

**Approved Date:**

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2023

**Subject:** Objective Basic Assessment (OBA) Policy

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### **Purpose**

To provide policy for the Objective Basic Assessment in Iowa Plains

### **Background**

- I. The Objective Assessment (OBA) process for Adults and Dislocated Workers collects information upon which a participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP) will be based. The Objective Assessment (OBA) process for Youth collects information upon which a participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) will be based. An objective assessment is a mutual exchange of ideas and opinions, discussion and deliberation which includes an examination of the capabilities, needs, and vocational goals of a participant.

### **Assessment Components**

- I. Such assessments are to be participant-centered and a diagnostic evaluation of a participant's employment barriers.
- II. Objective assessment is a short-term activity that may be revisited as needed to determine further service strategies. OBA should not be used as a stand-alone activity unless the participant's employment goals change. The OBA activity must be clearly documented in the data management system including the type of assessment used and the results of that assessment. Documentation of a mutual conversation between the career planner and participant of the results is also required.
- III. The assessment should consider the participant's family situation, general health, work history, education, occupational skills, interests, aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional occupations), attitude towards work, motivation, behavior patterns affecting employment potential, support service needs and personal employment information as it relates to the local labor market.

- IV. The results of the objective assessment must be shared verbally with the participant and must be used to develop the IEP/ISS in partnership with the participant. Participants, working with career planners, will utilize the results from assessments provided in IowaWorks to identify employment and personal skillsets and values. These results will be coupled with a career exploration and job analysis tool such as O\*NET to identify current job openings and career forecasts.
- V. An OBA may be completed using a combination of structured interviews, paper and pencil tests, performance tests, work samples, behavioral observations, interest and/or attitude inventories, career guidance instruments, and basic skills measurements. OBA is a process that requires more than one appointment between the participant and the career planner to conduct all of the necessary portions of the assessment.
- VI. The assessment process must utilize generally accepted methodologies and instruments to collect information on each of the following factors for each participant:
  - A. family situation
  - B. work history
  - C. education
  - D. basic literacy skills
  - E. occupational skills
  - F. work readiness skills
  - G. interests and aptitudes
  - H. attitude and motivation
  - I. financial resources
  - J. basic needs
  - K. review of strengths
- VII. For youth, the assessment shall include a review of the following:
  - A. basic skills
  - B. occupational skills
  - C. prior work experience
  - D. employability
  - E. interests
  - F. aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for non-traditional jobs)
  - G. supportive service needs
  - H. strengths (rather than just focusing on the areas that need improvement); and
  - I. developmental needs of such participant, for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants.

VIII. All Title I participants must receive an OBA.

### **Requirement for Timing of Assessment**

- I. Portions of assessments conducted by other American Job Center (AJC) partners, may be used to collect information for the OBA as described in this section. Such assessments must have been completed within one year prior to enrollment. Any tests of reading, writing, and computation skills must have been completed within six months prior to enrollment.
- II. A new assessment of a youth participant is not required if the provider carrying out such a program determines it is appropriate to use a recent assessment of the participant conducted pursuant to another education or training program. Such assessments must have been completed within six months prior to enrollment. Previous assessments older than six months may be used if deemed appropriate by the Iowa Plains Executive Committee and if there is a local policy in place that allows for such use of assessments

### **Assessment Requirements**

- I. In assessing basic skills, local programs must:
  - A. use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population; and
  - B. provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities
- II. 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.
- III. 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.

- IV. Skills related gains may 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.
- V. 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 a National Reporting System (NRS) approved assessment for both the EFL pre- and post-test to determine an individual's educational functioning level.
- VI. If basic skills goals are set for youth, tests for determining grade level must be given within 30 days of the goal being established.

### **Career Related Assessments**

- I. All youth, including youth with disabilities, can benefit from participation in career assessment activities, including, but not limited to:
  - A. assessments of prior work experience
  - B. employability
  - C. interests
  - D. aptitudes
- II. Multiple assessment tools may be necessary since there is no standard approach that will work for all youth, including youth with disabilities. Career assessments help youth, including those with disabilities, 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.
- III. Youth also need access to reliable information about career opportunities (based on labor market information) that provide a living wage, including information about education, entry requirements, and income potential. Youth with disabilities also may need information on benefits planning, workplace supports (e.g., assistive technology), and accommodations, and also may benefit from less formalized career-related assessments such as discovery techniques. These assessments may be provided directly through WIOA Title I youth program career planners, and/or through referrals to national and community-based partners and resources.

### **Basic Skills Assessment for Timing of Testing**

- I. Individuals with disabilities that preclude testing who are obviously at or below the eighth grade level may be reported that way.
- II. Individuals who have a college degree or a two-year associate degree do not need to be tested. They may be reported as having a 12th grade reading and math level.