

Policy Name: Emergency Guidance for WIOA	Policy Number: 02-2020	Date: June 9, 2020
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Purpose

This guidance is provided to ease and enhance EmployBR’s ability to respond and serve customers/participants in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

General Information

In order to address complications resulting from distance methods of service, and to facilitate rapid delivery of services, LWDB 21 is providing the following guidance on a variety of workforce programmatic and administrative requirements.

1. **ELIGIBILITY, ENROLLMENT, and WIOA DOCUMENTATION**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EmployBR will allow for remote eligibility determination, enrollment and WIOA documentation following the below guidelines:

- A. Customer interview/assessment – The use of video conference technology and/or telephone may be utilized to meet with a potential WIOA participant to conduct interview and assessment prior to enrollment.
- B. Applicant Self-Attestation - WIOA Program applicants are already allowed to self-attest to some eligibility elements. During the COVID-19 emergency, documentation that is not obtainable due to office and government agency closures or limited service will be allowed to self-attest, including for elements such as:
 - homeless individual or runaway youth
 - offender
 - individual status/family size
 - individual family income
 - pregnant or parenting youth
 - youth who need additional assistance
 - youth in foster care
 - education status at time of participation
 - dislocated worker

Note: An expired Driver’s License may be used to document date of birth.

- C. Staff Attestation - Where staff and participant have secure video conference available, staff attestation of their review of the required document(s) can support both application and eligibility documentation requirements. Staff must complete a self-attestation form, sign and upload into the HiRE system. A case note should also be made to document that this was done. Staff should request the documents (within 90 days from participation) for participants who are receiving individualized career and training services as stipulated above in B.

- D. Center staff should, to the best of their ability, ensure that eligibility is determined based on information provided by and attested to by applicants.
- E. Center staff may enroll customers in WIOA programs and may provide staff-assisted services, pending receipt of the self-attestation form. However, Centers must not incur participant costs until the self-attestation form is received.

For those enrolled participants, Centers may incur direct client costs for supportive services, career services, and classroom training costs, but must not incur costs for work experience or work-based training services unless the I-9 documentation requirements are met and verified.

- F. Testing for Basic Adult Education (TABE) - Center staff may delay the administration of the TABE assessments for up to 90-days due to COVID 19. Except where eligibility is based on basic skills deficiency. This time may be extended with approval of the Chief WIOA Administrator.

2. PARTICIPANT SIGNATURES

Center may accept digital or electronic signature options on all WIOA forms that currently require a signature. These forms include, but are not limited to: WIOA application, Training Authorization Form, self-attestation form, Individual Service Strategy/Individual Employment Plan, Participant Rights and Benefits, etc. All documents should be signed by participant when created and each time they are updated.

3. CLASSROOM TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Since many traditional face-to-face classroom training activities are not taking place, it may be necessary for many current and future participants to participate in their skills training utilizing virtual technology. Any Individual Training Accounts (ITA) issued for virtual or on-line occupational skills training will still be required to be for a program that is on the Eligible Training Providers List until such time as the State issues a modification to this rule.

There may be an opportunity to provide WIOA participants with virtual or on-line short-term, pre-vocational training activities that may increase an individual's ability to become re-employed and/or employed once businesses start hiring again. These activities are encouraged; however, the current procurement policies remain in effect and should be followed when procuring such programs.

Electronic signatures will be allowed for all classroom training related forms, including ITA's, etc. All WIOA requirements pertaining to justification of training and services provided remain the same and must be documented. The only changes are in the method for obtaining documents and signatures.

4. EMPLOYER-BASED TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Any employer-based training activities that remain in effect during the pandemic, must be monitored to ensure that training activities have continued in order for reimbursements to be continued.

If participants are furloughed, the OJT contract may be put on hold until such time as the participant returns to work and the training activity is re-started.

Electronic signatures will be allowed for any employer-based contracts and related forms.

Center staff should ensure that there are no duplicate payments to employers based on the availability of the Paycheck Protection Plan allowance under the CARES Act of 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis.

5. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive services must continue to follow Federal guidelines for allowability and continue to require receipts for certain types of support, even during the crisis. However, some participants may be in need of emergency assistance and are unable to contact other service providers within the community. If this is the case, and Center staff are also unable to reach a partner agency, the Center may provide the needed support as long as it is an allowable WIOA service.

For Needs-Related Payments to be provided to a participant in on-line courses, a valid record of the time spent in classes must be available and provided prior to payment being made.

This guidance will also allow for the Centers to approve and pay for at-home technology/equipment needed by eligible and enrolled WIOA participants who are participating in on-line/virtual occupational skills training. Justification of training activity and need for technology/equipment is required, as well as the documented procurement process utilized based on current financial policies. Therefore, purchase amount thresholds must be adhered to, as well as the purchase being allowable, allocable and necessary.

6. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Since the youth work experience program was temporarily suspended due to the current state of emergency, this activity should be ended and reopened when the service is able to be resumed.

In order for youth participants to remain engaged with the EmployBR staff and continue to receive some relevant activities, an on-line work readiness and soft skills development program can be obtained for use by these individuals. Incentives will be allowed to be issued to participants based on documented reports of successful completion of the on-line training and may be approved based on completion of weekly courses. Payments may be made monthly to participants based on successful completion of the training and assessments.

7. GAP IN SERVICE DUE TO COVID-19

This guidance acknowledges the use of “Gap in Service” for a participant not able to continue in their WIOA activity due to the COVID-19 emergency. At this time, the duration of the gap in service cannot exceed 180 days unless the LWC provides an allowance through guidance they may issue in the future. Center staff must document in a case note if the reason for the “gap in service” is due to the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the participant’s intent to continue services when they are able to return.

In addition, planned “Gap in Service” can be used for participants involved in non-training or education services, such as job readiness, job search, etc. This will avoid the Period of Participation (POP) closing and eligibility needing to be re-determined.

8. DOCUMENTATION OF SERVICES AND PARTICIPANT CONTACTS

Documenting services and participant contact is essential to ensure WIOA participants do not exit before their intended activities are completed. Center staff should continue to enter case notes in HiRE regarding customer contacts and ensure that service activities in HiRE are reflective of the participant’s current status. Staff may contact participants through other means than face-to-face contact, such as telephone, email, text and/or Skype.

Staff may contact training providers and worksite employer through phone and email in order to obtain information on participant’s progress. Timesheet and progress reports can be scanned by the service provider/employer and submitted through email to the workforce center staff, as this is a normal method for obtaining such documents.

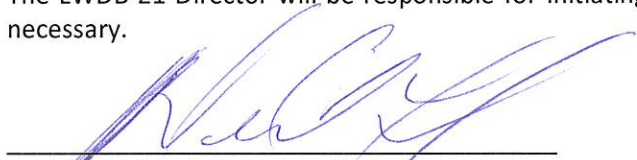
Detailed case notes should be entered for all changes/updates being made due to the COVID-19 crisis.

9. OTHER PROVISIONS

Nothing in this POLICY shall constitute a right for any individual to receive services.

This document does not change, modify, or set aside any other policies currently in effect that are not specifically addressed herein.

The LWDB 21 Director will be responsible for initiating and/or concluding this directive as determined necessary.



WIOA Chief Administrator/LWDB 21 Director