

Profiles in Success

WIA Dislocated Worker Programs

*at Workforce Solutions Concho Valley
in San Angelo*



The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 created a framework for streamlined delivery of employment and training services at the state and local levels, provided through a system of local workforce development boards and one-stop centers. WIA provides funding for services to assist adults, dislocated workers, and youth. In Texas, WIA is administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). As part of a statewide network called Texas Workforce Solutions, TWC and 28 regional Local Workforce Boards offer workforce solutions and statewide services to employers and job seekers at more than 240 Texas Workforce Centers and satellite offices.

The Dislocated Worker program provides quality employment and training services to job seekers and employers alike. TWC and the Boards partner to administer this program throughout Texas. The term “Dislocated Worker” refers to individuals who are unemployed through no fault of their own or who have received an official notice of layoff. A Dislocated Worker can also be someone who is self-employed (such as a rancher) but currently unemployed due to poor economic conditions or a disruptive natural disaster. A displaced homemaker who is no longer supported

by a family member also qualifies as a Dislocated Worker.

While there are separate funding streams for economically disadvantaged adults and dislocated workers, both groups have access to three levels of service under the WIA. These are: Core Services, Intensive Services and Training. To receive staff-assisted WIA-funded services, basic eligibility requirements must be met: being 18 years of age or older, and a U.S. citizen or a noncitizen authorized to work in the U.S.

All of these services are available at Texas Workforce Centers and are intended to be accessed sequentially. For example, when an individual is unable to obtain employment after receiving and using Core Services, he or she can access Intensive Services and eventually, Training Services. Some customers may proceed quickly to training services depending on need and skill level, while others may spend more time seeking employment before determining if training is their best option.

Core Services include both self- and staff-assisted services. Examples of self-service are accessing information and instructions on how to use job

search tools, posting a resume or job application, and applying for a job at Texas Workforce Centers.

Examples of staff-assisted Core Services include outreach and intake for both employers and job seekers in the event of layoff, along with job search, job referral and placement assistance. Core Services also include labor market information on job vacancies and particular skills that are needed for current in-demand occupations, plus information on local, regional and national employment trends.

In addition, Core Services may include an initial assessment of skills and needs, plus career counseling. Core Services also include access to resource rooms for Internet use, resume writing workshops, job clubs, and information about available supportive services.

Intensive Services encompass staff-assisted job search and occupational development services. An example of these services is comprehensive employment assessment through diagnostic testing and interviewing. Another is development of individual employment plans, including an evaluation of employment barriers. Intensive Services may also include individual counseling and career planning, case management, short-term pre-vocational services, internships and work experience.

Training Services cover the costs associated with WIA-approved training programs for Adult and Dislocated Workers. Eligibility must be determined and WIA funds must be coordinated with other resource programs such as federal Pell Grants or Trade Adjustment Assistance. Job seekers who need these services will receive information on training providers so that they may make informed decisions about their training choices. Training Services may include occupational skills training, on-the-job training, skills upgrading and retraining, and programs combining workplace training with related instruction.

In addition to the above, the WIA Dislocated Worker program provides specialized reemployment services. Rapid Response services provide early intervention strategies for workers affected by permanent plant closures or mass layoffs. The goal of Rapid Response is to transition workers to their next employment as quickly as possible. Rapid Reemployment Services assist unemployment insurance (UI) claimants who have been identified as likely to exhaust benefits. As a condition to be eligible for UI, claimants must participate in reemployment services.

The profiles below show how two individuals benefitted from the Dislocated Worker program in Texas' Concho Valley region.

Dislocated Workers: Profiles in Success

Thirty-one year old Lori Viola Watkins is from Big Lake, Texas, where her parents work a large cattle ranch that has been in her family since the late 1800s. Lori left her small rural town in 2000 to serve in the military at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California. She spent eight years in the Navy, specializing in supply and logistics and separated with the rank of Petty Officer Third Class.

When Lori returned to Texas as a recently separated veteran, she received résumé and job referral services from Workforce Solutions Concho Valley. She soon found employment in transportation supply management, but the downturn in the economy forced her employer to lay off workers, including Lori. Even though it was

unexpected and disappointing, this turn of events presented a new set of possibilities for Lori, and she set her sights on pursuing higher education.



On her second day of class at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, she learned that her mother had been in a serious car accident. This tragic event changed Lori's life and continues to shape her trajectory. Her mother suffered a spinal cord injury that left her a paraplegic, but with help from her family this courageous woman continues on a path to wellness and rehabilitation. The urgent need to care for her mother in Big Lake changed Lori's options, and as her priorities shifted, she realized that she would have to discontinue her studies at Tarleton and return home.

A few months later Workforce Solutions called Lori with another opportunity: the new Wind Energy Beginning Technician course at Howard College in San Angelo, in conjunction with Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in Sweetwater, trains students in maintenance operations for wind turbines in Texas' growing wind energy industry.

While the commute to and from San Angelo was over two hours, it was still manageable for Lori from her home in Big Lake. Dislocated Worker funding enabled Workforce Solutions to pay Lori's tuition, books and supplies in full, and Lori completed the course in March 2010.

Program Description

Wind Energy Beginning Technician is a six-week course that offers four course completion certificates in Hydraulics, Electronics, Mathematics, and Climbing. Together, they result in a Certificate Level One for Wind Energy Beginning Technician. The course gives the student 200 hours of combined online and classroom/laboratory instruction, with fieldwork at TSTC in Sweetwater and lab work at Howard College in San Angelo.

Using Workforce Investment Act Dislocated Worker and American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funding, Workforce Solutions purchased \$80,000 of lab equipment. Workforce Solutions then contracted with Howard College to use the equipment in the new wind energy program in exchange for training a certain number of Adult and Dislocated Workers. This state-of-the-art equipment includes a hydraulic trainer, an electrical trainer, a breadboard and several types of Fluke meters.

Wind energy is clean, renewable and as Lori explained, compatible with west Texas' existing cattle ranching industry. Texas is currently the nation's largest producer of wind energy, also one of the country's fastest growing renewable energy industry sectors. Wind generation has expanded rapidly in Texas and has outstripped the current capacity of the state's transmission infrastructure.

As Texas' grid for storing and transferring energy expands, programs such as Howard College's, are preparing graduates like Lori Watkins to be ready for work. She is pictured below, having successfully earned her Climb Test Certificate by reaching the top of a 400-foot tall wind turbine.



Dislocated Workers: Profiles in Success

Lisa Favor-Smith, a San Angelo native, will sit for her board exam this August to become a Registered Nurse. This is an entirely new career for Lisa, who had worked in Dallas in the telecommunications industry before returning to San Angelo a few years ago. Despite her Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing and

Journalism from Angelo State University (ASU), Lisa had experienced three layoffs in eight years. In a difficult economy, Lisa knew an alternative career path was something she wanted to consider, but as the single mother of two children, she did not know how or when she would be able to return to school for additional training.

Through the Dislocated Worker program at Workforce Solutions Concho Valley, Lisa learned that returning to school was possible. Workforce Solutions provided counseling and assessments to Lisa, and with the Dislocated Worker program covering her tuition, books and fees at ASU, she realized she had an invaluable opportunity.

She conducted her own market research and studied the various course and degree offerings at ASU. Since her oldest child had allergies, Lisa had already learned a great deal about nutrition and preventative care. Therefore, while it was a dramatic departure from what she had studied previously, nursing school really appealed to her. The prerequisites of biology, anatomy and psychology sounded ominous and with her youngest child a year old, she paused. Then she enrolled, took the classes, passed them all and within a few months was accepted to nursing school at ASU.

For two years, she rose at dawn, prepared her children for the day, went to class, studied, picked up her children and went through the evening routine with them, then studied some more and started all over the next day. She recalls that some classes tested over as many as 28 chapters at once, and for these, she would begin studying weeks in advance. When she had her clinical rotations, her father came to the house early to pitch in, and Lisa would go directly to the hospital.

Even though Lisa had encountered and overcome considerable obstacles in her young life to date, she found nursing school to be the greatest challenge ever. The physical endurance, the concentration required to master science and technology, and the strain of juggling so much as a single parent was enormous. Nevertheless, and with enthusiasm,

Lisa says that she would do it again. Interacting with others is rewarding and meaningful, and coming away from work each day knowing that she made things a little easier for someone is invaluable to her.

Lisa completed her Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (AASN) degree this past May 2010, and had a job offer from San Angelo Community Medical Center before she graduated. She works in the Preventive Care Unit (PCU) of the hospital, and this will be the first job in eight years that provides Lisa and her young family with benefits.

She purposefully sought a position in the PCU because she knew it would expose her to a wide variety of patient and clinical issues.

After she sits for her boards this summer and acquires her Registered Nurse (RN) certification, Lisa will begin coursework for her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree this August. The RN to BSN curriculum at ASU will allow Lisa to earn her degree within a year, and unlike her AASN, this degree will be almost entirely online coursework.



A BSN is not the last stop for Lisa, who plans to continue her studies and eventually work as a nurse practitioner. Lisa sees being a nurse practitioner as the best way for her to be more directly involved in the care of her patients because it will put her in a decision-making role where she can have direct input alongside physicians about patient care and medicines.

Lisa likes nursing for the wealth of choices and opportunities it offers in a high-demand field.

She loves knowing that she is now independent and can fully provide for herself and her children.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council promotes the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas and advocates a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities.

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