

Aspire's Employment Training Program: Distribution FAQs

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What is the Employment Training Program?

The Employment Training Program is a 10-week program that helps people with disabilities gain employment in the distribution industry. During these 10 weeks (about 2.5 months), trainees will practice skills in Aspire's mock warehouse, improve their fitness, and learn how to get ready for a job. After training, trainees will have an 8-week paid internship at one of Aspire's employer partners. If they do well, they may be offered a permanent job!

Why is the training focused on the distribution industry?

Distribution companies need reliable workers, and they often have trouble keeping employees. One of Aspire's employment partners, [Wesco](#), asked us to create a job training program for people with disabilities.

We've found that some people with disabilities do well in distribution jobs, which involve routine, physical tasks, and closely following safety rules. People with disabilities are often loyal and dependable workers!

Is the training only for the distribution industry?

Yes, but only for now. We plan to expand into **two more industries** over the coming years! We want to make sure this training works well before adding more industries to the program.

How is the program different from our existing programs?

This program builds on the Weinberg Career Academy by focusing on a specific industry. Throughout the class, trainees will visit real distribution centers to learn more about potential jobs within the distribution industry.

This training also **guarantees** an internship at the end of the program. If trainees perform well during the internship, they will be offered permanent employment!

Where is the training program located?

The training program will be located at Aspire's [Weinberg Career Academy](#) in Hillside, IL.

We are building a mock warehouse that looks and feels like a real, functioning warehouse space. We're re-purposing space we already have at our Weinberg Career Academy that has been empty for many years.

When does it start? How many people will be involved?

The first class started in January 2025. There will be two more cohorts in 2025 and four cohorts in 2026.

Who's running the program?

Garrett Reynolds, the Program Director, oversees the day-to-day operations of the Employment Training Program (ETP). The class is led by Brianna Lee, the Career Navigator, who teaches lessons on distribution work and job readiness skills.

Directly supporting the trainees are two Transition Coaches, Michael Turnbull and Cathy Tomasek. They assist the Career Navigator in class, provide on-site support during internships, and help trainees as well as their families with individual needs such as transportation or benefits.

Who is eligible to take part in the training?

Anyone who is over 18 years old and has a documented disability can join. It is **FREE!** There are some complexities with funding, so people who attend an Aspire Academy (or another day program) would not be able to do both at the same time.

If you know someone who's interested, please reach out to Garrett to apply - greynolds@aspirechicago.com

How is the program funded?

The program is funded by a federal grant from the Department of Education's Disability Innovation Fund (DIF). It is very strict with how we use funds. The grant can **only** be used for this program.

The grant covers team member pay, trainee transportation support, and the best part - all trainee fees! This program is **FREE** for trainees!

Why is Aspire doing this?

Our mission is to connect people with disabilities to ever-greater possibilities. The Employment Training Program allows us to do that. This program, developed with top distribution companies, helps businesses find quality employees and provides jobs for people with disabilities. It's a win-win!

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