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POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE LETTER: INTAKE, ENROLLMENT, AND PERSISTENCE FOR ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS [PPGL-0605]

Background:

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II Workforce Investment Act requires programs to provide adult educational activities that are of sufficient duration and intensity in order to ensure students achieve their intended goals.

The Rhode Island Office of Adult Education, at this juncture, only considers enrollment of staff- or volunteer-assisted activities as eligible activities (e.g., classroom instruction, one-on-one tutoring, staff-assisted learning resources centers, etc). Independent or self-directed forms of distance learning, at this juncture, are not allowable.

As the statute states, all eligible providers must agree to include twelve (12) considerations, all of which contribute to student persistence – improving attendance and outcomes – in their program designs. These include:

- Establishing measurable goals for participant outcomes;
- Improving the literacy (and numeracy) of adults and families;
- Serving those most in need of literacy (and numeracy) services;
- Offering a program design that:
 - Is of sufficient intensity and duration for participants to achieve substantial learning gains; and
 - Uses instructional practices that research has proven to be effective in teaching individuals to read;
- Providing educational activities that are built on a strong foundation of research and effective educational practice;
- Effectively employing advances in technology;
- Providing learning in real life contexts;
- Staffing the program with well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators;
- Coordinating with other available resources in the community;
- Offering flexible schedules and support services;
- Maintaining high-quality data in a management information system; and
- Serving populations with demonstrated need for English literacy programs.*

*Paraphrased from The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA II)

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Adhering to these considerations will substantially increase the chances of a program's success in serving adults in need of literacy (and numeracy) services. In an effort to ensure programs foster good intake, enrollment, and attendance practices, the following policy guidelines have been developed.

Intake Defined:

The Office of Adult Education (OAE) recommends CALIS' intake form be used as a basis for student intake (since it aligns with NRS requirements and coincides with the flow of CALIS data element requirements). The CALIS form may be customized by adding program-specific elements. This is subject to change as the additional phases of CALIS are implemented.

The intake process includes:

- ✓ gathering prospective student information (with CALIS' intake form);
- ✓ sharing program information, as well as conducting other activities programs have determined helpful in ascertaining prospective students' "fit" with and potential success in the program (i.e., interviews, caseworker information, etc.);
- ✓ orientation (providing information about services and referral agencies, explaining the CALIS database, etc);
- ✓ initial goal setting (gathering information to determine how best to serve the student (refer to *PPGL-0601 Policy and Practice Guidance Letter: Goal Setting for Adult Education Students* for further refinement of student goals);
- ✓ assessment (refer to *PPGL-0603 Policy and Practice Guidance Letter: Assessment for Adult Education Students* for approved assessments and guidelines); and
- ✓ placement (determining, based on intake processes, orientation, initial goal setting, and assessment, where best a student will be served within the program).

Enrollment:

Adult education participants are officially enrolled upon meeting eligibility requirements and completing intake, which includes conducting intake processes, orientation, initial goal setting, assessment, and placement.

CALIS has the capability of tracking intake hours up to 25 hours. After an approved assessment (refer to *Policy and Practice Guidance Letter: Assessment for Adult Education Students [PPGL-0603]*) is administered, the prospective student shall be appropriately placed with a class(es)/tutor, and may be enrolled. After the participant is enrolled, instructional hours shall be entered in CALIS at least every two weeks for National Reporting System (NRS) and data decision-making purposes.

While states must report for the NRS required measures on all students who receive twelve (12) hours or more of service, CALIS begins counting instructional hours or hours of enrollment after intake has been completed and a student educationally placed. The U.S. Department of Education uses NRS measures pertaining to students with twelve (12) or more hours to judge State performance, including eligibility for incentive grants. However, CALIS is able to track instructional hours starting with hour one (1). Twelve (12) hours of instruction are also required before student measures are reported by the Department for Human Services and its Project Opportunity program.

The Office of Adult Education's goal setting policy includes ongoing goal setting and follow-up, beyond initial, intake goal setting. This ongoing goal setting and follow-up may be included in instructional hours – unlike the initial goal setting referred to above. (Refer to *Policy and Practice Guidance Letter: Goal Setting for Adult Education Students [PPGL-0601]*.)

Separation and Re-enrollment:

Participants shall be separated when there is clear indication that the student has left the program. Otherwise, a reasonable rule of thumb, used by many programs, is separating non-participating students after 90 consecutive days of inactivity OR when a student has achieved his/her program goal. CALIS will separate ALL students at the end of the fiscal year, and automatically re-enroll them in the new fiscal year. The only exception is for FY2006/07 ESL students who, due to NRS changes within the ESL functioning levels, will be separated and re-entered with the designation of ESL06.

Reminder: When re-enrolling separated students, the intake process is particularly important. As implied in the *Policy and Practices Guidance Letter: Goal Setting for Adult Education Students [PPGL-0601]*, it is ultimately incumbent upon the program to determine if its adult education program services are a "fit" with students' needs. For example, students who have recently separated due to poor attendance and/or lack of motivation may not be the best candidates for immediate re-enrollment. Therefore, programs must carefully consider reasons for poor attendance and/or lack of motivation in an attempt to assess and resolve through support services what part barriers might have played in their stopping out.

Persistence (Attendance):

A vital component for students successfully persisting in adult education is a positive goal setting experience. Research 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." (Refer to *Policy and Practice Guidance Letter: Goal Setting for Adult Education [PPGL-0601]*.)

Programs must also consider whether to allow open enrollment (where students may begin instruction on any day) or to impose managed enrollment (where students must begin instruction on a specific day). Open enrollment offers learning opportunities to students who are limited by a regular schedule. However, since each student is at a different point in the curriculum, instruction must be individualized. While managed enrollment may exclude students whose schedules are always changing, group (managed) instruction is easier to manage since students are at the same point in the curriculum. If students perform well in both types of classes, programs should offer the type of class that best fits the needs of their students. If one type works well and the other does not, programs should consider offering the type that works better. J. Comings, *Establishing an Evidence-Based Adult Education System*, NCSALL, September 2003.

There is also initial evidence that suggests a relationship may exist between participant cohorts/learning communities and persistence. Finally, some studies indicate a relationship between when students are enrolled in a program and the time of year (i.e., persisting longer when they begin in the fall).

In addition to conducting ongoing goal setting and follow-up and carefully considering the method of class offerings, it is important for programs to do the following to improve student persistence.

- Programs shall create an attendance policy that maximizes the program's ability to assist students with achieving measurable outcomes which includes:
 - An expectation that students will attend all class hours appropriately assigned to them following intake.
 - Processes by which instructors/counselors may review attendance on a regular basis to determine if students require additional support services to overcome barriers to class/tutor participation. Re-visiting support services/systems needs is imperative. Research has suggested that these can

assist students in removing barriers that would otherwise impede them from persisting in educational programs (e.g., childcare).

- Ensuring sufficient intensity and duration of educational activities.
 - Research indicates most significant gains are realized after at least 150 hours of instruction
 - Programs shall adhere to publisher guidelines for interim- and post-testing, most of which suggest no less than 50 hours between pre- and progress or post-testing (Refer to *Policy and Practice Guidance Letter: Assessment for Adult Education [PPGL-0603]*.)
- Defining excused and unexcused absences, as deemed feasible. Establishing number of acceptable excused and unexcused absences, procedures for documentation, and consequences if limits are exceeded.
- Establishing protocol (i.e., instructor’s discretion, so many partial hours equals one unexcused absence, etc.) for “partial” hours of attendance.
- Programs should also recognize that offering different learning options (i.e., tutoring, small group, individualized programming) – particularly in cases where this kind of intervention may temporarily assist a student in overcoming learning barriers – facilitating his/her persistence in the program.
 - Student attendance hours shall be entered into CALIS at least every two weeks.

In addition to the above considerations, students need sufficient instructional hours to achieve learning gains. Programs (with the potential exception of volunteer-based programs) shall strive to meet or exceed between 100 and 150 hours of instruction per year, which is a level of services supported by research.

In addition, there is emerging empirical evidence that class intensity (i.e., number of instructional hours per week) matters in terms of outcomes. At a minimum programs should strive to provide four (4) to five (5) hours of instruction per week with the six (6) to 12 hour range being most desirable. At the upper end of the intensity range, programs should carefully consider whether 20 or more hours per week would result in additional meaningful gains.

These ranges can be used to identify an appropriate level of intensity based on the needs, interest, and availability of students and their educational setting (e.g., workplace).

In an effort to assist programs with defining elements to include in their persistence policy and procedures, please find below the program quality indicator for Learner Outcomes produced by one of the Governor’s Adult Literacy Task Force committees and refined by a program staffed work group.

Learner Outcomes

<p>Standard: The program supports learners to progress toward their goals as parents, workers and citizens and to gain skills and knowledge to progress to higher literacy levels, obtain secondary degree or certificate, enroll in post-secondary education or job training, secure employment or advancement in their job.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Learners remain in the program long enough to meet their own education goals. ✓ Program maintains linkages necessary for students to prepare for and enter employment, higher education, or job training. 	<p>Supporting evidence may include (but is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records and reasons for leaving documented and on file. • Evidence of progress toward goals and achievements documented in student files, portfolios, records, etc. • Evidence of active collaborations/ communications with one-stops, job training programs, and transition to college programs (e.g. presentations and informational materials onsite, field trips to one-stops or local colleges, referrals and follow-ups to next steps).
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Project Opportunity:

FIP parents shall attend all scheduled program hours in Project Opportunity (PO) programs, which includes, 20 hours for parents with children under 6 years of age and 30 hours for parents with child 6 years and older. Parents shall have a maximum of 10 excused absences per calendar year, not more than 2 excused absences in any given month, in addition to approved holidays.

- Holidays
 - Pending Federal approval of Rhode Island's Work Verification Plan, see approved holidays list (attached).
 - When any legal holiday falls on a Sunday, the day following it is a full holiday, with the exception of Armistic Day/Veteran's Day.
 - When a legal holiday falls on a non-workday * Saturday or Sunday * the holiday usually is observed on Monday (if the holiday falls on Sunday) or Friday (if the holiday falls on Saturday).
 - In addition, Rhode Island will consider any day that the individual cannot report to work or training or education, due to the closure of the institution or the program, as a holiday, with the exception of the extended summer break in academic institutions.

- Excused/Unexcused Absence
 - Partially attended days may be counted as either excused or unexcused absences at the discretion of the program coordinator. There shall be no unexcused absences.
 - The FIP parent is responsible for documenting excused absences, but the PO program coordinator has discretion to classify an absence as excused without requiring parental documentation, as when a parent calls in late or absent to attend to a sick child for one day only without having to secure a doctor's note. Absences of two or more consecutive days require parent documentation.
 - Since there will be no unexcused absences, programs must resolve these absences within 3 days or terminate the parent from the program while notifying the parent and the DHS social caseworker as to the specific circumstances and last date of attendance.
 - When a FIP parent is absent in order to attend a DHS appointment, evidence of the appointment must be submitted to the program coordinator, however, the absence shall be considered a necessary component of the parent's continued engagement and shall not be considered in the tally of excused absences. If the parent does not provide evidence of the DHS appointment, the absence may be considered either an unexcused or excused absence at the discretion of the program coordinator.

Also find attached a *Bi-Weekly Attendance/Time Calendar* – to be attached to DHS FIP 103s beginning 10/1/06.