



# ApprenticeshipUSA

## FACTSHEET

[www.dol.gov/apprenticeship](http://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship)

## Women in Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a ticket to the middle class. It is a proven training model that helps individuals develop the skills for a career, not just a job. But for too long, apprenticeships have not served a key segment of our nation's workforce: women. For years, women's enrollment in registered apprenticeship programs has been significantly lower than would be expected based on labor market data. In 2015, women comprised nearly half of the national labor force, but they made up less than ten percent of registered apprentices—with no significant change in the past decade. Women's underrepresentation in apprenticeship is particularly dramatic in the construction industry. During 2015, over seventy percent of all apprentices were enrolled in the construction industry, but less than three percent of those enrollments were women. Even after women gain entry into apprenticeship programs, there are barriers to completing programs, as evidenced by the instances of discrimination, sexual harassment and retaliation women have experienced during their apprenticeships. While not the sole explanation, discrimination is one of the significant factors underlying women's underrepresentation in apprenticeship. Further, there is evidence that women participate and succeed in apprenticeship programs at higher rates when they are provided equal opportunity and support.

The EEO regulations will help employers reduce barriers to apprenticeship for women and increase women's participation in and completion of apprenticeship programs. As apprenticeship programs expand to new industries, it's important that these equal employment opportunity rules are updated to ensure that programs have open doors from the start.

The final rule is an important step toward addressing women's underrepresentation in apprenticeship, including in the construction industry. Existing rules have long provided that employers cannot discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin and sex, in addition to requiring sponsors to take



affirmative action efforts to ensure equal opportunity in apprenticeships. The final rule amends those existing EEO regulations to ensure equal opportunity for women in apprenticeship. While there remains work to be done, the final rule is part of a continuing effort to ensure that apprenticeship benefits the entire American workforce, including women.

### Key Provisions of the Final Rule for Women in Apprenticeship

**Expands and clarifies categories of individuals who are protected against discrimination:**

- Updates the rule to add sexual orientation, disability, age (40 or older), and genetic information as prohibited bases for discrimination.
- Clarifies that sex discrimination includes discrimination on the bases of pregnancy and gender identity.

**Requires sponsors to communicate that harassment will not be tolerated, and to provide anti-harassment training:**

- The training must reach all individuals connected with the administration and operation of the apprenticeship program, including all apprentices and journeyworkers who regularly work with apprentices.
- The training cannot be a mere passive transmittal of information. It must include participation by trainees in a training program, such as attending in-person training or completing an interactive, online training program.
- The training must, at a minimum, communicate:
  - That harassing conduct will not be tolerated;
  - A definition of harassment and examples of the types of conduct that would constitute unlawful harassment;
  - Notice of apprentice’s right to file a harassment complaint.
- Sponsors must also establish and implement procedures for handling and resolving complaints about harassment, intimidation, and retaliation.
- The Department plans to provide anti-harassment training materials that sponsors and state apprenticeship agencies can adapt for their use. Additionally, the Department will promote and encourage effective anti-harassment training among employers and apprenticeship sponsors.

**Improves the outreach and recruitment provisions so that more women will have the opportunity to apply for apprenticeships:**

The final rule will improve outreach to women and women’s organizations so that women are more aware of opportunities in apprenticeship, thus increasing applications and hiring. It requires all apprenticeship sponsors to disseminate information about their program including requirements for entry and how to apply for the apprenticeship. It also requires sponsors to conduct outreach and recruitment to organizations likely to make referrals of applicants, including women, to apprenticeship programs. It is expected that many sponsors will establish specific goals for the participation of women in the apprenticeship program and lead to greater efforts in conducting targeted outreach to women. The Rule encourages the establishment of linkages with pre-apprenticeship programs and other activities by

community organizations, educational institutions and advocacy groups to prepare women for apprenticeship occupations.

**Improves enforcement:**

- Strengthens collaboration with the EEOC and other federal and state agencies when complaints are filed.
- The final rule provides standard language for the required EEO poster, which includes more expansive contact information and clear information about how apprentices can assert their rights.
- Provides complainants with clearer authority over how a complaint should be resolved.

The final rule provides protections from discrimination, harassment, and reprisal, and provides apprentices and job seekers with avenues to assert these rights. If you feel you’ve been harassed during your apprenticeship or discriminated against during the hiring process, the Department has resources for you. Please contact the Office of Apprenticeship or appropriate State Registration Agency. Contact information can be found at [www.doleta.gov/oa/contactlist](http://www.doleta.gov/oa/contactlist).

Additionally, the Department has substantially increased its investments in registered apprenticeship in recent years, including programs that target women in apprenticeship, recognizing that building a strong and diverse pipeline of skilled workers is critical for companies to grow their business and compete in the global economy. The Department has made efforts to diversify apprenticeship through the 2015 American Apprenticeship Initiative grant that supports programs with a focus on including underrepresented populations, including women, people of color, and individuals with disabilities. Visit: <https://www.dol.gov/featured/apprenticeship/grants>.

The Department continues that investment in 2016, through its investment in Registered Apprenticeship “Opportunity Partners” that will support in best practices in equity and expanding opportunities for women and other underserved populations. More at our website: [www.dol.gov/apprenticeship](http://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship). In addition, the Department will increase technical assistance available to sponsors in order to help them identify and overcome any barriers to equal opportunity for women in apprenticeship.