



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
OF SOLANO COUNTY

POLICY ISSUANCE

Date: November 16, 2018 Number: 2018-10

ASSESSMENTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy provides guidance to the Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County in providing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) candidates and participants with appropriate assessment of skills and abilities. Objective assessments can assist individuals in clarifying service needs, identifying career goals, and creating strong Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) or Individual Service Strategies (ISSs) for participants.

Assessments provide a systematic approach to gathering information about WIOA participants. The accumulated information can be used in a variety of ways by all the partners in aiding in a local area's combined workforce development efforts. Assessment guides the customer's skills development strategy and service delivery by identifying the gaps between job seekers' skills and employers' workforce needs. Once customers gain an awareness of their skills and any gaps they may have within those skills, opportunities need to be made available through the WDB to assist them in upgrading their skills to match labor market demands.

QUESTIONS

Questions relating to this policy should be directed to Tracy White, One-Stop Manager, at twhite@solanowdb.org or at (707) 863-3520.

ATTACHMENTS

- None

POLICY

Local assessments should work towards the following objectives:

- Exploring career and employment options suited to readiness, aptitudes and employment goals;
- Providing job seekers with information about their workplace skills, strengths and weaknesses;
- Reviewing job seekers' progress towards acquiring skills that are in demand, promoting attainment of industry-recognized credentials, and screening for employers;
- Referring appropriately screened, qualified job seekers to available job openings; and
- Identifying skill gaps and educational needs to help customers become competitive in the labor market.

Assessment results must be documented, appropriately available, and shared among the WDB partners as appropriate for the benefit of common customers.

Preliminary Assessments

Preliminary assessments should be made available throughout the one-stop system and intake. Not all customers will want or need an assessment. The preliminary assessment helps identify basic educational skills, occupational skills, work history, basic work skills/employment competencies, and work interests. Assessments may include standardized testing, assessment instruments, and identification of customer barriers and needs.

Secondary Assessments

Secondary assessment goes beyond preliminary assessment in collecting more information about the job seeker. Formal or objective assessment is a category of secondary assessment that may be required when the job seeker's skills are deficient for the employment goal. Formal assessments come in a wide variety of tests designed for longer term job counseling and career development.

Employer-focused assessments are those required by the employer to screen, test, and hire employees to meet critical job skill needs. These assessments are encouraged when appropriate.

USE OF INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS

Staff are encouraged to use a variety of informal assessments to ascertain skill levels, employability, and employment goals, as well as to monitor learning and inform service delivery.

Informal assessments may include performance samples, informal reading inventory, learner self-evaluation, learning plans and logs, HISET or GED Ready scores, additional standardized tests, computer-generated assessments, textbook tests, and staff-designed tests. These informal tests are not utilized for the federal NRS reporting requirements.

A participant's test score is just one piece of information that demonstrates what the person is able to do in a specific and defined area.

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS

All WIOA-enrolled Adults and Dislocated Workers with education levels less than an AA degree who are entering training, and all WIOA out-of-school youth must be academically assessed using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) standardized assessment instruments. Job seekers who are current college students at the time they are enrolled in WIOA do not need to be CASAS tested.

The National Reporting System (NRS) has defined a set of six educational functioning levels (EFLs) for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and for English as a Second Language (ESL). Nationwide, all WIOA Title I local areas must use standardized pre and post-tests, where required, to report Measurable Skills Gain according to NRS guidelines.

The following educational functioning levels tests are allowable:

- CASAS: Life and Work Reading – ABE and ESL learners
- CASAS: Reading GOALS Series – ABE learners
- CASAS: Life and Work Listening – ESL learners

- CASAS: Life Skills Mathematics – ABE learners

Staff are advised to monitor the test developer’s websites where they can find postings of any changes, information about new tests in development, and other resources. Resources can be found at NRS (<http://www.nrsweb.org>) and at CASAS (<http://www.casas.org>).

Required Procedures:

1. Providers must ensure full disclosure to persons undergoing an assessment of its purpose, its benefit to the job seeker (how the information will be used to deliver better service to that customer), and of the confidentiality of the results.
2. Assessments should be objective and without adverse impact on protected groups.
3. Staff must be trained in using and interpreting formal assessments. Assessment results must be interpreted for the customer by appropriately trained staff.
4. There must be reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities who wish to be assessed by the procedure or process.

When an academic assessment is required, staff must assess with the following timeline:

When	What	Purpose
Prior to commencement of training services, or for out-of-school youth	Placement test	Determine pre-test level
	Pre-test	Determine entry EFL or basic skill deficiency status
After 70-100 hours of instruction, but at a minimum of 40 hours	Post-test	Determine updated EFL

When using EFL as a Measurable Skills Gain indicator, staff must compare the pre-test and post-test levels using the same level, but a different form test. In addition, participants must only be tested once for pre-tests. Participants should not be tested a second time, unless the last time a pre-test was taken was over four (4) months. Staff are encouraged to use official test scores taken at other partner organizations if feasible, in order to reduce excessive testing of individuals.

Testing Parameters

The test series differ primarily in contextual focus (for example, employability versus general life skills and work skills). Selection of the appropriate test series is based on an individual’s goals and the focus of the program activities (general life and work skills, employability, and workplace).

If job seekers have been CASAS tested within the previous twelve (12) months and have not been in school during that time, those CASAS scores can be used without additional testing.

Initial placement with an appraisal (placement) test gauges a learner’s reading, math, listening comprehension, writing, and speaking skills. Staff should use appraisals whenever feasible, but may not use appraisals as pre-tests to measure learner progress. The appraisal tests require no more than thirty (30) minutes. Pre-tests must be administered as soon as possible during intake, but at least prior to commencement of instruction. Pre-tests require no more than sixty (60)

minutes, with the exception of the Reading GOALS series, which requires no more than 75 minutes.

Placement tests must always be administered to determine the level of pre-test to administer, unless the learner:

- Has a placement test history record current within 12 months; or
- Has limited literacy skills or limited ability to understand or speak English.

Testing personnel must remain in the testing room throughout each entire test session to ensure that students follow all testing rules. Examinees must sit three (3) to five (5) feet apart and refrain from talking during the testing session or seeking help from others in any way, including use of electronic devices. Testing personnel must ensure that they follow all test administration directions and language as stipulated in the appropriate CASAS Test Administration Manual.

All assessment records and results must be retained in the participant’s file and entered into CalJOBS.

Test Scoring

NRS guidelines require appropriate placement of learners in instructional areas. Staff must use the skill area (for example, reading and math) with the lower pre-test score to place testers. The skill area with the lowest first accurate pre-test matched to the highest accurate post-test measuring the same skill area is used for reporting NRS-defined EFL gains for the WIOA Measurable Skills Gains indicator.

Below are the relationships in scores between CASAS testing and NRS levels.

CASAS Relationship to NRS Levels for Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education			
NRS Levels		CASAS Level	Reading and Math Scale Score Ranges
1	Beginning Adult Basic Education Literacy	A	200 and below
2	Beginning Basic Education	B	201-210
3	Low Intermediate Basic Education	B	211-220
4	High Intermediate Basic Education	C	221-235
5	Low Adult Secondary Education	D	236-245
6	High Adult Secondary Education	E	246 and above

CASAS Relationship to NRS Levels for English as a Second Language				
NRS Levels		CASAS Level	Reading Scale Score Ranges	Listening Scale Score Ranges
1	Beginning English as a Second Language Literacy	A	180 and below	180 and below
2	Low Beginning English as a Second Language	A	181-190	181-189

3	High Beginning English as a Second Language	A	191-200	190-199
4	Low Intermediate English as a Second Language	B	201-210	200-209
5	High Intermediate English as a Second Language	B	211-220	210-218
6	Advanced English as a Second Language	C	221-235	219-227

Test Validity and Reliability

Assessment data must meet validity and reliability standards in order to be used in a meaningful way. To ensure validity, only NRS-approved assessments must be used to measure a participant’s EFL. To be reliable, time limits must be followed and directions should be consistent. To ensure overall system improvement, staff must utilize the same testing requirements as WIOA Title II Adult Education service providers. This is a means to align services and decrease duplication of assessments, and will ultimately create greater efficiency in the overall workforce system.

Staff must ensure that testing times and conditions are uniform for both pre-tests and post-tests. CASAS designed pre-tests and post-tests so that most students are able to complete a test in one hour or less. Post-testing should not occur before at least 40 hours of instruction.

Training Requirements for Administering Standardized Assessments

Training of personnel is essential to quality testing. Only staff that has completed training by CASAS may use CASAS assessments. Once trained, this individual can train others within his or her respective agency but may not train outside that agency. These training sessions teach participants to administer, score, and interpret CASAS reading, listening, and math assessments.

Online training is available throughout the year. Specific training sessions are designed for both new and experienced staff. Registration for all training is posted online on the CASAS Web site: https://www.casas.org/online_registration/. In addition, each CASAS Test Administration Manual provides charts and guidelines for converting raw scores to scale scores and should be used as a reference point.

Test Security

All testing materials online or on paper, including but not limited to CASAS eTests®, (online or desktop), test booklets, CDs, answer sheets, and answer keys, must be kept secure. No unauthorized personnel should be allowed access to CASAS eTests® or to paper test booklets.

Paper test booklets and related test support materials should be kept in locked storage at all times when not in use. Prior to distribution of test booklets, the test administrator must number each test booklet for tracking purposes. As examinees finish the test, they must put their answer sheet inside their test booklet and wait until the conclusion of the testing session. The administrator must ensure that each test booklet is returned.

No staff may use any CASAS test or test item—published or unpublished—as a tool to prepare examinees for the testing process. CASAS tests may never serve as practice tests in any capacity or for any purpose. Test items may not be reviewed, discussed, or explained to anyone at any time. If paper test booklets have been marked in or torn, agencies should shred these test booklets. Testing materials must remain at the testing site at all times.

CASAS assessment materials are copyrighted and shall not be duplicated. Reproducing test materials is a violation of federal copyright law and duplication of copyrighted materials exposes the WDB to legal and financial penalties.

Improper Use of CASAS Tests

Improper use of CASAS tests include activities such as:

- Teaching to the actual CASAS test item,
- Copying and distributing a CASAS test item or CASAS test booklet to unauthorized personnel or learners prior to or after test administration as a study guide,
- Administering a lower level test to artificially increase the learning gain between pre- and post-tests,
- Reducing the amount of time given on a pre-test (e.g., less than 20 minutes) and/or increasing the amount of time on a post-test (e.g., 40-60 minutes),
- Deleting test answers on the pre-test to lower the test score,
- Deleting accurate tests to manipulate the learning gains,
- Duplicating or copying the test of one learner and replacing the identification number of another learner,
- Altering test items or test score information,
- Providing the answers to test questions,
- Translating test items and answers into another language,
- Administering tests in quick succession without sufficient time for instructional intervention to maximize gains,
- Failing to administer tests at specific agency sites or in certain program areas; **and/or**
- Excluding certain individuals or groups who have attended 12 hours or more from pre-post testing.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR TESTERS WITH DISABILITIES

Under Section 188 of WIOA and related regulations, staff must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship. Accommodations are not designed to lower expectations for performance; rather, they are designed to mitigate the effects of a disability and to level the playing field. An individual with a record for a substantially limiting impairment may be entitled to a reasonable accommodation or reasonable modification if needed and related to the disability. Staff must document any accommodation requests and any meeting regarding the request in accordance with Section 188 regulations.

Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting documentation of their disability at the time of registration, program entry, or after

diagnosis. The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the learner's ability to demonstrate performance on the test. The information may be obtained from a doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment from a certified professional, or other clinical records.

Assessment accommodations will be based on the nature of the disability or special need and can include, but are not limited to:

- *Braille Test Edition* – the test administrator must transfer Braille answers to a scorable answer document,
- *Large Print Edition* – testers who use the large print edition should be allowed to mark their answers on a large print answer sheet,
- *Repeated Directions* – the test administrator may repeat the directions for testers who have difficulty following or attending to directions,
- *Assistive Technology* – can include, but is not limited to, a computer, tape recorder, calculator, grip for a pencil, visual magnification device, communication device, mask or marker to maintain place, speech synthesizer, and electronic reader,
- *Answers Recorded* – if unable to write, provision must be made for the test administrator to record the tester's answers on the scorable answer sheet. Scribes must be neutral in responding to the learner during test administration, and may not give away the answers,
- *Extended Time/Adjusted Time* – time may be adjusted for certain learners. The test administration may have to be altered considerably to allow for intermittent short breaks during the testing period, or it may be determined appropriate to administer the test in a number of short sessions. Testing may also be stopped and continued at a later time if the learner's behavior interferes with testing. The elapsed time must be documented and the test administrator must closely monitor that test security is maintained; **and/or**
- *Communication Assistance* – A sign language interpreter may be used for test administration directions only.

It is not an appropriate accommodation in test administration procedures to read a CASAS reading test to a learner with low literacy skills or blindness.

Detailed information about accommodations and alternate test forms can be found on the CASAS website at www.casas.org.

DISCLAIMER

This policy is based on WDB's interpretation of the statute, along with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Final Rule released by the U.S. Department of Labor and federal and state policies relating to WIOA implementation. This policy will be reviewed and updated based on any additional federal or state guidance.

REFERENCES

Law

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974

Federal Guidance

- Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA (TEGL) 21-16 – [Third WIOA Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance](#)
- TEGL 10-16, Change 1 – [Performance Accountability Guidance for WIOA Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV Core Programs](#)
- TEGL 39-11 – [Guidance on Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information \(PII\)](#)

Approved by

Workforce Development Board of Solano County



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
OF SOLANO COUNTY

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT AND UNDERSTANDING FOR:
ASSESSMENT POLICY

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County's Assessment Policy contains important information pertaining to my employment and duties at the WDB.

A copy of this policy has been given to me to retain for future reference, and I have been provided with the location on the Shared Drive for the policy where I can obtain an electronic copy.

Since the information and policies described in the policy are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the policy may occur. All such changes will be communicated through official notices. I understand that revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies.

I have received the Assessment Policy and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the information contained in this policy and any revisions made to it.

I understand that I should consult my supervisor if I have any questions about the information contained in the policy. I understand that failure to comply with the information contained in the policy could lead to disciplinary action or termination.

Employee's Name (printed): _____

Employee's Signature: _____ Date: _____