



COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

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New Study Looks at Aging Labor Force

In February, Commonwealth Corporation released its most recent Research and Evaluation Brief: The Graying Labor Force, which looks at the outlook for the 55 and older population in the state in the next ten years. The Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University analyzed U.S. Census data to estimate which segments of the working age population will be growing the most and the least in coming years.

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CommCorp Holds Youth Forum

On February 10, Commonwealth Corporation staff conducted a statewide WIA Youth Forum that provided guidance on the implementation of new common performance measures. More than eighty local workforce practitioners attended the session, and learned how the new measures will be implemented for 2005 and 2006.

The measures define new priority outcomes for WIA Title I Youth programs. This year, youth programs will be measured by their ability to help youth earn either a degree or a skill credential, gain employment or enroll in

postsecondary education. Starting in July, a third measure will compute a program's success in helping out-of-school youth gain literacy or numeracy skills.

These new measures are "common" because they are now being used to assess youth outcomes across several federal programs using universal definitions and measurements.

The Youth Forum provided an opportunity for local workforce officials to hear about the measures and share ideas about how local programs can be redesigned to help a workforce area meet the new performance expectations.

Aging Labor Force

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What they have found is that overall, the working age population of Massachusetts is projected to grow by about 4.8% between 2005 and 2015, a growth rate that is half that of the nation in the same time period. While the number of people over the age of 55 is expected to increase by nearly 230,000 people, or 23%, the numbers of people ages 16 to 54 is expected to decline by 2% over this time period.

Since the mid-1950s, members of the older population of the U.S. have increased their attachment to the labor force. These rising rates of labor force participation, combined with the rapid growth in their population numbers, will produce a very high rate of growth in the nation's older labor force over the coming decade.

In the last five years, older workers, along with immigrants, have played a prominent role in generating the limited labor force growth that Massachusetts saw. In the coming decade, the state will be more dependent on older workers for their labor force growth than most other states in the nation. Persons 55 and older will account for three fourths of the projected increase in the nation's working age population over the coming decade, a development that is historically unprecedented.

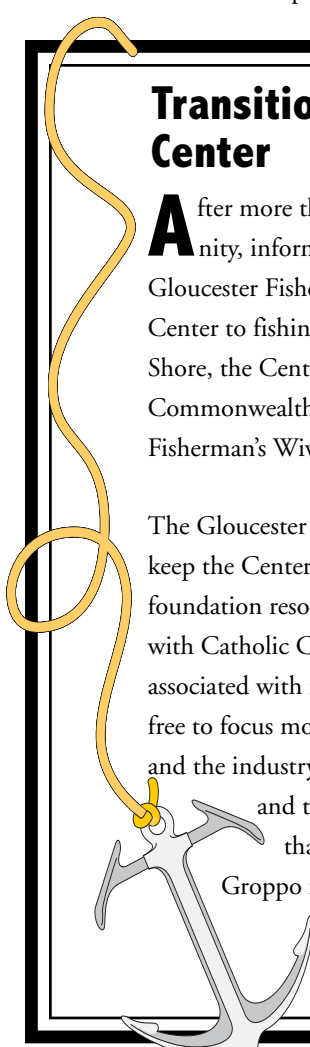
The forthcoming demographic and labor market changes over the coming decade will present a challenge for Massachusetts employers and for the workforce development system. Workforce development programs will need to substantially improve service delivery to older workers, and employers will need to restructure internal training and hiring systems to accommodate the greater number of older workers.

To read this and all our other briefs, please visit www.commcorp.org/cre/briefs.html.

Transitioning the Fishermen Center

After more than 12 years of providing opportunity, information, and expert guidance at the Gloucester Fishermen and Families Assistance Center to fishing industry workers on the North Shore, the Center will be transitioning from Commonwealth Corporation to the Gloucester Fisherman's Wives Association as of February 28.

The Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association will keep the Center open with state funds, local private foundation resources and through collaboration with Catholic Charities. Without the restrictions associated with federal funding, the Center will be free to focus more broadly on the issues of fishermen and the industry in Gloucester, the North Shore, and the state. We particularly want to thank Angela Sanfilippo and Nina Groppo for their dedicated service to their community and CommCorp. We wish them well.



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Mitt Romney, Governor; Kerry Healey, Lt. Governor; Jane C. Edmonds, Director, Mass. DWD; Jonathan Raymond, President, CommCorp