

HCC and C3RN launch cannabis workforce training programs

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College (HCC) and the Cannabis Community Care and Research Network (C3RN) will launch the first of four cannabis workforce training programs starting in fall 2019.

Approved by the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission as a Social Equity Vendor, the partnership aims to prepare workers - particularly those in communities with high levels of poverty and unemployment - for employment opportunities in the newly legal and regulated cannabis market.

C3RN and HCC will train job seekers from Holyoke and surrounding areas in four new workforce occupations: Cannabis Cultivation Assistant, Dispensary Patient Advocate/ "Bud Tender," Extraction Technician Assistant, and Cannabis Culinary Assistant &

Infusion Specialist

The Cannabis Culinary Assistant program will launch in fall 2019 at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, while the other training programs will start in spring 2020.

The culinary program will consist of 96 hours of skills-based training that will cover job readiness, professional skills, industry background, and Massachusetts laws and regulations. Training will use hemp and other products that simulate cannabis, rather than cannabis itself. In addition, C3RN will provide mentored internships with local legal and operating cannabis dispensaries.

This model cannabis education-to-employment program will build on HCC and the city of Holyoke's efforts to revitalize the city and surrounding areas and will bring the highest-level of

evidence-based education to the workforce. The team hopes to be the leaders in setting the standard for certificate training and innovative models of bringing those who have operated in the industry for decades into the new, legal and regulated cannabis market.

"We will be training students in customer service, cultivation, dosing, cooking, and extraction methods and techniques, but when it is time for students to work with actual product, that will take place offsite through our partner C3RN and local, legal operating dispensaries and cannabis and hemp companies," Jeff Hayden, HCC vice president of Business and Community Services. "As the education partner, we want to ensure that local residents and students have access to opportunities - including those in emerging industries such as cannabis and hemp

- that lead to jobs."

"We are thrilled to get started with HCC and cannabis industry partners to collaboratively develop high-quality skills-based workforce training programs that are rooted in evidence and cannabis industry best practices," said Marion McNabb, chief executive officer of C3RN. "The first culinary focused program will be offered this fall at the new HCC Culinary Arts Institute in Holyoke. We are utilizing best practices in adult workforce learning, entrepreneurship, and innovation to create training programs that are collaborative with industry partners and meet the needs of the industry and the learner."

People can learn more and receive updates about the Culinary Cannabis program launching this fall at www.cannacenterofexcellence.org/workforce.