

3.0 PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

3.1 Program Strategies for Special Populations including: a Description of How Individuals Who are Members of the Special Populations Will be Provided with Equal Access, Will Not be Discriminated Against, Will be Provided with Programs Designed to Enable the Special Populations to Meet or Exceed State Adjusted Levels of Performance, and How Special Populations Will be Prepared for Further Learning and for High Skill, High Wage or High Demand Occupations. [Sec. 122(c)(9)(A)-(C)]

The State of Florida will continue to demonstrate its commitment to those practices which ensure that members of special populations will have equitable access to, and success in, career and technical education opportunities. Special populations will include, but not be limited to, economically disadvantaged, non-English speaking students, and students with disabilities. Local practitioners will be expected to utilize a variety of recruitment and retention strategies for special population students and will be provided technical assistance by Division of Workforce Education staff to implement these strategies. The success of local efforts to serve will be measured by data, which reflect the enrollment and completion rates of members of special populations in career and technical education programs.

While not an exhaustive list, the following practices have been employed by local practitioners to assure that members of special populations are able to take full advantage of the program opportunities provided to all students:

- Targeted community outreach and recruitment
- School and program orientation sessions
- Comprehensive career assessment and counseling
- Ongoing support counseling including referrals for agency assistance when needed
- Peer support groups
- Advisors and mentors from the business community
- Job placement services
- Availability of accommodations/modifications and support services
- Work-based learning opportunities
- Participation in Career and Technical Student Organizations
- Parental involvement in student support activities when appropriate

It is recognized that members of special populations who are returning to school often require additional support mechanisms to accommodate their personal and family needs. Among the strategies which have yielded positive results for these students are:

- The use of Perkins funds and/or other financial assistance funds to help pay for tuition/fees, child care, transportation, books and/or tools;
- The scheduling of classes, child care, computer labs and resource rooms in the evening to accommodate working adults, welfare-reform participants and low-income youth; and
- Specially arranged public transportation schedules to accommodate work and class schedules

Equal Access to Activities Assisted Under the Act

The Division of Workforce Education provides eligible recipients with technical assistance, including training and publications, to meet the needs of special population students. Providing equal access ranges from diligent monitoring by Division of Workforce Education staff members of practitioner compliance with the 34 CFR *Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex, and Handicap in Career and Technical Education Programs* to proactive implementation of customized strategies for special populations.

All career and technical education programs in Florida are open to all students. Florida adheres to the *Vocational Education Programs Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex and Handicap*. All students are allowed entry into programs and are encouraged to enter.

Non-Discrimination

In accordance with the IDEA and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and subsequent federal legislation, Florida prohibits discrimination against students, (including students enrolled in career and technical education programs), on the basis of race, color, religion or belief, gender, disability or national origin. Professional staff development on non-discrimination regulations and policies are customarily provided to Florida's administrators and instructors. Posters stating local educational agencies' non-discrimination policies and complaint procedures are posted on bulletin boards throughout Florida's educational facilities.

Local eligible recipients will be required to include assurances in their local plan and application that:

- Individuals with disabilities who do not have an Individual Educational Program (IEP) will be afforded the rights and protections established by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), including making such programs accessible through supplementary services
- The rights of students with disabilities are protected based on the requirements of IDEA and Section 504, as amended
- Career and technical education for students with disabilities will be provided in the least restrictive environment
- Representatives for career and technical education programs, when appropriate, will be involved in the IEP development process

In addition, all eligible recipients will be expected to report data reflecting student participation in career and technical education programs. This data is used to adequately measure the progress of all career and technical education students, including students who are members of special populations.

Meeting or Exceeding State Adjusted Levels of Performance and Preparation for further Earning and for High Skill, High Wage or High Demand Occupations

Four specific strategies are in place to enable special populations to assure that this legislative requirement is met. (1) Florida State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.040 Federal Administration Code (FAC) requires LEAs to have a provision for exemptions from meeting the basic skills

requirements for completion of a final career and technical education occupation completion point for students with disabilities that successfully complete their career and technical education program. (2) Florida has also implemented the English Language for Career and Technical Education (ELCATE) to assist students with limited English proficiency to achieve more success in career and technical education programs. (3) To help special populations reach their potential is the wide-spread use of Vocational Preparatory Instruction (VPI) to assist students with basic skills instruction in career and technical education programs. (4) Modified Occupational Completion Points (MOCPs) provide the option for modifying existing career and technical education programs to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities.

3.2 Needs of Students in Alternative Education Programs [Sec. 122(c)(14)]

F.S. 1003.53 *Dropout Prevention and Academic Intervention* mandates how the State delivers alternative education strategies. The law stipulates *dropout prevention and academic intervention programs may differ from traditional educational programs and schools in scheduling, administrative structure, philosophy, curriculum, or setting and shall employ alternative teaching methodologies, curricula, learning activities, and diagnostic and assessment procedures in order to meet the needs, interests, abilities, and talents of eligible students.*

Several career and technical education centers throughout the State work with at-risk students by providing alternative education that allows the student to earn both a high school diploma and a career and technical education certificate. Students spend part of the day with academic teachers working on required course work and part of the day with career and technical education teachers mastering occupational and employability skills. Integration of academic and career and technical education skills is stressed, resulting in a more relevant program for students.

Students in the Department of Juvenile Justice education programs are provided with employment skills, career exploration and/or job preparatory instruction depending on their length of commitment. A competitive grant process over the past five years has provided over \$2,000,000 in Perkins funds to Department of Juvenile Justice facilities to implement or improve career and technical education programs.

3.3 Promotion of High Skill, High Wage or High Demand Occupations and Non-Traditional Fields [Sec. 122(c)(18)]

The Division of Workforce Education will continue current efforts to improve gender-specific participation in career and technical education programs designated as non-traditional. Statewide publications, web sites, and communications are being developed and distributed to eligible recipients for adaptation and use to encourage increased non-traditional participation. In addition, the Division's career clusters state supervisors are engaging local practitioners in discussions about how best to expand statewide and local participation in non-traditional programs. A specific example of work being done in the area of information technology is the Department of Education's participation in the *Girls Get IT* project. This project is a partnership between Cisco Systems, Inc., the Florida Community College System, and the Florida Distance Learning Consortium to create gender equity in the areas of Information Technology (IT) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

3.4 Individuals in State Correctional Institutions [Sec. 122(c)(19)]

Through the use of reserve funds and leadership grants, the Division of Workforce Education more fully develops the academic, career, and technical skills of secondary students in

Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) programs and of those incarcerated in Department of Corrections institutions. These funds are used primarily to introduce or strengthen career and technical education programs leading to industry certification and to support enrollment of DJJ students and incarcerated adults in career and technical educational programs to gain employability skills. A competitive grant process provides \$450,000 in Perkins funds to Department of Juvenile Justice facilities to implement or improve career and technical education programs. The Division of Workforce Education sets aside .72% or \$500,000 of State Leadership Funds to support Florida Department of Corrections career and technical education programs.

3.5 Applicants Will Ensure Equitable Access to, and Participation in, its Federally-Assisted Program for Students, Teachers, and Other Program Beneficiaries with Special Needs as Contained in Section 427(b) of the General Education Provisions Act as Amended.

Through the local plan and application, eligible recipients will be required to assure that:

- Individuals with disabilities who do not have an Individual Educational Plan (IEPs) will be afforded the rights and protections established by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, including making such programs accessible through supplementary services
- The rights of students with disabilities will be protected based on the requirements of IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended
- Career and technical education for students with disabilities will be provided in the least restrictive environment (Section 1412(5), IDEA)
- Representatives for career and technical education, when appropriate, will participate in the Individual Educational Plan process (Section 1414(d), IDEA)
- Programs will be provided to prepare special populations for further learning and high skill, high wage or high demand occupations

In addition, all eligible recipients will be expected to report data reflecting student participation in career and technical education programs. These data are used to adequately measure the progress of all career and technical education students, including students who are members of special populations.