

Labour Department enhances employment programmes to promote employment of elderly, young people and persons with disabilities

The Labour Department launches new measures to enhance the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM), the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP) and the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) today (September 1) to encourage employers to hire the elderly, young people and persons with disabilities.

To reflect the new measures for promoting the employment of the elderly, the EPM is renamed the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (EPEM) today. Employers engaging elderly job seekers aged 60 or above who are unemployed or have left the workforce will be offered an on-the-job training allowance up to \$4,000 per month per employee for a period of six to 12 months under the EPEM. For employers engaging unemployed job seekers aged 40 to 59, the maximum amount of on-the-job training allowance will remain \$3,000 per month per employee for a period of three to six months.

The scope of YETP is expanded with immediate effect to cover part-time on-the-job training posts to meet the needs of some young people. The ceiling of the on-the-job training allowance payable to employers is also raised from \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month per trainee for a period of six to 12 months so as to encourage employers to hire young people and provide them with quality on-the-job training.

To further encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities who have employment difficulties and assist them in settling into new posts, the WOPS is enhanced today with the work adaptation period (WAP) extended from two months to three months. The ceiling of the monthly allowance is also raised from \$5,500 to \$7,000 during the three-month WAP and from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for the ensuing six months. With this enhancement, the maximum period within which the allowance is payable is extended from eight to nine months, with the maximum allowance payable to employers increased by \$16,000 to a total of \$51,000 for each hired person with disabilities who has employment difficulties. The cash award for the mentor will also be increased by \$500 to a total of \$1,500 if the mentor successfully assists the employee with disabilities to stay on the job after the three-month WAP.

Through the provision of training allowance to employers, the EPEM encourages employers to take on mature unemployed job seekers aged 40 or above in full-time or part-time jobs and offer them on-the-job training. This will enable mature job seekers to adapt to the new working environment and acquire essential job-specific skills with a view to securing stable employment. The YETP provides comprehensive training and employment support to young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-

degree level or below. Under the programme, various recruitment activities and collaborations with training bodies and employers on different special employment projects are also organised to enhance the employability of young people. The WOPS aims to encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities and provide them with coaching and support through the provision of financial incentives, so as to enhance the employability and career prospects of these job seekers.

Details of the employment programmes are available from the EPEM's webpage (www.jobs.gov.hk/info/epem), YETP's website (www.yes.labour.gov.hk), and Interactive Selective Placement Service's website (www.jobs.gov.hk/isps). The public can also call the EPEM Co-ordination Office at 2150 6398, YETP's hotline at 2112 9932, or the Selective Placement Division at 2755 4835 for more information.