



Contra Costa County

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Contra Costa County Launches Bridge to Success Program: Pathway for People with Developmental Disabilities to Compete for County Jobs

(Martinez, CA) – Contra Costa County has launched the Bridge to Success pilot program, a competitive integrated employment program that provides a pathway for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities to compete for regular County jobs at regular salaries.

With the Bridge to Success program, Contra Costa joins counties, cities and other jurisdictions nationwide with alternative hiring processes for people who may need assistance getting jobs, but have the ability to perform the work. In the Bay Area, Alameda County, the City and County of San Francisco, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory have similar programs.

Bridge to Success, which was initiated last year, is a two-year pilot program that will help Contra Costa County implement, evaluate and make necessary adjustments for this new, but important effort.

“The application process for government jobs can be challenging and may prevent eligible candidates with developmental disability from getting jobs, even when they can do the work,” said Board Chair, Supervisor John Gioia, who spearheaded the program. “This contributes to the high unemployment rates for this population.”

“I’m excited that Contra Costa County is taking a step to bridge this gap. All people deserve the right to have opportunities for fair wage jobs,” said Supervisor Gioia.

Contra Costa County’s Human Resources Department, working with other County departments, has identified certain positions that are a good match for Bridge to Success. The first jobs are beginning clerical and service aid positions in the County Health and Library departments.

Bridge to Success Program employees do the same work as their nondisabled peers. Many employees hired under the program are eligible for job coaching through the California State Department of Rehabilitation or local nonprofit service providers, including Futures Explored and Contra Costa ARC. There is no cost to the County for this employment support.

“Historically, people with developmental disabilities are often lumped together as unemployable, but experience has taught us that this is very far from the truth,” said Heather Prince, a job coach with Futures Explored, a Contra Costa nonprofit providing supported

employment services. “It’s not just about having a job. It’s about feeling that they’re making a contribution to their community and are part of something important.”

The California Legislature in 2013 adopted an “Employment First” policy for people with developmental disabilities, which identifies competitive integrated employment as a priority of state resources. Contra Costa County’s Bridge to Success Program reflects this priority.

For more information, visit <http://www.contracosta.ca.gov/6821/Contra-Costa-County-Bridge-to-Success>.

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