

## **Case Management Policy**

### **Reference:**

Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Section 101, 129, 134; Federal Register/Vol. 65, No. 156/Friday, August 11, 2000; Youth Program Design policy; Youth Goal Setting policy; Attainment of a Degree or Certificate Performance Measure policy; Program Exit policy; Eligibility for Adult Programs policy; Eligibility for Dislocated Workers policy; Eligibility for Youth Programs policy; Placement in Employment or Education policy; Literacy and Numeracy Gains Performance Measure policy; Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination policy; Application Time Limit policy; Local Plan Instructions; TEGL 17-05.

### **Background:**

The Workforce Investment Act addresses the important role of case managers. For example, they assist in determining if the adult or dislocated worker has “the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training services.” [Sec. 134] In §663.410 of the final regulations, case managers are identified as having a consultation role in assisting the participant in selecting the eligible provider from which to purchase training. The preamble acknowledges the critical role of case managers and urges (where necessary) for “States and/or local areas to arrange quickly for staff training to ensure case managers have the understanding and knowledge to carry out this role effectively.” It is presumed that case management is a service conducted from the time an individual is enrolled through the four quarters of follow up after program exit. Case management is not a stand-alone activity but rather a continual service provided to adult, dislocated workers and youth to ensure their success in WIA. Case management is no longer a stand-alone activity in NEworks. This policy, along with citing law and regulations, shall recommend some of the best practices.

### **Action:**

After the 10 day public review period, this policy is determined final. All programs utilizing NEworks must adhere to this policy. Program Management should inform all NEworks end users of this policy. Questions and comments should be submitted in writing to Jan Fox, Policy Coordinator, [jan.fox@nebraska.gov](mailto:jan.fox@nebraska.gov).

### **Policy:**

Case management as defined in Sec. 101 of the Workforce Investment Act means the provision of a client-centered approach in the delivery of services, designed:

- To prepare and coordinate comprehensive employment plans, such as service strategies, for participants to ensure access to necessary workforce investment activities and supportive services, using, where feasible, computer-based technologies; and
- To provide job and career counseling during program participation and after job placement.

#### **Initial Assessment for Eligibility**

“The initial assessment provides preliminary information about the individual’s skill levels, aptitudes, interests, and supportive service needs.” [§663.160]

As a core service for adults and dislocated workers, the initial assessment is intended to be a brief, preliminary information gathering process that, among other things, provides sufficient information about an individual's basic literacy and occupational skill levels to enable the One-Stop operator to make appropriate referrals to services available through the One-Stop and partner programs.

The definition of "deficient in basic literacy skills" is defined in the local plan, but at the minimum is an individual who:

- Computes or solves problems, reads, writes, or speaks English at or below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level on a generally accepted standardized test or a comparable score on a criterion-referenced test; or
- Is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family or in society. [§664.205]

When choosing who shall participate in the Title I programs, refer to the "Eligibility for Adult Programs" policy, the "Eligibility for Dislocated Workers" policy, and the "Eligibility for Youth Programs" policy. In addition, special care must be exercised to not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, political affiliation or belief, participant status, and against certain noncitizens. Refer to the "Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination" policy in regard to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities who are applicants.

### **Information and Referral**

Local areas shall ensure that each participant or applicant who meets the minimum income criteria for consideration as an eligible youth be provided:

- Information on the full array of applicable or appropriate services that are available through the local board or other eligible providers or One-Stop partners, including those receiving funds under WIA Title I; and
- Referral to appropriate training and educational programs that have the capacity to serve the participant or applicant either on a sequential or concurrent basis. [Sec. 129(c)(3)]

To meet the basic skills and training needs of a youth applicant, each eligible provider of a program of youth activities "shall ensure that an eligible applicant who does not meet the enrollment requirements of the particular program or who cannot be served shall be referred for further assessment, as necessary, and referred to appropriate programs." [Sec. 129]

### **Registration**

Registration is the process for collecting information to support a determination of eligibility. This information may be collected through methods that include electronic data transfer, personal interview, or an individual's application.

- "Adults and dislocated workers who receive services funded under Title I other than self-service or informational activities must be registered and determined eligible." [§663.105]
- The WIA Participation Date "is the date following a determination of eligibility to participate in the program when the individual begins receiving a service funded by the program in either a physical location (One-Stop Career Center) or remotely through electronic technologies." The WIA Participation date is the official point when the participant begins being counted in performance measures. ["Application Time Limit" policy]

- In Nebraska, there is a limit of 90 days for validity of an application as it relates to eligibility. If over 90 days elapse between the WIA Application Date and the WIA Participation Date, then the application will be closed. ["Application Time Limit" policy]
- All youth who participate in the youth program must be registered in order to receive any youth services. [§664.215]
- A youth's dropout status is determined at the time of registration. "An individual who is out-of-school at the time of registration and subsequently placed in an alternative school, may be considered an out-of-school youth for the purposes of the 30 percent expenditure requirement for out-of-school youth." [§664.310.]
- "Equal Opportunity (EO) data must be collected on every individual who is interested in being considered for WIA Title I financially assisted aid, benefits, services, or training by a recipient, and who has signified that interest by submitting personal information in response to a request from the recipient." [§663.105(c)]

### **Eligibility for Intensive Services**

There are two categories of adults and dislocated workers who may receive intensive services:

- Adults and dislocated workers who are unemployed, have received at least one core service and are unable to obtain employment through core services, may be determined to be in need of more intensive services to obtain employment; and
- Adults and dislocated workers who are employed, have received at least one core service, and are determined to be in need of intensive services to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency. [663.220]

### **Comprehensive/Objective Assessment**

Comprehensive assessment (an intensive service) is a more detailed examination of issues affecting the participant and may explore any number of things relevant to the development of a person's individual employment plan (IEP). These might include some combination or all of the following: educational attainment; employment history; more in-depth information about basic literacy and occupational skill levels; interests; aptitudes; family and financial situation; emotional and physical health, including disabilities; attitudes toward work; motivation; and supportive service needs.

In the preamble, local areas are directed to "take into account any special assessment needs that may be experienced by individuals with disabilities and other populations with multiple barriers to employment."

Local youth programs must "provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant." The "assessment 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 such participant." [Sec. 129]

"A new assessment of a participant is not required if the provider carrying out such a program determines it is appropriate to use a recent assessment of the participant conducted pursuant to another education or training program." [Sec. 129]

### **Best Practices**

- As part of the assessment process, the case manager may help the participant assess his/her own situation. Is he/she in a job/career he/she can excel at? Is he/she utilizing his/her skills and talents to be successful?
- Identify in the assessment process the motivator that shall make the participant strive for change. This is individualistic and is based on what the participant has said or done.

- Focus on strengths and accomplishments. Then identify the barriers.

### **Individual Service Strategy Plan**

- Definition: “The individual employment plan (IEP) is an ongoing strategy jointly developed by the participant and the case manager that identifies the participant’s employment goals, the appropriate achievement objectives, and the appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals.” [§663.245] According to the preamble, the use of the word “strategy” was intentional to convey “the idea of a well planned approach for individual employment goals worked out in an interactive way by the case manager and the participant.”
- If determined appropriate based on the need of the individual participant, the “combination of services” includes supportive services.
- The development of an Individual Employment Plan is only one of the intensive services that may be provided to adults and dislocated workers determined to be in need of such service; it is not a condition to receive that service.
- Local Youth programs must develop Individual Service Strategies (ISS) for each participant that shall identify “an employment goal (including, in appropriate circumstances, nontraditional employment), appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant taking into account” the objective assessment. [Sec. 129]
- A new service strategy for a youth participant is not required “if the provider carrying out such a program determines it is appropriate to use a recent service strategy developed for the participant.” [Sec. 129]
- Refer to “Youth Goal Setting” policy for specific guidance in establishing goals for youth.
- For guidance related to the Youth Common Measures refer to these policies: “Attainment of a Degree or Certificate Performance Measure;” “Placement in Employment or Education;” and “Literacy and Numeracy Gains Performance Measure.”

### **Best Practices**

- Engage participant during every step of the process when building the Individual Employment Plan to get the commitment and ownership of the participant. She or he must make the decisions for his/her life. The caseworker may decide if there is funding for the decision or not, but the plan must reflect the participant’s decisions.
- Help the participant believe he/she can change and things can get better.
- Help the participant identify what he/she wants (goal setting).
- The plan states what the participant shall do and what the caseworker shall do.
- Identify the skills that need to be developed so the participant is able to not only obtain employment, but also to keep the job.
- Action steps should be as specific and concrete as possible.
- Make the participant aware of help and resources that are available, including partner resources.
- When both the participant and the caseworker sign the plan, it is easier to get concurrence and commitment from the participant.

### **Best Practices – Counseling**

- Listen (most critical). Try to build a relationship with the participant so he/she will trust you.
- Ask questions that cause the participant to think and make his/her own decisions.
- Confront. Try to get the participant to see what he/she is doing that is not working for him/her. Focus on behaviors. Ask for the participant’s permission to discuss issues that may be standing in the way of his/her success in reaching goals. Once the permission is given, then deal with uncomfortable issues.

- Self-disclosure is not recommended. Everyone believes his/her experience is unique and the focus should be on the participant's story.
- Summarize what has been communicated.
- Teach problem solving. If the participant learns to solve problems by his/her self, he/she shall be able to overcome obstacles when the caseworker is not there. When faced with a problem, he/she need to learn to consider options, the downsides of each option, and then make a choice.

### **Best Practices – Job Retention**

- Plan for emergencies. May want to consider the first month of work in the form of a “tragedy calendar” and prioritize what the participant shall do if certain situations occur.
- Discuss expectations of employers.
- Discuss the “do’s” and “don’ts” in getting along with coworkers if the participant is new to the workforce.
- Consider mentors and job coaches, where appropriate.

### **Supportive Services**

The term “supportive services” means services such as transportation, child care, dependent care, housing, and needs-related payments that are necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized under WIA Title I. [Sec. 101]

To ensure flexibility, the regulations afford local areas the discretion to provide supportive services as they deem appropriate with limitations only as defined in the Act.

Supportive services may only be provided to adults and dislocated workers who are:

- Participating in core, intensive or training services; and
- Unable to obtain supportive services through other programs providing such services.

Supportive services may only be provided when they are necessary to enable individuals to participate in Title I activities. [§663.805]

“Local Boards, in consultation with the One-Stop partners and other community service providers, must develop a policy on supportive services that ensures resource and service coordination in the local area. Such policy should address procedures for referral to such services, including how the services will be funded when they are not otherwise available from other sources.” [§663.800]

“Supportive services for youth, as defined in WIA section 101(46), may include the following:

- a) Linkages to community services;
- b) Assistance with transportation;
- c) Assistance with child care and dependent care;
- d) Assistance with housing;
- e) Referrals to medical services; and
- f) Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eye glasses and protective eye gear.” [§664.440]

### **Training Decisions for Adults and Dislocated Workers**

- After an interview, evaluation, or assessment, and case management before deciding on training, the case manager must ask these questions:
  1. Has the participant met the qualifications to be eligible for intensive services, received at least one of the intensive services, and been determined to be unable to obtain or retain employment through such services?

2. Does the participant have the skills and qualifications to successfully complete the selected training program?
  3. Is the program of training services directly linked to the employment opportunities either in the local area or in another area to which the participant is willing to relocate?
  4. Is there another funding source willing to pay the costs of the training, including such sources as State-funded training funds, Trade Adjustment Assistance and Federal Pell Grants?
  5. If funding is limited in the local area, does the adult participant meet the priority requirements given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals?
- Selection by the participant of eligible providers is made in consultation with the case manager. [Refer to Eligible Training Provider and Individual Training Account policies.]

### **Exits**

Everyone who has a WIA Participation Date in NEworks shall be assigned a WIA Case Closure when he/she is finished receiving WIA-funded services and is not scheduled for future services. In NEworks, the WIA Case Closure interface is only available after each valid activity has an actual end date. The Case Closure is initially subject to change for 90 consecutive calendar days, at which time if no further services have been received, it becomes the official outcome/exit date. Every WIA participant receiving an exit date shall be counted in WIA performance with the exception of a participant satisfying one of the following global exclusions, either at the time of exit or during the three-quarter measurement period following the exit quarter: institutionalized; deceased; health/medical; family care; relocated to a mandated program (youth only); reservists called to active duty who choose not to return to WIA; or invalid or missing social security number. [For more detailed information, refer to the "Program Exit" policy.]

### **Follow-Up/Post Placement Contact**

- Celebrate successes of participants!
- According to the preamble and as provided in §663.815, "financial assistance, such as needs-related payments, for employed participants is not an allowable follow-up service..."
- The provision of training and supportive services after entry into unsubsidized employment ("post-placement") shall be limited, and shall be part of the IEP, clearly documented in the participant case file. Such post-placement training and supportive services may be provided consistent with policies established by the State or Local Board, and determined to be necessary on an individual basis by the One-Stop partner.

### **Documentation**

- "The case file must contain a determination of need for training services under §663.310, as identified in the individual employment plan, comprehensive assessment, or through any other intensive service received." [§663.240(b)]
- Each person in intensive services must have a case management file. "A determination of the need for intensive services under §663.220, as established by the initial assessment or the individual's inability to obtain employment through the core services provided, must be contained in the participant's case file." [§663.160(b)]
- The case management file for enrollments prior to July 1, 2012 may be either hard copy, electronic, or both. All case management files that would be subject to a Federal or State Monitor review because the application date is on or after July 1, 2012 will be electronic.
- "For registered participants, a standardized record that includes appropriate performance information must be maintained in accordance with Section 185(a)(3)." [§666.140(b)]