

**ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICES**

**GUIDE FOR COMPLETING THE STUDENT EDUCATION AND  
CAREER PLAN**



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## Introduction

The imperative for Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs to provide education and career planning for their students cannot be overstated. The emerging economy will provide few well-paying jobs for workers who have a high school diploma or less. According to the National Governors Association, over the course of the next 15 years, employers are projected to demand more than 24 million workers with postsecondary education credentials. Projections of educational attainment for that same period show a shortfall in excess of three million workers with postsecondary education credentials.

In FY13, Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) announced its Education and Career Planning (ECP) policy that asked Community Adult Learning Centers (CALC) to pilot the ECP process with students in FY14 with the goal of reaching 50% of students by the following year. In FY16, the requirement will be raised to 75%, and by FY17, all programs will be expected to engage 100% of their students in the process.

In an effort to assist programs with developing and maintaining an active ECP process, ACLS developed this *Guide* and the *Student Education and Career Plan Template*. ACLS does not require the use of *this particular template*; programs are welcome to develop their own or modify this one to suit their needs and the needs of their students. This *Guide* provides instructions for using this template as well as suggestions for conducting the ECP process. For programs interested in creating their own guide, refer to *Key Elements for Education and Career Plans for ABE Students* on the ACLS webpage: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acsl/plan/keys.html>.

## The Education and Career Planning (ECP) Process

The ECP Process is a course of action intended to help students explore, plan, and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve their education and career goals. It is a systemic approach that involves raising awareness, instilling confidence, nurturing talents and interests, and providing the supports necessary to help students overcome barriers. It is based on the conviction that all students can succeed in postsecondary education and find family-sustaining employment in the industry of their choice.

Education and Career Planning occurs over time and is a collaborative process between program staff and students. Because students need guidance from advisors, teachers, and other staff to make a smooth transition from adult education to college, certificate programs, and/or careers, ACLS requires the use of documented plans to capture student ECP events and milestones.

### The plan encompasses:

- An outline of the educational steps students need to take to achieve their goals;
- Career advising and planning for employment and postsecondary education/training opportunities;
- Identification of resources to support the steps outlined (e.g., workshops at career centers; career fair information); and,
- A process for accessing those resources.

Ideally, the process should begin upon students' enrollment in the program and be included as part of student orientation. Students should be told that the program has a process in place to help them develop, track, and achieve their college and career goals. They should also be told that their advisor will meet with them individually and at times in group settings to develop a plan, and that this document will be reviewed and revised regularly during advising sessions.

## **The Student Education and Career Plan Template**

The Education and Career Plan Template is divided into nine parts. The sections below provide an overview of each part as well as suggestions for use.

### **Part A – Cover Page**

Program staff should work with the student to complete as much information as possible on the cover page as a first step in the ECP process; this part could be completed during an orientation session, as part of a classroom activity, or during an individual advising session. Students should finish, to the best of their ability, the three sentences listed.

### **Part B – Education Background and Goals**

Students should complete this section to the best of their ability; it may be useful for program staff to have a discussion with students about their educational experiences to get a sense of the challenges faced and accomplishments achieved. It is always important to encourage students to be descriptive when speaking about their educational aspirations. Often when students are asked about their goals, they respond with stock answers (e.g., “I want a high school credential” or “I want to learn English”). Program staff must follow up on these responses to see if the student can say more about the reasons for choosing these goals (e.g., “So that I can get a better job” or “So that I can go to college and become a paralegal”).

### **Part C – Employment Background and Goals**

Students should complete this section to the best of their ability. Once again, program staff are encouraged to engage students in a discussion about their employment experiences in an attempt to gain an understanding of work preferences, challenges, and accomplishments. For example, if a student is currently working, ask what he/she likes best about the work, what aspects of the job are easy to complete, and which are difficult.

### **Part D – Transferrable Skills**

Students come to programs with varied experiences; some have never worked in a traditional employment setting but have relevant experience and skills that are transferrable to a variety of jobs and careers. This section is intended to help students articulate these experiences and skills that can help in identifying college and career goals.

### **Part E – Skills, Values, and Interests**

This section can be completed a classroom lesson, during orientation, in an advising session, or as part of a workshop. What is important is that students are assessing their skills, work values, and interests.

### **Part F – Career Exploration**

Initially, this section can be done as a classroom activity, in a workshop, as an independent activity, a homework assignment, or during an advising session. Like many sections of the plan, this one should be regularly revisited. The top section is for students to research industries that are hiring. The bottom section is for recording detailed information about the occupations within the identified industries. For a map of the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board (WIB) regions, visit: <http://www.massworkforce.com/region-map.php>.

### **Part G – College Exploration**

This section has two parts. The first part can be done as part of a college exploration classroom activity, workshop, or homework assignment. Multiple copies should be made so students can research more than one school. The second part can be used when students begin the application process.

### **Part H – Short and Long Term Goals**

Goal setting in the context of education and career planning is a student-centered process and the plan reflects the education and career goals identified by students along with resources and information to help students reach those goals.

The Short Term goal statement recognizes that students may have immediate goals; advisors can help students identify those goals and acknowledge their importance to overall education and career planning. The steps identified in both the short-term and long-term goals sections are in essence the students' *next steps* goals.

The plan helps students to recognize, identify, and articulate the steps and challenges associated with reaching goals. It is important to clearly identify the goals and the steps needed to achieve them, along with a projected timeline.

### **Part I – Family Education Plan – Short and Long Term Goals**

Since students have multiple roles in their lives, it is important for the plan to reflect a comprehensive portrayal of all the goals learners wish to achieve. Recognizing and recording these goals validates students' needs, which are then translated to goals they are working on every day in the program. This becomes a key factor leading to retention in the program because the goals students are working on are directly related to their individualized needs. Programs may choose to use the same tool and incorporate the family aspect/experiences or provide a separate section and adapt the tool for their role as parents.

## **Curriculum, College, and Career Readiness Resources**

### **Curriculum Resources**

#### **ABE Career Connections**

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CareerPathwaysToolkit2011.pdf> - *Integrating Adult Education into Career Pathways.*

#### **Appreciative Advising**

<http://www.appreciativeadvising.net/> - *website on Appreciative Advising, the intentional collaborative practice of helping students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their college and career goals.*

#### **College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education**

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf> - *prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Technical Adult Education, this report covers the integration of CCR standards into adult education programs, with detailed sections on English Language and Literacy and Mathematics.*

#### **Integrating Career Awareness (ICA)**

<http://www.collegetransition.org/publications.icacurriculum.html> – *A curriculum for educators and advisors for incorporating career awareness into the ABE and ESOL classroom.*

### **College Resources**

#### **American College Counseling Association**

<http://www.collegecounseling.org/> - *an association that supports and provides resources for college advisors.*

#### **bigfuture by the College Board**

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/> - *a step-by-step guide to college planning where students can create personalized profiles to explore colleges, careers, majors, and financial aid opportunities.*

#### **The College Board, College Guidance website**

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance> – *a website for college advisors with resources on college planning, creating a college going culture, application fee waivers, and professional development offerings.*

#### **College Navigator**

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> - from the *National Center for Education Statistics*, College Navigator helps students find colleges based on location, programs, tuition, distance learning, evening courses, and more. Students can save their favorites and compare up to four colleges.

#### **Connect! College & Career Planning**

<http://connectedu.com/connect> - this resource allows students to take a variety of assessments, search for colleges, develop a personalized college and career plan, and find financial aid information.

#### **Federal Student Aid (FSA), Student Portal website**

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/> - This site provides information on academic planning and preparation, choosing a school, types of financial aid, qualifications, and steps to apply for financial aid, managing loans, and more.

#### **Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Student Site**

<http://www.mass.edu/forstudents/forstudents.asp> – this website includes information on state admission standards, placement testing policies, financial aid information, and Veterans Education information.

#### **National College Transitions Network (NCTN) website**

<http://www.collegetransition.org/home.html> – a website for educators with resources about transition programs, research, college, training, and careers.

#### **Perkins Collaborative Resource Network**

<http://cte.ed.gov/> - this resource contains tools and resources for use by students, advisors, parents, teachers, and administrators, including Career Decision-Making Tool, the National Career Development Guidelines, and the Career Development Toolkit.

#### **Student Interest Survey for Career Clusters**

<http://www.careertech.org/student-interest-survey> - this resource contains a career guidance tool that allows students to respond to questions and identify the top three Career Clusters of interest based on their responses. The survey is available in English and Spanish.

#### **Your Plan for the Future**

<https://yourplanforthefuture.org/Ext/YPFC/Home/index.html> – a College and Career Readiness planning site for students, staff, educators, and parents.

### **Career Readiness Resources**

#### **Massachusetts Career Information System (MACIS)**

[www.masscis.intocareers.org](http://www.masscis.intocareers.org) – developed by the MA Department of Career Services, a free statewide career information system for students and staff that includes educational and career information in an effort to help adults make well-informed career decisions.

#### **Occupational Outlook Handbook**

[www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco) – prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, this resource provides detailed information about employment projections and other occupation information.

#### **O\*NET**

[www.onetcenter.org](http://www.onetcenter.org) – U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training occupation site that utilizes current national data with information on career ladders. This site also includes the O\*NET Work Importance Locator which is a work values assessment.

#### **O\*NET Online**

<http://www.onetonline.org> – O\*NET Online supports students in career planning by providing key data for identifying and developing workplace skills.

**My Next Move**

<http://www.mynextmove.org> – developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, My Next Move is an interactive tool for job seekers and students to learn more about their career options, including growing jobs. This website has tasks, skills, salary information, and more than 900 different careers listed. Users can find careers through keyword searches, by browsing industries that employ different types of workers, or through the O\*NET INTEREST PROFILER, a tool that offers personalized career suggestions based on a person's interests and level of work experience.

**MyPlan.Com**

[www.myplan.com](http://www.myplan.com) – this website includes a free work values assessment. Upon completion of the assessment, students get scores for six work values clusters.

**CareerOneStop**

<http://www.careeronestop.org> – includes tools to explore careers, investigate salary and benefit information, review state-by-state labor market conditions and employment trends, research education and training opportunities, plan a job search, browse job sites, write and improve resumes and cover letters, prepare a job interview, and search for jobs.

**What's My Next Move? Career Guide**

<http://www.careeronestop.org/whats-my-next-move.aspx/> - a printable guide that includes seven steps to help students plan a career path after graduation.

**Adult Career Pathways Training and Support Center**

<http://www.acp-sc.org/> - the Adult Career Pathways section of the LINC website.

**Career Cruising**

<http://public.careercruising.com/us/en> – a career exploration site.

**NY Career Zone**

[www.nycareerzone.org](http://www.nycareerzone.org) – See “Assess Yourself” Section. NY-specific but it includes a wide selection of videos on job shadowing.

**City of Calgary Youth Employment Center**

[www.nextsteps.org](http://www.nextsteps.org) – See Career Planning link, which includes multiple career exploration resources and tools.