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By Daily Star

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Michigan Works offers tools as 12,000 Michiganders prepare to lose welfare assistance

Published 11:23pm Wednesday, September 21, 2011

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ST. JOSEPH —With the cutoff deadline for cash assistance enacted under recent welfare reform rapidly approaching, the Michigan Works Association this week offered job seekers in the southwest Michigan, including those who may soon be losing their benefits, a full complement of tools and tips to help them find employment.

Earlier this month, Governor Rick Snyder signed into law a package of legislation that limited at 48 months the amount of time able-bodied residents can receive state cash assistance. The new law will take effect on October 1st and is expected to immediately end cash assistance for approximately 12,000 Michigan residents. "Families in southwest Michigan have been hit hard by Michigan's economy, but we want them to know that we're here with a wealth of knowledge and a wide variety of tools to help them find a job," said Todd Gustafson, Executive Director of Michigan Works Berrien-Cass-Van Buren. "Putting these families back to work is our top priority."

State Rep. Matt Lori, R-Constantine, said: "Job hunting can be a stressful time for any family, but Michigan Works service centers offer a helping hand and expertise to help our residents find employment."

The Michigan Works system has more than 100 service centers in Michigan. Each offers a broad spectrum of services to meet the needs of local businesses and assist those seeking employment including local job postings, detailed and proven job search tips, resume assistance, help writing effective cover letters, mock interviewing, information on occupational training, workshops developed to assist with employment searches and more.

Job seekers, families and employers can find the Michigan Works! service center nearest their home by visiting <http://michiganworks.org/agencies/map> or by calling (800) 285-WORKS.

"Michigan Works is here to help connect businesses with residents across the state looking for a new job or a new career so they can provide for their families," said Michigan Works Association Chief Executive Officer Luann Dunsford. "From skill assessment services to help improving resumes and access to the state's Talent Bank, our service centers are staffed and located in every corner of the state to walk alongside job seekers in this difficult economy."

Established in 1987, the Michigan Works Association fosters high-quality employment and training programs serving employers and workers by providing support activities and a forum for information exchange for Michigan's workforce development system. For more information, visit www.michiganworks.org.

10 job search tips from the Michigan Works Association

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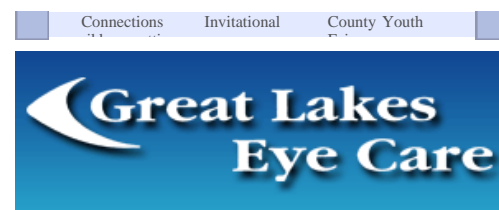
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1. Network — via social media or face to face. Get involved in local clubs/ organizations. Michigan Works can connect you with workshops on how to, where to and more.
2. Polish that resume. Michigan Works holds various types of workshops, free of charge, to help job seekers create or update their resumes. Resume writing software and support materials are also available — and don't forget to post your resume on the Michigan Talent Bank.
3. Be picky — narrow your search to include only the jobs that you are qualified for or those that you are interested in.
4. Do your research — remember; you're looking for a career, not just a job. Learn as much as you can about any organization you are looking to get an interview with. Michigan Works has local, regional and national labor market information on area employers.
5. Prepare and prioritize — Be prepared! Michigan Works agencies offer mock interviewing workshops and more to help you prepare for or land your next big interview.
6. Brand yourself. Put together a short elevator pitch that describes who you are and what you're looking for, and why. You never know who you'll meet or when.
7. Develop new skills. Figure out your skills and what makes you a better candidate than others. Michigan Works offers job, career, and skill self- assessment tools, free of charge.
8. Be proactive. Know where to look for your next career. Michigan Works staff have long standing relationships with local employers and can provide local information on employers that are hiring.
9. Hold yourself accountable. Set goals for yourself, whether they are weekly or daily; such as "I will send out X amount of resumes this week," or "I will update my resume by X."
10. Be realistic. You may need to improve your resume or interview skills if you're still not landing that job. Visit a Michigan Works! Service Center for support in your job search, no matter you level of employment.

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