



Employers look for 'Alarm Clock 101'

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Most of the 20,000 jobseekers who visit the local tri-county **Michigan Works** offices each year are work-ready.

They just need to search for jobs, use the computers or spruce up their resumes.

Other jobseekers have significant barriers to employment, which sometimes require the help of career development professionals.

The Jobs, Education and Training program, or JET, is one of more than a dozen programs administered by the non-profit workforce development organization.

JET is an intensive, 180-day curriculum. The goal is to provide training to chronically unemployed jobseekers and transition them into re-employment.

"We take several approaches to prepare JET students for the workplace," explains Todd Gustafson, executive director. "We create personal development plans based on a jobseeker's skills and interests. We teach them about customer service and other soft skills and we've also begun connecting jobseekers with volunteer opportunities so they can build their skills and learn to navigate a workplace environment while they contribute to their communities."

The program also addresses barriers to employment such as lack of transportation and inadequate clothing and materials.

Currently there are 790 Berrien, Cass and Van Buren county residents enrolled in the JET program.

The program contributes to overall economic health and business development, according to Gustafson.

"Although businesses are facing a shortage of technical skills within the local labor pool, most employers tell us the most important quality they look for in an applicant is knowing 'Alarm Clock 101.' They need employees who show up on time, every day, and can get along with their peers. JET addresses those core workplace-readiness issues.

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) April 2 awarded \$357,019 in temporary assistance for needy families funding to five Michigan Works agencies.

"This additional funding will help more Michigan citizens get the training they need to get good-paying jobs," Granholm said. "These services play an important role in helping workers with the education and skills they need to become financially independent."

Funding for the JET Program is provided by the State of Michigan and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.