

Workforce Issuance

100 DCS 03.101.5

Policy Information

To: MassHire Workforce Board Chairs
MassHire Workforce Board Directors
MassHire Career Center Directors
MassHire Fiscal Officers
MDCS Operations Managers

cc: WIOA State Partners

From: Beth Goguen, Director
MassHire Department of Career Services

Date: October 1, 2025

Subject: **Unified Workforce Development Complaint System and Appeals Process - Revised**

Purpose: To provide revised guidance to MassHire Workforce Boards, MassHire Career Center Operators, Fiscal Agents, Workforce Partners and Service Providers regarding the policies and procedures for the local workforce system to process complaints and address appeals brought by customers and/or other interested parties related to services/activities covered by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To provide guidance specific to alleged violations (by action or omission) related to services funded under Title I of WIOA and the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended.
2. to delineate procedures for initiating resolution of appeals, and for complaints related to other federal or state statutory requirements, including Equal Opportunity (EO); and
3. to provide consistency among complaint and appeals resolution policies and procedures across the MassHire Workforce Development System.

Revisions have been made to the following attachment:

A: Roles & Responsibilities & Required Elements

Designation of Local Hearings Officer. The Local MWB must designate a Hearings Officer who does not hold another position within the complaint system and is a board staff member. This individual must not be directly affected by or will not be implementing the resolution of the grievance or complaint.

The designated CO(s), EOO(s), designated back-up(s), and Hearings Officer must be a full time Career Center or Workforce Board employee to ensure stability and reliability in the timely receipt and responses to complaints in accordance with this policy.

All designations should carefully consider authority structures and any potential appearance of conflicts of interest.

Background: Requirements regarding the establishment and administration of complaint procedures related to services/activities funded under Title I of the WIOA are promulgated at 20 CFR, Ch. V, § 683.600 – 683.650. Requirements regarding services/activities funded under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as Amended (Title III of the Workforce Investment Act) and Final Rule effective January 23, 2024, are separately promulgated at 20 CFR Ch. V, § 658.400 - § 658.419; 20 CFR § 500 – 504 (Discontinuation of Services to Employers).

Regulations require the establishment of a local process to handle complaints brought forward by consumers of the respective program’s services. The processes for handling complaints as described in the two sets of regulations, however, employ two distinct sets of timeframes within which actions are to be taken and/or completed.

To further promote the ideal of a seamless Career Center system as envisioned by WIOA, the Commonwealth has developed a model for a unified complaint system that covers the requirements of both WIOA and Wagner-Peyser. The model streamlines state and local processes (including procedures pertaining to the appeal of local determinations to the State level and, beyond, if necessary, into a single, unified complaint system).

Policy: Consistent with the regulations promulgated at 20 CFR §679.290 and 20 CFR 683.600 – 683.650 and at 20 CFR Ch. V, §658.400 - §658.419, describes complaint system requirements for all direct recipients of WIOA Title I funds (excluding Job Corps) and Wagner-Peyser funds (Title III).

Direct Recipients of WIOA funds must either adopt the Commonwealth’s policy or develop and maintain a formal local unified process for the submission and resolution of complaints and appeals initiated by either customers or other

interested parties that are consistent with the guidance described herein and detailed in Attachments **A-A5** and Attachments **B-B3**.

Direct WIOA recipients include State Agency Partners, State and Local MassHire Workforce Boards (MWB), MassHire Career Center Operators (MCC), Career Center partners, local WIOA service providers, including eligible training providers and entities providing non-WIOA funds or resources to meet matching requirements or other conditions under WIOA.

Complaints may be submitted in accordance with this policy by an individual, group of Individuals, an employer or group of employers, a staff member, or an interested Third party acting on behalf of an individual, group of individuals, an employer, or group of Employers.

Under this policy, each Local Board must assure that the WIOA entities (including the Local MassHire Board, the MassHire Career Center(s), Fiscal Agent and local partners and service providers designate an appropriate number of Complaint Officers (CO), Equal Opportunity Officers (EOO) and back-ups whose responsibility it is to conduct the initial review of relevant complaints and to determine the correct jurisdiction and adjudication path to be followed to reach a resolution.

The designated CO(s), EOO(s) and designated back-up(s) can draw upon the expertise of program staff knowledgeable of the rules and regulations of the specific program(s) under which the complaint has been initiated provided the perception of any conflict of interest is determined to not exist.

Complaint Officers and EO Officers must:

- be readily available to receive a complaint from a customer and/or interested party.
- ensure that during the time of the filing of the complaint or thereafter, the perception of any conflict of interest has been determined not to exist. If a conflict has been identified, then the officer must recuse themselves immediately.

Any provisions contained in WIOA, the Wagner-Peyser Act, as Amended, their regulations, or other applicable laws and regulations shall apply even if not explicitly stated in this policy. Neither shall any part of this policy be construed to contradict current Federal requirements.

**Action
Required:**

This policy is in effect for all direct recipients of WIOA Title I and Wagner-Peyser (WIOA Title III) funds provided through the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), any of its subdivisions, or the Commonwealth Corporation for each Massachusetts Workforce Development Area.

This MassHire Unified Workforce Development Complaint System and Appeals Process Policy provides guidance on complaint and appeals resolution policies and procedures ensuring consistency with both WIOA regulations and the guidance provided herein, including the procedural guidance outlined in **Attachments A-A5: Processing Complaints and Attachments B-B3: Appeals and Hearings Process**.

As stated above, each MWB and MCC must adopt this policy or develop and maintain a formal local unified process for the submission and resolution of complaints and appeals. MassHire Department of Career Services (MDCS) highly recommends adoption of this policy to ensure all required elements are met.

Locally developed complaint policies must be submitted to the MDCS Complaint Officer for approval to ensure all regulatory requirements have been met prior to inclusion in Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

Local Areas adopting this policy should review their current Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to ensure the SOP includes a statement that the Local Area adopts MassHire Workforce Issuance #100 DCS – 03.101.3 Unified Workforce Development Complaint System and Appeals Process.

Effective: Effective immediately for all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds provided directly through the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), the MassHire Department of Career Services (MDCS) or Commonwealth Corporation.

References: Title 20, Chapter V, Parts: 658.400 – 419, 658.500 – 504, 679.290, 683.600 – 650, Title 29, Subtitle A, Parts 38, subpart 38.1 – 24, Subpart B 38.25 – 38.45, Subpart D 38.609 – 38.97, Wagner Peyser Final Rule effective January 23, 2024, and Training and Employment Guidance Letter 37-14

Inquiries: Please direct all questions to PolicyQA@mass.gov. Also, indicate Issuance number and description.

Attachments:

- A: Roles & Responsibilities & Required Elements (*Revised February 18, 2026*)
- A1: Jurisdiction (*Revised September 26, 2025*)
- A2: Processing Complaints (*Revised September 26, 2025*)
- A3: Complaint Process Flow Chart Informal Resolution
- A4: Complaint Process Flow Chart Formal Resolution
- A5: Jurisdiction & Timeframes Quick Reference Guide
- B: Appeals and Hearings Process
- B1: Sample Script- Oath-Opening Statement
- B2: Sample Notice of Hearing
- B3: Sample Notice of Determination
- C: Complaint System Official Complaint Form (ETA 8429)
- C1: Instructions to prepare Official Complaint Form (ETA 8429)

- D: CRC Complaint Information Form 2014 with Instructions - English*
- E: Unified Workforce Development System Complaint Log (*Revised September 26, 2025*)
- E1: Instructions to prepare Complaint Log (*Revised September 26, 2025*)
- F: How to File a Complaint Handout/English
- F1: How to File a Complaint Handout/ Spanish
- G: Training Provider Appeal Form
- H: Federal Contractor Statutes and Complaint Contact Information
- I: Training and Employment Guidance Letter 37-14
- J: Definitions
- K: Complaint Poster (English) PI (*Revised September 26, 2025*)
- K1: Complaint Poster (Spanish) PI (*Revised September 26, 2025*)
- L: "Equal Opportunity is the Law" Poster – English PI
- L1: "Equal Opportunity is the Law" Poster – Spanish PI
- M: WIOA Title, I Program/Training Approval/Denial Notification