ADULT COLLEGE COMPLETION TOOL KIT

Adult College Completion Tool Kit

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MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ARNE DUNCAN

When it comes to college completion, now is the time for action.

The *Adult College Completion Toolkit* has been developed by the Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). OVAE developed the Toolkit to help policymakers at the state and local level implement practical evidence-based solutions that increase the number of graduates who earn high-quality degrees and certificates required to compete for good jobs in the 21st century global economy. College completion is a shared responsibility; this Toolkit also provides resources for adult education administrators, teachers, and students.

Shortly after taking office, President Obama set a bold goal: by 2020 the U.S. will once again have the most highly educated, best prepared workforce in the world. In order to meet this goal, the President challenged every adult to complete at least one year of postsecondary education, which can be accomplished by pursuing a traditional 2- or 4-year degree or by completing a professional or industry-recognized certificate. In today's knowledge economy, education is the new currency. Put simply, we must dramatically increase overall rates of educational attainment to ensure the success of individuals in the workplace and safeguard our country's prosperity in the global economy. To do this, adult learners across America must enter and succeed in postsecondary education in ever greater numbers.

OVAE provides programs that help ensure adults make successful transitions to postsecondary education. Earlier this year, OVAE hosted a series of peer-to-peer webinars as part of the 2012 Community College Webinar Series. These events highlighted success stories where adult education programs and community colleges have strengthened programs and partnerships that promote college and career readiness and postsecondary transitions. In addition, working with the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, OVAE has reaffirmed its commitment to the development and advancement of career pathway delivery systems that better illuminate postsecondary education transitions to employment opportunities in high demand fields that pay family sustaining wages. Additionally, OVAE has been providing technical assistance to states that are developing policies to improve outcomes in adult education programs that support college and career readiness for lower-skilled individuals.

This is important work, but I am confident that America's postsecondary institutions are up to the challenge. In other times of transition, America has responded to lay the groundwork for our future. In the midst of the Civil War, President Lincoln established land grant colleges. After World War II, the G.I. Bill provided millions of veterans a path to a college education and security for their families. At the start of the 21st century, America faces yet again an education and workforce development challenge whose outcome will shape our collective prosperity for the next generation.

We look forward to working with all stakeholders to make higher education a reality for all Americans. I applaud the commitment of those working on this important task and look forward to partnering with you in the implementation and dissemination of the information in this Toolkit, which we hope will be a very important addition to the resources available to support your important work. Thank you for doing your part, and please let us know what else we can do to provide additional support as we work together to accomplish President Obama's 2020 graduation goal.

Arne Duncan

ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	adult basic education
AEFLA	*Adult Education and Family Literacy Act*
CASAS	Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems
CNA	certified nursing assistant
ELL-U	*English Language Learner University* (initiative and website)
ESL	English as a second language
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FERPA	*Family Education Rights and Privacy Act*
GED	general educational development (test)
IET	integrated education and training
LINCS	*Literacy Information and Communication System* (website)
NRS	National Reporting System for Adult Education Programs
NTER	National Training and Education Resource (initiative)
OER	open educational resources
OVAE	Office of Vocational and Adult Education
PBF	performance-based funding
SLDS	statewide longitudinal data systems
SIA	Standards-in-Action (initiatives)
STAR	*Student Achievement in Reading* (initiative and website)
WDQI	Workforce Data Quality Initiative

INTRODUCTION

To remain globally competitive through the 21st-century and beyond, the United States must increase its skilled workforce. To do so, President Barack Obama has called for the United States to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. He also has challenged all Americans to prepare for at least one year of postsecondary education or training. At present, however, too many Americans are not meeting this challenge.

Approximately two-thirds of adults age 25 or older do not persist in postsecondary education long enough to earn a credential, and many others do not even enroll (Camille and Siebens 2012). These adults are less likely to succeed in the labor market than are those with postsecondary credentials. Workers with an associate's degree, for example, typically earn 20 percent more over their lifetime than those with only a high school education and 40 percent more than high school dropouts (Baum, Ma, and Payea 2010). Moreover, future labor market demand is expected to favor workers with higher levels of education (Sommers and Franklin 2012).

For adults with low literacy and numeracy skills and those learning English as a second language, the transition to and completion of postsecondary education and training can be difficult. They face a range of barriers, including a lack of academic preparation for college and knowledge of and access to financial aid and other support.

The U.S. Department of Education is addressing this issue by simplifying the federal student aid application process; increasing funds for Pell Grants; and providing funds to states, postsecondary institutions, and organizations serving disadvantaged populations. Other support includes a variety of programs and initiatives supported by the Department's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) to help adult education state administrators and local practitioners better prepare their students for postsecondary education and training.

This *Adult College Completion Tool Kit* is designed to connect state administrators and local practitioners to the strategies, resources, and technical assistance tools resulting from the Department's work. States can use this information to identify and implement state adult education leadership priorities, supported by federal *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* (*AEFLA*) funds, which encourage and support adult learners transitioning to college.

The tool kit focuses on three areas:

- **Access**: Academic preparation, financial resources, and other support students need to enroll in postsecondary education programs.

- **Quality**: Evidence-based practices used by programs to ensure their services prepare students adequately for postsecondary education.

- **Completion**: Administrative policies and programmatic approaches to encourage student persistence in postsecondary education programs.

In each chapter, strategies, resources, and tools relevant to adult education administrators and local adult education practitioners are highlighted (see Figure 1 for a summary of the strategies). Each chapter also includes state and local examples illustrating how programs can improve the college transition process for their students.[1]

The tool kit concludes with a call to action. A summary list of the resources and tools described in the chapters and handouts for four target student populations—adult basic education students, incarcerated individuals, veterans, and high-skill immigrants—are provided in the appendix. Administrators and practitioners can use these handouts to encourage their students to meet the president's challenge and prepare for at least one year of postsecondary education or training.

Figure 1. Strategies to Promote Access, Quality, and Completion			
		For State Administrators	**For Local Practitioners**
Access	Strategy 1	Promote college and career readiness through standards	Prepare adult learners for college
	Strategy 2	Ensure adult education is included in career pathways delivery system	Link adult learners to career pathways through bridge programs
	Strategy 3	Increase awareness of college counseling and financial aid	Integrate college and career guidance into adult education
Quality	Strategy 1	Promote teacher effectiveness and evidence-based practices	Engage in activities to improve teaching practices
	Strategy 2	Hold programs accountable for performance	Use local report cards to improve program performance
	Strategy 3	Track adult learner progress using statewide longitudinal data systems	Track program outcomes using desk monitoring
Completion	Strategy 1	Encourage persistence and completion through career pathways	Offer programs that help students achieve college and career goals
	Strategy 2	Support programs in addressing student barriers	Address student barriers to persistence and completion
	Strategy 3	Form strategic partnerships to overcome student barriers	Use partners to help students transition to college
	Strategy 4	Explore technological approaches to facilitate college transition	Use technology to enhance services

Source: MPR Associates, Inc., 2012

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, information for the state and local examples was collected through phone conversations with state and local representatives.

ACCESS

With jobs increasingly requiring higher levels of education, why don't more adult learners enroll in postsecondary education and training? Research indicates that they face several obstacles to enrolling and succeeding in these programs. Adult learners often lack academic preparation (e.g., math, reading, and writing) and college readiness (e.g., time management and study strategies) skills, financial resources, and knowledge about financial aid and other available support (Matus-Grossman and Gooden 2002; Reder 2007). Further, the curriculum and assessments used by adult education programs often do not align well with college-level expectations, with the result that many adult learners must enroll in developmental education classes before they begin postsecondary course work (Jenkins 2008; Mazzeo et al. 2006). Participation in developmental education has been found to slow, and, in many cases, stop students' momentum toward their postsecondary education goals (Bailey, Jeong, and Cho 2009).

What can adult education administrators and local practitioners do to help students meet these challenges? As the following sections describe, some states and local programs are implementing promising, practical strategies and using a variety of helpful resources and tools developed by the U.S. Department of Education. A list of these resources and tools and their URLs is provided in Appendix A.

Strategies for State Administrators

State administrators can promote college access for adult learners using the following strategies:

1 Promote college and career readiness through standards that strengthen the academic rigor of adult basic education (ABE) instruction.

2 Support the development of career pathways by building on available resources and reaching out to college leaders and business and industry to help with curriculum development for adult education bridge programs.

3 Increase student and local practitioner awareness of college counseling, financial aid options, and other support available to aid students' transition to postsecondary education and training.

Promote College and Career Readiness Through Standards

State administrators can use standards-based reform as a practical strategy to promote quality and academic rigor in their adult education programs and ensure students gain the skills and knowledge needed to meet the expectations of colleges, universities, and employers. To support this work, OVAE developed the following resources and tools through its *Standards-in-Action* (SIA) initiatives:

- *Innovations for Standards-Based Education:* This is a guide to implementing professional development materials and methods that support implementation of content standards in the adult education classroom.

- *A Process Guide for Establishing Adult Education Content Standards:* This guide describes how to plan, develop, review, and implement a fully integrated standards-based education system to improve instruction and learner outcomes.

- *Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse:* This website is designed to support states in developing and using content standards.

Through its *Promoting College and Career Ready Standards in Adult Basic Education* initiative, OVAE is expanding its standards work with a new focus—supporting and encouraging states to adopt college- and career-readiness standards. To help states with this process, OVAE is examining existing college and career-readiness standards to determine their adaptability for adult education.

> **Kentucky: Implementing College- and Career-Readiness Standards in Adult Education**
>
> Kentucky adopted college- and career-readiness standards in 2011 and is using the SIA approach to implement the standards across its 120 adult education programs. SIA focuses on: (1) building instructors' understanding of standards; (2) translating standards into curriculum; (3) aligning student assignments to standards; and (4) assessing how well instructors are teaching to the standards and using effective instruction. Recognizing that its adult education workforce includes a large number of full- and part-time instructors dispersed across the state, Kentucky is providing professional development through in-person training, distance learning, and online learning communities. Although implementation is in its early stages, Kentucky is already seeing results. Local program directors are becoming champions of standards-based reform, and instructors are working collaboratively, developing units and resources together and sharing feedback.

STATE STRATEGY 2

Ensure Adult Education Is Included in Career Pathways Delivery Systems

Many states and local programs have established career pathways—a series of linked education and training courses, combined with support services, leading to certification and career advancement within an industry or occupational sector—with promising results. Not all of these career pathways, however, successfully incorporate adult education.

Adult education bridge programs are an important first step in creating career pathways. These programs connect adult education content with postsecondary occupational programs through integrated education and training (IET)—combining occupational skills training with adult education services—or contextualized instruction—integrating basic reading, math, and language skills with industry or occupational knowledge. State adult education administrators can facilitate this process by reaching out to college leaders and business and industry to help with curriculum development. They also can use and encourage their programs to use OVAE's *Adult Career Pathways Training and Support Center* website, which includes instructional resources, implementation strategies, best practices, research, and professional development and peer learning opportunities.

For those interested in IET, OVAE issued a memorandum about how adult education and postsecondary education providers can collaborate to offer these types of programs. The memorandum outlines how *AEFLA* funds can be combined with other funds to support IET models, the types of students eligible to enroll in such programs, and how their information must be reported in the National Reporting System for Adult Education Programs (NRS).

Additional information on IET and contextualized instruction can be found in OVAE's *Promoting College and Career Readiness: Bridge Programs for Low-Skill Adults* report, which describes career pathway bridge programs in three states—Illinois, Oregon, and Washington—and highlights best practices for planning, policy, instruction, and program improvement.

Oregon: A Statewide Approach to Developing Career Pathways

Oregon has taken a statewide approach to developing career pathways that include the adult education delivery system using a contextualized instruction model. Its pathway efforts are supported by state policies requiring:

- Postsecondary and adult education instructor involvement in developing career pathway and bridge programs;

- Professional development for all instructors teaching in career pathway programs to ensure consistent implementation; and

- Data collection on adult learners, including pre- and post-test scores, attendance, student course evaluations, and information gathered by instructors in their course implementation logs (U.S. Department of Education 2011).

State adult education administrators also can get support with developing and strengthening career pathways from the U.S. Department of Labor. As noted in a 2012 *Training and Employment Notice: Release and Availability of Career Pathways Technical Assistance Resources*, the U.S. Department of Labor has produced a wide range of career pathways tools and materials, including the *Career Pathways Toolkit: Six Key Elements for Success.* This tool kit provides a roadmap for state and local administrators, practitioners, and policymakers for developing career pathway systems at the state, regional, or local level.

The U.S. Department of Education is working closely with the U.S. Department of Labor to coordinate its career pathway work. In fact, the two departments and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released a joint memorandum summarizing all three agencies' commitment to promote career pathways to help adults gain marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials.

STATE STRATEGY 3

Increase Awareness of College Counseling and Financial Aid

Connecting students to college counseling, financial aid, and other support is an important component of career pathways. This means that both students and practitioners need a greater awareness of resources, including several U.S. Department of Education websites:

- *College Navigator*: Users can search for colleges and learn more about them on this website using a variety of criteria.

- *College Affordability and Transparency Center*: Users can search colleges and college programs by tuition cost.

- *Student Aid on the Web*: Users can find information on how to prepare and pay for postsecondary education using federal student aid programs (grants, work-study, and loans).

- *FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) on the Web*: Users can locate important information and tools for applying for federal student aid.

- *Federal Student Aid Information for Counselors*: Users can find resources and tools, such as answers to common student questions, FAFSA information, guidance for planning an event on financial aid, and a counselor and mentor handbook.

Other U.S. Department of Education resources include the federal TRIO Programs. These outreach and student services programs are designed to help individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities) access higher education and achieve their academic goals. They include Educational Opportunity Centers, which provide counseling and information on college admissions and financial literacy to students interested in entering or continuing a postsecondary education program, and the Student Support Services Program, which provides mentorships, academic programs, counseling, and other support to help students succeed in college and prepare for the job market.

The U.S. Department of Labor also supports various resources that help students identify their education and career goals. These include *mySkills myFuture* website, which allows students to search for careers that use similar job skills to their current job. Search results include job listings, employers, and typical wages and training requirements for their best career matches.

> **Massachusetts: Providing Targeted College and Career Guidance Services**
>
> State adult education administrators can encourage programs to provide targeted college and career guidance services to meet the unique needs of their students. Massachusetts, for example, has created the Adult Basic Education Transition to Community College program, state-funded grants to 12 community colleges to hire an advisor to focus solely on students moving from ABE to postsecondary education. The goal of the program is to offer students additional support in persisting in and completing postsecondary programs. This includes individualized advising; a learning community of other adults enrolled in postsecondary education; and college success courses that help students with academic and other college-readiness skills. Students at all educational levels also must have individualized education and career plans.

Strategies for Local Practioners

Local practitioners can promote college access for adult learners by implementing the following strategies:

1 Prepare adult learners for college by setting high expectations and developing their academic readiness skills from the beginning.

2 Link adult learners to career pathways by creating adult education bridge programs using contextualized instruction or IET.

3 Integrate college and career guidance services into adult education to promote student awareness and use of financial aid and other available support.

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LOCAL STRATEGY

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Prepare Adult Learners for College

Local practitioners can set high expectations for students, including enrolling in and completing postsecondary education, and "teach for transition" to postsecondary education from the beginning. As Figure 2 illustrates, median weekly earnings increase for adults with each level of education. Adult learners at all educational levels, therefore, should be encouraged to further their education and training.

A Center for Adult English Language Acquisition Network Brief, *Promoting Learner Transition to Postsecondary Education and Work: Developing Academic Readiness Skills from the Beginning,* outlines how adult education programs can prepare all adult learners for postsecondary education. The brief describes how data can be used to plan and assess professional development activities and instructional practices to help English language learners transition to postsecondary education. Based on these findings, the authors present a case for integrating academic readiness skills—reading and listening, organizational and note-taking skills, and critical thinking—into adult English as a second language (ESL) instruction. Examples of activities and strategies instructors can use to help students develop these skills are included.

FIGURE 2. Education pays in higher earnings

Median weekly earnings in 2011 ($)

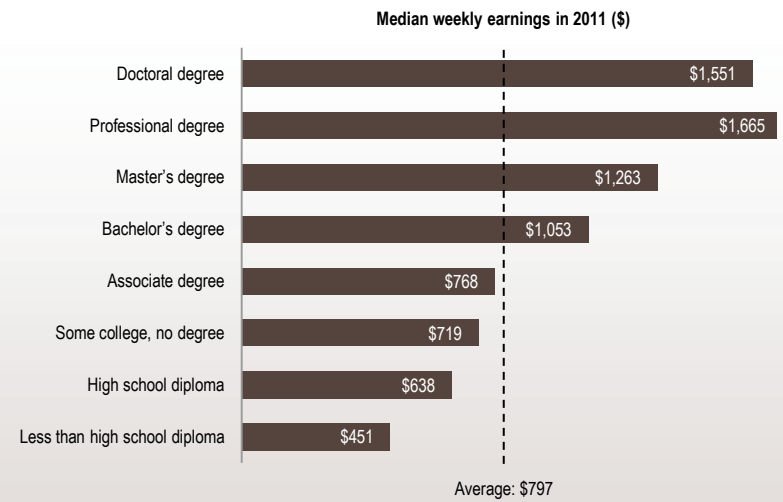| Education level	Median weekly earnings
Doctoral degree	$1,551
Professional degree	$1,665
Master's degree	$1,263
Bachelor's degree	$1,053
Associate degree	$768
Some college, no degree	$719
High school diploma	$638
Less than high school diploma	$451

Average: $797

Exhibit reads: In 2011, median weekly earnings for a graduate with a doctoral degree were $1,551.
Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2012.

LOCAL STRATEGY 2

Link Adult Learners to Career Pathways Through Bridge Programs

Adult education bridge programs combine basic skills instruction with occupational content and college and career readiness skills to prepare students for postsecondary education and work. They can be developed at the state or local level.

Several OVAE resources and tools can help adult education practitioners develop bridge programs locally. These include the *Adult Career Pathways Training and Support Center* website and the *ABE Career Connections Manual*, designed for programs just beginning to explore strategies for connecting adult education with postsecondary career pathways. The manual summarizes findings from five demonstration sites, including their approaches to implementing pathway components (student recruitment, orientation, and placement; course development; partnerships; and data collection and analysis), and the implementation challenges they faced. Project resources provided to the sites also are included.

The Instituto del Progreso Latino, a Chicago-based community organization for Latino immigrants, for example, uses contextualized instruction in its precertified nursing assistant (CNA) bridge program by combining basic skills instruction with the skills needed to be a CNA. At the end of the program, students are expected to have the skills necessary to pass the state written exam and receive CNA certification. They also are expected to have acquired important college and career readiness skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, time management, communication, and study techniques.

LOCAL STRATEGY 3

Integrate College and Career Guidance Into Adult Education

Providing adult learners with comprehensive, targeted college and career guidance is another important step in helping them transition to postsecondary education and training. To help local practitioners with this process, OVAE supported the *National Career Awareness Project* to strengthen career awareness and planning for adult learners by providing program staff with professional development on incorporating such services into their instruction and existing counseling activities. Sixteen state teams participated in the pilot, which provided online instruction on the *Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE/ESOL Classroom* curriculum guide. The curriculum guide includes:

- The cultural context for career awareness;

- Self-exploration (e.g., skills, values, experience, interests, education);

- Occupational exploration (e.g., occupational and job profiles, informational interviews, career and job fairs, and labor market information); and

- Career and education planning (e.g., decision making, goal setting, college success skills, and action planning).

Other resources available to local practitioners include websites such as *College Navigator*, *College Affordability and Transparency Center*, *Student Aid on the Web*, *FAFSA on the Web*, and *mySkills myFuture*. Although designed for all students, these sites include information especially relevant to adult learners. *College Navigator*, for example, allows users to search by a variety of criteria, including, for example, extended learning opportunities (e.g., distance learning, weeknight or weekend courses, and credit for prior work experience and training). *Student Aid on the Web* has a portal specifically designed for adult learners. It includes information on skill self-assessment, the General Educational Development (GED) test, standardized entrance exams, considerations in choosing a postsecondary institution, college costs and financial aid, and maintaining and repaying federal loans. Other resources available to practitioners and their students include the federal TRIO programs (see p. 7 for a description).

Besides exploring these resources with students, practitioners can help them gain a better understanding of the content by incorporating them in a lesson, taking students on a field trip to a local college financial aid office, or inviting a college financial aid counselor to speak to the class.

College Resources for Those in Corrections

Incarcerated individuals and those under community supervision (parole or probation) need targeted college and career guidance. OVAE has developed a resource for these individuals that also can be used by practitioners. *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* provides information on setting education and career goals, finding employment, earning a high school credential, applying for financial aid, and enrolling in college.

College Resources for Veterans

The Veterans Upward Bound program is a free U.S. Department of Education TRIO program designed to motivate and help veterans develop academic and other skills necessary for acceptance and success in postsecondary education. The program provides assessment and enhancement of basic skills through counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and academic instruction in core subject areas. It also allows users, including practitioners, to search for Upward Bound programs by state.

My Next Move is a U.S. Department of Labor website that helps veterans find a civilian career similar to their military job. It allows users to browse careers by key words, industries, and the type of work they might enjoy.

QUALITY

What does "quality" mean for adult education programs aiming to prepare students for success in postsecondary education?

Quality means teacher effectiveness. To be effective, teachers need the appropriate knowledge, skills, and disposition and the ability to use evidence-based instructional practices (Goe, Bell, and Little 2008; National Research Council 2011).

Quality also means using data to strengthen programs: assessing program effectiveness; identifying improvement strategies; targeting professional development and technical assistance resources; creating incentives for high performance; and monitoring progress. Student outcome data, including transitions to postsecondary education and employment, are critical in determining program quality. To collect these data, state adult education data need to be linked with other state data in a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS).

OVAE continues to support the development of resources and tools to help state administrators and local practitioners with teacher effectiveness, evidence-based instruction, using data for program improvement, and SLDS. The following sections describe these resources and tools, the promising and practical strategies they support, and how strategies are being implemented by states and local programs. A list of the resources and tools and their URLs is provided in Appendix A.

Strategies for State Administrators

State administrators can improve program performance and teacher quality using the following strategies:

1 Promote teacher effectiveness and evidence-based practice through professional development, technical assistance, and communities of practice.

2 Hold programs accountable for performance by establishing a performance-based funding (PBF) system, monitoring progress, and training staff in the collection and use of data.

3 Track adult learners' progress in postsecondary education and employment by integrating adult education in SLDS.

STATE STRATEGY 1

Promote Teacher Effectiveness and Evidence-Based Practices

What makes a teacher effective? Based on a review of research, policy, and standards on teacher effectiveness, Goe, Bell, and Little (2008, p. 8) defined effective teachers as having the following five characteristics:

- Have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test-based growth measures or by alternative measures;

- Contribute to positive, academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students, such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative behavior;

- Use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities; monitor student progress formatively, adapting instruction as needed; and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence;

- Contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness; and

- Collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success, particularly the success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure.

Effective teachers also use evidence-based instructional practices. A recent study by the National Research Council of the National Academies (2011, p. 9-4 and 9-5) examined extant research on reading and writing instruction and identified the following basic principles for effective literacy instruction:

- Targets (as needed) word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, background knowledge, strategies for deeper analysis and understanding of texts, and the component skills of writing;

- Combines explicit teaching and extensive practice with motivating and varied texts, tools, and tasks matched to the learner's skills and educational and cultural backgrounds, literacy needs, and goals;

- Explicitly targets the automation and integration of component skills and the transfer of skills to tasks valued by society and the learner; and

- Includes formative assessments to monitor progress, provide feedback, and adjust instruction.

OVAE supports several initiatives incorporating these definitions of teacher effectiveness and effective literacy instruction. These initiatives include SIA, *Adult Numeracy Instruction* (ANI), *Teaching Effectiveness in Adult Literacy* (TEAL), and the ongoing *Student Achievement in Reading* (STAR). They have produced tools and resources that state administrators can share with local programs and use to inform professional development and technical assistance activities.

- SIA: Supported states in developing and using content standards to improve the quality of their adult education programs.

- ANI: Piloted a professional development model designed to increase and deepen instructors' understanding of math content and pedagogical principles to help students improve their numeracy skills.

- TEAL: Provided state teams with professional development and technical assistance on research-based instructional approaches and components of effective teaching, with a focus on writing instruction.

- STAR: Assisting states and local programs in making systemic changes to improve instructional quality and reading achievement for intermediate-level learners.

Some of these initiatives and other OVAE projects—*the English Language Learner University (ELL-U), Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS)*, and *Adult Career Pathways Training and Support Center* websites—support communities of practice allowing teachers to improve their knowledge and skills continuously by sharing resources, challenges, and lessons learned. *ELL-U*, for example, is a free online professional development community for ESL practitioners. They can access online courses, study circles, and discussions to expand their knowledge, understanding, and application of evidence-based instructional practices. State administrators can encourage local program staff to participate in these communities of practice.

Georgia: Using Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

Georgia has participated in three of OVAE's evidence-based initiatives—SIA, ANI, and STAR—investing time and resources in these initiatives to increase teacher effectiveness and overall program performance. The initiatives are helping Georgia achieve its goal of a "fully literate Georgia," in which all students acquire the necessary basic skills—reading, writing, computation, speaking, and listening—to continue their education, succeed in the workplace, exercise their rights as citizens, and strengthen their families.

STATE STRATEGY 2

Hold Programs Accountable for Performance

To create incentives for strong program performance, states are implementing performance-based funding (PBF) systems, which distribute a portion of adult education funds based on program and student performance. OVAE has supported PBF through analysis and technical assistance. OVAE's *Performance-Based Funding in Adult Education* report summarizes a cross-state analysis of Indiana, Kansas, and Missouri, giving an overview of their funding systems, rationales for PBF formula adoption, and implementation issues. The *Technical Assistance to States on Performance-Based Funding* initiative helped state policymakers and administrators make informed decisions about adopting and developing PBF systems. A total of 25 states attended professional development workshops on PBF, with 12 states receiving additional technical support to help them develop or revise PBF formulas. The *Final Project Report* describes the states' experiences and project outcomes.

State administrators can use desk monitoring systems to hold local programs accountable for their performance. Desk monitoring systems allow local programs to submit data regularly (e.g., monthly or quarterly), enabling states to review the validity and reliability of the data, track program outcomes, and target technical assistance and program improvement efforts. Desk monitoring is an effective approach for improving data quality and use. An NRS guide, *Desk Monitoring: Improving Program Performance*, describes how to plan, implement, and use desk monitoring systems. An accompanying training session also is available. States can receive additional assistance in setting up effective desk monitoring systems through OVAE's regional coordinators.

Local report cards are another way to hold programs accountable for performance. Report cards are concise, sometimes public, presentations of program data that states can use to measure and monitor program quality. The NRS offers a four-part, self-paced training session illustrating the use of report cards in adult education. The course describes the role that report cards can play in program improvement and guides participants through the state and local report card development process. States also can use this resource to train local providers on how to create report cards.

Create a Learning Community on Data Use

Learning communities can help increase local practitioners' use of data. State administrators can learn how to create this type of learning community by taking the NRS training course, *The Local Connection: Building a Data Use Learning Community.* The course describes communication tools for establishing and maintaining a collaborative learning community for local practitioners on data use and offers guidance on developing state action plans to support local practitioners in using data for program improvement.

A Tool for Correctional Education Data

Correctional Education Data: Resources to Support the Collection, Reporting, and Analysis of Federal Data can help states use data more effectively to assist correctional education participants and improve programs. The collection provides overviews of several common federal funding sources, profiles common data collection challenges, and contains a checklist for building a robust, comprehensive correctional education data system. It also describes how five states have implemented the features and practices of strong data systems.

STATE STRATEGY 3

Track Adult Learner Progress Using SLDS

State administrators play an important role in building SLDS that connect K–12, adult education, career and technical education (CTE), postsecondary education, and workforce systems to capture valid and reliable information about students' learning experiences and outcomes. They need to be fully engaged in conversations about SLDS; too often, adult education representatives are left out. The federal government provides valuable resources and technical support to this work:

- SLDS Grant Program: This U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), program awards grants to states to support the development, implementation, and expansion of longitudinal data systems that span early learning through workforce outcomes. The program also supports state work through best practice guides, webinars, and an online portal for sharing nonproprietary documents related to SLDS grant work.

- Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI): This U.S. Department of Labor initiative offers grants to states to expand longitudinal workforce databases to include education data. Its goal is to give states the tools to conduct research on the effectiveness of employment and training programs.

Virginia: Integrating Adult Education Data in the SLDS

Virginia is participating in both the SLDS and WDQI grant programs and integrating adult education data fully into its longitudinal data system. The Virginia Office of Adult Education and Literacy took the following steps to make sure it was included in discussions about creating the data system:

- State adult education administrators asked to participate in the SLDS and WDQI grant programs. As noted by Randall Stamper, the director of adult education, "If you don't ask to be involved, you're never going to be involved. I see so many folks in adult education forgo asking, because they think the answer is going to be no."

- By participating in other state initiatives, state adult education administrators cultivated strong relationships with the other state agencies leading the grant programs.

- State adult education administrators have been actively involved in discussions about Virginia's SLDS and have taken the time to learn the "language spoken at the table." The terminology is unfamiliar to many in adult education, and feeling comfortable with it is critical to successful communication with other state agencies.

Virginia's work on the SLDS and WDQI projects necessitated changes in the *Code of Virginia,* which prohibited data sharing among state agencies for purposes other than those for which the data were collected. State officials worked with legislators and the attorney general's office to make appropriate changes to the code to allow for the creation and use of a federated system rather than a data clearinghouse. A federated system integrates multiple, autonomous database systems to allow for data queries, while protecting the security of each database. A data clearinghouse combines all state agency data in one database, which would have conflicted with Virginia's code.

Connecting student data among state agencies, however, has been difficult for states in the past because of the *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, a federal law protecting the privacy of student records. A 2011 FERPA regulations update, issued by the U.S. Department of Education, reduced these barriers by establishing procedures for state, local, and federal agencies to use when sharing data and developing SLDS.

Wisconsin: Analyzing Adult Education Student Outcome Data Using SLDS

Adult education participation in SLDS can permit pipeline studies, such as *Toward College Success for Working Adults: The Pipeline to Credentials in the Wisconsin Technical College System*. This study followed working-age basic skills students through the state's college system over five years to determine the educational trajectory of adults with low skill levels. An analysis of the study findings is helping to inform the state's career pathway initiative as well as student recruitment by the colleges.

Strategies for Local Practioners

Local practitioners can ensure quality in program instruction and services by implementing the following strategies:

1   Engage in professional development activities, such as communities of practice, to improve teaching practice continuously.

2   Use local report cards to evaluate performance and improve programs.

3   Track program outcomes using regular desk monitoring.

LOCAL STRATEGY 1

Engage in Activities to Improve Teaching Practices

Many opportunities are available to local practitioners for continuous improvement of their knowledge and skills, including professional communities of practice focused on evidence-based teaching strategies. OVAE supports several communities of practice addressing reading, writing, mathematics, and language learning research. These include the *Adult Career Pathways Training and Support Center*, *ELL-U*, and *LINCS* websites. *LINCS*, for example, provides adult educators at the state and local levels with a central location for collaborative learning, networking, professional development, and accessing high-quality evidence-based resources.

LOCAL STRATEGY 2

Use Local Report Cards to Improve Program Performance

Report cards provide local programs with an easy-to-use tool for evaluating program quality, identifying areas for improvement, and monitoring improvement efforts. Report cards, if made public, also provide information to stakeholders about program quality and accountability efforts. As noted in the NRS guide, they allow "adult educators to take the initiative in defining what is important about their programs and how to evaluate them" (Condelli 2005, p. 2). The NRS offers self-paced online training for states and local practitioners on report cards and why they are important to adult education. The course, *Demonstrating Results: Developing State and Local Report Cards for Adult Education*, describes the process for developing local report cards and their use for program improvement.

LOCAL STRATEGY

3

Track Program Outcomes Using Desk Monitoring

Desk monitoring enables local programs to collect data regularly to review and track program performance. Programs can use desk monitoring data to establish trends, comparing program performance over time or to program outcomes statewide. Monitoring data regularly also can help programs measure progress toward achieving goals and improve data quality and usage. The NRS *Desk Monitoring: Improving Program Performance* guide and training outline an approach to designing, implementing, and using a desktop monitoring tool. Although intended for state administrators, this resource also can be valuable to local programs.

COMPLETION

Although increasing numbers of adults are enrolling in postsecondary education, many do not persist in these programs long enough to earn a credential (Camille and Siebens 2012). This is particularly true among low-skill adults (Patterson et al. 2010; Prince and Jenkins 2005). Low-skill adults face many barriers that make it difficult for them to persist and complete postsecondary education.

These students have one or more of the following characteristics of nontraditional students as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (Choy 2002; Horn 1996): they tend to enroll later in life; attend part time; work full time; are financially independent; have children; are single parents; and lack a traditional high school diploma. As a result of these characteristics, adults often need help balancing multiple competing responsibilities in their lives. Many low-skill adults also lack transition support, access to financial aid, and the academic and college-readiness skills needed to enter postsecondary education without taking developmental education classes (Reder 2007). Other barriers include a lack of alignment between adult education and college-level programs (Jenkins 2008; Mazzeo et al. 2006).

State adult education administrators and local practitioners can adopt several promising and practical strategies to help overcome these barriers. These strategies and the tools and resources supporting them are described in the following sections. Examples of how states and local sites are implementing the strategies also are included. A list of the resources and tools and their URLs appears in Appendix A.

Strategies for State Administrators

State administrators can support students in completing postsecondary education by using the following strategies:

1 Encourage persistence and completion through career pathways linking course work to students' college and career goals.

2 Support local programs in addressing student barriers to persistence and completion by providing education and career counseling and establishing student learning communities.

3 Form strategic partnerships to overcome barriers to college persistence and completion.

4 Explore technological approaches to facilitate college transition for adult learners.

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STATE STRATEGY

1

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Encourage Persistence and Completion Through Career Pathways

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Adult learners need to see the connection between course work and their daily lives, educational goals, and career interests. Career pathways, which use instructional approaches such as contextualized curriculum and IET, help make these connections. These approaches also help adult learners progress more quickly through their course work (commonly referred to as accelerated learning). Other approaches used by programs to add real-world context to their students' educational experiences include work-based learning and internships.

As noted in the chapter on Access (pp. 5–6), OVAE has developed resources and tools to support this work. These include the *Adult Career Pathways Training and Support Center* website, the *Promoting College and Career Readiness: Bridge Programs for Low-Skill Adults* report, the *ABE Career Connections Manual, and Integrating Curriculum: Lessons for Adult Education from Career and Technical Education*. Additional support is available from the U.S. Department of Labor, including its *Career Pathways Toolkit: Six Key Elements for Success*.

> **Minnesota: Accelerating Learning for Adult Learners**
>
> Similar to the well-known Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program in Washington state, Minnesota's FastTRAC (Training, Resources, and Credentialing) career pathway model allows adult learners to receive both basic skills instruction and occupational training in the same course. Adult education and college instructors co-teach the courses using an integrated curriculum. The program also offers other support, such as childcare and transportation. The long-term goal of this program is to provide adult learners, who typically are managing other responsibilities in addition to their education course work, with a postsecondary credential valued by employers.

STATE STRATEGY 2

Support Programs in Addressing Student Barriers

Adult learners need help with many issues affecting their ability to persist and complete postsecondary education. Education and career counseling can help students set realistic goals, identify possible barriers to achieving those goals, apply for financial aid, and select appropriate college course work. The chapter on Access (pp. 5–6 and pp. 10–11) describes some U.S. Department of Education resources and tools that state administrators can share with their college and career counselors. These include *College Navigator*, *College Affordability and Transparency Center*, *Student Aid on the Web*, *FAFSA on the Web*, *Federal Student Aid Information for Counselors*, and the *Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE/ESOL Classroom* curriculum guide. The chapter also provides some state examples.

State administrators also can encourage programs and college partners to establish learning communities for adult learners. Research indicates that learning communities can increase persistence rates (Scrivener et al. 2008). Typically composed of groups of students taking two or more of the same courses in the same academic year, learning communities build a connection among the students and their instructors, giving students a support network to help them overcome barriers to persistence.

Resources for Veterans

The *VetSuccess on Campus* program provides vocational rehabilitation and outreach coordinators on college campuses to provide VA benefits outreach, support, and assistance to help meet veterans' health, educational, and benefits needs. To learn more, go to http://www.vetsuccess.gov.

**STATE
STRATEGY
3**

Form Strategic Partnerships to Overcome Student Barriers

Adult learners often need considerable academic and nonacademic support to help them persist and complete postsecondary education. Strategic partnerships with community organizations, state and local agencies, business and industry, and postsecondary education institutions can help meet their diverse needs. Partners can supply such services as childcare, transportation subsidies, and assistance with securing jobs, internships, or other work-based learning opportunities. They also can help strengthen curriculum and instruction, forging clear links with college course work and careers.

State administrators seeking further guidance in forming, strengthening, and sustaining strategic partnerships or offering assistance to local programs can use such OVAE tools and resources as the following:

- The *Community Partnerships for Adult Learning* website: Offers resources to build and sustain partnerships to improve and expand adult education. Includes a guide to business and adult education partnerships.

- *Pathways to Careers: A Guide to Building Partnerships for Workforce Education and Training*: Provides information on team building, using data to drive partnership activities, and collaborating with employers and other education providers.

- The *Policy to Performance* website: Includes a resource center linking to resources on partnerships, interagency coordination, and system alignment.

- *Helping Adult Learners Make the Transition to Postsecondary Education*: Outlines approaches to helping students transition to postsecondary education and how partnerships can support this work.

- *Partnerships Between Community Colleges and Prisons: Providing Workforce Education and Training to Reduce Recidivism*: Describes partnerships between colleges and prisons to provide postsecondary education services to inmates.

- *Integrating Industry-Driven Competencies in Education and Training Through Employer Engagement*: Describes collaborative efforts between community colleges and employers, focusing on employer participation in integrating work-based competencies into college curricula.

The role of partnerships in career pathways is recognized in a joint memo of the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. The letter summarizes the agencies' commitment to promote career pathways to help adults gain marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials. It encourages state agencies to collaborate and align resources to support pathway implementation and outlines essential components of pathway programs and supporting federal initiatives.

STATE STRATEGY 4

Explore Technological Approaches to Facilitate College Transition

As noted in OVAE's *Emerging Technologies in Adult Literacy and Language Education* report, technologies are increasingly available that offer state administrators and local practitioners additional tools to meet students' diverse needs and aid their transition to postsecondary education. These range from mobile devices to blogs and wikis. The report notes, however, that more research is needed to determine the cost, challenges, and potential benefits of many of these technologies. Further, substantial professional development will be needed to support adult educators in using such technologies in class. Similar conclusions were drawn by a 2011 National Research Council study. Despite the need for more research and professional development, however, the study finds that technology can enhance instructional strategies and facilitate and accelerate learning.

Recognizing these possible benefits, the U.S. Department of Education is exploring how technology can support adult learners and their transition to postsecondary education. These technologies include open educational resources (described on p. 28) and the National Training and Education Resource (NTER), which provides students with an online platform to learn new skills when it is convenient for them. It also offers programs and practitioners a variety of instructional tools and a means for finding, creating, and modifying the content of those tools.

Using similar technology, Learner Web, developed by Portland State University, provides adults with an online platform to develop a learning plan, enroll in self-paced instruction or participate in online instruction with the support of a teacher or tutor, and maintain an electronic portfolio of their work and other activities. It also helps adults connect with support services in their community. Learners can access their electronic portfolio wherever they go and share it with instructors and others helping them achieve their education goals. Learner Web, used in various contexts including correctional institutions, operates through Web-based software deployed regionally that matches student learning plans to online and community-based resources. A variation of Learner Web is being used in OVAE's *ELL-U* initiative.

Strategies for Local Practioners

Local practitioners can support students in completing postsecondary education by using the following strategies:

1 Link adult education course work, including developmental education, to college and career goals.

2 Address student barriers to persistence and completion through education and career counseling and student learning communities.

3 Use strategic partnerships to help students transition to college and address their diverse needs.

4 Use technology to enhance services by linking content to students' college and career goals, saving time and resources in the long term.

LOCAL STRATEGY 1

Offer Programs That Help Students Achieve College and Career Goals

Adult learners often can be discouraged by adult education and developmental education course work, because they do not see a clear link to their college and career goals. Local practitioners can address this through a variety of approaches. City University of New York (CUNY), for example, has created several basic skills programs leading to industry certification or college credit. CUNY's Kingsborough College, for example, offers a culinary arts basic skills program that results in industry certification and college credit. Other CUNY colleges, the Borough of Manhattan Community College and LaGuardia Community College, offer programs in various medical fields providing students with industry certification upon completion. Many of these programs use the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model developed by Washington state, which pairs two teachers—an adult education instructor and a vocational instructor—to provide basic skills instruction and workforce training.

LOCAL STRATEGY 2

Address Student Barriers to Persistence and Completion

Local practitioners can offer a variety of services to help students persist in and complete postsecondary education, including education and career counseling and learning communities. The FastStart program at the Community College of Denver offers both services in combination with other support. Students in the program are enrolled in developmental education programs that accelerate learning through a compressed curriculum and contextualized and computer-based instruction. They also must participate in a credit-bearing college- and career-readiness course. Students are assigned to cohort learning communities, allowing them to work collaboratively with faculty support.

LOCAL STRATEGY 3

Use Partners to Help Students Transition to College

Career pathways and approaches such as I-BEST require adult education programs to partner with postsecondary education institutions and business and industry. Both sets of partners can help develop appropriate curriculum aligned with college course work and job requirements. Colleges also can supply the instructors needed to implement the I-BEST model.

Partnerships also enable adult education programs to connect their students to non-academic support that can aid transition. By collaborating with other organizations, programs can stretch limited resources to meet students' diverse needs. OVAE has produced several resources on developing and sustaining partnerships, described on p. 24.

LOCAL STRATEGY 4

Use Technology to Enhance Services

Technology can allow programs to enhance services offered to students, link content to college and career goals, and save time and resources. As noted earlier, these technologies include the NTER initiative, which provides practitioners with an online platform for finding and modifying existing instructional tools and creating new tools. Another technology available to local programs is open educational resources (OER), which allow local programs to freely use, distribute, and, in some cases, adapt digital instructional materials and other learning technologies. OER tools save time and resources by allowing programs to build on each other's work instead of starting from scratch. Programs can access a range of high-quality learning technologies, such as NASA's educational portal, that help keep students engaged. To provide access to and facilitate the exchange of OER tools, the U.S. Departments of Education and Defense have jointly sponsored an open source technical system called the Learning Registry.

CALL TO ACTION

To meet President Obama's goal for the United States to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, adult education state administrators and local practitioners need to prepare their students for the transition to postsecondary education. This work includes improving their students' access to postsecondary education, the quality of their programs and services, and their students' persistence and completion rates in college. As described in this tool kit, OVAE and other offices of the U.S. Department of Education have developed a wealth of resources and tools to help state administrators and local practitioners in this work. The tool kit also outlines strategies to achieve the president's goal and offers examples of how state and local programs are implementing those strategies.

With your help, adult learners can meet the president's challenge to prepare for at least one year of postsecondary education or training and gain the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college and the workforce. Your work is critical to ensuring that adult learners are not left behind in the global economy. As President Obama noted in his 2009 Address to the Joint Session of Congress, "In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity—it is a prerequisite."

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Tools and Resources

The following includes the resources and tools noted in this report, as well as other materials developed by OVAE and the U.S. Department of Education that may be useful to state administrators and local practitioners seeking to improve adult learners' transition to postsecondary education.

ABE Career Connections Manual

http://www.policy2performance.org/wp-content/uploads/
ABE_Career_Connections_Manual.pdf

To support development of career pathways, this manual summarizes information on pathway components, describes approaches used by five demonstration sites to align basic skills training with local career pathways, outlines lessons learned from the sites, and discusses implications for policy and practice.

ABE-to-Community-College Transition Symposium Proceedings Report

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/cctransreport.pdf

This report summarizes a 2006 transition symposium, at which experts shared ideas about helping adult learners successfully transition to postsecondary education and training. The symposium focused on challenges and promising approaches at both state and local levels (e.g., holding colleges and ABE programs more accountable for transition rates and strengthening academic advising and mentoring for students).

Adult Career Pathways Training and Support Center

http://www.acp-sc.org

This website includes an extensive collection of instructional resources, implementation strategies, best practices, research, and useful tools for developing career pathways. It offers professional development opportunities and participation in a community of practice with others engaged in designing and implementing career pathway programs.

Building on Foundations for Success: Guidelines for Improving Adult Mathematics Instruction

http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/AdultNumeracyReportFinal2011.pdf

This report presents guidelines for adult mathematics instruction based on an analysis of recommendations from the National Mathematics Advisory Panel for K–12 instruction and their relevance to adult math instruction. The report has three main sections—content, instructional strategies, and teacher preparation—describing the guidelines, relevant research, and implications for adult education.

Career Pathways Toolkit: Six Key Elements for Success

http://www.workforceinfodb.org/PDF/CareerPathwaysToolkit2011.pdf

This U.S. Department of Labor tool kit provides a roadmap for state and local administrators, practitioners, and policymakers for developing career pathway systems and the state, regional, or local level.

College Affordability and Transparency Center

http://www.collegecost.ed.gov/catc/Default.aspx

This website allows prospective college students to search colleges and college programs by cost and documents trends in tuition increases.

Community College Virtual Symposium Proceedings Report

http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/ccvs-proceedings-final-report.pdf

This report summarizes panel discussions on several topics relevant to community college policies and practice: using bridge programs to promote college and career readiness; improving alignment between secondary and postsecondary education; connecting curriculum, assessment, and treatment in developmental education; and integrating industry-driven competencies in education.

Community Partnerships for Adult Learning (C-PAL)

http://www.c-pal.net

This online tool kit includes resources to strengthen partnerships among adult education programs, businesses, colleges, workforce development agencies, social service agencies, faith- and community-based organizations, and other providers. C-PAL includes information on developing partnerships, curriculum and instruction, professional development, workforce development, technology, and program management.

Correctional Education Data: Resources to Support the Collection, Reporting, and Analysis of Federal Data

https://www.cedatanetwork.org/pdf/CE%20Data%20Resources%20Guide%207-19-11%20FNL.pdf

Designed to help states use data more effectively to help correctional education participants and improve programs, this resource collection includes overviews of common federal funding sources; a description of common data collection challenges; a checklist for building a robust, comprehensive correctional education data system; and profiles of five states that have implemented the features and practices of strong data systems.

Educational Opportunity Centers

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/trioeoc/index.html

This federal TRIO program provides counseling and information on college admissions and financial literacy to students from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities) interested in entering or continuing a postsecondary education program.

Emerging Technologies in Adult Literacy and Language Education

http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/technology_paper_2010.pdf

This paper describes the potential benefits, costs, and challenges of using emerging technologies for adult literacy and language instruction and professional development. It describes relevant research and notes where more research is needed.

English Language Learner University (ELL-U)

http://www.ell-u.org

This online professional development community for ESL practitioners offers resources and learning opportunities through online courses, discussions, and forums; in-person training events; user-created groups for specific interest areas; and a resource library.

FAFSA on the Web

http://www.fafsa.ed.gov

This website helps prospective college students navigate the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process and track their application status. It includes a portal for adult students that includes information on self-assessments, the GED, college entrance exams, considerations in choosing a postsecondary institution, college costs and financial aid, and maintaining and repaying federal loans.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Regulations Update

http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-12-02/pdf/2011-30683.pdf

This federal register notice summarizes revised final amendments by the U.S. Department of Education to regulations implementing *FERPA*. The amendments reduce barriers to data sharing, allowing states to connect postsecondary and K–12 data in statewide longitudinal data systems and state education agencies to access and share data with non-education state agency partners. The new regulations clarify procedures that state, local, and federal agencies must use to be *FERPA* compliant when conducting studies.

Helping Adult Learners Make the Transition to Postsecondary Education

http://www.policy2performance.org/helping-adult-learners-make-the-transition-to-postsecondary-education

This background paper discusses challenges ABE programs must address in developing and implementing services to help students transition to postsecondary education. It presents labor market data making the case for postsecondary education transitions and describes how programs can help students make these transitions.

IES College Navigator

http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator

This U.S. Department of Education college search website enables prospective students to search schools by location, institution type, level of credentials awarded, selectivity, and other search criteria.

Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Practice and Research

http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13242#description

This National Academies report examines factors affecting literacy development in adolescents and adults and the implications for adult education programs. Recommendations include an expanded adult literacy infrastructure; improved access to professional development and technical assistance; greater collaboration between researchers and practitioners; and funding for research and evaluation.

Improving Reading Instruction for Adults Preparing for the GED and Transitioning to Postsecondary Education

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/factsh/improving-reading-instruction.pdf

This OVAE project is examining how to improve GED reading instruction so that GED recipients are ready for the demands of postsecondary education. A final report will include an analysis of the gap between GED and postsecondary reading demands; promising practices for enhancing reading instruction; a cross-case analysis of similarities and differences among these practices; and a course outline of reading methods and content to address the reading demands of entry-level postsecondary courses.

Integrating Curriculum: Lessons for Adult Education from Career and Technical Education

http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/IntergratingCurriculum2010.pdf

This paper examines two CTE integrated curriculum models and their relevance to adult education and describes current efforts to implement integrated curricula in adult education programs. The authors conclude that, although more research is needed, integrated curricula could help adults gain the skills and knowledge needed for transition to postsecondary education and employment.

Integrating Industry-Driven Competencies in Education and Training Through Employer Engagement

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/brief-4-employer-engagement.pdf

This brief describes partnerships between community colleges and employers to ensure that college programs align with workplace needs. It also explores several models promoting curricular change and innovation.

Joint Career Pathways Letter, U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/ten-attachment.pdf

This joint letter summarizes the agencies' commitment to promote career pathways as an approach to help adults gain marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials. It encourages state agencies to collaborate and align resources to support the implementation of career pathways and outlines essential components of career pathways programs and supporting federal initiatives.

Learning Registry

http://www.learningregistry.org/home

Jointly sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Defense, this open source technical system provides access to and facilitates the exchange of OER. OER are free digital instructional materials and other learning technologies that can be used, distributed, and, in some cases, adapted by practitioners and other users.

Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) Resource Collection/Program Management: Transitions to Postsecondary Education

http://lincs.ed.gov/lincs/resourcecollections/ProgramTransitions

The *LINCS* resource collection on transitions to postsecondary education includes materials for adult educators and program administrators seeking to help adult students in making a successful transition into postsecondary education. Among other resources, it includes background information; descriptions of national initiatives and program models; subject-specific information (e.g., numeracy); resources on counseling and nonacademic support; and information on contextualization and integrated curricula.

Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS)

http://lincs.ed.gov

This website provides adult educators at the state and local levels with a central location for collaborative learning, networking, professional development, and accessing evidence-based resources. It is designed to ensure educators are equipped with the research, information, and on-demand tools needed to deliver high-quality learning opportunities to adult learners who are preparing for the transition to college and careers.

mySkills myFuture

http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org

The online tool allows job seekers to search for careers that use similar job skills to their current job. Search results include job listings, employers, and typical wages and training requirements for their best career matches.

National Career Awareness Project

http://lincs.ed.gov/pd/NCA

This OVAE project is designed to strengthen career awareness and planning for adult learners by offering program staff professional development on incorporating such services into their instruction and existing counseling activities. Sixteen state teams participated in the pilot, which provided online instruction on using the *Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE/ESOL Classroom* curriculum guide. The content of the curriculum includes the cultural context for career awareness, self-exploration, occupational exploration, and career and education planning.

National Reporting System (NRS): Online Courses

http://www.nrsweb.org/trainings/online.aspx

The NRS has produced several online courses aimed at improving data quality and use:

- *Developing Report Cards for Adult Education:* This course offers an overview of developing and using report cards. It is based on the NRS guide *Demonstrating Results: Developing State and Local Report Cards for Adult Education.*

- *Data Use Guide Training Course:* This course includes a series of lessons on how to use NRS data for program improvement. It is based on the NRS guide *Using Data for Program Management and Improvement.*

National Reporting System (NRS): Training

http://www.nrsweb.org/trainings/trainings.aspx

The NRS has developed a range of training opportunities to help states improve data quality and use:

- *The Local Connection: Building a Data Use Learning Community*: This training presents communication tools for establishing and maintaining a collaborative learning community for local practitioners on using data. It also provides guidance on developing state action plans to support local practitioner data use for program improvement.

- *Desk Monitoring: Improving Program Performance*: This training helps states develop a desk monitoring system. Materials include a tool to supplement onsite monitoring visits and a rubric to evaluate program performance.

- *Demonstrating Results: Developing State and Local Report Cards for Adult Education*: This training offers guidance to states in developing local reports cards for accountability. Materials include tools and templates to use in developing report cards.

National Training and Education Resource (NTER)

https://www.nterlearning.org/home

This online platform allows students to learn new skills when it is convenient for them. It also offers programs and practitioners a variety of instructional tools and a means for finding, creating, and modifying the content of those tools.

Partnerships Between Community Colleges and Prisons: Providing Workforce Education and Training to Reduce Recidivism

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/prison-cc-partnerships_2009.pdf

This report describes partnerships between community colleges and prisons to expand educational services to help prisoners prepare for their release. It examines how partnerships are formed, coordinated, and funded; the challenges they face and how to address those challenges; and benefits to inmates, community colleges, prisons, and the public.

Pathways to Careers: A Guide to Building Partnerships for Workforce Education and Training

http://www.pathways2careers.ed.gov

This online guide is based on the career pathway experience of 32 community teams and their experiences in planning, team building, using data, engaging employers and the wider education community, and navigating the policy environment. It also includes a list of resources.

Performance-Based Funding (PBF) in Adult Education

http://www.mprinc.com/products/pdf/Performance_Based_Funding_in_Adult_Ed.pdf

This cross-state analysis summarizes findings from site visits conducted in three states—Indiana, Kansas, and Missouri—to learn about their experiences with adopting PBF systems. It includes an overview of their PBF funding formulas; rationales for adoption; implementation challenges; and lessons learned. It concludes with issues for consideration by state policymakers and administrators when developing state funding formulas incorporating PBF.

Policy to Performance Resource Center

http://www.policy2performance.org/resources

This website includes a searchable collection of resources for helping states ease the transition of ABE students to postsecondary education and employment. Resources include publications, initiatives, and tools on topics such as partnerships and interagency coordination, policy and systems alignment, and data accountability.

Program Memorandum: Use of Funds Provided Under the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)* for Integrated Education and Training

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/aefla-funds-for-iet.pdf

Career pathways often are designed using IET models that combine adult education with occupational skills training. This memo to state directors of adult education outlines guidance from OVAE on how *AEFLA* funds can be used to support IET programs in combination with funds from other sources.

Promoting College and Career Readiness: Bridge Programs for Low-Skill Adults

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/brief-1-bridge-programs.pdf

This brief describes career pathway bridge programs in three states, detailing their resources, instructional approaches, and program results. It concludes with a general discussion of best practices for bridge program planning, policy, instruction, and continuous improvement.

Promoting College and Career Ready Standards in Adult Basic Education

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/factsh/promoting-college-career.pdf

This project is designed to help ABE programs better prepare students for college or the workforce. Project activities include examining existing college and career-readiness standards to determine which may be appropriate for adult education.

Promoting Learner Transitions to Postsecondary Education and Work: Developing Academic Readiness Skills from the Beginning

http://www.cal.org/caelanetwork/resources/transitions.html

This brief describes how adult education programs can help English language learners gain the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education. It presents the case for integrating reading and listening, organizational and note-taking skills, and critical thinking into instruction. Examples are included of activities and strategies teachers can use to help students prepare for postsecondary education.

Promoting Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/factsh/promoting-teacher-effectiveness.pdf

For this OVAE initiative, researchers are reviewing literature on teacher competencies, teacher effectiveness, and models for teacher induction; developing and field-testing a teacher induction model; creating an online tool kit of resources to help state and local programs understand instructor competencies and teacher induction; and publishing briefs on the relationship between teachers' abilities and knowledge and student achievement.

Standards-in-Action (SIA)

http://www.adultedcontentstandards.ed.gov/standardsInAction.asp

SIA produced several resources and tools for state administrators and local practitioners:

- *Innovations for Standards-Based Education*: This guide describes how to implement professional development innovations in local programs.

- *A Process Guide for Establishing State Adult Education Content Standards*: This guide describes how to plan, develop, review, and implement a fully integrated, standards-based education system to improve instruction and learner outcomes.

- *Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse*: This website is designed to support states in developing and using content standards to improve the quality of adult education programs.

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds

This grant program supports states in developing, implementing, and expanding longitudinal data systems and links states to services and resources supporting their SLDS work. It includes best practice guides offering lessons learned and strategies for overcoming common challenges in development and implementation and webinars and an online portal allowing states to share products and best practices.

Student Achievement in Reading (STAR)

http://www.startoolkit.org

STAR helps states and local programs integrate evidence-based reading instruction through technical assistance and training activities; a certified STAR trainers' process; a tool kit with instructional and assessment materials; and reports on evidence-based reading instruction.

Student Aid on the Web

http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp

This U.S. Department of Education website is for practitioners and students seeking more information about the steps necessary to prepare and pay for postsecondary education. It includes a portal for adult students offering information on skill self-assessment, the GED, standardized entrance exams, considerations in choosing a postsecondary institution, college costs and financial aid, and maintaining and repaying federal loans.

Student Support Services Program

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html

This federal TRIO program provides mentorships, academic programs, counseling, and other support to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities) succeed in college and prepare for the job market.

Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need

http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/correctional-education.html#4

This education and career guide is designed for those who are incarcerated and under community supervision (parole or probation). It provides information on setting education and career goals, finding employment, earning a high school credential, applying for financial aid, and enrolling in college.

Teaching Effectiveness in Adult Literacy (TEAL) Center

https://teal.ed.gov

Designed to improve the quality of adult education instruction, with a focus on writing instruction, this OVAE initiative is providing 12 state teams with professional development and technical assistance on research-based instructional approaches and components of effective teaching. The *TEAL Center* website includes project resources available to the public, as well as private working spaces for state teams to share information, develop materials, and receive targeted training.

Technical Assistance to States on Performance-Based Funding (PBF): Final Project Report

http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/Final_PBF_Project_Report_2010.pdf

This report summarizes the experiences of 12 states that participated in an OVAE project intended to help state policymakers and administrators make informed decisions about developing and adopting PBF systems. The states received technical assistance in convening a state PBF taskforce; identifying state funding priorities and data sources; modeling potential funding formulas; and designing implementation strategies.

Training and Employment Notice: Release and Availability of Career Pathways Technical Assistance Resources

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html

A 2012 U.S. Department of Labor notice provides background on career pathways and a description and links to its collection of career pathway resources, including: *Career Pathways Graphic Framework*, *Career Pathways Community of Practice*, and *Career Pathways Toolkit.*

TRIO Programs

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

These federal outreach and student services programs are designed to help individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities) access higher education and achieve their academic goals.

The Veterans Upward Bound Program

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triovub/index.html

This free U.S. Department of Education TRIO program is designed to motivate and assist veterans in acquiring academic and other skills necessary for acceptance and success in a program of postsecondary education. The program provides assessment and enhancement of basic skills through counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and academic instruction in the core subject areas. It also allows users, including practitioners, to search for Upward Bound programs by state.

Adult Learners:
Five Steps to Prepare for College

Is college right for you? To answer this question, think about what you want out of life, what jobs you might like, and what skills you have or need to learn.

Getting more education or training can help you earn more money. Compared to someone with only a high school diploma, data show that you could earn:

- Over $300 more a month if you have some college but no degree;

- Over $500 more a month if you have an associate's (two-year) degree; and

- Over $1,500 more a month if you have a bachelor's (four-year) degree.[2]

Going to college also will help you learn new skills, have new experiences, build a career, and play a strong role in your family and community.

Getting ready for college can take time. First, you may need to get your high school diploma or work on your academic skills so you are ready for college classes. You also may need to apply for money (financial aid) to help pay for college. There are many people who can help you with each of these steps.

This handout describes five steps to get ready for college.

Step 1: Get help from groups in your community.

Step 2: Create a plan for going to college and starting a career.

Step 3: Earn your high school diploma.

Step 4: Choose and enroll in a college program.

Step 5: Apply for financial aid.

You may be able to skip some of these steps. For example, if you have your high school diploma, you can skip Step 2 and get ready to apply to colleges. If you know which college you want to go to but need help paying for it, you can skip to Step 5 to learn about financial aid.

Adam Sennott's Path to College

Adam Sennott dropped out of high school when he was 16 years old. He didn't do well in regular classes. But with help from his mother and brother, he earned his GED and joined a bridge-to-college program. This program helped him with his math skills, financial aid, and college applications. At age 19, Sennott was accepted at Bunker Hill Community College. But, soon after he started college, his mother died. Sennott could have quit college at that point, but he chose to keep going. His hard work is paying off. He won a scholarship and earned his associate's degree. He is now attending Emerson College and plans to get a bachelor's degree. He also recently wrote a news article, which was published on a city paper's website.

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[2] Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2012. *Education Pays*. Washington, DC: Author. Accessed on May 21, 2012. http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm.

STEP
1

Get Help from Groups in Your Community

The groups listed below can help you get ready for college. Many groups offer college and career counseling. They also can test your education level and then help you improve your skills. Some groups provide other helpful services, like transportation, childcare, and financial aid. If not, they can tell you where to find those services.

- **Adult education programs:** These programs help you with reading, writing, math, and English skills. They also can help you get a high school diploma (called a General Educational Development [GED] diploma or an adult high school diploma).   Adult education programs also can help you get ready for college. To find a program near you, go to: http://www.literacydirectory.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help you need. You will get a list of adult education programs and information for getting in touch with them.

- **Community colleges:** Community colleges can help you get a GED, a certificate, or associate's degree. They also can help you improve your skills so you can do well in college classes. To find a college near you, go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx. Then, enter your Zip Code or city.

- **One-Stop Career Centers:** These centers help you look for a job and find education or training programs. They also can help you to write your resume and practice for interviews. To find a center near you, go to: http://www.servicelocator.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. You will get a list of centers and information for getting in touch with them.

- **TRIO Programs:** These programs help people with low incomes or disabilities go to college. They also help people who are the first in their families to attend college. The different types of TRIO programs include:

  o   Educational Opportunity Centers: These centers give advice and information on applying to and paying for college.

  o   Student Support Services Programs: These programs provide mentors, education programs, counseling, and other services to help students do well in college and prepare for a job.

  Many TRIO programs are located at colleges. To find a program near you, contact your local community college. Your local One-Stop Career Center or adult education program also can help you find a program.

- **Community groups:** Other groups can help you with jobs, education, training, counseling, housing, healthcare, and more. For a list of groups near you, go to: http://www.211.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help or program you need.

STEP
2

Create a Plan for Going to College and Starting a Career

What do you want to learn in college? What kind of job would you like? Your local adult education program, community college, One-Stop Career Center, or TRIO Program can help you create a plan for going to college and starting a career. You also can find help at:

- *mySkills myFuture:* On this website, you can search for jobs that need skills you already have. Go to: http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org. Enter your current or past job. You will get a list of jobs using the skills you already have and names and contact information for employers. You also can get information about earnings and any training you may need.

- *My Next Move:* This website can help you find a job that matches your interests and training. Go to: http://www.mynextmove.org. Then, you can search for jobs by industry or key words (for example, build houses or computers).

- *College for Adults:* This website can help you plan your career, choose and apply to a college, and get financial aid. It also links you to other websites with helpful information. Go to: http://www.collegeforadults.org.

- *The Occupational Outlook Handbook:* On this website, you can learn about different jobs and the education and training you need for them. The handbook is updated every two years. Go to: http://www.bls.gov/oco. Then, search for jobs by job type, earnings, or required education and training.

STEP
3

Earn Your High School Diploma

If you do not have a high school diploma, you can get help from your local adult education program or community college. They can help you get ready for the GED test or get an adult high school diploma. First, they will ask you to take a test to find out which skills you have and which skills you still need to learn. The classes that you go to will depend on your skills. The different types of classes are:

- **Adult basic education (ABE):** These classes help adults with basic skills, such as reading, writing, math, solving problems, and using a computer.

- **Adult secondary education (ASE):** These classes help adults get ready for the GED test or earn an adult high school diploma.

- **English literacy:** These classes help adults with speaking, reading, and writing in English. They also can help immigrant adults become U.S. citizens.

STEP

4   ## Choose and Enroll in a College Program

You can work with college and career counselors to find a college program that best fits your career goals. You can choose from several types of college programs, including:

- **Career and technical education (CTE) programs:** These programs help you get the skills needed for jobs (for example, auto repair or nursing). They mix classroom learning with hands-on training. You usually get a certificate when you finish the program. Other training programs include apprenticeships, vocational rehabilitation programs, and Job Corps.

- **Two-year academic programs:** These programs teach skills that can help you do well in many different jobs. They also help you go on to a four-year college for a bachelor's degree. You usually get an associate's degree when you finish a two-year program.

- **Four-year academic programs:** Programs at four-year colleges and universities give you skills needed for many different types of jobs. When you graduate, you receive a bachelor's degree.

You can go to the *College Navigator* website at: http://collegenavigator.ed.gov to learn more about these programs. On this website, you can search for colleges by location and type of program. To find out more about the cost of college programs, go to: http://collegecost.ed.gov/catc. Select the type of college program you are interested in and then search by highest or lowest cost.

Talk to your counselor about getting college credit for any work experience or training you already have. You may need to take tests to get credit for these experiences.

You also should talk to your employer about your college plans. Some employers will help pay for college. Some may let you change your work schedule so that you can attend classes.

STEP

5   ## Apply for Financial Aid

You can get help with paying for college from colleges, states, and the U.S. government. The U.S. government offers several types of financial aid. Talk with your college and career counselor to find out what type of aid is best for you.

You also can get help from a website called *Student Aid on the Web,* at: http://studentaid.ed.gov. This website can help you get ready and pay for college. It can tell you how to find out what skills you already have and help you look into different careers. It gives information on taking the GED test and college entrance tests. You can learn about choosing a college, getting ready to attend, and paying for it. You also can get information about financial aid for adults by going to: http://studentaid.ed.gov/pubs. Then, look for the title *Federal Student Aid for Adults*.

Individuals in Corrections: Five Steps to Prepare for College

Is college right for you? To answer this question, think about what you want in your life after prison or when you are on probation or parole. What kind of jobs would you like? What skills do you already have or need to learn?

Getting more education or training can help you earn more money. Compared to someone with only a high school diploma, data show that you could earn:

- Over $300 more a month if you have some college but no degree;

- Over $500 more a month if you have an associate's (two-year) degree; and

- Over $1,500 more a month if you have a bachelor's (four-year) degree.[3]

A college education can help you change your life. You can learn new skills, have new experiences, build a career, and play a strong role in your family and community.

Getting ready for college can take time. First, you may need to get your high school diploma or work on your academic skills so you are ready for college classes. You also may need to apply for money (financial aid) to help pay for college. There are many people who can help you with each of these steps.

This handout describes five steps to get ready for college.

Step 1: Get help from organizations in your community.

Step 2: Create a plan for going to college and starting a career.

Step 3: Earn your high school diploma.

Step 4: Choose and enroll in a college program.

Step 5: Apply for financial aid.

You may be able to skip some of these steps. For example, if you have a high school diploma, you may need help just with choosing a college. If so, you can skip Step 2.

Amanda Seerattan's Path to College

At age 16, Amanda Seerattan was a runaway and high school dropout. She sold drugs and hustled to survive. She tried to get a job at a local mall, but no one would hire her. She decided she needed to get her high school diploma. In October 2005, she took and passed the GED test. But her past caught up with her: she was sent to prison two months after getting her GED diploma. While there, Seerattan learned that she was good at helping other people with their problems. She decided that she wanted to be a social worker. When she got out of prison, she joined a program, the Doe Fund, Inc., that helps former inmates and homeless people learn to take care of themselves. With help from a case manager, she entered college. Now she is working to get a master's degree in social work. It hasn't been easy, but she wants to be a good example for her old friends who are still living on the streets.

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[3] Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2012. *Education Pays*. Washington, DC: Author. Accessed on May 21, 2012. http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm.

To learn more about these steps and find other information that can help you with reentry, see *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need*. It is available at: http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/correctional-education.html#4. This guide is for people who are incarcerated or on community supervision (parole or probation) and want help thinking about the education or training they need for a successful future.

STEP

1 **Get Help from Groups in Your Community**

Whether you are incarcerated and getting ready for release or under community supervision, many groups in your community can help you. Many groups offer college and career counseling. They also can test your education level and then help you improve your skills. Some groups provide other helpful services, like transportation, childcare, and financial aid. If not, they can tell you where to find those services.

- **Adult education programs**: These programs help you with reading, writing, math, and English skills. They also can help you get a high school diploma (called a General Educational Development [GED] diploma or an adult high school diploma). Adult education programs also can help you get ready for college. To find a program near you, go to: http://www.literacydirectory.org/. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help you need. You will get a list of adult education programs and information for getting in touch with them.

- **Community colleges**: Community colleges can help you get a GED, a certificate, or associate's degree. They also can help you improve your skills so you can do well in college classes. To find a college near you, go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx. Then, enter your Zip Code or city.

- **One-Stop Career Centers**: These centers help you look for a job and find education or training programs. They also can help you to write your resume and practice for interviews. To find a center near you, go to: http://www.servicelocator.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. You will get a list of centers and information for getting in touch with them.

- **TRIO Programs**: These programs help people with low incomes or disabilities go to college. They also help people who are the first in their families to attend college. The different types of TRIO programs include:

  o Educational Opportunity Centers: These centers give advice and information on applying to and paying for college.

  o Student Support Services Programs: These programs provide mentors, education programs, counseling, and other services to help students do well in college and prepare for a job.

Many TRIO programs are located at colleges. To find a program near you, contact your local community college. Your local One-Stop Career Center or adult education program also can help you find a program.

- **Community groups**: Other groups can help you with jobs, education, training, counseling, housing, healthcare, and more. For a list of groups near you, go to: http://www.211.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help or program you need.

STEP 2

Create a Plan for Going to College and Starting a Career

What do you want to learn in college? What kind of job would you like? Your local adult education program, community college, One-Stop Career Center, or TRIO Program can help you create a plan for going to college and starting a career. You also can find help at:

- *mySkills myFuture*: On this website, you can search for jobs that need skills you already have. Go to: http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/. Enter your current or past job. You will get a list of jobs using the skills you already have and names and contact information for employers. You also can get information about earnings and any training you may need.

- *My Next Move*: This website can help you find a job that matches your interests and training. Go to: http://www.mynextmove.org/. Then, you can search for jobs by industry or key words (for example, build houses or computers).

- *College for Adults*: This website can help you plan your career, choose and apply to a college, and get financial aid. It also links you to other websites with helpful information. Go to: http://www.collegeforadults.org.

- *The Occupational Outlook Handbook*: On this website, you can learn about different jobs and the education and training you need for them. The handbook is updated every two years. Go to: http://www.bls.gov/oco/. Then, search for jobs by job type, earnings, or required education and training.

Remember that people with criminal records sometimes are legally forbidden from working in certain jobs. Before choosing an education or training program, make sure that your record will not prevent you from working in that job. To learn more, go to:

- *The National H.I.R.E. Network*: This website describes how your criminal record can affect your job search. Go to: http://www.hirenetwork.org. Click on "Resources and Assistance." Then, choose "Criminal Record Issues."

- *Reentry Mythbuster on Hiring/Criminal Record Guidance*: This explains why an employer cannot automatically keep people with criminal records from jobs. Go to: http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/documents/0000/1082/Reentry_Council_Mythbuster_Employment.pdf.

STEP
3   **Earn Your High School Diploma**

If you do not have a high school diploma, you can get help from your local adult education program or community college. If you are still incarcerated, you can get help from the education program in your correctional facility.

These programs can help you get ready for the GED test or get an adult high school diploma. First, they will ask you to take a test to find out which skills you have and which skills you still need to learn. The classes that you go to will depend on your skills. The different types of classes are:

- **Adult basic education (ABE)**: These classes help adults with basic skills, such as reading, writing, math, solving problems, and using a computer.

- **Adult secondary education (ASE)**: These classes help adults get ready for the GED test or earn an adult high school diploma.

- **English literacy**: These classes help adults with speaking, reading, and writing in English. They also can help immigrant adults become U.S. citizens.

STEP
4   **Choose and Enroll in a College Program**

You can work with a counselor at your correctional facility, local adult education program, or community college to get help choosing the right college program. If you are still incarcerated, ask your counselor about college programs offered in your correctional facility or through correspondence courses.

You can choose from several types of college programs, including:

- **Career and technical education (CTE) programs**: These programs help you get the skills needed for jobs (for example, auto repair or nursing). They mix classroom learning with hands-on training. You usually get a certificate when you finish the program. Other training programs include apprenticeships, vocational rehabilitation programs, and Job Corps.

- **Two-year academic programs**: These programs teach skills that can help you do well in many different jobs. They also help you go on to a four-year college for a bachelor's degree. You usually get an associate's degree when you finish a two-year program.

- **Four-year academic programs**: Programs at four-year colleges and universities give you skills needed for many different types of jobs. When you graduate, you receive a bachelor's degree.

You can go to the *College Navigator* website at: http://collegenavigator.ed.gov to learn more about these programs. On this website, you can search for colleges by location and type of program. To find out more about the cost of college programs, go to: http://collegecost.ed.gov/catc/. Select the type of college program you are interested in and then search by highest or lowest cost.

Talk to your counselor about getting college credit for any work experience or training you already have. You may need to take tests to get credit for these experiences.

If you are on community supervision, talk to your employer about your college plans. Some employers will help pay for college. Some may let you change your work schedule so you can attend classes.

STEP

5   **Apply for Financial Aid**

You can get help with paying for college from colleges, states, and the U.S. government. The U.S. government offers several types of financial aid. Talk with your college and career counselor to find out what type of aid is best for you.

You also can get help from a website called *Student Aid on the Web,* at: http://studentaid.ed.gov. This website can help you get ready and pay for college. It can tell you how to find out what skills you already have and help you look into different careers. It gives information on taking the GED test and college entrance tests. You can learn about choosing a college, getting ready to attend, and paying for it. You also can get information about financial aid for adults by going to: http://studentaid.ed.gov/pubs. Then, look for the title *Federal Student Aid for Adults.*

Many people with criminal records think they cannot get financial aid. This is not true. Most people on community supervision can receive financial aid. But there are some restrictions. You can learn more about these restrictions at:

- *Reentry Mythbuster on Federal Student Financial Aid*, http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/documents/0000/1062/Reentry_Council_ Mythbuster_Student_Financial_Aid.pdf; or

- *Incarcerated Individuals and Eligibility for Federal Student Aid*, http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/IncarcFAQ.pdf.

Veterans:
Five Steps to Prepare for College

Are you leaving military service and wanting to restart your college education? Or are you thinking about going to college for the first time? To answer these questions, reference the five steps outlined below as you consider the types of employment and educational opportunities that fit your skills, talents, and aspirations.

With 1.4 million service members set to leave the Armed Forces in the next few years, it is imperative that veterans and their spouses make a seamless transition from military to civilian life. In July 2012, President Obama announced a major overhaul to the transition assistance program that helps service members and spouses reintegrate into their communities. He also signed into law the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act, which provides additional education and training opportunities for veterans, as well as financial incentives for businesses that choose to hire former service members: http://benefits.va.gov/vow/index.htm. Additional information on the transition assistance program can be accessed at: http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/tap_fs.htm.

> **Don Parks's Path to College**
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> Don Parks, a master sergeant in the Air Force Reserves for 26 years, recently completed a tour of duty in Iraq. Though he faced serious challenges at the time of his retirement, including knee injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, Parks wanted to use his GI Bill benefits to return to college and earn a degree. In the summer of 2011, he enrolled in a Veterans Upward Bound program to work on his computer and English skills and get ready for college. That fall he enrolled in college full time—after being out of school for 40 years. He is still enrolled in his program and working hard to earn his college degree.

Expanding your knowledge and skills through education or training will help you and your family to increase your income. Compared to someone with only a high school diploma, data show that you could earn:

• Over $300 more a month if you have some college but no degree;

• Over $500 more a month if you have an associate's (two-year) degree; and

• Over $1,500 more a month if you have a bachelor's (four-year) degree.[4]

In addition to enabling you to earn a higher salary, postsecondary education and training also can help you learn new skills, have exciting new experiences, build a career, and play a stronger role in your family and community.

However, preparing to attend college for the first time—or going back to a college program that you left—can be challenging. There are many resources available, though, to help you and your spouse access the education and training you need to meet your goals.

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[4] Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2012. *Education Pays*. Washington, DC: Author. Accessed on May 21, 2012. http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm.

This handout describes five steps to help you get ready to begin this process.

Step 1: Get help from websites and groups in your community.

Step 2: Create a college and career plan.

Step 3: Earn your high school credential.

Step 4: Choose and enroll in a college program.

Step 5: Apply for financial aid.

This handout is designed to be flexible enough for a wide variety of veterans and their spouses. For instance, if you already have your high school credential or are returning to college, you may be able to skip some of these steps.

**STEP
1** **Get Help from Websites and Groups in Your Community**

In addition to the resources included in the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) *Adult College Completion Tool Kit*, there are many resources available especially to help veterans and their spouses. A good place to start is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) *eBenefits* website, which helps veterans, service members and their families access and manage their military and veteran benefits. It offers information on education benefits, career planning, the GI Bill, scholarships, and financial aid. To learn more, go to: https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal.

Another great place to find information on benefits for veterans and families is VA's *VetSuccess* website, which provides an interactive map to link veterans with valuable services for making the transition to civilian life: http://www.vetsuccess.gov/. The Vet Center is another VA service for veterans that helps service members and their families deal with the challenges of making the change from military to civilian life. More information is available at: http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/Vet_Center_Services.asp.

ED is also very committed to providing the support that veterans and their families need to succeed in college and obtain their degree. More information on all of the services and resources available for military families through ED is available at: http://www.ed.gov/veterans-and-military-families/information#benefits.

There are also many local organizations across the country that can help you and your spouse prepare for postsecondary opportunities. Many of them offer college and career counseling in addition to services such as transportation, childcare, and financial aid.

- **Adult education programs**: These programs can help you or your spouse improve key skills that will enable you to succeed in postsecondary education, such as reading, writing, math, and English skills. Adult education programs can also help you or your spouse obtain a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) diploma. To find a program near you, go to: http://www.literacydirectory.org/. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help you need. You will get a list of adult education programs and information for getting in touch with them.

- **Community colleges**: Community colleges are two-year postsecondary institutions that can also help prepare you to succeed on college-level course work, attain a GED, a certificate, or associate's degree. To find a college near you, go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx. Then, enter your Zip Code or city.

- **One-Stop Career Centers**: These centers can assist you in locating an education or training program in your area as well as finding and applying for open jobs. These centers also provide assistance with writing an effective resume and preparing for interviews. To find a center near you, go to: http://www.servicelocator.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. You will get a list of centers and information for getting in touch with them.

- **TRIO Programs**: These programs help individuals with low incomes or disabilities go to college. They also provide services to aid first-generation college students in succeeding academically, including:

  o Educational Opportunity Centers, which offer advice and information on applying to and paying for college.

  o Student Support Services Programs, which provide mentors, education programs, counseling, and other services to help students do well in college and prepare for a job.

  o Veterans Upward Bound, which helps students who served in the military develop the skills they will need to succeed in college. You can find more information at: http://www.ed.gov/programs/triovub/index.html.

  To find a program near you, contact your local community college, a local One-Stop Career Center, or an adult education center. Be sure to ask them about any Veterans Upward Bound programs in your area.

- **Community groups**: There are many other community organizations available to provide assistance with jobs, education, training, counseling, housing, healthcare, and more. For a list of groups near you, go to: http://www.211.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help or program you need.

STEP

2   **Create a College and Career Plan**

What do you want to learn in college? What kind of job or profession are you interested in? The *eBenefits* website, in addition to your local adult education program and community college, can help you determine what kinds of career opportunities are available. They also can assist you in creating and carrying out a plan to complete college and build your career. Other helpful resources are:

- *My Next Move for Veterans*: This website can help you find a job that matches your interests and training. Go to: http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/. Then, you can search for jobs by key words, industry, or your military classification.

- *Key to Career Success*: This website connects veterans and service members with career planning, training, and job search resources at local One-Stop Career Centers. Go to: http://www.careeronestop.org/MilitaryTransition/.

- *mySkills myFuture*: On this website, you can search for jobs that utilize the skills you have already developed. The site also provides information on potential earnings and any education or training you may need. Go to: http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/. Enter your current or past job. You will get a list of jobs using the skills you already have and names and contact information for employers.

- *My Next Move*: This website can help you find a job that matches your interests and training. Go to: http://www.mynextmove.org/. Then, you can search for jobs by industry or key words (for example, build houses or computers).

- *College for Adults*: This website can help you plan your career, choose and apply to a college, and get financial aid: http://www.collegeforadults.org.

- *The Occupational Outlook Handbook*: This website offers comprehensive information on thousands of careers, such as required education, expected salary levels, working conditions, and employment projections. To access the handbook, which is updated every two years, go to: http://www.bls.gov/oco/. Then, search for jobs by job type, earnings, or required education and training.

STEP

3   **Earn Your High School Diploma**

As most military members will already possess a high school diploma, this step will likely not be necessary for you. However, this step may be appropriate for spouses or other family members. A local adult education program or community college can assist them in preparing for the GED test or obtaining an adult high school diploma. Adult students who need to obtain a high school credential will likely need to take an exam upon entering the program to determine which skills they still need to develop. Several different types of preparatory classes are available depending on the skill level of the student:

- **Adult basic education (ABE)**: These classes help adults with basic skills, such as reading, writing, math, solving problems, and using a computer.

- **Adult secondary education (ASE)**: These classes help adults to take the GED test or earn an adult high school diploma.

- **English literacy**: These classes help adults with speaking, reading, and writing in English. They also can help immigrant adults become U.S. citizens.

STEP
4   **Choose and Enroll in a College Program**

There are many types of postsecondary training and education programs. You will want to consider your career goals carefully in order to determine the program that is best for you. You can work with a college and career counselor to learn more about the various postsecondary options:

- **Career and technical education (CTE) programs**: These programs prepare students for certain careers, such as those in many healthcare or mechanical fields. CTE programs often mix classroom learning with hands-on training, culminating in a formal certificate of completion. In addition, there are other training programs, such as apprenticeships, vocational rehabilitation programs, and Job Corps, which provide work-related skills and knowledge aimed at certain professions.

- **Two-year academic programs**: Academic programs at two-year institutions, which usually culminate in a two-year associate's degree, generally prepare students to transfer to a four-year institution for the purpose of obtaining a bachelor's degree.

- **Four-year academic programs**: Four-year academic institutions offer a range of undergraduate programs of study, which lead to a bachelor's degree. Many four-year institutions also offer graduate and professional programs for students interested in pursuing advanced degrees.

Most four-year academic programs require potential students to submit formal applications and take an admissions test, like the SAT or ACT. The application process can often be challenging and time-consuming, so it is important to plan ahead to give yourself enough time to complete all of the application requirements. The Department of Defense has a number of useful resources available online to help current and former members of the military search for colleges, understand the application requirements, and prepare for admissions tests. If you or your spouse would like assistance with this process, go to: http://www.nelnetsolutions.com/dod/.

You can also access the *College Navigator* at: http://collegenavigator.ed.gov, which enables you to quickly locate educational programs near you and access critical information on each of them. The College Affordability and Transparency Center, available at: http://collegecost.ed.gov/catc/, also provides a tool for quickly comparing colleges by tuition level and total net cost.

It is key that you talk with your counselor before beginning any postsecondary education or training program to determine how much credit you may be able to receive for your military training and experience. The Department of Defense recently established a military credentialing and licensing task force to help veterans get credit for the knowledge and skills they already developed during their service. More information on this initiative is available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/31/president-obama-calls-congress-act-veterans-job-corps-do-list-and-launch.

You may need to take an exam to get credit for your military experiences. In most cases you will also be required to submit a transcript from your military branch documenting your training and experience. To obtain this transcript and to learn more about receiving college credit for your past training and experience, go to:

- Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript at: https://smart.navy.mil/smart/welcome.do.

- Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System at: http://aarts.army.mil/.

- Community College of the Air Force Transcripts at: http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/transcripts.asp.

- Coast Guard Official Transcript at: http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/official_transcript.asp.

STEP

5 **Apply for Financial Aid**

Veterans are eligible for several types of financial aid, including many federal grants, loans and scholarships. The education benefits available through the VA, such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, provide valuable financial support solely to veterans and their family members to go to college or take another type of postsecondary training program. For more information on VA's education benefits, go to: http://www.gibill.va.gov/. The college you want to attend may also participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program, which provides additional financial assistance to veterans. For more information on the Yellow Ribbon Program and to find a list of participating colleges, go to: http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post_911_gibill/yellow_ribbon_program.html.

The Federal Student Aid website has additional information on the different types of loans and grants available to all types of postsecondary students. There is also a separate page outlining the unique financial aid resources for veterans and military families at: http://studentaid.ed.gov/types/grants-scholarships/military.

In order to access federal financial aid, however, you and your spouse will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Many states and postsecondary institutions also use the FAFSA to determine which other types of financial aid you may be

eligible for, so it is necessary to complete this step. For more information on the FAFSA or to start a new application, go to: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/.

In addition to loans and grants, there are also many scholarships available for veterans and their spouses. For a list of scholarships available specifically for student veterans, go to: https://mymilitaryeducation.org/app/answers/detail/a_id/1257.

Additional Support for College Students

The U.S. Department of Education has assisted several colleges in establishing Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CVESS). These offices provide a variety of additional services on campus to help student veterans succeed in their life after the military. ED has an interactive map of all the colleges that have CVESS programs: http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie= UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&z=4&msid=1002254279649361 34608.000491cf67e5f1342b238. Be sure to check with your college to see if they have a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success or any other special programs or services for veteran students.

Many colleges also have student organizations on campus just for veterans. For example, Student Veterans of America (SVA) is an organization located at many colleges that provides extra resources and support services for military members and their families. You can find a map of all the colleges with SVA chapters on the organization's website: http://www.studentveterans.org/.

Be Aware…

Some education programs, colleges, and companies are trying to take advantage of your military and veteran education benefits.   President Barack Obama issued an Executive Order in April 2012 to ensure veterans and their families have the information they need to avoid these scams. Do your research carefully before applying for an educational program or financial aid. For more information about what to research when applying for college, go to http://www.gibill.va.gov/documents/factsheets/Choosing_a _School.pdf.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) also helps veterans who are being targeted by companies, colleges or individuals trying to take advantage of their veteran education benefits. To report a scam, please contact the CFPB at http://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint/.

High-Skill Immigrant: Five Steps to Prepare for College

Are you working in a job below your skill level? Do you have a degree from your home country that you cannot use here? Completing a college program in the United States could help. Getting a certificate or degree that is recognized by American employers will put you in a better position to get a job and start or rebuild your career. Going to college also will help you learn new skills, experience new things, and strengthen your role in your family and community.

Preparing for and enrolling in college can take time. First, you may need to improve your English language skills before enrolling. You also may need help choosing a college and getting financial assistance. There are many people who can help you with each of these steps.

This handout describes five steps to get ready for college.

Step 1: Get help from groups in your community.

Step 2: Create a plan for going to college and starting a career.

Step 3: Earn your high school diploma.

Step 4: Choose and enroll in a college program.

Step 5: Apply for financial aid.

Depending on the skills you have and your finances, you may be able to skip some of these steps.   For example, if you know which college you want to go to, but need help paying for it, you can skip to Step 5 to learn about financial aid. Or, you may need help with improving your English language skills. You can learn more about English literacy programs in Step 2.

Noor Boulos's Path to College

Noor Boulos and her family left the turmoil of Iraq and moved to Syria for several years. While in Syria, she received training in medical laboratory technology and worked for three years as a technician. She and her family then moved to the United States. Even with her education and work experience, she struggled to find a job at her skill level. She decided to go to college to earn a degree recognized by American employers. She enrolled in Portland Community College (PCC), where she took general education classes and a class that helps immigrants learn English as they train for a job. She also interned at a local healthcare clinic. After completing her college program, Boulos found a good job. She continues to take college classes at PCC to further her education and advance her career.

STEP 1 Get Help from Groups in Your Community

There are several resources and groups set up especially to help immigrants. A good place to start is the *Welcome Home: A Guide for New Immigrants*. This guide includes information about working in the United States and becoming a U.S. citizen. It also describes the American education system and where you can go to get help with improving your skills. This guide is available at: http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-618.pdf.

The groups listed below also can help you. Many groups offer college and career counseling. They also can test your education level and then help you improve your skills. Some groups provide other helpful services, like transportation, childcare, and financial aid. If not, they can tell you where to find those services.

- **Adult education programs**: These programs help you with reading, writing, math, and English skills. They also can help you get a high school diploma (called a General Educational Development [GED] diploma or an adult high school diploma).   Adult education programs also can help you get ready for college. To find a program near you, go to: http://www.literacydirectory.org/. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help you need. You will get a list of adult education programs and information for getting in touch with them.

- **Community colleges**: Community colleges can help you get a GED, a certificate, or associate's degree. They also can help you improve your skills so you can do well in college classes. To find a college near you, go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx. Then, enter your Zip Code or city.

- **One-Stop Career Centers**: These centers help you look for a job and find education or training programs. They also can help you to write your resume and practice for interviews. To find a center near you, go to: http://www.servicelocator.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. You will get a list of centers and information for getting in touch with them.

- **TRIO Programs**: These programs help people with low incomes or disabilities go to college. They also help people who are the first in their families to attend college. The different types of TRIO programs include:

  o   Educational Opportunity Centers: These centers give advice and information on applying to and paying for college.

  o   Student Support Services Programs: These programs provide mentors, education programs, counseling, and other services to help students do well in college and prepare for a job.

  Many TRIO programs are located at colleges. To find a program near you, contact your local community college. Your local One-Stop Career Center or adult education program also can help you find a program.

- **Community groups**: Other groups can help you with jobs, education, training, counseling, housing, healthcare, and more. For a list of groups near you, go to: http://www.211.org. Enter your Zip Code or city and state. Then, choose the type of help or program you need.

STEP
2   **Create a Plan for Going to College and Starting a Career**

What do you want to learn in college? What kind of job would you like or did you have in your home country? Your local adult education program, community college, One-Stop Career Center, or TRIO Program can help you create a plan for going to college and starting your career. You also can find help at:

- *mySkills myFuture*: On this website, you can search for jobs that need skills you already have. Go to: http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/. Enter your current or past job. You will get a list of jobs using the skills you already have and names and contact information for employers. You also can get information about earnings and any training you may need.

- *My Next Move*: This website can help you find a job that matches your interests and training. Go to: http://www.mynextmove.org/. Then, you can search for jobs by industry or key words (for example, build houses or computers).

- *College for Adults*: This website can help you plan your career, choose and apply to a college, and get financial aid. It also links you to other websites with helpful information. Go to: http://www.collegeforadults.org.

- *The Occupational Outlook Handbook*: On this website, you can learn about different jobs and the education and training you need for them. The handbook is updated every two years. Go to: http://www.bls.gov/oco/. Then, search for jobs by job type, earnings, or required education and training.

You also can get help with education, training, and the job search from several groups that work only with immigrants. They are:

- **Upwardly Global**: This group helps skilled immigrants and refugees rebuild their career in the United States. You can get help with job searchers and training for a career. To learn more, go to: http://www.upwardlyglobal.org/.

- **The Welcome Back Initiative**: Located throughout the United States, these centers help immigrants who have received healthcare training in other countries.   The centers provide counseling and can give you advice on education and training programs and how to find a job in the United States. To learn more, go to: http://www.welcomebackinitiative.org.

- **World Education Services**: This group helps immigrants with applying to college, finding a job, and becoming a U.S. citizen. To learn more, go to www.wes.org.

Each of these groups have different eligibility requirements you must meet to qualify for their free services.   Their websites describe their eligibility requirements.

STEP
3   **Earn Your High School Diploma**

If you do not have a high school diploma, you can get help from your local adult education program or community college. They can help you get ready for the GED test or get an adult high school diploma. First, they will ask you to take a test to find out which skills you have and which skills you still need to learn. The classes that you go to will depend on your skills. The different types of classes are:

- **Adult basic education (ABE)**: These classes help adults with basic skills, such as reading, writing, math, solving problems, and using a computer.

- **Adult secondary education (ASE)**: These classes help adults get ready for the GED test or earn an adult high school diploma.

- **English literacy**: These classes help adults with speaking, reading, and writing in English. They also can help immigrant adults become U.S. citizens.

STEP
4   **Choose and Enroll in a College Program**

You can work with college and career counselors to find a college program that best fits your career goals. You can choose from several types of college programs, including:

- **Career and technical education (CTE) programs**: These programs help you get the skills needed for jobs (for example, auto repair or nursing). They mix classroom learning with hands-on training. You usually get a certificate when you finish the program. Other training programs include apprenticeships, vocational rehabilitation programs, and Job Corps.

- **Two-year academic programs**: These programs teach skills that can help you do well in many different jobs. They also help you go on to a four-year college for a bachelor's degree. You usually get an associate's degree when you finish a two-year program.

- **Four-year academic programs**: Programs at four-year colleges and universities give you skills needed for many different types of jobs. When you graduate, you receive a bachelor's degree.

You can go to the *College Navigator* website at: http://collegenavigator.ed.gov to learn more about these programs. On this website, you can search for colleges by location and type of program. To find out more about the cost of college programs, go to: http://collegecost.ed.gov/catc/. Select the type of college program you are interested in and then search by highest or lowest cost.

Talk to your counselor about getting college credit for any work experience or training you already have. You may need to take tests to get credit for these experiences. If you attended a college in another country, you also may be able to get credit for some of those classes.

You also should talk to your employer about your college plans. Some employers will help pay for college. Some may let you change your work schedule so that you can attend classes.

STEP
5 **Apply for Financial Aid**

You can get help with paying for college from colleges, states, and the U.S. government. The U.S. government offers several types of financial aid. Talk with your college and career counselor to find out what type of aid is best for you.

You also can get help from a website called *Student Aid on the Web,* at: http://studentaid.ed.gov. This website can help you get ready and pay for college. It can tell you how to find out what skills you already have and help you look into different careers. It gives information on taking the GED test and college entrance tests. You can learn about choosing a college, getting ready to attend, and paying for it. You also can get information about financial aid for adults by going to: http://studentaid.ed.gov/pubs. Then, look for the title *Federal Student Aid for Adults.*

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