

Tips For Older Job Seekers

Q: Any tips for unemployed older workers trying to find work?

A: Yes. Let's start with attitude: older workers should see themselves as a valuable resource with something younger workers don't have: experience. Even if you have not been steadily employed, you have picked up skills just by living your life.

The unemployment rate today for people 55 and over is around 7%. There are more than 2 million Americans over 55 who are unemployed. On average, they tend to be on unemployment for nearly 36 weeks---which is 25% longer on unemployment than younger workers. Anyone who is out of work for 27 weeks or more is called 'long-term unemployed.' Studies show that getting back into the workforce at later ages is harder than at younger ages.

But a new brochure titled "Employment Options" from The ElderCare Locator presents a number of tips for older job seekers to help them get back to work. Here are some of the tips for older workers:

- **Beforehand:** List out all your skills and experience, and think about how those skills could apply to a job. For example: if you weatherproofed your own home, you might qualify for a job doing energy audits or other 'green jobs.'
- **Use Your Network To Search:** 8 out of 10 job openings are never advertised. Use friends, neighbors, and former co-workers to find leads. Offer to volunteer at the kind of organization that you'd like to work for. Research a job that interests you, as well as the company that is offering it.
- **Resume Tips:** List skills and experiences that make the most sense for the type of job you're applying for. Briefly list your relevant work over the past 10 to 15 years. Mention your volunteer work or training, but don't list personal information. List your highest level of education. If you have a G.E.D., list yourself as a high school graduate. Have someone look over your resume to clean up any typos or errors.

- **Applications:** If you can, take a job application home and take your time to fill it out carefully. Don't add any personal, legal, or financial problems, and don't add any unnecessary information.
- **In An Interview:** Practice with a friend what you want to say before your interview. Be ready to list your major work accomplishments in a concise way. Ask questions that show you have researched the job and the company. Interviewers are not supposed to ask your age, marital or family status. Don't talk about race, religion, age, national origin or gender.
- **One-Stop Career Centers:** In Massachusetts there are 37 One-Stop Career Centers. To see the list, go to www.careeronestop.org, and click on "People + Places To Help." These centers offer skills assessments, training referrals, career counseling, help with resumes and interviewing, and job listings.
- **Senior Community Employment:** The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work based training program for older workers. The program provides subsidized, service-based training for low-income older persons who are unemployed and have poor employment prospects. To qualify for this program, you must be 55 years of age or older and a resident of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Your annual family income must not be more than 125% of the established federal poverty income guidelines. There are 11 sponsors operating a SCESP program in Massachusetts. To get the list, call the Executive Office of Elder Affairs at 617-727-7750.

Unemployment rates for older workers are at record levels, but older workers bring experience and a sense of leadership that is critical in any work environment. For more background information, go to www.seniorserviceamerica.org.

