Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and Individual Service Strategy (ISS) Policy

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to provide entities awarded a subcontract or agreement through the North Central Workforce Development Board's (NCWDB) WIOA Title I funds with the guidelines and requirements for the development and implementation of Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and Individual Service Strategy (ISS) documents.

II. REFERENCES:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); Public Law 113-128
- North Central Workforce Development Board (NCWDB) Policies
- Training and Employment Guidance Letters No. 21-16, No. 23-14, No. 19-16, No. 8-15, No. 10-16
- WIOA Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Title I and Title III Programs
- Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry Individual Employment Plan (IEP)/Individual Service Strategy (ISS) Authentication and Signature Standard Operating Procedure
- CWDS Help Center - Adding Planned Services to an Individualized Employment Plan / Individual Service Strategy; Understanding the Basics of an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP)/Individual Service Strategy; Refresher Training Transcript

III. BACKGROUND:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that all Adult and Dislocated Worker participants be provided with comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs. For Youth participants, programs are to provide an Objective Assessment of the academic levels, skills levels, and service needs, including a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional jobs), supportive service needs, and developmental needs of such participant, for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants.

The IEP (for Adults and Dislocated Workers) and **ISS** (for Youth) are the culminating documents that capture assessments, employment goals, achievement objectives, and services needed. Both serve as living documents that must be regularly updated to reflect participant progress, barriers, and service strategies, and must be authenticated by both the participant and WIOA Title I staff.

The IEP/ISS serves as the foundation for case management, documenting activities, accomplishments, and alignment with labor market information. Training or services must connect to in-demand occupations within the local labor market.

All IEPs and ISSs must be entered, maintained, and authenticated in **the** Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS/PA CareerLink®) within established timeframes and in compliance with federal and state regulations.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

Adult – An individual age 18 or older who meets WIOA eligibility requirements for Adult services.

Barrier to Employment – A condition or circumstance that may hinder an individual's ability to gain or retain employment (e.g., lack of transportation, limited skills, or physical limitations). Medical diagnoses should not be recorded; instead, barriers should be described in functional terms.

Case Management – A collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, service coordination, and monitoring to help participants achieve identified education and/or employment goals.

Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS/PA CareerLink®) – The official system of record for tracking workforce development program activity and participant data in Pennsylvania.

Dislocated Worker – An individual who has been laid off or terminated, is eligible for unemployment insurance, or meets other WIOA criteria for dislocated worker services.

Individual Employment Plan (IEP) – A participant-centered, jointly developed written plan for Adults and Dislocated Workers that identifies employment goals, achievement objectives, barriers, and the combination of services to achieve successful employment outcomes.

The IEP is developed as a detailed reflection of the following:

- Assessment results
- Skills
- Barriers
- Interests
- Employment goal
- Planned services
- Supportive services
- Training, if needed

WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(B) requires the development of Youth Individual Service Strategies (ISS), an intensive service, for youth ages 14-21 and in-school (ISY) or ages 16-24 and out-of-school (OSY) directly linked to one or more of the indicators of performance; and shall identify:

a) career pathways that include education and employment goals (including, in appropriate circumstances, nontraditional employment);
b) appropriate achievement objectives;
c) and appropriate services for the participant that directly link to the participant's Objective Assessment.

Individual Service Strategy (ISS) – A participant-centered, jointly developed written plan for Youth that outlines career pathways, education and employment goals, achievement objectives, barriers, and services aligned with the WIOA Youth program elements.

An assessment of the required WIOA Youth 14 program elements should be evident when referring to the ISS.

An ISS can be developed to address goals for Employment, Education, and/or Individual Development. To reach these goals, the ISS for a Youth participant must be jointly developed and signed by the WIOA Title I staff and the participant. The plan should be an ongoing strategy with regular updates and authentications to reflect the participant's progress and/or plan changes, including educational and employment opportunities as appropriate.

The ISS reflects details of the following:

- Youth objective assessment
- Employment goal (Education and Individual Development goals are possible for youth)
- Planned services
- Assessment results
- Age-appropriate goals
- Appropriate services strategies
- Skills
- Barriers
- Interests

The IEP/ISS will serve as the basis for the entire case management service strategy and as an on-going guide for delivery of appropriate services. The IEP/ISS will identify and document a participant's progress, activities completed, benchmarks reached, and any other accomplishments. Local labor market information must be taken into consideration in the development of the IEP/ISS.

Objective Assessment – A structured review of a Youth participant's academic levels, skill levels, service needs, and goals that informs the development of the ISS.

***Participan*t –** An individual determined eligible and enrolled in WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth programs.

Supportive Services – Services such as transportation, childcare, or other assistance that enable a participant to take part in WIOA activities.

***WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*) –** Federal legislation enacted in 2014 (Public Law 113-128) that governs workforce development programs and establishes requirements for IEPs and ISSs.

Youth (In-School Youth / ISY) – A WIOA-eligible youth ages 14–21 attending school.

Youth (Out-of-School Youth / OSY) – A WIOA-eligible youth ages 16–24 not attending school.

V. <u>POLICY:</u>

1. All Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth shall have an IEP/ISS established.
2. The development of the IEP/ISS, including assessments must be recorded in the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS).
3. The IEP/ISS is a continual process which is to be participant driven, and designed collaboratively with the participant.
4. The IEP/ISS is to be based off of the assessments provided to the participant. This includes assessment for service needs and coordinated delivery of the required WIOA Youth 14 program elements.
5. Specific medical information is to be excluded from the IEP/ISS. Any barriers to employment/education which are health related are to be framed in a manner which states the limitation rather than a health condition or diagnosis (i.e. "Cannot lift more than 10 pounds" vs. "has had surgery on a torn rotator cuff.")
6. All elements of the IEP/ISS shall focus on employment/career goals, education goals (if applicable), and overcoming barriers to employment.
7. The plan shall provide a framework including timeframes, resources, and incremental steps/objectives to achieve overall goals and remediate barriers.
8. The IEP/ISS should be reviewed/updated and authenticated in cooperation with the participant at least quarterly.
9. The IEP/ISS and progress notes shall be used as the basic instrument to record results of decisions made about the combination and sequence of services for the participant based on the assessment.
10. It is the responsibility of the WIOA Title I provider to establish processes to review and approve all registration paperwork, including the IEP/ISS, for completeness, accuracy and internal consistency as well as to ensure that the plan is current at all times.

VI. PROCEDURES:

1. WIOA Title I staff will provide for assessments of adults/dislocated workers and Objective Assessment for Youth as part of enrollment and service development.
2. Staff will create the IEP/ISS within CWDS in collaboration with the participant
3. Staff will enter the required assessments/objective assessment into the IEP/ISS
4. The assessment will identify interests, skills, employment, and barriers to be addressed and documented within the IEP/ISS
5. The Youth ISS goals will be linked to at least one of the indicators of performance:
   a) Educational and Employment Rate 2nd quarter after exit;
   b) Educational and Employment Rate 4th quarter after exit;
   c) Median Earnings 2nd quarter after exit
   d) Credential Attainment;
   e) and Measurable skills Gains.
6. The IEP/ISS shall contain goals and objectives to achieve the participant's specific occupational goal. Goals and objectives should take a holistic approach, including elimination of barriers identified during assessment.
7. All goals and objectives shall be measurable and attainable within the identified timeframe.
   a) Employment Goal
      The employment goal is determined as a result of comprehensive assessment consisting of an interview, evaluation, and/or specialized testing. The goal is based on the participant's career

aptitudes and interests. It is WIOA Title I's role to guide participant career choices based on assessment results, labor market information, career pathways, work experience, trainings, special skills, interests and other viable information.
Any skills or remedial training necessary to meet employment goals should be included as objectives under the employment goal.

b) Educational Goal (Youth Only)
An educational goal should be linked to an employment goal. The goal is to have the youth continue or return to school and achieve post-secondary education or advanced occupational training. If applicable, the ISS should identify services to maintain regular school attendance, counseling, tutoring, and/or career options, as well as dropout prevention and recovery strategies that will lead the youth to completion of their educational goal.

c) Objectives
The objectives of the plan break down the larger goal (employment and/or educational) into shorter steps to reach the established goal(s). Effective objectives will include established start dates and projected end/review dates of achievement, in which they should be reviewed and updated when needed.
Objectives should be closed upon completion with a successful or unsuccessful outcome.
Objectives can be added throughout the participant's active status in the program if any new goals or added services are needed that were not discussed within the initial IEP/ISS process.

8. WIOA Title I staff shall also enter a case progress note providing information around the development of the IEP or ISS. The progress note shall include:
   a) brief summary of goals, objective, and planned services;
   b) signature/authentication;
   c) plan for IEP/ISS review.
9. The IEP/ISS should be reviewed/updated on a regular basis, no less than quarterly, and may be reviewed more frequently when training and supportive services are being provided.
10. Projected end dates of a goal or review dates for objectives should be frequently monitored by WIOA Title I staff to ensure that timeframes are being met.
11. The IEP/ISS must be updated when necessary to reflect any goal changes from the initial plan. The expectation is for updates to occur timely and within 30 calendar days of the actual occurrence.
12. Updates should be completed in collaboration with the participant and authenticated in the IEP/ISS.
13. Plan reviews and updates should be documented in the Progress Notes section of the IEP.
    a) If there are no changes/updates to the IEP/ISS, enter a progress note with subject "IEP/ISS Review." Clearly state that the case has been reviewed, the participant is on track with plan, and no changes or updates are being made.
    b) If changes/updates have been jointly agreed upon with the participant, make modification of plan in CWDS and enter a progress note within the IEP/ISS section detailing the updates and subject "IEP/ISS Update."
    c) Ensure the participant authenticates any plan changes by reviewing and signing the plan within 48 hours to ensure proper PII handling.
14. All electronic signatures and requests for signatures should be documented in the progress notes.

15. All participants who have an active participation period and those receiving follow-up services, shall have at least one goal with at least one objective open in the IEP or ISS.
16. Follow-up services are to be documented in the IEP/ISS objectives.

The IEP and ISS are also used to justify training which must be linked to occupations in demand in the local area or areas where the individual is willing to relocate based on the region's current labor market data.

The Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS)/PA CareerLink® is the system of record for tracking program participant data. All workforce development activity **must be entered into CWDS/PA CareerLink®** to ensure compliance with federal and state statutes, regulations, and policies.

While data **must** be entered and authenticated in the CWDS 2.0 IEP/ISS screens within **30 days** of the creation of the plan, interview, evaluation, assessment, plan closure or other communication with participant where an applicable change in a plan was identified, it is proper PII handling procedure to promptly (within 48 hours) enter information into CWDS 2.0.

VII. POLICY EXCEPTIONS:

Any discrepancies arising between Workforce Solutions policy and/or procedures with federal and state provisions due to current or future revisions will default to the current minimum federal and state regulations and guidance available. Workforce Solutions policy/or procedures may set forth stricter requirements than provided by federal and state guidance, but in no case will local policy and/or procedures not meet minimum federal and state policy.

VIII. RESCISSIONS:

None

IX. EXPIRATION:

Ongoing

X. INQUIRIES:

Questions shall be directed to:

Pamela Streich, Executive Director at pstreich@ncwdb.org; or
Tonya Mauk, Oversight and Project Manager at tmauk@ncwdb.org; or
Donna Hottel, Strategic Planning and Project Manager at dhottel@ncwdb.org

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XI. POLICY HISTORY:

This policy is reviewed annually (at a minimum), typically during the first week of July, by Workforce

Solutions' staff to assess and implement any necessary changes, edits, updates and revisions.

Name of Staff Reviewer	Date of Review	Description of Change	Effective Date
Tonya Mauk; Pam Streich; Donna Hottel	07/22/2025	Reviewed and revised to align with current practices and format	07/25/2025
Tonya Mauk	07/01/2024	Policy restructured to align with CWDS 2.0	07/01/2024
Pam Streich	01/17/2017	Policy revised to reflect new agency (Workforce Solutions for North Central PA)	01/17/2017
Pam Streich	12/01/2016	Policy revised to add Career Pathway language	12/01/2016
Pam Streich	07/01/2013	Policy revised to address the transition to WIOA from WIA	07/01/2013

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program
For more information on the Stevens Amendment and Funding, visit
https://www.workforcesolutionspa.com/categories/resources/pages/stevens-amendment