

# **TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

## **9th Annual Apprenticeship Texas Conference Agenda**

### **September 25-26, 2025**

#### **Building Texas Talent – Apprenticeships of Tomorrow**

Thursday, September 25, 2025

8:00 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.                      REGISTRATION

8:30 A.M. – 9:15 A.M.                      WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

**ED SERNA**, Executive Director, Texas Workforce Commission

**MAHALIA BALDINI**, Chief Deputy Director, Workforce Development Division, Texas Workforce Commission

**MARY YORK**, Director, Workforce Development Division, Texas Workforce Commission

**ALBERTO TREVIÑO III**, Commissioner Representing Labor, Texas Workforce Commission

**DESI HOLMES**, State Apprenticeship Director, Texas Workforce Commission

9:15 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.                      GENERAL PLenary, AUSTIN BALLROOM

#### **DRIVING WORKFORCE SUCCESS – CALIBER COLLISION’S JOURNEY**

Join us for an engaging session spotlighting Caliber Collision, a national leader in the automotive repair industry, and its innovative Registered Apprenticeship Program that’s reshaping the future of workforce development in the skilled trades. This session will explore how Caliber successfully launched and scaled its apprenticeship model to address industry-wide technician shortages, build a pipeline of highly trained talent, and promote career advancement opportunities across its nationwide network.

**TODD DILLENDER**, Chief Operating Officer, Caliber Collision

**MAX SORENSEN**, Senior Vice President of Operations, Caliber Collision

10:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.                      BREAK

11:00 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.                      GENERAL PLenary, AUSTIN BALLROOM

#### **BUILDING A HEALTHIER WORKFORCE**

Discover how DHR Health in Texas is addressing healthcare workforce shortages through an innovation driven registered apprenticeship program designed for measurable impact. This session explores how the hospital in partnership with state agencies, education, providers, and workforce boards is developing innovative earn-and-learn pathways that build sustainable careers in critical healthcare roles, including patient care technicians, medical assistants, and other high-demand positions, including registered nurses.

**CARLOS MARGO**, Dean, Center for Advanced Training and Apprenticeships, South Texas College

**CARLOS CARDENAS**, MD, Chairman of the Board, DHR Health

**NORI ZAPATA**, MSN, RN, SVP Education and Career Development, DHR Health

**WENDY SCHELL**, ADN, RN, Nurse Apprentice Graduate, DHR Health

**JOEL MARIO RAMOS**, DNP, RN, CGRN, Director of Nursing, Rio Grande Valley College

12:15 P.M. – 1:30 P.M.                      LUNCH (PROVIDED), AUSTIN BALLROOM

1:30 P.M. – 2:45 P.M.

BREAKOUT SESSION, HOUSTON ROOM A

**APPRENTICESHIP 101**

This session is designed for attendees seeking a clear understanding of Registered Apprenticeship Programs and its core components of the apprenticeship model – including industry partnerships, on-the-job learning, related technical instruction, and the registration process.

**TROY JOHNSON**, Region IV Deputy Director, Office of Apprenticeship, US Department of Labor

**TRACI NOLEN**, Program Specialist, Texas Workforce Commission

1:30 P.M. – 2:45 P.M.

BREAKOUT SESSION, HOUSTON ROOM B

**APPRENTICESHIP 2.0 – WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU HAVE A REGISTERED PROGRAM**

You've launched your RAP, but what comes after USDOL approves your registration. If you're asking, "Now what?" this session is for you. Building on the basics of Apprenticeship 101, this session will guide sponsors through the essential next steps to move from paperwork to progress! From recruitment to retention, we'll share how to build momentum as you'll learn important best strategies for recruitment and selection, partnering with RTI providers, onboarding and orientation, mentorship, tracking, promoting your program internally and externally.

**AMBER WARNE**, Business Engagement Senior Director, Workforce Solutions Capital Area

**STEPHANIE MORA**, Partnerships Specialist, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area

**AVERY LASH**, Operations Manager, Aerospace Components Division, Acutronic

1:30 P.M. – 2:45 P.M.

BREAKOUT SESSION, SEMINAR THEATER ROOM

**EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY: ADVANCING INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED APPRENTICESHIPS IN TEXAS**

As workforce demands evolve, Industry-Recognized Apprenticeships (IRAPs) in Texas are helping bridge the gap between skills training and real-world employment needs – especially in high-growth sectors like healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and skilled trades. This session will explore how Texas is leveraging industry-driven apprenticeship models to create flexible, responsive training pathways that meet employer demands while offering workers a clear route to quality careers.

**DESI HOLMES**, State Apprenticeship Director, Texas Workforce Commission

**TARA COLE**, Program Specialist, Texas Workforce Commission

2:45 P.M. – 3:15 P.M.

BREAK

3:15 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

BREAKOUT SESSION, HOUSTON ROOM A

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**TRACI NOLEN**, Program Specialist, Texas Workforce Commission

3:15 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

BREAKOUT SESSION, HOUSTON ROOM B

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**DESI HOLMES**, State Apprenticeship Director, Texas Workforce Commission

**TARA COLE**, Program Specialist, Texas Workforce Commission

4:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.                      GENERAL PLENARY, AUSTIN BALLROOM

**STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATES: WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S NEXT**

Stay informed on the latest state and federal legislative developments impacting workforce development and registered apprenticeship programs. This session will provide key updates, highlight emerging policy trends, and discuss potential implications for programs, funding, and compliance. Designed for a general audience, the session will explain what these updates mean for communities, workers, and employers, and what changes may be coming next.

**DUDLEY LIGHT**, Region IV Director, US Department of Labor

**DESI HOLMES**, State Apprenticeship Director, Texas Workforce Commission

5:00 P.M. – 5:15 P.M.                      CLOSING REMARKS: DAY 1

5:15 P.M. – 5:45 P.M.                      EXHIBITOR HALL, PRESS CLUB

## Friday, September 26, 2025

8:30 A.M. – 8:45 A.M.

DAY 2 WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

**ALBERTO TREVIÑO III**, Commissioner Representing Labor, Texas Workforce Commission

**DESI HOLMES**, State Apprenticeship Director, Texas Workforce Commission

8:45 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.

GENERAL PLENARY, AUSTIN BALLROOM

### **FUTURE-READY TALENT THROUGH INDUSTRY-EDUCATION APPRENTICESHIP MODELS**

This session highlights how industry-education partnerships are using registered apprenticeships to develop future-ready talent. These collaborations have led to sustainable, scalable programs that directly benefit both students and employers. With support from Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, these models are being expanded across the region to help industries grow a competitive, skilled workforce.

**BRANDI HARRISON TROTTER**, Industry Workforce Development Specialist and Apprenticeship Navigator, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

**ROBERT FLORES**, Talent & Career Development Programs Lead, Raytheon, an RTX Business

**MATTHEW JERLECKI**, Director of Learning, Lippert Components

**ADAM BARBER**, Industry Relations, Texas State Technical College

**BRENDEN MESCH**, Ed.D., Campus Provost, Collin College

10:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.

BREAK

10:30 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

GENERAL PLENARY, AUSTIN BALLROOM

### **SHAPING THE FUTURE WITH K-12 APPRENTICESHIPS**

Teacher apprenticeships are transforming how we grow the next generation of educators. By building upon Texas' initial investments in "grow your own" pathways, K-12 teacher apprenticeships provide supportive and affordable pathways into the teaching profession for critical talent pools – including high school students and paraprofessionals. Join us to learn how the Tri-agency is shaping the future of educator preparation through its innovative K-12 teacher apprenticeship strategy, funding mechanisms and technical support (provided by the Center for Reigniting the Educator Workforce at Dallas College) and how you can participate in, leverage, or replicate this apprenticeship model.

**LORI KNIGHT**, Manager, Tri-Agency and Special Projects, Texas Workforce Commission

**SARA DELANO**, MAT, M.Ed., MBA, Teacher Preparation Dean, Dallas College

**CHERYLYNN JODY MOODY**, Ed.D., Director of Apprenticeship, Texas Education Agency

11:45 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

CLOSING REMARKS: DAY 2