



MO Div. of Workforce Development
DWD Issuance 19-2012

Issued: March 28, 2013
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Subject: Objective Assessment and Individual Service Strategies for Workforce Investment Act Youth

1. Purpose: This Issuance provides the guidelines for conducting participant Objective Assessments (OA) and developing Individual Service Strategies (ISS).
2. Background: The passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) led to major reforms in Youth programming and placed new emphasis on serving youth within a comprehensive youth development approach. The focus of Youth programming changed from short-term training and job placement to long-term services that provide the education, skills, work experience, and support that youth need to successfully transition to careers and productive adulthood.
3. Substance: Highlights of these reforms include the requirement of 10 program elements found in WIA Section 129(c)(2). As stated in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 9-00, these elements can be grouped around four major themes:
 - I. **Improving Educational Achievement**: tutoring, study skills training, dropout prevention strategies, and alternative secondary school services.
 - II. **Preparing for and Succeeding in Employment**: summer employment opportunities, paid and unpaid work experiences, and occupational skills training.
 - III. **Providing Adequate Support in Completing Learning and Employment Goals**: supportive services, adult mentoring, appropriate follow-up services, and comprehensive guidance and counseling.
 - IV. **Developing the Potential of Youth as Citizens and Leaders**: leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors during non-school hours.

As outlined in WIA section 129(c)(1) (29 U.S.C. § 2854(c)(1)), and detailed in the WIA regulations at 20 C.F.R. § 664.405(a)(1) - (2), the program design framework includes an OA and ISS development. These are integral components of the WIA Youth program and help determine the program elements that must be provided to Youth participants.

The WIA Youth program is intended to offer participants a range of services, based on their individual needs, from organizations or agencies in the community best suited to provide those services. As stated in WIA regulations at 20 C.F.R. § 664.410 and outlined in TEGL 9-00, Local Boards must make all 10 program elements *available* to all Youth participants in the local area, although individual Youth participants need not participate in all 10. Local areas have discretion to determine the specific services provided to individual Youth participants, *based on each participant's objective assessment and individual service strategy*.

When designing Youth employment and training programming, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) encourages states and local areas to focus on the following elements:

- A. Conducting Participant Assessments
- B. Developing ISS
- C. Increasing Youth Engagement and Retention in Programs
- D. Providing Quality Follow-up Services
- E. Offering Leadership Development Activities
- F. Offering or Partnering to Provide Adult Mentoring

Objective Assessment (OA)

A comprehensive assessment is the basis for good planning and overall quality case management and should be initiated at intake. As stated in WIA Section 129(c)(1), local areas must provide an OA of the academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant. The OA shall include a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional jobs), supportive service needs, and developmental needs of participants.

The OA of a young person entering the program begins with the registration process, initial interview, and documentation of eligibility. This process identifies the factors listed in 129(c)(1), and barriers to employment and training. As described in the Toolkit for Effective Front Line Services to Youth located at http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/Toolkit-improve.cfm, when developing a comprehensive assessment strategy, it is important that case managers, counselors, or job coaches:

- A. Utilize a comprehensive and exploratory approach;
- B. Administer assessment instruments under conditions that do not adversely affect performance; and
- C. Seek opportunities to embed assessments within program activities.

The OA process involves gathering information from observations and personal interviews, Youth-completed forms, and any activities or tools designed to determine a young person's career interests. It may also include more formal assessments, which generally involve the use of standardized tests to assess specific abilities, such as literacy and numeracy skills for out-of-school, basic skills deficient youth. For policies on formal assessments of literacy and numeracy skills, see TEGl 17-05, Change 2.

Important considerations when conducting participant OAs include:

- A. Ensuring active involvement of the young person in developing specific goals within his or her ISS;
- B. Using a variety of methods and tools including questioning, observations, self-assessment checklists, worksheets, Internet resources, and tools that assess the occupational and employability levels of the youth;
- C. Documenting and assessing the youth's strengths, abilities, and environment (e.g., supportive parents or other family members, connection to the community through a faith-based organization, or assistance with child care); and
- D. Identifying and documenting challenges in the youth's life, including homelessness, residing with a substance user, or in an unstable home environment, in order to determine if the youth needs supportive services, such as transportation, child care assistance, or counseling services.

U.S. Department of Labor's Toolkit for Effective Front Line Services to Youth provides approaches to conducting participant OAs. This Toolkit is designed to enhance the quality of Youth services and can be useful to all professionals assisting youth in developing the knowledge and skills to succeed in a 21st Century economy. In addition TEGl 05-12 provides additional resources to assess interests, abilities, work readiness skills, etc., in the Tools and Resources section.

When barriers to employment are substantial, it may be necessary to seek assistance from external resources, such as professionals in special education; the behavioral, substance abuse, and mental health fields; or experts on physical and mental abuse. Case managers can benefit from training in recognizing the need for a more specialized formal OA. Examples of barriers include:

- A. **Learning disabilities:** There are ways in which a youth can compensate for the challenges of a learning disability through identification and appropriate accommodations. Many state and local literacy councils have

expertise in recognizing disabilities and assisting in minimizing the impact of these types of disabilities, and can prove to be a valuable partner. To identify assistance in this area, you may search the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) Web site at <http://lincs.ed.gov/programs/learningtoachieve/learningtoachieve.html>. See the Toolkit for Effective Front Line Services to Youth and TEGE No. 31-10, *Increasing Enrollment and Improving Services to Youth with Disabilities* at http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=3037 for more information on identifying and serving Youth with learning disabilities.

- B. Potential behavioral health issues including substance abuse (e.g., risky alcohol use) and mental health issues (e.g., depression):** Since behavioral health issues are complex and can impact the overall health and well-being of the Youth, WIA Youth providers should have a list of mental health and substance abuse professionals who they know can respond to the needs of these Youths. Developing partnerships and leveraging resources within these fields at the local and state levels can result in a wrap-around provision of services to the Youth and support desired outcomes for Youth in the WIA program. ETA recommends local providers consider using brief screening tools to help identify behavioral health issues; followed by a referral to appropriate providers, if needed. To learn more about the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment approach, see SAMHSA's Web page at <http://www.samhsa.gov/prevention/sbirt/>. For a list of mental health facilities in your area, see the SAMHSA Mental Health Service Locator at <http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator>. For a list of substance abuse treatment facilities in your area, see SAMHSA's Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator at <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

Developing an ISS: The WIA Youth program requires every Youth participant to have an ISS. As outlined in WIA section 129 (c)(1)(B), the ISS represents an individual plan for each young person that includes: 1) an employment goal, including, when appropriate, employment in a non-traditional vocation; 2) appropriate achievement objectives, including educational goals; and 3) appropriate services that take into account what is learned from the OA.

The ISS is the basis for the overall case management strategy. The case manager should utilize the ISS to update strategies and activities as they occur, and to document referral and contact information for services obtained from partner organizations. When reviewing the ISS, case managers should document a Youth's progress, activities completed, benchmarks reached, and any other accomplishments. Additionally, the ISS should be:

- A. Developed in partnership with the Youth;

- B. Used as a tool that can and will change over time, as necessary, to meet the needs of the young person;
- C. Used as a roadmap to achieve measurable and attainable short-term and long-term goals; and
- D. Designed to reflect the young person's interests and incorporate career pathway planning.

The Toolkit for Effective Front Line Services to Youth offers effective approaches for developing an ISS. For sample ISS documents, see ETA's Youth Connections Community of Practice on Workforce 3One at <https://youth.workforce3one.org/page/resources/1001200332592308266>. Additional samples are provided in the Tools and Resources section of TEGL 05-12.

4. Action: Effective immediately local Workforce Investment Areas must ensure that the OAs and ISSs are the first components of Youth activities provided to WIA eligible youth. Upon enrollment into the WIA Youth program these activities should be recorded in DWD's information management system using the appropriate activity codes for the service:

511 – OA
512 – ISS

The OA will support the decision to enroll the youth into WIA services. It should lay the foundation for services the customer receives during participation.

The ISS is the plan developed with the participant based on the outcomes of the OA. The ISS must include strategies to prepare the Youth for postsecondary educational opportunities and for unsubsidized employment opportunities.

Again, both activities must be completed upon initial enrollment and should be updated throughout the Youth's participation in activities.

6. References: Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), as amended (29 U.S.C. 2801 *et seq.*) (<http://www.doleta.gov/USWORKFORCE/WIA/wialaw.pdf>);

WIA Regulations, 20 C.F.R. Part 664
(<http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/finalrule.pdf>);

TEGL No. 09-00, Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Section 129 - Competitive and Non-Competitive Procedures for Providing Youth Activities Under Title I

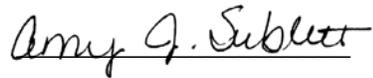
TEGL No. 5-12, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program Guidance for Program Year (PY) 2012

Career Pathways Toolkit,
<https://learnwork.workforce3one.org/view/2001134052969836533/info>

Toolkit for Effective Front Line Services to Youth located at
http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/Toolkit-improve.cfm

7. Rescissions: None.

8. Attachments: None.



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