

The Right Connections: Navigating the Workforce Development System

WHAT IS THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM?

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) has defined the workforce development system as organizations at the national, state, and local levels that have direct responsibility for planning and allocating resources (both public and private), providing administrative oversight, and operating programs to assist individuals and employers in obtaining education, training, job placement, and job recruitment.

Included are several federal agencies charged with providing specific education and/or training support and other labor market services such as labor market information. At the state and local levels, the network includes state and local workforce investment boards (discussed below), state and local career and technical education and adult education agencies, vocational rehabilitation agencies, recognized apprenticeship programs, state employment and unemployment services agencies, state and local welfare agencies, and/or sub-units of these entities.

A wide array of organizations provides direct education, training, or employment services. Some of the more common entities include technical schools, colleges, and universities, vocational rehabilitation centers, apprenticeship programs, community-based organizations, One-Stop Career Centers, welfare-to-work training programs, literacy programs, Job Corp Centers, unions, and labor/management programs.

This publication is for administrators and youth service practitioners who provide programming to young people and want to connect their programs to the workforce development system.

This brief is aimed at helping those who work with youth better understand how to navigate this complex system. While this brief focuses on one piece of legislation that impacts youth, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), there are a number of other laws relevant to the workforce development system. Visit the NCWD/Youth website for additional information, at www.ncwd-youth.info.

THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA)

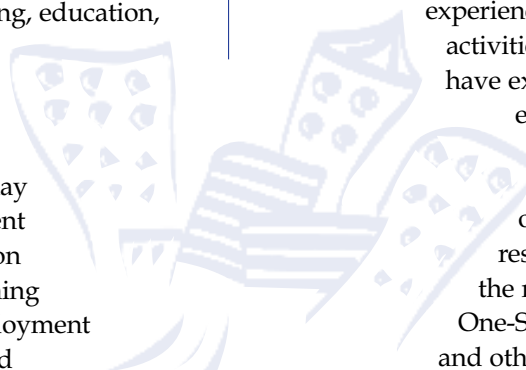
The WIA, enacted in 1998, is the cornerstone of the publicly funded workforce development system and provides workforce investment services and activities through local One-Stop Career Centers, or "One-Stops." The One-Stop delivery system provides a full menu of job training, education, and employment services at a single location where adults, veterans, dislocated workers, and youth may receive skills assessment services, information on employment and training opportunities, unemployment services, job search and

placement assistance, and up-to-date information on job vacancies. Governance responsibilities for the workforce investment system rest with the state's Governor and with local officials through state and local workforce investment boards.

What is a State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB)?

While the Governor has responsibility for the system, he/she is guided by a State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). The Board assists the Governor in the planning, administration, and oversight of the state workforce development system. Among its duties are designating local workforce investment areas; developing allocation formula for distribution of funds; and developing comprehensive state performance measures.

Members of a SWIB include the Governor or designee, state legislators (two members of each chamber of the state legislature appointed by the presiding officers of each chamber), and representatives from each of the following appointed by the governor: businesses; elected officials representing cities and counties; labor organizations; those that have experience in youth activities; those that have experience and expertise with workforce activities; state officials with responsibility for the management of One-Stop Centers; and other





representatives and state agency officials responsible for economic development and juvenile justice.

What is a Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB)?

Each state is divided into local workforce investment areas by the state. Each one of these local workforce areas must have a local board called a Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) or some variation thereof.

Each LWIB is responsible for the development and oversight of the workforce development activities in its area. LWIB responsibilities include selecting operators and providers of One-Stop services, as well as developing the list of eligible providers of training services; monitoring local system performance, and developing local performance measures with the SWIB and governor.

Local elected officials appoint representatives from the following to serve as LWIB members: local educational entities; labor organizations; community based organizations (including organizations representing individuals with disabilities and veterans); and economic development agencies. A majority of LWIB members must represent businesses. Among these business representatives, LWIB members elect their chairperson.

What is a Youth Council?

A Youth Council is established as a subgroup of the LWIB under the WIA. The LWIB serves to ensure that parents, participants, and other members of the community with experience relating to programs for youth are involved in the design and implementation of WIA youth programs.

In cooperation with the chief elected official(s), the LWIB appoints the Youth Council members. Members include those from the LWIB with special

interest or expertise in youth policy, representatives of youth service agencies and local public housing authorities, parents of eligible youth seeking assistance, former participants and representatives of organizations that have experience relating to youth activities, representatives of the Job Corps, and other individuals or representatives deemed appropriate by the LWIB.

What is a One-Stop Career Center (“One-Stop”)?

Each local workforce area must establish a One-Stop Career Center delivery system (“One-Stop”), which provides training and other services that improve employment potential. Each area must have at least one full service physical center where individuals can receive services. Services also can be provided through

Required One-Stop Partners

- Programs authorized under WIA for adults, youth and dislocated workers;
- Programs that administer the employment services system;
- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Rehabilitation programs;
- Welfare programs;
- Activities authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965;
- Postsecondary vocational education activities;
- Activities for workers affected by trade agreements);
- Veterans employment and job training activities;
- Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act;
- Employment and training activities carried out by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and,
- Programs authorized under state unemployment compensation laws.

a network of affiliated sites and through a network of eligible One-Stop partners. The LWIB enters into a memorandum of understanding with the various One-Stop partners and the Board designates or certifies the operators. Required partners have to make their services available through the One-Stop system. The required partners are listed in the box to the right.

Services at the One-Stop are divided into core and intensive services. Additionally, adult individuals can receive training services through individual training accounts (ITAs).

Core services are available to everyone and include outreach, intake and orientation; initial assessment; determination of eligibility for additional services; job search and placement assistance; career counseling; and, labor market information. Intensive services are services available to those who are unemployed and who are unable to obtain employment through core services. Intensive services include comprehensive and specialized assessments, development of an individual employment plan, counseling and career planning, and shortterm prevocational services.

Training services, which are available to eligible individuals who have not become successfully employed as a result of core and intensive services, are provided through the use of ITAs. An ITA is a type of voucher that allows participants to choose among eligible training providers pre-approved by the LWIB through a competitive process based upon performance-related information.

What are Youth Services?

While youth can be served in One-Stop Centers, more frequently they receive services in their local communities by eligible youth service providers chosen



Low-Income Qualification

Low-income individual is an individual who meets one of the following criteria:

- 1) receives public assistance;
- 2) family income is not above the poverty line, or is 70 percent of the lower living standard income level;
- 3) is a member of a household that receives food stamps;
- 4) qualifies as a homeless individual; or,
- 5) is a foster child on behalf of whom State or local government payments are made.

by the LWIB. Through a competitive process, the LWIB develops a list of eligible youth service providers. Local areas must make sure that the list includes providers that can serve younger and older youth, and youth who are in and out of school. In addition, the selected providers must meet the core performance indicators for youth programs contained in WIA, which include 1) attainment of basic skills; 2) attainment of secondary school diploma; and, 3) placement and retention in postsecondary school, the military, employment, or apprenticeships.

The LWIB must ensure that the ten program elements listed in the WIA are available for youth. While each provider is not required to provide all ten elements, WIA mandates that the ten **youth program elements** be available in every local area so that they can be provided to eligible youth based on their individualized service strategy. These program elements, which are consistent with youth development research, include

1. Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to completion of secondary school, including dropout prevention strategies;
2. Alternative secondary school services;

3. Summer employment opportunities that are directly linked to academic and occupational learning;
4. Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing;
5. Occupational skills training, as appropriate;
6. Leadership development activities, including but not limited to community service and peer-centered activities, which encourage responsibility and other positive social behaviors during non-school hours;
7. Supportive services;
8. Adult mentoring during program participation;
9. Follow-up for at least 12 months after program completion (this is required for all youth); and,
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate.

Who can participate in the Workforce Investment Act Youth Program?

WIA youth services are available for both in-school and out-of-school youth aged 14 to 21. To be eligible, youth must be low-income (see box above for low-income qualification) and face one or more of the following barriers:

- Basic skills deficient;
- School dropout;
- Homeless, a runaway, or foster child;
- Pregnant teen or teen parent;
- Offender; or
- Individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold

employment.

Even if the family of a youth with a disability does not meet the income eligibility criteria, the disabled youth may be considered a “family of one” if the youth’s own income:

- Meets the income criteria established in WIA; or
- Meets the income eligibility criteria for cash payments under any federal, state, or local public assistance program.

In addition, up to five percent of the youth served in a local area can be exempted from the low-income requirement, if they:

- Experience one or more of the barriers listed above;
 - Are one or more grade levels below their age-appropriate grade level;
 - Are **individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities** (emphasis added); or
- Face a serious barrier to employment as identified by the LWIB.

Youth activities are available to youth who are in-school as well as youth who are not. WIA requires that 30 percent of youth funds be used to address the needs of out-of-school youth. The WIA definition of “out-of-school” includes youth who have dropped out of school, as well as youth who have graduated from high school or hold a GED but are deficient in basic skills, unemployed, or underemployed. To be defined as “out-of-school,” the young person must not be enrolled in school or any alternative educational program when he or she registers for WIA services; however, the young person may be placed in an educational program, such as a GED program or alternative school, as part of the service strategy after registration.



CONNECT TO THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS IN YOUR AREA

The WIB and/or One-Stops in your area can be valuable resources as youth with disabilities transition to post-secondary education or enter the workforce.

Multiple resources in one spot: One-Stops include many resources at one central location, including services for youth, community colleges, employment services, as well as vocational rehabilitation, and other services. Overall, One-Stop Centers are required to have 19 mandatory partners that can assist in your job search or connect youth with additional resources. In some states, youth may even be eligible to receive assistance otherwise reserved for adults. Youth with disabilities can access job leads and valuable labor market information about the wider community and surrounding areas as they plan to enter the workforce or continue education.

Access to training requirements and training: The majority of LWIB members is from the private sector and are individuals who have hiring authority. Because these individuals know what industries may be expanding, as well as the training and educational background required for these and other future jobs, they may be able to assist individuals in tailoring their education and career plans. WIBs or One-Stops can also establish job training, mentoring or apprenticeship programs designed to create better trained employees that are qualified to meet employers' specific requirements.

HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Understand your local Workforce system: Although having a general understanding of WIA is important, you should know that each state and locality will differ in terms of how WIA is implemented. To get a better sense of how LWIBS and Youth Councils operate in your area, look at the state and local plans that both the state and the LWIB are required to develop. These plans detail the workforce issues that confront them, including services for youth. This information is critical to understanding what the state's priorities will be, what resources may be available, and how they will be allocated. Talking to those serving on the Board or Youth Council may also provide additional insight.

Learn about services provided: You can access the list of youth service providers through the WIB. This information can be extremely useful in determining how best to connect to the workforce system and what services might be needed.

Use the information available at the One-Stop in your programs: One-Stops provide labor market reports, job postings, and other information that can be useful to both youth service practitioners and to youth and their families. Access to this type of information can provide youth with disabilities and those that assist them with the ability to find out what industries are hiring, what qualifications are necessary, and what initiatives currently exist.

Attend meetings: Both the Youth Council and WIB meetings are open to everyone. Once you attend, develop relationships with members so you

are consulted on issues before policies and practices are adopted. Eventually, you may join a Youth Council. While the selection procedures for becoming a Youth Council member may vary slightly depending on the WIB, you should contact the director of the SWIB or LWIB and inquire about the application process. In some places, youth or youth service providers are discouraged from joining the Youth Council.

Become a resource to the One-Stop and WIB: Share information from your resource mapping efforts with your SWIB and LWIB. Train staff and/or board members on issues in your area of expertise (e.g., accessibility, assistive technology or disabilities inquiries). The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) website contains some materials that can be used in staff or board trainings. Provide One-Stops with access to untapped pools of workers by connecting the WIB to other local disability organizations. Share information on grant and funding opportunities with the WIB. Some of these opportunities require partnerships between disability and workforce organizations; WIBs may be able to offer in-kind support in these opportunities and disability organizations may do the same. Finally, in order for the One-Stop and WIB to understand how you can be helpful, share stories about your work with Board members and staff so that they begin to see you as a resource.

Become a service provider: You can ask to be placed on the list to receive notice when service providers are to be chosen. Most LWIBS operate a selection process every several years.

CONCLUSION

By accessing the workforce development system, youth with disabilities and the professionals that assist them will have increased access



to information, industry employers, and other resources. Youth with disabilities can use these resources to enhance the relevance of their education and increase their chances of professional success.

LOCATING SERVICES IN YOUR AREA

How do you find Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), One-Stop Career Centers (One-Stops), and youth services in your area?

To locate One-Stops, go to:
www.servicelocator.org

To locate WIBs in your area, go to the National Association of Workforce Boards website, at:
<http://www.nawb.org/asp/wibdir.asp>


For more information on connecting youth with disabilities to the workforce system, go to: www.ncwd-youth.info.

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The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development issues. NCWD/Youth is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. The Collaborative is charged with assisting state and local workforce development systems to integrate youth with disabilities into their service strategies.

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