

Phoenix Workforce Connection Youth Program

Section: II-D

Objective Assessment

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BACKGROUND

Active participant engagement leads to positive outcomes. In addition, specific program elements have direct impacts on WIA outcome measures. Thorough assessment of each individual's needs will increase successful program outcomes. Tracking youth participation will help manage the process of keeping participants on track for completion of short-term skill attainment goals and preparation to move into long-term employment, education, or training.

POLICY

Objective Assessment is always the first WIA funded activity.

As a result of the objective assessment process, the participant will learn more about his/her skills, knowledge, and abilities in relation to secondary and post secondary school education goals, vocational training goals, and/or career goals. The youth program service provider will learn about the participant's educational levels; work readiness and prior work experience strengths and abilities; barriers that may hinder returning/remaining in school to complete basic education, hinder occupational skills training or hinder obtaining/retaining employment. Determining educational skills will also assist the provider with determining goals for skill attainment. Please see Skill Attainment section.)

An objective assessment of skill levels and service needs of each participant is to be completed. This assessment shall include an examination of basic skills, occupational skills, educational background, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes, attitudes towards work, motivation, behavioral patterns affecting employment potential, supportive service needs, developmental needs, leadership needs, and family situation. The assessment shall include an evaluation of the participant's barriers to employment including financial resources and supportive service needs. The assessment is used by youth program service providers to develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) to identify and provide a method to obtain employment and accomplish education and training goals.

Younger youth (ages 14 through 18) shall be assessed using standardized evaluation tools for deficiencies in basic, occupational and work readiness skills to establish goals for the required Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Skills Attainment Performance Measure. An assessment to determine presumptive need and pre-assessment tools for each skill attainment category are available in Arizona's Skill Attainment System manual. The pre-assessment and skill attainment must be included in the hard copy file. The youth program service provider must set a minimum of one skill attainment goal

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per year, and may determine whether the youth can achieve more than one goal in the same period.

Older youth (ages 19 through 21) are assessed with a focus on education and/or employment. Barriers to employment and training are evaluated and take into account participant's family situation, work history, education, occupational skills, interests, attitudes toward work, motivation, behavior patterns affecting employment potential, financial resources, supportive service needs, and personal employment information as it relates to the local labor market.

The objective assessment is to be a client-centered, diagnostic approach to evaluate the needs of participants without regard to services or training programs available. It should include a full array of options including structured interviews, career guidance instruments, basic skills tests, and behavioral observations. The objective assessment process begins with an interaction between the participant and youth program service provider and resulting in a mutually developed ISS, which is the plan of action for training and/or services. This process may include structured interviews, written tests, performance tests (i.e. skills and/or work samples including those that measure interest and capability to train in nontraditional employment), behavior observations, interest and/or attitude inventories, career guidance instruments, aptitude test, and basic skills test.

The objective assessment shall include, as appropriate, assisting the participant to establish eligibility for Pell Grants, student loans and other forms of financial aid. This examination of the capabilities, vocational potential, barriers to employment, and supportive service needs of a participant is to be used to develop a realistic employment goal and a service strategy. The objective assessment is an ongoing process and should not be viewed as a one-time event, even though the activity may be closed in VOS upon completion. The objective assessment is to be revised regularly when additional needs are identified or goals achieved.

A new comprehensive objective assessment is not required if the youth program service provider determines it is appropriate to use a recent assessment conducted under another education or training program, provided that the assessment has been completed within six months of application for services. All youth program service providers and partners shall accept the assessment outcomes and data of other service collaborators as long as the necessary, accurate and appropriate information is provided, can be translated into a grade level equivalency, and be repeatable for post-testing.