

COORDINATION OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Clear Roles and Responsibilities

- In Connecticut, no single organization oversees all the various adult basic skills and ESL programs available throughout the state or has responsibility for systematically assessing service delivery and outcomes. To date, state efforts to coordinate policies, programs, and resources across service systems have been piecemeal and ad hoc.
- Connecticut's overall adult literacy goals, and the roles required to implement them, are not clearly defined in statute or any state policy document. There is no legislative mandate for a unified policy, comprehensive strategy, or effective leadership mechanism for improving adult literacy levels in the state.
- Responsibility for adult literacy is divided among all three levels of government and across a number of agencies, organizations and programs, with no center of authority for systemwide strategic planning, coordination, and oversight.

To promote effective coordination of adult literacy programs, program review committee recommends:

1) Adoption of a vision and mission statement that clarifies the purpose of adult literacy programs and services in Connecticut, emphasizing the goals of helping adults develop the literacy skills they need to function as productive citizens in work, family, and community environments.

2) Development of a three-year strategic plan that defines roles, identifies priorities, and directs funding for an adult literacy service system in Connecticut. Among the specific areas addressed by the plan shall be the following:

- a) **Leadership, support, and service delivery roles of all system components, examining in particular:**
 - i) **governance responsibility for adult education;**
 - ii) **ways to promote regionalized service delivery and partnerships; and**
 - iii) **system "infrastructure" needs (resources and support for overall administration, management, research, and coordination).**
- b) **Priorities for services, including :**
 - i) **intensity of available programs (quality versus quantity of instruction);**
 - ii) **access (improving outreach) and retention (improving learner persistence);**
and
 - iii) **target populations.**
- c) **Analysis of funding requirements, identifying at a minimum:**
 - i) **estimated resources needed to implement plan goals and objectives;**

Key Points

- ii) **current sources of funding and possibilities for reallocation; and**
- iii) **potential alternative and new sources of funding sources.**

d) **The plan shall be developed every three years by the adult literacy leadership board recommended below. The board shall review the implementation status of the plan and make any necessary revisions annually. The board shall designate regional planning workgroups consisting of representatives of adult literacy stakeholders to assist in developing and reviewing the state strategic plan for adult literacy.**

3) Establishment of an adult literacy leadership board consisting of nine voting members appointed by the governor and the legislature. The governor shall appoint five members including the chairperson. The speaker of the House of Representatives, the president pro tempore of the Senate, and the minority leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate shall each appoint one member.

- a) **The voting members shall be representatives of the key stakeholders in the adult literacy system including but not limited to: public and private adult literacy service providers, such as local and regional adult education programs, community colleges, volunteer literacy organizations, and community-based organizations experienced in adult literacy programs; public libraries; adult literacy advocates; businesses with employees in need of improved basic skills and English language proficiency; organized labor; and regional workforce investment boards.**
- b) **The term of office of the members shall be for four years. The board may create officers other than the chairperson as it deems necessary from among its members. All actions of the board shall require the affirmative vote of at least five voting members serving on the board, which number shall constitute a quorum.**
- c) **The commissioners of correction, education, higher education, economic and community development, labor, and social services, the director of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, and the secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or their designees, shall serve as nonvoting, ex officio members of the board.**
- d) **The board shall:**
 - i) **develop the vision and mission statement and strategic plan recommended above by July 1, 2008;**
 - ii) **submit recommendations to the governor and legislature for sources and levels of funding to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan each year;**
 - iii) **establish performance measures for the adult literacy system and use them to track progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan; and**

Key Points

- iv) **report to legislature and the governor each year by July 1 beginning in 2008 on progress made in developing and subsequently implementing the strategic plan, based on the established performance measures.**
- e) **The board shall also be responsible for developing and maintaining centralized system information and for promoting coordination through regional planning, community partnerships for service delivery, and mechanisms for sharing resources, as discussed below.**
- f) **The board may call upon state agencies and offices, including but not limited to the departments of education, higher education, labor, economic and community development, and social services, the workforce competitiveness office and the board of trustees for the community colleges for information, reports, and assistance as it may need to carry out its duties.**
- g) **The board shall be scheduled to terminate five years from its effective date unless reauthorized by the General Assembly. During the year prior to automatic termination, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee shall conduct a sunset review and report its findings and recommendations regarding continuation, modification, or termination of the board for consideration by the General Assembly during the next regular legislative session.**

Centralized Information

- There is no central information source for all adult literacy services to assist statewide planning and collaboration. The outcome data public programs are required to collect are not compiled in a single source to aid evaluation of results by providers, funders, and policymakers and determine the status of adult literacy in Connecticut.
- An inventory that learners, providers, advocates, and case managers could use to find out about current services throughout the state including when and where they are offered is not available.
- For the most part, data about specific adult literacy programs and services are maintained in separate, incompatible automated information systems operated by each major component of the system. Various federal privacy law requirements and administering agency policies also restrict access to each system's data, even for research purposes.
- There is great need for program evaluation and research but little capacity for that function within any of the systems involved in adult literacy.

Key Points

4) The program review committee recommends that under the direction of the adult literacy leadership board:

- a) a statewide automated inventory of adult literacy services that can be accessed by the public online, and includes a description of the type of service, the time and place it is offered, and any eligibility requirements or fees, be established and maintained;**
- b) all adult literacy service providers be required to maintain waiting lists and report that information in accordance with standards developed by the board; and**
- c) state agencies with automated information systems containing data related to adult literacy services work together to overcome the restrictions that impede the sharing of program data for research purposes and develop ways of using their systems to track individual progress and service outcomes.**
- d) The committee also recommends a state “report card” on the status of adult literacy in Connecticut be prepared and presented as part of the board’s annual report recommended earlier. The adult literacy report card should include, for each major component of the adult literacy system (e.g., adult education, family literacy, workplace literacy, developmental education): a description of funding levels and sources; numbers and demographics of the individuals served, and performance measures for key adult literacy outcomes such as learning gains, program/credential completion, success in employment or postsecondary education/training, and indicators of community participation (e.g., attain citizenship, voting, attending parent-teacher conferences, etc.).**
- e) The program review committee further recommends at least two full-time education consultant positions be added to the adult education unit of the State Department of Education to provide sufficient capacity to collect and analyze information on available services and program outcomes and to carry out research on adult education program effectiveness and best practices. As part of its strategic planning responsibilities, the leadership board should also determine whether additional staffing is needed at the state level by other systems with adult literacy responsibilities, including public libraries, to carry out these functions.**

Shared Resources

- Overall, it is clear that collaborative approaches are the most cost-effective way to deliver quality services to the adult literacy target population. Strong working relationships among adult literacy stakeholders within a region - employers, adult education providers, local schools, community colleges and other higher education institutions, workforce boards, job training providers, organized labor -- make shared resources and coordinated service delivery possible.

Key Points

- Several factors present impediments to successful collaboration among adult literacy providers. These include: fragmented and inflexible funding sources; inadequate resources for adult literacy services overall; and a lack of resources dedicated to building and maintaining partnerships for coordinated service delivery.
- There is no statewide policy directive or significant fiscal incentive in place to foster regional planning and service delivery partnerships for adult literacy services. Furthermore, successful collaboration requires its own resources -- someone must be assigned to manage the partnership process

5) The program review committee recommends that the board, through its strategic planning process:

- a) **establish that collaboration and community partnerships are the preferred way of delivering adult literacy services and identify ways to modify program requirements to promote shared funding and funding flexibility; and**
- b) **develop funding policies that provide a) incentives for community partnerships of adult literacy providers and regionalized service delivery and b) financial support for regional collaboration and community planning.**
- c) **In addition, it is recommended that the legislature, with the advice of the adult literacy leadership board, establish a new funding source for adult education and other adult literacy program providers that provides state bonus grants for good performance outcomes, including but not limited to, effective collaboration and coordinated funding and service delivery. The board should also develop a policy for providing multi-year funding to programs with records of good performance.**