TO: CSD Regional Administrators
CSD CSO Administrators
CSD CSC Administrators
WorkFirst Staff

FROM: Babs Roberts, Director
Community Services Division, ESA

Erin Frasier, Policy Associate, WorkForce Education
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

SUBJECT: CHANGES TO APPROVED WORKFIRST VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (EFFECTIVE JULY 23, 2017)

Effective July 23, 2017, full-time vocational education (VE) opportunities for WorkFirst students may extend up to 24 months. On June 30, 2017, legislation passed allowing these education opportunities to increase from the current 12-month limit to 24-month limit for state fiscal years (SFY) 2017-19. This change increases the likelihood of degree/certificate completion, which may lead to a better wage at entry-to-employment and positive impact on child and family well-being.

Community Services Division (CSD) WorkFirst staff may continue to refer participants interested in educational activities to their local colleges when they have exhausted their 12-month VE limit. The college staff will review the participant’s education history to see if they meet the following criteria:

- VE/High Wage (HW) components are within a single vocational program (the extension is not permitted for changing to a new program of study)
- Participants with a gap in their education that have exhausted their 12-month limit may continue toward an uncompleted degree or certificate, but may not begin a new program of study

The Community and Technical Colleges may approve an extension for up to an additional 12 months if the criteria of the VE extension policy is met. Any approved extensions must be covered within the college’s FY18 WorkFirst allocation. Work Study and Work Experience opportunities continue to be available when appropriate for the participant.

Community and Technical Colleges will determine a participant's eligibility for this extension and will include the following information in the Education and Training Worksheet and Client Notes in eJAS:

- a statement of the extension
- identification of vocational program of study
- identification of expected quarter of completion

Though Vocational Education beyond twelve months will not count toward the federal work participation rate, this opportunity allows for ‘participation that matters’ to support families through their education pathway.
We revised [WAC 388-310-1000](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac-rulemaking/2020-09-22) *WorkFirst – Vocational Education* by emergency rule.

WorkFirst Handbook section updates include:

7.2 Vocational Education  
7.2.3 What is Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) – (VE)?  
7.2.8 What is High-Wage, High-Demand (HW) and Degree Completion (DC) training?  
7.2.11 What are the participation requirements for High Wage/High Demand (HW) and Degree Completion training?  
7.2.15 What is the Vocational Education Extension?  
7.6.2 Type of training and institution

We are excited to offer this opportunity to WorkFirst families to assist them in meeting their educational goals and reaching economic stability.

If you have any questions, please contact the appropriate representative below:

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