

Supportive Services and REO

Supportive services provide assistance beyond education, career, and training services to participants in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs such as the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and other programs. Supportive services are designed to provide participants with the resources needed for their participation and success in planned programming. For more information, please visit:

https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/07/14/09/22/Supportive_Services_Desk_Reference.

Research indicates that supportive services are a critical element of success in reentry employment programs. Observations from past and current REO grants also indicate that supportive services are especially critical in REO activities. REO grantees have the flexibility and discretion to provide necessary supportive services at any time during the grant performance period, including the follow-up phase. Grantees must have written policies in place to ensure that they distribute resources the same way to all participants.

About Supportive Services

Supportive services may include¹, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Assistance with transportation;
- ◆ Assistance with childcare and dependent care;
- ◆ Linkages to community services;
- ◆ Assistance with housing;
- ◆ Assistance with educational testing;
- ◆ Reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities;
- ◆ Referrals to health care;
- ◆ Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eye glasses and protective eye gear;
- ◆ Assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in post-secondary education classes;
- ◆ Payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications; and
- ◆ Legal aid services.

REO programs serve individuals with juvenile or adult criminal justice system involvement, as well as individuals at risk of adjudication or violence. Programs serving communities which experience high levels of poverty and crime are prioritized for REO funding. Connecting targeted individuals with stable jobs and employment services can reduce the risk of recidivism for previously justice-involved individuals, and providing supportive services can enhance their success in employment settings.

[According to a 2019 report](#), implementation studies of reentry programs “emphasized both the need to

¹ The WIOA Final Rules discuss supportive services at [20 CFR § 680.900-970](#) for adults and dislocated workers and [§ 681.570](#) for youth.



Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)

connect participants to [supportive] services and the importance of strong... relationships between community organizations to help with such services.”

Supportive services in REO programs align with the philosophy exemplified by WIOA youth programs, which emphasize the availability of supportive services for all program participants at any time – including during a follow-up period. Additionally, REO participants have no requirement to be enrolled in or actively taking part in a training program before receiving supportive services. In addition to facilitating participation in career and training services, supportive services in REO programs are intended to directly address barriers to participation and improve employment retention.

REO Grantee Take-Aways

PROGRAM VARIATION

Requirements differ for each REO program, and Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) vary slightly from year to year. The amount of grant funds allowed for supportive services may change, and grantees must consult the relevant FOA if questions about supportive services arise.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Because of the flexibility and variability of supportive services in REO programs, it is especially important for grantees to have written policies and procedures regarding supportive services in place for each grant program. Policies should ensure the availability of necessary supportive services for program participants and establish procedures for coordination with and referrals to appropriate service providers in the local area.

Grantee policies and procedures must ensure that supportive services both mitigate barriers to participation in REO programs and facilitate participation in career and training services. Strong policies address procedures for referral to such services, including how the services will be funded. These policies may establish limits on the provision of supportive services, including a maximum amount of funding and maximum length of time for supportive services to be available to a participant. Policies may, however, set forth a path to make rare exceptions to these limits.

