



**BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD, INC.**

LOCAL POLICY BULLETIN

BECWIB BULLETIN # 02-20 DATE: 1/28/2020

TO: Lavon Stephens, Administrative Director, WDC, Inc.
FROM: Geoffrey Szymanski, Executive Director, WIB, Inc.
SUBJECT: Basic Skills Deficiency Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: IMMEDIATELY

Purpose

Low educational functioning levels can be a significant barrier to educational and/or employment success. WIOA requires, as part of the objective assessment, that all youth are assessed to determine their basic skills and to learn of any basic skills deficiencies. This policy provides guidance whereby the Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) establishes local criteria for defining a youth that is “basic skills deficient”.

Background

Local Workforce Development Boards (WDB) are required to assess the basic skills of workforce applicants for Youth eligibility and for an objective assessment of academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant, which includes a review of basic skills.

WIOA Section 3(5) defines a participant who is “basic skills deficient:”

(5) BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT.—The term “basic skills deficient” means, with respect to an individual—

(A) who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or

(B) who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society.

Definitions/Requirements

Section I: Demonstrating Basic Skills Deficiency as evidenced by a youth functioning at or below the 8th Grade Level

The Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board (WIB), as the local WDB, will determine basic skills levels, as per WIOA Section 3(5)(A), by utilizing the following guidelines:

- Utilize a standardized assessment tool (TABE, WorkKeys, CASAS, GAIN, BEST Plus/BEST Literacy, etc.) to determine the skill levels of each youth in need of training or career services under WIOA (see chart).
- Use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population; and
- Provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities

Note: Previous basic skills assessment results are allowable if the assessment was conducted within the six (6) months prior to enrollment.

Scale Score Conversions to Educational Functioning Levels								
EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL	Basic Skills Deficient	Grade Level	Test Benchmarks					
			TABE 9-10 and TABE 11-12			CASAS	GAIN	
			Reading	Math	Language	Reading/ Math	English	Math
Beginning ABE Literacy	Basic Skills Deficient	0-1.9	9-10: <368 11-12: 300-441	9-10: <314 11-12: 300-448	9-10: <390 11-12: 300-457	<201	200-406	200-314
Beginning Basic Education		2.0-3.9	9-10: 368-460 11-12: 442-500	9-10: 314-441 11-12: 449-495	9-10: 390-490 11-12: 458-510	201-210	407-525	315-522
Low Intermediate Basic Education		4.0 - 5.9	9-10: 461-517 11-12: 501-535	9-10: 442-505 11-12: 496-536	9-10: 491-523 11-12: 511-546	211-220	526-661	523-669
High Intermediate Basic Education		6.0-8.9	9-10: 518-566 11-12: 536-575	9-10: 506-565 11-12: 537-595	9-10: 524-559 11-12: 547-583	221-235	662-746	670-775

Note: WorkKeys cannot be used to measure educational functioning level, but can be used to determine basic skills deficiency. A level score of four (4) or less on any of the WorkKeys Curriculum Placement Quiz or WorkKeys Assessment indicates basic skills deficiency. BEST Plus or BEST Literacy assessments should be used only for English Language Learners. For these assessments, scores at or below 575 in reading, 595 in mathematics, and 583 in language indicate basic skills deficiency.

For purposes of the basic skills assessment portion of the objective assessment, local programs are not required to use assessments approved for use in the Department of Education’s National Reporting System (NRS), nor are they required to determine an individual’s grade level equivalent or educational functioning level (EFL), although use of these tools is permitted.

Rather, local programs may use other formalized testing instruments designed to measure skills-related gains. It is important that, in addition to being valid and reliable, any formalized testing used be appropriate, fair, cost effective, well-matched to the test administrator's qualifications, and easy to administer and interpret results.

Alternatively, skills related gains could also be determined through less formal alternative assessment techniques such as observation, folder reviews, or interviews. The latter may be particularly appropriate for youth with disabilities given accessibility issues related to formalized instruments.

Section II: Determining Basic Skills Deficiency as evidenced by a youth that is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

Examples of less formal screening tools for determining basic skills deficiency under WIOA 3(5)(B) may include the following:

- Records from an educational institution indicating below average GPA.
- Qualifies for Special education services or has an Individual Education Program (IEP) plan or 504 Plan.
- Lacks a high school diploma or equivalency and not enrolled in secondary education.
- Is enrolled in a Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (including enrolled for English as a Second Language (ESL)).
- Determined to be Limited English Skills proficient through staff-documented observations.
- Case Manager/Staff make observations of deficient functioning and records those observations as justification in a case note/comment.

In contrast to the initial assessment described above, if measuring EFL gains after program enrollment under the measurable skill gains indicator, local programs must use an NRS-approved assessment for both the EFL pre- and post-test to determine an individual's educational functioning level.

The WIB will provide reasonable accommodations, if needed, for the assessment of individuals with disabilities.

Documentation of the assessment(s) and results must be maintained in hard copy participant files and properly recorded in the OSOS participant record.

Please share this bulletin with appropriate staff. If you have any questions, please contact Anthony Scello at 504-1480.

Thank you.

ATS

C: Demone Smith, Terry Chatfield, Denise Raymond, Jeff Conrad, Ken Colon, Cynthia Coney-Trowman, Ivy Diggs-Washington, Kate DeCarlo, Katya Kroll-Haeick, Deborah Miller, Karen Simmons and WIB staff.