

Job-Skills Program at Tidewater Community College Graduates 600 People, Shows 95% Job Placement: “Our secret is MRT,” says program developer.

Starting with a pilot program begun in 1997, Virginia’s Tidewater Community College has continuously operated a Job-Skills program initially designed for the then, newly mandated “Welfare to Work” initiative. Since their small 1997 beginning, the program has now graduated over 600 people, with only a 21% dropout rate. According to Leslie Boughton, the Program Coordinator and developer, the national dropout average in similar programs is 28%.

The program teaches basic job skills, provides classes for its participants to obtain GEDs, and offers 24-hour counseling. Boughton explained, “Our students are mostly women on welfare, many without a GED, and who want to change their lives.” The program has formed strong bonds to the local business community and offers internships prior to guaranteed jobs paying at least \$18,000 a year. Based on those criteria, the program has successfully placed 95% of its graduates in jobs. As to the key element in the program that changes the students, Boughton stated, “Our secret is MRT, Moral Reconciliation Therapy.” The program won the Virginia Community College System’s Excellence in Workforce Development Award in 2000.

Source: Job-skills grads crash through barriers to employment. *Tidewater Comm. Col. Chronicle*, June 17, 2004.