

The Workforce Investment Act

Desktop Reference Guide



U.S. Department of Labor

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Overview

Purpose

This desktop reference guide is a resource you can turn to for quick answers about The Workforce Investment Act as well as a companion to the online course *The Workforce Investment Act*.

Internet Resources

The following links provide additional information on the Workforce Investment Act you may find useful.

- Workforce Investment Final Regulations:
<http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/finalrule.pdf>
- Workforce Investment Act of 1998:
<http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/wialaw.pdf>

Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Worker Program information, including:

- General Program Information
 - Laws & Regulations
 - Planning & Policy Guidance
 - Performance & Reporting
 - Technical Assistance
<http://www.doleta.gov/programs/wia.cfm>
 - WIA Youth Services Information:
http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/
 - Toolkit for Front-Line Services for Youth:
http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/Toolkit-improve.cfm
 - America's Service Locator - tool to locate American Job Centers across the country: <http://www.servicelocator.org/>
 - Career One-Stop - tools to help job seekers, employer, students, and career professionals: <http://www.careeronestop.org/>
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WIA Programs

WIA Service Delivery

The Workforce Investment Act provides the operating instructions for the system. It is also the system's main funding source through three distinct programs defined by the age and circumstances of individual job seekers: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. Services for these programs are delivered through One-Stop Career Centers which are branded nationally as American Job Centers, and occasionally known by other names locally.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

The Adult program funds employment and training services for job seekers 18 years or older. When local workforce investment funds are limited, WIA allows the local area to implement a "priority of service" policy that directs Adult program funds to public assistance recipients and other low-income participants.

The Dislocated Worker program covers employment and training services for:

- An individual who has been terminated or laid off, or who has received a notice of termination or layoff from employment; and is eligible for or has exhausted entitlement to unemployment compensation or is not eligible for unemployment but can demonstrate "attachment to the workforce" and is unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation
 - Has been terminated or laid off or received notice of layoff as a result of a permanent closure or substantial layoff at any plant, facility or enterprise or the employer has announced closure within 180 days
 - Was self-employed but is unemployed as a result of general economic conditions or because of natural disasters
 - Or is a displaced homemaker
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Youth Programs

The Workforce Investment Act Youth program funds employment and training services for low-income Youth, ages 14-21, although the law also allows a local area to serve up to five percent of youth participants who do not meet the low-income criterion. Both types of youth participants, however, must also fall into one or more of the following specific categories:

- Basic literacy skills deficient
 - School drop-out
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WIA Programs, *continued*

Youth Programs, ***continued***

- Homeless, runaway, or foster child
 - Pregnant or parenting
 - Offender
 - Or an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment
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WIA Services

Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

Adults and Dislocated Workers may access a continuum of services organized into three levels: core, intensive and training. Participants move along the continuum when they receive one or more services at a level and are still unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency.

Core Services

Core services are provided to Adult and Dislocated Workers, and are designed to identify and assess participant skills and qualifications as well as determine eligibility for additional services if needed to obtain employment. Core services include:

- Outreach, intake, and orientation to the information and other services available through the workforce system
 - Eligibility determination
 - Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, ability, and supportive service needs
 - Job search and placement and, where appropriate, career counseling
 - Provision of labor market information
 - Provision of program performance information and program cost information re: education and training providers
 - Provision of local workforce investment area performance information
 - Provision of information regarding availability of supportive services
 - Provision of information regarding filing Unemployment Compensation claims and applications for financial aid for training and education programs not funded through WIA
 - Follow-up services for WIA participants placed in employment
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Assessment

An assessment provides information about the participant's skill levels, interests and supportive service needs while the job search and placement assistance helps to determine whether the individual is unable to obtain employment, and therefore, requires more intensive services.

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WIA Services, *continued*

Assessment, *continued*

The decision on which core services to provide and the timing of the delivery may be made on a case by case basis at the local level depending on the needs of the participant.

Intensive Services

When a participant has received one or more core services and is still unable to secure employment that leads to self-sufficiency (as determined by the State or Local Board), he or she may receive intensive services. Intensive services provide more in-depth assistance to connect job seekers with available employment. Services are often focused on work readiness, such as soft skills instruction, literacy activities, basic computer skills, internships or work experience. Intensive services should be driven by the participant needs outlined in the assessment and the skill needs of employers in the local community. Intensive services include:

- Diagnostic testing and other comprehensive or specialized assessment tools
 - In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and goals
 - Development of an individual employment plan
 - Individual or group counseling and career planning
 - Short-term pre-vocational services
 - Case management for participants seeking training services
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Training Services

Training services may be made available to Adult and Dislocated Worker participants who have received at least one intensive service and are still unable to obtain or retain self-sufficient employment; and, through an in-depth evaluation by the local workforce center staff, have been determined to have the skills and qualifications needed to successfully complete a selected training program. Participants must also be unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay for the training. The selected training program must be in high-demand for the local area and should provide the skill sets needed by local employers.

WIA Services, *continued*

Individual Training Accounts

Training services are typically provided through Individual Training Accounts (ITA). An ITA:

- Is an account established on behalf of the participant and funded by the Local Board
- Allows Adult and DW participants to purchase training services from eligible providers they select in consultation with a case manager
- Allows payments to be made in a variety of ways, including the electronic transfer of funds, vouchers or other appropriate methods
- Can be limited in both duration and amount by the Local Board

ITA Exceptions

Local Boards may skip the ITA process and contract directly with training providers for services when:

- There are an insufficient number of providers in the local area
- There is a training program of demonstrated effectiveness offered in the area to serve special populations
- The services provided are on-the-job training (OJT) or customized training

On-The-Job/ Customized Training

OJT is a contract between the Local Board and an employer in which the employer provides on-the-job training for a WIA participant in exchange for the reimbursement of up to 50% of the wage rate to compensate for the extraordinary training costs. The employer hires the participant and commits to retain the participant upon successful completion of the OJT.

An OJT contract must be limited to the period of time required for a participant to become proficient in the occupation for which the training is being provided. WIA prohibits Local WIBs from entering into OJT contracts with employers who have previously exhibited a pattern of failing to provide OJT participants with continued, long-term employment.

Customized training is training designed to meet the special requirements of an employer or group of employers that is conducted with a commitment by the employer to employ or continue to employ the participant upon successful completion of the training. The employer pays for not less than 50% of the cost of the training.

WIA Services, *continued*

Eligible Training Providers

The Workforce Investment Act emphasizes customer choice, system performance, and continuous improvement. The eligible training provider process is part of the strategy for achieving those goals. Local Boards, in partnership with the state, identify training providers and programs with performance outcomes that qualify them to receive Workforce Investment Act funds to train adults and dislocated workers. Those identified providers and programs are maintained at the state and local levels on the “Eligible Training Provider List.” Adult and Dislocated Worker participants must select training providers and programs from that list.

WIA Youth Services

The Workforce Investment Act Youth program is designed to meet the current and future employment and training needs of both in and out-of-school youth in local communities. The framework of local WIA Youth programs must:

- Provide an objective assessment of each youth participant
- Develop an Individual Service Strategy
- Provide preparation for post-secondary educational opportunities and linkages between academic and occupational learning as well as preparation for employment

In addition, the WIA Youth program requires that competitively procured service providers must make ten unique program elements available to youth participants. Those ten elements include:

1. Tutoring, study skills training and dropout prevention strategies
 2. Alternative secondary school offerings
 3. Summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning
 4. Paid and unpaid work experience
 5. Occupational skill training
 6. Leadership development opportunities
 7. Supportive services
 8. Adult mentoring
 9. Follow-up services
 10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling
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WIA Supportive Services

Local Policies

While the availability of supportive services is required for Youth programs, the Workforce Investment Act also allows for the provision of supportive services to Adult and Dislocated Worker participants.

Supportive services may be provided to Adults and Dislocated Workers when they are:

- Participating in core, intensive and training services
- Unable to obtain supportive services through other programs
- Need supportive services to participate in WIA activities

This is accomplished through the adoption of a local supportive services policy that ensures resource and service coordination in the local area.

These services may include, but are not limited to:

- Transportation (bus passes, car repairs, subway, etc.)
 - Child care
 - Dependent care
 - Housing assistance
 - Needs-related payments
 - Needs-related payments provide financial assistance to participants to enable them to participate in WIA activities
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