

Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education

FY 2009 Adult Basic Education Fact Sheet: What's At Stake

Adult Basic Education (ABE) services teach adults who lack high school level skills:

- ABE includes English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), General Education Development (GED) programs, and adult basic education (non-reader to pre-GED), with targeted services in Workforce Development, Family Literacy, and Transition to Higher Education.
- ABE services include classroom instruction, one-on-one tutoring, computer assisted instruction, and distance learning.
- ABE services are delivered by a diverse provider network composed of community-based organizations, local educational agencies, community colleges, and correctional institutions.

FY2009 ABE Budget Request. This covers funding from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.

\$40 million for ABE line item #7035-0002 under the Mass Dept of Education to increase ABE capacity, intensity, and access to services, and strengthen the ABE infrastructure to serve more adults.

The need for ABE services is great.

- **More than 1.1 million (1/3) of the state's 3.2 million workers do not have the skills required to perform in the state's rapidly changing economy and need ABE services.**
 - **667,000** workers have a high school credential but still lack basic math, literacy, language and analytic skills to perform in the typical 21st century workplace.
 - **280,000** are high school dropouts who lack necessary skills.
 - **195,000** are immigrants with limited English speaking skills who need to learn to speak English.
- **The State Assessment of Adult Literacy for Mass released in Dec. 2005 by the National Center for Education Statistics reports that a significant number of adults in the state do not have sufficient literacy skills.**
 - 32% of adults were at Below Basic and Basic on the prose literacy scale (ability to read and comprehend a continuous text such as newspaper articles, editorials, or brochures).
 - 26% of adults were at Below Basic and Basic on the document literacy scale (ability to read and comprehend texts in various formats such as job applications, bus schedules, and drug and food labels).
 - 46% of adults were at Below Basic and Basic on the quantitative literacy scale (ability to identify and perform computations using numbers imbedded in printed material, such as balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip or the amount of interest on a loan).

The consequences of poor skills for individuals, families, communities, and the state are great.

- **Families headed by adults without a high school diploma suffer severe economic consequences.**

- Since 1979, earnings of full time, year round workers without high school diplomas decreased by 27% while earnings of full time workers with a high school diploma increased by 1.6%.
 - 21.7% of families headed by high school dropouts were poor.
 - 55% of families headed by a single woman who are high school dropouts are poor.
- **The best indicator of a child's future success in school is the educational level of the parents.**
 - Mothers who are enrolled in ABE programs spend more time with their children talking about school, helping with homework, going to school activities and meeting with teachers, all of which are essential for a child's success in school.
 - Children in 114,000 Mass. families have a parent who cannot read aloud to them
 - Children in 264,000 Mass. families have parents who can read at a basic level but have difficulty helping their children with homework.
- **Civic and community participation suffer when adults do not have sufficient literacy skills.**
 - Adults with low literacy skills are half as likely as their more educated neighbors to vote.
- **Adults suffer adverse health outcomes as a result of low literacy skills.**
 - Low literacy is associated with several adverse health outcomes, including low health knowledge, increased incidence of chronic illness, poorer intermediate disease markers, and less than optimal use of preventive health services.
- **Incarceration and recidivism rates are high among adults who do not have sufficient literacy skills.**
 - 68% of the incarcerated adults and youth in Mass. have literacy levels below the 8th grade.
 - Inmates with at least 2 years of college education have only a 10% re-arrest rate, compared to a national rate of 60%.

The demand for ABE services is far greater than the services available.

- **Over 40% of the adults who try to enroll in ABE services each year cannot enroll because there are not adequate resources to fund needed programs in the state.**
 - Approximately 25,000 adults are currently enrolled in ABE programs funded by the Mass. Dept. of Education
 - Approximately 20,000 adults are currently on waiting lists for ABE programs funded by the Mass. Dept. of Education because there aren't adequate resources to fund needed programs in the state. Waiting lists vary from 2 to 8 months for Adult Basic Education and 3 months to 2 years for ESOL.