THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Registered Apprenticeships and Skilled Trades

Educational & Scholarship Pathways · Career & Workforce Pathways

How earn-while-you-learn programs work and where to search for them nationally.

IN THIS GUIDE

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- Reading a listing properly
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A free guide from My Fairy GodParents — for youth impacted by parental incarceration, justice-impacted youth, and the caregivers and families who support them.
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint

Print, write on it, and share it with the people helping your family.

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> *How earn-while-you-learn programs work and where to search for them nationally.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

Knowing apprenticeships exist is different from being able to find one. Families regularly hear the advice, search once, hit a confusing site or a dead listing, and conclude there is nothing in their area.

There is a real search process, and it has a small number of reliable entry points: the national job finder, state apprenticeship agencies, local union training centers, community-college workforce divisions, and large employers that run their own programs.

This lesson is the practical how — where to look, how to read a listing, what pre-apprenticeship means, and how to keep a search alive across the months between application windows.

WHERE THE OPENINGS ACTUALLY LIVE

Start with the national apprenticeship job finder, which lists registered programs and can be filtered by location and occupation. It is the broadest single source and the right first stop.

Then go local, because many programs never post nationally. State apprenticeship agencies keep their own lists. Local union training centers — often called joint apprenticeship training committees — recruit directly and post their own windows. Community-college workforce divisions frequently know which employers are hiring apprentices this season.

Large employers in utilities, transit, healthcare systems, and manufacturing sometimes run internal apprenticeships listed only on their own careers pages under 'apprentice' or 'trainee.'

Check each source on a schedule rather than once. A program that has nothing open in March may open a window in September, and the window may last two weeks.

READING A LISTING PROPERLY

Look for five details in any listing: the program length, the starting wage and the progression, what instruction is required and who pays for it, the physical and licensing requirements, and the application window with its exact closing date.

If the listing does not name a wage, call and ask. A registered apprenticeship pays; a posting that is vague

about pay may be an unpaid internship or a trainee role wearing the word apprentice.

Note whether the program is registered. Registration means the credential is recognized beyond that employer, which is most of the long-term value.

+ PRE-APPRENTICESHIP: THE ON-RAMP NOBODY EXPLAINS

A pre-apprenticeship is a short preparation program — often free — that builds the math, safety knowledge, tools familiarity, and workplace habits that competitive apprenticeships screen for. Many programs give graduates of a partner pre-apprenticeship direct entry or preference.

For a young adult who does not yet look like a strong applicant, this is usually the highest-value next step. It converts a rejected application into an accepted one within a year.

Community-based organizations, community colleges, and workforce boards run these. Ask any apprenticeship program directly: is there a pre-apprenticeship you recognize, and how do I get into it?

+ KEEPING A SEARCH ALIVE

Treat this like an application season with deadlines rather than a job hunt. Build one sheet listing each program, the contact, the window, and the status. Check it monthly.

While waiting, accumulate the things that make an application stronger: a driver's license, a safety certification, a math refresher, any hands-on work at all, and one adult reference.

Apply to more than one. Applicants who apply to a single program and get rejected usually leave the field entirely, which is the worst outcome given how much the next window differs.

If transportation is the barrier — and it often is — raise it with the workforce center before ruling out a program. Some have transportation, tool, and work-clothing assistance specifically for this.

+ NINE MONTHS, ONE SHEET, ONE ACCEPTANCE

A twenty-year-old applied to a single electrical apprenticeship, was not selected, and stopped looking. A workforce counselor asked him to try a different approach: one sheet of paper, five programs, a monthly check.

The sheet listed the union training center that had rejected him, two other trades' centers, a transit authority trainee program, and a community-college partner track. Two had no open window; he wrote down when to check again. One pointed him to a free eight-week pre-apprenticeship that included a safety certification and a math refresher.

He finished the pre-apprenticeship in the spring, got a tool stipend and a bus pass through the workforce center, and reapplied to the original program in the fall with a certification, a reference from the pre-apprenticeship instructor, and a much better assessment score. He was accepted in the next cohort.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

First call to a training center

Ask all four questions in one call.

"Hi — I'm looking to get into an apprenticeship. Four quick questions: when is your next application window, what are the minimum requirements, is there a pre-apprenticeship you recognize that would make me a stronger candidate, and what does the wage progression look like from start to journey level?"

Asking a workforce center for help with barriers

Transportation, tools, and clothing assistance often exist but are not advertised.

"I've been accepted into / I'm applying to an apprenticeship program, and the barriers for me are transportation and the cost of tools and work clothing. Does your office have any assistance for those, or can you point me to a program that does? I don't want to lose the spot over a bus route."

Following up after a rejection

This call is what turns one cycle into the next.

"I applied for the last cohort and wasn't selected. I'd like to apply again. Can you tell me what would make me a stronger candidate next time — a certification, a pre-apprenticeship, a better assessment score? I'd rather spend this year fixing the right thing."

Caregiver helping a young adult stay in the search

For the months between windows.

"One rejection isn't the answer to the question — it's one program's cohort. Let's put the five programs on one page with the dates, and between now and September we'll get the license and one certification. Check the sheet with me on the first of the month."

+ YOUR APPRENTICESHIP SEARCH PLAN

- [ ] Search the national apprenticeship job finder for your area.
- [ ] Add state agency, local training centers, and community-college workforce lists.
- [ ] Check large local employers' careers pages for 'apprentice' or 'trainee.'
- [ ] Build one sheet: program, contact, window, status. Review monthly.
- [ ] Confirm each program is registered and pays wages from day one.
- [ ] Ask every program about a recognized pre-apprenticeship.

- [ ] Between windows: license, safety certification, math refresher, one reference.
- [ ] Ask a workforce center about transportation, tool, and clothing help.
- [ ] Apply to at least three programs, not one.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

Which three programs go on my sheet this week?

What is the next application window I can actually meet?

What one credential or habit would make my next application stronger?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

Search one trade and one metro area on the national apprenticeship finder and note two programs.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Source: Apprenticeship.gov (U.S. Department of Labor) — verified August 2026. Curated and summarized by MFGP.

https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-job-finder

This is general information and practice guidance — not legal advice, mental-health treatment, or a statement of any court, agency, or facility's rules. Policies differ by state, county, facility, school, and program, so always confirm details with the office involved.

For decisions with legal, medical, financial, or clinical consequences, work with a licensed professional or the organizations listed with each resource.

You do not have to do this alone.

More free guides, scripts, and checklists:
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint