



MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR ADULT EDUCATION

FY2007 ADULT BASIC EDUCATION FACT SHEET: WHAT'S AT STAKE

Adult basic education (ABE) services teach adults who lack high school level skills.

- ABE includes English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), General Educational Development programs (GED) and adult basic education (non-reader to pre-GED), with targeted services in Workforce Development, Family Literacy and Transition to Higher Education.
- ABE services include classroom instruction, one-to-one tutoring, computer-assisted instruction and distance learning.
- ABE services are delivered by a diverse provider network composed of community-based organizations (CBOs), local education agencies (LEAs), community colleges and correctional institutions.

FY2008 ABE BUDGET REQUEST

\$40 million for ABE line item #7035-0002 under the Massachusetts Department of Education to increase ABE capacity, intensity and access to services, and strengthen the ABE infrastructure to serve more adults.

The need for ABE services is great.

- **More than 1.1 million (1/3) of the state's 3.2 million workers do not have the skills required to perform in the state's rapidly changing economy and need ABE services.** (MassINC, *New Skills for a New Economy*, 2000):
 - **667,000** workers have a high school credential but still lack basic math, literacy, language and analytic skills to perform in the typical 21st century workplace.
 - **280,000** are high school drop-outs who lack necessary skills.
 - **195,000** are immigrants with limited English speaking skills who need to learn to speak English.
- **The State Assessment of Adult Literacy for Massachusetts released in December 2005 by the National Center for Education Statistics reports that a significant number of adults in the state do not have sufficient literacy skills.** (www.doe.mass.edu/acls/news/2005/SAAL_MA.pdf)
 - **32%** of adults were at Below Basic and Basic on the prose literacy scale (ability to read and comprehend a continuous text such as newspaper articles, editorials or brochures).
 - **26%** of adults were at Below Basic and Basic on the document literacy scale (ability to read and comprehend texts in various formats such as job applications, bus schedules, and drug and food labels).

- **46%** of adults were at Below Basic and Basic on the quantitative literacy scale (ability to identify and perform computations using numbers embedded in printed material, such as balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip or determining the amount of interest on a loan).

The consequences of poor skills for individuals, families, communities and the state are great.

- **Families headed by adults without a high school diploma suffer severe economic consequences** (MassINC report, *The State of the American Dream in MA*, 2002)
 - Since 1979, earnings of full-time, year-round workers without high school diplomas **decreased by 27%** while full-time workers with a high school diploma gained 1.6%.
 - **21.7%** of families headed by high school drop-outs are poor.
 - **55%** of families headed by single women who are high school drop-outs are poor.
- **The best indicator of a child's future success in school is the educational level of the parents.**
 - Mothers who are enrolled in ABE programs spend more time with their children talking about school, helping with homework, going to school activities and meeting with teachers, all of which are essential for a child's success in school. (National Center for Family Literacy)
 - Children in 114,000 Massachusetts families have a parent who cannot read aloud to them (Mass. Family Literacy Consortium).
 - Children in 264,000 Massachusetts families have parents who can read at a basic level but have difficulty helping their children with homework (Mass. Family Literacy Consortium).
- **Civic and community participation suffer when adults do not have sufficient literacy skills.**
 - Adults with low literacy skills are half as likely as their more educated neighbors to vote. (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1993)
- **Adults suffer adverse health outcomes as a result of low literacy skills.**
 - Low literacy is associated with several adverse health outcomes, including low health knowledge, increased incidence of chronic illness, poorer intermediate disease markers, and less than optimal use of preventive health services. (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, *Literacy and Health Outcomes*, 2004).
- **Incarceration and recidivism rates are high among adults who do not have sufficient literacy skills:**
 - **68%** of the incarcerated adults and youth in Massachusetts have literacy levels below the 8th grade. (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1993; The Policy Information Center of Educational Testing Service)
 - Inmates with at least 2 years of college education have only a 10% re-arrest rate, compared to a national rate of 60%.

The demand for ABE services is far greater than the services available.

- **Nearly 50% of the adults who try to enroll in ABE services each year cannot enroll because there aren't adequate resources to fund needed programs in the state.** (Mass. Dept. of Education, Oct 2006)
 - Approximately 25,000 adults are currently enrolled in ABE programs funded by the Mass. of Department of Education.
 - 23,266 adults are currently on waiting lists for ABE programs funded by the Mass. Department of Education (non-duplicated count) because there aren't adequate resources to fund needed programs in the state. Waiting lists vary from 2 to 8 months for ABE and 6 months to 2 years for ESOL.