

# Youthwork *Information Brief*

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## Managing Program Exits

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Under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), a youth participant exits WIA when he or she receives no program or partner services for 90 days, no further services are scheduled, and no gap in services is documented. All exits are soft exits, automatically and retroactively system-generated 90 calendar days after the last day on which the individual received a program or partner service.

While WIA administrators and case managers may be concerned about the possibility of unintentional and unnoticed soft exits, they sometimes overlook an advantage of soft exits. In addition, they may overlook an important technical detail of program exits; that is, some services extend the exit date but others do not.

### Soft Exits: A Window of Opportunity

The 90 calendar days between the last service and exit give case managers a window in which they can manage the participant's exit. During that 90-day window, case managers can determine whether the participant is ready to exit the WIA youth program by looking for some typical signs of success or problems.

Exit: Ready or Not?	
Signs of Success: Ready	Signs of Problems: Not Ready Yet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still employed and doing well (e.g., received good evaluation, salary increase, even promotion).</li> <li>• Found a new job before quitting the previous job.</li> <li>• Still in educational or training program and doing well (e.g., still enrolled, attending classes, accumulating credits).</li> <li>• Taking appropriate action to solve problems as they occur.</li> <li>• Successful so far in the transition to work or further education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having problems on the job (e.g., was demoted, received disciplinary action).</li> <li>• Was fired.</li> <li>• Quit before finding a new job.</li> <li>• Is failing or has dropped out of school.</li> <li>• Not using available assistance or services when needed.</li> <li>• Avoiding problems or relying on others to solve them.</li> <li>• Needs additional assistance to transition to work or further education.</li> </ul>

If signs indicate that the participant is ready for program exit, case managers should begin providing follow-up services; if signs indicate that the participant is not ready for exit, case managers should schedule the participant for other program services to meet the identified needs. In addition, the 90-day window allows case managers the option of further program services if continued monitoring indicates any new difficulties for the participant.

## Extending Participation and the Date of Exit

When youth start the activities that were planned as the positive outcomes in their ISS – for example, employment or postsecondary education – the case manager often believes that his or her work is complete. However, many youth have not been in those types of activities before and may not be familiar with the strategies they need to ensure that they remain in those activities.

Rather than starting the 90 day period of *not* providing services that would lead to the exit occurring, it is recommended that the case manager provide services to ensure that the individual remains stable in those outcomes. Those services may include career counseling, workshops on job retention, workshops on career advancement, and other similar activities.

Case management is not considered a service that extends participation (see next section) because those types of activities do not add any benefit to the youth—they only add benefit to the agency. Career counseling activities provide a benefit to the youth, which is why they are considered a service when case management is not. Career counseling services might include providing youth with skills and/or training in these areas, for example:

- How to get along with bosses and co-workers.
- Managing change for themselves and family members.
- The importance of getting to work on time.
- How to budget their money.

Local WIA youth staff sometimes believe that long-term participation leads to a higher cost per participant and results in administrative penalties for the local area. This is a misconception, however; federal cost-per-participant measures are recalculated every year, and the date on which services began is not relevant. In fact, there is every reason to keep youth enrolled and participating in services for the long term.

None of the desired outcomes for youth – placement in employment, postsecondary education, or advanced/occupational skills training; attainment of a degree or certificate; or increase in literacy and numeracy skills – can be achieved in a short time. By their very nature, those outcomes may take several years to achieve, and participants may need to receive multiple services through multiple programs to achieve them. So, the needs of youth often dictate a menu of different services and programs over the long term – perhaps as much as seven years, from age 14 through age 21.

To extend participation and meet a youth's individual needs, case managers should consider not only services under the 10 required WIA youth program elements. For many youth, preparation for a successful transition to work or further education may also require partner services or a documented gap in services.

### Don't Overlook Partner Services and a Documented Gap in Services

**Partner services** extend the date of exit *if* –

- the youth is already enrolled in WIA, *and*
- the service is provided by a One-Stop partner that has a signed memorandum of Understanding (MOU), *and*
- the partner has the capability to track services and report outcomes.

A **documented gap in services** is allowed *if* –

- the next planned service is not available within the 90 days, *or*
- the participant has a health or medical condition that precludes participation, *or*
- the participant is providing care for a family member with a health or medical condition, *or*
- the participant is temporarily moving from the area and cannot participate in services.

## Services and Program Exits

Many WIA staff can recite from memory the policy that “the date of exit is applied retroactively to the last day on which the individual received a service funded by the program or a partner program.” In other words, services extend the exit date – they keep the 90-day clock from ticking. However, it is important to note that some services do not extend the exit date; the 90-day clock starts ticking even though participants continue to receive certain services.

### These Services Do Not Extend the Exit Date

#### Case Management

- Administrative activities involving regular contact to obtain information on employment status, educational progress, need for additional services, or problems and challenges

#### Follow-Up

- Supportive services and leadership development
- Regular contact with a youth participant’s employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise
- Assistance in securing better paying jobs, career development and further education
- Work-related peer support groups
- Adult mentoring
- Tracking the progress of youth in employment after training

#### Supportive Services

- Include but are not limited to the following
- Linkages to community services
- Assistance with transportation
- Assistance with child care and dependent care
- Assistance with housing
- Referrals to medical services
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eye glasses and protective eye gear

Supportive services do not extend the exit date if they are the only services provided. Likewise, case management activities do not extend the exit date. So, if a participant receives only case management and supportive services for 90 calendar days, the participant will be exited.

## Manage Soft Exits to Meet the Needs of Youth

And so . . . the bottom line? Soft exits are much more than an accident to be avoided; they are a 90-day window of opportunity for informed decisions and appropriate action in each individual case. Using the 90 days profitably depends on a correct understanding of which services extend the exit date and which don't. And making an appropriate choice between allowing a soft exit or continuing services always depends on the needs of the youth, which typically take a long time to meet.

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