

# NORTHEAST CARPENTERS APPRENTICE TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL FUND



## BACKGROUND

The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America has a long history that dates back to 1881 when it was founded by 36 carpenters from 11 cities. In that era, carpenters sometimes worked seven days a week to earn a living. Carpenters in the colonial U.S. were considered skilled artisans, and those who immigrated to the U.S. were often part of a European “guild system” in which masters, journeymen, and apprentices had an unwritten division of work responsibilities.

The Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters (NRCC), which has 10 locals with 40,000 active members in New Jersey, New York (not including New York City), metropolitan Philadelphia, Delaware, and Maryland, initiated its RA program in 1969 as a way to train carpenters for positions in the commercial construction industry. The NRCC partnered with employers to create a training program that would ensure that union members had successful careers and that the employers were getting skilled carpenters.

The training program, also known as the Northeast Carpenters Apprentice Training and Educational Fund, is funded entirely through employer contributions based on a percentage of the negotiated hourly wage. The fund, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is part of a collective bargaining agreement between the NRCC and the Associated Construction Contractors of New Jersey and their affiliates, most recently for 2016 to 2019. The employers pay a percentage of the carpenters’ hourly wages, and those funds are

dedicated to the training fund. On January 1, 2016, the NRCC training program merged with that of Empire State Carpenters, creating a program that serves the carpenters' unions in both New Jersey and New York State (not including New York City).

Ridgeley Hutchinson, executive director of the Northeast Carpenters Apprentice Training and Educational Fund, explained that carpentry is the oldest and most respected trade in the construction industry and that commercial carpenter apprentices are trained for many different types of building projects, including hotels, casinos, pharmaceutical office buildings, industrial complexes, nuclear plants, oil refineries, and bridges.

The NRCC RA program runs for five years and is based in Edison, NJ. Apprentices focus on one of four crafts: carpentry, floor laying, mill cabinetmaking, and millwright installations. The work done by employed carpenters in each of these crafts is wide-ranging and increasingly computerized.

There are many specialties in the carpentry trade, such as:

- **Carpenters:** They prepare concrete foundations and frame and finish walls and ceilings in building projects.
- **Floor layers:** These specialists install a wide variety of flooring materials, including carpet, linoleum, hardwood, laminates, and sport surfaces.
- **Mill cabinetmakers:** These craftspeople create decorative moldings, paneling, cabinets, and woodwork and install windows, doors, staircases, and furniture.
- **Millwrights:** They install, maintain, diagnose, and repair machines such as compressors, pumps, conveyers, and gas and steam turbines. They also install and calibrate machinery.

The NRCC has training centers in Kenilworth in Union County, NJ, and in Hammonton in Atlantic County, NJ, and is building a new 100,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art center in Edison. NRCC also oversees three newly renovated training centers in New York State.

In addition to the apprenticeship program, the NRCC has additional training programs that are available free of charge to all journeymen who wish to update their skills or add an industry-required certification or qualification.

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## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The Northeast Carpenters Apprentice Training and Educational Fund is part of a larger group of funds that includes the carpenters' pension and welfare monies. All funds are overseen by an administrative manager. The executive director of the fund manages day-to-day operations and reports directly to the administrative manager and the board of trustees. The board is composed of an equal number of employers that are participating in the collective bargaining agreement and union member employees.

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## RECRUITMENT

Apprentices are recruited through word of mouth, the Northeast Carpenters Apprentice Training and Educational Fund's website, and community-based organizations. Applicants for the apprenticeship program contact the training center and fill out an application, take a proficiency exam, interview with

one of the union locals, and are considered based on employer needs. Applicants for the apprenticeship program are scheduled for technical training and enter the apprenticeship program before they are hired by the employer. The union assists them in finding employment.

The NRCC has sought to increase membership from underrepresented populations, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, young people, and ex-offenders.

Some highlights of these efforts include the following:

- In 2015, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America selected New Jersey to pilot a new effort to increase the number of women union members in the carpentry trade. An NRCC committee created a recruitment and retention plan for this effort called Sisters of the Brotherhood, which seeks to expand woman apprentice enrollment to 10 percent. The participation of women in the NRCC's apprenticeship program has increased from 2 percent to 5 percent in the past two years.
- The NRCC has had a targeted effort in Hudson County, NJ, to recruit, train, and place qualified minority and female residents in its pre-apprenticeship program. This effort was funded by a grant from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development in partnership with the NRCC, Hudson County One-Stop Career Centers, and the Hudson County Schools of Technology. The fund staff provided outreach and organized recruitment sessions at the Hudson County One-Stop Career Centers and at various locations within Hudson County, workforce readiness and adult basic education at the One-Stop Centers and at Hudson County Schools of Technology, and classroom training and hands-on carpentry training at a New Jersey carpenters training center.
- In 2014, the NRCC signed an agreement with the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development, Inc., in Perth Amboy, NJ, to create a training program that could lead to women and minority candidates becoming union apprentice carpenters. The NRCC and the association signed a memorandum of understanding about their respective roles and responsibilities. The training is conducted at the NRCC's training center in Kenilworth.
- The NRCC is participating in a state-funded Youth Transitions to Work<sup>49</sup> program designed to interest high school juniors and seniors in pursuing high-skill, high-wage employment in apprenticeable occupations after graduation. While in high school, students are introduced to the apprentice training model, participate in job shadowing, and attend instruction at the NRCC's training centers. High school juniors and seniors who are accepted into the pre-apprenticeship program receive workforce readiness and trade-specific classroom training and are placed into apprenticeship training following graduation. Thirty juniors and seniors have been accepted into the pre-apprenticeship program in the past three years.
- The NRCC has also participated in the New Jersey Youth Corps, which engages young people who have dropped out of high school.

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## PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

In 2011, the NRCC started a pre-apprenticeship program consisting of 200 to 400 hours to help determine whether applicants have the qualifications and desire to become carpenters. Pre-apprenticeship creates an opportunity for individuals to participate in part of the RA program's technical training curriculum while deciding if it is the right career choice for them. The pre-apprenticeship program includes construction safety, CPR/first aid, qualifications in setting up scaffolding and operating aerial lifts and forklifts, basic rigging,

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<sup>49</sup> For details on this program, which involves the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, see [http://careerconnections.nj.gov/careerconnections/plan/foryou/youth/youth\\_transitions\\_to\\_work.shtml](http://careerconnections.nj.gov/careerconnections/plan/foryou/youth/youth_transitions_to_work.shtml).

drywall installation, math in the carpentry trade, and workforce readiness skills. It also gives the training program staff the chance to evaluate participants to discern if they have the ambition, commitment, and interest in the carpentry trade, Hutchinson said. The designated training hours during the pre-apprenticeship must be completed in order for the participant to be considered as a full-fledged carpenter's apprentice.

Participants who complete the program receive a strong recommendation to the local union for acceptance into the full apprenticeship program, a process that requires union membership. Once they are accepted into the program, credit is given toward their required training hours for training already completed during the pre-apprenticeship.

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## ON-THE-JOB LEARNING

Apprentices are paired with journeyworker carpenters in the same craft specialty, often on a rotating basis with different employers.

Apprentices are paid a percentage of the journeyworker's wage and receive incremental raises during their training. They must be proficient in all aspects of carpentry before becoming a journeyworker carpenter.

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## RELATED TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION

The program requires at least 1,000 hours of RTI, which is provided at the NRCC training centers. Instruction is typically given by journeyworker carpenters who have also received teacher training. Apprentices receive instruction at an NRCC-affiliated training center located near their union local for a 40-hour training week for five weeks per year for about 200 hours annually. The curricula for the apprenticeship program and other NRCC training are developed at the union's international training center in Las Vegas.

Upon completion of the apprenticeship program, apprentices receive 24 credits toward an associate degree at one of the community colleges in New Jersey and can receive 34 credits toward a construction-related program at Thomas Edison State University.

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## RESULTS/IMPACT

The program has created a skilled workforce of carpenters working in the commercial construction industry. The training has given apprentices the opportunity to obtain good-paying jobs and careers with health-care and pension benefits.

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## PROGRAM COSTS AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The program's RTI costs \$6,000 to \$7,000 per apprentice per year. The training program measures its ROI by monitoring the success of the participants' careers and the employers' satisfaction with the production and skills of program graduates. Hutchinson explained: "During the course of negotiations,

whether or not the employers are prepared to continue contributing to the training program is largely a result of their experience with the apprentices as they go through the program and their proficiency and skill when they complete the program.”

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## FUTURE PLANS

The Northeast Carpenters Apprentice Training and Educational Fund is in the early stages of developing a pile driving training program that will become part of its RA. The program would support the Wharf and Dock Builders, Pile Drivers, and Divers Local No. 179, a specialty trade union composed of members who perform heavy foundation, earth retention, marine construction, and commercial diving services throughout the eastern half of Pennsylvania; the southern half of New Jersey; Delaware; Maryland; Washington, D.C.; and northern Virginia.

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## INSIGHTS

The fund’s Hutchinson said: “Apprenticeship training has been around for a long time, and for good reason. The apprenticeship experience teaches essential life skills like responsibility, respect for each other, and admiration for the master craftsperson. This admiration or appreciation for the experiences of others is of vital importance because apprentices are learning the trade not only during their apprenticeship but throughout their career. Respect for another’s methods, ideas, and techniques is mandatory for a successful career in any industry or profession. These are skills that help individuals succeed in their careers and, ultimately, in life. The apprenticeship provides a structured learning experience that requires dedication, commitment, and a sincere interest in the trade, and that can contribute to long-term personal development.<sup>50</sup> It is an opportunity for apprentices to assess their priorities, consider their aims in life, and begin to set goals in order to realize and maximize their potential.

“The NRCC finds that pre-apprenticeship programs provide a detailed method of assessing candidates, reduce attrition numbers, give applicants an opportunity to confirm that they want to gain skills in a certain field, help reach targeted populations for better program diversity, and help recruit better quality candidates for apprenticeships.

“The NRCC is finding that its pre-apprenticeship program is very helpful in determining good candidates.”

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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<sup>50</sup> The fund cites this resource on personal development: [www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/personal-development.html](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/personal-development.html).

**NORTHEAST CARPENTERS APPRENTICE TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL FUND  
REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM**

Historical Program Data

Program start date	1969
Number of apprentices who started program since inception	N/A
Percentage of apprentices who completed program (completers)	N/A
Percentage of completers who are new hires vs. incumbents*	N/A new hires N/A incumbents
Percentage of completers who are still working for apprenticeship employer	N/A

Current Data as of December 31, 2016

Number of apprentices enrolled in program	2,302
Average age	31
Gender	95% male 5% female
Race/Ethnicity	69% White (not Hispanic or Latino) 13% African American (not Hispanic or Latino) 12% Hispanic or Latino (any race) 5% Other race/Two or more races (not Hispanic or Latino) 1% Asian (not Hispanic or Latino)

\* Incumbent workers were already employed by the employer when they started the RA program.

**NORTHEAST CARPENTERS APPRENTICE TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL FUND  
APPRENTICES PARTICIPATING IN REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP  
PROGRAM AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2016**

	New Jersey	New York
Carpenter	1083	873
Mill Cabinetmaker	27	1
Millwright	91	88
Floor Layer	84	11
Lather	N/A	21
Casino Worker	14	N/A
Ride Mechanic	9	N/A
<b>Total</b>		
	1,308	994
Pre-Apprentices	57	N/A