



## Central Office

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### 2016-2017 ABE Narrative – Minnesota Department of Corrections

#### Section Two: Program and Student Accountability

- 2.1 In adherence with the ABE Contact Hour Policy, explain how student contact hours are recorded and verified for intake, orientation, assessment, daily attendance, distance learning and any other allowable time. Refer to Attachment F in your explanation, the student attendance sheet example.**

#### Initial Intake, Orientation and Assessment

Every new offender (inmate) goes through a *corrections* intake/orientation process. The intake/orientation is basically a “Prison 101” type of program, with offenders learning what life will be like during incarceration. Some of those offenders will eventually enroll in ABE classes. During this process each and every offender takes a TABE test and is provided with an overview of DOC education. Since we are not certain which offenders will be ABE-eligible at the time of this initial TABE test, the DOC Consortium **does not count** hours for initial TABE testing or education overview. We anticipate some changes in FY17 that will allow us to capture these eligible hours.

In addition to literacy classes, some offenders also enroll in conditional content courses during their stay in the DOC. Examples include cognitive or critical thinking skills courses and re-entry/transitions classes taken when they are near the time of their release from prison. The DOC has had the curriculum approved by MDE/ABE as conditional content. We track students who take these classes and, **if they enroll in one or more core ABE instructional content classes** during the same ABE year, we then count those hours. If they do not enroll in a core content class during the same ABE year, we remove those hours and that student from our current year ABE records.

#### Enrollment in ABE Classes

After initial DOC intake, adult women remain at Shakopee and adult males are placed in one of the eight adult male correctional facilities (including Saint Cloud) to begin



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their sentence. Each facility is an ABE site within the DOC consortium, and all sites have access to our shared COMS (Department of Corrections database) and MARCS systems. Offenders who are ABE-eligible are placed into classes. Facility orientation and registration takes place during the first day of the offender (student's) assignment to education. Hours are recorded effective that first day. Teachers meet with their students during the first week of class to develop the personal education plan (PEP). If a review of the student's current TABE scores determines the need for a new pre-test, the TABE is administered. Hours are counted for PEP development and TABE testing.

### Daily Attendance

There are slight variations (e.g. the daily attendance roster may look different) between the nine sites within our consortium, but the following consistent process is in place throughout the consortium. Using the Education "Student Management" and "Curriculum Management" features within the DOC's "COMS" database, teachers are able to print out Teacher Class Rosters to use for attendance. COMS is programmed to automatically record the number of daily hours or minutes of attendance for each student, based on the start and end time for each class.

**For example**, and please refer to **Attachment F: Sample Student Attendance Sheet** for supporting documents in this real scenario. Student A (listed 9<sup>th</sup> from the top on the Teacher Class Roster), is in a class titled "ABE WEST-PM" from 11:50 AM to 2:50 PM, Monday-Friday. The class is set up in COMS to register 180 minutes of attendance for each student unless the student misses part or all of class on a given day. Student A was "sick" on March 21, as the notation on the Class Roster indicates, and did not attend class. (Perhaps she wasn't really sick, climbed over the prison walls and went to Caribou that day?). This notation by the teacher sets off a chain of attendance-taking events:

1. Student A is not attending class on the Teacher Class Roster.



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2. The teacher enters a 180 minute “negative exception” for Student A into the class Attendance page in the DOC Education “Student Management” module in our internal system, COMS. **See page 2 of Attachment F.**
3. At the end of the month, the monthly attendance report for this class (and all others throughout the DOC) is accessed and printed by our DOC consortium’s MARCS Student Worker. **See page 3 of Attachment F.** Note that Student A in our scenario, circled, had 45.5 actual attendance hours in March 2016. The 180 minute (3 hour) negative exception on March 21 and any other exceptions during that month are reflected in the report.
4. The actual number of hours of attendance (as recorded in COMS) for Student A (and all students) is entered in MARCS. **See page 4 of Attachment F.**

### Assessment

Each ABE student takes a TABE (or CASAS if ESL) post-test at least once every three months of enrollment (unless they have not reached 40 hours or more of instruction since the previous test) and the scores are entered into COMS and MARCS. Functioning level increases, if any, are noted in MARCS. These tests are typically scheduled during the student’s regular classroom time, so the hours are counted accordingly. On occasion, students are called down from their living unit to take the TABE test, and those hours are entered as additional ABE hours.

GED testing is done on site at each correctional facility. Each facility has authorized GED testers on site. There are different GED testing schedules at each facility, according to demand. If GED testing is scheduled during a student’s ABE class time, the student signs out of class and does not receive instructional hours for the time spent taking the GED test. GED test data is recorded in COMS and MARCS, with



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appropriate GED testing hours recorded in MARCS based on GED test entry.

### Distance Learning

Although DOC offender students do have access to computer based curriculum such as Aztec, Ultra Key word processing and, recently, KeyTrain during regular class time, DOC offender students do not have access to online curriculum for independent study outside of the classroom, nor are they given assignments to complete while back in their living units or cells. All documented instructional hours occur under the supervision of their instructor or the TABE/CASAS or GED examiner.

Distance Learning approved platforms by MDE may be accessible in the future for DOC as technology capabilities within corrections advances. When and if the platforms become a viable instructional option for our students, we will develop a distance learning plan by participating in DL101 and follow all distance learning policy guidelines for counting proxy hours.

#### **2.2. What is your program quality/accountability plan for main fiscal agent sites and all sub-grantees? Accountability plans should include:**

##### **2.2.1 How does the fiscal agent ensure that the ABE consortium and all its sub grantees are in compliance with federal and state ABE law, policy and guidance?**

Our consortium has an ABE Manager (housed at Central Office in Saint Paul) and nine "site managers" who are the education directors at each of the nine correctional facilities. The DOC Education managers and supervisors, including the nine site managers/education directors, meet all day on the third Thursday of each month for training, planning and discussion. "ABE" is on the agenda at each of



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these meetings, at which time ABE updates, current data, etc., are shared. Site managers/education directors bring the information back to their respective sites/correctional facilities and disseminate the relevant information to their ABE staff.

Following the submission of the annual ABE grant application, the ABE Manager reviews all components of the grant application with the site managers/education directors, including all Assurances.

DOC ABE consortium staff receive current training on ABE practice, law, policy and receive quality guidance through regular attendance at both the annual ABE Summer Intensive and at the annual Correctional Education Association (CEA) state and/or regional meetings held each spring.

Further, all of the ABE and MARCS data staff receive annual training held at the MLC by Mary Zimmerli.

To ensure quality control, NRS data and attendance/enrollment is maintained and monitored for the entire consortium at the DOC Central Office in Saint Paul by the DOC ABE Manager and staff. Facility (Site) education directors and designated facility MARCS/ABE data entry staff monitor NRS data and attendance/enrollment trends at the facility/site level. To avoid error, all attendance entry into MARCS is done by one staff who is housed at the DOC Central Office. However, in anticipation of monthly attendance changing to daily attendance in the new state ABE database system, we anticipate attendance responsibilities will revert back to the facility level, with Central Office staff working in support of the facility staff and monitoring for accuracy.

### **2.2.2 How often is the consortium's performance data monitored (especially information found in the state ABE database reports like the National Reporting System (NRS) Tables A, 4, and 4b and others)?**



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Data is compiled and analyzed, and the updated data is shared with facility site managers/education directors at the monthly education directors meetings, with particular attention to Tables A, 4 and 4b. Site managers/education directors then bring this data back to sites/facilities and shares with ABE staff. In addition, site/facility MARCS data staff are trained to provide their site manager with these reports. If and when, during the ABE year, data trends appear statistically relevant, at the consortium and/or individual site level, in terms of positive or negative trends, the ABE Manager and team (Transitions to Post Secondary and Careers Coordinator, Education Specialist and MARCS data entry specialist) review and analyze to determine if there is data error and/or if any course of action is required. Our program shares **NRS outcome and enrollment data** through the dissemination of quarterly reports to all education staff and to DOC commissioner-level staff.

### **2.2.3 How is program performance data monitored at the agency-, site-, teacher, and/or class-levels?**

In addition to the site managers/education directors being informed of program performance level at the agency and site levels on a monthly basis, as noted in Item 2.2.2, each site holds periodic (typically monthly) staff (site manager/education director, teachers and support staff) meetings during which the program site manager leads discussions about NRS outcome and enrollment data. Site/facility MARCS data specialists are trained to provide reports, including teacher and class levels, and these reports are provided to the site manager/education director.

Tables A, 4 and 4b, at the agency, site, teacher and class levels, are regularly reviewed at each facility for that particular facility.



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### **2.2.3 How and when do you share and communicate your NRS outcome and enrollment data with other staff and stakeholders?**

NRS outcome and enrollment data is shared with other staff and stakeholders as needed. In addition to sharing with facility education staff as outlined in 2.2.2, in the DOC it is often necessary to share select information about offender students with others such as treatment program staff, case managers and unit security (especially in the case of attendance issues).

In addition, the ABE Manager provides verbal and/or written consortium progress reports to the DOC Assistant Commissioner for Facilities, facility wardens and associate wardens of operations, and to Central Office and facility finance directors on a bi-monthly basis. Finally, the DOC Commissioner (currently Tom Roy) is especially interested in hearing graduation information as he delights in boasting to fellow commissioners of corrections from around the country about how Minnesota leads the nation in GED 2014 completion rates!

### **2.2.4 How has the consortium implemented the ABE Student Progress Policy? If this is addressed in your assessment or attendance policy, please refer to the policy and page number and/or section.**

The DOC consortium implements the ABE Student Progress Policy as written, albeit, due to DOC procedures and policies we typically maintain students who go through the Progress Policy process and fail. However, these students for whom we are no longer allowed to count instructional hours for due to the Progress Policy guidelines are taken off of the rosters that generate ABE attendance hours for our consortium. It is rare for the DOC consortium to have students reach the criteria where the Progress Policy kicks in due to the fact that typical ABE students attend classes five days per week and tend to advance a level or more in the prescribe amount of time. **See Attachment E2 for a sample student progress intervention using this policy.**

### **2.3 In what roles do you use volunteers in your program (i.e. instruction, teaching assistance, intake, goal-setting, assessment, data entry, etc.)?**



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The DOC does not use traditional volunteers in our program. We do use offender (inmate) tutors in classrooms to provide general teaching assistance to our licensed instructors. The typical DOC ABE classroom instructor has 2-3 offender tutors. The tutors have high school or GED diplomas as a minimum requirement, with many tutors having post-secondary education, as well. Tutors work with individual or small groups of offender students in the classroom and/or assist the teacher with paperwork and other miscellaneous classroom duties.

### **2.3.1 How do you orient and train potential volunteers in your consortium for these roles? (Can refer to Document I.)**

The DOC has an annual contract with the Minnesota Literacy Council for its volunteer training. Instead of traditional volunteers, the MLC provides training for our offender tutors. In addition to this training, each facility/site has hiring and training procedures for its offender tutors. Instructors benefit from the fact that a large percentage of their tutors are former ABE students who have earned their diploma and are now back in the classroom providing assistance. **See Attachment I, which for the DOC is our annual contract with the MLC for offender tutor training.**

### **2.3.2 What training do you provide or require on an ongoing basis for volunteers in the consortium, locally and/or through other entities?**

As noted in 2.3.1, the DOC has an annual contract with Rob Podlasek and the MLC for volunteer (in our case, *tutor*) training at each of our correctional facilities. This training complies with the Volunteer Training Standards policy, and tutors receive the training annually.

**Documents** – Provide the following **local program policies**, which are rules and procedures that apply to consortium programming; describe how the policies are implemented in the program and how these policies are communicated to staff and



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students (if applicable).

- B Student orientation and intake policy (see [Local ABE Consortium Student Orientation and Intake Policy - Template](#) and [Local ABE Program examples](#))
- C Assessment policy (see [Local ABE Consortium Assessment Policy - Template](#) and [Local ABE Program examples](#))
- D Student attendance policy (see [Local ABE Consortium Student Attendance Policy - Template](#) and [Local ABE Program examples](#))

**Additional Documents** – Provide the following documents:

- E Student attendance contract (see [Local ABE Program examples](#))
- F A sample student attendance sheet that is completed – remove students' identifying information
- G Student intake or initial registration form(s)
- H Personal Education Plan (PEP) or goal-setting form(s) and/or procedure
- I Volunteer orientation and training plan (Additional approval required for programs that use volunteers to deliver instruction but are not using the Minnesota Literacy Council's (MLC) volunteer training. Other programs should still include their local volunteer orientation and training plan here. See also Narrative Question 2.3); For more information, please review the [Volunteer Training Standards Policy](#) found on the [Minnesota ABE Law, Policy and Guidance page](#) ([www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance](http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance)).