

Burlington County  
Workforce Investment System Plan

Needs of the Client Customer

### *Anticipated Need for Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System Services*

Under the Workforce Investment Act, all Burlington County residents are considered customers of the workforce development system. However, among this broad customer base, there are certain customer segments, other than employers, who are in a greater need of the services offered through the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System.

The following customer segments have traditionally been the predominate individuals who have sought job seeking services.

- Economically Disadvantaged Adults
- Dislocated Workers
- Youth
- Older Workers
- Persons with Disabilities
- Public Assistance Recipients
- Veterans

Many individuals identified above may be deficient in one or more of the skills that enhance employability. Burlington County proposes to meet the skill development needs of its customers by continuing its efforts to identify and close the gaps between employer skill needs and current and future workforce participant skill sets. Skill development needs of individuals in the above customer segments are presently, and will continue to be, widely varied. In order to gain a better sense of the specific skill needs of our customers (i.e. Work Ethics, Pre-Employment, Academic, Job, or Supportive Services) the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board will wait for the integrated, co-located One-Stop Career Center to operate for a period of at least one year.

Accordingly, this plan identifies the core, intensive and training services that are offered through the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System to aid customers in attaining the skills needed for employment, based on the what is required by the Workforce Investment Act and past history of County employment and training programs. The major shift from the previous employment and training system is to a work first philosophy. However, customers should not see a major difference in how the services are now provided. All Workforce Investment Act allowable activities are available through the One-Stop Career Center System and will continue to be available to customers, depending on their needs and goals for employment. The labor exchange activities and a description of specialized populations are described in the One-Stop description section of this document.

Customers who require more assistance in their job search are provided with the necessary testing, counseling, job search skills and other services to help them become successful in their job search. All customers who move into training services will have received a comprehensive assessment and have an Individual Service Strategy outlining their goals and objectives. The types of training predominately used are On-the-Job training and classroom training. Burlington County is an area rich in supportive services. An examination of the Human Services Directory includes more than 300 programs and organizations available, providing a range of health and social services for the general public. Many of these services are available free of charge or on a sliding fee scale based on the customers' ability to pay. These services address

many basic family needs that are barriers to employment and job retention. Support services are provided as necessary and will be made available with Workforce Investment Act funding only if they are not available elsewhere. Although there are supportive services that address a myriad of needs, the greatest barriers of customers that require support are Literacy and Adult Basic Education, Childcare and Transportation.

Adult Basic Education and Literacy is now seen as a priority for the statewide implementation of the workforce development system. The Burlington County Workforce Investment Board has been partnering with the Literacy Volunteers of America and the Burlington County Adult Basic Education Consortium over the past several years to establish linkages with all Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System partners. The Literacy Volunteers of America, along with the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board's Literacy committee, have in the past conducted a countywide literacy needs assessment.

The purpose of the literacy needs assessment was to clearly identify adults in need of literacy education and to promote more effective adult basic education and literacy programs throughout the county. Historically, customers do not usually recognize that they possess deficiencies in literacy skills. Starting with the provision of core services through training services, the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center partnering staff will be trained to identify the characteristics of those individuals who need literacy skill enhancement. The Burlington County Workforce Investment Board's Literacy committee produced and actively maintains a directory of all available literacy services throughout the county. Each One-Stop Career Center System partner has copies of the directory and has been making them readily available to their customers.

From the initial findings of the literacy needs assessment, approximately 23% of the current Burlington County workforce development system customers (including public assistance recipients) have considerable literacy and basic education deficiencies. Burlington County will not be able to succeed in its endeavors to transition to a successful workforce development system with a high rate of illiteracy.

Common definition and measures of basic skills within Burlington County's adult basic and literacy skill programs are needed to enhance the provision of skills identified as critical by employers. The literacy committee is hoping to utilize some fashion of a needs assessment in an ongoing manner so that the strategic planning process for literacy in the county can continue to evolve. Adult Education and Literacy Skill needs is a primary focus of the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board. To correct any deficiencies and create a foundation of life long learning the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System will need:

- A strong foundation of basic skills services;
- An expanded outreach system to identify the customers who need these services;
- An expansion of family literacy services that focus on employability and self-sufficiency;
- A coordination of the partners to provide uniform access to literacy services.

Childcare and transportation are the two biggest hurdles preventing customers in attaining and retaining employment. There has been an increase in the provision of childcare services for

certain customer segments of the workforce development system; however, there is still an expansive gap in the availability of childcare services.

The Unified Childcare Provider for Burlington County is a member of the Workforce Investment Board as well as, a member of the Welfare-to-Work and One-Stop Career Center System committees. Although Work First New Jersey customers are prioritized for services under the contracted activities, other customers are eligible to receive services. The Burlington County Workforce Investment Board is highly aware that without available and accessible childcare, customers of the workforce development system are not able to attain and retain employment. The Burlington County Community Action Program is the pivotal source for childcare services and is located at the One-Stop Career Center site.

Childcare services will be introduced to the One-Stop Career Center customer early in the client flow. Following initial assessment and registrations, customers may be referred to the unified childcare provider for services. This partner also offers educational and placement services for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families recipients, as well as, transitional child care for the Work First New Jersey customers who have left the rolls because of employment. The New Jersey Care for Kids childcare Certification program, which is also operated by the unified childcare program, can meet the needs of the working poor and other economically disadvantaged customers.

As Burlington County's childcare resource and referral service, the Burlington County Community Action Program is available to provide all types of childcare, whether subsidized, public or private. Also available to those customers, who may be interested, is the opportunity to explore childcare as an employment option. The One-Stop Career Center has information available to become a provider of care and/or to work within a childcare setting. Customers of the One-Stop Career Center System will be able to access the needed services with the assistance of the Burlington County Community Action program staff.

There is no greater barrier for finding and retaining employment than getting to and from work. Burlington County is the largest county in New Jersey covering more than 800 total square miles and is comprised of 40 municipalities. The County extends from the Delaware River to Great Bay on the Atlantic Ocean. Mercer County borders it on the north, Monmouth County on the northeast, Ocean County to the east, Atlantic County on the south and Camden County on the west. Within the County there are several distinct regions with traditional market patterns that operate almost exclusively of each other. Each of these regions has experienced very different growth in both jobs and population. This dispersion of populations and employment centers has been summed up for transportation purposes as "many people going many places". No one solution will create an easily accessible transportation system.

Easy access to transportation is amongst the many needs of the County. Based upon the County's prosperous economic situation, we have the ability to get jobs for people but we continue to struggle to sufficiently transport them to the needed childcare and workplace sites. For the customers receiving public assistance, there are some limited resources to pay for transportation when needed. Bus transportation runs regularly between Trenton and Camden/Philadelphia, Mount Holly and Camden/Philadelphia and from the Marlton area to

Camden/Philadelphia. Surface trains do not run in Burlington County, although a Philadelphia to Atlantic City line does operate on a regular schedule just south of Burlington County. However, the distances that must be traveled using any of these mass transit modes is a formidable consideration for the low wage earner. With the added challenge of transporting children to childcare as part of the commute, it can easily become a two-hour ride without ever leaving Burlington County.

The Burlington County Workforce Investment Board encourages the inclusion of transportation services within the workforce development system. Collaborating with the Burlington County Transportation Coordination Steering committee, the Workforce Investment Board has attempted to map out various means to address the transportation needs of its customer base. The Board will continue its efforts to assist in the development of a plan for more coordinated and integrated local and regional transportation services within the County. The planning process will ultimately identify the services to respond to the transportation needs of employment related activities as well as, enhance the mobility for county residents in general.

The Board through its involvement with the Transportation Steering Committee will continue to inventory and analyze existing transportation services and resources and identify the transportation gaps to estimate unmet needs.

The Workforce Investment Board is also looking towards a more coordinated relationship with the local housing authority and the Community Development program to address a plethora of needs, which includes public housing assistance. There are many programs that may be available through the Community Development program that the One-Stop Career Center System will need to leverage. The Burlington County Workforce Investment Board and the One-Stop Career Center System will be establishing a coordinated relationship with the Burlington County Community Development agency regarding the availability of the following programs:

- **Family Self Sufficiency Program:** Public Housing Authorities who have received additional units of assisted housing are obligated to offer job training and support services to interested, eligible customers.
- **Community Development Block Grant Program:** Funds available through this program may be made available to public housing authorities and other non-profit agencies for supportive services, including job retention assistance to help residents of assisted housing become self sufficient.
- **Tenant Opportunity Program, Economic Development and Supportive Services Programs, and HOPE IV:** All of these programs include funding opportunities for training and other supportive services to residents of public housing;
- **Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities:** Another initiative that the Workforce Investment Board must demonstrate awareness and possible leveraging of is the stipulations placed on recipients of Housing and Urban Development funds for the establishment of Empowerment or Enterprise Zones. One such mandate under these funds is to hire low-income residents from within the local area.

The United Way of Burlington County and the Burlington County Office of Human Services recently conducted a countywide Needs Assessment using survey, specialized software, and a review of 14 human service based plans from various groups in the county, looking for common trends and issues. Based on the results, findings were grouped into two (2) priority levels.

**Priority 1**

- Housing Issues
- Substance Abuse
- Transportation
- Youth Issues

**Priority 2**

- Abuse and Neglect
- Child Care
- Mental Health

Since the compilation of the assessment information was just completed, only the issues can be related in this plan and not the strategic plans to conquer them. **(See Attachment E)**

In addition to the United Way membership of the Workforce Investment Board, the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board maintains a seat on the Human Services Advisory Council, and is actively involved with the needs assessment planning process so that the issues can be properly addressed through the workforce development system.

The Burlington County workforce Investment Board or a committee thereof, will strategically develop processes for the identification and leveraging of any available resources that may be accessed to link customers with appropriate programs.