



SIX STEPS TO A BETTER JOB TRAINING SYSTEM FOR WOMEN

1. INCREASE FUNDS TO SUPPORT WIA IN GENERAL AND TRAINING IN PARTICULAR.

Increase funding and designate a significant portion of funding for training services. Significant resources have been spent on infrastructure leaving little funding for actual training services. Adequate funding should be provided for training. In addition, multiple funding streams or programs should not be collapsed within WIA and Youth Programs should not be cut to fund new grant programs.

2. EASE ACCESS TO TRAINING.

Broad Array of Services

- **Eliminate the sequential delivery of services and base access to intensive and training services on an assessment of customer needs.** By providing services on a sequential basis many job seekers are wasting time, searching for jobs for which they are not qualified or jobs that pay too little for them to support their families.

Displaced Homemakers and Dislocated Workers

- **Require services be made available to displaced homemakers under dislocated worker provisions.** WIA took a great step forward by including displaced homemakers in the definition of dislocated workers without restrictions. Congress intended that this be the mechanism by which displaced homemakers would receive the counseling and training they need. This has not been the case and must be corrected.
- **Designate a specific portion of dislocated worker funding for displaced homemaker programs.** Congress should direct states to programs with expertise in providing services to displaced homemakers. In over half the states, there is state-level displaced homemaker legislation, an easy mechanism for one-stops to contract for services.
- **Amend the definition of “displaced homemaker” to include welfare recipients reaching time limits.** The term “displaced homemaker” describes an individual who has lost his or her primary source of income and therefore must enter the workforce. Welfare benefits represent the primary source of income for welfare recipients. Welfare recipients who are within two years of reaching their time limits should be eligible for services under WIA, as are other displaced homemakers.

State Reserve

- **Require states to use a portion of funds reserved for statewide activities on programs to serve displaced homemakers and women seeking nontraditional jobs.** These two activities are currently allowable under the “governor’s reserve.” However, less than one-fourth of the state are utilizing these provisions according to a survey by Women Work! These activities should be a required use of funds.

Coalition Co-Chairs

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3. INCREASE ACCESS TO WELL-PAYING JOBS.

- **Strengthen commitment to increase women’s entry into high-wage jobs in state plans.** Current law requires states to include a description of how they will serve displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, individuals seeking nontraditional occupations and single parents. States should also be required to describe the proposed impact of such policies and programs and how their success will be measured.
- **Ensure that Youth Programs are serving girls and boys equitably.** Current law does nothing to ensure that girls and boys are being served in comparable numbers, are entering jobs, education, or training leading to comparable pay, and have comparable job retention rates. Job training and career development programs for youth witness the birth of the wage gap. State boards should be responsible for a review of WIA youth programs to ensure that youth are being served equitably.
- **Ensure that career guidance and planning include a full awareness of career options with self-sufficiency as the goal.** All one-stop customers and youth entering WIA programs should receive information on high-wage jobs that do not require a four-year degree, including those that are nontraditional for women, and should be assessed for their suitability and interest in these jobs. A career plan should include an assessment of skills, aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs that meet the short-term goal of connecting job-seekers to supportive services, and the long-term goal of making them economically self-sufficient.
- **Encourage placement into high-wage, high-demand jobs by providing better labor market information.** States or local areas should conduct assessments of their regional labor markets to identify industries or occupations that meet employer demand for workers and employee need for self-sufficiency wages. Youth programs must link girls and boys with job opportunities in high-wage, high-growth fields, especially technology jobs and nontraditional jobs for girls.
- **Require technical assistance to state and local WIA staff in serving women who are displaced homemakers and who are training for nontraditional jobs.** Local and state one-stops should have access to technical assistance to help them fulfill their requirements for developing plans and designing services for displaced homemakers and individuals seeking nontraditional training. The Department of Labor should contract with organizations that can provide technical assistance.
- **Retain Pregnant and Parenting Teens’ eligibility for Youth Programs.** Both in-school and out-of-school youth who are pregnant and parenting face serious barriers to employment. With four-fifths of teen mothers and their families headed for poverty, investment in pregnant and parenting teens career preparation and access to well-paying jobs will enable their future economic self-sufficiency.

4. ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MOVING WOMEN AND ALL FAMILIES TOWARD ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

- **Report actual wages in relation to the goal of self-sufficiency.^a** States must report actual earnings levels for adults rather than only earnings change. In addition, states must adopt, calculate or commission a self-sufficiency standard (a measure of how much income families need to cover their

^a The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a measure of how much income families need to cover their basic costs, depending on where they live and family composition. It is calculated using a consistent methodology, and is at the same time, geographically-and family type-specific. The Standard, developed by Dr. Diana Pearce and Wider Opportunities for Women, is already in place in 34 states and the District of Columbia.

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basic costs, depending on where they live and family composition), against which to measure progress. Progress should be measured in terms of closing the gap between earnings and needs over time.

- **Report who receives services.** States and/or the Department of Labor must produce reports that, at minimum, describe demographic characteristics of participants, including race, ethnicity, gender and age; occupations participants enter, including specific break-outs for nontraditional occupations; and whether participants are recipients of public benefits or displaced homemakers.
- **Make demographic and other information available to the public.** Although WIA currently contains provisions that this information be made publicly available, it is not. This information must be made available to the public and policymakers by states and the Department of Labor in order to determine the effectiveness of WIA in serving different populations.
- **Report what kinds of services One-Stop Centers provide.** Currently, states do not have to report how funds are spent among core, intensive and training services. Without this information, we cannot know the efficacy of services.
- **Include financial literacy education in Youth Programs.** Providing youth with personal financial literacy skills improves their basic education skills as well as enables them to make smarter choices as they prepare to enter the workforce.

5. MAKE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES AVAILABLE.

One-stops must assure that the absence of support services do not deter women from participating in employment and training. Current law requires that all other avenues for support services be expired before WIA funds are used. One Stops should either provide support services or ensure that women have access to them through other providers. Over half of the programs surveyed by Women Work! report that they were “not satisfied” with the provision of support services by the one-stops. These services include: childcare, transportation, and access to public benefits.

6. COORDINATE WIA WITH OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE FUNDS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

- Set a standard of preparing students and job seekers for employment in high-wage, high-skill careers.
- Maintain the integrity and funding of all federal education and training programs.
- Report outcomes consistently across federally-funded education and training programs including WIA, Perkins, and TANF. Reporting should be consistent in terms of treatment of earnings, job retention and demographics of participants. Outcomes should be assessed in relation to a measure like the self-sufficiency standard, which is both geographically-and family-type-specific, and calculated using a methodology.

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