

DWD leader highlights groups targeted with employment initiatives

Posted on Wednesday, Jul 27, 2022

The head of the state DWD says focusing on potential workers in Wisconsin is a “much better solution” to workforce challenges than attracting those from outside the state.

Speaking yesterday to WisconsinEye, Department of Workforce Development Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek highlighted four groups of state residents the agency is targeting with various employment initiatives.

These include individuals with disabilities, “justice-involved” individuals such as the formerly incarcerated, military veterans and “underskilled” residents that may lack certain skills needed to compete for jobs.

“We know because this quantity shortage is all around us, this idea that, you know, there’s 50,000 workers just over the border in Illinois who’ve got nothing to do is a fallacy,” she said. “Although we want to attract workers, we think the much better solution is to focus on the workers here to help them overcome those barriers.”

Pechacek noted one in 10 adults has a disability. She said when provided with an accommodation, some form of adaptive technology or on-the-job coaching, these individuals “will be some of the best employees an employer will ever have.”

She also touted the agency’s approach to getting those who are currently incarcerated ready to rejoin the workforce upon release. She said the state

Department of Corrections releases between 6,000 and 9,000 people from correctional facilities into Wisconsin communities each year.

“We know the best antidote to recidivism is a well-paying, stable job,” she said, adding DWD has installed job centers at 10 different DOC facilities with programs for welding, electronic machining, cosmetology and many other occupations. She noted participants can interview for positions before they’re even released.

Meanwhile, she said the agency is working with employers to ensure they’re “vet-ready,” with a welcoming environment, support groups and accommodations for veterans with disabilities. She added military veterans have a higher unemployment rate than the general population, and the agency aims to help address that gap.

And she discussed DWD’s efforts to connect “underskilled” residents with training, certification programs, apprenticeships and internships to help them secure employment.

Watch the full interview:

<https://wiseye.org/2022/07/25/newsmakers-wisconsin-workforce-updates-from-dwd-secretary-designee-amy-pechacek/>