

WHY A UNION APPRENTICESHIP?

There are many advantages in becoming a Union Apprentice. You will become a member of a Local Union, which is comprised of a group of workers in your trade that as a unit negotiates a contract with employers. This contract establishes working conditions, wages, hours of work, fringe benefits and education opportunities. Your Local Union is part of a National Organization, which contributes support, direction, guidance and continuity to your Local Union and other Local Unions in the United States and Canada.

Your wages throughout your career will be based on industry standards and the cost of living. The advantage of collective bargaining is you do not have to negotiate your wage as an individual and you are not required to renegotiate your wage if you change employers. As an apprentice, you will receive specified increases as you advance through the apprentice program. The pay rates for apprentices are usually an increasing percentage of the journeyman wage.

The collective bargaining agreement will contain a fringe benefit package that includes such necessities as medical and pension plans, life insurance and educational benefits. The cost of these benefit packages are not deducted from your wages, they are in addition to your wages. A very important advantage of working under a collective bargaining agreement is that the benefit package is part of that agreement and if you change employers, providing you are employed by another signatory contractor, your benefits will continue without a lapse due to being vested into a different plan.

As a union apprentice, you have the advantage of established working conditions governing your assigned tasks. You are not solely dependent on government agencies to assure a safe work place. You have union representation that can investigate unsafe conditions and most important, give immediate advice and support. Your employer is required to supply specific safety equipment and you will receive safety training. Your hours of work are restricted to designated periods of time or you must be compensated at a premium rate for variations of the work hours. You will have established holidays and if required to work, you will be paid at a premium rate.

Union apprenticeship programs have a long record of established comprehensive apprentice training. The programs are designed to teach the apprentice all phases of the craft necessary to become a qualified, versatile worker who is able to perform all tasks of the specific trade. There is no tuition cost for the training. The classes are taught by qualified journeymen with practical job site experience. The apprentice instructors usually are participating in or have completed special training to become a qualified instructor of the craft. The union programs use text books that are nationally recognized and include practical applications and information that is used throughout the United States and Canada. The related training is arranged in a specific order to maintain continuity with job site progress and other related training classes. Upon completion of apprenticeship, there are additional classes offered to assure that the journeyman is trained in the latest technology and can obtain or renew certifications and qualifications that are frequently required in the construction industry.

Upon completion of the apprentice program union members may relocate to other Local Unions in other locations in the United States and have the same protection as offered at the original local.

In addition to employment and training benefits, union apprenticeship programs offer various social benefits. Acquaintances made both at work or training class will evolve into long lasting friendships. You will share support with others facing the same everyday life situations at work, school, home or your community. You may attend picnics, dances and other social functions with other trades people and their families. As a union member, you may participate in civic activities with other trades people. Unions are active and major contributors to such benevolent functions as blood donor drives; collections for diabetes; leukemia and etc.; and making repairs or contributing labor to make repairs for needy persons. Members are also active in establishing political policy that protects the needs of working class people.

Finally, as a union apprentice, you are represented by a committee comprised of trustees from both labor and management with the authority to oversee your progress in the apprentice program. In addition, you have full time union officers to aid and represent you to assure safe and fair working conditions and when necessary, help you obtain compensation in cases of unemployment or job site injury.

In summary, as a union apprentice, you will be compensated fairly for your labor with the ability to improve your skills and advance in the industry. You will be given the courtesy and respect that every qualified, dependable, industrious worker deserves. You will be able to provide your family with decent food, shelter, education and healthcare.

WHAT IS APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeship is a training strategy that

- combines supervised structured on the job training with related theoretical instruction and is sponsored by labor/management and employer groups that have the ability to hire and train in a work environment.
- prepares people for skilled employment by conducting training in a bona fide and documented employment settings. The content of training, both on-the-job and related instruction, are defined and dictated by the needs of the specific occupation within an industry. The length of training is determined by the needs of the specific occupation within an industry. In the building trades, for example, some apprenticeship programs are as long as five years with up to 240 hours of related instruction per year.
- has requirements that are clearly delineated in Federal and State laws and regulations. The National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 (also known as the Fitzgerald Act) and many State laws provide the basis for the operation of formal apprenticeship training programs in the U.S.: regulations that implement these laws are in force today. These laws and regulations establish minimum requirements for protecting the welfare of the apprentice, such as the length of training, the type, and amount of related instruction, supervision of the apprentice, appropriate ratios of apprentices to journeypersons, apprentice selection and recruitment procedures, wage progression, safety, etc.
- is a contract that leads to a Certificate of Completion and official journeyperson status. These credentials have explicit meaning, recognition and respect in the eyes of Federal and State governments and relevant industries.
- involves a tangible and generally sizable investment on the part of the labor/management and employer sponsored program.
- pays wages to its participants during the on-the-job training phase of their apprenticeship and that increases these wages throughout the training program in accordance with a predefined wage progression scale.
- the participant learns by working directly under the supervision and tutelage of masters in the craft, trade, or relevant occupation area.
- involves a written agreement and an implicit social obligation between the program sponsor and the apprentice. The written agreement, which is signed by both the apprentice and the program sponsor and is ratified by government, details the roles and responsibilities of each party. It is the implicit social obligation of the labor/management and employer to employ the apprentice upon completion of training given the investment in training and gives the apprentice a reasonable right to expect such employment. Labor market conditions should guide the size of training programs to enable each party to maintain his or her side of the obligation.