

**A National Scan of  
Entry Qualifications and Early and Ongoing  
Professional Development Requirements and Offerings  
for Adult Basic Education Practitioners**

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## **Introduction**

This report on policies regarding the preparation and professional development requirements for instructional staff in adult basic, literacy, and GED education was prepared at the request of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium as a first step in developing a research agenda that could ultimately and helpfully inform the work of state directors of adult education. The fact that there is a need for this information is an indicator that there is only limited policy regulation in exchange for federal funding to the states for the provision of adult basic and literacy education with regard to professional preparation and professional development of instructional staff. Instead, every state has developed and implemented its own policies. Given local control, the typical location of service provision and the influence of that institution (e.g., K-12 or post-secondary education systems), and other contextual factors, there is significant variation across states. And given the scope of this variation and the few outlets for information sharing available, state directors do not always know what policies exist in other states and may lack a sense of the bigger picture of professional requirements for instructors nationally.

Gaining information on this topic can serve several purposes. First, because we have here provided relevant websites when citing examples, it provides resources and opens up possibilities for more information sharing. Knowing how policy in one state stacks up against others may impel change and improvement as state directors seek to bring their states more in alignment with others. And finally, the information we present here raises many important and researchable questions about effectiveness. It can be used to identify priorities for further

research and evaluation and aid in future sampling decisions. Importantly, it gives state directors information they can use to raise questions, the answers to which can helpfully inform their practice and the improvement of state policies related to the preparation and ongoing professional development of instructors in adult education.

This report is organized around addressing the following research question and subquestions:

**What requirements do states have for entry into the field, early professional development, and ongoing professional development? How do they enact and evaluate them?**

- What modes and methods of delivery are states using to provide early and ongoing professional development?
- What are the key areas of focus for early and ongoing professional development?
- Do states have teacher competencies or standards that guide their training and professional development curriculum and their teacher evaluation?
- In what ways have states studied the effectiveness of their training and professional development requirements in leading to high quality instruction in terms of methods, modes and content?

Following a summary of findings in each section below, several states' policies and procedures are described in some detail to illustrate more unusual or elaborated examples of how they are enacted. When URLs are available that are directly relevant to these descriptions, they are included. A summary of our findings in graphic form is included in an appendix.

## **Research Design**

All 50 states plus the District of Columbia contributed to our findings by participating in phone interviews and responding to email requests for information. Data was collected in several phases. Initially a scan of state agency websites was conducted as a way to try to answer the research questions. This process provided some information, but not comprehensively. The problem is that some states do not have websites for their adult basic education programs; others were incomplete, out of date, or difficult to interpret. None of them fully addressed our research questions. Therefore, a second data collection phase was implemented by conducting telephone interviews of all state directors or designated representatives. Some state respondents answered the interview questions in writing rather than participating in the phone interview. The next phase of data collection occurred as we engaged in data analysis and the development of findings when additional questions and missing details about state policies and procedures emerged as a result of examination and analysis of the data that had been collected. Finally, we have engaged in a process of fact checking by asking states specifically named in the report to verify descriptions of their policies and procedures; all corrections and clarifications were inserted.

Notes from the interviews were completed and organized by state. Next they were coded by research question. States that had a policy with regard to any of the research question were tallied and those that provided examples of note in some way were tagged to be used in the final report.

It should be noted that the goal of including 50 states and the District of Columbia in this scan presented significant challenges. The first challenge was that state websites were not fully useful. They were often incomplete or inadequate for gathering data to address the research questions. While they obviously were not designed with our study in mind, the information we

sought seemed to us like typical information a practitioner (or prospective practitioner) might also seek. However, it is not possible to collect comprehensive data on policies regarding professional requirements by using state websites. A second challenge was making contact with and setting appointments with state directors or their representatives in all 51 offices. Although the NAEPDC provided contact information, it took multiple attempts and significant urging from OCTAE and NAEPDC to get a response from about one third of the states. We recognize that this may be due to limited time, staff turnover, some reluctance to air “laundry”, and general staff turbulence. However, the process was time consuming and took far longer than expected. This reality points to the general difficulty of doing national, cross state research and should be taken into account in any future research planning. Finally, the sheer quantity of data and the difficulty of understanding all the variation within and across state policies made the task of making sense of it all rather significant. However, we have confidence that our efforts have paid off and that our findings are an accurate reflection of the policies effecting entry into the field and professional development requirements for practitioners.

## **Findings**

### **Entry Qualifications**

We defined entry qualifications as minimum requirements for an instructor to be hired. If instructors had time after hire to complete a requirement, such as a certification, we considered that to be a requirement for early service professional development rather than an entry requirement. Thirty states have some type of state-mandated requirements for entry into the field. The most common entry requirements are a Bachelor’s degree of any kind or some type of teaching license. Sixteen states require a Bachelor’s degree in any field, 10 states require some

kind of a teaching certificate for teachers for some types of adult education programs, and four states require a Bachelor's degree with additional requirements such as experience or coursework beyond the Bachelor's degree. Of the 10 states that require teaching certification for entry into the field, three states accept either a K-12 certificate or an Adult Education Credential as an entry requirement, but the other seven only accept K-12 certification. Although a small number of states accept some kind of adult education certification in place of a K-12 license and a few even require it, it is notable that the K-12 certificate is the dominant entry requirement among those that require licensure. This suggests that while it is assumed that subject and age specific certification is appropriate in K-12 education, no such distinctions are made in adult education. Generally, any kind of instructional training is acceptable. More importantly, the majority of states either does not require a college degree, or requires one without specifying any particular, required area of expertise. This is likely more a realistic reflection of the potential workforce than a judgment on the appropriate qualifications for teaching in adult education, but it is notable nonetheless.

Although most states that have an entry requirement simply require either a Bachelor's Degree or a Teaching certificate, in this section we highlight three states that have additional or unique entry requirements into the field. In general, states with additional requirements do focus on the importance of additional coursework and experience specifically related to teaching adults. These requirements acknowledge that a college degree or certification in just any area is not adequate training for teaching adults, and that the skills needed for teaching adults are distinct from those for teaching children.

**Arizona.** The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) issues an Adult Education Teaching Certificate at two levels: the Provisional Adult Education Certificate and the Standard



Adult Education Certificate (the latter described under Ongoing Professional Development). The Provisional Adult Education Certificate is the gatekeeping credential that is required for entry into the field for state-sponsored adult education providers. An instructor must have a Provisional Adult Education Certificate at the time of hire or be eligible to obtain it within 60 days. This policy is somewhat unusual because it allows years of experience in place of a college degree. In order to qualify for the Provisional Adult Education Certificate, instructors must have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree; however, if an applicant does not hold a Bachelor's Degree, then s/he must have at least two years of experience as a tutor or aide in a state-sponsored adult education program. As the Provisional Adult Education Certificate expires after three years, instructors must earn the Standard Adult Education Certificate by that point to continue teaching in a state sponsored adult education program. Instructors can apply for a Standard Adult Education Certificate after they have taught for a minimum of one year in an adult education program with a Provisional Certificate (<http://www.azed.gov/educator-certification/certificate-requirement/teaching-certificate/>). The majority of State sponsored providers have additional requirements for instructors and administrators that exceed the minimum certification requirements.

**Minnesota.** Minnesota has three different ways to qualify to be an adult education instructor; individual programs can choose which option to require. The options are to require a K-12 teaching license or a K-12 license with an additional 12 credit ABE endorsement. If the instructor does not have a valid K-12 license, a third option is to obtain a 24 credit ABE teaching license that qualifies an instructor to teach adults in public school-based, adult education programs. About 5% of the adult educators in the state teach in correctional facilities, colleges, and community programs where there are no mandated entry requirements. However, because

the job market is so competitive, many of these programs do have entry requirements. It was reported that the majority of teachers in Minnesota have a K-12 license and a substantial subset have the ABE license.

**Wisconsin.** Wisconsin also has an adult education certification requirement, the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) certification. Although it takes five years to earn this permanent certification (described later under Adult Education Credential), instructors are required to have, at minimum upon entry into the field, an ABE generalist “provisional” certification. The ABE generalist “provisional” certification requires instructors to have a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree with certification in Elementary, Secondary, Adult, or Special education. Alternatively, instructors must have a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree and a Department of Public Instruction (DPI) certification (or 20 college credits) in any area taught at elementary or secondary education levels AND a total of three credits of course work in reading instruction and/or teaching methods.

**States with no entry qualification requirements.** While there are 21 states that do not have any requirements for hiring, these states are not necessarily assuming that adult education teachers do not need to have any qualifications. There are often requirements articulated at the local level or through the education agencies that house adult education programs. For instance, five states have programs located in community colleges and many of them require a Master’s Degree as an entry requirement. Some states, like Colorado, do not have an entry requirement, but do require that their instructors obtain an ABE license within three years. Three states reported that most of their instructors have a Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree although they have no requirement for hire. Seven states that do not have entry requirements explained that this is due to a legacy of local control, and three states reported that if they did have state requirements,

they would have difficulty finding qualified instructors in very rural areas. There is also one state that is in the process of transitioning to a Bachelor's degree requirement and one state that is interested in developing a required teaching credential. Although local expectations influence hiring decisions in these states, without a state policy, it is likely that adult education instructors in these 21 states have inconsistent qualifications for teaching.

### **Early Service Professional Development Requirements**

We defined pre or early service professional development as any professional development that instructors are required to complete either before they begin working with students or within one year of hire. Twenty-five states require some type of pre or early in-service training. All of these require participation in a new teacher orientation as all or part of their pre or early in-service training. In nine states, the teacher orientation is delivered face to face. In seven states the training is delivered online, and in six states the training is a blend of face to face and online training. In two states the delivery method depends on the program or is determined by the local agency. One state reported that while an orientation is required, it is not systematic or enforced. Some states also include requirements such as mentoring, observations, or follow up projects in addition to or as part of their new teacher orientation programs. One state requires participation in new teacher orientation and that their instructors earn an adult education credential within the first year of employment. In general, early service professional development seems aimed at addressing most states' rather nonspecific requirements for hire, as they tend to focus on the particulars of working with adults and in adult education programs (as distinct from schools). In this next section, we provide some descriptions of pre and early in-service requirements that illustrate a variety of approaches in the field.

**North Dakota.** North Dakota requires that new teachers participate in informal mentoring and an orientation that draws from a number of different approaches and provides agency flexibility to local programs. Although the state requires that the orientation be 12-15 hours, it is up to the local agency to design, organize, and implement it. It can take the form of observations, workshops, or working with mentors. The state allows this level of flexibility, in part, because some of their programs are very small and need to customize their orientations to their capacity and unique needs. In addition to the 12-15 hours of orientation required within the adult learning centers, instructors are also required to spend 12-15 hours observing at another site. Finally, they are required to work with a mentor for a longer, 6 month orientation in order to review standards, understand the overarching history and principles of adult education, compare and contrast adult education to other types of education, and discuss, as the state director described it, “the joy of adult education”.

**South Dakota.** South Dakota requires new teachers to participate in the Adult Education Instructor Development Program (AEIDP), an orientation that combines face to face and online activities with mentoring and the completion of a follow up project, within six months of hire. An English Language Instructor Development Program (ELIDP) is also available. The program is offered twice a year; about 80% of the program is delivered face to face, while about 15 % includes online follow up. The remaining 5% of the orientation is carried out over the telephone. Instructors are also assigned mentors as part of the program. Once they have completed the orientation program, adult education instructors work with their mentors to choose what kind of a follow-up project they will do and what topic they will pursue based on a list of suggested topics. Projects are most commonly action research; example topics include assessment, student

motivation, student goal setting and action plans, and orientation. They are subsequently shared at the state's annual Summer Summit.

**West Virginia.** West Virginia requires comprehensive pre-service training that all instructors must complete before they can work with students. The training is customized, but includes independent study, job shadowing, online and in person training, and follow-up activities. There are different requirements for instructors depending on employment status, but even long-term substitutes, short-term instructors, and returning instructors are required to complete some pre-service training. The first step of this process is "Advance Study", or two hours of independent study delivered online in Schoology, a web-based learning management and social networking application. Then, instructors are paired with an experienced teacher in their instructional area whom they shadow in the classroom for three hours. They must subsequently complete a report on what they observed and learned. In addition, instructors complete three to five hours of face-to-face training with a peer trainer. This specialized component of pre-service training is specific to the instructors' area of practice (e.g., ABE, ESL). Regular full and part-time instructors are required to complete additional components of the pre-service training. This includes another two hours of independent study, additional face-to-face training that focuses on Reporting/Accountability, and a follow-up visit by the peer-trainer. Figure 1 illustrates how West Virginia's pre-service process combines training, independent study, and hands-on experience and how this training is customized for instructors at different levels of employment ([http://wvde.state.wv.us/abe/tcher\\_handbook\\_pdf/section2.pdf](http://wvde.state.wv.us/abe/tcher_handbook_pdf/section2.pdf)).

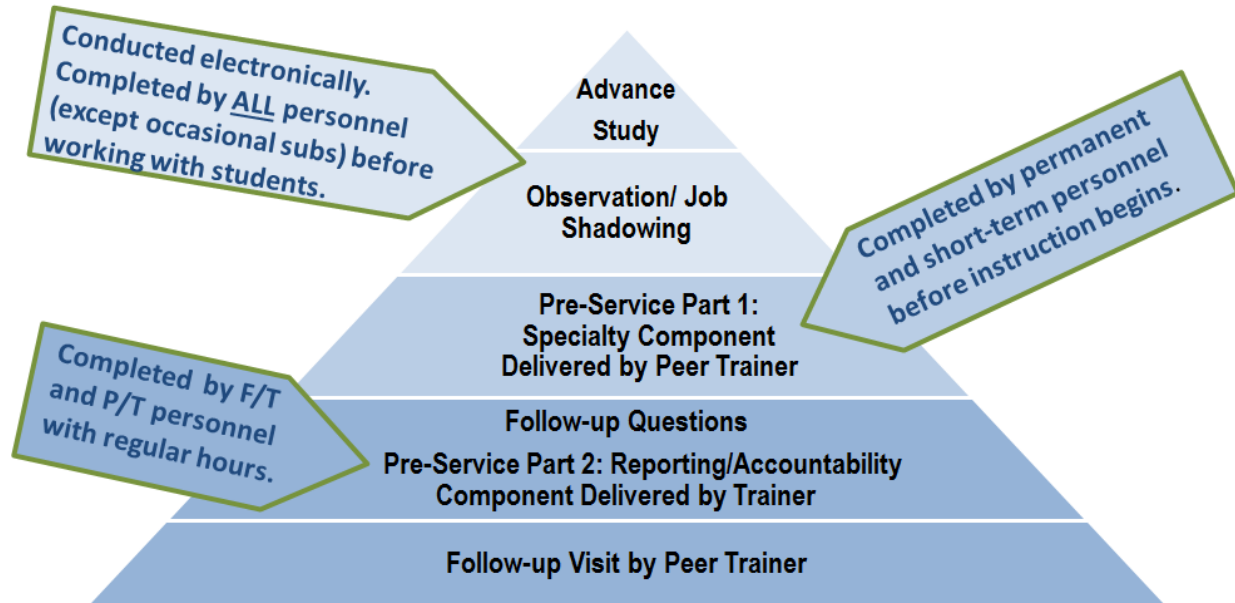


Figure 1. Model of West Virginia's early service professional development. Reprinted from The WVABE Instructor Handbook by the WVABE Professional Development Program, 2014-2015, Section 2, p.3. Reprinted with permission

**Missouri.** Missouri requires that instructors obtain an Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) certification within four months after hire. There are three levels of AEL certification: Initial AEL Teacher Certification, AEL Career Continuous Certification, and High Quality Career Continuous Certification. The certification process is clearly tied both to the state's early service professional development requirements and ongoing professional development requirements. The number of hours of professional development that instructors are required to complete depends on their level of certification. Early service professional development is worked into the AEL Initial Certification process. In order to obtain the initial certification, instructors are required to complete online assessment training on the TABE and/or CASAS and

are paired with mentor teachers with whom they meet and observe teaching. Then instructors take the Pre-Certification Workshop (PCW), a 12 hour, two day, face-to-face workshop that must be completed within three months of hire. The state provides hotel accommodations for instructors that have to travel more than 80 miles from home to attend the workshop. After the workshop, there are required follow up activities, including an evaluative observation conducted by the program director, of the new instructor teaching a lesson. The purpose of the evaluation is to see whether the instructor is using strategies learned in the PCW, and to provide follow up guidance/instruction on assessment policies and instructional materials. The completion of the PCW and the post-workshop activities in addition to a Bachelor's degree qualifies an instructor for the Initial AEL Teacher Certification. This certification is valid for four years. In addition to the requirement to obtain the Initial AEL Teacher Certification, new teachers are also required to participate in the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program, a 6 hour face to face workshop, within 12 months of hire (<http://mti.missouri.edu/adult-education-literacy.php>).

**States with no early service requirements.** While 26 states do not have early service requirements, many of those states do offer or encourage early or pre-service training. Eight states offer but do not require some type of online or face to face teacher orientation. Additionally, eight other states do expect or strongly encourage their local agencies to provide some type of teacher orientation. One state is in the process of shifting from no early in-service requirement to a six hour requirement.

### **Ongoing Professional Development Requirements**

We defined ongoing professional development as any training or professional development activities that are required at the state level beyond the instructor's first year of

teaching. Thirty two of the 51 states do have state requirements for ongoing professional development. The most common approach, used by 12 states, is to require instructors to complete a specified number of hours of professional development over a designated period of time without mandating any particular content, format, or process. Five states require participation in specific courses or specific training to meet their professional development requirement, and one state requires all current teachers to attend specific professional development institutes held during the year. Four states require a professional development plan; two of those states require an individual plan, and three require a program plan. Five states require some blend of required courses, free choice hours of PD, institutes or PD plans. Four states require that their instructors obtain an Adult Education Certificate within a certain number of years and also have requirements for PD hours that are connected to their certificate status and level. One state is in transition and does not enforce its current requirements. In this next section, we highlight some states with professional development approaches and delivery systems because they stand out as distinct for their fully articulated policies or because of their efforts to move beyond one shot workshops and institutes to more sustained efforts that can potentially have a greater impact on practice.

In general, states that have a well developed set of policies and professional development offerings have at least two characteristics in common. They are more aligned with research on professional development best practices by being of longer duration and intensity, they are generally collaborative, and often embedded in job sites. They avoid or have completely stopped offering short, one-shot workshops where showing up for a short period of time is assumed to lead to learning. Secondly, several of these states have built systems that differentiate between the needs of new and more experienced teachers. At the same time, this



could create something of a career ladder for those who opt for more advanced or extensive training beyond requirements.

**Kentucky.** Kentucky requires instructors, who work more than 199 hours a year, to meet a yearly professional development requirement consisting of specific courses that must be fulfilled through participation in either an online course or a face-to-face curriculum collaboration in either English/language arts or mathematics. The required courses depend on the number of hours the instructor works per year. The courses are organized around addressing a statewide goal. During the 2014-15 school year, for example, the goal is to continue the emphasis on standards-based instruction with reference to the College and Career Readiness Standards. Two other goals are mathematics and integrating technology. Instructors who teach between 200 and 499 hours a year are also required to take an online course (Putting It All Together) focused on integrating the elements of standards-based instruction, e.g., diagnostic testing, classroom assignments, curricula selection, and progress assessment. Instructors teaching more than 499 hours a year must complete the online Putting It All Together, a face-to-face curriculum collaboration, and an online study circle based on teacher observation results conducted during the Standards-in-Action process. All instructors are also required to take an assessment refresher course every two years.

Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE) also offers a number of elective PD opportunities (Professional Growth Opportunities) to go above and beyond PD requirements. Although teachers are not required to use them, PD partners and coaches are available for program visits during which staff may receive assistance employing techniques acquired during PD. All offerings are listed on the KYAE website (<http://kyae.ky.gov/educators/PD201314.htm>). Additionally, the state reimburses teachers up to \$1,300 a semester and \$3,900 a school-year for

college coursework that is related to adult education. In order to be reimbursed for a course, instructors must maintain a C average in undergraduate courses and a B average in graduate courses. All professional development is delivered by the state in conjunction with other professional development partners, and instructors can register online. Administrators can view reports on their staff professional development participation through the state data collection system, KAERS.

**Colorado.** Instructors in Colorado must obtain the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Authorization within three years of employment. Colorado requires that at least 50% of the full time staff and 25% of the part time staff in any adult education program have the ABE Authorization. There are three ways to attain the authorization. Instructors can complete required coursework, submit a portfolio that demonstrates competencies covered in that course work, or have equivalent course work evaluated and approved. Required coursework is offered through the community college system and at the graduate level. Once the four required courses (or their equivalent) are completed, instructors submit a transcript or a Certificate of Equivalency for each course with an online application to Educator Licensing. These options are displayed in a flow chart which is viewable at [http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/1.6FlowChart\\_1.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/1.6FlowChart_1.pdf).

In addition to this certification requirement, instructors are also required to complete a specific number of PD hours based on how many hours a week they teach. At the start of this process, at least 60% of all teachers at each program are required to complete the online “Professional Development Self Assessment for Colorado Adult Education”. Then, all instructors are required to use the results to work with their supervisor to develop a professional development plan. Professional development hour requirements can be fulfilled by completing

a variety of activities across four strands: Self Study, Collaboration with Colleagues, Workshops/Trainings/Conferences, and Courses for Credit. Local programs can also develop their own professional development programs. There is currently an emphasis on professional learning communities organized at the local level. The training provided by the state is a mixture of online and face to face instruction. A blended approach and the use of webinars is favored by the state, in part, because of the high percentage of part-time instructors and because weather and geographical issues can make traveling to face-to-face meetings difficult. The state of Colorado no longer provides short, “one-shot” workshops of three hours or less with no follow-up. In alignment with research on professional development best practices, trainings are designed to be sustained over the course of an entire year because the goal is to truly change the instructor’s skill set. All instructors are also required to keep a record of their completed professional development hours so that their supervisors can compile their staff professional development hours and submit that report to the state. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/pdindex>

**Ohio.** Ohio Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) has a central, statewide Professional Development Network that is managed at the state level by the State Leadership Manager with contracted support from Ohio State University and Kent State University. This new, centralized system does not require multiple brick and mortar sites that provide services resulting in duplicate staffing, specialized regional expertise, and costly overhead. The new infrastructure provides for a greater focus on statewide vs. regional needs and resources that are in alignment with the overall vision/mission of the Ohio Board of Regents.

There are specific training requirements for new ABLE staff, which must be taken within the first two years of hire. In addition, ABLE programs are required to have a formal written professional development plan to identify specific program staff in need of professional

development. Starting in fiscal year 2014, annual regional and statewide teacher academies and administrator summits are being convened. Participants attending the two-day, statewide academy and/or summit receive a stipend.

Professional development offerings can take the form of workshops, webinars, face to face training, online training, study circles, college courses, and state and national conferences. Other acceptable PD activities include classroom visits and peer observations, involvement in professional organizations, action research, conference presentations, focus groups, professional development consultation, mentoring/coaching, and special projects.

Required and non-required professional development courses, workshops, and activities are scheduled quarterly and programs are required to keep PD histories for all ABLE staff. Registration for professional development opportunities is available at <http://www.ohioable.org/online>, where numerous professional development and instructional materials are housed. The website includes the course catalog, PD calendar, links to online courses through Moodle, and access to learning communities on topics such as enrollment, student persistence, and retention. Ohioable.org also houses a Teacher Resource Center with myriad lesson plans, curriculum frameworks, and instructional resources.

Many ABLE programs provide and/or promote professional development opportunities outside the ABLE Professional Development Network, which must be submitted for approval before being added to the PD history.

**Arizona.** As already previously described, Arizona requires an Adult Education Certificate. The entry level certificate is a Provisional Certificate which is valid for three years. In order to continue to teach in Arizona's state funded programs, instructors must earn a

Standard Adult Education Certificate within that three year period. To meet the requirements for the Standard Certificate, instructors must have taught adult education for a minimum of one year, complete 10 hours of Professional Development each year, and demonstrate “knowledge and abilities” in instruction, lesson planning, evaluation, record keeping, written and oral communication, and working cooperatively with colleagues and students. “Training and experience” is also required, either through coursework or approved professional development activities. Once an instructor earns the Standard Adult Education Certificate, they must complete 60 hours of professional development within 6 years in order to renew the certificate.

In addition to the requirements for certification and renewal of adult education certificates, adult education programs are required to develop annual professional learning plans. These plans include professional learning goals developed by program administrators and instructional staff who have received training on how to use data to determine program improvement and teacher effectiveness goals. Professional learning in Arizona is standards-based, and local programs are required to allocate 10% of their funding to professional learning. ADE staff provides training and support to local programs and requires that all professional learning at the state and local program level be data driven, job embedded, and standards based. The state representative we spoke to reported that their state mantra is “The purpose of professional learning is to improve teacher effectiveness and to improve student outcomes.” State training is delivered both face-to-face and online and includes learning communities and Institutes focused on specific content areas. One time trainings are no longer offered. They often use a hybrid approach and use online tools, as a component of face-to-face trainings. Their professional development approach is based on research that suggests 50 hours of professional learning is needed in order for a teacher to improve his or her instructional practice.

**Missouri.** In order to retain their teacher certification after the first four years, instructors must upgrade from the Initial AEL Certification to a Career Continuous certification. The requirements for the Career Continuous Certification include attainment of the Initial AEL certification plus participation in a two year mentorship, yearly performance based evaluations, 60 hours of self-selected and approved professional development, and teaching for a minimum of 100 hours per year during the four years. In order to maintain their Career Continuous Certification, instructors must teach a minimum of 100 AEL hours each year and complete an average of 20 hours of professional development each year with a minimum of four hours in any one year. The highest level of certification, the High Quality Career Continuous Certification, is an optional certification that requires that an instructor have 10 years of experience teaching in a state funded AEL program, a master's degree, and approval from the local AEL director. An instructor with a High Quality Career Continuous Certification is exempt from state professional development hour requirements.

Professional development opportunities are offered in the form of workshops through the state's PD vendor, Missouri Training Institute (MTI), and instructors can find and register for them on the vendor's website (<http://mti.missouri.edu/adult-education-literacy.php>). All workshops that are offered have gone through a recommendation process with a professional development advisory committee made up of 12 adult education directors who use surveys and needs assessment to select appropriate topics. In response, MTI develops the courses. In addition to those offerings, the website includes other pre-approved trainings provided by other institutes and organizations. If instructors want to complete a workshop or course that is not pre-approved, they can submit a request for approval. Attendance at professional conferences can also be counted towards PD hours. While professional development plans are not required,

directors do need to submit annual PD tracking forms to the state to describe how teachers have met their professional development goal and are maintaining compliance with Missouri AEL policy.

**States with no ongoing professional development requirements.** Nineteen states do not currently have requirements for ongoing professional development. However, three states report that they expect local programs to require professional development. Three other states report that despite not having a requirement, they have high levels of participation in their professional development programs. In two states, instructors must participate in professional development to maintain a teaching certificate that may be required at the local level. One state reports that they provide significant financial support through a professional development grantsystem. Three states are in transition and plan to enact state requirements in the near future. Of the seven remaining states, most do offer statewide professional development. We have chosen one state in transition, California, to feature in this report because it is unusual in having significant depth and breadth of PD offerings without any requirements for taking advantage of them.

**California.** California professional development is delivered through the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO) which has an extensive website where instructors can find information about and participate in professional development (<http://www.calpro-online.org/>). These opportunities include Communities of Practice that are organized around nine different topics and meet both online and face to face for 16-20 hours; instructors can also join Communities of Practice which are completely online and include discussions, a place to share and access resources, networking, and subgroups that instructors can join around specific topics and goals. They also offer many PD webinars. There is a schedule of

upcoming webinars that instructors can participate in live, and there is also an archive of completed webinars that includes the audio and handouts from the webinar and a linked discussion board.

There are many other resources on the website. These include an events calendar of regional workshops being offered. Instructors can register on the site for online resources, such as facilitated asynchronous courses, facilitated training in real time, and can access two different self-assessment tools, self-directed courses, a video library, and webinars. There are also Virtual Workrooms organized around topics such as Best Practices in ABE Reading instruction that include videos, research, links for further study, and lists of references and resources related to that topic. Professional development is offered face-to-face, online, and in hybrid form to allow school districts that have lost funding and instructors in rural areas to access the wide range of professional development options offered through CALPRO. California is currently in the process of creating PD requirements in an effort to encourage more agencies and individuals to take advantage of the professional development that is being offered.

### **The Adult Education Credential**

There are fourteen states have an adult education credential or endorsement. Five states, some of which we already described, require the adult education credential at some point before or after hire. One state that now has an optional credential plans to make it a requirement. The requirements to earn the credential or endorsement vary from state to state, but most include some combination of teaching experience and coursework provided by the state agency or through an institution of higher education. Four state agency staff in states without a credential expressed interest in having one, and two of those states are currently working with universities



to develop them. Three of those staff also expressed concerns about development and implementation. They identified the expense of doing so as the biggest roadblock. In this section we highlight three states that do offer or require a clearly defined adult education credential.

**Arkansas.** In Arkansas, a current Arkansas Department of Education teacher's license is a requirement for entry into the field. In addition, full time instructors must obtain an Adult Education additional license within four years of hire. Instructors earn an Adult Education license through an approved adult education program in a college or university. The state outlines recommended content, such the psychology of the adult learner, and recommended experience, such as learning to include technology into instruction, that should be a part of the approved program. In addition, candidates for the Adult Education additional license must earn a minimum score of 157 on the Praxis II: Principles of Learning and Teaching exam. When instructors complete this license it is added to their original credential.

**Massachusetts.** Massachusetts offers an Adult Basic Education Teacher's License that is not required by the state but may be required by some local programs. There are two levels of the license and instructors can apply for the Provisional license first, or they can apply directly for the Professional license. The requirements for the Provisional ABE Teacher's License are a Bachelor's or Master's degree in any discipline, a passing score on the Communication and Literacy Skills Test, a passing score on the ABE Subject Matter Test, and "evidence of sound moral character". The provisional license, the entry level license, is valid for five years, and is non-renewable.

The Professional ABE Teacher's License requires all the requirements for the Provisional plus demonstration of proficiency in 29 professional standards for ABE teachers, which includes

a performance assessment (portfolio) and a demonstration of teaching. There are four routes to the professional ABE Teacher's License. Novice ABE teachers must participate in a pre-practicum and/or practicum, which may be fulfilled either pre-service or in-service. Two of the four routes to licensure are considered "streamlined" options for experienced ABE teachers through which certain criteria are considered "fulfilled" by virtue of their years of experience. The professional license is valid for five years and is renewable every five years thereafter.

**Wisconsin.** As previously mentioned, Wisconsin requires an ABE generalist "provisional" certification as an entry requirement. If instructors want to gain the more permanent 5-year certification, they need to complete about 2 credits each of coursework in the following areas: 1) Philosophy of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, 2) Teaching Methods, 3) Curriculum or Course Construction, 4) Educational Psychology, 5) Educational Evaluation, 6) Guidance and Counseling, and 7) Educational Diversity.

### **Evaluation of Training and Professional Development Requirements**

Every state reported that they evaluate individual professional development activities in some way. This includes, in every case, asking participants to complete a paper or online feedback form upon completion of a PD activity. In general, these focus on participant satisfaction, self-reported learning, and action planning. Thirteen states collect additional data through methods such as a pre- and post-tests and follow up surveys which focus generally on evaluating whether participating in the professional development activity has contributed to changes in practice. Presumably, these activities are carried out as a way to understand impact and improve offerings, but the extent to which this data is consistently, systematically, and effectively utilized to accomplish this is highly variable and somewhat limited. Furthermore,

only nine states report conducting systematic, formal evaluations of their professional development systems as a whole. However, many use some data and informal feedback to inform professional development planning, needs assessment, and design. All in all, state professional development systems seem only moderately informed by data gathered about the impact of regulations governing and participation in professional development

### **Frameworks (Standards and Competencies) to Guide Professional Development and Teacher Evaluation**

Seventeen states report that they have some kind of framework (teacher competencies or standards) that guides their professional development offerings and/or their teacher evaluation systems and which have the potential to help increase instructional quality and professionalism. Of those, nine have posted them in easily accessed areas of their state agency website (URLs provided below). Three additional states reported that their competencies/standards are in draft form or are currently being revised. At least one state reported that, although they have published competencies, they do not use them in any kind of systematic way. One state has different standards for teachers with different levels of experience.

There is significant variation in the language which describes the frameworks that states use. The broad areas and categories of these frameworks are generally referred to as standards or competencies, but one state refers to them as duties. All of the states provide elaboration on these, albeit using different terminology, typically in the form of definitions and descriptions, as well as indicators that can be used to provide evidence that they have been implemented. Importantly some focus more on the teacher's knowledge and skills while others focus on behaviors. Some states provide significantly more explanation, description, and elaboration of standards and competencies than others. These differences seem to be balancing a tradeoff

between detail as a way to be specific and to attain standardization with simplicity and ease of implementation which could lead to more inconsistent implementation and evaluation.

Although two states have content specific standards, and another has specific lists of competencies associated with each of its four courses required for their ABE Authorization required within three years of hire, most states focus on broader topic areas. There are differences across states, but in general the topics of these frameworks are related to program procedures and administrative tasks, lesson and class planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, assessment and monitoring progress, technology integration, and participation in professional development. Some states focus on knowledge and skills that are specific to working with adults while others focus more on what constitutes good teaching practice regardless of learner age. Standards and competencies related to content area and pedagogical content area knowledge and skills are significantly less common. To date there is little evidence that these frameworks are tied in any way to the Common Core, but it may be too soon to see this. Below are URLs for states that have made their frameworks accessible on an easily locatable webpage.

**Arizona:** <http://www.azed.gov/adultedservices/adult-education-teacher-standards/>

**Arkansas:**

[http://www.arkansased.org/public/userfiles/HR\\_and\\_Educator\\_Effectiveness/Educator\\_Prep/Ed\\_Compentency\\_Areas/Adult\\_Ed\\_012714.pdf](http://www.arkansased.org/public/userfiles/HR_and_Educator_Effectiveness/Educator_Prep/Ed_Compentency_Areas/Adult_Ed_012714.pdf)

**Kentucky:** [http://kyae.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/EA3AFFE4-0652-4895-A00C-78B39ACF0DFC/0/KYAESTandardsforInstructors12\\_2010.pdf](http://kyae.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/EA3AFFE4-0652-4895-A00C-78B39ACF0DFC/0/KYAESTandardsforInstructors12_2010.pdf)

**Maryland:** <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/gedmd/prostandards.pdf>

**Massachusetts:** <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pd/ESOLstandards.pdf>

**Ohio:**

<https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/able/reference/pd/ABLE%20Teacher%20Standards%20Report%20June%202013.pdf>

**Rhode Island:** <https://pdcenter->

[public.sharepoint.com/Documents/Complete%20Guide%20Draft%201b%20CR%20EDITS%2011Dec121.pdf](https://pdcenter-public.sharepoint.com/Documents/Complete%20Guide%20Draft%201b%20CR%20EDITS%2011Dec121.pdf)

**Vermont:** <http://www.learningworksvt.org/documents/pd%20handbookNovember2012.pdf>

**Wisconsin:**

<http://mywtcs.wtcsystem.edu/wtcsinternal/cmspages/getdocumentfile.aspx?nodeguid=fc6c7b1-ffc2-49fa-88d8-f20330aff449>

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

States that receive federal funds for adult education are required to offer professional development, but how much, on what topics, using what formats for delivery, and what requirements they impose is not regulated on a national level. Therefore, it is unsurprising that there is much variation in requirements and offerings from state to state. Not only do local contextual factors contribute to this variation, but the limited research and lack of consensus about what is appropriate professional preparation and professional development further muddies the situation. Drawing on research conducted primarily in K-12 can provide important clues about what is effective. For example, there is a fairly well developed knowledge base on effective approaches to professional development that emphasize the importance of activities that

are sustained, job embedded, and collaborative. However, the contexts of adult education provision can make it sometimes difficult to implement “best practices” research developed in K-12 settings. Additionally, there is far less consensus about what the requisite knowledge base should be for adult educators teaching adult literacy, basic education, and GED than there is in K-12. State agencies are constrained by small budgets, staff turnover, and a state-wide system that often requires traveling long distances to provide or access professional development or the use of relatively sophisticated (and costly) technology.

Yet, there are multiple examples of states innovating and developing rich early and ongoing professional development programs that are aligned with and guided by coherent and comprehensive frameworks for what effective instructors should know and be able to do. These efforts may help counter-balance the almost total lack of pre-service opportunities for professional preparation aimed specifically at instructors who seek to provide instruction for adult educators. However, there is very little within state evaluation of these efforts and there has been no effort to evaluate the impact of policies and activities comparatively, across state lines. We do not know anything about how differences among states regarding criteria for entry into the field, professional development requirements and activities, and the elaboration of teacher competencies influence teacher retention and effectiveness or learner outcomes. For example, we can not answer questions about which entry requirements are most effective or even if some requirement is better than nothing. We do not know if teachers who earn an adult education credential after being hired are more effective than those who enter the field with some kind of K-12 certification. And we do not know how much professional development is enough to gain a return on investment in terms of improved practice. Given the considerable time and

expense involved in regulating and providing professional development, these are surely worthy questions to pursue.

As a result, we recommend that states receive technical assistance to conduct, or the support to commission, periodic system-wide evaluation of their policies and activities related to professional preparation and professional development so that they can better understand the implementation and impact of their work in these areas. Additionally given the significant variation regarding criteria for entry into the field, requirements for early and ongoing professional development, topics, and modes of delivery, we suggest that a cross state evaluation be conducted. Our experience collecting data from websites suggests that many states could clarify and disseminate policy information more efficiently and effectively by updating and improving their websites. Doing so would also be an important assist in conducting this kind of research. Both kinds of evaluations would help OCTAE and individual states make more data driven policy decisions. We are not suggesting that there necessarily be uniformity from state to state with regard to policy or implementation. That may not be possible or even desirable given contextual differences. However, we are suggesting that, given the key role the efficacy of the instructor plays in the success of the learner and the investment in time and money that is already devoted to improving the quality of the workforce, research should inform policy and practice decisions in ways that it is not currently doing.

**Appendix**