

## CHAPTER 127

**AN ACT** establishing the Women's Vocational Training Pilot Program and authorizing an allocation of funds therefor.

**BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. There is established in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development the Women's Vocational Training Pilot Program, which shall be developed by the commissioner and implemented through current department programs. The purpose of the program is to improve employability of women through education and training to help them and their families become financially empowered and economically self-sufficient. The commissioner shall consult with the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations' Center for Women and Work to identify and recruit appropriate and qualified persons to develop and implement the program.

The program will provide women with education, training, and support for success in the workforce, specifically in nontraditional occupations. A nontraditional occupation for women, as defined under the "Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006," Pub.L.109-270, is a job sector or field where women account for 25 percent or less of those employed in the field. Nontraditional occupations span all major occupational groups including architects, computer programmers, computer software and hardware engineers, detectives, chefs, barbers, clergy, engineers, computer and office machine repairers, construction and building inspectors, railroad conductors, machinists, truck drivers, fire fighters, aircraft pilots, and construction occupations, as well as certain occupations in the fields of customer service, health care, and tourism.

b. The program shall:

(1) target women with family incomes below the local self-sufficiency standard, when available, or women in families with income of less than 200 percent of the poverty threshold. As used in this section, "self-sufficiency standard" means a measure of how much income families need to cover their basic costs without subsidies, as determined or recognized by the State for an applicable local area using a consistent methodology that calculates the costs of living and working based upon geographic location and family size and composition;

(2) recruit low-income women for careers in nontraditional occupations and provide comprehensive career guidance and counseling, including regional labor market information and projections about nontraditional jobs and salary information;

(3) conduct individual assessments and employment counseling;

(4) assist low-income women to access programs leading to a degree, industry recognized certificate or credential, and apprenticeship programs that will prepare them for high-demand, high-skill occupations;

(5) conduct education and pre-apprenticeship and pre-employment skill development activities including basic skills, education, literacy, including financial literacy, and training;

(6) develop or obtain curricula, handbooks, tools and equipment;

(7) engage in necessary activities for the recruitment, preparation, placement, and retention of participants in registered apprenticeships, postsecondary training programs, and permanent employment;

(8) provide access to pre- and post-placement supportive services such as child care, transportation, tools, application fees, dues, needs-based payments or stipends, and mentorships as may be necessary to complete training and retain employment;

(9) develop incentives for employers and sponsors of registered apprenticeship programs to retain women in nontraditional occupations for more than six months;

(10) provide technical assistance to employers on how to create a safe and healthy workplace environment designed to retain and advance women, including best practices for addressing sexual harassment;

(11) provide post-placement assistance to participants in order to promote employment retention, including exit interviews, mentoring, networking and leadership development for women employed in the field; and

(12) develop and collect data, consistent with the requirements of the “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,” Pub.L.113-128, to track women by race, ethnicity, and age throughout the process and establish benchmarks such as numbers contacted through outreach, placement into training and completion rates, and employment outcomes, including earnings progression.

c. The commissioner may allocate for the Women’s Vocational Training Pilot Program any sums as may be necessary to effectuate the purposes of the program from annual appropriations as may be made available for those purposes from the Workforce Development Partnership Fund created pursuant to section 9 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-9).

d. The commissioner shall annually submit to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly a report detailing the progress and results of the pilot program and any recommendations on whether the program should be continued. The report shall include such program enrollment details as the gender, race, and age of participants, the job sectors selected by each participant, the number of participants educated, trained, and hired, and the starting salaries of participants who are hired, among any other essential details, facts, and statistics regarding the program that the commissioner deems relevant.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of any law or regulation to the contrary, from amounts appropriated from the Workforce Development Partnership Fund, section 9 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-9), the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development shall allocate an amount as the commissioner determines is necessary to effectuate the Women’s Vocational Training Pilot Program, subject to the approval of the Director of the Division of Budget and Accounting.

3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire after submission of the fifth annual report required to be submitted pursuant to section 1 of this act. The commissioner may recommend to the Legislature and the Governor that the pilot program be extended beyond the expiration date provided in this section.

Approved July 21, 2017.