SHRM Foundation

STARTING STRONG

A Tailored Approach to Onboarding Opportunity Youth



What's Included?

- Preboarding communication and preparation
- First day structure and workplace introductions
- Orientation and early training during the first week
- Foundation building during the first 30 days to 90 days
- Mentoring and peer support systems
- Ongoing check-ins throughout the first 180 days
- Evaluation and growth conversations

A strong start to a new job is critical to long-term employment success, especially for opportunity youth — young people, typically between the ages of 16 and 24, who are not currently participating in formal education or employment.

However, traditional onboarding processes are often designed with experienced employees in mind and may not fully address the clear expectations, structured support, and consistent communication young employees need early on to become highly engaged and reliable members of the workforce.

To help employers create a smoother transition for young employees, the SHRM Foundation developed two resources:

- **The Customizable Employer Toolkit for Successfully Onboarding Opportunity Youth** helps employers identify opportunities to better support young employees during the first 180 days of employment, with example templates by industry for easy customization.
- **The companion Guide to Using AI to Customize Onboarding Frameworks for Opportunity Youth** provides step-by-step instructions and cut-and-paste example prompts that show employers how to use AI tools to review and refine their existing onboarding materials.

Together, these resources help employers strengthen existing onboarding practices so young employees feel welcomed, supported, and connected during the transition into work.

While this guide is designed for opportunity youth, the practices will strengthen onboarding for all entry-level employees, regardless of age or circumstance – helping increase engagement and retention across the workforce. Download these resources and start strong today. Learn more at shrm.org/foundation.