

# Ray Allen: Pre-employment drug testing program helps workers move from dependence to independence

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With all the news of Wisconsin's economic success recently, one statistic underscores the challenge we face as a state moving forward: We have nearly 100,000 jobs available on Wisconsin's JobCenterofWisconsin.com website, and according to the most recent monthly data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 89,000 individuals in Wisconsin are unemployed.

That's right, we have more available jobs than we do people to fill them.

Under the leadership of Governor Scott Walker, we are employing multiple strategies to grow and retain Wisconsin's pool of skilled workers. We have increased funding for Wisconsin's Youth Apprenticeship program to help grow relationships between businesses and their local school districts. At the direction of the Governor and State Legislature, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has implemented a statewide internship coordination program, WisConnect, to help employers tap into the skilled workers graduating from our state's premier technical schools and 4-year public and private universities prior to graduation. We have implemented the apprenticeship "bridge" program which allows youth apprentices to seamlessly transition from their youth apprenticeship to a good-paying, family supporting career as a registered apprentice.

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These and other programs administered by DWD provide employers with great tools

for accessing and retaining home-grown Wisconsin talent, but to meet the 21st century challenges, we need an “all-hands on deck” approach to developing talent. All Wisconsinites deserve to experience the dignity that comes with a hard-days’ work, and at DWD, we are committed to leaving no talent on the sidelines.

DWD’s Pre-Employment Drug Testing Program is an easy way for employers to help grow Wisconsin’s pool of work-ready job seekers. It focuses treatment resources on Unemployment Insurance claimants who have the skills and motivation to work, but fail a drug test as part of an employment offer. As these tests are only administered when the individual is offered a job, these are job seekers with the skills employers are seeking but simply need the assistance to overcome this last barrier to gainful employment.

We make it simple for employers to report the name of someone who either fails or refuses to take a pre-employment drug test that is a condition of the offer of employment. Just fill out and mail or fax in a form that’s available online.

Please know that DWD keeps all employee names and treatment records confidential. Additionally, employers may submit names of individuals to DWD in compliance with federal and state law, including the federal Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

As more employers actively participate in the program, more claimants with skills employers are seeking will be identified and offered the necessary treatment to join our labor force and fill more job openings. I encourage all employers, big and small, to visit [http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/ui/pre\\_employment\\_drug\\_testing/](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/ui/pre_employment_drug_testing/) to help expand Wisconsin’s talent pool. It not only benefits the state, it benefits your bottom line.

— *Allen is secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.*