

One-Stop Career Centers: All in One Place and Everyplace

by Matthew Mariani

Finding jobs and training will never be the same again. Here's how you can win your place in the work force of the future.

Welcome to America's newest megamalls, where you do the selling. In this marketplace, you don't sell clothes or pots and pans or even CD players. Here, you sell your own skills (and knowledge) to an employer. You invest wisely in education, study the labor market, sell to the highest bidder, and profit from your own labor. In America's new labor exchanges, you don't just find a job. You choose your working destiny.

One-stop career centers, the new malls of American labor, offer customers (students and workers) the resources needed to succeed in the workplace of the 21st century. Stop by and consider all available information on employment and training. Seek aid, including counseling, from helpful staff. Use computers and the most modern telecommunications. If you're too busy to stop by, visit via cyberspace and obtain many services that way.

These one-stops help workers find jobs and help employers find qualified employees. They broker the labor exchange. But they do a lot more, and they help everyone: students, college graduates, downsized professionals, career changers, people moving from welfare to work, veterans, and workers with disabilities. Anyone can apply for unemployment benefits, register for the State job service, obtain free job search assistance of countless kinds, find out about job training programs, learn about special programs for veterans and others, and more. Anyone in need of training or employment is welcome.

The one-stop idea seems simple: Put all employment and training services in one place to make them easy to use.

Explore further, however, and the one-stop concept reveals itself as a complex system. The first section of this article discusses major aspects of one-stops as a system. The next section shows, on a personal level, how customers in varying life circumstances use one-stop career centers. Five fictional stories portray:

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- A high school student exploring interests and career pathways,
 - Two college students job hunting before graduation,
 - A married couple seeking better paying, higher skill jobs,
 - A single parent moving from welfare to work, and
 - A downsized professional rebuilding a career.

A final section lists contacts for more information about currently operating centers.

This article does not explore the many services one-stops provide to employers. Here, the subject is the American worker, both present and future.

The Big Picture

One-stop career centers are already being implemented in 33 States, according to the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor. When fully up and running, the one-stops in these States will serve about 80 percent of the Nation's civilian labor force; the remaining States will soon join. The Employment and Training Administration makes grants to help one-stops get started, but States and localities create centers that vary according to local needs. One-stops are local inventions with national promise.

Consider some of the many reasons why one-stop career centers will change the way Americans train for and find work. As noted earlier, one-stops make many training and employment services available all in one place. The places where one-stops exist belong to both physical and virtual reality. These centers balance automation with personal service and destroy red tape at every turn. They also help the average

Matthew Mariani is a contributing editor to the *OOQ*, (202) 606-5728.

worker adjust to the labor market by allowing better access to labor market information than ever before.

All in One Place

One-stop career centers blend together key programs, resources, and services. Typically, a center integrates programs such as unemployment insurance, the State job service, public assistance, and training programs (for example, those allied under the Job Training Partnership Act).

Centers also have resource rooms in one form or another. In them, customers find local, State, and national job vacancy listings in both electronic form and on paper—and sometimes microfiche. Customers may use computers equipped with word processing software and career information delivery systems (CIDS). This allows for activities ranging from writing résumés to exploring careers to researching sources of training and education. Customers might also find out how past completers of training and educational programs fared in the work force. Career libraries offer books and videos on various employment topics. In pursuit of work, customers enjoy

At one-stop career centers, customers enjoy free use of telephones, fax machines, photocopiers, and the Internet.

free use of telephones, fax machines, photocopiers, and the Internet. Some centers have video conferencing facilities, allowing for long-distance job interviews.

One-stop staff provide individual career assessment and counseling. They offer training in job search skills as well. The training may address résumé preparation, applications, interviewing, networking, and phone techniques, among other things. Staff also facilitate job clubs or networking groups.

And Everyplace

Melding one-stop centers with telecommunications wizardry stretches our everyday notion of place. Some communities build centers from the ground up, but others build from what is already there. Suppose a locality has its unemployment insurance office and its job training headquarters set up on opposite sides of town. It saves money to link such sites by computer network instead of putting up a new building to combine functions. Electronic links between facilities allow customers at one site to do business at another, as if they really were at the distant site.

In most cases, one-stops find it impractical to squeeze everything under one roof. An employment counselor, for

example, normally refers customers with substance abuse problems that impair their ability to work to outside human services agencies. In rural areas, one-stop satellite offices staffed by only one or two people may offer less than the full range of services. Still, a mobile staff and the electronic transfer of information may fill much of the gap.

The Internet, television, and telephone warp one-stop space most of all. Centers have their own websites to provide information, and anyone with Internet access can search the State job bank remotely. In shopping malls and other public places, computerized kiosks beam customers in to the one-stop environment virtually, via the Internet.

Some one-stops also use public access or college television stations to broadcast training programs, scroll job listings onscreen, or announce events scheduled at the centers. In many States, followup contacts regarding unemployment insurance occur by phone; in some areas, unemployed workers even file their initial claim for benefits by phone.

With a Human Face

One-stops temper their technology with human concern. Staff size, however, is always limited, so centers offer different levels of personal service according to the needs of the customer.

Typically, when customers walk in the front door, a staff member greets them and finds out what assistance they seek. If they are new to the center, either the greeter or another staff member may take them on a tour, explaining what the center offers. After being introduced to the resource room, customers often use it on their own. A staff member hovers nearby to answer questions or resolve minor computer glitches. Many one-stops also conduct group orientations, introducing customers to available training and employment programs. The majority of one-stop customers only need this type of attention from staff.

At a higher level of service, unemployed customers might spend time with a placement specialist who will help them look for another job in their field. At the highest level of service, customers receive individual counseling. They may meet with an assigned case manager repeatedly over an extended period.

Someone facing barriers to entering or reentering the work force may need extra aid. For example, a worker dislocated by a plant closing, a disabled veteran, an ex-offender, or anyone making a major career change might opt to work with a case manager. Or not. The customer always chooses. If a dislocated worker with few transferable skills wants to use the self-service aspects of the center with no further assistance, nothing prevents that.

The roles of staff in one-stops vary from one center to the

next, but in every case, not all staff members work for the same employer. Because of the way one-stops combine programs, the staff may work for a variety of public and private entities, including nonprofit or for-profit organizations. Despite the mix of employers, however, one-stop staff coordinate their efforts. This frees customers from having to wrangle with multiple agencies, each with its own set forms to fill out. Customers need not care who employs the person helping them at a one-stop career center. Only the help itself matters.

And a Backbone

One-stops run on information. This information flows from an electronic structure that supports the national work force development system encompassing the one-stops. This electronic backbone has four parts: America's Job Bank, America's Talent Bank, America's Labor Market Information System, and America's Training Network. The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration has taken the lead in developing all four.

America's Job Bank (AJB) contains job openings posted with local employment services offices and directly to the Internet. Each of the 50 States has its own Internet-accessible job bank that contributes to the national job bank. On an average day, jobseekers may search through more than 750,000 job listings on AJB. Check it out at www.ajb.dni.us

America's Talent Bank (ATB) holds electronic résumés posted with local employment services offices and directly to the Internet. Each of the 33 one-stop States will also have its own résumé bank. Employers will search the bank to find candidates with the skills needed to fill available jobs. Take a look at www.atb.org

America's Labor Market Information System (ALMIS) will deliver wage rates, occupational and industry employment projections (short and long term), labor supply and demand data, employment and unemployment statistics, employer profiles, area profiles, and occupational descriptions (including relevant skill standards). The Web address is ecuvax.cis.ecu.edu/~lmi/lmi.html

America's Training Network (ATN) is still in design. When implemented, it will serve as a national database of training opportunities, providing information on courses offered by traditional institutions and those available via distance learning. ATN will also include an inventory of commercially and publicly developed computer-based instruction.

Growing links between AJB, ATB, and ALMIS promise increasing benefits to users in the future. Posting a résumé to ATB, for example, will trigger the display of relevant job openings from AJB. Links between ALMIS and the job and talent databases will give jobseekers labor market information

specific to their job search. After finding a job opening on AJB, a user might check national, state, and local wage data for the occupation to see if the salary offered is competitive. The user can also look at any of the other relevant information in ALMIS. The ordinary jobseeker will draw upon extraordinary information in making employment decisions—and training decisions when ATN comes on line.

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration provides easy links to all these sites, as well as additional information on labor markets, training programs, apprenticeship opportunities, and other valuable services for jobseekers and students. Just set your browser to www.doleta.gov

One-Stops, At Your Service

One-stop career centers have something to offer you, regardless of your educational level, employment status, or career plans. Stop by and explore on your own, or consult with staff for assistance. Whether you visit in person or via cyberspace, you'll find resources to help you make informed choices about your working future.

The following segments describe the kinds of services you may receive at one-stops. Even though the characters in these stories are made up, the one-stop career centers and the services portrayed are all real. Happy endings, of course, are never guaranteed in the world of work, but these stories show what possibilities one-stops inspire.



From High School to Career

To Kerry, CareerNet Visions seems like a computer game about herself. A video clip plays onscreen, and the woman in

it—someone her classmates already call the “CareerNet woman”—says they are about to do a career search.

“In this part of the system,” says their guidance counselor, Mr. Johnson, “you’ll answer questions about your interests and the job characteristics that are important to you. Then, the system will match you with a list of occupations that might suit you based on your answers.”

Kerry glances around at her 17 classmates who sit at their computer terminals in the career center none of them has seen before today. She has never heard of a guidance counseling field trip before, but she admits it’s pretty interesting. She reads the career interest questions and selects an answer to each by touching it on the computer screen. “Hey, I like this better than using a mouse,” she says to her neighbor, who smiles back at her.

The guidance counselor checks to see how each student is doing and answers questions that come up. When the students

Students use the one-stop resources to explore career, education, and summer job options.

finish, Mr. Johnson explains how they may explore different occupations as career options using the system.

“There are profiles on hundreds of occupations,” he explains. “You can read about any of them, even if they don’t appear on the personalized list of occupations CareerNet has generated for you. But let’s look at the list first. How many occupations are on your list, Kerry?”

“Twelve.”

“Good,” Mr. Johnson says. “Out of those 12, do any jump out at you as something you might like to do?”

“Uhhh...travel agent,” Kerry says, but quickly adds, “No, wait. Real estate agent.”

“OK,” the counselor says. “Now, I want everyone to pick an occupation to start with. And remember, you can always go back later and look at anything else.”

Kerry selects real estate agent and begins reading about the nature of the work, the number employed in her home State of Maryland, earnings, training required, and the outlook for employment in the future. It looks good to her, but she wants to read about other occupations in the limited time they have. Following Mr. Johnson’s advice, she quickly browses through several and prints the ones she wants to study later.

After Kerry’s classmates do the same, Mr. Johnson intro-

duces some other features of CareerNet. “Besides exploring careers,” he says, “you can find colleges or other postsecondary schools to prepare you for the career you pick. Plus, the system gives you current labor market information.”

“That’s cool,” Kerry says, “but I won’t be starting my real career for a while. What if I just want a summer job waiting tables after junior year?”

“Good point,” the counselor replies. “Another part of the system, called Maryland’s Job Bank, lets you search job listings here.”

“Even jobs for high school kids?” asks Kerry’s neighbor.

“Some, yes. And as you’ll see, each listing specifies the minimum education required, so you can tell what you might qualify for.”

“OK, but here in Rockville, we’re right by Virginia and DC,” Kerry’s neighbor says. “If you want a job there, the system won’t help you, huh?”

“Yes, it will. You’ve also got access to the Internet, so you can search listings in any State or combination of States using America’s Job Bank. Now, I’m going to take you through these features to give you a quick look. We’ll be able to come back later in the year to do more, but I encourage you to explore the system further on your own.”

“How can we get here to Montgomery College to do that?” Kerry asks. “Can we borrow your car?”

“Try plan B,” the counselor says over the students’ laughter. “CareerNet is on wheels now—seriously—and I’m giving you all a schedule showing where the CareerNet van makes its visits. Plan your next trip to the mall some weekend when the van will be parked right outside.”

“For real?” Kerry asks, beaming.

“Yes,” says Mr. Johnson with a smile. “And if I’m wrong, you can borrow my car.”



Kerry and Chauntel stop in front of the Baltimore row house where Chauntel lives. They pause at the bottom of the steps, enjoying the sun and the first full week of summer vacation. Chauntel is 2 years younger than Kerry, but they’ve been best friends as far back as either remembers.

“I’m glad I could visit you this week,” Kerry says. “I hardly ever see you since you moved here from Rockville.”

“Yeah,” Chauntel says. “I wish you could stay longer, but what’s up with this new summer job of yours?”

“I’ll be working at a travel agency, answering phones, delivering tickets—things like that. Really, it’s an internship, though, not a job. They won’t be paying me.”

“Won’t pay you!” Chauntel says. “Get out! Why should you work for nothing?”



“It’s for the experience,” Kerry says. “I want to see what it’s really like to be a travel agent.”

“I thought you wanted to sell real estate.”

“I did,” says Kerry, “but I want to be a travel agent, too. Besides, that might be one way to start out so I could move into real estate later on.”

“How are you getting all these ideas in that head of yours?”

“You’ll understand better when you grow up,” Kerry says, teasing. “But it all started with what I learned about different occupations from CareerNet.”

“You mean one of those career centers?” Chauntel asks.

“That’s where we went to use it,” Kerry says. “How did you know?”

“There’s the Eastside Career Center right down the street. That’s where my brother Calvin went when he got laid off from his job last winter. Come on.”



Ten minutes later, Kerry types her social security number into a career center computer. CareerNet remembers her from when she first logged on back home, and she gains access. She does a search for postsecondary schools that train travel agents in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC. She finds two schools near her and prints out their addresses and phone numbers.

“When I go home,” Kerry says, “I’ll call and ask for more information about these schools.”

“I bet you can do that right now,” Chauntel says.

“Yeah, but these numbers are long distance from here,” Kerry says.

“Just ask. They let my brother call long distance to see about a job last winter.”

Kerry asks a nearby staff member and is directed toward a phone.

“I told you so!” says Chauntel.

“You’re just jealous, girl,” says Kerry.



A College Degree—and Then What?

It’s the last spring break of Luisa’s college career. Already, she regrets having chosen to spend it here at her parents’ new home in California’s Napa Valley. She should be with her cousin Ray in New Jersey. That’s where she and Ray grew up. That’s also where they plan to put their college degrees to work. In a few months, Luisa will earn a bachelor’s degree in accounting, and Ray will receive an associate degree in computer science.

Luisa thinks about searching for an entry level job as an accountant, but her hands get cold, her throat tightens up, and dire thoughts come to mind. I’ll have to pay my own rent, she thinks. I’ll have to pay back all my student loans. How many thousands of dollars is that? And what if I can’t find a job, or the job I find can’t pay the bills?

The telephone rings. Sighing in relief at the distraction, Luisa scoops up the receiver. “Hello, *Raimondo*?” she says.

“Yeah,” Ray says. “How did you know it was me?”

“Oh, I didn’t,” she says. “I was just thinking about you, hoping you wouldn’t choke in your first job interview—when you get one, I mean.”

“Yeah, right,” Ray says. “It so happens I do have an interview scheduled for tomorrow, and I’m not really so nervous about it anymore.”

“Why not?”

“Last week, I went to that career center I told you about, here in New Brunswick,” he explains. “I asked about classes on interviewing skills, but I ended up joining their PSG.”

“Their what?” Luisa asks.

“PSG,” Ray says again. “It stands for Professional Service Group. It’s only a small part of the center, but it’s great. It’s a group of out-of-work professionals who help each other find new jobs. I—”

“But, you’re not a professional,” she says. “How could you join?”

“They define a professional as anyone seeking a job in a professional manner,” he says. “I can see why you’d be confused, though. Anyway, I took a class every morning last week and learned about résumés, networking, interviewing, telephone techniques, Internet job search—everything. And they



told us how to use all the resources of the center.”

“How much does all that cost?” she asks.

“I don’t pay anything,” he says. “I only have to work 3 hours a week for the group, plus go to a committee meeting. I’m on the job leads committee, so I call up employers to ask if they have any openings group members would be interested in. It’s really good practice.”

“Huh!” she says.

“Another good thing is the networking,” he continues. “One member is an unemployed personnel manager—he taught one of the classes—and he gave me a contact at the company where he used to work. That’s how I set up my informational interview for tomorrow. Of course, it’s not for a job, but it could lead to something in the future.”

“It’s lucky you’re only taking two classes your last term,” she says.

“Yeah,” he says, “otherwise I couldn’t have fit this in. But you don’t have to join the group to use the center.”

“I should have spent this week in New Brunswick,” she says. “You were right.”

“That’s more like it,” he says. “Now, I’ll help you. There’s something called the Workforce New Jersey Public Information Network. It’s on the Internet. Tomorrow, you can use it from where you are to start looking for a job here in Jersey.”

“My parents don’t have access from their home computer,” she says, “but maybe the public library—”

“Better than that,” Ray says. “I did a little research, and there’s one of these one-stop career centers right in Napa County. You can talk to an employment development specialist there and get some guidance, besides using the Internet.”

“I’m there,” she says. “Give me the address.”

The next morning, Luisa speaks with an employment development specialist at the Napa County Training and Employment Center. He listens to her plight and puts her at ease right away.

“Not a problem,” he says. “Even though it feels like one, it’s really more like a challenge—and today is your lucky day.”

“Why?” she asks.

“You can do a lot of things right here and now,” he says, “to get started toward finding your job. Let’s take a quick tour.”

First, he shows Luisa some computer terminals with Internet access. “You had a good idea about visiting the New Jersey website,” he says, “but remember, the Internet is just one tool out of a whole bunch you can use in your search.” Next, he tells her about other resources, including an extensive career reference library and résumé writing software. He then invites Luisa to take part in job skills workshops scheduled during the week.

“I have an appointment with another customer,” the specialist says, “so I’ll leave you to surf the Web. But if you have a question about anything, just flag down any staff member you see, OK?”

“Yeah, thanks a lot!” she says.

Luisa finds the Workforce New Jersey Public Information Network online. A little browsing reveals that jobs for accountants are projected to grow significantly in New Jersey in the coming years. In fact, accountant is designated as a “demand occupation” in the State, meaning that there will likely be more jobs than qualified people to fill them. Now, Luisa feels a little braver, and she clicks on “jobs.”

A menu search yields listings for more than 150 vacant accounting jobs statewide. The jobs are sorted by city, which gives Luisa an idea of how they are concentrated geographically. Luisa then re-sorts the job listings by salary. Starting at the low end, she selects each job that requires a bachelor’s degree and no more than 1 year of work experience. Her accounting-related work experience, gained through summer jobs and an internship, totals almost 1 year. Luisa identifies the 20 job listings meeting her criteria. She reads the brief description for each position and notes the application instructions for the ones she thinks she might qualify for.

“Can I find out average salaries for new accountants...,” she suddenly wonders out loud.

“Yes,” says a staff member who is nearby. “If you go to the career description for accountants in the system.... Here it is. You see, there’s some data for New Jersey. If you want national data, try the online version of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.”

“Oh, yeah.” Luisa says. “I remember that from high school. Thanks!”



“Hi, Ray. It’s Luisa. I just got home from the career center, so I’m calling to—”

“How was it?” Ray asks.

“Great. I found five jobs I wanted to apply for,” she says. “I updated my résumé and wrote my cover letters there and faxed everything where it needs to go. Apply for jobs in Jersey via California! Not bad—speaking of which, how did your interview go?”

“Don’t worry about me,” he says. “I’m still way ahead of you, cousin.”



Trading a Low Wage for a Higher Wage (and Higher Skill)

When Tse-Hsin walks into the JobNet center, he comes in from the cold of a Michigan winter in search of a new job and a different life.

“Good morning,” a woman says to him as he takes off his coat. “I’m Mira. How can I help you today?”

“Hi. This is the unemployment office, isn’t it?” Tse-Hsin asks.

“We process claims for unemployment compensation,” she says, nodding her head, “but we offer lots of other services, too.”

“Could you tell me about them?” he asks.

“Sure. Right up front here,” she says, “we’ve got computers you can use to search job listings electronically. If you don’t like computers, we’ve got it on paper, too. See, here are some books of local and regional job leads.”

“What kinds of jobs?” he asks.

“From A to Z,” she says. “What kind of work have you been doing?”

“I worked as a stock clerk in a store for over 3 years,” he says. “But it’s closed down, now.”

“I see,” she says. “What do you want to do now?”

“Something else,” he says, shrugging his shoulders.

“Well, here is where you can use the Michigan Occupational Information System,” she says. “We call it ‘MOIS.’ It can help you decide what sort of work is really for you. You find out which schools offer various types of education and training, also.”

“And what are all those books over there?” Tse-Hsin asks.

“We’ve got books and videos on just about every career

related subject you can think of,” Mira says. “You can use them here or check them out to take home. Oh, before I forget, you can also use word processing and résumé software and even a typing tutor program. Plus, there’s the standard phone, fax, Internet access, and photocopier for job search purposes.”

“I don’t know where to start,” he says.

“Don’t worry,” she says. “First, I’ll introduce you to the person who’ll process your unemployment benefits claim. To collect, you’ll also have to register with the State job service. Then you’ll be in our database, and we can refer you for job openings. If you just wanted another stock clerk job, you’d likely see a placement specialist next, but it sounds like you’re looking to change careers.”

“Definitely,” he says.

“OK,” she says. “I’ll see if a case manager is available to talk with you after you file your claim. If not, you can schedule an appointment.”

“Thank you,” Tse-Hsin says. “I guess you were serious about offering a lot of services.”

“Yes,” Mira says. “And I’ve only shown you the tip of the iceberg.”



As it turns out, a case manager named Virginia Kenna can

Losing a job sometimes leads to a better career with the aid available at one-stops.

see Tse-Hsin right away. Keying Tse-Hsin’s intake information into the computer, Virginia first registers him with the job service. Then, they discuss his current situation. Tse-Hsin is married and has no children. His wife works as a cashier. Considering her income and his unemployment benefits, the two of them will barely scrape by in the short run.

“If you could work at any job in the world,” Virginia asks, “what would you do?”

Tse-Hsin isn’t sure what to say. He thinks a long moment, and finally he says, “I can’t do that. I’d need to go to college, and I can’t pay the tuition.”

“Just ignore that for a minute,” she says. “What would you do?”

“I’d get into health care,” he says. “Not as a doctor—I don’t want that much school. I’d be a nurse.”

“Why do you think you’d like that profession better than

what you were doing before?" she asks.

"I hated being a stock clerk," Tse-Hsin says. "I didn't feel like I was helping anyone, but nurses help. I was in the hospital for 3 months after a car accident when I was 11 years old. The nurses took care of me, and there was even one guy among them. That's when I knew I wanted to be a nurse."

"You probably can, if you want," Virginia says. "It would be tough, though. You'd have to go to school and keep a part-time job in order to maintain a family income you can live on."

"But school isn't free," Tse-Hsin says.

"No," she admits, "but you will likely qualify for assistance under the Job Training Partnership Act. It will pay for your education, if you're eligible."

"Where do I sign up?" Tse-Hsin asks, not yet believing what he has heard.

"Right here," she says. "And now we need to do five more things. First, I'm going to give you a brief reading test I give to everyone. It'll take about 10 minutes. While you're working on that, I'm going to print a career script from MOIS and cite some other sources of information about nursing from our library. Third, we'll scan the job listings to identify potentially suitable part-time jobs for you. Next, we'll begin drafting a step-by-step plan for you to achieve your goal of becoming a nurse. Finally, I'll schedule another appointment with you, so we can talk again in a week."

"Sounds great," Tse-Hsin says.

"One step in your plan of action," Virginia continues, "will be for you to read more about nurses and the training they need. This will help you decide if you really want to be a nurse, and if so, what kind. Another step I'll suggest is an informational interview. Obviously, you know a lot about nursing from the patient's perspective, but I recommend you talk to a nurse to hear that point of view. I can help you set

that up, if you're agreeable."

"I'm totally agreeable," Tse-Hsin says.



A week passes quickly, and Tse-Hsin returns for his next appointment. His wife, Cassandra, has the day off, so she accompanies him to the JobNet center with an agenda of her own. While Tse-Hsin meets with Virginia to discuss his progress, Cassandra asks Mira about learning to network and interview well.

"I don't really need it for what I'm doing now," Cassandra explains. "It's just that I've done every job there is in a fast food restaurant, except management. I'm hoping to find an employer who will hire me as a management trainee. I don't have a college education, but I'm sure I can do the work if I find an employer who will give me a chance."

"I can suggest some books and videos from our library," Mira says. "And you could also talk to one of our case managers for advice."

"No, I don't need to do that," Cassandra says, "but the library sounds good."

"OK," Mira says. "Another option would be to sign up for our next job search class."

"Tell me more."

"It meets eight times over a 4-week period," Mira says, "and it covers everything you're interested in. Can you fit daytime classes into your work schedule?"

"Yes. Where does the class meet?" Cassandra asks.

"Well, it's only one class, but it meets in five different places at once," Mira says. "You can take it right here or at one of four other locations in the Traverse City area. The instructor is in one location, but you can see everyone and everyone can see you through interactive video."

"Huh?"

"It's one big teleconference," Mira says. "In each classroom are four television monitors showing the other classrooms live. You can ask the instructor questions and have discussions, just like in a regular class."

"I get it," Cassandra says. "I live in Maple City. Where's the classroom near me?"

"Glen Lake High School."

"Hey, if there's a blizzard," Cassandra says, "I won't have to travel all the way into Traverse City for class."

"You've got the picture," Mira says.



Tse-Hsin considers carefully and decides to attend community college to prepare for a career as a licensed practical nurse. After three meetings and a few phone conversations

with Virginia over a 4-week period, Tse-Hsin finds a part-time job with a very flexible schedule. His career plan is ready, and he awaits approval for assistance under the job training program.

Two days pass. Cassandra attends her first teleconferenced job search class. When she returns home, she finds Tse-Hsin.

"I'm in," Tse-Hsin says. "I'm starting classes next month."

"I'm so happy for you," Cassandra says. "I told you good things would happen to us if you married me!"



From Welfare to Work

"Hold my hand," Alice says to her 1-year-old son, Arlo. Alice leads him toward the child dropoff center within the Workforce Development Center of Waukesha County, Wisconsin. "You'll get to play with the other kids while Mommy keeps her appointment, OK?"

Arlo toddles into the center, and Alice reluctantly lets go of his hand. She knows he'll be fine here, but she dreads meeting with her economic support specialist. Alice came here 6 months ago to verify her continuing need for public assistance. She doesn't know how she, Arlo, and her older boy, Jimmy, would survive without this aid. All the talk she's been hearing about welfare reform frightens her. In fact, she hasn't felt this scared since her husband abandoned the family just before Arlo was born.



"I see your job title has changed to financial planner," Alice says.

"Yes," says Nancy Olsen. "Things are always changing."

"Am I going to lose my welfare?" Alice asks.

"No," Nancy says. "Don't panic. I know you're worried, and that's understandable, but these reforms are not about trying to take benefits away from people. We want to help you over the barriers preventing you from working. Once you get over them, you won't need so much aid."

"Don't get me wrong," Alice says. "I want to work, but I'm not qualified for many jobs, and even if I find one—do you know how much daycare costs? Jimmy is in kindergarten now, but who's going to take care of Arlo while I'm working? I don't have any other family in Waukesha, and I just can't do it alone."

"I know," Nancy says, "and I know you're frightened, but you can have what you really want: a job, an income, and a budget you and your boys can live on."

"How?"

"For one thing," Nancy says, "we're trying harder to see that parents receive court-ordered child support payments. Even if your husband has gone out of State, we'll find him eventually and make him pay support."

"Good luck," Alice says bitterly.

"A lot of States besides Wisconsin are doing this now," Nancy says, "and we're serious about it. In the meantime, you'll be asked to attend an orientation to our JOBS Program."

"What's that?"

"It's where you'll learn about the programs we have to help you ease into the work force," Nancy says. "After that, a cus-

Some one-stops offer welfare-to-work programs that provide on-the-job training and help with daycare.

tom service representative will be assigned to you. He or she will work with you to plan a strategy. And I'll help, too."

"I've heard promises even better than this before," Alice says.

"I know," Nancy says.

"Where do I do all of this planning and stuff?" Alice asks.

"Right here. How's next Monday?" asks Nancy.



The customer service representatives who present the orientation calm some of Alice's fears. The program they describe makes sense to her. Afterward, she makes an appointment to meet with Brian Oland, one of the representatives.

The next day, they meet as scheduled. First, they go through an intake form, and Alice tells about her education and work history. She explains that she dropped out of high school in March of her senior year and that parenting is the sum of her work experience. They chat for a few minutes about how Alice always disliked school.

"Was there anything you did like about high school?" Brian asks, finally.

"I don't know," she says. "I guess I liked my business classes some, especially keyboarding. I used to type 60 words per minute."

Brian grins. "If I could type that fast, I'd save a lot of time on paperwork," he says. "That's a valuable skill."

"I wouldn't know," Alice says, but she feels a little proud.

"Have you ever considered taking the exam for a GED?" he asks.



“No, I don’t think I’m up for that,” she says. “I haven’t really taken any tests in years.”

“OK,” he says, “but you might consider it. If you do decide to pursue that, I’ll steer you toward some ways to prepare for the test.”

“I suppose a GED would look better to somebody who hires people,” she says.

“It would give you one extra advantage over someone without a diploma,” Brian says. “But first things first. I want to suggest you spend a day doing some assessments and mulling over the results. It’ll aid you in figuring out what you might like and not like about different types of work.”

“It’s a test?” Alice asks.

“No, not at all,” he says. “It’s just a chance to learn about yourself and where you want to fit in to the work force. How does that sound?”

“I’ll do it,” she says, “but....”

“What?”

“Why would anyone hire a welfare mother like me, anyway?” she asks.

“Employers will hire you if it’s in their best interest,” he says. “Like I was saying at orientation, unemployment is low here. Workers are scarce. There are lots of lower skill positions, and employers are willing to train you on the job—if you’re willing to make the effort. And remember, our program will reimburse the employer for up to half of your wages during your initial weeks on the job. That’s a good deal for them.”

“And you said my welfare payments would stop if my

income went over the limit,” she recalls, “but I’d be earning a paycheck instead, and the program will help pay for Arlo’s daycare, besides.”

“Exactly,” he says.



It’s Alice’s third week on the job. She still can’t believe she’s here in this office, sitting at her own work station. So many people at the one-stop center helped her along, finding solutions for every problem she ran into. One of the job developers even talked to the human resources manager here before she interviewed. That way, the company knew her strong points beforehand, so she felt less nervous at the interview. In a couple of weeks, she’s mastered the basics of the word processing software. This week, a coworker will show her how to use a database.

The phone rings, and she answers: “Aske Industries, how may I direct your call?”

“It’s Brian Oland. Just calling to see how things are going.”

“Really well,” she says. “I can hardly believe how far I’ve come in 2 months. None of it is easy, but I’m doing it!”



Professionals Reinventing Careers

Ali lies in bed in a room illuminated only by the glow from the television and the few rays of midmorning Florida sunshine that make their way through the drawn curtain. He knows the cuts in defense spending are real, and his 20 years on the job as an aeronautical engineer are over.

Brooding over the end of his career, he skips from one television station to the next, clicking the remote again and again until some footage from a space shuttle launch rivets his attention. It turns out to be a show about Brevard County Job Link Centers and the employment and training resources they offer. After 30 minutes, the program ends, and Ali picks up the phone to inquire about the next orientation session.



The Job Link Center has a more inviting decor than the office where Ali previously filed for unemployment benefits. Ali does not notice. He tries hard to pay attention during orientation, but his worries distract him. Afterward, he schedules a meeting with a case manager, Laura Aldovar.

Three days later, he arrives several minutes late for his appointment. “I’m not sure this isn’t a waste of time,” Ali says,

about 15 minutes into the meeting. "There's nothing out there for me."

"I'm not going to lie and say the outlook is rosy," Laura says. "There are few openings for aeronautical engineers here, and there are many well qualified candidates like you competing. However, remember that you will find a job. It's only a matter of when and what kind."

"But I only know one profession," he says.

"Still, you have skills that could transfer to other jobs if you wanted that," she says. "And there's funding available to help dislocated workers like you train for new work."

"I can't imagine doing that," he says.

"Maybe not," she says. "That's just one option. I worked with another aeronautical engineer who lost his job and then went into business for himself as a consultant. We also help people in circumstances like yours to look for work in other parts of the country."

"I know," he says, "and you'll provide for interviews by video conference and all the rest."

"And the program even pays for relocation expenses," she adds.

"But I have roots here," he says. "All of my family. And my wife has her job here."

"I understand," she says. "I just want to point out that many options exist, and there are always more than you imagine at first."

"OK," he says and sighs heavily. "I know I should have made greater efforts to find a job in the past month, but I've been so depressed. I can't get motivated."

"People react that way sometimes," she says. "Losing a job is major stress. Let me suggest one thing that might help with that. Join one of our job clubs."

"You mean one of those let's-network-and-help-each-other-find-a-new-job groups?" he asks.

"Yes."

"I don't know," Ali says. "I just don't feel capable of mounting a full-scale job search, yet."

"You don't have to do everything all at once," she says. "And the job club is partly a support group, too. It might help just to be with some people going through the same thing you are."

"OK, I'll try it," he says.

"Good," she says. "We'll talk more next week about which path you will want to take for the longer term."

"Yeah, I'll think more about it," he says. "At least it will take my mind off the short term."

"Speaking of which," she says, "are there any other problems you need to deal with right away, beyond what we've already discussed?"

"Well, my biggest worry right now," he says, "is my daughter's college tuition bill. I put it on plastic, but I was already sitting on a mountain of credit card debt. It's out of control."

"I see," she says. "Our credit counselor has hours here the day after tomorrow. We better get you signed up."

Ali raises his eyebrows. "You offer credit counseling on top of everything else?"

"Sure," Laura says. "You can't solve a puzzle without all the pieces."



When Ali meets with his case manager again, they talk about his old job and his love for finding solutions to engineering problems in military aircraft. At some point, he mentions how his duties changed during his last 2 years. He began to spend one-fourth of his time helping network engineers establish the company's wide area network. Ali enjoyed this special assignment more than he had expected, and he learned much about network engineering. Laura points out that the local employment outlook for network engineers appears very promising. Reflecting on this, he devises a new career strategy with Laura's help.

Ali enrolls in a school for 200 hours of special training that will qualify him as a certified network engineer. The program for dislocated workers covers the entire cost. By the time he

One-stop customers changing careers can find networking and support through the centers.

completes training, the prospect of his professional change of course excites him. Using the center's job search computers, he quickly identifies one vacancy, applies, and is invited for an interview.

The day before the interview, he arrives early for an appointment with Laura. He scans the want ads. Then he phones one of the network engineering consultants he worked with when his former employer contracted with them to design the wide area network. The consultant knows someone at another company who is about to advertise a position, so the consultant calls this contact and asks her to fax the job description to Ali at the center. A few minutes later, he meets Laura with the description in hand.

Ali first asks Laura to help him tailor his résumé to the new job opening. After working on that, they do a mock interview to prepare Ali for the real one the next day.

“After the interview, you’ll send a thank-you letter promptly?” Laura asks.

“I’m glad you reminded me,” Ali says. “It’s been a long time.”

More Information

See the table below to find out how to obtain more information about one-stop career centers in the States that currently have them. Phone numbers may change, but the Training Technology Research Center of the Employment and Training Administration offers regularly updated, searchable directories of key contacts at its website at

ttrcnew.ttrc.doleta.gov/common/directories

OOQ



| One-stop State | Lead agency contact information |
|----------------|---|
| Alaska | Alaska Job Center Network Office of the Governor www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/LABOR/home.htm |
| Arizona | Division of Employment and Rehabilitation Services Arizona Department of Economic Security (602) 542-1250 |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| California | Office of Workforce Policy California Employment Development Department www.sjtcc.cahwnet.gov/SJTCCWEB/ONE-STOP |
| Colorado | Colorado Workforce Coordinating Council (303) 894-2076 www.state.co.us/gov_dir/labor_dir/labor_home.html |
| Connecticut | Connecticut Department of Labor (860) 566-2533 www.ctdol.state.ct.us |
| Florida | Division of Jobs and Benefits Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security (904) 488-7228 www.floridajobs.org |
| Idaho | Idaho Department of Labor (208) 334-6399 www.labor.state.id.us |
| Illinois | Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs and Illinois Department of Employment Security (217) 785-6006 www.commerce.state.il.us |
| Indiana | Indiana Department of Workforce Development (317) 232-4785 in.jobsearch.org |
| Iowa | Iowa Workforce Development 1 (800) JOB-IOWA www.state.ia.us/government/wd/jobs/index2.htm |
| Kentucky | Kentucky Cabinet for Workforce Development (502) 564-9146 www.state.ky.us/agencies/wforce/one-stop/oscc.htm |
| Louisiana | Louisiana Department of Labor (504) 342-7629 www.ldol.state.la.us |

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|----------------|---|--------------|---|
| Maine | Maine Department of Labor (207) 624-6390 www.state.me.us/labor/jsd/jobserv.htm | Ohio | Ohio One-Stop The Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (614) 728-8766 www.state.oh.us/obes/onestop.html |
| Maryland | Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (410) 767-2173 www.careernet.state.md.us | Oklahoma | Oklahoma Employment Security Commission www.oesc.state.ok.us |
| Massachusetts | One-Stop Career Center Office (617) 727-6641 www.masscareers.state.ma.us | Oregon | Oregon Employment Department (503) 378-3921, ext. 31 olmis.emp.state.or.us/olmishom.html |
| Michigan | Michigan Jobs Commission (517) 335-5853 www.michigan.state.mi.us/mjc | Rhode Island | Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (401) 277-1158 www.dlt.state.ri.us |
| Minnesota | Minnesota Department of Economic Security 1 (888) GET-JOBS (Minnesota only) www.des.state.mn.us | Tennessee | One-Stop Career Advancement Center Tennessee Department of Labor (615) 741-8564 www.state.tn.us/employsecurity |
| Missouri | Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (573) 751-2240 (573) 526-8261 www.works.state.mo.us/wfd | Texas | Texas Workforce Commission (512) 463-7750 www.twc.state.tx.us/twc.html |
| Nevada | Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (702) 687-4605 www.state.nv.us/detr/detr.html | Utah | Utah Department of Workforce Services dwsa.state.ut.us |
| New Jersey | Employment and Training Office New Jersey Department of Labor (609) 292-5005 www.wnjp.state.nj.us | Vermont | Vermont Department of Employment and Training (802) 658-1120 www.det.state.vt.us |
| New Mexico | New Mexico Department of Labor (505) 841-8446 nm.jobsearch.org | Washington | One-Stop Implementation Washington State Employment Security Department (360) 438-3227 www.wa.gov/esd |
| New York | Community Service Division New York State Department of Labor www.labor.state.ny.us | Wisconsin | Division of Workforce Excellence Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (608) 266-1145 www.dwd.state.wi.us/jobnet |
| North Carolina | Governor's Commission on Workforce Preparedness (919) 715-3300 www.joblink.state.nc.us | | |

