

# **NMHED Adult Education (AE) Division DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY & PROCEDURES**

**Effective July 1, 2019**

## **SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

### **Background**

In June 2007, The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), received approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to collect demographic, enrollment and outcome data on distance education learners and report this information in the National Reporting System (NRS). As a result, New Mexico Adult Education (NM AE) convened a task force and implemented local program pilots to determine how to best provide distance education to the NM adult education population. This policy discusses the primary actions needed to design and implement distance education programs that will provide quality services to students at the local program level. New Mexico is a predominantly rural state with huge distances between its more populated areas. With less-than-ideal economic conditions, and the high cost of transportation, distance education has become a prime alternative to the traditional classroom setting. Distance education can be an effective way to serve learners unable to attend regularly scheduled classes. It may also be an attractive option for students who live some distance away from a local program. Distance education courses can help students obtain the skills necessary to transition into work and/or higher education. They can also help students develop the self-efficacy, discipline, resourcefulness and technology skills to pursue a career or advance in a current job.

### **Procedures Overview and Purpose**

The purpose of this procedure is to give local programs information on how NM AE will implement distance education processes and procedures for local programs. This will help local programs to determine whether distance education is an appropriate initiative for their population, and set realistic timeframes in planning distance education programs.

## **SECTION II: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

National Reporting System (NRS) Implementation Guidelines define Distance Education as:

Formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, web-based programs and other online technology. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail or online technologies, and software. (p 50)

It is common for adult learners to take traditional classroom-based, blended and/or distance learning courses during the same program year. For purposes of defining who is a distance learner, programs will track students as distance learners if at least 50% of the instructional

hours scheduled for a given class are to be derived from proxy hours. For the purposes of this policy, blended learning students will follow the same policies as distance learners.

### **SECTION III: Assessment, Contact Hours and Approved Software**

#### **Assessing Distance Learners**

Distance learners must be assessed in accordance to the NMHED/Adult Education Division State Assessment Policy. All assessments must be completed face-to-face, in a secure proctored setting with a certified test administrator. Proxy hours should be considered when determining when it is appropriate to post-test students.

In addition, programs must have a procedure to determine the student's ability to function effectively as a distance learner. This may be a survey of computer skills, motivation, and independent learning skills, or a plan to support the student through blended learning to build those skills.

#### **Instructional Hours for Distance Learning**

Classes providing distance or blended learning must be indicated as such in the title of the course in the state database (LACES). NRS Implementation Guidelines require:

Students in distance education ... must have at least 12 hours of contact with the program before they can be counted for federal reporting purposes. Contact hours for distance learners can be a combination of actual contact and contact through telephone, video, teleconference or online communication, where student and program staff can interact and through which learner identity is verifiable. (p 48)

Contact hours are entered into the state database (LACES) as Instruction.

In addition, programs should report proxy (distance learning) hours according to NRS Implementation Guidelines and as defined below. (p 48-49)

**Clock Time Model (preferred)** – assigns contact hours based on a software program that tracks time. PLATO, Common Core Achieve and KeyTrain are examples of online programs that provide reports of clock time.

NOTE: Procedures for reporting clock time must ensure that time using the software during contact hours are not also reported as proxy hours.

**Teacher Verification Model** – assigns a fixed number of hours based on teacher determination of the extent to which a learner engaged in, or completed the assignment. This model is useful for print or video programs as well as other software that does not include clock time such as USA Learns and Khan Academy.

**Learner Mastery Model** – Assigns a fixed number of hours based on the learner mastering a test on the content of the lesson. This model is useful for print or video programs as well as other software that does not include clock time such as USA Learns and Khan Academy.

For Teacher Verification and Learner Mastery Models, a chart will be provided and updated annually to ensure consistency throughout the state.

Proxy hours are entered into the state database (LACES) as Instruction – Distance Learning.

**NOTE:** Homework for a face-to-face class may NOT be included as proxy hours. Proxy hours must include the student engaging with and learning new material at a distance.

### **Approved Curricula**

State licenses are purchased annually for online curriculum that has been reviewed and deemed appropriate. Training and support will be provided for this curriculum. The curriculum the NMHED/AE office will provide statewide is Edmentum (PLATO). Individual programs may choose other quality online products as meet the needs of their programs. Programs choosing different online learning systems will need to bear the costs of those systems, including training and support. Training for other curriculum and delivery methods may be provided by DELT at the discretion of the project and HED.