

Coquitlam Now

Pilot program helps new Canadians with work experience

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A new program aims to assist internationally trained human service workers to improve their English skills and gain hands-on Canadian work experience in the Tri-Cities.

The Internationally Trained Human Service Worker Program is a five-month initiative offered by SUCCESS and Douglas College in collaboration with more than a dozen local service organizations.

The pilot project, funded by the provincial and federal governments, is open to Tri-Cities residents with documented international credentials and experience in the human services field -- including early childhood educators, mental health workers, home health-care workers, child and youth care workers, counsellors and community advocates.

Applicants must either be permanent residents or Canadian citizens, and they need to be assessed at an intermediate level of English language.

Program manager Sharon Goldberg said the one-time project hopes to achieve several goals.

"Part of it is to work with Tri-Cities human services agencies and organizations to help them examine their inclusivity and diversity," Goldberg said.

"Another piece of it is to offer a program for people who are trained in other countries, but for some reason can't get employment in their field. One of the problems is sometimes their English isn't good enough or the age-old catch 22 -- you can't get a job in Canada until you have experience from a job in Canada."

The program aims to improve their odds through specialized classes offered at Douglas College beginning next month. Initially, participants will study full-time in the classroom to improve their idiomatic English skills and workplace-related language.

Then midway through the program, they will begin spending two days per week at a work placement with a community agency or organization in the Tri-Cities.

"The placements will only be in the Tri-Cities, and right now we are targeting participants only in the Tri-Cities," Goldberg said. "This is for Tri-Cities by Tri-Cities."

So far, a long list of organizations have jumped onboard to participate in the initiative: Act II Child and Family Services Society, Coquitlam Public Library, Douglas College, Immigrant Services

Society of B.C., the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Place Maillardville Community Centre, School District 43, SHARE Family and Community Services, Simon Fraser Society for Community Living, SUCCESS, Tri-Cities Women's Resource Centre and Westcoast Family Resources Society.

Participants will receive a \$400-per-month allowance while they attend the course to cover incidental costs such as school supplies, bus tickets and childcare.

However, they will also need to pay a fee of about \$400 to attend the five-month course.

The program will run from March 9 to Aug. 12 at the David Lam campus of Douglas College.

Registration is limited to 18 participants, and applications will be accepted until Feb. 26.

For more information, contact Goldberg at 604-777-6503 or sharon.goldberg@success.bc.ca.

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