



Volunteer Training Standards Policy

Minnesota Adult Education (ABE)

Policy Development Date: July 1, 2006

Policy Implementation Date: July 1, 2006 (latest revision applies starting June 2, 2025)

Latest Policy Revision Date: June 2, 2025

Policy Overview

Background

Applicable Minnesota Law:

According to State ABE statute, 124D.518 Adult basic education aid definition, Subdivision 6, b. 3:

(b) A community-based organization or nonprofit organization that delivers education services under this section must demonstrate that it has met the following criteria:

(3) require all instructional staff to complete a training course in teaching adult learners;

According to State ABE statute, 124D.52 Adult basic education, Subdivision 2 Program approval, a. 7:

Subd. 2. Program approval. (a) To receive aid under this section, a district, a consortium of districts, the Department of Corrections, or a private nonprofit organization must submit an application by June 1 describing the program, on a form provided by the department. The program must be approved by the commissioner according to the following criteria:

(7) volunteer training and use of volunteers;

Policy Statement

Volunteer Training Standards Rationale: The Adult Education Team at the Minnesota Department of Education is dedicated to ensuring high quality educational options are offered by all adult education providers for adult learners. Volunteers outnumber paid staff in Minnesota's adult education system. Trained, supported, and effectively placed volunteers improve the quality of adult education services. These required training standards are established for approved Adult Basic Education (ABE) providers so that volunteers can improve educational quality and capacity in Minnesota Adult Education.

The Adult Education Team at the Minnesota Department of Education must uphold ABE law as cited above through the development and implementation of training standards for all volunteers who are working directly with ABE students in an instructional capacity. Enhanced accountability efforts and the requirement of the National Reporting System (NRS) ABE student performance measures have become increasingly important and necessary to meet the requirements of ABE federal and state law. These ABE student performance measures are measurable skill gains often based on ABE adult-appropriate standardized tests scores, as well as adult learner employment, wage, and credentialing outcomes.

All volunteers are required to receive training for the duties they perform. Even if a volunteer is not serving in a teaching, assistant teaching, or tutoring role, they need to be trained with the information and given the necessary resources to do their role effectively and ensure program quality. For example, if a volunteer is assisting with testing, they need to receive training on how to appropriately administer assessments.

Minnesota Volunteer Training Standards

This section is divided into six parts:

- Required initial training hours
- Required initial training content
- Initial training timeline
- Ongoing training requirement
- Training options and resources
- Minnesota Adult Education program compliance

Volunteer Training Requirements

All volunteers in Minnesota Adult Education are required to receive the appropriate training to do their work effectively and ensure high quality adult education services. This includes volunteers who serve in-person and/or remotely. **All volunteers must receive provider-specific orientation and training by**

the host adult education program. Depending on their role within the program, some volunteers must also complete an additional 4 or 12 hours of initial training.

4-Hour Initial Training: The following volunteers are required to receive 4 hours of initial training in addition to the provider-specific orientation and training:

- Volunteers who only work as classroom assistants in remote or in-person classes led by an adult education teacher or a volunteer with 12 hours of initial training
- Volunteers who work with subgroups of students during class using an activity/lesson prepared by an adult education teacher or a volunteer with 12 hours of initial training
- Volunteers who are providing supplemental instruction outside of class to directly support lessons and content from classes led by an adult education teacher or a volunteer with 12 hours of initial training
- Volunteers who serve as navigators (digital literacy, career, social services, etc.) for students

12-Hour Initial Training: The following volunteers must receive 12 hours of initial training in addition to the provider-specific orientation and onsite training:

- Adult education volunteers who deliver individual instruction and are under minimal or no direct supervision of a teacher
- Adult education volunteers who lead instruction for a group or class of students and are under minimal or no direct supervision of a teacher

Exemptions: The following volunteers are not required to complete the 4 or 12 hours of initial training:

- Volunteers who started their service before October 1, 2021
- Adult education volunteers who have no instructional or tutor responsibilities and perform other, non-instructional tasks (e.g. intake, support services, book-keeping, technology aides, data entry, etc.)
- Adult education volunteers with a teaching license
- Volunteers with more than 400 hours of documentable adult education instruction (volunteer or paid teacher) in a program or programs comparable to the Minnesota Adult Education (ABE) system programming
- ESL-specific volunteers with at least one of the following:
 - TEFL/TESL/CELTA certification
 - College degree in ESL or Linguistics
- Volunteers who are participating as part of a formal service-learning program with a college or university that requires them to volunteer a total of 10 hours or fewer. These volunteers should only serve as classroom assistants under the direction of a teacher. They should never lead instruction.

Content Required for Initial Training

Requirement for All Volunteers: *Provider-specific orientation and training* including site information, safety information, resources, and other information important for volunteers to know for their role.

This training could also include:

- Specific site procedures (testing process, recordings hours, risk management, etc.)
- In-depth training on specific text/curriculum/software used by the local ABE program
- Remote instruction technical guidance (e.g., how to use Zoom, Google Drive, etc.)
- Description of the volunteer role and expected tasks

Note: The provider-specific orientation and training is separate from the 4- and 12-hour initial training.

4-Hour Initial Training Requirement (*Literacy Minnesota's Foundations of Volunteering in the Adult Education Classroom*)

- Understanding Adult Learners (2 hours): Characteristics and motivations of adult learners, principles of adult learning, equity and cultural awareness, sensitivity to the challenges of learning English/developing literacy
- Two additional hours of targeted training, topic(s) to be determined by the program based on the volunteer assignment. Examples may include:
 - Level- or modality-specific instructional content topics (pronunciation, writing, listening, math vocabulary, etc.)
 - Remote tutoring best practices, if appropriate
 - Test certification (offered by state adult education assessment trainers and/or test publishers)
 - Other topics identified by the provider

12-Hour Initial Training Requirement (*Literacy Minnesota's Foundations of Adult Education Tutoring*)

Core Training Content (8 hours)

- Overview of MN Adult Education and ABE Accountability (2 hours): Overview of ABE programming in Minnesota, demographics of learners, content standards, assessment, NRS educational functioning levels, annual state ABE level completion targets, and other state accountability information
- Understanding Adult Learners (2 hours): Characteristics and motivations of adult learners, principles of adult learning, equity and cultural awareness, sensitivity to the challenges of learning English/developing literacy
- Instructional Best Practices: Working with Students (2 hours): Explicit instruction, checking comprehension, error correction and feedback, facilitating questions, learner-centered instruction
- Instructional Best Practices: Working with Materials (2 hours): Using curriculum, lesson planning, gradual release of responsibility when introducing new materials and activities

Targeted Training Content (4 hours)

Selected by the volunteer and/or program based on role, interest and availability. Examples may include:

- Level- or modality-specific instructional content topics (pronunciation, writing, listening, math vocabulary, etc.)
- Remote tutoring best practices, if appropriate
- Test certification (offered by state adult education assessment trainers and/or test publishers)
- Other topics identified by the provider

Initial Training Timeline

Volunteers must complete the provider-specific orientation and start some of the required training topics within their first three months. The minimum initial training hours and content must be completed within the first six-month period of their volunteer assignment.

Ongoing Training Requirement

Ongoing Training (In-Service) Requirements: All volunteers who have tutored for more than one year are required to attend 2 hours of in-service training annually. Volunteers can attend training offered by Literacy Minnesota or the local program can provide the training.

Training Options and Resources

As part of the Minnesota Adult Education Support Network, Literacy Minnesota has the capacity to assist with the delivery of the initial 4-hour or 12-hour training necessary for volunteers. The training offered by Literacy Minnesota has been approved by the Minnesota Department of Education.

As an alternative, local adult education providers have the option of providing their own initial training to their volunteers. Literacy Minnesota can work with providers to develop their training plan. All training plans must be approved by Literacy Minnesota and the Adult Education Team at the Minnesota Department of Education. Please contact Rob Podlasek at Literacy Minnesota for assistance with developing and submitting volunteer training plans for approval: rpodlasek@literacymn.org.

After approval has been granted, these volunteer training plans must be submitted annually for review as part of the annual volunteer report for each consortium or provider.

Minnesota Adult Education (ABE) Program Compliance

All state and federally funded ABE programs are subject to review by the Minnesota Department of Education. The purpose of the review regarding volunteer training is to ensure that ABE providers

receiving state and federal funds are offering high quality educational services for adults that are in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures, that funds have been expended effectively and efficiently, and that required performance goals are achieved.

Any provider that is found to be violating this policy (or any other Adult Education (ABE) policies set by the Minnesota Department of Education) may be placed in program improvement or potentially lose their grant authorization.

For More Information

- This policy, along with other ABE policies and resources, can be found online at www.mnabe.org/abe-law-policy/mn-abe-policies.
- Minnesota State Statutes can be found on the Minnesota Revisor of Statutes website (www.revisor.mn.gov).
- The contact for training with Literacy Minnesota, which is the state's current supplemental service provider for volunteer training, is:
 - [Rob Podlasek](mailto:rpodlasek@literacymn.org), Literacy Minnesota Training Director, at rpodlasek@literacymn.org
- If you have any questions about Minnesota Adult Education (ABE) policies, contact:
 - [Brad Hasskamp](mailto:brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us), State Adult Education Director, at (651) 582-8594 or brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us