



National Council of
State Directors of Adult Education

Adult Student Waiting List Survey

Adult Education State Directors

NCSDAE

Findings:

- 1. 40 of the 43 states reporting confirmed students on waiting lists in their state***
- 2. 917 of the 1376 (66%) of the local programs reporting confirmed waiting lists***
- 3. 90,000+ potential learners cannot access services***

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Introduction

This two part report sheds light on the question regarding waiting lists for adult education and literacy classes.

Part I is this Executive Summary that highlights the findings from the survey of local programs conducted in the spring of 2006.

Part II includes the data tables and individual state reports on which the Executive Summary is based.

Part I Executive Summary

There is a need to expand access to adult education programs.

- 93 million adults have reading, math, and/or English limitations (NAAL, 2005).
- Only 3 million can access services now.
- Most jobs with family sustaining income require GED/high school plus some college.
- For the country to remain competitive, we need an educated adult workforce.
- Only 2% of the annual workforce comes from public schools.
- How can NCLB, job training, welfare to work, public health, immigration and other national initiatives be successful if 40% of the adult population has limited skills?

Waiting Lists: Before increasing funding for services, it is important to know if current services are being fully used.

Because few states collect waiting list information, the State Directors' national office (NAEPDC) conducted a waiting list survey for the 2005-2006 program year. The voluntary electronic survey was sent to State Directors who in turn forwarded the URL to local program directors. Programs in 43 states responded. Not all programs in those states responded. Here are some of the general findings:

Data Sources:

- 1376 of the 4,000+ programs in the US responded to the survey--about one quarter of all local programs.
- Response was voluntary; there was no random selection.
- Only two states (Arizona and Rhode Island) collect complete data on waiting lists.
- Waiting lists in some New York programs had gotten so long, they did away with waiting lists and established a lottery for seats.

- Maryland's state wide report include over 1,000 students on 5-8 month waiting lists

The number on waiting lists:

- 40 of the 43 states reporting had waiting lists in a number of programs
- Of the 1376 local program reporting, 917 (66%) had waiting lists
- 90,000+ potential learners are on waiting list for these 917 programs

The number of months waiting to get access in the programs reporting:

- One month or less: 200 programs
- 1-4 months; 503 programs
- 5-8 months, 142 programs
- 8+ months, 71 programs

More specific data:

In Rhode Island and Arizona, the State Directors have chosen to collect waiting list data on all programs. These states give us a more complete picture. Their reports are attached in Part II, but here are some general findings.

In Arizona, 40% of programs have waiting lists totaling more than 6,000 students. Arizona enrolls approximately 32,000 students. Thus, Arizona could service 19% more adults than it can serve now.

In Rhode Island, 44% of local programs have waiting lists. The highest need, 77%, is for adults at the lowest levels of adult basic education and English literacy. 52% had been waiting for 12 months or more.

In New York, because waiting periods can reach one to two years, some programs have resorted to a lottery system. If your number is drawn, you may attend class.

Summary:

A waiting list can be a psychological barrier to participation in adult education and literacy programs. It takes courage for any of us to return to school. Imagine the apprehension of an adult who has not been successful in school. Imagine the doubts. Then imagine trying to hold that determination while he or she waits, even one month, to get into class.

These survey results from 32 states confirm waiting lists in all but one. Many students are seeking to access services but cannot. The detail tables are found in Part II.

At current student costs, it would take \$130 million to clear the waiting lists reported in this survey alone.

The waiting lists are only one part of the conversation regarding the need to expand access to adult education services.

- The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) released by NCES in December 2005 reported that 93 million adults, 40+% of the adult population, have reading, math, and/or English deficiencies that inhibit them making their full contribution as workers, parents, and community members.
- Only 3 million adults can enroll at current funding levels.
- If the United States is going to address the competitiveness challenge, it must have an educated workforce.
- How can NCLB, job training, public health, welfare to work, immigration, and other federal priorities be successful when only 3 million of the 93 million can access services?

43 adult education state programs meet or exceed the performance standards as prescribed by Congress and the Department of Education. We have quality programs.

If we are going to be competitive and if federal initiatives are going to be successful, we must erase these waiting lists by increasing access to adult education programs in every state.

Part II

Excel spread sheet of survey results
(See separate document)