



Workforce Issuance

100 DCS 19.107

☒ 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: Diane Hurley, Acting Director
MassHire Department of Career Services

Date: January 16, 2025

Subject: **WIOA Youth Individual Service Strategy**

Purpose: To provide guidance to MassHire Workforce Boards, MassHire Career Center Operators, Youth Committees, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Service Providers related to the requirement for the development of an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for youth participating in the WIOA Title I Youth program. This policy replaces WIA Policy #14-77 Youth Individuals Service Strategy Requirements.

Background: A well-developed ISS and related documentation is a vital part of case management required by WIOA law and Department of Labor (DOL) regulations. The WIOA Youth program requires that every youth participant be provided the benefit of an ISS (20 CFR 681.420 (a)(2)). As outlined in WIOA Section 129 (c)(1)(B), the ISS represents an individual plan for each young person and requires that all eligible youth have an ISS that is directly linked to one or more WIOA indicators of performance, identifies career pathways that include education and employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant taking into account objective assessments.

The ISS is a detailed, unique, individual strategy for each participant that is the basis for the overall strategy. The ISS is a living document, to be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

The youth program uses the ISS to update strategies and activities as they occur and/or as life circumstances require, and to document referral and contact information for services obtained from partner organizations. When reviewing the ISS, youth programs are to document a participant's progress, activities completed, benchmarks reached, and any other accomplishments. Additionally, the ISS is developed and modified in partnership with the participant and used to document achievements in measurable and attainable short-term and long-term goals that reflect the young person's interests and activities, and incorporate career pathway planning.

The ISS is planned in conjunction with the youth and utilizes a customer-focused, strengths-based, customized approach that addresses the unique strengths, challenges and needs of each participant. The ISS must be revisited regularly with the youth.

Policy:

In accordance with WIOA Section 129 (c)(1)(B), all eligible WIOA youth will have an Individualized Service Strategy (ISS) plan developed as required for program participation. The ISS developed for each youth participant must include:

1. Career planning and the results of objective assessments
2. Education and employment goals
3. Achievement objectives and services
4. A direct linkage to one or more performance indicators
5. Identification of an appropriate career pathway

Career Planning and the Objective Assessment

All youth must have an objective assessment of academic levels, basic skills, service needs, interests and aptitudes. Objective assessments are not used to determine WIOA eligibility, but rather, used to determine the necessary levels of education, training, and support services needed to achieve goals.

Assessments must also consider a youth's strengths rather than just focusing on areas that need improvement. An objective assessment can be achieved with the use of a variety of evaluation tools. Local areas must use assessment tools that are valid and appropriate for the target population, and must provide reasonable accommodations in the assessment process. Results of the objective assessment must be used when developing the ISS.

It is not necessary to use assessment tools from the National Reporting System (NRS) when assessing the basic skills assessment portion of the objective assessment. Previous basic skills assessments taken within the past six months may be used.

Assessment tools from the NRS list must be used when assessing educational functioning levels (EFL) as part of the Measureable Skills Gains for federal performance reporting.

Career-related assessments can be beneficial in identifying appropriate career pathways for youth, including youth with disabilities. Career assessment activities include, but are not limited to, assessments for prior work experiences, employability, interests, and aptitudes.

Multiple assessment tools may be used as there is no standard approach that will work for all youth. Career assessments are useful in helping youth understand how a variety of their personal attributes (e.g., interests, values, preferences, motivations, aptitudes, and skills) affect their potential success and satisfaction with different career options and work environments.

Examples of career-related assessment tools and resources are listed below:

- [MASSCIS](#)
- [Work Keys](#)
- [My Next Move](#)
- [Career One-Stop - GetMyFuture](#)
- [MySkills MyFuture](#)

Please refer to [MassHire Workforce Issuance 100 DCS 08.112.3: Career Planning Requirements for WIOA Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker Customers](#) for more information related to career planning.

Education and Employment Goals

The ISS includes both short-term and long-term educational and employment goals. Education and employment goals are updated as achieved or the youth's needs change.

Achievement Objectives and Services

The ISS must also include achievement objectives that lead to completion of short-term goals, long-term goals, as well as personal development goals. Achievement objectives are used to document participant progress, activities completed, benchmarks reached, and other accomplishments.

The combination of partner and program services provided to help youth meet their education and employment goals must also be included in the ISS.

Identification of an Appropriate Career Pathway

In accordance with WIOA Section (3) (7), the term “career pathway” means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other support services that—

- Aligns with the skill needs of industries;
- Prepares individuals to be successful in education options;
- Includes counseling to support education and career goals;
- Includes contextualized learning within an occupational cluster;
- Organizes education, training, and other services that accelerates education and career advancement;
- Enables the attainment of a secondary and at least one postsecondary credential;
- Supports entrance or advancement within a specific occupation or occupation cluster.

Youth entering the program are to be provided with information that allows for exploration of career options along with the education, training, and or skills needed to be successful in those careers. Information provided on career options are beneficial to assist youth in setting career goals and to make informed decisions about appropriate career pathways.

Career goals for younger participants are to be age appropriate and may identify a *career interest* that can be developed into a career goal. Goals may change as a youth ages and interests broaden as a result of participation in workforce development activities, which must be reflected in a revision of the ISS and documented in case notes.

Program staff must work in conjunction with the youth to determine interests, aptitudes, skills, and values that are important to the youth in identifying an appropriate career pathway.

Direct Linkages to One or More Performance Indicators

Short-term and long-term goals are to link directly to one or more of the following performance indicators:

Entered in Education, Training, or Employment: Youth who enter in education, training, or unsubsidized employment during the 2nd and 4th quarter after exit.

Credential Attainment: Youth who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its equivalent, during participation of within one year after exit from the program.

Median Earnings: The median earnings of youth who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit.

Measurable Skills Gain: Documented progress of youth enrolled in education or training in one of the following measures:

- Achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant below the postsecondary level;
- Attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State's unit's academic standards;
- Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of an OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training, or;
- Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers: Retention with the same employer.

*Please note a Measureable Skill Gain goals is to be established each program year for all youth enrolled in education or training.

14 WIOA Program Elements and the ISS

Program staff must inform youth of the 14 WIOA program elements (*also referred to in this policy as program elements*) available. WIOA eligible youth must participate in at least one of the following program elements as required for program participation. Program elements should be selected based on the youth's objective assessment and individual need.

The 14 WIOA Youth program elements are:

1. **Tutoring, study skills training, instruction**, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. **Alternative secondary school services**, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;
3. **Paid and unpaid work experiences** that have as a component academic and occupational education, which may include:
 - summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;
 - pre-apprenticeship programs;
 - internships and job shadowing; and
 - on-the-job training opportunities;

4. **Occupational skills training**, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupation in the local area involved;
5. **Comprehensive guidance and counseling**, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate;
6. **Leadership development opportunities**, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate;
7. **Supportive services**;
8. **Adult mentoring** for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;
9. **Follow-up services** for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate;
10. **Financial Literacy Education**;
11. **Entrepreneurial Skills Training**;
12. **Services that provide labor market and employment information** about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services;
13. **Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training**;
14. **Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training** for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Youth are required to have access to all program elements and may benefit from a mix of program elements and services. Local areas may have policies in place that require all youth to participate in a specific set of program elements. However, youth are not required to participate in all the 14 program elements.

Staff must document in the ISS the program element(s) in which the youth will participate. Staff must also document in the ISS when a youth is referred to an appropriate service provider for participation in a program service element.

The ISS is the basis for the entire case management strategy. It shall be developed in partnership with the participant and reflect the needs indicated by the objective assessment and the expressed interests and desires of the participant. The ISS is the framework for justifying decisions concerning the appropriate service mix and sequence of services. As part of the ISS, a plan of action is developed for the following:

- Identify academic competencies to be achieved, (e.g. preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities)
- Determine the type of occupational and basic skills training that is needed, (ensure strong linkages between academic and occupational learning)
- Identify employment goals and prepare for unsubsidized employment
- Identify education goals that lead to the attainment of secondary, post-secondary, and industry recognized credentials

- Determine the need for support services and identify appropriate mechanisms to deliver these services
- Identify the mix and sequence of the 14 required program elements, as appropriate to the individual

Once actively receiving WIOA services, the youth participant and service provider review the ISS as initially established benchmarks are achieved and as goals or service needs change, at a minimum time period of twice per program duration. The purpose of the review is to assess the continued relevance of the service strategy and the participant's progress towards goals. The ISS is to be viewed as a living document that is continually developed along with the participant's changing needs, interests, and goals. The obligation to review the ISS continues through completion of the plan, at which time the participant is considered to be exited, triggering the subsequent twelve month follow-up period.

ISS Development

The Individual Service Strategy is a road map of services that will help youth reach their individual goals; the development of the ISS begins with assessments administered during the pre-enrollment period.

When developing the ISS with the youth participant, staff should consider the following:

- Dedicate enough time to complete the ISS with the youth. Allow time to brainstorm and develop their "road map" and how they plan on accomplishing their goals.
- Introduce the concept of and encourage the youth to develop SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound).
- Encourage the youth to lead and take ownership of the ISS process.
- Develop a schedule for ISS review with the youth.
- Celebrate successes and create learning opportunities from setbacks.

It is important to note that enrollment in WIOA programming begins when a youth, determined eligible, receives one or more objectives assessments, participates in the development of an ISS, and participates in any of the 14 program service elements. The Development of an ISS is required for program participation and must be established to initiate enrollment in WIOA.

The sections of the ISS are as follows:

- Participant identifying information, including name, contact information, and Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES) ID; Social security number is captured in MOSES
- Participant assessments administered, including assessment dates and results
- Educational and work experience background

- Identification of immediate participant needs with documented recommendations for solution
- Participant education goals
- Identification of an initial career goal, as well as employment goals, as applicable
- Strengths and Challenges
- Participant supportive service needs
- Participant personal goals
- Case Notes

Youth programs must ensure that the ISS includes the following components:

- Addresses key goal areas in education, training, employment and personal development
- Includes short and long-term goals
- Ties the goals to the 14 WIOA Youth Program elements/service areas
- Includes objectives and actions steps
- Includes needed referrals for services and support services
- Includes timelines with start, end and review dates
- Includes appropriate individuals involved in ISS implementation
- Addresses potential barriers
- Includes progress updates/status
- Includes youth-staff agreements
- Includes 1st and 2nd review dates and signatures of the youth and staff responsible for development of the ISS

The Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) has provided a sample ISS Template that may be used for WIOA youth program case management. The ISS Template has been modified to include the sections of the ISS described within this policy. MassHire Department of Career Services (MDCS) encourages but does not mandate the use the ISS Template. Local areas have the flexibility to customize the ISS but must ensure that all of the required components are included in the local ISS document as well as in MOSES. The sample ISS Template is located in Attachment A.

The MassHire Department of Career Services monitors compliance of the ISS forms with DOL regulations, the ISS requirements described in this policy, and in accordance with MassWorkforce Issuance 100 DCS 08.112.1: Career Planning Requirements for WIOA Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker Customers.

ISS Review and Completion

In order to assess progress toward benchmarks and goals, and to evaluate the continued relevance of the goals and services planned for the youth, the ISS is reviewed by the youth program staff and participant as benchmarks initially established are achieved, as well as when goals or service needs change. Once all goals are attained, the ISS is considered *complete*. At this point, the participant is ready for exit from the WIOA program.

ISS MOSES Data Entry

Local youth programs must ensure the ISS contains the required elements as specified in this policy. Local youth programs may exercise flexibility in the format used to capture the required information. The ISS may be in paper format or tailored for electronic use. In all cases, the MOSES database must be used to document youth case management services. Staff must enter the required elements of the ISS into the Youth ISS tab in MOSES.

Action

Required: Please assure that all staff responsible for providing services to WIOA Youth participants are informed of and versed in the content of this policy.

Effective: Immediately

Inquiries: Please email questions PolicyQA@mass.gov

Attachment: A – WIOA Youth Individual Service Strategy (ISS) Template

References: [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Section 129 \(c\)\(1\)\(B\)](#)
[WIOA 20 CFR Parts, 676, 677 and 678 §681.420](#)
[Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA No. 21-16: Third Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance](#)
[Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA 10-16, Change 1- Operating Guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(referred to as WIOA\)](#)