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State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

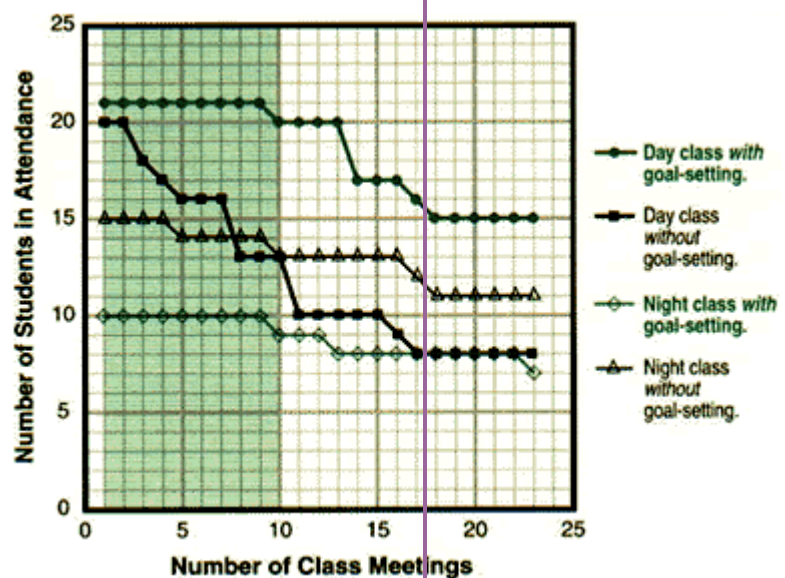**Peter McWalters**
Commissioner

POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE LETTER: GOAL SETTING FOR ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS
[PPGL-0601]

Introduction:

Adults seek adult education services for a variety of reasons - some may be personal, such as completion of high school or becoming a citizen; others may be job-related, reflecting the need to improve skills to retain a job or advance in one; while still others may be family-oriented, such as a desire to increase involvement in their child's education. Whatever the reason for enrolling in an adult education program, a vital component for successfully persisting is a positive goal setting experience.

Evidence suggests that goal setting has a positive impact on adult student persistence. Pamela Meader's, *The Effects of Continuing Goal-Setting on Persistence in a Math Classroom* states, "…students who persisted in an adult basic education course attributed this persistence, in some measure, to goal-setting."

Comparing Persistence of Learners in Classes *With* Goal-Setting Versus Classes *Without* Goal-Setting

Taken from *The Effects of Continuing Goal-Setting on Persistence in a Math Classroom*, NCSALL *Focus on Basics*, March 2000

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Additionally, the results of John Commings' et. al., Persistence Study in *Helping Adults Persist: Four Supports* (NCSALL, *Focus on Basics*, March 2000), "Adults who mentioned a specific goal, such as 'help my children' or 'get a better job' when asked why they had entered a program, were more likely to persist than those who either mentioned no goal or said they were doing it for themselves."

It is safe to say that all adults enrolling in an adult education program have at least one goal: development of literacy and numeracy skills. Although students may have other goals, goals related to the National Reporting System (NRS) accountability requirements include obtaining employment, retaining employment, achieving a high school diploma or the GED or other secondary credential (i.e., EDP), and entering postsecondary education and training. While students may select one of these four goals, the goal of educational gain (development of literacy and numeracy skills) still remains.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) and National Reporting System (NRS) require that all programs have a documented student goal setting process. This goal setting process shall assist students in setting realistic short-term and long-term goals, which shall, in turn, impact program accountability and the results reported to the U. S. Department of Education under the requirements of the NRS.

Goal Setting Components:

In developing a goal setting process, each program must assure the following:

- Staff understands reporting requirements of the NRS and the implications effective student goal setting has on student persistence and program accountability.

- Staff understands the difference between NRS-related goals (a goal achievable within a program year) and instructional goals.

- A clear process (e.g., timeline, activities, responsible persons, etc.) exists for intake, orientation, goal setting, and assessment and placement, including an effective method by which to convey this to students entering the program.

- Staff understands the implications of setting realistic, short-term student goals have on goal achievement within a program year and continuing to pursue long-term goals. Strategies shall be developed to help set both.

  > For example, a student may come to a program with a self-stated goal of obtaining a GED. However, when the assessment is completed and results shared with the student, it indicates the student's skill levels would likely hinder him/her from attaining a GED by the end of the program year. A short-term goal of gaining an educational level(s) in reading or numeracy may be more appropriate as a short-term goal and earning a GED reserved for a long-term goal.

- Staff understands the potential implications other factors (i.e., educational barriers, family obligations, experience, etc.) have on goal achievement and, therefore, assist the student in setting realistic goals with these in mind.

- A time shall be designated for students to be assessed to ensure proper placement. Assessment results shall be communicated to the student in order to inform the goal setting process.

- When assisting students with the goal setting process, staff consider the following, (1) each student's self-stated goal(s); (2) each student's skill proficiency; and (3) professional knowledge and experience before offering a thoughtful recommendation, based on available data, for the best course of action.

- Staff assists students in developing an individual educational plan to work toward their goals.

- A process for revisiting goals for the purposes of refining existing goals and celebrating progress toward goal achievement must exist.

- Interim- and post-testing results shall inform instruction and the goal revisiting process.

- All staff understand the program services and goal setting process – and its importance to student persistence and achievement.

- The goal setting process should be an ongoing process of initially setting, informing curricula and instruction, revisiting, celebrating progress, and refining. It should be of sufficient intensity and duration to ensure student achievement.

Please find below two of the program quality indicators for Intake and Orientation and Goal Setting produced by one of the Governor's Adult Literacy Task Force committees and refined by a program staffed work group. These can assist in defining elements to include in your intake, orientation, and goal setting processes.

Intake and Orientation

Intake and Orientation Standard: The program has an intake and orientation process that enables potential students and staff to determine if there is an appropriate match between student goals and program services.	Supporting evidence may include (but is not limited to):
✓ *Agency ensures all staff members are welcoming and respectful, client-centered, and have knowledge necessary to provide accurate information regarding all program services.* ✓ *Staff informs entering students of available support services particularly those that facilitate attendance (e.g. childcare, transportation).* ✓ *Staff clearly informs entering students of responsibilities expected of them such as attendance policies.* ✓ *Staff conducts intake interview and assessment, consistent with the program's instructional approach and offerings, to guide placement.* ✓ *Staff provides informed referrals as needed.*	• Orientation of new staff • Documentation of student orientation process and materials • Written intake form, completed and in student files • Written student policies • Student satisfaction surveys • Documentation of placements and needed changes of those placements • Staff knowledge of other adult education program offerings

Goal Setting

Goal Setting Standard: The program has an established process to assist students in long- and short-term goal setting. ✓ *Staff assists students to identify educational and career goals and to assess progress toward those goals.* ✓ *Staff assists students to recognize and build on their strengths, interests, and experiences in developing goals.* ✓ *Staff assists students to create individual education plans to work toward their goals.* ✓ *Plans and goals are reviewed and updated regularly.*	Supporting evidence may include (but is not limited to): • Student goal plans or individual education plans • Evidence of periodic review and progress toward goals documented in, for example, student file, portfolio, education plan, etc.