

Connecting the Dots: MRE and Workforce Development

Stable employment and job opportunities are important to the well-being of families. In this recession, unemployment rates are the highest they have been in two generations. Many families are struggling with economic stability. Marriage and relationship education (MRE) providers should: 1) be prepared to help clients navigate the workforce system as un/underemployment can place stress on the couple relationship and 2) work with the local workforce board as a partner in strengthening the community. This Tip Sheet provides an overview of employment services, briefly discusses the connection between healthy relationships and the workforce, and offers tips for MRE practitioners to collaborate with employment services and connect their participants with them.

Workforce Investment Boards/ Workforce Development Boards

In 1998, the federal government attempted to streamline the maze of agencies under one umbrella with the [Workforce Investment Act \(WIA\)](#). This law established a “one-stop” approach that would fill the needs of two important customers: the job seeker and the employer. Additionally, it provided the guidance for each state to create Workforce Investment Boards (also called Workforce Development Boards).

Know your state’s board structure (for example, is it regional?) and be familiar with the services that are provided. Learn about the volunteer appointees and who appoints them.



Under the law, the volunteer members of State and Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) are appointed by Chief Elected Officials, like the governors at the state level and county judges and mayors at the local level. The members of that board are made up of representatives from both the public and private sector, with the majority being representatives of the private sector. Larger, more populated states have opted for a state board as a rule-making body and local, regional boards as deliverers of the hands-on services for job seekers and businesses. In smaller or less populated states, the state has the option of keeping the primary duties at the state level and delivering services on a regional level. Local Workforce Investment Boards are given the choice of broadly defining options and categories of services to be offered in their area, as well as defining the demand occupations and targeted industries as long as they stay within the boundaries of statutory requirements. They are funded by both federal and state grants, some of which can be for selective populations (like TANF recipients).

