



NEDP Implementation Training

Pre-Training Unit: Introduction to the National External Diploma Program



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Welcome

You are about to begin the first of a multi-component program developed to train the new staff of the National External Diploma Program (NEDP). The NEDP was designed to meet the needs of adults and youth who seek a non-traditional method for obtaining a high school diploma. Adults certified by this method must be highly skilled, have acquired their learning from life experiences as well as schooling, be able to demonstrate their skills in the context of life and work, and be able to manage their own *learning*.

Although the NEDP is non-traditional in many ways, it is highly structured. The NEDP training is designed to familiarize you with the steps, roles, procedures, processes, and vocabulary of this authentic assessment model. The NEDP training is individualized, will include simulations as well as readings, and will allow you to interact with each other as well as with the materials and to receive feedback from the trainers.

The NEDP training program you are about to begin has several components:

- The pre-workshop introductory unit, which is designed to provide you with background information about NEDP history and philosophy, preparing you for the training modules that will follow.
- *Module One- Introduction to NEDP* will introduce trainees to the NEDP program and training activities. Webinars will also be provided throughout the first of year of implementation to provide support, feedback, and allow the opportunity to seek clarification.
- *Module Two- NEDP Diagnostics* outlines the purpose of the Diagnostic Phase and prepares the trainee to administer the seven diagnostic instruments.
- *Module Three- Generalized Assessment* discusses the principles of performance assessment and delves into how to conduct and evaluate client work.
- *Module Four- T Trainer* provides an opportunity to practice the principles learned in Module 3 through an NEDP training site that simulates the client and Assessor experiences.
- *Module Five- Post-Task Assessment and Portfolio Review* concludes the training with a discussion on evaluating reattempted client work and conducting a blind, third party review of the assessment. Module Five also includes information on becoming a certified Advisor/Assessor and a look back over the program as a whole.

Throughout the first year of the program, technical assistance is an integral part of the NEDP training process. This allows the new NEDP staff to learn from mistakes. It also offers the opportunity for peer and trainer feedback. As with the NEDP graduate, eventual mastery and demonstrated competence is required for certification as an NEDP Assessor.

I. Introduction to the National External Diploma Program

The National External Diploma Program is a high school diploma program based on competency and applied performance that credentials mature adults and youth who have acquired high school-level skills through their life experiences. The process expects adults to demonstrate their ability in a series of simulations that parallel job and life situations; to undergo evaluations against a criterion of excellence instead of by comparison to others; to take responsibility for acquiring instruction by using existing community resources; and to achieve mastery of all the competencies required as well as an occupational or specialized skill.

Through the National External Diploma Program Assessment, adults demonstrate competence in:

- Oral and written communication
- Listening, reading, and following directions
- Computation and problem solving
- Personal management: Goal setting, self-direction, and persistence
- Sensitivity to cultural diversity and to the need for teamwork
- Career development and/or entry-level job skills
- Effective use of community and educational resources

Adults demonstrate and increase their awareness of social, consumer, aesthetic, governmental, and scientific issues by:

- Using data-gathering skills
- Manipulating data
- Analyzing and synthesizing data
- Applying data in context
- Solving problems with social and personal relevance

Within the assessment process adults are empowered to:

- Direct their own learning
- Set their own goals and follow through on them
- Learn to learn

The National External Diploma Program is unique among the alternative high school credentialing programs for adults. Ruth Nickse, the first director of New York's External Diploma Program, describes EDP's distinctive features in *Assessing Life-Skills Competence: CBE Forum, Perspectives on Competency-Based Education*.

The "external" in the title means just that – the program is not part of an institution nor does it provide instruction. It attempts, through its administrative structure and the content of its

assessment program, to fit itself to some characteristics of adult learners rather than expecting them to conform to it.

This is not a program for adults with poor skills or for those who lack experience. Since there is no instructional component or instructional staff, direct teaching cannot be provided to those who may need it by their NEDP Advisor or Assessor. It is assumed that the clients are able, with explicit Learning Recommendations from Advisors, to arrange for their own learning experience, whether self-instructional or requiring the aid of others.

Competency requirements and standards are not in any sense “minimal”. Clients must be able to perform at a mastery level within the standards required in the program.

Responsibility for demonstration of competence rests, where it properly belongs, with the adult learners. External programs require initiative and organization skills and best fit those who do not need group interaction or support. They are not for the inexperienced or immature...

To really view individuals as capable of teaching and testing themselves takes a deep belief as well as trust in the self-directedness of adult learners. In practice, this philosophy requires that clients take charge of their own experience; this is not an easy concept for staff who both view and value directing students as their responsibility, nor for students who expect to be so guided

By encouraging individual responsibilities and trust through emphasis on achievements rather than weaknesses, the external program contributes to feelings of self-worth and competence in the adults which it serves.¹

The Beginning

In 1972, the Syracuse Research Corporation (SRC) received a grant from the Ford Foundation that funded a research project to learn why the over-25 adult population of New York State did not participate in existing high school diploma programs. At that time, 43 percent of the population in the Central New York area did not have high school diplomas. Although that fact might seem to indicate a large number of unskilled and therefore unemployed people, the unemployment rate in the same area was only 6 to 7 percent. This suggested that there were many competent adults who had not received high school diplomas.

The researchers conducting the Ford Foundation study identified services and programs available to adults seeking high school diplomas and determined the reasons why many adults were not taking advantage of such services. They discovered that two alternative ways of acquiring a high school diploma were available in New York State – the GED, and a community college program.

The researchers interviewed many persons without diplomas to determine why these two services were not used more universally.

The adults interviewed during the study noted several characteristics about themselves that were later taken into consideration during the design of the External Diploma Program.

¹ Ruth Nickse, *Assessing Life-Skills Competence*. 1980. CBE Forum, Perspectives on Competency-Based Education, Fearon Education, Belmont, California, pgs. 23-24.

The adults interviewed reported that:

- The classes were not scheduled to accommodate student needs.
- The content of the other programs offered did not relate to life experiences.
- The test formats (Multiple-choice, paper and pencil tests) were too limiting.

Concurrent with this study, Stephen K. Bailey, a New York State Regent and Chairman of SRC's Policy Institute, and Francis U. Macy of the policy institute formulated the notion of a brokering service that would provide career and educational counseling to adults.² One goal of this service was to facilitate career change. The result was the creation of the Regional Learning Service (RLS), which opened its doors to its first clients in January 1974. RLS was organized as an agency that would provide educational and career counseling for adults on a one-to-one basis. Adults without high school diplomas were identified as one group that RLS would serve.

The SRC staff at RLS, taking into consideration the findings of the Ford Foundation Study, developed the External Diploma Program.

Philosophical Underpinnings of NEDP

The adults interviewed during the Ford Foundation study noted several characteristics about themselves that were later taken into consideration during the design of the External Diploma Program. These adults said that they:

- Were highly motivated to earn the diploma, even after having been out of school for some time
- Wanted to take the responsibility for their own learning and testing
- Felt competent in life skills that they had acquired through work and community participation
- Wanted to participate in assessment processes that would recognize their achievements and enable them to demonstrate their competence
- Wanted to participate in programs that recognized the need for flexibility in scheduling because many were busy with full-time jobs and families
- Were anxious and embarrassed by the lack of a high school credential and wanted to be able to participate in a program privately and confidentially
- Were test-anxious

Malcolm Knowles³, in his work on adult learning, described a set of characteristics of adults and the implications that these characteristics have for adult education programs.

² Nickse, 23-24.

³ Malcolm Knowles, *Higher Adult Education in the United States: The Current Picture, Trends, and Issues*, American Council on Education, 1969, Washington, D.C.

These assumptions about adults were also incorporated into the design of the NEDP:

- Adults are mature, independent, and self-directed. These characteristics encourage accountability and the use of self-directed study, self-paced learning and assessment, and require the use of explicitly stated expectations and standards.
- Adults are ready to apply new learning immediately. This characteristic means that the content of learning should be practical as well as problem solving in nature. Adults should be asked to apply what they have learned in real or simulated conditions. Assessment should be based on performance.
- Adults are involved with home commitments. Their educational activities should therefore include flexible scheduling.

Finally, the creative base of the External Diploma Program was built around the concept of competency-based education.

Competency-based education is an educational system that requires the individual to demonstrate specifically stated competencies under specifically stated conditions to a stated criterion level. This system encourages flexible time for learning and for demonstration. Assessment and learning are self-paced. Competency-based programs stress individualization of learning and assessment, clearly stated objectives, the individual's responsibility (accountability) for her or his own education, specific criteria for evaluation, and a mastery of competency.

In competency-based education the focus for accountability is shifted to the individuals' attainment of a set of objectives designed for the program. They are no longer judged by her or his standing relative to the performance of a group. Individual achievement is compared with the stated objectives and the specified criteria; the achievements of other individuals are not relevant to the evaluation. Adults "compete" only with themselves, not others.

About CASAS

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems – CASAS is the most widely used system for assessing adult basic reading, math, listening, writing, and speaking skills within a functional context. CASAS is the only adult assessment system of its kind to be approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor to assess both native and non-native speakers of English. Backed by more than 30 years of research and development in adult assessment, instruction, and evaluation, CASAS provides programs with the resources and expertise to establish a comprehensive performance accountability system, address core indicators of performance, integrate literacy and occupational skill instruction, and evaluate the effectiveness of adult education and literacy programs. CASAS assessment, training, and evaluation are based on the critical competencies and skill areas required for success in the workplace, community, and family.

CASAS is responsible for ensuring the quality of this national program through:

- Management, implementation, and development of program
- Technical assistance and customer support
- Creation and maintenance of quality materials
- Training and certified trainer assistance
- NEDP participation in the CASAS National Consortium

The CASAS National Consortium is a national field-based group that identifies priority needs based on extensive feedback from adult education program providers, employment and training professionals, and business and industry representatives. It provides a forum for leadership and advocacy for quality lifelong learning for family, work, and community. NEDP representatives can now benefit from this National Consortium arrangement.

National consortium participants include state-level representatives, business and industry specialists, and CASAS and NEDP certified trainers from 30 states, the District of Columbia, the Pacific Rim, and Singapore.

To ensure the quality and validity of this national program, CASAS, with support from Connecticut, Maryland, and New York undertook a redevelopment effort to meet new assessment guidelines and increasingly more rigorous high school completion standards. This redevelopment effort included improvements to both the Diagnostic and the Generalized Assessment phase of the program. This process will continue to be a collaborative effort between CASAS and NEDP professionals.

After a cut-score study and extensive pilot testing, CASAS revised the diagnostic assessment process to include CASAS reading, math, and functional writing assessments.

CASAS completed a national competency revalidation project which included state wide meetings with the six major states and written input from states with limited NEDP sites. With the input from a National committee, CASAS finalized the revised NEDP competencies and began to redesign NEDP assessments. CASAS is now ensuring that these competencies are aligned with Common Core College Readiness Standards and other national standards initiatives.

CASAS maintains a Web site (www.nedp.org) to provide information to NEDP professionals and prospective applicants and interested employers and post-secondary institutions. CASAS provides training opportunities for NEDP professionals through many on-line workshops and presentations. CASAS ensures the certification of all NEDP trainers and helps support the training of all new sites and new assessors and advisors. In addition, CASAS hosts a summer institute which provides yearly networking and professional growth opportunities for NEDP professionals.

Key Characteristics of the NEDP Process

The New York model and the CASAS NEDP model share the original assessment processes derived from the early research on the characteristics of adult learners:

Open Information on Requirements: The Advisors and Assessors fully explain and freely discuss the competencies and the required performance indicators with the adult during the counseling and throughout the assessment process.

Breadth of Skills and Knowledge: The assessment is related in form and content to the practical concerns of adults. Items in the Competency Areas require the application of the cognitive skills of synthesis and analysis along with thinking skills of comprehension and recall. The Competency Areas provide simulations of the practical experiences of adulthood such as changing residence, applying for a job, demonstrating consumer awareness, solving personal and social problems, and maintaining personal health.

Variety of Communication Modes: In many take-home projects, the clients must provide written documentation of their work, allowing an opportunity for those with strong writing skills to present them in this fashion. However, the writing requirements are balanced by oral performance interviews,

which encourage clients who may feel more comfortable expressing themselves verbally. Most assessment opportunities involve an application of specific skills in context.

Flexibility in Time and Location: Because of the system's self-paced characteristics, busy adults with heavy responsibilities can establish some of the conditions of assessment. The client can choose to complete the seven assessment Competency Areas at home or in the program offices, as she or he prefers. The in-office checks (IOC) are not timed. The adults set the appointments so they can self-pace their program. The time a client takes to earn a diploma through the National External Diploma Program varies because it is self-paced, but the average time is six months. This flexibility in timing, as well as some choice of location, reduces client anxiety and improves performance.

Flexibility of Assessment: A client must answer mathematical computations, which have only one right answer, with 100 percent accuracy. But many other items (for example, those that ask a person to present information about the location, use, and comparison of community resources) have a broad range of acceptable answers. In addition, clients can supply documentation or other proof of competence in a variety of acceptable forms. Many open-ended questions, such as writing topics and problem-solving situations, allow the adult to bring his/her own experience to the assessment, thereby reducing cultural and gender bias.

Continuous Feedback to Students: Assessors document progress through the assessment program at each step through written reports to the client. Competency Areas are not passed or failed. Competencies are simply demonstrated or not demonstrated and are so noted to the client in the performance report. If a competency has not been demonstrated (it is either incomplete or incorrect), an explanation of the error is included. Mistakes are to be learned from and corrected until mastery is achieved.

Unlimited Opportunities to Demonstrate Competencies: Clients may attempt, as often as they wish to demonstrate competencies they were previously unable to demonstrate. Because clearly defined competencies are being assessed, a client does not need to repeat an entire Competency Area when a particular competency has not been demonstrated. However, demonstration of all the competencies is required to successfully complete the program. Assessors may suggest instructional resources or referrals when the client needs assistance.

II. Performance-Based Assessment

What is performance-based assessment?

Performance assessment ... is a form of testing that requires students to perform a task rather than select an answer from a ready-made list. For example, a student may be asked to explain historical events, generate scientific hypotheses, solve math problems, converse in a foreign language, or conduct research on an assigned topic. Experienced raters--either teachers or other trained staff--then judge the quality of the student's work based on an agreed-upon set of criteria.⁴

Furthermore,

Because they allow students to construct or perform an original response rather than just recognizing a potentially right answer out of a list provided, performance assessments can measure students' cognitive thinking and reason skills and their ability to apply knowledge to solve realistic, meaningful problems.⁵

Benefits to Learners

In the National External Diploma Program, clients demonstrate their knowledge by engaging in more complex tasks in performance assessment, rather than choosing an answer from a list as in multiple-choice questions. The process to demonstrate performance offers major advantages in that it:

- mirrors the realistic performance events in our lives;
- allows for more in-depth content coverage;
- takes advantage of web-based technology; and
- determines if clients know how to apply their knowledge

as required in the Common Core State Standards for College and Career Readiness. Performance assessment offers more opportunities to focus on higher-level skills needed for the 21st Century. Client achievement is judged on the basis of relatively unconstrained responses to rich stimulus material (Johnson, Penny & Gordon, 2009, pp. 14-18). NEDP participants demonstrate a wide range of communication, reading, writing, mathematic and technology skills throughout nine functional content areas in the NEDP performance system. Performance tasks require clients to combine use of built-in diverse resources as well as citation of their own research to respond to item prompts. Through a post-

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Research, *Education Consumer Guide: Performance Assessment*. Retrieved February 3, 2015, from <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/OR/ConsumerGuides/perfasse.html>

⁵ Linda Darling-Hammond & Frank Adamson. 2010. *Beyond Basic Skills: The role of Performance Assessment in Achieving 21st Century Standards of Learning*. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. Retrieved June 4, 2014 from <https://scale.stanford.edu/system/files/beyond-basic-skills-role-performance-assessment-achieving-21st-century-standards-learning.pdf>

task assessment and portfolio review process, NEDP participants learn skills for planning, and how to take feedback constructively which in turn encourage perseverance and resourcefulness.⁶

Examples of NEDP performance tasks include:

- Creating a pie chart that illustrates monthly budget expenses
- Developing a workplace resume
- Researching a current event related to the US Bill of Rights and present a reasoned position on the issue
- Researching the relationship between local geography and local economy and develop a short power point presentation of findings
- Comparing nutrition labels and identify the better nutritional choice
- Writing a short essay analyzing the purpose and application of the Miranda Rights

The topic of Nutrition Labels can be used to illustrate the difference between a multiple-choice item and performance-based item task:

<i>Multiple-Choice Item</i>	<i>Performance-Based Task</i>
Which food item from the list below is most likely to have the greatest amount of saturated fat? a. Whole Milk b. Oatmeal c. Cereal d. Ground Beef	Compare nutrition labels for two similar food products and research which product provides the better nutritional value. Based on your research, specify the most important reason for your choice.

Challenges for Assessors

The ability to evaluate performance assessment results is developed with ongoing practice and discussion with colleagues. As an NEDP Advisor/Assessor trainee, you will:

- Become familiar with NEDP assessment activities
- Learn and utilize the evaluation criteria for each activity
- Apply the evaluation criteria in a standardized manner
- Become aware of your individual scoring inclinations and potential areas of scoring bias
- Participate in consensus-building activities to strengthen inter-rater reliability between assessors and among other agencies

⁶ Virginia Posey, *The National External Diploma Program®: A 21st Century Performance Assessment*. 2014, Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems.

III. The NEDP Competency Framework

The NEDP assesses learner mastery of a series of NEDP Competencies which cover a wide range of academic, life skill and work skill areas. This competency framework is described by the *NEDP Competency List*. A copy of this list may be found in Appendix C of the *NEDP Test Administration Manual*.

The NEDP Competencies encompass the following competency areas:

1. Communication and Media Literacy
2. Applied Math/Numeracy
3. Information and Communication Technology

4. Cultural Literacy
5. Health Literacy
6. Civic Literacy and Community Participation
7. Consumer Awareness
8. Twenty-First Century Workplace
9. Financial Literacy
10. Geography and History
11. Science

Competency areas 1 through 3 are referred to as **Foundational Competencies**. These represent generic skills such as reading, writing, math, and technology that are applied in specific contexts. For example, rather than assessing math formulas in isolation, NEDP applies those skills to contexts in which they are typically used, for example: managing a household budget, evaluating credit card rates and comparing consumer products.

Competency areas 4 through 11 are **content-specific** and cover secondary-level academic, life and work skills and knowledge. As an *assessment* program, NEDP does not represent a comprehensive high school *instructional* curriculum. Rather, NEDP measures skills and knowledge deemed highly critical by subject matter experts from each competency area.

Each NEDP competency is defined by one or more performance indicators, and these in turn define the specific content of each NEDP assessment task. It is important to note that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between NEDP competencies shown on the NEDP Competency List and the assessment tasks that clients complete. In some cases, two or more tasks may be required to fully assess an NEDP competency; in other cases, multiple NEDP competencies may be combined in one assessment task. This is particularly true where foundation competencies are being assessed. For example, a Civic Literacy task may integrate specific content (the US Bill of Rights) with online research (technology) and oral presentation skills (communication).

IV. Program Design and Staff Roles

Introduction

The National External Diploma Program is designed with two phases through which the program participant moves to attain the high school diploma. The NEDP activities are designed so that the Advisors and Assessors may:

- I. Counsel the applicant, verify that s/he has the requisite skills needed for success in the NEDP program, diagnose skill deficiencies and recommend learning remediation activities
- II. Assess Generalized and College and Career competencies
- III. Conduct Portfolio Review
- IV. Award the high school diploma

Note: In working through this module, please refer to the flow charts provided in the *NEDP Test Administration Manual* on pages 4 and 69.

NEDP DIAGNOSTICS (COUNSELING, DIAGNOSTIC TESTING AND LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS)

Before enrolling in the Diagnostic Phase, the applicant is counseled about the various methods of earning a diploma. These include:

- The GED or other applicable equivalency test approved in the applicant's state
- The community college or public school adult secondary completion programs, or any additional instructional programs in the community leading to a high school diploma
- The National External Diploma Program
- Other methods available in the applicant's state

After all the possibilities are discussed, the applicant is instructed to choose the most suitable method.

Many NEDP sites use a pre-screening assessment, such as the CASAS Appraisal, to determine if the applicant is eligible to enter NEDP.

Diagnostic Assessment consists of seven Diagnostic Instruments that are administered by the Advisor to each client after registration in the National External Diploma Program. The Diagnostic Phase of NEDP introduces the client to the skills needed for assessment and allows applicants to evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses with a prescriptive analysis of the skills needing improvement. The Diagnostic portion of the program informs the client of competencies and skills measured in Generalized Assessment and what level of preparation is necessary for success. If basic skills are deficient, a referral to an appropriate learning resource can be made at this time. In addition, the client's occupational and specialized skills are explored so that an appropriate recommendation for training or other individualized skill demonstration can be made.

Diagnostic Instruments

The NEDP staff will use seven Diagnostic Instruments to determine learning gaps and identify basic skills that the client will need to attain before entering the Assessment Phase of the program.

Diagnostic Instruments Administered in a Closed (Monitored) Setting

The three instruments that measure basic academic skill are:

The Reading Diagnostic Instrument:

- Is a CASAS Reading test that measures reading comprehension skills
- Takes approximately one hour
- Is completed at the NEDP Assessment Center
- Is completed by the client in a monitored (closed) setting by a CASAS-certified staff

The Math Diagnostic Instrument:

- Is a CASAS Math test that measures basic math skills
- Takes approximately one hour
- Is completed at the NEDP Assessment Center
- Is completed by the client in a monitored (closed) setting by a CASAS-certified staff

The Writing Diagnostic Instrument:

- Evaluates the writing skills that adults need for success in college and careers and serves as a diagnostic instrument to determine whether an NEDP applicant has the writing skills to be successful in NEDP Generalized Assessment.
- Requires the applicant to write an extended response to a written prompt and is evaluated on how effectively it responds to the prompt, develops the main idea, is organized, uses varied word choice and sentence structure, and demonstrates accuracy in grammar and mechanics.
- Takes approximately 75 minutes
- Is completed at the NEDP Assessment Center
- Is completed by the client in a monitored (closed) setting
- Evaluation is provided by an autoscore function

Diagnostic Instruments Administered in an Open (Unmonitored) Setting

Four other Diagnostic Instruments are primarily information-gathering instruments. These include:

The College and Career Competency Instrument (CCCI):

- Is a questionnaire directed toward work experiences, hobbies, homemaking responsibilities, licenses, military background, etc.
- Is completed in an unmonitored (open) setting

This information helps the NEDP staff and the client to determine which College and Career Competency option the client will be asked to demonstrate in the Generalized Assessment Phase.

The Checklist for Self-Assessment of Competencies (SAC):

- Introduces the client to the competencies s/he will be expected to demonstrate in Generalized Assessment, and asks the client to assess his/her ability to successfully complete these competencies, shifting the responsibility for learning to the client
- Is an instrument to share the requirements of the program before the client begins
- Provides opportunity for Advisor to make recommendations and referrals to resources the client may access to improve his/her self-identified areas of weakness, and
- Is completed in an unmonitored (open) setting on the client's electronic portfolio.

The Checklist for Technology Self-Assessment (Tech SAC):

- Introduces the client to the technology skills s/he will be expected to perform in Generalized Assessment, and asks the client to assess his/her ability with these skills
- Is an instrument to share the technology requirements of the program before the client begins
- Provides opportunity for Advisor to make recommendations about resources the client may access to practice skills, and
- Is completed in an unmonitored (open) setting on the client's electronic portfolio.

*The O*NET Interest Profiler:*

- Identifies the client's aptitudes and interests in many different occupational areas
- Is used as part of a job search simulation in the Generalized Assessment Phase
- Is completed in an unmonitored (open) setting through the client's electronic portfolio.

Staff Roles Associated with the Diagnostic Phase

The staff person who functions as a counselor and who administers and evaluates the Diagnostic Instruments is called the *Advisor*. The Advisor's duties are:

- To explain the National External Diploma Program to the applicant
- To conduct information sessions
- To obtain demographic data on the program participants
- To administer and evaluate the Diagnostic Instruments
- To score and evaluate the CASAS Reading and Math Diagnostic instruments, complete remediation forms as required, and provide learning recommendations to the client
- To interpret the writing diagnostic test results and provide learning recommendations to the client.
- To work with the client to identify the College and Career Competency, which will be demonstrated with the Assessor in the Generalized Assessment Phase.
- To facilitate the client's entry into the Generalized Assessment Phase.

Learning Recommendations

- The Advisor presents learning recommendations to the client after evaluating the Diagnostic Instruments. The recommendations provide the opportunity for the client to learn missing or deficient skills to prepare for final assessment.
- The Advisor suggests resources in the community for remediation
- The client is responsible (accountable) for obtaining the recommended learning by seeking resources in the community and acquiring the necessary skill.
- Further diagnostic testing is required after the client has obtained the recommended knowledge or skills.
- A further learning period is possible, with retesting afterward, if needed.
- When all Diagnostic Instruments have been completed successfully, the client is ready to enter Generalized Assessment.
- **NOTE:** The Advisor is strictly prohibited from providing direct instruction to his/her own diagnostic client.

Staff Roles Associated with Learning Recommendations

The Advisor's function is to not only counsel the applicant and administer Diagnostic Instruments, but to deliver Learning Recommendations. Specifically, in this phase, the Advisor's duties include:

- The delivery of learning recommendations based on the evaluation of Diagnostic Instruments. This process includes interpreting CASAS remediation tools for the client to assist in recommending remediation for reading, math, and writing. The Advisor presents these results to the client.
- The identification of possible learning resources in the community
- The facilitation of the client's entry into the Generalized Assessment Phase

GENERALIZED ASSESSMENT (POST-TASK ASSESSMENT [PTA] AND PORTFOLIO REVIEW [PR])

Upon successful completion of the Diagnostic Phase, the client and enters Generalized Assessment. The client will be assessed on two types of competencies in this phase.

One set of competencies to be demonstrated is the *NEDP Generalized Competencies* listed on page 12.

The second set of competencies is in the area of a *College and Career Competency* such as employment verification, a plan to transition to post-secondary education or training, or concurrent career and technical training.

Generalized Life-Skill Competencies

The NEDP Generalized life-skill competencies are measured by demonstration of activities and in In-Office Checks (IOCs). A Competency Area is a set of projects that simulates a life or work situation. It contains a detailed set of written directions that the client is asked to follow.

The client is asked to complete a series of these Competency Areas independently. Up to two weeks is given to complete each Competency Area. Each Competency Area encompasses many competencies. Family and friends can assist the client while she or he is working on the Competency Areas at home, but the final completion of the work must be the client's. The In-Office Check (IOC) insures that the client can do the Competency Area alone at the NEDP office in a monitored setting.

Some examples of the competencies and their real-life applications that a client must demonstrate in the Competency Areas are:

- Read articles from a newspaper, warranties, and other real-life documents
- Write an organized paragraph, letter, and resume
- Write a set of directions, follow directions, and solve problems
- Compute percentage, area and perimeter, tax, interest, and measurements
- Interpret charts and graphs, metric conversions, and graphic representations
- Participate in the process of government
- React to a live performance, art, and musical selections
- Describe or perform various first-aid techniques
- Discuss the warning signs of several common health threats and describe preventative measures
- Discuss and compare sources of consumer credit in making a purchase decision
- Locate and analyze information about job choices in the local community

A complete list of the NEDP competencies, with their performance indicators and the places (Take-Home Activity or In-Office Check) that each competency is measured, is included for your reference in the *NEDP Test Administration Manual*.

During the assessment process, the client receives continuous feedback. After evaluating each Competency Area, the Assessor generates one of the Assessment reports (Assessment Items Demonstrated, Assessment Items Not Demonstrated, or Consolidated) which lists which competencies were demonstrated, which competencies were not demonstrated, and the reason(s) why.

During a period called *Post-Task Assessment* (PTA), the client has the opportunity to reattempt any of the NEDP activities or In-Office Checks that have been assessed as "Not Demonstrated." The client is always made aware of the requirements for completing the competencies successfully and is given continuous feedback on his/her progress. The client continues the PTA until she or he has demonstrated all required competencies with *100 percent mastery*.

Staff Roles Associated with Generalized Assessment

- The Assessor provides the client with access to the competency areas and conducts the In-Office Checks (IOCs) with the client. IOC appointments are conducted at approximately two-week intervals. The time allotted for each actual office visit should be about one and one-half hours.
- The Assessor evaluates each competency according to specific criteria contained in the *NEDP Test Administration Manual*, which is mirrored by the pop-up boxes within the staff interface of the client portfolio.
- The Assessor gives feedback from each Competency Area and In-Office Check. These are structured interviews and brief performance examinations monitored at the NEDP Assessment Center or via a secure remote In-Office Check meeting
- The Assessor conducts Post Task Assessment (PTA) visits and monitors the client's progress throughout the demonstration.

Staff members will, at various times, function in different roles for different clients. For example, the Advisor for Jane X might be the Assessor for Tom X. Alternatively, one staff member may serve as both Advisor and Assessor to the same client, agency and state permitting.

The NEDP Assessor may not be concurrently serving as an instructor or tutor to his/her client and may not be the same person who will serve as the Portfolio Reviewer.

Every NEDP staff member is expected to serve in the roles of Advisor and Assessor at least once each year. NEDP does not mandate that staff serve as a portfolio reviewer.

Individualized College and Career Competency Assessment

Each client for the NEDP must fulfill a College and Career Competency Assessment requirement in addition to the demonstration of academic skills required in the Generalized Assessment Phase. College and Career competencies are those learned or developed by an adult through work experiences, training, or self-employment. Because there is no one system or technique that could measure and document all of the possible competencies with any degree of validity, various methods of documentation and criteria have been established.

During the Diagnostic Phase, the Advisor, sometimes in consultation with other staff members, helps the client arrive at a decision as to which method to use to demonstrate the College and Career Competency; this competency should be selected before a client begins Generalized Assessment. Once the client moves into Generalized Assessment, the Assessor will be responsible for monitoring the demonstration of this competency.

At some point during Generalized Assessment, the client will demonstrate competence in only one of four areas of skill of his/her choosing:

- An occupational or vocational area, *OR*
- A transition to postsecondary area, *OR*
- A personal and management skills area, *OR*
- A specialized skill area.

Please refer to the *College and Career Competency Manual* for detailed descriptions of options within these areas.

Staff Roles Associated with the College and Career Competency

The Assessor coordinates the assessment of the Individualized skill during this phase. Duties include:

- Determining when to send employer letters, when appropriate
- Monitoring the Individualized Assessment demonstration
- Assessing the Individualized Assessment documentation to ensure consistency with the established criteria
- Reporting the Individualized Assessment outcomes to the client

PORTFOLIO REVIEW AND PROGRAM COMPLETION

The Assessor maintains a comprehensive portfolio of the client's completed activities throughout both phases of the program. This portfolio serves as evidence attesting to the client's demonstration of all the competencies required by the National External Diploma Program.

To ensure that all work in the portfolio is correct and complete, another **certified** Assessor conducts a cold review of the client's work. This Portfolio Review is performed after each competency area so the trainee will receive immediate feedback. It is advisable to allow the client to move ahead with the next competency area so that the client's work is not delayed during the period of the review. However, it is not advisable to allow the client to move beyond one competency area because generic mistakes may be compounded. If the Portfolio Reviewer finds that any of the client responses do not demonstrate mastery, the client may have to re-demonstrate those competencies.

Portfolio Review is a cold review conducted to establish inter-rater reliability among Assessors and to ensure that the client has in fact demonstrated all competencies with 100% mastery. If the Portfolio Reviewer and Assessor are at odds about whether a client response demonstrates mastery, they may mediate between themselves or bring the issue to a larger consensus discussion (among local, regional, or state Assessors) to determine if the client work must be reattempted.

When both the Assessor and Portfolio Reviewer agree on the completeness and accuracy of the portfolio, the client is eligible for a high school diploma.

First Portfolio Review for New Staff

At a new NEDP agency, an NEDP certified trainer who is external to the agency must review a trainee's first portfolio. The review of a trainee's first portfolio by the trainer provides ongoing support and technical assistance- an extension of NEDP Implementation Training- to the trainee. The first review with a trainee includes a few enhancements designed to ensure that the trainee is compliant with NEDP policies and using system tools to facilitate client success.

Only certified Advisor/Assessors may conduct Portfolio Review. See the "Next Steps" section of this document for the requirements to become a certified Advisor/Assessor.

V. Next Steps

Advisor/Assessor Certification:

The Advisor/Assessor trainee is eligible for certification when the following criteria have been met and verified by the State or National Trainer:

- All NEDP Implementation Training modules and T Trainer requirements are complete,
- The trainee is certified to administer CASAS tests through CASAS Implementation Training,
- The trainee has served at least one client through the Diagnostic Phase,
- The trainee has served one client through the Generalized Assessment Phase,
- The Portfolio Review for trainee's first Generalized Assessment client is conducted by a State or National Trainer, and
- The State or National Trainer verifies that the first portfolio is satisfactory and recommends that the trainee be certified as an NEDP Advisor/Assessor.

Additional activities that may be required by CASAS or your state.

VI. Glossary

Activity: A group of assessment items that, taken together, assess an NEDP competency.

Advisor: A trained individual who counsels and administers the Diagnostic Instruments to clients in the National External Diploma Program.

Applicant: A person who has expressed interest in the National External Diploma Program but has not yet enrolled.

Assessment: The process undertaken by a client in which they attempt to demonstrate the required Individualized and Generalized competencies for the National External Diploma Program.

Assessor: A trained individual who assesses clients' Generalized and Individualized competencies according to the established criteria stated in the *NEDP Test Administration Manual*.

Client: An individual who has registered in the National External Diploma Program and is active in either the Diagnostic or Generalized Assessment Phase of the program.

Cold Review: A portfolio review in which the Portfolio Reviewer uses only the criteria in the manual to evaluate evidence. The Portfolio Reviewer should not consider previous Assessor's evaluation of the submitted work.

Competency: A specific skill or knowledge that can be demonstrated by a client at the request of an Assessor. Competencies also refer to a given set of activities, usually completed by a client at home (or other independent setting) that provides practice for the client and evidence for the Assessor to use in evaluating a variety of designated competencies.

Competency Area: A content area focused on academic, life or workplace skills. NEDP assesses seven content-specific competency areas (Health Literacy, Civic Literacy and Community Participation, Cultural Literacy, Geography and History, Consumer Awareness and Financial Literacy, Science, Twenty-First Century Workplace) and three foundation Competency Areas (Communication and Media Literacy, Applied Math/Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology).

Competency-Based Education: An educational system that requires the client to demonstrate specifically stated competencies by fulfilling clearly articulated criteria. This system encourages self-paced learning and allows for individual adaptability.

Competency Statement: A description of a specific skill that a client must perform in the assessment portion of the program, which includes behavior to be demonstrated and performance indicators such as the conditions and criteria.

Conditions: That part of a competency statement that states the parameters within which a client must demonstrate a skill, such as materials provided and amount of time.

Criteria: The specific elements in a competency statement that determine whether a competency has been demonstrated.

Demonstrated (D): Term used to indicate that a competency has been successfully completed.

Diagnostic Instruments: Those instruments used to determine the readiness of the client to enter the Generalized Assessment Phase and from which learning recommendations are made.

Evaluation: An Assessor's determination of whether a competency is or is not demonstrated based on evidence presented by the client and the criteria outlined in the manual.

Evidence: Written or spoken information or performance that is presented by a client to demonstrate a competency.

Generalized Competencies: NEDP competencies representing the skills that a high school graduate should possess. They are called “Generalized” competencies because the skills can be used in many contexts and learned in many different ways.

In-Office Check (IOC): The proctored examination of specified items completed in the presence of an Assessor.

Incomplete: A part of the evaluation criteria pop-up box that denotes that a client has either not finished or not attempted.

Incorrect: A part of the evaluation criteria pop-up box that denotes an error in a client response.

Indicators: Items that are used to illustrate or further define a competency.

Item: A task within a competency.

Not Demonstrated (ND): A term denoting the unsuccessful completion of a competency that may further be described as incorrect or incomplete.

Portfolio Review: Process of review which verifies that all competencies required by the program have been demonstrated by the client.

Post-Task Assessment (PTA): Additional opportunity to demonstrate competencies that were not demonstrated in the original set of required Activities or In-Office Checks (IOCs).

Resource: Materials contained in the NEDP Activities. The Resources may be in the form of web links, podcasts and documents.

Setting: The place where an Activity is completed by a client.

Closed Setting: A private location monitored by an Assessor.

Take-Home Activity: Assessment items that clients complete independently at home or other location. Each NEDP competency contains one or more Take-Home Activities, displayed as Activity A, Activity B or both.