



National Reporting System
for Adult Education

A Project of the U.S. Department of Education

ISSUE 2

Identifying Learner Cohorts for Postsecondary Education Follow Up

Issue Presented at Congress of State Directors

The National Reporting System (NRS) requires States to report student entry into postsecondary education or training for the students who set this outcome as a goal. Local programs must follow up with these students after they exit the adult education program to determine whether they entered postsecondary education.

OVAE proposed the following change to this policy at the State Congress.

Automatically designate all students who have earned a GED, have a secondary credential, or are enrolled in a class specifically designed for transitioning to community college (e.g., bridge program, college readiness), as the cohort for which “entry into postsecondary education” must be tracked.

Summary of State Response

State responses to this proposed policy change were mixed—while fifteen states supported the change, twenty-nine states identified some problems with the cohort definition. About half of the states requested additional time beyond July 1, 2011 to implement the change. Some states were concerned that the definition of postsecondary education and/or training had been changed to include only enrollment in community or four year colleges. The definition was clarified by OVAE to include postsecondary occupational skill training and appropriate apprenticeship training as well as enrollment in community colleges and four year institutions.

Fourteen states noted that this change would help them to capture more positive outcomes because local programs are reluctant to set this goal, while four states stated that goal setting has been problematic and this change could eliminate local program confusion regarding setting the goal. Twenty-four states commented that the cohort as defined is inappropriate and too large, noting that many of these students may not want to enter postsecondary education and/or training. Four states observed that the cohort was too limited because, in these states, students could enroll in postsecondary education and training without earning a GED or high school diploma.

Additionally, several states noted that the increased size of the cohort would pose a significant struggle for data collection, requiring more resources both in time and money. Also, 23 states said they would need adequate time to incorporate the change into the state MIS and conduct implementation training on this policy change.

Final Recommendation

OVAE proposes to implement in Program Year (PY) 2012 the change presented at the State Congress of replacing goal setting for the entry into postsecondary education or training measure with an automatic cohort designation. The cohort, for which “entry into postsecondary education” must be tracked, would consist of all learners who have earned a GED or high school diploma, have a secondary credential at entry, or are enrolled in a class specifically designed for transitioning to community college (e.g., bridge program, college readiness).

In making this recommendation OVAE clarifies that postsecondary education includes postsecondary occupational skill training and appropriate apprenticeship training, in addition to community colleges and four year colleges. Students who passed the GED tests or earned a secondary credential while enrolled in adult education as well as students who enter with these credentials would be included in the cohort.

In addition, OVAE proposes to extend the follow-up period for entry into postsecondary education to include the next program year after exit. For example, states can report entry into postsecondary education for a student who exits in PY 2012 any time from exit till the end of PY 2013. The revised definition below shows proposed changes in ***bold italics***.

It is important to note that in addition to implementing automatic cohort identification and extended time line reporting, OVAE is also pursuing adding measurement of progress and completion of postsecondary success as core outcome measures in the NRS. This proposal is discussed in more detail in *Issue 6: Exploring Progress and Completion in Postsecondary Education*. This supports the President’s 2020 College Completion Goal for the U.S. to regain its stature as the country with the largest number of college graduates. OVAE believes that adult education state agencies should be held accountable not only for entrance of its learners into postsecondary education and training, but also for their progress and completion of postsecondary programs.

Proposed Changes to the Definition of Entered Postsecondary Education or Training

Definition: Learner enrolls in a postsecondary educational, ~~or~~ occupational skills training program, ***or an apprenticeship training program*** that does not duplicate other services or training received, regardless of whether the prior services or training were completed.

Applicable Population: All learners ***who have earned a GED or high school diploma, have a secondary credential at entry, or who are enrolled in a class specifically designed for transitioning to community college with a goal of placement in postsecondary education or training*** who exit during the program year.

Federal Reporting: The total number of learners who enter postsecondary education or a training program and ***the total number of students in the applicable population (see above) who had this goal*** who exit during the program year are reported. ***Entry into postsecondary education can occur any time from time of exit till the end of the following program year.*** To compute a rate of placement, the number of students enrolling in postsecondary education or

training is divided by the total number of learners *in the applicable population ~~with a goal of advancing to postsecondary education or training~~* who exit during the program year.

Major Implications of Proposed Change

- The number of learners requiring follow-up will increase from current levels. It is recommended that states explore the use of postsecondary enrollment databases for data matching.
- This change will require changes to state data systems and training of local staff to identify and record students with secondary credentials.
- States will be required to implement tracking procedures to follow students for an additional program year after exit.
- Further definition of what comprises a transition class will be provided in NRS Guidelines.
- The two-year reporting cycle proposed will have an impact on how this measure will be included in calculations for the annual incentive awards.