Referral Process Policy

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to provide entities awarded a subcontract or agreement through Workforce Solutions for North Central PA/North Central Workforce Development Board with the Referral Process Policy for the North Central Local Workforce Development Area.

This policy also applies to all WIOA Title I programs, core and required one-stop partners, subcontractors, and staff operating within the North Central PA CareerLink® system. It governs referrals made between all partners for jobseekers, youth, and businesses accessing services through the workforce system.

II. REFERENCES:

- Workforce innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Public Law 113-128 (2014)
- 20 CFR Parts 678, 679, and 680 WIOA Regulations
- TEGL 04-15 Vision for the One-Stop
- TEGL 16-16 WIOA General Guidance for One-Stop Operations
- PA Department of Labor and Industry WIOA State Plan
- PA CareerLink® Partner Memorandum of Understanding
- North Central Workforce Development Board Memorandum of Understanding with PA CareerLink® partners
- Workforce Solutions policies

III. BACKGROUND:

The vision of WIOA Partnerships in American Job Centers (TEGL 4-15) – PA CareerLink® centers is to:

- Connect all customers to the full range of services available in their communities;
- Provide Seamless, customer-focused, integrated service delivery across all programs and enhance access to the programs' services;
- Ensure that businesses and job-seekers have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes.

Grantees, subrecipients, and contractors funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) must abide by WIOA law, regulations, and guidance, state and local WIOA policies.

As agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), core partners agree to provide substantive referrals in accordance with this policy to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

Active Referral – A referral in which, with the customer's consent, the referring staff provides the receiving agency with relevant information or assessment results about the customer's needs, so the customer does not have to repeat their entire story.

Case Notes (CWDS) – Documentation entered into the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) that records services provided, referrals made, follow-up actions, and customer progress.

Cold Referral – A referral where the customer is transferred to another service provider without prior communication between the providers.

Core Partners – The primary partners identified under WIOA: Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth), Title II (Adult Education and Literacy), Title III (Wagner-Peyser), and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation).

Facilitated Referral – A referral where the referring staff assists the customer by scheduling an appointment, requesting the receiving agency to contact the customer, or otherwise helping initiate the connection.

MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) – A written agreement between the Local Workforce Development Board and PA CareerLink® partners that outlines roles, responsibilities, and procedures, including referral processes.

Passive Referral – A referral in which the customer is provided with contact information for another service and is expected to make the connection independently.

Referral – The process of directing a customer to another agency, partner, or service provider to access services, benefits, or resources not directly provided by the referring organization.

Warm Referral – A live, three-way interaction (in person or by phone) where the referring staff introduces the customer to the receiving agency, explains what services have already been provided, and clarifies the reason for referral.

WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) – Federal legislation enacted in 2014 that governs workforce development programs, establishes one-stop delivery systems, and defines the roles of partners, boards, and service providers.

V. POLICY AND PROCEDURE:

The choice of referral process depends on the customer's needs, the arrangements agreed upon with the receiving service, and the capacity of both the referring organization and the receiving service at the time of referral.

Referrals may occur by telephone, face-to-face, email, written communication, or a combination of these channels. The method selected may combine aspects of multiple processes. Staff are encouraged to use facilitated, warm, and/or active referral processes whenever feasible, especially for customers who are likely to have difficulty navigating services independently.

Types of Referrals.

Referral Type	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages
Passive referral	Customer is given contact information for appropriate service(s) and left to make contact independently	Empowers customer to take action on their own behalf.	Higher likelihood that the referral will not follow through
Facilitated referral	Referring staff helps the customer connect, e.g., by making an appointment or transferring the call.	Ensures receiving service is aware of the customer. Customer receives direct support.	Customer may experience delays awaiting response.
Active referral	With customer consent, staff shares collected information or assessments directly with the receiving organization.	Customer avoids repeating their full story; receiving agency is prepared.	Risk of miscommunication if context is lost; requires consent.
Cold referral	Customer is transferred without communication between providers.	Immediate transfer may provide fast access.	Receiving service may lack context; customer may need to repeat information.
Warm referral	A "live" three-way interaction (in person or phone) where the customer is introduced, context is provided, and next steps are clarified.	Transparent, efficient, minimizes repetition for customer.	Requires receiving service availability at that moment.

Confidentiality and Consent

When sharing customer information as part of an active or warm referral, staff must first obtain the customer's informed consent. Consent may be verbal or written and must be documented in CWDS. Only information necessary to facilitate the referral may be shared.

Feedback and Follow-up

Referrals should be followed by:

- Obtaining customer feedback regarding the referral;
- Confirming with the receiving agency whether the customer successfully accessed services;
- Documenting follow-up in CWDS case notes;
- Determining next steps with the customer, if applicable.

Tracking of Referrals

Referrals made by core partners should be completed by phone or email with documentation in CWDS. This includes referrals made to both core and non-core partners. All follow-up activity must also be documented in CWDS.

The North Central Workforce Development Board will monitor referrals for compliance and effectiveness.

Staff Skills

Effective referrals require staff to:

- Understand the customer's situation and perceived needs;
- Discuss prioritization of needs and available options;
- Confirm the customer's readiness and willingness to be referred;
- Anticipate potential barriers and problem-solve solutions;
- Choose the most appropriate referral method based on the customer's circumstances.

Staff Checklist

☐ I understand the customer's situation and needs.

☐ We have discussed priorities and available options.

☐ The customer is ready and willing to be referred.

☐ Barriers have been considered and addressed.

☐ Referral type (facilitated, warm, active, etc.) is appropriate for the customer's situation.

☐ Consent is documented if customer information is shared.

☐ Follow-up plan is in place.

Continuous Improvement

Referral data and follow-up notes may be reviewed quarterly by the PA CareerLink® Operator and/or NCWDB staff. Trends such as missed connections, delays, or communication gaps will be addressed during partner meetings, staff training, or process updates.

VI. 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.

VII. RESCISSIONS:

None

VIII. EXPIRATION:

Ongoing

IX. INQUIRIES:

Questions shall be directed to:

Pam Streich, Executive Director at pstreich@ncwdb.org; or

Tonya Mauk, Oversight and Project Manager at tmauk@ncwdb.org; or
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X. 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
Pam Streich, Donna Hottel, Tonya Mauk	September 30, 2025	Reviewed. Updated to current formatting	July 1, 2025
Pam Streich	February 1, 2021	Referral Process Guidance to Policy	February 1, 2021
Susan Snelick	October 4, 2017	Guidance Issue Date	October 4, 2017