



FACT SHEET

Career Pathways to Jobs with Family Sustaining Incomes
Through
ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY SERVICES

What is adult education? Adult education serves adults 16 years of age and older who are no longer in school and are functioning below the high school completion level. Services include foundation skills (reading, mathematics, and English) coupled with college and career readiness skills leading to adult secondary education and transitioning to post secondary. Local programs are conducted by combinations of public schools, community-based organizations, and community colleges

What is the need for services? According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, ⁱ(NCES, 2005) more than **90 million** adults (45% of the population) may not have the skills to fully participate in family, work and community opportunities. Currently programs are able to serve approximately 2.3 million individuals a year, combining state, local and federal dollars. **Waiting lists** exist in almost every state with over 100,000 waiting an opportunity to enrollⁱⁱ.

Why is adult education important? Limited education and work readiness skills not only negatively affect individuals' ability to participate in and benefit from work, family and community activities, but also affect many sectors of society.



Business: Experts estimate that low literacy costs the American economy \$225 billion a year in **lost productivity**.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1950 60% of all jobs were classified as “unskilled” and available to those with high school diplomas or less. Now more than 80% of jobs are skilled, requiring education and training beyond high school.

Educating Children: Children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the education level of their parents, especially their mother. Parents with low levels of education are at a disadvantage in supporting their child's education. The more educated the parents, the greater the likelihood their children will succeed.^{iv}



Health: According to the results of an American Medical Association Foundation/Pfizer study...., individuals with low health literacy incur medical expenses that are up to four times greater than patients with adequate literacy skills, costing the health care system tens of billions of dollars every year for unnecessary doctor visits and hospital stays.^v

AMA estimates that **46% of adults cannot read and follow medical instructions** for them and their children.^{vi}

Corrections: Participation in correctional education *reduces recidivism*. Prison inmates who attempt to earn GEDs or take postsecondary course work while in prison have lower rates of recidivism than other prisoners. This is significant, as 95 percent of the more than 2.3 million inmates incarcerated in the United States will eventually be released (Hughes and Wilson n.d.).^{vii}



Immigration: The ability of new immigrants *to assimilate and become productive citizens* depends on their ability to read, write and speak English. Roughly half of the adult immigrants living currently in the U.S. report that they speak English “less than very well,” and an increasingly large proportion of the U.S. workforce in the near future will be made up of recent immigrants, with one in every four Americans of Asian or Hispanic origin by 2030^{viii} Currently 43% of adult education enrollees are in ESL classes even though they are only 15% of the eligible population.

Welfare: Two in five youths between the ages of 16 and 24 who drop out of school receive public assistance^{ix}. In adults, 43% of people who are *not proficient readers live in poverty*. Of those who are proficient readers, a mere 4% live in poverty.^x



Return on Investment: Adult education plays a major role in many key areas of society. Investment in adult education results in *higher salaries, enhanced job security, greater business productivity, increased consumer spending, increased tax revenues and decreased drain on social program services*. In addition, we will see parents better able to support their *child’s education, healthier citizens and reduced correctional costs*.^{xi}

ⁱ National Assessment of Adult Literacy, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003
<http://nces.ed.gov/naal/> ,

ⁱⁱ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, Adult Student Waiting List Survey, 2009-2010.
<http://www.ncsdae.org/2010%20Adult%20Education%20Waiting%20List%20Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Carnevale, Gainer & Meltzer, The American Society for Training and Development

^{iv} National Center for Family Literacy, Family Literacy Toolkit,
<http://ncladvocacy.org/FamilyLiteracyFactSheetfromNCFL.pdf>

^v McGraw-Hill Research Foundation, The Return on Investment for Adult Education and Training: measuring impact of a better educated and trained workforce. 2011, <http://www.mcgraw-hillresearchfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/the-return-on-investment-from-adult-education-and-training.pdf>, page 21

^{vi} AMA foundation source

^{vii} McGraw-Hill Research Foundation, Op. Cit. page xxxxx (Hughes and Wilson...)roi paper)

^{viii} McGraw-Hill Research Foundation, Op. Cit. page 7

^{ix} Bridgeland, DiIulio & Morison, 2006

^x Nora O’Neill, Why encouraging literacy should be part of your business plan,
<http://bookshopblog.com/2009/05/09/why-encouraging-literacy-should-be-part-of-your-business-plan/>

^{xi} McGraw-Hill Research Foundation, Op. Cit.

For more information on adult education and family literacy in your state or locality, contact the *National Council of State Directors of Adult Education*, www.ncsae.org, 202.624.5250 and ask for Dr. Lennox McLendon, Lynn Selmsler, or Dr. Bonnie Moore.