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ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.00 General	3.
Discrimination	3.
2.00 Definitions	3.
3.00 General Policy	4.
Privacy of Personal Assessment Information	4.
Staff Responsibility	5.
Test Security.....	5.
Disabilities	5.
Limited English Proficiency.....	6.
Assessment of Ability to Benefit.....	6.
Ethical Testing Standards.....	7.
4.00 Vocational Training Assessment	7.
Assessment Instruments and Activities	7.
Assessment Exemptions	8.
5.00 CHOICES and SNAPE&T Assessment.....	9.
6.00 Career Center Assessment.....	9.
7.00 Business Services Assessment.....	10.
8.00 Youth Assessment.....	10.
9.00 Assessment Forms	11.
Income and Expense Summary	11.
Assessment Referral Form.....	11.
Hay Aptitude Battery Report	11.
Background Consent Form	11.
TABE and Keyboard/Data Entry Proficiency Forms	11.
Attachment 1, Assessment Fee Schedule.....	12.

1.00. GENERAL

1.01. **Purpose:** This manual outlines procedures and policy for the assessment of customers of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT). Changes/additions from previous policy are in red print.

1.02. **Disclaimer:** Policies, procedures, and/or benefits summarized in this and all other WSCT policy and procedures manuals and policy letters are not contractual in nature. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas reserves the right to change, modify, add, or delete any policy at any time with or without prior employee or customer notification or approval.

1.03. **Discrimination:** Customers receiving assessment services will not be discriminated against by reason of race, age, religion, color, disability, national origin, gender, political affiliation, beliefs, genetic tests and information, citizenship, and for beneficiaries only, citizenship or participation in any Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or other grant-assisted program or activity.

1.04. Pending the implementation of the WSCT paperless file system, all reference to filing of documents and information assumes the use of paper files.

2.00 DEFINITIONS

2.01. **Assessment:** Is the gathering of information, analyzing it, and using it to assist customers and enhance program performance. It can identify skill strengths and deficiencies and basic education needs. It can be used for career discovery and job applications. It can form a basis for services by measuring academic development, workplace skills, interests, job seeking and retention skills, financial situation, work readiness, employment and family barriers, and ability to learn and to do work tasks.

2.02. **Basic Skills Deficient:** The inability to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the family, in society, or in the workplace.

2.03. **Ability to Benefit:** The assessed ability of a training customer to qualify for program sponsorship, complete training provider entry requirements, successfully complete training, and become employed in a training-related occupation.

2.04. **Fee-based Assessment:** Assessment for which a fee is charged, either individually or by contract with an employer.

2.05. **Vocational Training:** Training for skills related to an occupation and which is a part of any WSCT-operated program or grant having a vocational training component.

3.00 GENERAL POLICY

3.01. **Privacy of Personal Customer Information:** The WSCT Personally Identifiable Information (PII) Policy will be followed in all cases involving requests for, and providing assessment information about customers to other persons and agencies.

- 3.01.01. Assessment results, associated case notes, and other information gathered through assessment are confidential and require a written, signed customer release. The requesting agency should have a need-to-know. It may also require an open records request to the Central Texas Workforce Board (CTWFB). **Exception: This does not apply to assessment conducted under Business Services Unit (BSU)-employer agreements to provide assessment or when the report is given directly to the person being assessed.**
- 3.01.02 **Assessment containing health, mental, legal, personal, background, or financial data:** Regardless of a customer's wishes, health-related information will not be given **by WSCT** to any person or agency.
- 3.01.03. **On-Line Data:** Assessment information, including information from The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) or other on-line data, will not be placed on or downloaded to external drives such as cell or smart phones, flash drives, i-pads, tablets, home computers, or any other place where the data can be observed or stolen by unauthorized persons.
- 3.01.04. **Unemployment Benefits:** Under no circumstance will center staff release customer unemployment benefit (UI) information to any agency or person or divulge the fact that a customer is drawing these benefits. This includes requests by courts or Open Records Act. These requests will be directed to the Workforce Board open records contact person.
- 3.01.05. **Filing of Confidential Assessment Information:** **Until fully digitized under the new paperless system,** medical reports relating to health and mental health issues or information resulting from a negative background investigation should not be placed into customer files but stored separately in a limited access area. Case notes shall not contain specific information but should relate to the information filed separately.

3.02. Any assessment instrument administered to a customer must be consistent with the purpose for which it is designed and ensure that the expected outcomes are compatible with the customer's service or activity.

3.03. Assessment activities should not be needlessly repetitive. If a previous assessment is valid and relative, it may be used.

- 3.03.01. Use of a previous assessment depends on the elapsed time since it was given and what it is being used for. For example, a school transcript indicates what a person accomplished at that time but depending on the age of the transcript it may not reflect current capability.
- 3.03.02. TABE test results one year or more old require the TABE to be administered again. Others such as a physical, mental, or background evaluation may still be OK.

3.04. Objective assessment instruments shall be administered only by workforce staff familiar with the administration of the specific instrument.

3.05. **Staff Responsibilities:** Staff responsibility for assessment services rests with the WSCT Program Specialist for Assessment and Vocational Training.

- 3.05.01. The Program Specialist administers test instruments, develops assessment rules and procedures, trains and advises staff about assessment applications and results, advises business customers and the Business Services Unit (BSU), and selects and procures assessment instruments as required.
- 3.05.02. Workforce staff refers customers to assessment, interprets and links results to customer services, and counsels them on the results.
- 3.05.03. WSCT information systems technical staff determines compatibility of computer-based assessment with the WSCT system and installs assessment software/hardware as required.

3.06. **Test Security:** To prevent compromise, all written tests and assessment instruments will be stored in a controlled-access area. Assessment administrators must account for test material at completion of assessment. Computer-based assessments will be password protected. Completed answer sheets will not be given to customers.

3.07. **Disabilities:** Referring a customer with a known or suspected disability to an assessment activity without first considering the possible need for appropriate accommodations is a violation of that person's rights under The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- 3.07.01. **Accommodations:** Upon a customer's request, appropriate accommodations shall be given when assessment is administered to customers with learning or physical disabilities. An attempt may be made by the Case Manager to acquire from the customer a disability professional's prescriptive accommodation for the disability claimed. If accommodations are required, the person administering the assessment must be informed prior to the assessment date.

- 3.07.02. Persons who perform poorly on standardized tests may have a measurable learning deficiency that has not been professionally diagnosed and which should be certified and treated by a professional. If staff suspects that this is the case, the Assessment Program Specialist should be consulted.

3.08. Limited English Proficiency:

- 3.08.01. Persons with a deficiency in English language skills (reading and language) may require accommodations. Assessment instruments published in English will not be given to non-English reading/speaking persons.
- 3.08.02. If it is possible that the customer has a learning disability, this person should be referred to an appropriate agency for diagnosis.

3.09. Assessment of Ability to Benefit:

- 3.09.01. Ability to benefit depends on the customer's assessed ability and the perceived personal commitment. This usually requires an objective assessment instrument and a subjective assessment by the Case Manager during orientation or development of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Persons may be fully eligible and in need of training but not be able to proceed pending resolution of an immediate problem or personal barrier. If ability to benefit is in question, Case Managers must make this determination prior to committing fully to training.
- 3.09.02. In determining ability to benefit, Case Managers may require an assessment of current basic education skills through the TABE. If TABE results indicate a deficiency, the Case Manager may require remediation in basic education skills should the deficiency be a barrier to success in training or subsequent job search.
- 3.09.03. Following remediation, a retake of the TABE may be administered using a different form. If the customer remains unable to attain the prescribed standard and the manager is not convinced that the customer can be successful, sponsorship may be delayed until the standard is attained. In this case guidance published in *Q&A about TABE* by the developers of the TABE test (CTB McGraw Hill) applies: "[allow a minimum of six months between testing to avoid the "practice effect" in which a student scores artificially high because of familiarity with test items". Also do not review TABE with the students to show them the questions they answered correctly or incorrectly if you plan to retest with the same form and level. The person may be provided with instructional booklets such as *Getting to Know TABE* or *Building Skills with TABE* to help them gain confidence and master specific learning objectives].

3-10. Ethical Test Standards:

- 3.10.01. Standardized assessment instruments will be used only for the intended purpose identified by the test publisher/developer.
- 3.10.02. Instruments must not be used for individuals who are not within the scope of the test where the results would be invalid.
- 3.10.03. Assessment administrators shall follow the administrative and scoring instructions published by the test developer/publisher to ensure the most favorable test environment for the customer.

4.00 VOCATIONAL TRAINING ASSESSMENT

4.01. All available assessment results should be reviewed prior to making training decisions.

4.02. Assessment Instruments and Activities:

- 4.02.01. TABE Survey Battery: Encouraged for training customers if other current assessments of educational abilities are not used or available.
- 4.02.02. Program Application: Completion of an application is part of the assessment process. The information gained may be used as assessment.
- 4.02.03. Counseling: Information may be used as assessment.
- 4.02.04. Income and Expense Summary: Reflects the total financial situation of the customer. It is only required for support services eligibility. (See the Support Services Policy).
- 4.02.05: Instruments administered by other agencies and programs (colleges, state agencies, health services, etc.)
- 4.02.06. **IBM Assess**: Assessment of job-specific skills. Keyboarding, data entry, and ten-key assessment tests may not be used for practicing keyboarding, data entry skills, or ten key. A keyboarding, ten-key, or data entry test may not be taken more than once per week unless a possible hire depends on a certain score being achieved, the customer is within a few words or keystrokes of being able to qualify, and, with minimal practice, could do better. In this case a test may be given once a day using a different version each time.

- 4.02.07. Hay Aptitude Battery: Measures skills in working with, and remembering alphanumeric characters. It identifies skills based on numbering systems.
- 4.02.08. R.D. Craig Typing and Data Entry Assessment: These assessments will not be used for practicing keyboarding or data entry skills and may not be taken more than once per week (see 4.02.06 above).
- 4.02.09. O-Net On-Line Work Importance and Interest Profilers:
- 4.02.10. Background Check: May be required prior to entry into certain training programs or to determine ability to benefit. A Background Consent Form (or a similar form required by the assessing agency) will be completed and signed by the customer prior to initiating a background check.
- Staff will explain the purpose of the check.
 - a. If the report contains negative information, the customer will be allowed to explain the circumstances.
 - b. If a negative report is not one that would disqualify the customer from successful completion of training and obtaining employment, it should not be considered negative. If, however, the offense would prevent the customer from entering into and successfully completing training or getting a job in that field, the customer will be informed and given an opportunity to select another training program.
- 4.02.11. Individual Employment Plan (IEP): Is part of the assessment process. The information contained therein may be relative to customer eligibility, needs, and ability to benefit. It may be used as a basis for further assessment prior to enrollment in services.
- 4.02.12. Other: Other source assessments may be used such as current grade reports, transcripts, and mental or physical health reports and tests.

4.03. **Assessment Exemptions:**

- 4.03.01. Customers entering vocational training who are already attending classes and have an established and recent (1 year or less) academic record of at least one enrollment period, may use a recent grade report or transcript to assess aptitude and ability. This exemption does not apply if there are recent (within 1 year) grades on the documents of D or less or if the current grade point average is below passing. In this case, WSCT assessment must be used.

- 4.03.02. At the discretion of the Case Manager, customers having either a baccalaureate degree or have successfully passed (does not mean exempted from) all portions of a required college entry exam may be exempt from taking an assessment subject to the following:
 - a. Case notes must be annotated that ability to benefit for training has been determined based on previous education; that is, an academic degree or successful completion of an entry exam, etc.
 - b. Persons with a bachelor's degree should be considered for further assessment using the TABE if there is reason to question the applicant's current academic capabilities or if the degree was earned more than 10 years prior.

5.00 CHOICES AND SNAPE&T ASSESSMENT

5.01. **CHOICES/TANF:** The TABE Survey, level D, Form 9, is the primary basic skills assessment administered to CHOICES/SNAP customers. Other levels may be used at the Case Manager's discretion. A retest requires the use of Form 10 (see paragraph 3.09.03). **Beginning January 1, 2019, the TABE will not be administered by WSCT to CHOICES customers who are to be referred to Adult Education Literacy (AEL) programs. This testing will be accomplished by the AEL agency.**

5.02. **SNAPE&T:** Assessments may be offered in the same manner as CHOICES.

6.00 CAREER CENTER ASSESSMENTS

6.01. Some career center assessments require a fee (see 6.04).

- 6.01.01. **Walk-in** customers requesting assessments required by an employer, or to support a resume or job application, are required to pay a fee except for the keyboard, data entry, and **ten-key** tests, and the O-Net on-line instruments.
- 6.01.02. **Fees** are not required to be collected for persons enrolled in a WSCT administered grant program or who are under a BSU employer services contract.

6.02. **Job Seeker Self-Assessment:** A self-directed, personal assessment completed by the customer and used to guide counselors in assisting persons attending the "Show Me the Money" classes.

6.03. **The University of Texas Spelling Test:** given to persons seeking employment at UT Austin. This test is available only by appointment with the Program Specialist for Training and Assessment.

6.04. Career center assessments requiring a fee for non-grant or non-contract customers include:

- 6.02.01. TABE: single fee is charged for the entire battery.
- 6.02.02. Hay Aptitude Battery: single fee is charged for each test taken.
- 6.02.03. **IBM Assess** On-Line Skills Assessments: Individual tests are fee-based except keyboarding, **ten key**, and data entry which are free.

6.05. **Fees:** If a fee is to be charged, staff will consult the fee schedule (attachment 1) and determine the fee to be charged. Once determined, procedures are as follows:

- 6.05.01. The customer completes the assessment.
- 6.05.02. The fee is collected either by a check or money order made out to CTCOG. The test report may be given to the customer following payment. The payment is then forwarded with a brief written explanation to Fiscal in a sealed envelope marked confidential.

7.00 BUSINESS SERVICES ASSESSMENT

7.01. All assessment instruments are available to employers. With the exception of keyboarding, data entry, or **ten-key** skills, they will be offered on a fee basis to be negotiated by the BSU.

7.02. Needs and expectations of the business must be considered when deciding on the kind of assessment to offer. Assessment instruments selected must relate to what the business determines are the skills, job performances, and behavior expected of an employee in the specific job for which the assessment is required. Benchmarks should be provided by the employer as a basis for comparison.

7.03. Employer-Provided Assessment Instruments: Business customers may desire that the centers administer an assessment developed and/or purchased for use by the business. If so, the business assumes responsibility for test validity and results.

8.00 YOUTH ASSESSMENT

8.01. In School Youth programs must provide for objective assessment for each youth participant to include a review of academic and occupational skill levels and service needs to identify appropriate services and career pathways and to complete the youth Individual Service Strategy (ISS). This assessment may include a review of: basic skills, occupational skills, work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes, support service needs, and developmental needs.

8.02. Recent assessments of the youth participant may be used if conducted as part of another education or training program.

9.00 ASSESSMENT FORMS

9.01. Pending implementation of the WSCT paperless system, assessment forms are found in the WSCT Intranet. **Full Social Security numbers will not be placed on these forms; last four digits are OK.**

9.02. **Income and Expense Summery (Required for Support Services; optional otherwise):** This assessment addresses existing financial situations to determine the customer's eligibility for support services. It also can be used to assess ability to benefit. It is completed by the customer. Information on this form is **confidential**.

9.03. **Assessment Referral (As Required):** Refers customers to test administrators. It provides information about the instruments to administer and other information for proper assessment as required. The Case Manager completes and provides it to the assessment administrator prior to testing. **This form is not required for CHOICES/SNAP test-takers.**

9.04. **Hay Aptitude Battery Report (As Required):** This is completed by the test administrator and provides information about the results of the Hay Aptitude Battery.

9.05. **Background Consent Form (As Required):** This obtains customer consent to conduct a background check when an assessing agency form is not provided. Complete the form prior to approving sponsorship and prior to the check being initiated.

9.06. **Tests of Adult Basic Education, Report of Test Results (as required):** Provides test results to those requiring them.

9.07. **Certificate of Keyboard Proficiency (as required).** Provides test results to those requiring them.

Attachment 1 ASSESSMENT FEE SCHEDULE

Tests of Adult Basic Education, Individual Test:	\$10.00 per test
Tests of Adult Basic Education, Full Battery:	\$25.00
Hay Aptitude Battery:	\$30.00
Background Check*	\$10.00
IBM Assess	\$30.00 per test
IBM Assess Keyboarding, Data Entry and/or Ten Key:	Free
R.D. Craig Typing and Data Entry:	Free
O-Net Assessments	Free
BSU-Administered Tests for Business:	Negotiable

* This does not include costs, if any, charged by the agency doing the check. If the customer is an enrolled customer of a program administered by WSCT, the published fee may be waived.