

September 24, 2001

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA)
STATE ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY (SAE)
SAE INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 49-01
(**SIN NO. 49-01**)

SUBJECT: WORK READINESS SKILLS TRAINING GUIDELINES

1. **PURPOSE:** To provide New Mexico Workforce Development Areas/Local Workforce Development Boards (NMWDAs/LWDBs) and Service Providers general guidance regarding the provision of “work readiness skills” for eligible youth as required under the WIA. Although not mandated under the WIA, this State Information Notice also addresses “work readiness skills” for adults. This SAE Information Notice does not create state policy but merely transmits general guidance on identification of work readiness skills needs in the local areas for development of appropriate activities.
2. **BACKGROUND:** Today’s workers need new and higher level skills to compete in the radically changing global economy and labor market. Not only are the basic educational skills (reading, writing and mathematics) necessary, but also just as critical are the work readiness and the higher thinking and problem solving skills. The needs of business and employers require workers that are well prepared to work (whether a youth entering the labor market, a dislocated worker re-entering the workforce or a working person wanting to advance on the job), who can apply their knowledge creatively and can work effectively with others. These skills must not only be acquired in school but also on the job.

Under Title I of the WIA, State and local areas are required to provide workforce preparation and training for adults and youth. Section 129 (a) (1) prescribes the use of funds for youth activities including providing “..assistance in achieving academic and employment success, effective and comprehensive activities, which include a variety of options for improving educational and *skill competencies* and provide effective connections to employers.”

DISTRIBUTION:

NM State and Local WDB Chairpersons
NMWDAs/LWDBs Administrative Staff
State WIA Subrecipients

SAE NMDOL Legal Counsel
SAE NMDOL EO Officer
USDOL Federal Representative

Similarly, under Section 134(d)(3)(vi) of the Act, services that may be provided for adults and dislocated workers under the Intensive Services category include “short-term prevocational services, including development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct, to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment and training.” Allowable training services for eligible adults and dislocated workers include *job readiness training* as specified at Section 134(d)(4)(vii).

One of the required youth performance measures that local areas and the state must meet includes the reporting of work-readiness. There are no similar performance requirements for adult work readiness skills. However, many adults, particularly younger adults, lack the necessary pre-employment and/or work maturity skills necessary to obtain employment. Under prior Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) SAE policy, work readiness skills were defined as *employment competencies* that addressed the same workforce preparation needs of youth and adults/dislocated workers. Additionally there are other systems for identifying and addressing work readiness skills needs. One of these essential workplace skills systems is the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) worker competencies and foundations skills. The SCANS was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1990 to identify the skills that American workers needed to succeed in the international marketplace and to develop a strategy to ensure that all workers acquire these skills. The competencies and foundation skills that resulted from the SCANS study were to be included in the public schools educational curriculum for preparing youth for the careers of the future and to be used for training or retraining adults in high-skill, high-wage jobs. All these systems share common features in their objectives and skills definitions. All have resources that can be accessed for developing local area work readiness skills policy and designing appropriate activities for youth and adults. Additional information on work readiness, employment competencies, SCANS or other skills development systems can be obtained by contacting the NMDOL Job Training Division or the following websites: www.dol.gov, www.doleta.gov, www.workfutures, www.scans.

3. **DEFINITIONS:** For purpose of this SAE Information Notice the following definitions apply:
 - a. *Comprehensive or specialized assessment* means an assessment performed at the intensive service level of the skill and service needs of adults and dislocated workers which may include diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools and in-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals.
 - b. *Employment competencies* refers to skills performance levels (originally established under JTPA though the Private Industry Councils (PICs) that

are based on such factors as entry level skills and other hiring requirements, in consultation with educational agencies and, where appropriate, with representatives of business, organized labor and community-based organizations.

- c. *Employment development plan (EDP)* means the same as individual employment development plan
 - d. *Individual employment development plan* means an ongoing strategy jointly developed by the participant and the case manager based on assessment results that identify the participant's employment goals, the appropriate achievement objectives, and the appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals.
 - e. *Initial assessment* means an analysis of the skill levels, aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs of applicants for WIA services conducted at the core service level.
 - f. *Skill* means an individual's ability to competently perform a job task or function. This term is also used to connote that certain levels of education and training correspond to specific skill levels (i.e. the more education or training a person has, the more skilled he/she is in that particular vocational or technical area).
 - g. *Skill assessment* is an in-depth analysis of an individual's basic educational skills, occupational skills, prior work history and basic work skills/employment competencies utilizing standardized testing and assessment instruments and procedures.
 - h. *Work readiness skills* include the five SCANS workplace competencies and three-part foundation skills, the workplace competencies formerly referred to as employment competencies under the JTPA, or other related job preparation skills strategies approved by the SAE or local boards.
 - i. *Workplace competencies and foundation skills* refer to the SCANS competencies and personal qualities required to perform well on the job. The workplace competencies consist of how well workers can productively use resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems and technology. The foundation skills refer to the basic skills, thinking skills and personal qualities needed on the job.
4. **ACTION.** The integration of the classroom and workplace essential work readiness skills into the local service delivery strategy is vital to preparing workers for the demands of the labor market and for meaningful higher skill occupations that provide sustainable wages. Flexibility is provided to local boards in establishing work readiness skills standards and designing the appropriate mix of services and activities necessary to prepare individuals to

compete successfully in the labor market. Local boards may select any of the worker skills development systems available but at a minimum should address the basic employment competencies required on the job. Whether implementing a classroom and/or work-based strategy, the following elements are essential to any worker readiness skills development strategy:

- a. *Identification of skills and skill levels to be obtained.* The local strategy should define the job readiness skills to be developed and contain scales/measures for each skill, which can serve as common point of reference, or standard for employers, workers and program administrators. These standards will help to identify the skills and establish the skill levels required for employment, identify the skill development to match workers to job requirements, estimate the skill levels needs of current and future workers, identify what assessment tools are required, assist in developing a listing of essential skills required on the job, and support the development of individual employment development plans.

- b. *Assessment.* In order to determine if work readiness skill training is required and to determine the work readiness skills level of each participant, an initial or comprehensive assessment should be conducted. The assessment should be a client centered diagnostic evaluation of a participant's barriers and needs to include the appropriate tests and assessment tools, in-depth interviews and related assessment procedures. At a minimum, it should include a review of basic and/or occupational skills needs; barriers to employment and related factors (taking into account family situation, work history, education, interests, aptitudes including interests, aptitudes for nontraditional jobs), supportive services needs, career and labor market information needs, and the need for accommodation(s) of any mental or physical disability. Youth assessments should identify the academic levels and service needs of the participant. A new assessment is not required if the One-Stop operator or service provider determines it is appropriate to use a recent assessment conducted pursuant to another education or training program. Generally accepted standard assessment instruments include but are not limited to Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), DOL Work Workplace Literacy Test (DOL-WLT), Adult Measure of Educational Skills (AMES), Adult Basic Learning Exam (ABLE), Adult Literacy Test (ALT), Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT), Basic Occupational Literacy Test (BOLT), General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB), California Achievement Test (CAT), Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS), Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT), Reading Job Corps Screening Test (RJCST), and the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT). In cases where standardized assessment tools are not available, an objective in-depth personal interview or other objective assessment process may substitute. All results should be documented in each participant's file.

- c. *Work skills competency plan/individual/employment development plan.* Based on assessment and interview results, the case manager in consultation with the participant, develops a work readiness or employment competency plan. The plan, which should be part of the participant's IEDP, should address what work readiness skills are required, how acquisition of the skills is to be accomplished, the time frame for completion of these objectives, how skill obtainment is to be measured and identify the need for accommodation(s) of any mental or physical disability.
 - d. *Post assessment and performance evaluation.* Results from performance assessments will support that work readiness skill levels have been reached. Supporting documentation as applicable suffices to demonstrate that the participant has mastered the skill(s). Case managers should evaluate the participant's progress periodically as the circumstances require. Assessment and performance evaluation instruments to be developed locally should conform to generally accepted methodology and scoring criteria and be unbiased and as objective as possible.
 - e. *Certification.* Certification of skill mastery provides participants with an effective means to market their skills to employers and serves as an "industry standard" by which qualifications for jobs can be set by employers and workers. The certification process should be backed by a locally approved job readiness skills curriculum or plan that is established in partnership with local employers.
 - f. *Confidentiality of information.* All personal information disclosed by the applicant during the assessment and training should be kept confidential in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements. Personal information (including records) about the participant shall not be released to other persons without the written consent of the participant. All participant records should be maintained in a manner to sufficiently safeguard personal information about the participant.
5. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This notice is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until rescinded.
 6. **RECISSIONS:** None.
 7. **CONTACT ENTITY:** Inquiries regarding this notice should be directed to the Job Training Division in Santa Fe at (505) 827-6827.

CLINTON D. HARDEN, JR.
Secretary