



## Shortage of skilled workers predicted

### O'Malley to talk about training to help meet demand

By Lorraine Mirabella | [lorraine.mirabella@baltsun.com](mailto:lorraine.mirabella@baltsun.com)

March 2, 2010

Maryland is expected to face shortages of workers to fill jobs requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a college degree - jobs that will make up the biggest share of openings over the next several years, according to a national study to be released today.

The state has a widening gap between work force credentials and the so-called "middle skills" needed for jobs that will account for 42 percent of all openings by 2016, reported the Washington-based National Skills Coalition, a worker training advocacy group. The coalition projects more than 434,000 job openings in that category by then.

Such jobs include police officers, firefighters, medical technicians and therapists, electricians and mechanics. Nearly half of the jobs in Maryland are classified as "middle skill," but just over one-third of Maryland workers likely have the minimum credentials to fill them, the report said.

The coalition has reported similar findings in each of the handful of states it has studied since 2007, when it released a national study that mirrored training versus job growth patterns.

"Even as the job numbers get worse, the situation still continues - there are still employers looking for people to fill jobs," said Jessie Hogg Leslie, a senior regional field director for the coalition. "Even in states that have high-skilled jobs, about half the jobs are still middle skills."

The findings will be unveiled during an event today with Gov. Martin O'Malley, who is expected to announce plans to help workers navigate a network of existing training programs and funding. During the event at Prince George's Community College in Largo, O'Malley plans to discuss access to education and training beyond high school.

The goal is to create a "larger and better talent pool for Maryland businesses, as it relates to the recovery," said Eric Seleznow, executive director of the Governor's Workforce Investment Board, a policy advisory board under the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

"More and more jobs are requiring certificates, credentials or degrees," Seleznow said. "We want people to go get credentials, get a skill. When the economy starts to rebound, there will be more of these jobs that require these skills."

The coalition stops short of making specific recommendations, but it suggests Maryland should give residents access to at least two years of education or training beyond high school that will lead to a vocational credential or industry certification. Such training can come through community colleges, private career schools or apprenticeship programs.

Training should be targeted not only to recent high school graduates but to those in the work force, the report said. Two-thirds of the people in Maryland's work force in 2020 will have been working for at least 15 years, the report pointed out.

Though Maryland is a hub for high-skill jobs in areas such as health care and defense, the biggest share of jobs - 47 percent - are those that are considered middle-skill jobs, the coalition's report said. The report notes that much of the job creation fostered by the federal stimulus money will be in middle-skill jobs such as construction, manufacturing and transportation.

"Matching the skills of the state's work force with this demand will help the economy recover more quickly, take advantage of the resulting job creation and prepare Maryland for better times ahead," the report said.

Some of the middle-skill jobs expected to grow in Maryland during the next six years include police officers with a median annual income of \$51,310; carpenters with a median annual income of \$39,160; and licensed practical nurses with a median annual income of \$46,690.

Martin Knott of Knott Mechanical in Timonium said the construction industry has struggled with shortages of skilled workers for years.

"When the economy bounces back, the construction industry will need not just workers, but workers with particular skills and certifications," he said.

Copyright © 2010, [The Baltimore Sun](#)