

Executive Summary

Creating a Statewide Delivery System for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Florida

Completed by:

The Interagency Policy Development Team on Adults with Learning Disabilities

Funded through an Adult Education State Leadership Grant to
Daytona Beach Community College
from the Florida Department of Education,
Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Development.

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June 6, 2005

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Introduction and Overview

The charge of the Interagency Team was to work toward a single goal that would benefit our shared population of adult students/clients/customers/consumers with learning disabilities in Florida. The team's responsibility was to make recommendations to the Florida Department of Education on serving these adults with learning disabilities. Those recommendations would then be used to develop policy and a State Plan for submission to the U.S. Department of Education - Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The "Plan" that has been created involved development of a statewide delivery service for adults with LD. The process included determining what system elements were essential for adults with learning disabilities to become successful. During this process, critical elements representing systemic change were identified. Barriers were identified and discussed but did not stand in the way of creating a model delivery system. A successful end result of developing this framework would be that all agencies that serve this population will work together as part of a continuum of services meant to support adults with learning disabilities as they become literate, earn their high school diploma, receive technical training, register for community college, receive support services, become employed, and develop the success attributes necessary to lead a happy, productive, and fulfilled life. The final list of *Recommendations to the Department of Education* reflects the Interagency Team's consensus.

National Statistics Reflecting Rates of Learning Disabilities Reported in the Adult Population

The following national statistics reflect why the issue of Learning Disabilities has become one of critical concern to adult service providers.

- As many as 1 out of every 5 people in the United States has a learning disability. Almost 3 million children (ages 6 through 21) have some form of a learning disability and receive special education in school. Over half of all children who receive special education have a learning disability (Twenty-third Annual Report to Congress, U.S. Department of Education, 2001) Source: National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities - <http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs7txt.htm>)
- Specific learning disabilities have increased 22% over the past 25 years. In the past decade, the number of students ages six to 21 years identified with specific learning disabilities has increased by 38%. (Source: National Institutes of Health - <http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HD-02-031.html>)
- 30 – 50% of the population has undiagnosed learning disabilities. (Source: National Institute for Literacy)
- 35% of children with learning disabilities drop out of high school. This is twice the rate of students without learning disabilities. Of those who do graduate, less than 2% attend a 4-year college, despite the fact that many are above average in intelligence. (Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study)
- 50 – 80% of students in ABE and literacy programs with low reading skills (below 5th – 7th grade level) may have either a suspected or diagnosed learning disability (Source: Bridges to Practice - <http://novel.nifl.gov/nald/workplac.htm>).
- 25 – 40% of those on government assistance programs may have learning disabilities. (Source: Bridges to Practice)
- 43% of learning disabled are living at or below the poverty level. (Source: Bridges to Practice)
- 48% of those with learning disabilities are out of the workforce or unemployed. (Source: Bridges to Practice)
- Approximately 85% of all individuals with learning disabilities have difficulties in the area of reading. (Source: [National Institute of Child Health and Human Development](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/readbro.htm) - <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/readbro.htm>)
- Only 14% of students with learning disabilities (compared to 53% of students in general population) have attended a postsecondary school program within two years of leaving high school. (Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study)
- 196,000 of the 428,000 students with disabilities enrolled at two-year and four-year postsecondary education institutions reported having learning disabilities. (Source: [National Center for Education Statistics](http://nces.ed.gov) - <http://nces.ed.gov>)

- Inmates in American prisons have a four times greater percentage of learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, than the general public. When combined with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, inmates have learning disabilities at projected rates up to 60 – 85%.
- 46% of all students with disabilities enrolled at post-secondary education institutions reported having learning disabilities (LD). In public 2-year institutions, 38% of all students with disabilities have LD. At public 4-year institutions, 51% of students with disabilities have LD. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 1999)

Data collected from the Florida Department of Education for the years 2003-04 reflect a similar picture in the numbers of adults with LD receiving services in Adult General Education and Technical Education. However, merely registering and attending a class does not result in the type of systemic change being formulated in *Creating a Statewide Delivery System for Adults with Learning Disabilities*.

Data Reflecting Rates of Learning Disabilities in Adult General and Vocational/Technical Education in the State of Florida

Community College – Students Enrolled in Adult General Education Identified with Disabilities		
Disability Code		Count
D – Disabled, but not categorized		271
H – Hearing impairment		95
L – Specific Learning Disabilities	31.53%	820
M – Mental or Psychological Disorders		972
O – Other health impairment		37
P – Physical impairment		238
S – Speech impairment		8
V – Visual impairment		160
Total		2,601
Source: CC SDB 2003-04		

Florida Community College System Student Data Base
Version 15.1, January 1, 2004
Number: 1002 - Name: Disabled Classification

Community College – Students Enrolled in Vocational Education (PSAV) Identified with Disabilities		
Disability Code		Count
D – Disabled, but not categorized		43
H – Hearing impairment		38
L – Specific Learning Disabilities	36.24%	316
M – Mental or Psychological Disorders		297
O – Other health impairment		15
P – Physical impairment		132
S – Speech impairment		2
V – Visual impairment		29
Total		872
Source: CC SDB 2003-04		

School Districts – Students Enrolled in Adult General Education Identified with Disabilities		
Exceptionality		Count
A – Educable Mentally Handicapped		2,867
B – Trainable Mentally Handicapped		778
C – Orthopedically Impaired		632
F – Speech Impaired		1,101
G – Language Impaired		1,643
H – Deaf or Hard of Hearing		565
I – Visually Impaired		190
J – Emotionally Handicapped		6,586
K – Specific Learning Disabled	55.63%	23,691
L – Gifted		1,034
M – Hospital/Homebound		536
N – Profoundly Mentally Handicapped		99
O – Dual-Sensory Impaired		56
P – Autistic		110
Q – Severely Emotionally Disturbed		1,832
S – Traumatic Brain Injured		79
V – Other Health Impaired		790
	Total	42,589
Source: WDIS Data Base 2003-04		

School Districts – Students Enrolled in Vocational Education (PSAV) Identified with Disabilities		
Exceptionality		Count
A – Educable Mentally Handicapped		816
B – Trainable Mentally Handicapped		315
C – Orthopedically Impaired		454
F – Speech Impaired		319
G – Language Impaired		188
H – Deaf or Hard of Hearing		159
I – Visually Impaired		43
J – Emotionally Handicapped		1,606
K – Specific Learning Disabled	50.59%	4,975
L – Gifted		272
M – Hospital/Homebound		98
N – Profoundly Mentally Handicapped		9
O – Dual-Sensory Impaired		30
P – Autistic		26
Q – Severely Emotionally Disturbed		235
S – Traumatic Brain Injured		14
V – Other Health Impaired		274
	Total	9,833
Source: WDIS Data Base 2003-04		

Vision, Mission, and Goal Statements

The following section is structured to reflect the vision, mission, goal statements, recommended actions to facilitate achievement of those goals, and indicators to help in determining whether the expected outcomes were achieved.

Vision: A comprehensive delivery system that supports adults with learning disabilities and those suspected of having learning disabilities, in achieving their self-determined goals.

Mission: Develop a statewide interagency policy and service delivery system that maximizes access and resources for adults with learning disabilities and that enhances services and accommodations necessary for success.

Goal #1: Awareness

Increase awareness, identification, and understanding of learning disabilities that will guide teachers, service providers, and employers in comprehending the impact of learning disabilities on an individual.

Recommended Actions:

- Adopt a definition of an adult with learning disabilities consistent across all service providers.
- Provide staff development for teachers, service providers, and employers to create greater awareness of the characteristics of learning disabilities.
- Develop and disseminate promotional materials regarding the impact of having a learning disability.
- Establish a screening process to identify adults who exhibit characteristics of learning disabilities.
- Provide assurances of non-discrimination and access to reasonable accommodations at initial point of entry.

Indicators:

- Consistent definition of adult with learning disabilities is used in all policies, training materials, promotional materials, and Memoranda of Understanding.
- Increased attendance at staff development trainings provided to service providers.
- Promotional material dissemination increased.
- At-risk adults referred for diagnosis of a learning disability at increased rates.
- Assurances of non-discrimination and reasonable accommodations are provided.

Goal #2: Educational Gains

Increase the educational gains or outcomes of adult students with learning disabilities.

Recommended Actions:

- Implement process to develop learner specific Adult Individual Education Plan (AIEP) and/or Accommodation Plan for adults with learning disabilities that complies with state and federal regulations.
- Provide staff development training on the research-based material and strategies for developing and implementing AIEPs/Accommodation Plans.
- Hire experienced teachers that have a minimum of three (3) semester hours of university credits or thirty (30) hours of inservice hours (the equivalent of 5 days of inservice/professional development training) in the area of teaching students with learning disabilities.
- Provide appropriate and adequate accommodations in the classroom to adult students with learning disabilities.
- Provide appropriate and adequate accommodations to adult students with learning disabilities during GED Preparation classes.

Indicators:

- AIEPs/Accommodation Plans are implemented for adult students with learning disabilities.
- Training is provided to teachers on materials and strategies for developing and implementing AIEPs/Accommodation Plans.
- Experienced and knowledgeable teachers instruct adult students with learning disabilities.
- Appropriate and adequate accommodations are utilized in the classroom.
- Adult students with learning disabilities that are approved for testing accommodations pass the GED Tests and earn their State of Florida high school diploma.

Goal # 3: Workforce Readiness

Increase access to the education and training necessary to prepare adults with learning disabilities for transition into the workforce.

Recommended Actions:

- Teach marketable job skills training to adults with learning disabilities.
- Provide work readiness training including interviewing skills, application procedures, and resume preparation, etc.
- Teach the knowledge and skills required for entrepreneurship – establishing and maintaining small but successful businesses and how to access funds, etc.
- Teach the skills required to navigate the One-Stop system in accessing occupational information and job referral sources.
- Provide staff development training to service providers on methods and strategies that promote success attributes in adults with learning disabilities.
- Integrate success attributes into curricular offerings.
- Develop checklist to indicate presence of success attributes in adults.

Indicators:

- Marketable job skills increase.
- Rates of entry into employment increase.
- Adults with learning disabilities start their own businesses.
- Resources of the One-Stop system including labor market information and job referrals are utilized.
- Methods and strategies to enhance students' success attributes are utilized.
- Curricular options for instruction of success attributes are written and implemented.
- Checklists and observation techniques are utilized to gauge students' success attributes.

Goal #4: Resource Development

Increase access to resources for adults with learning disabilities using local, state, and national sources.

Recommended Actions:

- Establish an Implementation Guide based on Statewide Delivery System for adults with learning disabilities.
- Identify available resources for adults with learning disabilities that will assist them in attaining their self-determined educational and employment goals.
- Establish and promote a Clearinghouse of resources for adults with learning disabilities.
- Provide staff development in accessing appropriate resources for stakeholders/partner agencies.
- Instruct adults with learning disabilities in accessing and using appropriate resources.
- Expand the use of the Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources Systems (FDLRS) to include adult students with learning disabilities.
- Establish Regional Assessment Center through joint Interagency funding to complete diagnosis of learning disabilities for GED Preparation students that meet specific criteria.
- Develop and maintain an accurate statewide database system to begin collecting consistent baseline data on a bi-annual basis.

Indicators:

- The *Implementation Guide to Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities* is widely available in Florida.
- Resources are identified.
- A Clearinghouse houses materials, resources, services, and assistive technology for adults with learning disabilities
- Staff development informs all stakeholders of services available from the Clearinghouse.
- Adults with learning disabilities have access and use appropriate resources.
- Adults with learning disabilities use materials, resources, services, and assistive technology from FDLRS.
- A Regional Assessment Center is operational.
- A statewide database collects numbers bi-annually of adults that: 1) are screened for possible learning disabilities, 2) are referred for diagnosis of LD, 3) are provided accommodations in the classroom, 4) passed the GED Tests with accommodations, and 5) were employed.

Implementation Plan and Evaluation

It is recommended that an implementation and evaluation plan be structured such that there is an end-to-end “process” approach for the achievement of “holistic” outcomes (goals). By “process,” it is meant a set of activities systematically performed to achieve desired outcomes (goals). The scope and design of each activity is dictated by the requirements of the outcomes. Therefore, there are no gaps which may result in service failures. By “holistic,” it is meant the complete set of outcomes which define success for the individual consumer. Success is rarely defined by a single desired outcome; therefore, a holistic approach must be taken. Just as a business cannot be satisfied only with short-term profits, an adult with a learning disability may not be satisfied only with, for example, quality employment.

The following three (3) features should comprise the scope of work for the implementation of activities and evaluation of the achievement of the defined goals or outcomes:

1. **The Measurement System** is composed of both outcome and predictive measures. Each outcome measure is decomposed into requirements which become the measures for each process. By managing the process measures, one can “predict” what the outcome measure’s performance will be. This enables managers to make adjustments or reallocate resources before an outcome goal is missed.
2. **The Resource Allocation** is based on process requirements, not function or provider capabilities. Since process requirements are driven from the outcome measures, provider capabilities must expand or contract accordingly. Gaps in capability can be quickly quantified and resources reallocated as needed so as to achieve the goal.
3. **The Concepts of Strategic, Process, and Performance Management** are woven together by the system of outcome and predictive measures. This helps ensure all activities are aimed at common organizational goals, are performed effectively, and are constantly evaluated and improved.

Recommendations to the Department of Education

To facilitate the effective implementation and the achievement of the Service Delivery System goals, several recommendations are being made. These recommendations are as follows:

1. Adopt a definition of an adult with learning disabilities consistent across all service providers.
2. Each service provider shall develop documentation guidelines that establish eligibility for services pursuant to the framework established in the document *Creating a Statewide Delivery System for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Florida*.
3. At the initial point of entry, each service provider shall make available to adults with documented learning disabilities, assurances of non-discrimination and access to reasonable accommodations.
4. Service providers shall adopt a procedure for documenting and providing reasonable accommodations (pursuant to Section 504/ADA/IDEA/ and the Florida Equity Act) within 30 to 45 days from development of the Accommodation Plan. Should the provision of services exceed 30 to 45 days, written communication shall be provided to the adult describing the progress made to date.
5. Implement the Statewide Service Delivery Model with recommended timelines to service adults with learning disabilities.
6. Waiver opportunities that are available to high school students shall also be made available to adults in Adult High School and GED Preparation.
7. Enforce the Basic Skills Exemption for Students with Disabilities - FS239.213(3), 228.041(18), FS 239-105(7) in all vocational programs so that test scores will not be used to keep students from entering programs for which they have otherwise demonstrated an aptitude.
8. Expand existing K-12 State Board policy rule 6A-6.03028 to include adults with disabilities in adult education, workforce readiness, and literacy programs to set their self-determined goals.
9. The Department of Corrections shall refer inmates with identified learning disabilities for re-evaluation and follow-up within six months prior to release.
10. Establish and promote a pilot Regional Assessment Center through joint Interagency funding to complete diagnoses of learning disabilities for GED Preparation students that meet specific criteria.
11. Establish and promote a Clearinghouse of resources for adults with learning disabilities.
12. Develop a statewide database system that can provide impact information on the programs, activities, and services provided to adults with learning disabilities.
13. Conduct a summative evaluation on the effectiveness of the service delivery system including use of the qualitative and quantitative data relative to the indicators in this Implementation Plan.
14. Establish an Implementation/Advisory Committee to proceed with the recommended actions and indicators as set forth in this document.