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ApprenticeOhio Website Launches Virtual Assistant Feature

COLUMBUS — Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Director Matt Damschroder announced today that Ohioans now have an additional tool to help them find answers to questions about apprenticeship programs: a “Chat with Virtual Assistant” feature at [Apprentice.Ohio.gov](https://www.apprenticeohio.gov). The automated assistant, named “Antonio,” was built with artificial intelligence software. Users can simply type in their questions or – to see categories of information – click “What can Antonio help you with?”

“Ohioans can now quickly and easily get answers to questions such as ‘Why should I be an apprentice?’, ‘What kind of career can I be trained in?’ and ‘How can I apply for an apprenticeship?’” Damschroder said. “This feature will be helpful not only for job seekers interested in apprenticeships, but also parents, educators, employers, apprenticeship sponsors, and others.”

Ohio ranks third in the nation for the number of registered apprentices, with more than 21,000 enrolled. ApprenticeOhio programs offer a combination of paid on-the-job training, related technical instruction, and mentoring for skilled occupations. Apprentices earn while they learn, avoid student loan debt and, when they complete their programs, they can earn an average of \$72,000 a year.

ODJFS oversees ApprenticeOhio, which registers programs that meet national criteria for quality and safety. Each ApprenticeOhio program is run by a sponsor: usually an employer, a group of employers, or a labor/management committee. Apprentices learn skills needed for a job in the sponsor’s industry through at least 2,000 hours of structured on-the-job training and 144 hours of related instruction, typically at a local college or university. Ohio has 319 occupations that offer apprenticeships, in fields as diverse as aerospace, construction, energy, health care, manufacturing, computer programming, and more.

The virtual assistant was developed with funding from a U.S. Department of Labor 2019 Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant. For more information about apprenticeship programs in Ohio, visit [Apprentice.Ohio.gov](https://www.apprenticeohio.gov).

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

