

N E W S R E L E A S E

News Release

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\$950,000 State Grant Will Help Retrain 200 Laid-Off Workers in Merced County

SACRAMENTO – The California Employment Development Department (EDD) has awarded the Merced County Workforce Investment Board a grant of \$950,000 to retrain nearly 200 laid-off workers and return them to the workforce.

This \$950,000 is in addition to the \$500,000 EDD recently granted the Madera Workforce Board serving 300 additional recently laid-off workers. These grants are providing needed investments in California's Central Valley to help many unemployed workers transition into new careers with growing industries.

The grant is part of the state's Rapid Response Program, which mobilizes resources to regions suffering from mass layoffs. In this case, the Merced County Workforce Investment Board offered assistance to more than 500 laid-off workers in Atwater, including 441 workers laid off from an AT&T call center, 91 workers laid off with the closure of Mi Pueblo grocery store, as well as other workers whose jobs were dependent on these businesses.

"The Rapid Response Program assists workforce agencies in California during local employment emergencies," said EDD Director Patrick W. Henning Jr. "The program provides these agencies with needed resources to quickly get people back to work in good jobs."

The Merced Workforce Investment Board will use the funds to collaborate with the America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM locations in Merced and Los Baños, local adult schools and training providers, the County Office of Education, and Merced Community College. Through a combination of on-the-job and direct vocational training, supportive services, and individual career assessments, workers will prepare to gain employment in the region's top-industry sectors: agriculture, manufacturing, supply-chain management and logistics, health and medical care, and renewable/alternative energy.

Funding for the program is drawn from the Governor's 25 Percent portion of Dislocated Worker Funds from Title I of the federal Workforce Investment Act and is under the administrative authority of the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency's EDD.

For more information about this project, please contact the Merced County Workforce Investment Board at (209) 724-2000.