

Wanted: Bus cleaners who are 'hard to hire'



By **Brittany Wallman** · Contact Reporter
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Broward County is now hiring. Applicants must be fresh out of prison, disabled or poor.

The unlikely hiring spree is part of a recently approved one-year trial, offering jobs to the traditionally hard-to-hire, doing work the county says is critically needed: cleaning county buses.

County bus passengers have long complained of foul odors and stomach-turning messes. A woman who wore white complained her clothing was stained brown after sitting on one county bus. And stowaway cockroaches have surprised more than a few passengers, the county complaint logs from the past few years reveal.

One first-time passenger in late 2014 lodged a complaint that he saw "all this garbage on the floor," the county bus complaint log notes. "He then noticed a German Roach crawling on him. Please clean the buses and get rid of the roaches."

Another rider complained that buses on her route were always dirty "and nasty," but the day she called, according to the complaint log: "She saw several dead roaches on the bus and some that were still alive that crawled near her. She said that this is disgusting and she ASAP."

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which helps people re-enter society after incarceration, and [ARC Broward](#), which helps people who have disabilities.

Those who prove to be good workers will be eligible for permanent county jobs, including coach service attendants, who are paid between \$12.26 and \$20 an hour. They clean buses inside and out, check bus fluid levels and ready them for the next shift.

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"This is what this is all about," Holness said, "is reaching out to folks who need a pathway to become productive, people who are returning from our prisons, our jails, those who are in low-income communities, those who have been unemployed for a long period of time, to be able to give them a chance."

The county stepped up bus cleaning last year.

Under the test program, up to 26 people will be paid \$11 to \$12.50 an hour to supplement the bus cleaning that already takes place. The county will spend \$544,000 on the extra sweeping and sanitizing.

The cleaning crew for the county's 350 buses will be put together by two organizations: Opportunities Industrialization Center of South Florida,

and [ARC Broward](#), which helps

Unemployment in Broward is 4.2 percent, which is lower than statewide. But in the poorest, unincorporated part of the county, as many as half of the residents are out of work, Commissioner Dale Holness said in arguing for the new program.

People with disabilities also have a higher unemployment rate, about 21.3 percent in 2014, county officials said.

No one with a history of violent offense or sex crime will be eligible.

The work is expected to begin in mid-August, with a progress report due in February.

Those interested can apply online at oicsouthflorida.org or by calling at 954-563-3535. Disabled applicants can go to ARCBroward.com or call ARC Broward at 954-746-9400.

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