

**Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Plan**

July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

**LOWER MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Overview

The Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area consists of the following fifteen (15) cities and towns, collectively known as the Lower Merrimack Valley region: Andover, Amesbury, Boxford, Groveland, Georgetown, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury and West Newbury. The Lower Merrimack Valley region has a culturally diverse client population that includes the following significant service groups: public assistance recipients, limited English speakers, individuals with disabilities, high school dropouts, and offenders.

The Workforce Investment Act Annual Plan requires the demonstration of partnership between the regional Workforce Investment Board, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I Administrator, and the One-Stop Career Center. In the Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area (LMVWIA), the Workforce Investment Board is the *Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB)*, the Title I Administrator is the *Division of Grants Administration* and the One-Stop Career Center is the *ValleyWorks Career Center*, a workforce collaboration of the *Department of Training and Development (DTD)* and the *Division of Career Services (DCS)*. The ValleyWorks Career Center has two (2) comprehensive service sites, one based in the City of Lawrence and one in based in the City of Haverhill.

These agencies have worked together to craft the Annual Workforce Development Plan for Fiscal Year 2010, which includes the integration of the state's planning priorities, an analysis update of the local labor market conditions and characteristics of the region, which then drive the regional partners' response to the plan narrative questions.

Planning for Fiscal Year 2010 poses a significant challenge to local areas as anticipated increases in local service levels amid continuing uncertainty with regard to the economic outlook at the national, state and local levels (for at least the short term) requires both careful analysis and systemic flexibility in order to respond quickly and effectively to potentially fluid conditions. The infusion of additional fiscal resources in conjunction with implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) is also considered by Congress and the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) as an opportunity for both states and local workforce areas to actively work with system partners to accelerate

transformational efforts to demonstrate innovative approaches to integrating workforce services more fully and aligning those services more closely with economic development efforts and priorities to better assure the long-term economic well-being of both individual workforce members as well as the community as a whole.

As the MVWIB was asked to address and describe economic conditions; local service and capacity elements; collaborative efforts and other aspects of planned service delivery and activities as part of our Local ARRA Plan, narrative questions to be answered for this FY2010 Annual Plan submission were held to a minimum.

The vision of workforce development policy in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is to ensure that workforce development is an integral part of the state's economic development system. The long term economic prosperity of the state is increasingly dependent upon a workforce that has the skills and abilities needed by the Commonwealth's business community to retain high quality jobs and to grow and prosper. For Massachusetts citizens, the goal is to increase employability, the ability to compete for higher skilled jobs in the economy, access career mobility and achieve more broadly-based prosperity. The fundamental goal for federal, state and local partners under the Workforce Investment Act will be to continue to focus on sustained improvements in the system of Workforce Boards and One-Stop Career Centers to increase responsiveness to changing economic conditions in order to meet the needs of critical, high growth sectors of the economy and the local workforce.

While state planning priorities for FY2010 continue to include the development of an integrated and responsive workforce system, a particular focus for FY2010 will be an emphasis on aligning service delivery and service improvements to accommodate the anticipated increases in customer participation resulting from the recent national economic downturn and the infusion of additional fiscal resources through the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Significant participation increases are expected across all services, particularly occupational skills training and training-related services such as supportive services and needs-related payments. The MVWIB FY2010 Annual Plan endeavors to ensure that effective service and positive outcomes remain the focus for all local providers and that quality is not compromised in the wake of increased demand.

For FY2010, the MVWIB formulated a planning vision that demonstrates continued development of a demand-driven system that will respond quickly and effectively to close the skills gaps in the local workforce and to align strategies to economic sectors that hold the greatest post-recovery potential for job creation and growth (such as health care, manufacturing, and green jobs). The MVWIB vision encompasses both short and long-term strategies designed to significantly contribute to establishing and sustaining a prosperous regional economy.

FY2009 –FY2010 MVWIB WIA ALLOCATIONS COMPARISON

GRANT	FY 2009	FY 2010	\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE	ARRA Funding
WIA Adult	\$1,266,764	\$1,073,024	(\$193,740)	-15.3%	\$ 616,776
WIA Dislocated Worker	\$1,250,214	\$ 830,805	(\$419,409)	-33.5%	\$ 930,860
WIA Youth	\$1,368,495	\$1,149,535	(\$218,960)	-16.0%	\$1,477,863
WP 90%	\$ 524,066	\$ 511,624	(\$12,442)	-2.4%	\$ 107,550
WP 10%	\$ 58,230	\$ 56,847	(\$ 1,383)	-2.4%	\$ 11,950
ARRA RES (DCS Staff)					\$ 282,936
Total	\$4,467,768	\$3,621,836	(\$845,932)	-18.9%	\$3,427,935

Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Plan Narrative Questions

Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner Peyser

1. *Describe how your area's FY 2010 service plan aligns with the Governor's vision for a continuum of education and training opportunities that support a skilled workforce. What local priorities for FY 2010 specifically align with the Governor's vision?*

The Governor's vision for the workforce development system, as described in the existing state plan, includes the statement that "all Massachusetts residents will have the competencies, employment skills, and education to support themselves and their families and to live a quality life." In order for this vision to become a reality in the Merrimack Valley, it is vitally important that training and educational initiatives be aligned with the critical and emerging sectors in our region and especially the specific job opportunities in demand in these industry sectors. This will ensure that our workforce has the required job skills to meet the needs of area employers.

Due to the rapidly changing economy, even the most recent labor market information publications are quickly outdated. In order to utilize the most recent and reliable data to inform our plan, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board consistently reviews the Job Order Posting by Occupations report accessed through the MOSES system. Additionally, the MVWIB recently conducted an electronic survey of approximately one thousand area employers. Questions included whether they would be hiring over the next two quarters, what positions they would be hiring for and what technical and educational skills were required to fill the positions. We also asked these employers if they would be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss their training and employment needs. In analyzing the surveys, we found that more

than half of those who said they would be hiring were from the manufacturing or healthcare sectors. These results were not surprising as healthcare and manufacturing are the two largest employment sectors in our region. Within the Merrimack Valley, manufacturing plays a much more significant role relative to the entire Massachusetts economy. Based on the May, 2009 Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Profile for the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area, while manufacturing only accounts for 9.1% of total jobs in Massachusetts, it accounts for 19.4% of all jobs in the Merrimack Valley and represents more than one quarter (27.2%) of the total payroll. Additionally, according to the Profile, two large sectors, Professional and Business Services (14.9%) and Healthcare and Social Services (14.7%), comprised more than one quarter of all jobs in the Merrimack Valley. However, between the third quarters of 2007 and 2008, Healthcare and Social Assistance gained 627 jobs, while Professional and Business Services lost 537 jobs. The Annual Profile is projecting that between 2006-2016, the Massachusetts economy will generate 216,650 net new jobs. Healthcare alone is expected to account for 64,630 new jobs during the projection period, almost 30%. Based on our employer surveys, projected healthcare openings are for CNAs, home health aides, nurses, radiologists, physical therapists and pharmaceutical technicians. Manufacturing employers indicated a need for CNC machinists, CNC programmers and assemblers. When asked whether a lack of basic skills, such as proficiency in math, reading and English speaking skills is an issue when interviewing potential employees, 62% of employers said yes.

The focus group with area employers was held on June 18th, 2009. Participants represented healthcare, manufacturing, banking and two employment agencies. While the majority indicated that a lack of basic skills, especially math skills and a knowledge of written and spoken English, is a problem in potential hires, a major concern is a lack of work readiness skills. Overall, many potential hires lack professionalism, and a good attitude/work ethic. Employers also stated that their employees need to have basic computer skills and many potential hires do not have the necessary computer training.

For FY 2010, the top priorities for the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board include the following:

1. Meet the skill needs of existing and emerging employers as well as the needs of under-skilled adults.
2. Align workforce investment services (especially training services) with high-growth, critical sectors in the region.
3. Assure that One-Stop Career Center front-line staff are trained to be knowledgeable of high-growth occupations and critical job vacancies.
4. Work to develop a demand-driven system that will close the skills gaps in the local workforce and align strategies to economic sectors that hold the greatest post-recovery potential for job creation and growth.

In addition to a continuing dialogue with area employers regarding their training and employment needs, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board has convened a Green Jobs Advisory Council, made up of board members, local employers and area educators and training providers. With the influx of stimulus money for "green jobs" such as "green building," weatherization, "green manufacturing" and "green energy," the MVWIB expects to see additional employment opportunities across industry sectors for these types of jobs. For FY 2010, a special focus will be on clean energy and the skills required to meet the needs of this emerging industry sector. Feedback from area employers and the Green Jobs Advisory Council will be shared with area training and education providers, including ABE/ESOL providers, at a special vendor meeting to be convened in late summer of 2009. The focus of the meeting will be to encourage the collaboration of employers and training vendors to develop or expand training programs that will meet the needs of critical and emerging industries in our region. The development of educational (including "work readiness skills") and contextualized occupational skills training programs will be a priority. Currently, at the urging of the MVWIB, Northern Essex Community College is collaborating with the Center for Manufacturing Technology in Woburn, MA to develop a CNC Machinist training program.

The MVWIB will also work closely with the Career Center to provide updated labor market information to front-line staff by giving brief presentations at Career Center staff meetings. Presentations will include new training programs being developed and the addition of any new ITA training providers recruited specifically by the MVWIB to meet the training needs of area employers.

The goals and objectives outlined above are very much in line with the goals and objectives articulated in the MVWIB's High Performing WIB Strategic Plan Initiative; building the capacity of the workforce system and addressing the region's skills gaps in key industry sectors being two of the three major priorities. It was also decided that the two industry sectors to receive special focus would be healthcare and manufacturing. Goals outlined in the High Performing WIB Strategic Plan Initiative include utilizing labor market information and other relevant data from employers to identify and address education and training needs in key employment sectors, ensuring the quality and appropriateness of training options and providers, and supporting and facilitating the expansion of programs providing ABE and ESOL.

2. As ARRA guidance strongly encourages local areas to expend most of their allocated ARRA funds quickly, and given the reduction in the FY 2010 regular local allocation amounts, how will the WIB plan to monitor and adjust its service activities in a manner so as to assure continuity of delivery and avoid any service disruptions?

The Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area partners, with the MVWIB in the lead, made the determination to co-enroll all WIA Dislocated Worker and Adult participants with the

ARRA Adult and Dislocated Worker Grants. All job seekers who are determined eligible and in need of intensive services through WIA funds will, at the point of enrollment, be co-enrolled in both the formula fund grant and the appropriate ARRA funding source. Following intensive services, if an enrollee is determined in need of training services, the assessment will determine the most appropriate training support necessary. This could be either a group program, procured and funded with ARRA dollars, an OJT (funded with ARRA dollars) or an ITA, funded by formula funds. Regardless, as the individual is already co-enrolled, he/she will have access to the most comprehensive and appropriate service necessary for re-employment. All support services and needs based payments will be paid through formula funds. To ensure that we are not supplanting resources, the ARRA training funds will be used for group training, OJTs, and customized training activities only. The WIA FY10 allocations will be used to continue to support ITAs and all the support services and needs-based payments for our co-enrolled participants.

There will be an increase in staffing to support the increased goals based on the influx of ARRA funds. All ValleyWorks Career Services Advisors will be co-funded with both WIA Title I Dislocated Worker and Adult funds and with ARRA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. In this way, there will be no difficulty in tracking services. Expansion of space, staff and services are all geared to the increase in service levels (customers); all are also geared to the inevitable contraction when the ARRA stimulus funds are completely expended. It is our plan to direct charge our ARRA funds, i.e. charge directly to ARRA activities.

3. What strategies have been either implemented or are under consideration for FY2010 that are intended to move the local workforce development system to addressing training needs and job development initiatives specific to green industries and occupations?

As was previously stated, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board has established a Green Jobs Advisory Council, made up of board members, local employers and area educators and training providers. Marybeth Campbell from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center was invited to speak at the initial meeting of the Council. Although unable to attend, Ms. Campbell forwarded information which was distributed to participants. We will be coordinating our efforts with the mission of the Clean Energy Center. In addition, the Council will provide information regarding emerging "green jobs" across industry sectors as well as emerging job opportunities in the Clean Energy Industry. The MVWIB will continue to identify and recruit additional training providers in key industry sectors, including those providing training for "green jobs". So far, the MVWIB has added Clean Edison and Everblue Energy to our list of training providers. Clean Edison offers a course in Energy Auditing and a LEED Exam Prep course for architects, contractors and engineers interested in "green jobs." Everblue Energy offers a LEED Exam Prep course for new construction/green building training. The MVWIB is also talking to the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) about their certificate program to become a certified energy auditor. An important priority for the MVWIB in FY 2010 will be the expansion of programs already being offered by current training providers and the addition of new training

providers that will more specifically meet the needs of critical and emerging industries in the Merrimack Valley. To that end, the MVWIB is also exploring the development of a policy to approve distance learning programs for eligibility for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). We are reviewing state-level policies in Massachusetts related to distance learning in both the Section 30 Program and the TRADE Adjustment Act Program. We feel that distance learning courses offer a viable alternative to individuals who would otherwise not be able to complete training due to child-care, transportation or other issues. We would be focusing on courses that provide an industry-wide recognized certification/credential leading to increased marketability and eventual job placement in a critical, emerging or high-growth industry in our region.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Fiscal Year Annual Plan 2010 Youth Narrative

- 1. Please describe the region's overarching initiatives/priorities for providing services to youth for FY 2010. Include in the response the type and availability of youth activities (WIA and non-WIA) in the local area.*

Strategic Priority: Enhancing the Youth Pipeline

The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, joined by other workforce partners, is focusing on issues related to enhancing and improving opportunities for the region's youth to attain the education and skills needed to successfully transition into a productive and satisfying working adulthood.

In September of 2008, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) began the development of a three year Strategic Plan in response to the State's High Performing Workforce Investment Board (HPWB) initiative.

At the beginning of this process, our discussions were focused on ensuring that employers would have sufficient prepared workers to fill anticipated vacancies in our critical sectors. Of the 7700 employers across the Commonwealth that responded to the Massachusetts Job Vacancy Survey in the fourth quarter of 2007 30% expected to increase hiring, 53% expected to keep their employment levels the same, just 8% anticipated cutting jobs. The unemployment rate for the region in November 2007 was 4.4%.

The economic downturn that occurred in the last few months of 2008 and in 2009 has had a dramatic impact in the Merrimack Valley region. The most recent unemployment data (6/2009) shows the unemployment rate at 10.3%, compared to 5.9% in June, 2008. Lawrence has gone from 10% to 17.3% in the same twelve months. Youth unemployment in The Merrimack Valley is even more dramatic. According to the March, 2009 Youth Development Indicators for educational and Workforce Development Programs in Massachusetts at the State, Regional and Local WIB Service Delivery report by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, "Teen employment was only marginally affected by national job growth from 2003 to 2006 and then began to decline in the fall of 2006, well before the onset of the national recession. The teen E/P ratio fell considerably from the fall of 2007 to the end of 2008; by the end of 2008, only 30% of the nation's teens were employed, the lowest rate in post-World War II history. Teen employment declines were severe in every major demographic and socioeconomic group; young college students affected the least, high school students and high school dropouts the most. Employment rates of teens in 2008 were lowest among young males, Blacks and Asians, and low-income youth." The report indicates that in the Northeast WIB Region, youth are unemployed at the rate of almost 50% and high school dropouts experience

more than 53% unemployment. Youth with low incomes, Hispanic youth, and youth who have dropped out have the highest unemployment rates. The Lawrence dropout rate was 59% in 2006, one-third of Merrimack Valley youth are Hispanic, and in 2007, more than 27% of Lawrence families lived below the poverty level. These numbers describe LMI between 2006 and 2008. As we are all aware, with the economical changes in the past eighteen months, higher dropout rates and higher youth unemployment rates are expected. The first priority for the workforce system in the Merrimack Valley is to ensure that the immediate needs of these individuals are met. It also reinforces the need for thoughtful and thorough analysis of the region's workforce and employment opportunities that will ensure that the resources of the MVWIB and other system partners are utilized to prepare youth currently working, still in school, or unemployed in the Merrimack Valley for the jobs of the future and to support businesses that are manufacturing the products and delivering services that will meet future consumer demands.

Building on past success and lessons learned through a number of key initiatives and collaborations, the MVWIB Strategic Plan will provide the Board, local workforce stakeholders, customers and funders with goals, activities, and benchmarks designed to measure and evaluate the impact and implementation of the Strategic Plan over the next three years. WIA and non-WIA youth activities are provided through Pathways to MCAS Success; P21; Year Round YouthWorks; ARRA/Byrne JAG Grant; Title 1 WIA Formula; YouthWorks Summer Jobs for Youth; ARRA Summer Jobs for Youth; Connecting Activities, and Individual Training Accounts.

The majority of jobs being created in industries in the Merrimack Valley require post-secondary education and/or training. Therefore, we are actively creating and strengthening links with area colleges, including Merrimack College, Northern Essex Community College (NECC), Middlesex Community College, Cambridge College, and UMass Lowell. Through our P21 grant, two NECC counselors were located at ValleyWorks Career Center, which facilitated and continues better access to information, resources and support information available through NECC. Youth who have not considered college to be an option for financial or academic readiness reasons receive the guidance and support required to overcome barriers to higher education.

There has been extensive work and planning by the Youth Council and other stakeholders engaged in P21, Connecting Activities and other youth initiatives to identify the workforce needs of the region's critical and emerging industries. On-going objectives include documenting successful career pathways for these careers and providing appropriate training and education to meet those needs. We are working with NECC to explore existing green job career mapping in order to understand the training needs for: a. specific green industries, such as solar heating, and b. for all industries to reduce their carbon footprint. We have also worked with NECC through a P21 grant, to map community college health careers entry points according to academic levels, in order to better inform WIA, ABE, VWCC and WIB partners. Our Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Collaboration has created many opportunities for youth to explore careers in those fields. New initiatives are planned to facilitate new and better

connections and collaborations between workforce development agencies, employers, and education and training organizations, to develop successful new career pathways for young people in our region. In order to increase collaboration between these stakeholders, ValleyWorks Career Center has a dedicated Business Services Representative (BSR) specifically for youth programs and services. The BSR helps build and sustain relationships and increase communication and understanding between the parties.

The MVWIB has been active in creating and strengthening links between the workforce system and educational institutions. A number of activities have focused on ensuring that the region's youth are receiving information and learning skills that are relevant to the future workplace, including educating school staff in the career pathways, job opportunities and workplace-specific skills required in the region's critical and emerging industries. Employers are providing externships for teachers that add and enhance workforce/industry context to academic content. In the past, the MVWIB and Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce have leveraged funds through collaboration to expand internships and employment opportunities for youth both in the summer and year round. These activities will continue to grow as part of our Strategic Plan, through other partnerships developed with organizations such as the Newburyport Education Foundation and industry partners.

The MVWIB also supports the development of proposals and projects by other entities that will build workforce capacity in the region. The WIB has actively worked with local institutions of higher education in the region in support of funding for new curriculum and program offerings in the healthcare and manufacturing sectors. Currently the WIB is providing support and assistance to Northern Essex Community College in its application to the Commonwealth Corporation for funding through the Innovative Post Secondary Education Models RFP to provide training for Medical/Laboratory Technicians, a need that was identified in our meeting with the Health Care Focus group.

The WIB has worked with the LARE Training Center in its development of health care related training and education programs, such as Medical Billing and CNA/CNN certification.

Because of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding available from the Obama administration, with its focus on infrastructure rebuilding, the MVWIB has begun discussions with construction, manufacturing and machining-related employers and their membership organizations. We will bring these employers and organizations together to resolve barriers to making related training and apprenticeships available and accessible.

One of our Youth Council members, an organizer for the Painters and Allied Trades Union, has been actively working with the MVWIB for many years to encourage linkages with the Union and apprenticeships for local youth. We will also be exploring anticipated opportunities through the Plumbing, Heating & Cooling Contractors Association of Greater Boston.

The employers in our Manufacturing Partnership have expressed strong interest in developing a career awareness campaign in the machine tool and customized manufacturing industry. Additional funding will allow us to develop programming that will support career exploration, training, and try-out employment opportunities in that industry.

A key Youth Council activity in the Strategic Plan will be the development of a marketing campaign to engage more youth to our programs. The marketing plan will identify strategies to reach youth where they live and spend time. A special emphasis will be on engaging more males in Career Center activities and programs, a segment of the population that has been difficult to reach, while encouraging females to pursue training in non-traditional industries.

Our health-related programs continue to grow, with three currently running to train Certified Nursing Assistants, Coders and Billers, and Medical Assistants. Our successful summer jobs program is eagerly anticipated by both youth and employers. This year, we are serving up to 1,000 youth and up to 165 for-profit, public and municipal employers. We will offer supported wages to out of school youth until March through the ARRA funding. We have expanded the number of employers providing high school teacher externships with funding from Connecting Activities leveraged with funding from non-public grantor entities and relationships with organizations such as the Newburyport Education Foundation. These are designed to develop new and better aligned vocational curricula for the schools.

The cross regional Youth Summit in March, with the Greater Lowell and Northshore WIBs, the Commonwealth Corporation, DESE, EOLWD, and the Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies, brought together hundreds of workforce development entities and school systems to discuss the labor market, future trends and likely areas of job growth and how to build collaborations that will meet future workforce needs. We are generating new relationships in order to bring in more vendors who will develop and provide training to meet these needs.

During the next three years we will focus on ensuring that opportunities for future success exists for all Merrimack Valley youth, that education and training providers receive up to date information on the labor market and skill requirements for employment in the labor market, and that collaborations between workforce development organizations, employers, education and training providers and other key youth-serving stakeholders are continued and expanded

2. Workforce investment areas failing one of more youth performance measures as of the 3rd quarter of FY 2009 must describe in detail, the specific action steps that will be taken to ensure performance improvement for each measure in FY 2010. Please include a timeline for major activity (local area may include all relevant action steps taken in FY 2009 to address the performance, including sub-recipient corrective action).

a. Diploma (and High school Equivalency) Attainment Rate.

On July 28, 2009, looking at the FY 2009 cohort information, the current rate of this performance measure was 38.9%. The local goal for our Workforce Investment Area is 61%. There are 18 youth in the count for this measure of which 7 achieved a high school diploma or its equivalent in the required time. Of the 11 remaining youth the counselors have found 4 additional youth that met the criteria but were not entered in the system. This would bring the performance goal to 61% meaning that we achieved 100% of the measure. We are continuing to review the remaining cases to see if there are any additional youth who also met the requirements.

b. Skill Attainment Rate

The local area goal for this performance measure is 84%. Currently, the actual performance is 44%. We have requested technical assistance from the DCS IT Department and have received a report of 37 youth who are included in the denominator. The Youth Staff and the Systems and Planning Director are reviewing the list and making the necessary data entry changes where appropriate to increase the performance measure. We feel that many of the goals were attained in the allotted time period but were not documented in a timely manner. We believe that when all documentation has been entered into the system, within the next week, we will reach 84% of Skill Attainment Rate, as we predicted. We have held WIA vendor meetings in order to build skill levels regarding documentation and eligibility.

3. Indicate the workforce investment board approved additional eligibility barriers for youth "who require additional assistance to complete an education program or to secure and hold employment" (WIA 101(13)). Please indicate the documentation requirements for this barrier.

Youth Requiring Additional Assistance to Complete an Educational Program or to Secure Employment:

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board policy is in alignment with The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which has determined that this term be defined to include an individual that:

- is one or more grade levels below his/her age-appropriate grade level; or,
- has a disability, including a learning disability; or,
- is facing a serious barrier to employment, defined as either an individual who is currently unemployed and has held at least three jobs for less than 45 days each within the last year, or is a state-involved youth.

Additionally, "state-involved" means any state agency/entity providing services to the youth.

Documentation of the above was agreed as follows:

For the employability barrier of three jobs, the documentation would be a completion of the work experience fields in the Case Plan and the signature of the Youth on the Case Plan as true.

For the State-Involved Youth, a document (letter, etc.) from the state agency confirming the provision of services.