily searchable online format
- Optimize your website pages, ensuring quick and easy access to what apprentices need to know
- Share links to resources repeatedly, through multiple methods, and over the entire course of an apprenticeship program

2.3 Use multiple delivery formats and mechanisms

When you make learning efficient and easy for apprentices, they are more likely to see, read, understand, and retain what you're teaching. That approach directly benefits the apprentices, the program, workplaces, and the work itself.

- **Provide the information through multiple methods**
 - Share information verbally in group or individual sessions

- Make presentations to groups, and provide paper/electronic handouts and links for the presentation, detailed content, handbooks, guides, etc.
- Use text messages, social media posts, and email to provide quick information, alerts, tips, and links
- Create web pages and online repositories specifically for registered apprentices to access key information – and regularly direct them to those sites
- **“Drip” orientation content over time** so apprentices have the chance to learn everything that’s important. Multiple short sessions result in better understanding and retention than delivering too much, too quickly.
- **Tailor communications**, which helps you match the scale of communications to the needs, and ensures your content is relevant to the recipients and how far along they are in their program.
 - Adjust and vary your message content, timing, methods, and recipients to meet everyone’s needs
 - Mix in-person, online, and written formats
 - Provide brief text notices or reminders, send more details and links via email, post information on dedicated organizational web pages, and teach important content during training or regular gatherings with apprentices
- **Recognize relevance; repeat:** Recognize that much of the orientation content may not seem relevant to apprentices -- until it is, which is often much later in an apprenticeship. Provide key information multiple times and share contact information and links early and often.
- **Drive apprentices to online resources:** Use quick/brief communications like text messages, social media posts, alerts, and reminders at regular gatherings to drive apprentices to stable and well-maintained online resources such as searchable information repositories, web pages specifically for this information, training calendars, checklists, contact people, policies and procedures, FAQs, opportunities, events and activities, notices, and so forth.
- **Automate communications:** Set up auto-send features for unique or repeated messages via text messaging, emails, or social media posts to cohorts or subsets of apprentices. That supports spreading content over time, repetition, and driving apprentices to online reference information. You can also use this approach for topics like welcome messages, alerts, tips, and timely notices -- *and* more frequent communications strengthens the connection between apprentices and the program and key contacts.

3. Content Guidance

The list of topics below will help you prepare orientation training, materials, online resources, and other information that will help apprentices learn and access what they need to be successful. Add the detailed content that applies to your registered apprenticeship program, arrange the content in a sequence that makes sense for your apprentices and organization, and provide the information using tools and timing that work best for apprentices.

Employers and sponsors must also ensure that supervisors, journeyworkers, and mentors are sufficiently familiar with your orientation efforts to successfully deliver and support them. Doing so helps ensure all apprentices learn the critical content, know where to find more information online, and know who can answer their questions and help with their concerns.

3.1 Welcome and Intake

3.1.1 Definitions

Be sure to define and explain terms when they are first mentioned and later as needed to ensure understanding. If that's not possible or you need more formal definitions, include them in a definitions section for reference.

3.1.2 Basic information about the apprenticeship

Some of this is provided in writing before the apprentice begins work, and more during the apprenticeship, supported by references and links to information available online.

- Welcoming message
- Where to find all this information online
- Position title, description
- Department or similar
- Term, duration, hours, etc.
- General expectations or requirements for attendance, conduct, quality, safety, etc.
- Compensation and how that is determined; include references or links to information on pay increases
- Critical dates: start, end, required events or activities, etc.
- Work schedule: days, times, what may change, and any special information
- Timecards: How, when, and where to complete and turn them in, and the importance of always doing so
- Requirements and arrangements for uniforms, tools, equipment, and similar
- Requirements for membership or similar (such as with a union)
- Transportation: what is required, expected, provided, and any associated resources or tips
- 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
- Primary contacts

3.1.3 Organization and apprenticeship culture, commitments

Each organization has its own culture that shapes the workplace environment and the work done. Sharing that early and often with apprentices provides important context for your apprenticeship program and your expectations for apprentices in the workplace.

- Introduction to the organization's culture, mission/vision, and similar
- Overview of the apprenticeship program, such as broad apprenticeship standards, expectations, responsibilities, and supports that apply to all apprentices

3.1.4 Training, instruction

Provide detailed information on the apprenticeship program training and instruction.

- Detailed requirements and expectations
- Enrollment information
- Place, time, location, and other key information about training and instruction
- Costs for tuition, books and materials, and similar, and any available supports for those expenses
- Rules, options, and issues for training/instruction in special circumstances such as with layoffs, illness or disability, and similar
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

3.1.5 Supervision

Provide information on the supervisory structure and details that apply to your apprenticeship program.

- Supervisory structure
- Required ratios and explanation of what that means in this program
- Performance review purpose, process, roles and responsibilities, schedule or frequency
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

3.1.6 Layoffs

For fields that regularly experience either predictable or unpredictable layoffs, explain this in detail to apprentices, then provide information and support to help them plan ahead so they can manage during such periods.

- Definitions and description for this organization and/or per union agreements
- Implications, options, and resources to help apprentices prepare for and manage through layoffs; this includes what is and isn't expected from and provided to apprentices during layoffs
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

3.1.7 Handling concerns and challenges

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. Apprentices are new to their field and typically to a particular program, so issues may arise from and with apprentices. Each concern is different, and individuals and programs approach issues in their own ways. Most problems can be prevented or quickly resolved when everyone in the registered apprenticeship program -- and especially new

apprentices -- understand expectations, rules, policies, protections, and rights; know who can answer their questions; and know how to escalate a concern if needed.

- Workplace protections and worker rights
- Guidance on problem-solving, including when, where, and how to get additional help
- Recognizing and reporting incidents, complaints, and concerns
- Protections from retribution through the employer, the sponsor, and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

3.1.8 Disciplinary action

The formal set of expectations, policies, rules, and regulations on Related-Technical-Instruction (RTI) 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). It is important to review and make sure apprentices understand:

- Apprenticeship agreement
- Basis, rules, and process for disciplinary action
- Types of disciplinary action
- Roles and responsibilities of the apprentice, employer or sponsor, and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry
- Appeals and complaints process
- How to ask questions and get help

3.2 Human resources, supports, and program changes

3.2.1 Legal, personnel, benefits issues

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

All information that apprentices need to know and apply should be directly taught as part of orientation and repeated as needed over time.

- Relevant policies, rules, laws related to the apprenticeship program/apprentices, including from the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee; examples include workplace rules, worker/apprentice rights, safety, attendance, grading, drugs/alcohol/tobacco use, harassment, injuries, weapons, social media, discipline, any mandatory testing (drugs, etc.), and so forth
- Required forms, documents, identification
- Computer access, email and text communications, and related
- Guidance, supports, and resources for:
 - Problem-solving and troubleshooting with supervisor, instructors, and fellow apprentices
 - Overcoming personal issues and challenges that affect the apprenticeship
- Adjusting to the new work setting, working on a team, and similar guidance and resources
- Employee assistance program

- Wellness/fitness program
- Benefit details, where to find information, and contacts
 - Healthcare
 - Subsidies or reimbursements (tools, uniforms, equipment)
 - Other insurance and benefits
- Wage progression policies, process, timing
- References: Where to find all this information online
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

3.2.2 Probationary period

Minnesota registered apprenticeship programs are required to have a probationary period. It's important to clarify how that works in your program.

- Rights and responsibilities of all parties
- Term of probationary period in hours, weeks/months, etc.
- Performance review description, process, requirements

3.2.3 Cancellation

Explain the rules, rights, and responsibilities around the cancellation process for your apprentices, emphasizing how this works in your apprenticeship program.

- Rights and responsibilities of all parties
- Cancellation description, process, requirements
- 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
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

3.2.4 Transferring to another registered apprenticeship

Briefly explain eligibility, requirements, and process for registered apprentices who are allowed to transfer to a different registered apprenticeship program.

3.3 Reference

3.3.1 Regulatory and oversight

Apprentices should be provided with and have easy access to this information and relevant contacts.

- 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 this 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.)