



# New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

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Dennis M. Bone, *Chairman*

Chris Christie, *Governor*

**POLICY RESOLUTION: SETC #2017-02**

**SUBJECT:** SCALES - Coordination of Adult Literacy Services

**Purpose:**

The State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) recommends establishing a policy that recognizes the various sources of adult literacy education program resources; and that notes the importance of coordinating related programs locally in order to maximize services to people needing such services.

**Background:**

The primary funding source for adult literacy in the State of New Jersey is the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). Formerly incorporated as Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), in 2014 it continued as Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Final regulations for Title II were published in the Federal Register in the summer of 2016. Changes in these regulations may be summarized as:

1. Restates the purpose of the AEFLA;
2. Updates and revises regulations regarding the suitability of testing for use in the National Reporting System for Adult Education;
3. Describes the process and requirements to award contracts/grants including new requirements associated with WIOA and the required involvement of local Workforce Development Boards in the review of applications and the alignment of activities;
4. Describes how Title II funds may be used to support programs for corrections education and the education of other institutionalized individuals;
5. Clarifies the use of funds for new and expanded activities under the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program; and,
6. Removal of sections no longer in effect

Realizing the goals of WIOA, requires reexamination of the way programs are organized in light of available resources.

**Discussion:**

In New Jersey, more than 800,000 adults lack a high school diploma. Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, the largest funding source for adult literacy services, provides resources to serve only about 3 percent of this population. Although other programs fund adult literacy education, these programs are located in different funding areas and have not been historically coordinated with Title II in a holistic manner. Examples include:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training – SNAP is the program that replaced traditional food stamps. SNAP Employment & Training dollars may be used to provide services that allow able-bodied individuals to return to work. These resources may be used to provide Title II-style services, as needed;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/Work-First New Jersey – Welfare-to-work dollars allow for the provision of services to eligible recipients. Adult education, literacy and English language services, comparable to Title II are included in its service availability in a number of cases;
- Higher Education Pell Grants (developmental skills) – Pell grants are historically used as a financial aid instrument for programs approved by the federal government to award these funds. While they may be used towards improving literacy skills as part of a more aspirational goal, these resources which do not require any input from a local workforce development board. The literacy programs in institutions that provide these services may accept students through a local workforce process with the hope that these organizations would be open to discussion to link these efforts to the existing literacy system in the area;
- Workforce Development Partnership – A State program that provides resources for employment and training purposes. Resources are used in local workforce areas as part of what is called the Supplemental Workforce Fund for Basic Skills (SWFBS);
- Literacy New Jersey (formally Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey) – As a major provider of instruction for adults who need assistance with reading, writing, math and speaking English, this group provides volunteer tutors and works with small groups of those in need. SCALES recognizes their value and suggests that a successful literacy system would be able to integrate these and similar services; and,
- Community Services Block Grants (CSBG) – Federal anti-poverty funds allocated to 25 agencies across the state that provide a broad range of support services and training opportunities to families at or below 125% of the federal poverty guideline. Comprehensive case management assists families in accessing services that enhance self-sufficiency, and address the causes and conditions of poverty. Services include housing assistance, child care, ESL and literacy services, job training, youth and senior programs, and health care.

In order to maximize efficiency in a resource scarce environment, it is important that the funding streams for adult literacy be coordinated as best possible within the guidelines of laws and regulations.

Equally important is the emphasis in WIOA on the transition of learners from their beginning levels to higher education and family sustaining employment. When learners transition, they move across existing programs, hopefully, in a seamless way. Their transitions cannot take place, unless the various literacy programs within a community are coordinated.

**In consideration of this need for resource coordination, SCALES recommends that guidelines for local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) ask that they develop plans which seek to join together local literacy resources, including, but not limited to those included in this document into a more comprehensive and coordinated local literacy system. Local WDBs should specify in local and regional plans a priority for the development of such a system that is tied to local and regional planning data that indicates the need for the programming. Further, such plans should indicate how such efforts would be co-planned and co-joined throughout their respective communities. This plan should identify local and regional needs and, prioritize, in consideration of the applicable funding sources, how the resources should be used to advance learners along the educational spectrum to meet their needs and employer needs. SCALES further recommends that the state work with local providers to develop appropriate program standards for the professional development and technical assistance local WDBs will need to implement this resolution.**

**Commission Approved: June 6, 2017**