

Hudson County Youth Service Policy

Background

Hudson County Workforce Development Board (HCWDB) is responsible for programs associated with WIOA Title I Youth funding. This policy provides information to help improve services, support, and outcomes for youth, particularly opportunity youth (out-of-school and out-of-work youth), by integrating equity and job quality principles into program design and service delivery as well as elevating youth voice and addressing mental health. [TEGL 9-22, issued on 3/2/2023 and titled “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance”, Hereafter referred to as TEGL 9-22]. This policy also provides guidance to forming an integrated service network leveraging the WIOA Title I Youth Program and other youth programs in Hudson County to provide seamless, holistic support to the youth population in the region.

Priorities for Youth Programs

HCWDB share a vision and several priorities for youth with the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOLE) and US Department of Labor (USDOL) concerning workforce development, including priorities of advancing equity, ensuring job quality, addressing mental health, and elevating youth voice. The overarching vision is to achieve a no-wrong-door workforce system with critical partners committed to quality career pathways and paid work experiences. One-Stop partners must incorporate this vision and priorities in their planning and implementation of programs.

Youth programs in Hudson County must work to incorporate youth voice into decisions about programming that ultimately impact the young people they serve. Youth, as partners and co-designers of programs, can provide critical insights and recommend strategies to improve outreach, recruitment and other service delivery strategies. [TEGL 9-22. P2]

Youth Programming and Reporting

HCWDB serves Youth through the One-Stop system and using WIOA Title I Youth funding to assist out-of-school youth. Some of the aspects of serving youth are:

- a. Documenting WIOA Youth Eligibility: As stated in TEGL 23-19, Change 1, the following youth eligibility data elements allow self-attestation as an acceptable source of documentation: school status at program entry, date of birth, individual with a disability, pregnant or parenting, youth who needs additional assistance, foster youth, homeless youth, offender, low income, and English Language Learner. The only data element related to WIOA Youth eligibility that does not permit the use of self-attestation for documentation is “basic skills deficient.” Once enrolled,

programs should assist the participants in obtaining the required documents through the use of supportive service funds as these documents are likely needed for employment and training related activities.

- b. **Mental Health Assessment, Referrals, and Training for Staff:** Comprehensive guidance and counseling is one of the WIOA Youth program's 14 program elements. As defined in 20 CFR 681.510 of the WIOA final rule, comprehensive guidance and counseling "provides individualized counseling to participants. This includes drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs, as appropriate." It is important to note that while youth workforce development practitioners are not expected to be experts in mental health, there are many ways to assess mental health needs at program enrollment and throughout their participation in the program and that mental health assessments are an allowable cost under WIOA.
- c. **Virtual Work Experience:** Virtual work experiences are allowable under the WIOA youth program. They can also promote equity and access for youth that might not otherwise have the opportunity for certain types of work experiences.
- d. **Digital Literacy and Access:** Section 107 of WIOA states that local boards shall "identify strategies for better meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including strategies that augment traditional service delivery, and increase access to services and programs of the one-stop delivery system, such as improving digital literacy skills." Jobs in almost every industry are increasingly requiring workers to have digital literacy skills. While many youth are considered "digital natives," or people who have grown up with technology and the internet, it is still important to ensure that young people have the digital skills needed to successfully enter and remain in the workforce.
- e. **Assessment:** WIOA requires an objective assessment of academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant, which includes a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes, supportive service needs, and developmental needs.
- f. **Supportive Services:** Supportive services allow participants to persist in and complete program activities and are vital ingredients in youth success.
- g. **Reporting and Expenditures for Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship:** WIOA and 20 CFR § 681.590(a) require that a minimum of 20 percent of local area funds for the Title I Youth program be spent on work experience. TEGL Nos. 8-15 and 21-16 provide further discussion of allowable expenditures that may be counted toward the work experience expenditure requirement and articulate that program expenditures on the work experience program element can be more than just wages paid to youth in work experience. An important reminder is that expenditures for pre-

apprenticeships count toward the work experience expenditure requirement. In addition, if the pre-apprenticeship program includes an occupational skills training component, separate from the work experience, WIOA Youth programs may report pre-apprenticeship under both the work experience program element and the occupational skills training program element.

- h. Follow-up Services and Mentoring Reporting: Both mentoring and follow-up services provide critical support to youth that help youth succeed in their career pathway progression.
- i. Reporting Barriers, Including In-School Youth Who Require Additional Assistance: In order to ensure the program is serving a diverse mix of youth and that it is accessible to all youth, reporting youth demographic information, including eligibility barriers, is very important. In addition, programs should make sure to report all eligibility barriers for youth when youth have multiple barriers, so that HCWDB and staff have an accurate representation of the youth we serve.

Key Youth Programs in Hudson County

HCWDB, through its One-Stop operator works with various workforce service programs that cater to the youth population and forms a strong service network in Hudson County. The major programs include WIOA Title I Youth, Title I YouthBuild, Job Corps, and Youth Corps.

WIOA Title I Youth

The WIOA Title I Youth program in Hudson County provides services to out-of-school youth aged 16-24. The Title I Youth Provider in Hudson County is the Hudson County Schools of Technology (HCST), located at the HCST Earl W Bryd Center in Jersey City. WIOA Title I Youth program representatives must be present at the Hudson County One-Stop Center at a minimum two times a week to ensure sufficient information and support is provided to young job seekers/customers. WIOA Title I Youth program representatives are expected to participate in the One-Stop cross-training so that partner staff have a clear understanding of this program and are able to provide relevant information to customers and make appropriate referrals.

WIOA Title I Youth Program staff are currently available on the HCST campus Monday through Thursday. As HCST has been providing services to youth for many years, many individuals come directly to HCST to enroll. To ensure its full integration with the Hudson AJC, WIOA Title I Youth staff must closely work with the Hudson AJC and the HCWDB to understand customer flow, mitigate service gaps, and conduct outreach to increase program awareness and continuously improve service quality.

The Title I Youth program focuses on assisting out-of-school youth to obtain their NJ high school diploma and entering into appropriate career pathways. Individuals begin by filling out an online application that allows them to upload all necessary documents and then taking an assessment test to determine whether the program is a good fit. Eligible participants work through an education module that covers the essentials they need to obtain their high school diploma, as well as a career module that goes through the 14 required program elements. These modules can be completed in-person, virtually, or in a hybrid format to allow the student the flexibility to complete the modules on their own schedule, while also having access to teachers for subjects they need more support in.

After completing the modules, participants are scheduled for a post-test, and then allowed to take the high school diploma test. Once participants have received their high school diploma, program counselors help them obtain six-week internships for up to 18 weeks in an area of interest. Program counselors then conduct a follow-up discussion with the participant to assess and determine whether they wish to continue their education, get a job, or pursue another pathway. If the participant expresses interest in seeking a job, the counselor must work with the student to help secure employment.

Title I YouthBuild

YouthBuild is a discretionary WIOA grant program that serves high school dropouts or dropouts that have reenrolled aged 16-24. Participants must be one of the following: member of a low-income family, in foster care, an offender, an individual with a disability, the child of a current or formerly incarcerated parent, or a migrant youth. The program helps participants obtain a high school diploma or equivalent, obtain an industry-recognized credential through hands-on training, and develop soft skills. Participants may be co-enrolled in other WIOA programs if eligible.

The Hudson AJC currently does not have a YouthBuild Representative. However, all AJC staff should be familiar with YouthBuild and able to provide information regarding this program to customers. AJC staff should also be able to refer customers to this program if they deem eligible to participate.

WIOA Title I Job Corps

The Edison Job Corps center, located at 500 Plainfield Ave, Edison, NJ 08817 provides workforce development services to youth participants. A representative from the Edison Job Corps center is present in the Hudson County One-Stop every Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.

Edison Job Corps center provides academic, career and technical education, service-learning, and social opportunities primarily in a residential setting for low-income young

people. The objective of Job Corps is to support responsible citizenship and provide youth aged 16-24 with the skills that lead to successful careers providing economic self-sufficiency, opportunities for advancement in in-demand occupations or the Armed Forces, or enrollment in postsecondary education. Participants can be cross-referred and/or co-enrolled with partner programs to receive the services that best meet their unique needs.

Program participants usually live full-time on the recreational facility in Edison and take part in self-paced educational and technical training. A major goal of the Edison Job Corps strives to reduce program turnover by focusing on matching the service to the student and making referrals to other programs (such as Youth Corps funded by NJDOL) for youth who may not be ready for the responsibility of living independently.

New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC)

New Jersey Youth Corps is one of the largest youth service and conservation corps in the United States. The program is funded by NJDOL and [follow program requirements set forth by NJDOL](#). NJYC is a year-round, voluntary program that engages young adults (ages 16 to 25) without a high school diploma in full-time community service, training, and educational activities. Youth Corps greatly supplement the youth workforce network in Hudson County by providing (1) education in basic skills and assistance in obtaining a high school equivalency diploma, life skills and employability skills instruction, personal and career counselling, transition services to college, employment and other service opportunities, and community service opportunities.

Youth Corps, which is more behavioral focused than other youth programs in the area greatly supplement the WIOA Title I Youth Program and Title I Job Corps program. Youth Corps may be appropriate if students need basic education before transitioning to a more advanced job training program and education program.

Hudson AJC's Role in Serving Youth

Identifying and Leveraging Other Resources to Support Youth

Separate from the Title I Youth program, One-Stop staff are able to provide information about and refer youth to other programs and services, such as community action programs (CAPs), family centers, childcare services, Job Corps, and YouthBuild programs. The One-Stop Operator should continue to explore and bring in new secondary and postsecondary programs that may benefit the youth population including a variety of community-based organizations to assist County youth in areas as diverse as youth at risk of or in the Juvenile Justice system, mental health and wellness, violence prevention and developing employment opportunities. The HCWDB and Hudson AJC, in collaboration with their

associated community-based organizations, must develop partnerships that serve youth in accordance with WIOA principles while preserving youth voice and input into the design, operation and assessment of youth programming.

Facilitating Youth Services Integration

The One-Stop Operator must hold monthly youth partner representation meetings onsite so that all staff are fully aware of youth programs and cross-trained. One-Stop staff should be knowledgeable about the full range of youth programs that are available. This list (catalogue, roster) should be up to date with regular updates as a matter of HCWDB policy.

The One-Stop Operator should adopt an *evidence and data-based approach* to analyze foot traffic, monitor program performance, identify service gaps, and strategize with partners to mitigate service gaps. The data that should be collected reviewed include:

- Participant data and program data from all aforementioned partners
- Surveys, interviews, or focus groups with program staff to improve operations
- Surveys and focus groups with youth customers to identify their challenges

This way we make sure youth voice is heard and challenges/barriers are addressed in a timely manner.