



Wider Opportunities for Women

April 2007

Perkins Reauthorization 2006: Priorities for Women and Working Families Achieved

After years of work by all stakeholders, the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act* (S. 250) conference report, legislation to strengthen career and technical education and improve educational opportunities for students was approved by both the Senate and House and with the President's signature. The Perkins program represents one of the largest federal investments in U.S. high schools and is a key component of secondary and postsecondary education systems.

The 2006 Perkins reauthorization made a number of changes to the program, including¹:

- Broadening the ability of the program to act as a bridge between secondary, post-secondary, and higher education (with an emphasis on math and science education).
- Giving states the flexibility to consolidate all or part of their Tech Prep funds (under Title II of the Act) with State Basic Grant funds (under Title I).
- Separating secondary and post-secondary performance measures—to recognize the difference between high school and college-based vocational programs—and adding local performance and reporting requirements to the existing state performance and reporting requirements.
- Encouraging a state and local focus on programming that prepares individuals for high skill, high wage, or high demand occupations or that trains adults who are changing careers or updating their skills.

The new provisions strengthen the potential of career and technical education to ensure that education and training is leading students on a path to economic security.

The changes in Perkins IV will allow for effective transitions for students between secondary, post-secondary, and higher education; put forward labor market information and counseling to empower students more effectively on occupations; and permit local input to ensure that you can determine what programs have been successful in preparing individuals for the workforce, help students retain jobs, and move them in the direction of economic independence. Also, the new provisions require activities that prepare students for “high-skill, high-wage or high-demand occupations that will lead to self-sufficiency”. Including the concept and measure of self-sufficiency in Perkins allows for state and local flexibility for their programming and local community needs.

In addition to the changes noted above, the 2006 reauthorization also expanded the coordination requirements of the Perkins program with the Workforce Investment Act in several notable ways. Expansion includes requiring, where possible, the alignment of information for performance measurement with information required to be collected for other federal workforce and vocational programs. Secondly, expansion includes permitting the use of local funds to provide assistance to Perkins participants in continuing their education or training or finding an appropriate job through referral to the WIA system. Perkins is also included in the list of mandated partners under WIA.

¹ The Workforce Alliance: <http://www.workforcealliance.org>

There are several trends in diminished Perkins federal funding. The Perkins Act has not received a substantial increase in funding since FY 2002. Plus, appropriations for Perkins and its predecessors have not kept pace with either inflation or the expansion of other DoEd programs and the department's overall budget. More importantly, the President's FY08 Budget proposal reduces CTE State Grants by half to a program level for \$600 million in 2008 and also eliminates Tech-Prep.

The following is an analysis of the resulting *conference report* as it relates to self-sufficiency and supportive services.

Self-Sufficiency

The concept and terminology of self-sufficiency in the Perkins reauthorization has been a part of WOW's advocacy on Perkins reauthorization for several years now. WOW has advocated that any legislation advancing career and technical education must provide programs, policies and resources that include a focus on preparing students for high-wage, high skill careers that provide self-sufficient wages, which is based on a measure of how much it costs for families to meet their basic needs, based on where they live and the size of their family and that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

In a step that expands the programs scope, the new law does include "self-sufficiency" in several sections. This language will allow states and localities the opportunity to meet local programming and community needs while leading their students toward the goal of economic independence.

Definition of Self-Sufficiency

The following definition of self-sufficiency was contained in the report language: "The Conferees intend that the term '**self-sufficiency**' means *a standard of economic independence that considers a variety of demographic and geographic factors, as adopted, calculated, or commissioned by a local area or State.*"

Additional Indicators of Performance

An eligible agency, with input from eligible recipients, may identify in the State plan additional indicators of performance for career and technical education activities authorized under this title, such as attainment of **self-sufficiency**. Indicators of performance described shall be established solely by each eligible agency with input from eligible recipients.

Local Plan for Career and Technical Education Programs

The agency will review career and technical education programs, and identify and adopt strategies to overcome barriers that result in lowering rates of access to or lowering success in the programs, for special populations;

- provide programs that are designed to enable the special populations to meet the local adjusted levels of performance; and
- provide activities to prepare special populations, including single parents and displaced homemakers, for high skill, high wage, or high demand occupations that will lead to **self-sufficiency**.

Local Uses of Funds

Provide activities to prepare special populations, including single parents and displaced homemakers who are enrolled in career and technical education programs, for high skill, high_wage, or high demand occupations that will lead to **self-sufficiency**.

- Student participation in, and completion of, career and technical education programs that lead to employment in non-traditional fields that includes the attainment of **self-sufficiency**.

Supportive services

Although supportive services are not defined in current law, Perkins III provides States and Locals the flexibility to determine if Perkins funds are spent on supportive services. Many local programs rely on Perkins funds to provide these supportive services to special population students who are not eligible or able to receive these services through other programs to ensure their full participation in career and technical education. We were successful in holding the supportive services language to current law and gaining additional clarity in the conference report.

Supportive Services

“The Conferees recognize that special populations, including single parents and displaced homemakers, may need direct assistance to be able to participate successfully in career and technical education. These **supportive services** include such services as transportation, child care, dependent care, tuition, books, and supplies and other services necessary to enable an individual to participate in career and technical education activities. Consistent with administrative guidance and prior interpretations of the Perkins Act, the Conferees believe that eligible agencies and eligible recipients should retain the flexibility to provide direct assistance to special populations under certain, limited conditions. In providing direct assistance, recipients of the assistance must be individuals who are members of special populations who are participating in career and technical education activities that are consistent with the goals and purposes of the Perkins Act. Funds must be used to supplement, not supplant, assistance that is otherwise available from non-Federal sources, and assistance may only be provided to an individual to the extent that it is needed to address barriers to the individual’s successful participation in career and technical education.”

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-270):

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgibin/getdoc?dbname=109_cong_public_laws&docid=f:pub1270.109.pdf

The conference report is available at:

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgibin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=2006_record&docid=cr25jy06-138.pdf

For more information about these new provisions, integrating the concept and measure of self-sufficiency into state or local plans, or training opportunities, please contact Susan Rees at WOW at 202-464-1596.