



# Strengthening Working Families Initiative

## Strengthening Working Families in the Chicago Southland (SWFCS)

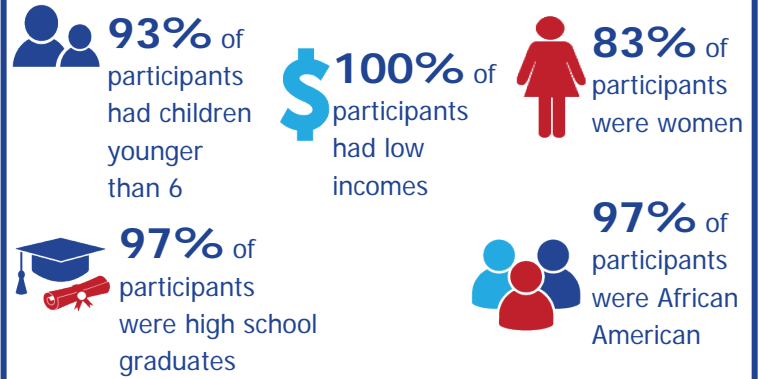
**SWFCS program's core objective:** To address education and training for low- to middle-skilled parents by increasing their access to child care and training and bridging the gap between the workforce development and child care systems.

Our success so far:	Goal vs. actual number of participants	
Enrolled in SWFCS	460	496
Enrolled in training	420	480
Completed training	360	388
Received on-the-job training	75	74

**Our plans for sustaining this work:** SWFCS is designing a new apprenticeship program and seeking funding to sustain the current model of coordinated training and supportive services.

OAI, Inc.

### Who did our SWFCS program serve?



Advanced manufacturing

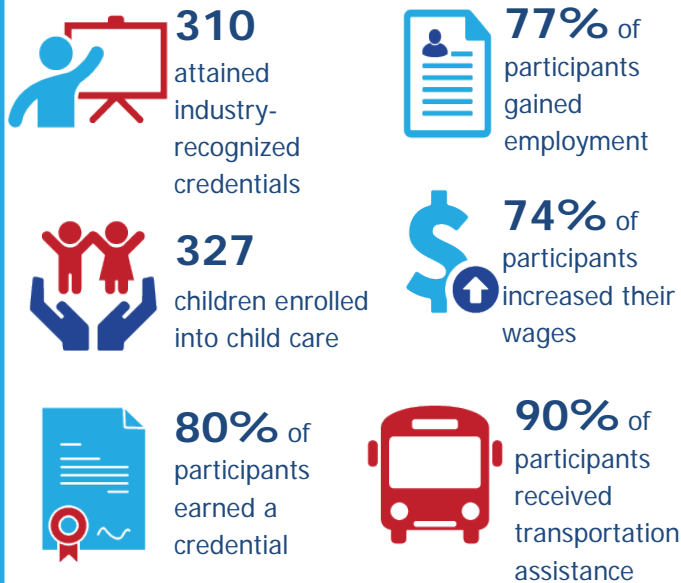


Health care



Information technology

### Building evidence



### Stephanie's SWFI story

Before coming to SWFCS, Stephanie said she was at risk of losing her home, losing custody of her child, and was recovering from drug addiction. When she signed up for SWFCS's certified nursing assistant (CNA) training program at Excelsior Healthcare Academy, she thought it was just another program for her to attend and didn't realize the extensive support she would receive.

Stephanie successfully completed the foundational skills training with the Career Coach, who met individually with her to determine her goals and career path for the SWFCS program. Having completed an associate's degree in applied science during the SWFCS program, she knew school was not a challenge for her. She is now employed at Trinity Hospital as a CNA, earning \$25 per hour, and plans to become a dialysis technician. Stephanie thought returning to school was "unattainable" but now says it is "achievable" because she is financially stable.



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### Looking ahead

OAI, Inc. will sustain the training, career coaching, and job placement components of its current SWFCS program. OAI has been awarded an Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity apprenticeship grant and will continue to offer the CNA training programs. It will leverage other resources from partners and private companies to continue on-the-job-training. Another sustainability priority is maintaining the connections to supportive services, especially the continued collaboration with Illinois Action for Children (IAC), which helped SWFCS-OAI participants access child care. OAI's appointed liaison with IAC has focused on both program design and sustainability planning. Other programs (for example, Community Development Block Grant, Cook County Justice Advisory Council Grant) could help OAI continue to provide transportation support for training participants.



### Bria's SWFI story

Bria came to OAI with limited manufacturing experience but demonstrated a drive to succeed and a willingness to receive training and guidance from the SWFCS team. She completed OAI's bootcamp and training, then began her internship at Chicago Magnesium as an assembly trainee. Early in her internship, Bria experienced transportation and personal issues, which she shared with the SWFCS team. Aware of Bria's potential, SWFCS worked with Bria to develop a plan of action to address each issue. The SWFCS team provided supportive services to alleviate transportation and child care challenges; the team also provided guidance and emotional support to help Bria succeed.

Bria began her internship with a wage of \$11 per hour. She is now enrolled in classes at Prairie State College, which Chicago Magnesium is paying for as part of the two-year apprenticeship program. Bria makes \$15 per hour in the apprenticeship program; when she completes it, she will get a permanent position making \$23 per hour. These opportunities have enabled Bria to purchase a new vehicle to meet her transportation needs.

### Key partners

- Child care partner: Illinois Action for Children
- Training providers: Prairie State College, South Suburban College, Excelsior Healthcare Academy, and Scott School
- Planning and coordination partners: National Able Network, Chicago Jobs Council, and Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
- Employer relationship management partners: Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation and Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce

