

Adult Education and Literacy: Guidance for High School Completion Program and TABE 11/12 Assessments During the COVID-19 Response

Purpose

This guidance provides clarifications on permissible High School Completion Program (HSCP) reimbursement requests and paper/online versions of the TABE 11/12 assessment in response to center closures as a result of COVID-19.

HSCP Reimbursements for Students assessing at NRS 4

Plan Development Reimbursements

Per FY20 HSCP Policy Manual, plan development reimbursements are not available for students assessing below NRS 5. This policy honors that ABE-level student services are supported by State and Federal grants to Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers.

Tech Fund Reimbursements

Tech funds will continue to be paid for those students special group enrolled with a minimum of NRS 4 in all skill levels. As part of FY20 Q4 invoicing, reimbursements will be made for all students with new plans during FY20 Q1 and FY20 Q2 who assess at NRS 4. This will appear in line item #34 of the [HSCP reimbursement rates chart](#). The funds may be used to support technology for all AEL students as a COVID-19 response.

Graduation Outcome Reimbursements

The graduation outcome is paid for each student who attains a high school diploma with a minimum of NRS 5 skills according to the most recent assessments. This policy reflects the AOE's core value of holding high expectations of providers and providing a financial incentive to meet those high expectations so that all students can achieve secondary proficiency. The policy should not have a significant financial impact on AEL providers as the expectation is that the large majority of students attaining a high school diploma or a GED will have demonstrated a minimum of high school level skills in reading, writing and math on Federally-required assessments.

However, as part of the COVID-19 response the graduation outcome reimbursement will be paid for any students at NRS 4 who complete their plans meeting the criteria outlined in [guidance issued on May 14, 2020](#), attain a high school diploma and who were provided with AEL service hours sufficient to meet assessment policy requirements. The student must

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graduate prior to July 1, 2020, for the outcome to be paid. This should not be interpreted as a change in policy for FY20 or FY21, but rather a short-term waiver in response to the significant barriers to progress assessing students as a result of the pandemic.

Special Group Enrollment in FY21

Policy will continue to allow all students assessing at a minimum of NRS 4 in all skill areas to be special group enrolled for HSCP reimbursement if the student has the goal to obtain a high school diploma and has a signed HSCP PLP with a partnering high school. Special group enrollment will be allowed without prior approval for students demonstrating this minimum skill level using TABE 11/12 form levels M, D and A.

NRS-Required Assessments

Paper and Online Assessments: Addressing Discrepancies as a Result of COVID-19

The AOE is allowing the TABE 11/12 paper and online baseline and progress assessments to act as matched pairs retroactive to July 1, 2019. The AOE is currently working with the database developer to make the necessary adjustments in [DataWorks](#). AEL data specialists will participate in the recalculation of EFLs as part of the retroactive response. After July 1, 2020, AEL providers will need to identify students whose current assessment was given prior to July 1, 2019, and plan for progress assessing using the same mode (paper or online) as originally given.

Paper and Online Assessments: Expectations for the Future as a Result of COVID-19

New students entering AEL services after the March 18, 2020, closing of learning centers must be assessed using the TABE 11/12 online. The transition to online assessments is necessary to prepare for the possibility of further closures and to ensure student access to assessments during a time of uncertain and limited in-person interactions. However, the transition to online assessments is also a fundamental issue of equity in a rural state with geographic disparities and barriers for learners. Finally, teaching adult learners how to learn and assess online is also a fundamental component of being a literate, digital citizen in an evolving and global economy.

The exception to using the online version of TABE 11/12 occurs when the Locator indicates use of the Literacy form (or L) level, which is only available in the paper version. When the Locator indicates a student is ready to take the E or higher assessments, the AEL provider shall evaluate the student's digital literacy skills and ability to take an online assessment prior to assessing the student. AEL providers should prioritize providing sufficient instruction to prepare all students to develop the digital skills necessary to access the online tests.

Expiration of Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs)

The AOE acknowledges AEL providers' concern for the expiration of EFLs after June 30, 2020, due to the inability to administer progress assessments to some students as a result of COVID-19. Although the Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) will not appear on Federal reports for FY20, the AOE will continue to monitor and track MSGs that result when students are re-baselined in FY21. In addition, any skill gain outcomes will be reimbursed through the HSCP invoicing

process for those students special group enrolled in HSCP reaching a minimum of NRS 5 when re-baselined.

Progress Assessments at Exit

Although it is the general practice that all students planning to exit at the end of the school year with a high school diploma or its equivalency must be assessed prior to exit, as part of AOE's COVID-19 response, students at a minimum of NRS 5 are not required to be assessed prior to exiting AEL services.

Virtual Proctoring of Assessments

The transition to online assessments does not mean that all students must be virtually proctored when taking the tests. It is still permitted to administer an online assessment in person. The AOE will allow virtual proctoring for the TABE 11/12 assessments as an alternative to in-person proctoring. The decision to virtually or in-person proctor a test shall be made at the center level, in compliance with [Vermont Department of Health \(VDH\)](#) health and safety guidance, and determined by such things as the student's preference, the student's digital literacy skills, connectivity and equipment access, and ability to attend a local learning center. Per the publisher's guidance, the TABE Locator does not currently require proctoring. Virtual Proctoring Procedures for Continuity of Learning will be provided by the AOE.