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Out-of-School Youth

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Which Youth Are Out-of-School Youth?

Out-of-school youth are one of the key populations served under the Workforce Investment (WIA) Act of 1998. It's critical to note that the WIA definition of out-of-school youth is not intuitive. **Out-of school youth** include any eligible youth who:

- Is a school dropout **or**
- Has received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent but is basic skills deficient, unemployed, or underemployed.

A **school dropout** is an individual who is no longer attending any school and who has not received a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. In Ohio, a youth is considered out-of-school if he or she was:

- Categorized as habitually truant by the school anytime during the current semester or the semester preceding application to WIA **or**
- Expelled from school.

In Ohio, a youth is **basic literacy skills deficient** if he or she:

- Has a math, English reading, or writing level that is one or more grade levels below the grade level appropriate to his or her age **or**
- Has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below grade level 8.9 on a generally accepted standard test or a comparable score on a criterion-referenced test.

An **unemployed individual** has no job but wants work and is available for work.

An **underemployed worker** is one whose education and skill level limits his or her earning capacity to an hourly wage below the self-sufficiency standard set by a local workforce investment board.

Characteristics of School Dropouts

- *Truancy, attitude, discipline problems*
 - *Lack of success in education*
 - *Low self-esteem*
 - *Learning disabilities and related conditions*
 - *Cycle of poverty*
 - *Increased criminal behavior*
 - *Lack of positive role models*
 - *Lack of parental involvement*
 - *Low parental expectations*
 - *Conflict between home and school culture*
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Characteristics of Out-of-School Youth

It's possible to list some characteristics of the "typical" school dropout, although most dropouts only have some of those characteristics. However, other out-of-school youth – those with a secondary diploma or equivalent but basic skills deficient, unemployed, or underemployed – cannot be conveniently summed up like that.

The Challenge for All Out-of-School Youth

On the other hand, it is possible to describe a common challenge that all four groups of out-of-school youth face, at least to some extent. Finding and keeping good jobs is more and more difficult for youth with:

- **Limited educational credentials.** A high school diploma is the minimum credential just to enter the workforce. High-skill, high-wage jobs and careers require occupational skills certificates and college degrees, including associate degrees. The lower the educational credential, the lower the wages and the higher the unemployment rates.
- **Limited basic skills.** Fewer and fewer jobs are open to individuals with low basic skills. The jobs open are low-skill, low-wage jobs, and advancement to high-skill, high-wage jobs is far more difficult.
- **Limited occupational skills training.** Finally, no one gets a high-skill, high-wage job without occupational skills – and usually a certificate to prove it. Dropouts don't get that training and certificate; youth with low basic skills experience less success in training.

Dropouts: A Few Statistics

- Every 9 seconds in America, a student becomes a dropout.
 - Of youth age 16-24, 4 million are high school dropouts.
 - Of youth age 18-24, 3.8 million are neither employed nor in school.
 - The unemployment rate for dropouts age 16-24 is 24%, compared to 15% for high school graduates with no college.
 - Between 1979 and 1992, 80% of those without a high school diploma were unemployed for at least a full year.
 - Dropouts earn 27 percent less than those who graduate from high school.
 - Of young men age 18-24 without a high school diploma, 16% are incarcerated or on parole.
 - The U.S. death rate for those with fewer than 12 years of education is 2.5 times higher than for those with 13 or more years of education.
 - Dropouts cost the nation more than \$260 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over their lifetimes.
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Solutions for Out-of-School Youth

Dropouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reenroll dropouts in high school; enroll them in a credit recovery program leading to a high school diploma; or enroll them in an adult education GED program.
Youth with a Secondary Diploma or Equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help basic skills deficient youth improve their basic skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For college students, developmental or remedial education services are usually available in any college. ○ For youth not in college, adult education services are appropriate and universally available.
All Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help all youth acquire educational credentials – at least a high school diploma, preferably a postsecondary degree. • Help all youth acquire occupational skills training and a certificate for high-skill, high-wage jobs and careers.

Local Youth Program Issues

- In practice, out-of-school youth include all youth **except youth who:**
 - Are attending any school and have not received a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent **or**
 - Are attending postsecondary school and y are not deficient in basic skills **or**
 - Are working and are neither basic skills deficient nor underemployed.
- WIA out-of-school status is determined at the date of participation and does not change.
- Thirty percent of WIA youth money must be spent on out-of-school youth. Funds spent on out-of-school youth during follow-up may be counted toward that 30%.
- Local areas should **not** spend all their out-of school youth money on college students, who can receive remedial and developmental education services at their college. Rather, out-of-school youth money should be spent on youth who are **not** served by other programs.

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