



Perkins Career and Technical Education Primer

Special Populations

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) reauthorizes and updates the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV). Perkins V includes several provisions designed to ensure that career and technical education (CTE) programs meet the demands of the twenty-first-century economy.

Perkins V includes specific supports for unique demographic groups, referred to in the law as “special populations,” intended for recruiting and retaining these groups in high-quality CTE programs and improving their overall academic performance.

The definition of special populations in Perkins V includes the following groups:

- individuals with disabilities;
- low-income youth and adults;
- individuals preparing for nontraditional fields;¹
- single parents, including single pregnant women;
- out-of-workforce individuals;
- English learners;
- homeless individuals;
- youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system; and
- youth with a parent who is an active duty member of the armed forces.

*Note: The definition of special populations **does not** include racial and ethnic subgroups; therefore, this definition does not align fully with the [protected populations in the Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (see section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).*

Resources to Support Special Populations

New to Perkins V is a special set-aside—a specific allocation from state leadership funds—for recruiting special populations into CTE programs. Of the 10 percent of funds a state can use for various state leadership activities to facilitate CTE programs across the state, the state must allocate 0.1 percent or \$50,000—whichever is the lesser amount—for recruiting special populations into CTE programs.

Additionally, school districts can use their Perkins V allocation to reduce or eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for special populations, including expenses for dual- or concurrent-enrollment or early college high school programs, and costs associated with fees, transportation, childcare, or mobility challenges.

Special Populations Reflected in Accountability

Perkins V includes a new accountability provision that requires states and school districts “to continually make meaningful progress toward improving the performance” of all CTE students, including racial and ethnic subgroups and special populations, when setting specific performance levels for each of the five core indicators of performance under the law. This new provision provides an opportunity for states to be proactive, rather than reactive, in meeting the equity requirements of the law.

During annual reporting, states and districts also must identify disparities and gaps in performance on the state-set performance levels between special populations and the performance of all CTE concentrators as well as between racial and ethnic subgroups and all CTE concentrators. Additionally, states must include a quantifiable description of progress

being made for special populations and racial and ethnic subgroups in meeting established performance levels. For additional information about the accountability requirements of Perkins V see “[Perkins Career and Technical Education Primer: Accountability](#).”

Informing the State Plan

Perkins V provides a number of opportunities for entities that serve special populations to provide direct input on the development of the state Perkins plan. First, the state must develop its Perkins V implementation plan in consultation with members and representatives of special populations. Additionally, through the public comment process, individuals who belong to and/or represent the groups the law considers special populations can provide written comments to the state about whether the performance levels set by the state support the meaningful improvement of special populations in CTE course work.

State Plan Content

Each state plan must describe the state’s program strategies for special populations, including how these students

- will receive equal access to all of the activities described under the law;
- will not be discriminated against based on their status as members of a special population;
- will receive programs designed to enable these students to meet or exceed the state’s performance levels; and
- will receive additional learning opportunities that grant them access to high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations.

State Guidance

In partnership with several organizations, the Alliance for Excellent Education developed a set of recommendations for states and school districts about how best to support special populations through the implementation of high-quality CTE programs and through the accountability system and program improvement. Those recommendations are available at all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/innovating-for-equity-and-excellence-perkins-v-implementation-recommendations-for-states/.

For additional information about Perkins V, visit all4ed.org/perkins.



Endnotes

- 1 “Nontraditional fields” refers to occupations or fields of work, such as careers in computer science, technology, and other current and emerging high-skill occupations, for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in such an occupation or field of work.



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