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## Montgomery County Workforce Development Board

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### Affirmative Outreach Plan

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**APPROVAL DATE:** April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**REFERENCES:** 29 CFR Part § 38.4 §38.9, §38.40, §38.54

**PURPOSE:** This plan establishes how the Montgomery County Workforce Development Board addresses compliance with the requirements of 29 CFR 38.40 relating to the provision of affirmative outreach and equal access to programs and activities. This plan serves as a supplement to the Montgomery County Workforce Development Board (MontcoWorks) Policy: Priority of Service under WIOA adopted in 2016.

**Background:** Affirmative outreach means that as recipients of federal funding, MontcoWorks must ensure equal access to programs and activities by making reasonable efforts to include members of the various groups protected by Section 188, including but not limited to persons of different sexes, various racial and ethnic/national origin groups, various religions, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and individuals in different age groups.

**PLAN:** MontcoWorks requires that the PA CareerLink® Montgomery County and any affiliated sites must be fully accessible to all individuals who desire access to employment and training services. Each site is certified annually for compliance with EO/ADA requirements by the Office of Equal Opportunity, PA Department of Labor and Industry. Overall, the Board promotes full accessibility by requiring that its One-Stop Operator and One-Stop Partners:

- Conduct and participate in training of staff members and partner personnel regarding services to individuals with disabilities.
- Provide outreach and referral to agencies within the local area that offer services to individuals with disabilities.
- Maintain an updated list of resources available within the local area for use by staff and customers in accessing needed services.
- Advocate for individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment by advising and informing them about resources available via the PA CareerLink® Montgomery County and throughout the local area and coaching them on how to apply for needed resources.
- Make provisions for access to bi- and multi-lingual personnel to assist customers with language barriers.
- Provide assistive technology items for persons with disabilities: PC headsets; TTY Line; alternate mini keyboard, track ball and mouse; foam wrist supports; screen magnification software; speech output software; low glare screen filters; adjustable monitor arms; adjustable height tables and chairs




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- Conduct a physical inspection of all assistive technology/equipment to ensure functionality on a regular basis.
- Coordinate staff training on assistive technology and equipment to ensure that personnel are fully trained in usage and application.
- Help individuals with disabilities that may require additional assistance with the registration process.
- Maintain required federal and state notices and postings.

**Methods of Outreach:** As a subset of the Montgomery County Workforce Development Board, the Local Management Committee (LMC) brings together representatives from over 30 different state, local and community agencies to establish and maintain relevant resources for job seekers with a range of barriers to employment. This committee was created to support the board in oversight of the Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) program, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, but has broadened its purpose to brainstorm best practices, leverage resources, and build partnerships necessary to equitably serve job seekers and incumbent workers with barriers to employment. The LMC started an Employer Spotlight segment to each meeting so that all partners could hear what a specific employer is looking for and can ask questions in support of the populations they serve. The network of representation within this group affords broad distribution of information in-person, virtually and electronically pertaining to programs and activities within Montgomery County to individuals of protected groups and other underserved priority populations. In addition to board and program staff, current representation includes:

CADCOM	Montgomery County Intermediate Unit
Career Wardrobe	Montgomery County Norristown Public Library
Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center	Montgomery County Office of Mental Health
Montgomery County Assistance Office	Montgomery County OIC
Department of Human Services (PA)	Montgomery County Senior Adult Activity Center
EARN Program	Montgomery County Veterans Affairs
EDSI	Norristown Hospitality Center
Family Services of Montgomery County	Norristown Vet Center
KEYS Program Montgomery Community College	Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
Keystone Opportunity Center (Title II)	Partnership TMA
Legal Aid of Southeastern PA	Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry
Literacy Council of Norristown	SeniorLAW Center
Manna on Main Street - Common Grounds	The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Montgomery County
Montgomery County Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC)	Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce
Montgomery County Community College	Your Way Home   Montgomery County Housing & Community Development



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The committee will continue community outreach to bring new members on board including representations from the LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities to ensure all individuals in Montgomery County are afforded the opportunity to participate in activities and services.

The PA CareerLink® Montgomery County One-Stop partners also play an integral role in notifying their participant base of available services. While some of these partners overlap with the LMC membership, a full listing of the organizations and their descriptions can be found in response to 4.2 of [Montgomery County's 2021-2024 Local Plan](#). MontcoWorks' involvement in several partnerships and regional collaborations also ensure that job seekers have access to employment and training opportunities throughout Montgomery County and beyond. The Board continues to collaborate with community-based organizations and agencies to ensure appropriate services to job seekers in remote and underserved areas of the county are available. Examples of some of those partnerships are listed below:

*HealthSpark Foundation – Safety Net Resiliency Initiative* - in 2017, MontcoWorks and PA CareerLink® Montgomery County representatives joined leaders from across Montgomery County to strengthen the workforce system by strengthening the safety net accessed by the economically disadvantaged residents, including the unemployed and working poor. The Safety Net Resiliency Initiative is a ten-year project created by HealthSpark Foundation, a private, independent foundation whose mission “invests in nonprofit organizations, networks and coalitions promoting a more just and healthy community.”

*Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce PerkUp Initiative* - supports the Greater Upper Perkiomen Valley's development of a competitive workforce and catalyzes economic recovery and growth. PerkUp represents the best of public and private partnerships working together to protect and (economically) leverage natural resources, encourage business development, and provide local education opportunities. This initiative provides a base on which MontcoWorks can better meet the needs of this community.

*Tri-County Community Network* – the TCN Workforce Development Committee provides career development opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed in the Greater Pottstown community.

*Montgomery County Community Connections* – through Community Connections, those job seekers who may not otherwise readily access one-stop services can be connected through a strong partnership with Community Connections Navigates. Community Connection sites are located throughout Montgomery County, including Pottstown, Pennsburg, East Greenville, Norristown, Lansdale, Willow Grove, Souderton, Lower Merion and Ambler and can be accessed on-line and by phone.

*YWCA Tri-County Area Dignified Advancement Workforce Navigation (DAWN) Program* – program participants receive one-on-one support from trained AmeriCorps members as they build employment-related skills, including job readiness, job search, and digital literacy. AmeriCorps members also provide support through skills assessments, setting goals and career coaching. Adults who complete the AmeriCorps DAWN program gain the skills necessary to gain jobs providing a living wage and/or to continue with education or training for a new job or career. DAWN participants also will have access to high school equivalency classes and testing, English as a Second Language classes, and tutoring in math



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and reading through YW's Education and Training Center, located inside the Montgomery County Human Services Center, home of PA CareerLink® Montgomery County.

*YWCA Tri-County Area Dignity Kitchen* – Planned to launch in 2021 as Montgomery County works to rebuild the critical restaurant industry, Dignity Kitchen's food service operations will provide occupational skills training in various aspects of food service while offering breakfast and lunch to workers in the Montgomery County Human Services Center. A 12-week culinary arts and food service management-training program, the goals of Dignity Kitchen include improving job skills and career opportunities for adults while enhancing nutrition in young children. The Dignity Kitchen training program will offer three cohorts of 6-12 students each per year. Program participants will gain skills in culinary arts applied to real-world food service employment openings while gaining job readiness and other life skills. The curriculum is designed to lead to sustainable, meaningful employment and additional training opportunities. Participants completing the program will demonstrate kitchen prep and management skills and earn safe food handling certifications. Dignity Kitchen will utilize the Catalyst Kitchens model. Catalyst Kitchens supports nonprofits as they create and grow food service programs that provide job training and social enterprise, offering expertise, best practices, and a collaborative network of members. Catalyst Kitchens' curriculum integrates on-the-job training with classroom instruction.

#### *Team MontCo*

The Commerce Department partners with other local and regional organizations once per month to serve as a panel of a business assistance resources forum, sharing resources and services to those who may be eligible to receive them. Other Team MontCo partners include PECO, Temple University SBDC, PA SEWN, U.S. Small Business Administration, Ben Franklin Technology, DVIRC, Montgomery County Development Corporation, World Trade Center of Greater Philadelphia, and the Montgomery County Community College. By maintaining representation on Team MontCo, the Commerce Department engages with employers to address their economic and workforce development needs and help the community become more familiar with available departmental services, liaising with MontcoWorks and PA CareerLink® Montgomery County staff as needed.

#### *Job Corps*

While Job Corps does not operate specifically in Montgomery County, Philadelphia Job Corps actively serves eligible Montgomery County Youth. Therefore, MontcoWorks has made space available to Job Corps representatives for recruitment events and ongoing outreach. Additionally, Job Corps is represented in MontcoWorks' Youth Committee, ensuring that partners serving youth have access to this training option as a referral resource.

#### *MaturityWorks*

As an active, onsite partner, MaturityWorks helps Montgomery County job seekers, age 55 and older, increase their job skills through paid community service in local non-profit organizations.

#### *Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center*

As of July 1, 2021, Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center will no longer be an onsite partner of PA CareerLink® Montgomery County, moving instead to a permanent remote model. Continuing to be



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an active mandated partner in Montgomery County, Three Rivers' Eastern Pennsylvania regional representation will continue to receive referrals for customers who are eligible for services and will continue to refer WIOA-eligible customers. Three Rivers' Eastern Pennsylvania region covers over 22,000 square miles of the Commonwealth. This move to a remote model will better position the Three Rivers' Eastern Pennsylvania regional representative to serve customers from other areas beyond Montgomery County.

#### *Montgomery County Employment, Advancement and Retention Network (EARN)*

MontcoWorks has taken pride in service delivery to recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), referred directly by the Montgomery County Assistance Office to participate in EARN. While key components of EARN had been integrated with Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth to ensure in-depth service delivery to TANF recipients, the location of both the Montgomery County EARN Center and PA CareerLink® Montgomery County inhibited ongoing access to the full range of services. MontcoWorks has sought to leverage services by procuring a PA CareerLink® Montgomery County Title I service provider who dually serves as the primary EARN program provider. This ensured ongoing access to career and business services. However, EARN customers would often need to travel to PA CareerLink® Montgomery County to participate in workshops and recruitment events. In August 2020, PA CareerLink® Montgomery County relocated to the Montgomery County Human Services Center, finally collocating these programs. While both centers have had limited foot traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic, the anticipated result for EARN participants is expanded and equitable access to services.

#### *Office of Vocational Rehabilitation*

With the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) as a partner, the board is able to maximize OVR's expertise and knowledge to provide input pertaining to ongoing staff development and adaptive equipment. In addition, a sharing of complementary resources per customer will provide an opportunity to customize employment plans to lead to gainful employment.

WIOA Title IV eligible OVR customers receive multiple services from qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that may include but not be limited to; diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities.

MontcoWorks has established strong partnerships and referral relationships with a multitude of county agencies including the county's network of libraries serving as locations for and extension of services that all job seekers, including those in remote areas, may otherwise not have access to. Web-based software such as Learning Express Library is available through Montgomery County libraries (on-site and virtually) to compliment PA CareerLink® Montgomery County services and allow for remote access to High School Equivalency preparation, ABE and language services, and college prep assistance. In an effort to provide equitable access throughout the county, the Montgomery County Workforce Development Board will be distributing a laptop and stand to all 35 libraries withing the Montgomery County Public Library network so that individuals without internet at home have the opportunity to



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learn about and access services.

Title I staff utilize the libraries and other community resources to take job seeker services into remote areas based upon need. In addition, library staff have been trained in how best to assist job seekers using the PA CareerLink® Online system. Welcome Aboard Road Shows connect with residents in the farthest parts of the County. Training opportunities, eligibility requirements, and services are described with connections to career coaching. These events are open to the public and are held at the offices of our Title II providers, thereby offering those students a direct link to the PA CareerLink® Montgomery County services. The PA CareerLink® Montgomery County Outreach Coordinator assists with identifying participants' needs (in-person or virtually), and then directs participants to the proper services (in-person or virtually). Adult education referrals are introduced to Career Pathways during Assessment reviews. The position was created as a means to assure Affirmative Outreach occurs through relationships with workforce partners and stakeholders.

Social Media is also a key method of outreach. Information about workshops, individualized services, job leads, training opportunities, job fairs and much more is posted on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. There are also Business Services and Career Services videos available through YouTube with captions on the PA CareerLink® Montgomery County website, in addition to a live feed to Facebook and other updated information regarding services and operations. It is a goal for PY2021 to get other informational videos posted on topics such as: Navigating PA CareerLink® On-line, how to sign up for a workshop, how to apply for a job and more. The purpose of the videos is to provide an additional means of information transmission and to accommodate those that learn better by watching a tutorial.

Constant Contact has become an integral part of promoting services. Over 20,000 individuals receive weekly and monthly newsletters that include upcoming workshops, training opportunities, hot jobs, resources, Unemployment Compensation updates, testimonials and more. Partners are invited to share their updates on programs and services for distribution.

Radio and digital outreach were added at the end of PY2020 to diversify outreach efforts to a much broader audience. Radio commercials promoting PA CareerLink® Montgomery County programs and services started running on Beasley Media Group and iHeartRadio owned stations and have the ability to reach vulnerable populations throughout the county that may not have access to the internet or a computer.

**Accessibility:** As of May 2021, the following accessible provisions are becoming available in the PA CareerLink® Montgomery County center at 1430 Dekalb Street in Norristown:

- Propio Language line
- PC headsets
- TTY Line (Dial 711 for TTY Relay Services until TTY technology is determined at state level)
- Alternate mini keyboard
- Alternate track ball and mouse
- Foam wrist supports
- Screen magnification software
- Speech output software



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- Low glare screen filters
- Adjustable monitor arms
- Adjustable height tables and chairs
- Purple Scheduled and On-Demand Sign Language Interpretation
- Fusion Software

An American Sign Language interpreter will be provided as a communication accommodation for deaf individuals upon advance request.

Additionally, a dedicated workstation is available on-site, in the one-stop center to assist individuals who may require adaptive computer equipment.

MontcoWorks will continue creating and enhancing relationships with community partners that can assist in accommodating individuals with disabilities, limited English proficiency and other underserved populations to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion for all residents of Montgomery County.