

**ACTION BULLETIN**

**TO:** All WIOA Program Operators

**DATE:** June 2, 2020

**SUBJECT:** **COVID-19 Remote Service and Eligibility Determination Guidance**

**PURPOSE OF BULLETIN:**

The purpose of this revision to Action Bulletin (AB) 20-05 is to provide an update to previously issued guidance for the determination of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) eligibility and the provision of WIOA services while working remotely due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting Shelter in Place order issued by our state and local governments. Modifications to this bulletin will be represented in **bold** font.

**SCOPE:**

This directive applies to all WIOA service providers currently under contract with the Alameda County Workforce Development Board (ACWDB) to provide services to WIOA-eligible participants throughout our Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA).

The exceptions and allowances presented in this bulletin will remain in place until:

1. The Shelter in Place order is lifted; and/or
2. Physical Distancing is no longer required; and/or
3. When operations return to normal.

Formal notification will be transmitted by ACWDB upon return to normal operations.

After the Shelter in Place order has been lifted, ACWDB will consider which, if any, of the processes outlined in this bulletin may be adapted for regular use.

**REFERENCES:**

- Workforce Services Information Notice (WSIN) 19-40 Temporary Changes to WIOA Registration and Eligibility Due to COVID-19

## **BACKGROUND:**

On March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an Executive Order (N-33-20), declaring a State of Emergency in the State of California as a result of the threat of COVID-19.

On March 11, 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO).

On March 17, 2020, Alameda County – and several other counties throughout the San Francisco Bay Area issued a Shelter in Place order restricting and/or limiting group gatherings and requiring individuals to self-isolate in their places of residence unless providing or receiving essential services.

On March 31, 2020, Alameda County extended the Shelter in Place order through May 3, 2020. **That order has been subsequently amended to extend indefinitely until the Alameda County Public Health Officer replaces, amends, or rescinds the order.**

Workforce services have been identified as “essential services” during this time. Therefore, services should continue while heeding the restrictions of the Shelter in Place order with regard to avoiding and/or limiting face-to-face interactions with the general public and physical-distancing of at least six feet when in-person appointments or meetings are required.

Due to the essential nature of workforce services, ACWDB is issuing this guidance which is intended to allow more flexibility in the gathering and maintenance of documentation and for service provision under WIOA during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It must be noted that federal and state deadlines have not been relaxed as a result of this pandemic. To date, ACWDB has received no direction regarding the loosening of date restrictions for WIOA eligibility determination and service provision.

WIOA services may NOT be provided in advance of a determination of eligibility. Please ensure that casefiles are maintained at the same level as prior to this pandemic. Casefile reviews and desk audits will continue to be a part of program monitoring on an ongoing basis.

ACWDB provides this guidance to inform service providers of acceptable methods of using technology whenever possible to ensure the timely provision and continuity of services to WIOA applicants and participants.

**The Employment Development Department’s (EDD) WSIN 19-40 contains an expiration date of May 6, 2022. Unless retraction of this bulletin is published, this guidance may extend through the expiration date of the WSIN.**

## **POLICY:**

### **Collection/Maintenance of Eligibility Documentation**

## The WIOA Application:

The WIOA application is available through the CalJOBS system. Intake workers may complete the application within the CalJOBS system or in paper format – while over the phone with the individual applicant.

Electronic versions of the WIOA application may be completed online then printed from the CalJOBS system and forwarded to WIOA applicants through email or other electronic means – in order to obtain the signature of the applicant. The signed document may then be scanned or photographed to be returned, electronically, to the intake worker.

An electronic version of the WIOA application may be forwarded to applicants through email, but care must be used in reviewing the document to ensure that no changes were made to the format of the document once it is submitted by the applicant. Additionally, a thorough quality review should be performed of the information submitted within the soft copy WIOA application to ensure that all required information has been reported correctly. The document returned to the intake worker must possess the signature of the applicant.

Care must be used to ensure that individual's Personal Identifiable Information (PII) is protected during this time. Emails should be sent using secure options as a method of protecting sensitive PII data. Additionally, as career coaches work remotely, extra care must be administered with the handling of applicant and participant data outside of our normal work facilities.

**It has been determined that electronic signature tools, (i.e. DocuSign, Adobe Sign, SignEasy, etc.) are acceptable as original or wet signatures. Use of these tools to obtain signatures will ensure that original or wet signatures will not be required upon lifting of physical distancing requirements.**

**It is recommended that while photos or scans of documents containing the required signature of the customer are acceptable in the short term, that individuals mail in the original documents with signatures to assure compliance once the SIP orders are lifted.**

## Document Management

The CalJOBS system has the ability to upload scanned documents and maintain them in association with a WIOA applicant's record through the CalJOBS Document Management feature.

Please keep in mind that the information regarding a participant's disability or medical status must be redacted from any documents relevant to WIOA eligibility, case management or provision of service. It is recommended to redact the information on the copy of any document prior to uploading. However, the Document Management feature also includes a redaction tool which can be utilized if further information must be redacted after a document has been uploaded. Assigned Workforce Technicians can provide technical support regarding use of this feature.

## Original Signatures for ACWDB/WIOA required forms and documents

In instances where ACWDB would normally require an original signature, it will be acceptable to use a photocopied signature that has been transmitted through email or other electronic means – so long as the signature appears on a form or document that is required for WIOA eligibility or

participation. While the electronically submitted documents will be accepted and maintained in participant case files, the applicant must provide required forms or documents with original signatures through the postal service at the earliest possible convenience or when in-person services resume.

### Self-Attestation

Per recommendation from the state in WSIN19-40, ACWDB is allowing expanded/increased acceptance of self-attestation verification for determination of WIOA eligibility. However, right-to-work, selective service registration, date of birth, social security number, and eligibility for Unemployment Insurance (UI) will continue to require hard documentation.

Self-attestation will also be expanded to include messages sent through email and text from the applicant's personal email address or phone number.

If there are questions about the modes of technology that are acceptable, please reach out to your assigned Workforce Technician.

### Provision of timely WIOA Services

A viable WIOA service must be provided every 90-days at a minimum. ACWDB's recommended best practice suggests case load reviews at 30-day intervals. While adjustments may be made to these recommended time frames, it would best suit operations to adhere to ACWDB's recommendations in this area.

### Desk Audits and Case File Reviews

Workforce Technicians will continue to perform desk audits at regularly scheduled intervals throughout the program year. Desk audits will include a random sampling of cases in the CalJOBS system – and a review to ensure timely service delivery.

As these desk audits are in process, ACWDB staff may request to see copies of the documentation that has been collected and stored that supports WIOA eligibility, case management, and provision of services.

### Training Activities and Credential Attainment

At this time – and until further notice, ACWDB is recommending that training activity dates be extended for those participants who were attending training, but whose classes were cancelled due to the Shelter in Place Order.

ACWDB is NOT recommending that career coaches submit modifications for training dates at this time – unless there is certainty of the new projected end date of the activity. It would be preferable to continue to extend training dates until such time that we can be relatively certain of the actual end date of training activities.

Upon return to normal operations – or in the event that training programs begin to offer online education, it would be expected that career coaches begin to submit training modification forms to correct the actual dates and/or costs of training.

**ACTION:**

- This ACWDB Action Bulletin becomes effective immediately upon release.
- All WIOA Program Operators shall comply with these requirements.
- All relevant staff shall be immediately informed of this bulletin and all requirements contained herein.

**For information and inquiries please contact:**

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