

Peoria Park District

Drop Out Recovery Program Abstract

Contract # OSY-2024-04

This contract has been entered into for the purpose of providing a drop-out recovery program for the high school drop-outs in need of literacy and/or numeracy remediation. The contract begins July 1, 2024 and will terminate on June 30, 2025, but may be extended for two additional years if mutually agreed to. The funding amount is \$200,000. The enrollment goal is 40 students.

Peoria Park District will provide the intensive education and employment skills program for Peoria County youth and youth from surrounding counties who may benefit from enrollment in Park District's program. Consensus from both Peoria Park District and Career Link will be required for students outside of Peoria County. The program will serve students, ages 16-24, that have dropped out of high school, preferably have a deficiency in literacy or numeracy, and will be provide an opportunity to participate in a GED Recovery Program. Students will become self-sufficient by receiving education and workforce preparation needed to succeed through three basic goals:

1. increased literacy or numeracy achievement by at least one educational functioning level;
2. obtain employment or attend post-secondary training after completion, and
3. obtain a GED.

The Service Provider will be monitored for compliance with the terms of the contract by Career Link and possibly monitors from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Some supportive services will be available to the youth, such as childcare, transportation allowance, and emergency needs. These supportive services will be arranged and paid for directly by Career Link unless other arrangements are established with the Service Provider.

1. GED Preparation

GED/HISET instructional areas include Reading (Language Arts), Math, Science, Social Studies, Writing (grammar and essay), and the Constitution. These content areas will be covered in Elements #1, and 2. Additional instruction in the areas of Career Exploration, Job Readiness Skills, and Job Search Techniques is provided, meeting the requirements of Element #3. When students complete the tasks outlined in the incentives list (below), they will receive the corresponding payment.

Peoria Park District will use instructional materials such as, but not limited to, the following: GED Ready Practice Test; Contemporary Mathematics, Social Studies, Language Arts, and Science (Book and Computer); Scoreboost for TABE 11 and 12 (Levels A, D, M, and E); Pre-High School Equivalency (Social Studies, Math, Science, Language Arts); Voyager-Reading and Writing for Adults; and various internet resources.

The Service Provider is required to assist Career Link in attaining a copy of the youth's GED certificate or transcript from the Regional Office of Education.

2. Literacy and Numeracy Gains/Measureable Skills Gains

The program must provide for specific gains in literacy and/or numeracy, as appropriate, based on the initial assessment with the TABE or CASAS. The standard of achievement is for the youth to increase at least one educational functioning level in at least one area of deficiency. Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) are indicators used to track important achievements of WIOA participants. A student in a GED program can earn a MSG by completing their GED or increasing a reading or math grade level. Attainment of the MSG will be determined by a post-test. The post-test must be the same type (TABE/CASAS) as the pre-test. The Service Provider should work with Career Link to develop an individualized plan for when students should be post-tested.

Career Link has the final decision regarding entry into the GED program. Achievement of educational gain must take place within one year from the date of first participation. Ideally, the youth will be able to attain their GED within one calendar year of entering the program.

The purpose of the Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) indicator is to track and measure important progressions and achievements made by WIOA clients (entered in training or education), through pathways and towards various goals of their individual programs. A gain must be recorded for a client each year (July 1 – June 30) they are enrolled in training or education and progress satisfactorily in one or more areas of their employment or training program.

The Service Provider and the Career Link Career Planner must meet to evaluate each youth's progress towards MSGs no later than six (6) months after enrollment.

3. Employment-related Skills

The program must provide information in Career Exploration, Job Readiness Skills, and Job Search Techniques in order to enhance the youths' ability to obtain employment or to attend post-secondary educational training. The program provider is responsible for providing adequate training and counseling to assist the youth in achieving one of these outcomes mentioned above, up to the point where the youth has been terminated from the program. Goals for attainment of benchmarks in the area will be jointly established between Career Link staff and Service Provider staff. These Work Readiness goal achievements will flow naturally from the delivery of this element.

A designated job coach will work with students to create a resume and job search. The job coach will work one on one with students to create, revise and edit their resumes. The coach will also assist the students with searching for jobs and the application process. A soft skills class will be held for students to teach good communication and interpersonal skills, work ethic, time management, problem solving, and teamwork. A social media class will be held for students that discusses how to responsibly use social media and that employers view the social media accounts of potential employees.

4. Incentives

A financial incentive system will be offered to encourage perseverance and participation in goal-directed activities. Incentives may be modified, with prior approval from Career Link, as the need arises to make them more effective and appropriate in promoting program successes. The subcontractor will issue incentives directly to students. Incentives must be awarded throughout the year and may not be withheld from students until

completion of the program. Every award will be fully documented and receipt of each incentive will be signed for by the student and the records saved by the subcontractor.

- Student incentives may not be incurred after 30 days upon attaining a GED.
- Maximum incentive awards per student may not exceed \$415 for the duration of the student's enrollment with Career Link.

Work Experience Component

Students who demonstrate regular and reliable patterns of attendance, work ethic, and academic performance are selected to participate in a related work program. Worksites are arranged by the Service Provider and the Career Link Career Planner. Efforts are made to place students in sites that are compatible with their interests or previous work experiences and are easily accessed, especially when transportation is a challenge for the student. Career Link will establish a contractual agreement with the employer at the request of the Service Provider. Career Link will pay the youth the current Illinois minimum wage or up to \$5.00 above the minimum wage, depending on the prevailing entry-level wage for the work site. Work Experience may continue up to 1,800 hours, or up to eighteen (18) months duration, whichever occurs first. Student workers cannot exceed 29 work hours per week. Career Link should be made aware of issues at worksites and should be contacted before a student is removed from a worksite. The subcontractor will initiate the process of placing students in job, in conjunction with Career Link oversight.

Selected students are required to complete an Orientation and Soft Skills workshop prior to beginning Work Experience. Workshops are conducted by Peoria Park District staff and include 5-7 hours of teaching and role-play to develop skills regarding communication, work attendance, appearance, work ethic, etc. Once workshops are completed, students are eligible to be placed with an employer. Job coaches will maintain regular and ongoing contact with both the students and employers for the entirety of the Work Experience. To this end, the Job Coach can assist with problem solving hopefully before problems become insurmountable or result in separation from the job.

Transition to Employment or Post-Secondary Training

The subcontractor will provide a comprehensive transition program to support GED graduates in their pursuit of post-secondary education or employment, including but not limited to career assessments, job placement services, and referrals to local education and training providers. The subcontractor will work collaboratively with Career Link to identify and address barriers to successful transition, and shall provide regular updates on its progress towards achieving these goals.

In the immediate days/weeks following completion of the Work Experience, a Transition Coach will work with the student to facilitate full-time employment in the training site or in another community job site. Additionally, the Transition Coach will work with the student to pursue post-secondary education or training opportunities, military, or other post-secondary pathways requested by the student.