

# Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council

## Policy # 03-2001 FINAL

### YOUTH SKILLS POLICY

**Implementation Date: July 20, 2001**

#### **Purpose**

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) establishes a framework for youth programming that emphasizes skill development, particularly for younger youth. One of the critical federal outcomes for youth who register from age 14 through 18 is skill development and attainment. Additionally, WDC policy encourages skill development in all youth, regardless of age. The purpose of this policy is to establish the principles and protocol to define and attain Basic, Work Readiness and Occupational Skills for younger youth in WIA and Youth Opportunity programs. Youth Opportunity programs also use WIA performance measures, and therefore fall under the skill attainment policy for younger youth.

#### **Reference**

Workforce Investment Act [(P.L. 105-220) Title I, Sections 101 (4) & (13)(C)(i); 129 c) (1); 136(b)(ii)(I)]  
20 CFR Parts 664.200-210; 664.830; 666.100; 666.300  
Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 7-99  
Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 3-99

#### **Policy**

All youth who are registered in WIA youth and YO programs, and *are deficient* in any skill area, are required to set and achieve at least one skill goal per year. Each youth will be evaluated for their level of proficiency in, at a minimum: Basic Skills, Work Readiness Skills, and Occupational Skills. Although it is not mandatory that every participant be deficient in one of these skill areas, applicable WDC youth programs are designed to increase these skill areas. It is therefore highly encouraged that when resources are limited, youth needing improvement in these areas should be targeted for program participation.

There must be, *at a minimum*, one goal set *per year* of active program participation, as long as the participant is deficient. A youth may have up to three goals set per year. A program year per participant begins on his/her registration date. Goals may be set one at a time, with an emphasis on increasing proficiency, or multiple goals for the same time period may be set, depending on the individual situation of the participant. Providers are encouraged to re-set new goals as old goals are met during the course of a year's participation. If a participant is in active program participation for more than one year from point of registration, and he/she is deficient in any of the three skill areas, it is mandatory that at least one new goal is established in the second year of participation.

The key to effective and appropriate goal setting is an accurate assessment and development of an Individual Service Strategy (ISS). To avoid duplication, the assessment may include

referencing prior assessments on these skill areas that were performed by other entities (e.g., schools, other training providers) as long as the results are recent and valid. The ISS should clearly indicate the areas needing improvement, and the specific way that the provider will help that youth achieve improvement. Goals that are established in the ISS should correspond to the deficiency documented in the assessment. There should be evidence in the ISS that the youth participated in developing the ISS, and understands his/her obligation to work on specific goals.

One of the overriding purposes of WDC youth programs is to support youth to reaching developmentally appropriate levels of proficiency. An attained goal does not necessarily indicate adult-level proficiency. Rather, the purpose of setting goals is to mark on-going improvement and milestones for achievement that are developmentally appropriate and recognized by the participant. The ISS may include long-term goals (e.g., finishing GED), and the goals established should mark the steps necessary to accomplish the long-term outcome (e.g., improve English literacy; pass three GED tests, complete GED, etc.)

Attainment benchmarks must be quantifiable, measurable and verifiable learning objectives that specify increased competency as a result of program participation. The WDC encourages that these benchmarks should be individually tailored to the specific situation of the participant, and approves the use of a menu of options for skill attainment. As such, the WDC recognizes that it is impossible to account for all menu possibilities in a changing environment. Providers are encouraged to use other assessment tools that meet the needs of their participants, as long as those tools fall within the parameters of this policy guidance. WDC staff is available to consult on any questions regarding the validity of the tool, and to disseminate innovative tools and ideas to other providers in the youth system.

There is a mandatory order of priority in attaining these three goals: (1) basic skills; (2) work readiness skills; (3) occupational skills. If a youth is basic skills deficient, he/she must work on a basic skills goal. If a youth is not basic skills deficient, but lacks work readiness skills, he/she must establish a work readiness goal. If he/she is both proficient in basic skills and work readiness, there may be an occupational skill goal set for the participant. Although deficiencies must be prioritized in this order, providers should not feel limited by this requirement: several skills can be developed simultaneously (e.g., basic skills and occupational skills) if this would benefit the participant.

Providers are expected to report all goals set and attained through MIS forms. Providers will be accountable for two performance outcomes regarding skill development. Federal performance outcomes will measure only skill attainment for younger youth; local measures will add outcomes to skill attainment for older youth. Outcomes will be measured as the number of total goals attained during a program year divided by the total number of goals set during that year.

### **1. Basic Skills**

*Basic skills goals* should measure increases in basic education skills including reading comprehension, math computation, writing, speaking, listening, problem solving, reasoning and the capacity to use these skills.

For purposes of assessment, goal setting, and WIA eligibility, **basic skill deficiency** is defined as:

- The inability to compute or solve problems, read, write or speak English at or above the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. This definition is not appropriate for individuals who are on track to graduate on time and are currently functioning at grade level.
- The inability to compute or solve problems, read or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family or in society. Educational achievement is one of the key indicators to success on the job and in the family, and the WDC will use academic indicators as a key to goal setting. This includes:
  - Functioning below grade level for age/unable to graduate on time
  - Credit deficiency/failing grades in core academic subjects such as language arts or math/inability to meet statewide academic standards
  - Being a high school dropout
  - Limited English proficiency
  - Disability that inhibits school performance, as indicated by qualification under IDEA as disabled student
  - Inability to pursue and/or succeed in higher education/advanced training because youth can't meet entrance requirements/complete basic course work

Providers are encouraged to work closely with schools to target specific areas of improvement and to develop joint strategies to address those weaknesses. Providers are encouraged to work with the youth and the school to establish multiple benchmarks that will count as attainments if a deficiency is documented.

## **2. Work Readiness**

*Work Readiness goals* should measure increases in work awareness and positive work attitudes and habits, labor market knowledge, occupational information, values clarification and personal understanding, career planning and decision-making, and job search techniques. The purpose of setting this goal is to demonstrate an understanding of the world of work and employer expectations, and an individual's ability to plan for the future by identifying necessary steps to achieve goals.

There are several levels of youth development that are appropriate work-readiness activities. There must be documentation that individual youth are assessed on these skills (as appropriate), and goal setting should be based on areas of weakness. These skills, which may be individual Work Readiness goals, include:

**a. Transition skills** – skills needed to help transition young people into adulthood. Skill deficiencies in these areas would undermine an individual's ability to keep and hold a job. These may include, for example, time management skills, the ability to live independently, or money management. Attachment B outlines key competency areas for transition skills.

**b. Career Awareness** – includes the skills needed to assess individual career interests and self-direct educational/employment planning to increase awareness of specific industries/fields, including the requirements necessary to find adult employment in those fields. Development of career awareness includes completing an internship in an area of interest.

**c. Work Maturity** – display of personal/professional assets that indicate the ability to keep a job and progress in employment. These include punctuality, neatness, interpersonal

communication skills, willingness to take on progressive responsibility, positive attitudes, and other self-management skills (e.g., SCANS). Employer evaluations are encouraged as the most telling indicator that a youth has achieved this goal.

### **3. Occupational skills goals**

Occupational goals should measure increases in the ability to perform actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate or advanced levels. Secondary occupational skills entail familiarity with and use of set-up procedures, safety measures, work-related terminology, record keeping and paperwork formats, tools, equipment and materials, and breakdown and clean-up routines. These goals may be attained demonstrating success in:

- Secondary/post-secondary/vocational coursework, or other short term training programs
- Increases in skill standards or other supervisor/instructor verification of technical expertise
- Retaining employment in area of skills training
- Completion of individual training plan, as outlined in worksite agreement

## Guidance

The following three attachments are designed to give providers flexibility to address specific needs while ensuring that appropriate goals and documentation are met, dependent on participant's assessment. This is intended to clarify WDC expectations on how the assessment can be used to establish specific goals, and the expected documentation needed for verification. Other tools may be acceptable, and goals should be benchmarked to indicate achievement based on a level and quality of service that is typically achieved by 90 hours and/or .5 credit in a school district environment. It is recommended that providers consult with WDC staff if there are questions regarding levels of attainment requirements prior to implementation.

### Attachment A

#### Basic Skills

Deficiencies/ Assessment	Documentation (examples)	Attainment/Goal	Documentation of Attainment (examples)
<p>Unable to graduate on time/ functioning below grade level</p> <p>Failing courses</p> <p>At risk of dropping out due to academic struggles</p> <p>Inability to meet EALR/Seattle Standards/WASL (depending on grade)</p>	<p>Transcripts</p> <p>Teacher/counselor documentation that clearly states specific academic areas needing improvement</p> <p>WASL scores (when fully implemented for cohort); or school documentation of inability to meet standard</p>	<p>Overall GPA increase of .25</p> <p>Credit attainment (.5 credit) in area of deficiency</p> <p>WASL level 3 or 4 in area of deficiency</p> <p>Academic performance that would meet EALR requirements</p>	<p>Transcripts or other appropriate school documentation (Connection to area of deficiency and goal must be obvious)</p> <p>WASL scores</p>
<p>Disability that impacts individual's ability to perform in school or workplace</p>	<p>Individual Educational Plan (IEP)</p> <p>Teacher/counselor/ DVR caseworker documentation</p>	<p>Completion of one IEP/Section 504 goal</p> <p>Other goals established by professional counselor</p>	<p>IEP</p> <p>Teacher/Counselor documentation</p>
Deficiencies/	Documentation	Attainment/Goal	Documentation of

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>(examples)</b>		<b>Attainment (examples)</b>
Limited English ability, as demonstrated by Placement in ESL or classes specifically to improve English language skills	<p>Transcripts</p> <p>School documentation</p> <p>Standardized test measuring English proficiency for non-native speakers (e.g. CASAS listening test)</p>	<p>Pass transition class/advance to next class level</p> <p>Statistically relevant increase on normed test (e.g., min. 5 point increase on CASAS listening test)</p>	<p>Transcripts/school documentation</p> <p>Test scores</p>
Dropout	Until GED/diploma attained, dropouts are considered basic skills deficient	<p>Successful return to school</p> <p>Pass 3 of 5 GED Tests</p> <p>Achieve GED</p>	<p>Transcript of 1 quarter demonstrating passing grades</p> <p>GED scores</p>
Testing below 8 <sup>th</sup> grade level	Any approved standardized test (CASAS, TABE)	Marked improvement in area of deficiency	<p>CASAS – 10 point increase for ISY; 5 point increase for OSY in areas of deficiency</p> <p>Other statistically relevant increases in standardized test</p>
<p>Inability to proceed to advanced training/higher education due to lack of basic academic skills</p> <p>School placement in pre-100 level course work in math or language arts</p>	<p>Documentation that academic work is required in order to pass college entrance exam (SLEP, ASSET)</p> <p>Transcripts, test results, course schedule or other school documentation</p> <p>Documentation of inability to pass pre-apprenticeship competencies</p>	<p>Pass classes aligned with requirements of entrance exams, (if a non-school district class, curricula must be approved by WDC)</p> <p>Pass entrance exam</p> <p>Pass to 100 level college course work</p> <p>Pass pre-apprenticeship/Apprenticeship competencies</p>	<p>Test Scores</p> <p>School transcripts, course schedule</p>
Inability to succeed in higher education	Transcripts indicating less than 2.0 GPA in college level class	Maintain 2.0 in non-vocational college level courses for 2 consecutive quarters or more	Transcripts

**Attachment B  
Work Readiness Skills**

<b>Deficiency</b>	<b>Documentation</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Documentation of attainment</b>
Transition skills (see below)	Assessment tools to be developed	Attain age/developmentally appropriate competencies in basic life skills	TBD
Lacks career awareness/knowledge on finding job	CASAS Pre-Employment Checklist (A-E)  Other appropriate evaluation regarding pre-employment skills	Completion of <i>at least two</i> "steps" in the following sequence:  * Establish knowledge of strengths and interests in specific industries/career options  * Target career interests and create educational plan to meet requirements  * Job finding skills, including using Worksource and on-line resources  * Successfully complete internship/work experience/unsubsidized employment in area of interest	Pass CASAS Pre-employment standards  Completion of career/interest inventory  Case manager /counselor verification of student planning activities  Demonstrated ability to look for job  Positive Supervisor evaluation
Lacks appropriate behavioral traits to keep a job	CASAS Pre- Work Maturity Assessment (checklist F)  Lack of proficiency on Learning and Employability Profile (LEP)	Display of punctuality, neatness, courtesy, positive attitude, and other interpersonal skills appropriate to the workplace	PE/WM level of competency (G)  Proficiency on LEP
<b>Deficiency</b>	<b>Documentation</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Documentation of attainment</b>
Lacks work history	No history of holding a job more than 2 months	Ability to keep unsubsidized employment displays range of work-readiness competencies  Complete internship or subsidized work experience to supervisor's satisfaction	Pay stubs; supervisor verification  Supervisor evaluation

If providers are interested in using Transition Skills as an outcome, they should coordinate with the WDC to develop appropriate tools that objectively measure deficiency and attainment in this area. These should include:

- An understanding of personal strengths, learning styles and weaknesses
- Building personal skills and access educational to advance career interests
- Organizing daily life to meet obligations, including getting to and from appointments
- Crisis management
- Obtaining personal documents, such as social security cards, driver's license, birth certificate, etc.
- Understanding requirements and responsibilities of contractual agreements
- Money management
- Accessing community resources
- Establishing independent living situations

## **Attachment C Occupational Skills**

Less guidance is required to document deficiency/attainment of occupational skills. Deficiency in areas of technical expertise is significantly easier to document, and it is assumed that most young people lack technical occupational skills, unless there is evidence to the contrary. Occupational skill development should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following menu should cover most instances where a young person could acquire technical occupational skills.

- Secondary/post-secondary vocational coursework (minimum of two courses or two consecutive quarters at a minimum of 2.0 GPA)
- Mastery in course competencies in technical areas not covered above
- Positive completion of a short-term training program in career area with positive labor market and living wage potential
- Increase in skill as measured by industry standards
- Satisfactory evaluation by supervisor and/or instructor that includes technical expertise in industry area, when there are not developed skill standard available
- Obtain and retain subsidized or unsubsidized employment in area of skills training for at least two consecutive months
- Completion of an individual training plan for on-the-job skill development, as documented by a Worksite Agreement and supervisor evaluation