

Helping Skilled Immigrants Succeed

A Guide for Adult Educators

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The logo for the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, featuring the text "Welcoming Center for NEW PENNSYLVANIANS" in white, serif and sans-serif fonts, set against a dark blue background with orange horizontal bars at the top and bottom.

Welcoming
Center *for*
NEW PENNSYLVANIANS

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AGENDA

- 1) IMPRINT: skilled immigrant issue overview
- 2) Adult Educators and skilled immigrants
- 3) Questions and discussion

IMPRINT

... is a **national umbrella group** of nonprofits supporting professional re-entry of **underemployed skilled immigrants**

- Creates and disseminates resources
- Advocates for effective policies
- Broadcasts best practices

www.imprintproject.org

Who are skilled immigrants in the U.S.?

- 30% of all immigrants hold a B.A. or higher
- 2 million + are underemployed, at higher rates than U.S.-born (22% versus 16%)
- More likely to have bachelor's degrees than U.S.-born in shortage fields of healthcare, STEM, and IT
- Advanced degree holders (masters or higher):
 - Paid \$22,500 in taxes, used <\$3,000 in benefits in 2009
 - 100 immigrant jobs are associated with 44 new jobs

Why this issue?

- ✓ Non-partisan
- ✓ An economic development opportunity
- ✓ Leverages another country's prior investment
- ✓ Connects to the global economy
- ✓ Helps satisfy diverse consumers



Photo courtesy of Welcoming America

Other benefits of skilled immigrants joining the professional workforce

- ✓ Meets employer talent needs
- ✓ Sparks job creation
- ✓ Improves tax revenue
- ✓ Fosters economic independence for families
- ✓ Relieves low-skills job crowding



Donut Maker... or IT pro?

Common barriers for white-collar immigrants

- Loss of professional networks
- Lack of information about:
 - Career pathways
 - Transferring credentials
 - U.S. standards for resumes, interviews
 - American workplace culture
- Licensing barriers
- Unprepared public workforce system
- Lack of English classes
- Employer misperceptions



Today's Agenda: The Checklist for Adult Educators

- Are you getting key information at intake?
- Does your staff have “big picture” context?
- Are you fostering critical thinking among learners?
- Is US job market information integrated into your curriculum?
- Do you have a strong library of resources for referrals?



Knowing Who is in Your Classroom



Getting the right information at intake requires:

- Questions that elicit accurate information
- Data systems that capture information collected
- Personnel trained to probe for necessary details

An Example:

Collecting information about type of degree, date of graduation, country of education, and name of college/university.

Currently work Authorized as: _____	Expiration Date: ____/____/____
Language(s) Spoken: Native: _____	Other(s): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed	Total Years of Education: _____
Type of Degree or Diploma earned: _____	Graduation Date: ____/____/____
Name of School: _____	Country: _____

Intake

- Assess what info you're already collecting. Is it necessary to add a field on your form?
- Ensure staff have a common understanding of definitions
- Select a client file at random to spot-check your procedures



Building a Shared Understanding of the Big Picture



You Don't Have to Be an Expert, But it's Useful to Know...

- Key facts about how professions are regulated in the US
- Differences between regulated and unregulated professions
- Portable vs. proprietary credentials
- The basics of credential evaluation & licensing

How Professional Licensing Works in the US

- Not all professions are regulated. Among those that are, each state typically has its own laws.



Regulated Professions

- Professions that *are* regulated are typically overseen by a state licensing board.

An example:

- Pennsylvania's Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs oversees 29 licensing boards for professions ranging from physician to crane operator.
- Visit your state government's website to find information about regulated professions in your community.



Unregulated Professions

- Professions that are unregulated can include medical assistant, laboratory technician, and hair braider.
- When no formal regulation exists, employers typically establish informal or company-specific requirements.
- Training provided at one job may not be recognized by future employers.
- Credentials issued by independent training providers may or may not be recognized by employers, depending on the rigor and reputation of the program.

A Word to the Wise

- A *proprietary* credential is unique to the school or organization that provides it. It may or may not be industry-recognized.
- A *portable* credential is relevant to multiple employers and may be state-regulated. It is generally industry-recognized.
- An *industry-recognized* credential holds meaning in the job market. Unfortunately, not all credentials are meaningful.



What is Credential Evaluation?

- Rigorous, third-party review of a foreign degree which explains education in US terms (such as grades/GPA)
- Credential evaluation services offer 2 types of evaluations – course-by-course, or complete degree.
- Cost is typically \$150-300
(does not include translation)



What Kind of Evaluation Does My Student Need?

- First, determine *why* evaluation is being sought.
- Is it for applying to a US college or university, informing employers of one's experience, and/or fulfilling requirements for professional licensure?
- Each US college or profession has its own rules for which evaluations it will accept.
Check with the relevant institution to avoid wasting money on an evaluation that will not be accepted.



Beware! Dangers of Bad Credential Evaluation

- Google search for “credential evaluation” includes Sponsored Links that are advertisements
- Some companies advertising are actually fraudulent services
- Check NACES.org to see if a company adheres to industry standards



Also Note: Some legitimate services are nevertheless not accepted for certain professional licenses. Always check with the licensing board directly to verify approved evaluators for that profession.

Critical Thinking: A Vital Tool in Self-Protection



Help Your Students to Stop, Think, and Check

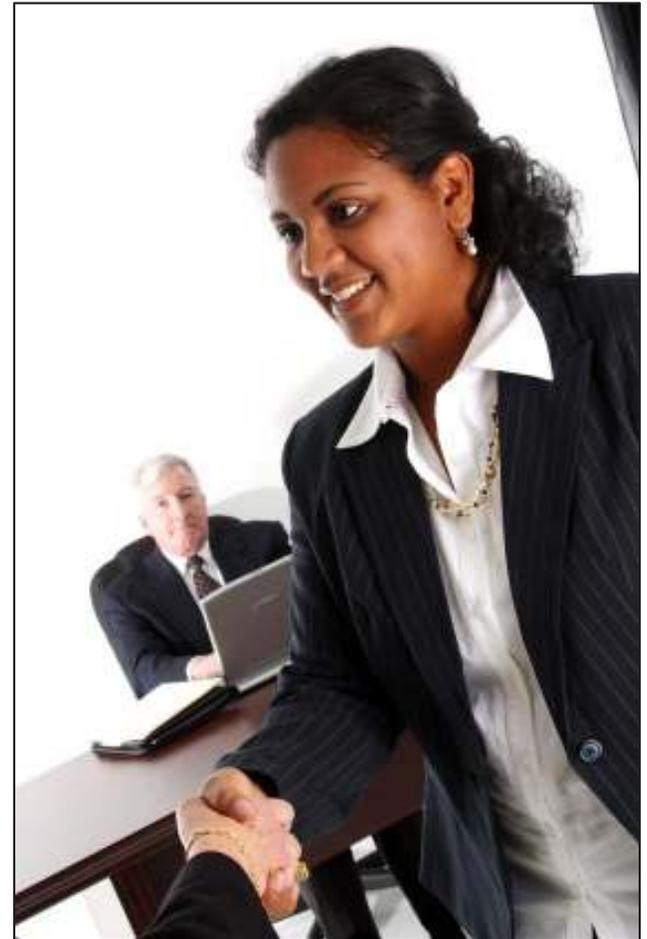
- **Stop.** Don't pay money, hand over personal information, or sign up for services based on an Internet search or word of mouth.
- **Think.** Does this make sense given what I know about the American job market process?
- **Check.** Ask a trusted advisor or teacher for advice before registering with a "licensing board" or signing up for classes. Scams often look superficially legitimate.



Incorporating Employment Information in the Classroom

Be aware: skills for entry-level and professional level job search can differ

Nevertheless, there are common skills that may apply across students



Teaching the American Job Search

Soft skills are even *more* important in white-collar job interviews.

Create opportunities for your students to practice:

- Handshakes
- Eye contact
- Mock interview (with a US-born, native English speaking volunteer)
- Leaving voicemail and email messages



Practice, Practice, Practice

Real-world situations create powerful learning incentives.

Help your students prepare through repeated practice of:

- Listening to voicemail and writing down key information
- Finding a company location on a map and determining public transit options
- Practicing an “elevator speech” about him- or herself
- Writing a short thank-you email to an interviewer



Drawing on a Well of Resources for Your Students



Selected Resources

- *How to Succeed in the Workplace* & 4 industry-specific Career Guides www.WelcomingCenter.org/publications
- *Guides for Licensed Professionals* & online training via webinars www.UpwardlyGlobal.org
- Licensing, certification, and alternative careers www.GlobalTalentBridge.org

Looking for something specific? Contact IMPRINT or post a question on ELL-U. We'll respond!

Reminder: Your Checklist for Serving Skilled Immigrants

- Are you getting key information at intake?
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CONTACT US



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