

**Commonwealth of Virginia**  
**Virginia Community College System**  
**Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**  
**Virginia Workforce Letter #11-06**

**Date:** September 12, 2011  
**To:** WIB Directors  
**From:** Workforce Development Services  
**Subject:** Service Delivery for Dislocated Workers in the One-Stop Environment, with Emphasis on WIA and Trade Coordination Efforts

Background:

In 2007, a policy directive was issued from the Governor's Cabinet level requiring co-enrollment of dislocated workers into the WIA and Trade programs under certain circumstances. (Reference VWL 07-1 at: [http://myfuture.vccs.edu/Portals/0/ContentAreas/Workforce/VWN/Policy07-01\\_WIATAA%20coenroll.pdf](http://myfuture.vccs.edu/Portals/0/ContentAreas/Workforce/VWN/Policy07-01_WIATAA%20coenroll.pdf)). The intent of the issuance was to ensure that certain federal resources made available to Virginia were coordinated and leveraged to benefit customers in the services they receive.

Since that time, the manner in which this policy has been implemented has varied among the local workforce areas due to a variety of reasons such as local interpretation, variances in workflow among the areas, changes in service providers and turn-over of staff. Additionally, changing federal regulations and requirements over time, structural changes within state government, technology and information system changes and changes in the economy have also impacted co-enrollment and related processes and procedures in serving dislocated workers.

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to: (I) provide technical guidance on key principles and practices that can be implemented to effectively serve dislocated workers in a one-stop environment; and (II) convey some recent changes to the Trade program as administered by VEC so there is clarity on how those changes might impact WIA and other workforce system partners and programs.

Part I – Effective Strategies and Practices to Facilitate Service Delivery for Dislocated Workers

A. Knowledgeable Staff and Communication

All WIA One Stop staff should have a general understanding of the policies and procedures for benefits and services allowed and offered to dislocated workers under both the WIA and Trade. Staff should have general knowledge of and the ability to answer basic questions about both programs. Dedicated time for discussion at staff meetings, cross-training and shadowing are

examples of how this can occur. Frequent and regular communication among and between the staff can also be effective both over the course of time and as specific issues or questions occur. While WIA and Trade serve the same population, there are variances in terminology, allowable services, and other regulations. Having staff that are aware of these distinction, and who have good working relationships, is essential to serving customers in an integrated manner and managing expectations.

#### B. Co-enrollments based on informed decision and customer needs

Examples of some reasons for co-enrollment include:

- Employer is pending Trade certification
- There is a lapse between when customer is dislocated and when they will receive Trade services
- Customer needs case management and intensive/supportive services to reach goals and such service is not provided by Trade Act
- Customer cannot complete training without WIA supportive service assistance.

WIA emphasizes service strategies that are individualized to the needs of the customer. When serving dislocated workers who are eligible for both WIA and the Trade Act, co-enrollment decisions should be based on the above, as well as the customer's expressed interests, needs and circumstances. Additional factors such as funding availability and other underlying policies and procedures that apply to all potential WIA customers will also have an impact on co-enrollment.

*Note: In no instance should Trade Act eligible customers be denied services under WIA solely because they are or may become Trade Act eligible.*

#### C. Integrated Case Management

It is important for WIA & Trade staff to develop a standardized process for serving customers in an integrated fashion so as not to give the impression that individual is being "handed off" between and among various programs. One Stop staff should assign clear case management responsibilities at the onset. Case managers from both programs should work together on developing a joint individualized employment plan. In collaboration with the customer, they should agree about the goals of service participation. It is important to address how team-based case management will be implemented to manage communications between the customer and one stop staff during the enrollment period, as well as how customer contact and updates will be obtained and documented in case notes. The customer should not be expected to call two case managers on every update, the case managers should document the contact and inform each other of the updated customer information. When possible, one stop staff members that serve the same customer are encouraged to have joint meetings with customers at appropriate intervals during enrollment, and work together on placement, exit, and retention strategies.

#### D. Documentation of the Service Strategy

Local one stop staff members are encouraged to develop an action plan that documents how the above strategies will be incorporated into daily operations. Committing this to paper can serve as an important reference resource and be used to train new staff that might be hired.

### Part II – Recent Changes in Trade Program Administration

#### A. Clarification on Assessment in Relation to the Extension of Trade Waivers

Under the Trade program, there are six different types of waivers that can be granted to participants under certain circumstances so that other program benefits are not interrupted. Two of the waivers which most commonly impact with WIA co-enrolled customers are known as the “W-5” and the “Marketable Skills” waivers. The W-5 waiver provides the opportunity for individuals to receive Trade income benefits for an interim period while they are waiting for a training program to commence. A marketable skills waiver allows an individual to continue to receive Trade income benefits without an expectation of entering training while they continue their search for employment because they have been determined to have transferrable skills that will facilitate their re-employment.

As a result of the ongoing downturn in the economy and how that has impacted job placement, the Trade program has been granting more extensions of these marketable skills waivers than has occurred in the past. In July of 2011, the VEC issued guidance internally to their local office Trade staff indicating that as a result of findings from VEC monitors, marketable skills waivers were being granted more than once without documentation supporting the extensions. The Trade manager has indicated that all Trade customers under marketable skills waivers should be assessed to determine if they are at a point where training would enhance their re-employment.

**This does not mean that WIA must conduct multiple comprehensive assessments as defined under WIA for individuals already co-enrolled individuals that may have already had a WIA comprehensive assessment, nor is it required that mass WIA enrollment sessions be conducted for new customers to include a comprehensive assessment.**

As it relates to the VEC Trade manager issuance discussed above, such an assessment can be documented in case notes as establishing contact with a customer, getting updates on their job search status and determining if a skills upgrade would assist in re-employment. This can be done by any one stop staff member, which may include but not be limited to VEC Trade employees, VEC Wagner-Peyser employees, VEC UI staff, or local WIA adult/dislocated worker staff. Under this scenario, the following could occur:

1. Referrals to WIA may occur for those Trade participants not already co-enrolled. In these instances, local WIA staff would manage the process under normal circumstances based on local policies, procedures and funding availability.
2. The individual may already be co-enrolled in WIA and have a comprehensive assessment on file. This should suffice to meet any Trade requirement for support of training enrollment.
3. An individual could elect not to pursue training.

#### B. Enhanced Trade Emphasis on On-the-Job Training (OJT)

The VEC launched a new effort in July of 2011 to expand use of OJT as the preferred training vehicle for Trade, expanding on a pilot that had been conducted in conjunction with some local workforce areas. Local plans are being developed in each local VEC office with Trade staff during the first two weeks of August 2011. All local one stop staff are encouraged to participate with VEC in developing and implementing these plans.

As part of their efforts, the VEC, with input from VCCS have developed a combined OJT contract and other forms that can be used for both WIA and Trade participants. It includes minimum requirements that satisfy both programs' requirements, and can be promoted to the employer community in a streamlined way that conveys a single workforce system solution. The VCCS will prepare and post to its website a "resource kit" with examples of OJT contracts and other similar resources that local areas may elect to use.