

Career Wardrobe – Frequently Asked Questions

What is Career Wardrobe?

Career Wardrobe is a social enterprise that uses clothing and professional development to empower unemployed individuals to work. Our mission is to empower women and men in transition by providing programs that inspire the confidence necessary to achieve self-sufficiency and pursue a productive career. Career Wardrobe was established in 1995 by a group of Philadelphia women who were dedicated to helping low-income women transition into the workplace and become more self-sufficient. Over the last 21 years, Career Wardrobe has empowered over 80,000 individuals on their journeys to work and extended its services to include men, high school and college students, and unemployed individuals who are not receiving public assistance. In 2016, the State of PA Department of Human Services asked Career Wardrobe to expand its service area to the five-county region. As a result, the Career Wardrobe now operates Boutiques in Philadelphia, Chester, and Bristol, and oversees programs serving women on public assistance in Chester, Montgomery, and Berks Counties. In 2017, Career Wardrobe will have an annual operating budget of \$1.5 million and staff of 16 serving upwards of 7,000 individuals in Southeastern PA.

What makes you different from other organizations that give business attire to women?

Since Career Wardrobe started in Philadelphia and maintains relationships with partners around the city, the research we conduct to ensure we're providing the best service possible is local. We're able to respond to the specific needs of job seekers in Southeastern PA by communicating with the local workforce development industry and conducting unemployment research that affects our community. Also, Career Wardrobe's services don't stop with a suit – along with providing professional clothing to job-seekers, we also provide a free education program, Gateway to Success, which can help anyone develop the interpersonal and professional skills they need to not only land a great job, but build a new career.

How does Career Wardrobe connect with clients?

Clients access Career Wardrobe's services via three main avenues: individuals on public cash assistance can receive a referral from their case manager through the **PA WORKWEAR** program; individuals affiliated with one of our **Referral Partners** (nonprofit organizations that provide housing, domestic violence, immigration, and rehabilitation assistance) can also receive a referral from their case manager; and individuals who are otherwise unaffiliated (unemployed, students, those receiving SNAP/Medicaid) can come through our **Open Access Initiative**, which makes our programming accessible for a small co-pay.

How successful are Career Wardrobe clients?

Career Wardrobe surveys all of our clients to get an idea of how our services benefit them. On average, over 90% of our clients leave their dressing appointment with Career Wardrobe feeling more confident, professional, and prepared for their job search. Six months after, 58% have secured employment, with nearly half working full-time and almost all earning above minimum wage. 70% of our clients report no longer depending on cash assistance.

Can I volunteer with Career Wardrobe?

Yes! Career Wardrobe hosts over 300 volunteers every year. We need help sorting clothing donations, merchandising our Boutique displays and mannequins, dressing clients who are getting ready for interviews or new jobs, and even reviewing resumes with job seekers. For more information on volunteering, visit careerwardrobe.org/volunteer/

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How do I get my clothing to you? And why can't you pick it up?

To drop off clothing, you have three location options. Unfortunately, we're still a small organization and don't have the capacity or the vehicles to come pick up donations. If you can't make it to one of these three options, you can always call a courier service (like Time Cycle) or send your items through US Mail.

1. **The Wardrobe Boutique**, 19th and Spring Garden: If you don't need assistance, you can drop off donations Monday-Saturday 12-6 PM. If you do need assistance, you can drop off at our monthly drive, every third Thursday from 5:30-7 PM, when volunteers are on staff.
2. **Mainline Drive**, Athertyn at Haverford Reserve, 7700 Parkview Dr.: On the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 5-7 PM, volunteers will be available to help unload and collect donations.
3. **East Falls Drive**, Falls Presbyterian Church, 3800 Vaux Street: On the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 6-8 PM, volunteers will be available to help unload and collect donations.

What kind of items do you accept?

If it's in good condition and current style, we want it! We collect new and gently used clothing of all seasons. Use the following as a guide:

- ❖ **Women's Items – SPECIAL NEED FOR PLUS SIZES!** – Professional Apparel (suits, separates, blazers, dress pants, skirts, dresses, blouses, cardigans, khakis), Professional Accessories (conservative handbags, shoes, scarves, jewelry), Fashion/High-End Apparel (tops, denim, dresses, cardigans, shirts, dresses, jackets), Fashion/High-End Accessories (handbags, shoes, scarves, jewelry), Scrubs.
- ❖ **Toiletry Items** – Beauty/skin products, lotion, shampoo, conditioner (unused & unopened)
- ❖ **Undergarments** – unused & unworn
- ❖ **Men's Items** – Professional shirts, jackets, pants, khakis, ties, belts, shoes.

What happens to the donations you can't use?

Career Wardrobe maintains very high standards for the items we provide our clients and shoppers. If you donate an item we can't currently use, or we receive items that are not usable, we pass them along to our friends at Goodwill and The Salvation Army, so they can be put to good use.

Is my donation tax deductible?

Yes! You can find our donation form on our website. It's up to you to place a value on your clothing donation, and luckily, the IRS has a handy guide for just such an occasion. We encourage you to fill out a tax form – not just to get a tax break, but to help us too! Career Wardrobe can only use these receipts to measure how much clothing we collect in a given year. In FY2016, we collected nearly \$2 MILLION worth of clothes and accessories!

What are Career Wardrobe's hours of operation?

Career Wardrobe's administrative offices are open Monday-Friday, 9-5. The Wardrobe Boutique, where we provide all of our dressing services and are open to the public for guilt-free shopping, is open Monday-Friday 10-7 and Saturdays 11-6. Career Wardrobe also operates a Boutique in Chester, PA (Monday-Friday 9-4, open for client appointments only) and in Bristol, PA (Tuesdays 9-4, open for client appointments only).

How can I get my company or group involved?

So many ways! Companies & groups can help Career Wardrobe by holding large-scale clothing drives, coming in to volunteer, holding small fundraising events (like happy hours or Jeans Days), sponsor or attend one of our annual fundraising events – the sky is the limit! For more info, contact **Rae Pagliarulo at rae@careerwardrobe.org or call 215-568-6693 x14.**