



A business guide to learning more about First Choice.

Who are we?

First Choice in Michigan's *Great Southwest* is an affiliate of Cornerstone Alliance and Chamber of Commerce. It is a unique system designed to control the candidate's introduction to the community and to your company. This process has been designed in such a way that it eliminates almost all of the typical objections most candidates have for not accepting a position and moving to a new community.

Who is Cornerstone Alliance?

Cornerstone Alliance is a non-profit, investor-driven economic development organization. Cornerstone's service area includes the following communities in Berrien County: the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Benton Charter Township, St. Joseph Charter Township, Lincoln Charter Township, and the Township of Royalton. Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce operates under the Cornerstone umbrella to promote Michigan's *Great Southwest*.

What's the mission of First Choice?

To help your first choice candidate understand why our community calls itself Michigan's *Great Southwest*. We want to make sure that their visit provides them with all the information they will need to make the important relocation decision ahead of them.

What is the goal of the program?

The program is designed to save businesses of all sizes substantial amounts of money through the hard and soft costs of recruiting by helping them to get their first choice candidate.

What does Michigan's Great Southwest mean?

Michigan's *Great Southwest* refers to our location in the southwest corner of Michigan while stating that the community offers great amenities. *Into the business of life* explains that not only does our community offer an outstanding business climate, it also offers a superior quality of life.

What does Michigan's Great Southwest mean geographically?

Michigan's *Great Southwest* was created to develop a sense of community, not to create boundaries. Therefore, anyone throughout the entire Southwest Michigan region who feels a part of Michigan's *Great Southwest* is. With the primary geographic focus being Berrien County.

How does First Choice work?

Identify your first choice candidates and work with First Choice to plan their visit to the community. First Choice will help the candidate to get to know our community on a personal level. So, whether their interest is hiking, horseback riding, sailing, the arts, volunteerism, or pursuing graduate studies, First Choice will help them to find what the area has to offer and how to get plugged in. We focus on quality of life issues and the unique and special needs that effect an individual's decision to relocate. We remove typical objections to the community and uncover concerns the candidate has about the company, their position, or other related issues.

Our program offers a wide variety of services to your candidate that you can choose from, including:

- **Pre-Visit Phone Call.** We'll call the candidate before they ever leave home! We'll discover their interests, fears, and needs as well as those of other family members helping to make this important decision. After the call, the candidate will receive an introductory e-mail.
- **Community Information Book.** A great resource for helping the candidate understand what the community has to offer is provided upon their arrival in the community. It includes maps and pages of information relating to quick facts, realtors, rental options, employment agencies, schools, and much more.
- **Community Tour.** The candidate will receive a personalized guided tour of our beautiful area, tailored to their particular interests.
- **Community Visits.** If there are issues that will be factors in the candidate's decision-making process, First Choice will schedule meetings for them with local businesses, medical or special needs providers, schools, child or eldercare, or any other organization that provides them with the information they need.
- Additionally, many other services will be provided to the candidate based upon your request as the hiring company.

And if your candidate decides to say, "Yes!" to Michigan's *Great Southwest*, First Choice will help them to get *into the business of life*. Assimilation assistance is also available once your candidate has accepted the position. This may include community visits, rental assistance, help finding a place to get a great haircut, a place of worship, and avenues to make new friends and build support networks.

For further information, contact: Cornerstone Alliance • P.O. Box 428 • Benton Harbor, MI 49022
Ph: 269-757-0204 • 866-647-6781 • Fax: 269-925-4471 • E-mail: firstchoice@cstonealliance.org

History of the Program

How did First Choice in Michigan's *Great Southwest* come about?

It all began in 2000 when Cornerstone Alliance brought together human resource professionals from 20 of the area's largest companies to talk about the challenges being faced in recruiting and retaining the talent needed for their businesses to grow and prosper. These area businesses agreed that something had to be done to make recruiting into the community easier. Based upon their request, the staff of Cornerstone Alliance began working to find some ways to meet the needs at hand.

In April 2001, it all came to a head as the community had the chance to roll out the red carpet and put all the pieces developed and discussed into action. That is when we were asked to assist Whirlpool Corporation with the relocation of their Cooking Technology Operations from Dayton, Ohio to St. Joseph. Over 100 families learned about Michigan's *Great Southwest* in those visits.

With the success of the Whirlpool Dayton visits and many pieces in place, Cornerstone Alliance staff began looking at ways they could take the process to the next level and customize each individual candidate's visit to the community. Many hours of planning, researching, and developing the best program possible has resulted in the First Choice in Michigan's *Great Southwest* program becoming available to all businesses in our community.

What First Choice is not.

First Choice is not the human resource department, the realtor or the corporate relocation firm. We are simply a community partner to these groups striving to make it easier for each group to do their specific task.

Working together, First Choice and the realtors are able to make the transition even easier for a candidate. Realtors are allowed to do what they do best—*sell homes*. First Choice is available when rental assistance is requested.

First Choice works when human resources is part of the process. Relocation functions are essential after the prospect has said yes. First Choice handles community issues, which enhances the Human Resources's role in the process.

First Choice simply becomes a transparent extension of your staff resources. HR staff can focus on company versus community. First Choice provides additional admin support to create a single, integrated experience. HR doesn't have to "train" functional departments on the process, allowing them to focus on finding their first choice candidate.



*Your key to success in
recruiting and assimilating your
company's first choice candidate!*

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