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ABSTRACT

The 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) consolidates more than 70 programs and gives states the flexibility to partner with local governments to develop streamlined services providing universal access. Because adult education and postsecondary vocational education are required partners in the one-stop systems being established through Title I of the WIA, being represented among those perceived as providing leadership for development of state and local work force development systems is an important issue for adult and vocational educators alike. For both adult and postsecondary vocational educators, becoming key players in the work force development system will depend partially on their ability to collaborate with other agencies, particularly those involved as one-stop partners. Another issue for adult educators is how to combine literacy development with work force education. Because the individual training accounts mandated in the WIA will give adults much more choice in selecting where they will be trained, institutions known for their high-quality training will undoubtedly benefit from passage of the WIA, whereas institutions lacking such a reputation could suffer because they will no longer automatically receive students. (An annotated bibliography constituting 75% of this document contains 18 print resources and 2 Web sites related to the implementation of the WIA.) (MN)

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The Workforce Investment Act: Some Implications for Adult and Vocational Education

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), passed in 1998, grew out of a desire to reform the nation's work force policy from a "patchwork" system to one that is more integrated and that focuses on customer satisfaction and performance outcomes (King 1999). It consolidates over 70 programs and gives states the flexibility to partner with local governments to develop streamlined services that provide universal access (King 1999; Pantazis 1999b). Key elements of the WIA include the following: business-led boards, one-stop career centers, individual training accounts for skill training, consumer report cards, accountability, and improved youth programs with funding for new out-of-school youth programs (Clark 1999). In its reforms, the WIA is "unlike any change in workforce development thus far" ("Testimony of the National Association of Counties" 1999, p. 2), and it has implications for providers of education and training in the fields of adult, career, and vocational education. Some of the emerging issues are highlighted in this *Alert*.

Leadership. Adult education and postsecondary vocational education are required partners in one-stop systems being established through Title I of the WIA. Therefore, being represented among those perceived as providing leadership for the development of state and local work force development systems is an important issue for both adult and vocational educators (Grubb 1999; Jurmo 1998). Jurmo (1998) provides guidelines for adult educators to use in getting to the table, but based on their research, Grubb et al. (1999) suggest that adult educators might not be considered key players because of perceptions about the quality of their programs. WIA's emphasis on accountability means that programs and services will be judged on outcomes, including customer satisfaction. In some states, vocational education is already well integrated in the existing work force development system; in others, it remains outside the system (Grubb 1999).

Collaboration. For both adult and postsecondary vocational educators, becoming key players in the work force development system will depend partially on their ability to collaborate with other agencies, particularly those involved as one-stop partners. In many local areas, a great deal of local coordination already exists (Grubb 1999; Imel and Zengler 1999). Relationships between existing collaborative groups and the emerging one-stop centers may have to be worked out as a part of WIA implementation (Imel and Zengler 1999).

Appropriate Curriculum. Another issue for adult educators is how to combine literacy development with work force education (Imel 1998; Jobs for the Future 1999). Traditionally, the focus has been on the former, but the emphasis in WIA on work force development means that adult educators must attend to work-related learning as well.

Customer Choice and Satisfaction. Individual training accounts (ITAs) will give adults much more choice in selecting where they will be trained (Pantazis 1999a). Institutions known for their high-quality training will undoubtedly benefit from this feature of the WIA (American Association for Community Colleges 1998) but those who do not have such a reputation could suffer because they will no longer automatically receive students.

The WIA is a complex piece of legislation designed to make far-reaching changes in the work force development system. A few of the issues related to its implementation have been described here. The following sources can be consulted for additional information.

Resources

American Association for Community Colleges. "The Workforce Investment Act: Implications for Community Colleges." October 13, 1998. <www.aacc.nche.edu/leg/docs/WIA.htm>

Highlights the employment and training provisions of the WIA that are of particular interest to community colleges and discusses implications of the provisions for participation in the delivery of employment and training services.

Brustein, M., and Mahler, M. *The Administrator's Guide to the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998*. Washington, DC: National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, n.d.

Directed toward the administrator and practitioner, this guide contains information for fulfilling the requirements of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the WIA. It includes an overview of the legislation as well as a detailed analysis of Title II and references to Title II contained in other parts of the WIA.

Clark, C. S. "One-Stop Career Centers Are Open for Business." *State Legislatures* 25, no. 10 (December 1999): 32-33.

Describes how state agencies in Minnesota are cooperating to offer a variety of employment services in a single location, which is what Congress has in mind when the WIA was passed in 1998.

Grubb, W. N. "From Isolation to Integration: Occupational Education and the Emerging Systems of Workforce Development." *Centerpoint* no. 3. Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, March 1999. (ED 429 184)

Summarizes a decade of research that examined the shifting roles of education and training and the efforts to create more coherent and effective work force preparation systems. The role of the WIA in system development is discussed.

Grubb, W. N.; Badway, N.; Bell, D.; Chi, B.; King, C.; Herr, J.; Prince, H.; Kazis, R.; Hicks, L.; and Taylor, J. C. *Toward Order from Chaos. State Efforts to Reform Workforce Development Systems*. Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1999. (ED 427 172)

A 10-state study of work force development efforts in Florida, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin is described. A section outlining implications for state and federal policy includes the likely effects of the WIA.

Imel, S. *One-Stop Career Centers*. ERIC Digest No. 208. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University, 1999. <ericacve.org/digests.asp>

Provides an overview of one-stop career centers, a key component of the WIA. Includes a discussion of the issues in their continued development.

Imel, S. *Work Force Education or Literacy Development: Which Road Should Adult Education Take?* ERIC Digest No. 193. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University, 1998. (ED 418 248) <ericacve.org/digests.asp>

Describes how the increasing emphasis on work force development as a policy goal has heightened the debate about the goals and purposes of adult basic education.

Imel, S., and Zengler, C. *For the Common Good: Local Linkage Team Case Studies*. Columbus: Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University, 1999. <literacy.kent.edu/CommonGood/facts.html>

Factors leading to successful interagency collaboration at the local level are identified and the relationship between existing teams and the emerging one-stop system is described.

Implementing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. A White Paper. Washington, DC: Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 1998. (ED 427 177)

Provides an overview of the WIA and its implementation. Outlines the fundamental changes in the service delivery system including one-stop service delivery, provision of a continuum of services for adults and dislocated workers, and availability of core career development and training services throughout customers' lifetimes.

Jobs for the Future. *Work-Related Learning Guide for Family Literacy and Adult Education Organizations*. Boston, MA: JFF, 1999. <www.jff.org/programs/cluster3/projects/familit.html>

Provides assistance for integrating work-related learning into family literacy and adult education programs. Examples of actual practices used in programs are used to illustrate many of the topics covered.

Jurmo, P. "Integrating Adult Basic Education with Workforce Development and Workplace Change. How National-Level Policy Makers Can Help." East Brunswick, NJ: Learning Partnerships, 1998.

Based on a review of literature and work with focus groups, proposes guidelines for adult educators to following in creating a role for themselves in the new work force development systems, especially those being developed under the WIA.

King, C. T. "The State at Work: The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and What It Means for Texas." *Texas Business Review*, October 1999, pp. 1-5.

Describes how efforts in Texas to reform its work force development system mesh with the requirements of the WIA. Outlines work that still needs to be done.

McNeil, P. W. "Responsibilities and Opportunities Created by Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998." *Program Memorandum- OVAE/DVTE-99-11*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, May 24, 1999. <www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/VocEd/InfoBoard/title1_9911.html>

This memorandum addresses 24 issues related to Title I of the WIA that have raised concerns for state and local education agencies. Among those addressed are the following: local entities qualified to be one-stop partners, responsibilities of partners, performance and cost information offered through one-stop centers, sharing student assessment information, and the extent of supportive services (e.g., career guidance) that will be provided.

Pantazis, C. "Individual Training Accounts." *Training and Development* 53, no. 10 (October 1999a): 53-55.

Under the WIA, states are allowed to create individual training accounts (ITAs) that let adults purchase the training they feel is appropriate for their needs. A number of existing federal programs that support work force training are described and background information on the development of the ITA concept is provided.

Pantazis, C. "The New Workforce Investment Act." *Training and Development* 53, no. 8 (August 1999b): 48-50.

Provides a concise overview of the WIA including the boards that will be created, one-stop career centers, and the opportunities provided for business.

Savner, S. *Key Implementation Decisions Affecting Low-Income Adults under the Workforce Investment Act*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, August 1999. <www.clasp.org/pubs/jobseducation/kellwia2.htm>

The WIA changes priorities for services among adults and will have a significant impact on the availability and quality of job training and other employment-related services for low-income adults. This paper explains those changes and suggests how to become involved in the WIA-related decision-making process at both the state and local levels.

Testimony of the National Association of Counties to the Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Safety and Training of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Washington, DC, July 1, 1999. <www.icesa.org/articles/template.cfm?results_art_filename=nacotest.htm>

Based on initial efforts to implement the WIA, this paper presents immediate and future concerns related to the WIA from the perspective of the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Training and Employment Professionals.

Working for America Institute. "Why the Workforce Investment Act Is Important to Organized Labor." *Workforce Investment Act Fact Sheets*. Washington, DC: AFL-CIO Working for American Institute, 1999. <www.workingforamerica.org/documents/Factsheets/factsheet1.htm>

Outlines opportunities for organized labor created by the WIA.

Websites

USWORKFORCE.ORG <usworkforce.org/>. This site, managed by the U. S. Department of Labor, is the gateway site to information on the Workforce Investment Act. Included is the official DOL word on WIA implementation as well as information about WIA state activities.

The Workforce ATM <www.icesa.org/>. Maintained by the Interstate Conference of Employment Security Agencies, this site provides access to training materials, discussion groups, and examples of what states are doing to implement the WIA.

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