



Objective Assessment Policy

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A. Purpose

1. The Mississippi Valley Workforce Development Board (MVWDB) provides this guidance on the assessment practices that are to be utilized by the Iowa*WORKS* one-stop centers in the assessments of WIOA participants.

B. Background

2. The goal of WIOA is to align services, establish consistency with WIOA partners and to promote program collaboration within the Iowa*WORKS* system creating greater efficiency in utilizing existing assessment processes while decreasing duplication of services within the WIOA partner system.

C. Policy

3. An Objective Assessment (OBA) is an initial service activity required to be provided to each Title I participant per section 129 (c)(1)(A) of WIOA.
 - a. The OBA process collects information upon which a participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP), or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) will be based.
 - b. An OBA is a mutual exchange of ideas and opinions, discussion and deliberation which includes an examination of the capabilities, needs, and vocational goals of a participant. OBAs include a review of the academic and occupational skill levels, as well as the service needs and strengths, of each participant for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants and informing the IEP or ISS.
 - c. The IEP and ISS should be developed, and updated as needed, based on the needs of each participant that is directly linked to one or more indicators of performance described in WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(ii).

D. Assessment Components

4. Such assessment is to be participant-centered and a diagnostic evaluation of a participant's employment barriers.
5. The assessment should take into account the participant's family situation, general health, work history, education, occupational skills, interests, aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional occupations), attitude towards work, motivation, behavior patterns affecting employment potential, support service needs and personal employment information as it relates to the local labor market.

6. The purpose of the OBA is to identify appropriate services and career pathways that are supported by the assessment and appropriate for the individual Youth participant and all information must be incorporated into the youth's ISS.
7. The OBA is an ongoing process that requires the grantee staff to remain in close consultation with each participant to continuously obtain current information about the participant's progress that may be relevant to his/her IEP.
 - a. The results of the OBA must be shared verbally with the participant and must be used to develop the IEP or ISS in partnership with the participant.
 - b. OBA is a process that requires more than one appointment between the participant and the career planner to conduct all the necessary portions of the assessment.
 - c. The OBA activity must be clearly documented in the data management system including the type of assessment used and the results of that assessment.
 - d. Documentation of a mutual conversation between the career planner and participant of the results is also required.

E. Objective Assessment Tools

1. An OBA is a procedure designed to comprehensively assess the skills, abilities, and interests of each employment and training participant using diagnostic testing and other assessment tools. The methods used by the grantee in conducting the OBA may include:
 - a. Structured in-depth interviews.
 - b. Skills and aptitude assessments.
 - c. Performance assessments (for example, skills or work samples, including those that measure interest and capability to train in nontraditional employment).
 - d. Interest or attitude inventories.
 - e. Career guidance instruments.
 - f. Aptitude tests.
 - g. Basic skills tests.

F. Requirement for Timing of Assessment

1. Portions of assessments conducted by other American Job Center partners, may be used to collect information for the OBA as described in this section. Such assessments must have been completed within one year prior to enrollment. Any tests of reading, writing, and computation skills must have been completed within six months prior to enrollment.

G. Basic Skills Assessment Requirements

1. In assessing basic skills, local programs must:
 - a. Use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population.
 - b. Provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities.
2. For purposes of the basic skills assessment portion of the OBA, local programs are not required to use assessments approved for use in the Department of Education's National

Reporting System (NRS), nor are they required to determine an individual's grade level equivalent or educational functioning level (EFL), although use of these tools is permitted.

3. Rather, local programs may use other formalized testing instruments designed to measure skills-related gains. It is important that, in addition to being valid and reliable, any formalized testing used should be appropriate, fair, cost effective, well-matched to the test administrator's qualifications, and easy to administer and interpret results.
4. Alternatively, skills related gains may also be determined through less formal alternative assessment techniques such as observation, folder reviews, or interviews. The latter may be particularly appropriate for youth with disabilities given accessibility issues related to formalized instruments.
5. In contrast to the initial assessment described above, if measuring EFL gains after program enrollment under the measurable skill gains indicator, local programs must use an NRS-approved assessment for both the EFL pre- and post-test to determine an individual's educational functioning level.
6. Previous basic skills assessments that have been conducted within the past six months may be used if available. This may include assessments completed by a secondary school, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic and Literacy Education, or other education or training providers.

H. Basic Skills Assessment Requirement for Timing of Testing

1. If basic skills goals are set for Youth, tests for determining grade level must be given within 30 days of the goal being established.
2. Individuals with disabilities that preclude testing who are obviously at or below the eighth-grade level may be reported that way.
3. Individuals who have a college degree or a two-year associate degree do not need to be tested. They may be reported as having a 12th grade reading and math level.

I. Basic Skills Assessment Tools

1. Basic skills assessment for Youth eligibility will be completed at the time of the OBA; for Adults the OBA will be completed if deemed necessary by the Career Navigator. Adults who are English language learners may also complete a basic skills assessment. Workforce system staff will make the most of partnerships with local organizations, including but not limited to, WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy and WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation.
2. The MVWDB will determine basic skills level by utilizing the following methods:
 - a. In-School Youth basic skills will be assessed by utilizing records from the educational institution in which the youth attends.
 - i. This information will be coordinated by using the "Authorization for Release of Confidential School Records" form.
 - ii. When school records are not available TABE, and CASAS can also be used.
 - b. Out-of-School Youth and Adults with or without a High School diploma or equivalent may be assessed using TABE or CASAS test and may be conducted with our WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy partners.

- i. The Work Keys Assessment scores can also be used for assessments and a Bronze Level or below indicates individual is basic skills deficient.
 - c. Adults with Limited English Proficiency may be assessed by our WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy partners
3. An exception to the above is if an Adult participant reports:
 - a. They possess an associate degree or higher.
 - b. Documentation of entrance exams required by a post-secondary education provider, with scores showing that participant does not require remedial courses.
 - c. Documentation of a 3.0 GPA or higher based on post-secondary attendance within the prior 12 months.

J. Assessment Interpretation

1. Case managers should become familiar with the types of assessments administered to customers and should have a solid understanding of the results and what they mean.
2. Case managers should also be prepared to explain the assessment results to the customer in a meaningful way, rather than just briefly covering the data or numbers.

K. Reasonable Accommodation

1. Under Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and related regulations, providers must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship. No qualified individual with a disability may be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of a recipient's service, program, or activity or be subjected to discrimination by any recipient because a recipient's facilities are inaccessible or unusable by individuals with disabilities.

L. Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Statement

1. All Recipients, and Sub recipients/Sub grantees must comply with WIOA's Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination provisions which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, political affiliation or belief, or, for beneficiaries, applicants, and participants only, on the basis of citizenship status or participation in a WIOA Title-I financially assisted program or activity.

Equal Opportunity Programs/Employer – Auxiliary aids and services available upon request for individuals with disabilities