



NATIONAL GUARD JOB CHALLENGE PROGRAM

For many of our nation's youth, job opportunities are elusive, despite a much healthier national economy. Those with juvenile criminal records often find the barriers between education and career success daunting. Without a good job, these young people likely face a return to prison or a life in poverty.

To halt this cycle and give court-involved youth a meaningful shot at career success, the U.S. Department of Labor today announces \$12 million in grants to offer vigorous job training and real-life work experience on the path toward a good job. The grants are possible thanks to the U.S. Department of Defense which created the National Guard Job Challenge program.

"Second chances are embedded in the American spirit. Our youth deserve a real chance to turn their lives around," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez. "These grants will help young people at risk of dropping out of the labor force and equip them with the ability to find and keep a good job. We want these young people to become valued members of their communities."

This initiative is an outgrowth of the successful [National Guard Youth Challenge](#) program begun in the 1990s. Based on evidence of similar successes, the program seeks to improve the life and employment prospects of high school dropouts — age 16 to 18 — absent from the labor market.

Youth people in the program are "cadets" who gain military-based discipline and training. They also receive educational instruction, experiential learning and mentoring. Eight core program components are presented to cadets who live for six months at an active or closed National Guard base, training center, or school campus. Now operating in 27 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, the program has served more than 120,000 young people.

This announcement responds directly to the call to action made by President Obama's [My Brother's Keeper Initiative](#) to ensure that all young people have access to entry-level job opportunities that allow them to gain critical career skills, strengthen pathways to employment and increase future earnings. These grants build on recommendations in the My Brother's Keeper [Task Force report](#) to provide paying job opportunities that build early career skills and increase the availability of programs which help overcome barriers to employment.

Today's funding will expand existing National Guard Youth Challenge programs to provide court-involved youth with vocational education including technical skills needed for specific jobs. Participants will receive work-based learning, and real work experience through field trips, job-shadowing and other opportunities to consider other career paths and prepare them for the labor market. Funds will also help participants create career and academic goals, and better understand long-term career and education options.



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Award recipients include the following:

- [Georgia Department of Defense](#) receives \$4 million to fund its Georgia Youth Challenge Academy which will recruit an estimated 225 court-involved youth annually, from the Fort Stewart, Fort Gordon and Milledgeville Youth Challenge Academy campuses. The Georgia Youth Academy will partner with Paxen Learning Corporation which provides workforce development programming for youth throughout Georgia; Savannah Technical College which provides credit and non-credit occupational training programs and supportive services for students; and local employers that will facilitate job shadowing and internship opportunities.
- [Michigan Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs](#) receives \$3,995,709 to implement the Michigan Youth Challenge/Job Challenge Program serving 300 participants. Graduates will be prepared to successfully obtain employment in the manufacturing and industrial trades with employer partners including Kellogg Company, Denso Manufacturing of Michigan and Duncan Aviation.
- [South Carolina Military Department](#) receives \$3,994,475 to operate the South Carolina DOL Job Challenge in partnership with Aiken Technical College and Clemson University's Youth Learning Institute's Camp Long facility. Three hundred participants will be provided an opportunity to complete education and training towards an associate of applied science credit certificate in one of several vocational fields in high demand in South Carolina. Employer partners will include NHC HealthCare North Augusta, TTX Southeastern Repair Division, Custom Machine & Welding, Inc., Aiken County and South Carolina Educational Television.