



National Reporting System
for Adult Education

A Project of the U.S. Department of Education

NRS STATE DATA QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

The NRS state data quality standards identify the policies, processes and materials that states and local programs should have in place to collect valid and reliable data for the National Reporting System (NRS). The Division of Adult Education (DAEL) within the Office of Vocational and Adult Education developed the standards to define the characteristics of high quality state and local data collection systems for the NRS. The standards provide an organized way for DAEL to understand the quality of NRS data collection within the states and also provide guidance to states on how to improve their systems. States are to complete this checklist, which incorporates the standards, with their annual NRS data submission to rate their level of implementation of the standards. The accompanying policy document describes DAEL's requirements for state conformance to the standards and explains the use of the information from this checklist.

Overview of Standards

General Content Areas

The standards are organized into four content areas that define high quality data collection systems.

1. Data Foundation and Structure

This content area addresses whether the state has in place the foundation and structures for collecting quality data that meet NRS guidelines. Standards measure whether the state has policies for assessment, follow-up and goal setting; whether local programs know these policies and whether the state conducts validity studies to ensure processes are working to produce accurate and reliable data.

2. Data Collection and Verification

This area measures whether the state collects measures according to NRS guidelines, using procedures that are likely to result in high reliability and validity. Standards also address whether data are collected in a timely manner, are systematically checked for errors, and whether the state also has processes for verifying the validity of the data.

3. Data Analysis and Reporting

The quality standards in this content area include whether the state has systems for analyzing and reporting data, including appropriate databases and software. The standards also address whether analyses and reports are produced regularly, are used to check for errors and missing data, meet NRS and state needs, and are useful to state and local staff for program management and improvement.

4. Staff Development

The standards under this area address whether the state has systems for professional development of state and local staff on the NRS, including whether the state has provided training on data collection, measures, assessment, goal setting and follow-up procedures. Standard also focus on whether the training is ongoing and continuous, meets the needs of state and local staff, and is designed to improve data quality.

Levels of Quality and Quality Improvement

Within each area there are three levels of quality that reflect whether the state has policies and procedures likely to improve the reliability and validity of data. Based on the checklist, DAEL will classify states' NRS data procedures into one of these levels each year.

- **Acceptable Quality.** State policies and procedures for implementing the NRS meet the essential requirements for NRS implementation, as described in the *NRS Implementation Guidelines* and the *Guide for Improving NRS Data Quality*. This level reflects the minimum acceptable for the December 2002 data submission, according to DAEL policy.
- **Superior Quality.** State procedures go beyond the minimum to promote higher levels of data validity and reliability through more rigorous definitions, regular oversight of data collection methods, ongoing assistance to local programs on NRS data issues and procedures for verifying the accuracy of data. In future years, states will be required to have NRS policies and procedures conforming to this level.
- **Exemplary Quality.** The state has procedures and systems that promote the highest levels of data validity and reliability, including systems for verifying data accuracy from local programs, systems for monitoring data collection and analyses, and has corrective systems to improve data on an ongoing basis. State procedures indicate a focus on continuous improvement of the quality and accuracy of data.

States will have to meet all of the standards within a quality level to be considered at that level. In addition, the *scoring will be cumulative*, so that to score at the superior level, a state would have to meet all of the standards for that level *and* all standards for

the acceptable quality level. To rank at the exemplary level, a state would have to meet all of the standards for all quality levels.

Instructions for Completing the Checklist

States use this checklist to rate their implementation of the data quality standards in their NRS data collection procedures. States also describe details of their data collection policies and procedures for some standards. States must also include with the checklist a plan for data quality improvement. The director of the administrative state agency where the federal adult education and literacy program resides must certify the checklist and it must be submitted with the annual NRS data performance report.

Reporting on Standards

The checklist presents the standards for each content area and quality level. States are to report whether they have the policy process or procedure described by the standards by indicating “yes” if the standard has been met or “no” if it has not been met. Some standards apply only to the survey or data matching follow-up methodologies for collecting NRS outcome measures. If the state does not use one of the methods, it should report “not applicable” (NA) for the standard. Please note that since your state may meet some of the standards in all categories (e.g., some under the acceptable level and some under the superior level) it is important to complete the *entire* checklist.

To report that the state has met the standard (i.e., “yes”), the state must meet *all* of the criteria for the standard. For example, for the standard concerning written state assessment policy, the policy must include all of the topics listed in the standard. Otherwise the state must indicate a “no” for the standard and address the problem in the data quality improvement plan.

Narrative Detail

Some standard require the state to provide additional information, such as the name of assessment used or the state’s follow-up method, or a narrative description with more detail. For example, if a state has a system of technical assistance on data quality to local providers, the state must describe the system. All narrative descriptions should be brief – but sufficient enough to convey the information requested. No more than a few sentences are necessary.

Data Quality Improvement Plan

If the states fails to meet acceptable standards in any area, the state’s performance will be considered unacceptable and the state must include a brief data quality improvement plan that describes how it will move toward acceptable quality within the next year (for December 2003 data submission). The plans must address all standards that the state did not meet, describe what new policies or procedures it will put in place to meet the standards, identify barriers to moving to a higher quality level and the technical

assistance needed to implement the plan. For areas at acceptable quality, the state may optionally submit a data quality improvement plan to describe how the state will move toward superior quality for the July 1, 2003-June 30, 2004 reporting period. (December 2004 data submission). DAEL will offer technical assistance to states that fail to meet acceptable or superior quality levels.

Submission and Certification

States are to complete the checklist for the 2001-2002 program year for the NRS data due on December 31, 2002. This initial submission, which will serve as a baseline for the state, is due to DAEL on **January 31, 2003**. Thereafter, the checklist will be due with each annual data submission on December 31, 2003 and December 31, 2004.

The last page of the checklist is a certification page, where the state director of adult education or head of the administrative state agency where the federal adult education and literacy program resides must certify to the accuracy of the information in the checklist. The director or agency head must sign this page. Since DAEL cannot accept electronic signatures, and a copy of the original page with signature must be submitted with the checklist.



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NRS STATE DATA QUALITY CHECKLIST

State: Iowa Date: 12-21-2002

Completed by (name and title): John Hartwig-State Director

A. Data Foundation and Structure

Acceptable Quality

1. State has written assessment policies that specify: Yes No
- Standardized assessments to use for accountability that are valid and appropriate for adult students.
 - Time periods (in hours or weeks) for when to pre- and posttest.
 - Score ranges tied to educational functioning levels (EFL) for placement and for reporting gains for accountability.
 - Appropriate guidance on tests and placement for special populations (e.g., students who are unable to be tested due to language or disability).
 - Unacceptable methods of assessment for EFL placement.

1a. List up to three of the most of commonly used assessments permitted for ABE and ESL.

ABE Assessments: **CASAS assessment instruments for all CASAS levels**

ESL Assessments: **CASAS assessment instruments for all CASAS levels**

2. State has written policies for follow-up that explain: Yes No
- Goal setting procedures.
 - Follow-up methodology (survey or data match) for each measure that meets NRS requirements.
 - Which of students are to be followed.
 - Difference between goal setting for NRS and goals for instruction.

2a. Indicate your follow-up methods for each measure.

Entered employment: Survey Data match Both (explain)

Retained employment: Survey Data match Both (explain)

Obtain GED: Survey Data match Both (explain)

Enter postsecondary: Survey Data match Both (explain)

3. If state uses survey follow-up method for any measure (check not applicable (NA) and skip to the next item if survey is not used): NA

- Local programs or state can produce a list of students to survey, according to NRS requirements. Yes No
- Survey is conducted with a state provided, standard survey instrument. Yes No
- State has a regular schedule (e.g., quarterly) for submission of survey data or student names from local programs. Yes No

4. If state uses data matching for any measure (check not applicable (NA) and skip to the next question if data matching is not used): NA

- Local or state data system can produce files for matching that include exit dates, goal and employment status for each student. Yes No
- State has established a procedure for collecting Social Security numbers, including how to deal with missing numbers. Yes No
- State has set a regular schedule for data submission from local programs and for data matching with external agencies. Yes No

5. States has provided to all local programs a copy of the assessment policy and an explanation of the policy. Yes No

6. State has provided to all local programs the written state policies, procedures and requirements for student follow-up and an explanation of the procedures. Yes No

7. The state has written definitions for all measures (including demographic measures and contact hours), defined according to NRS requirements and has provided them to all programs. Yes No

Superior Quality

1. The state has a comprehensive data dictionary, which defines all measures on state student data forms and in the state data system, and has provided it with an explanation to all local programs. Yes No

2. State has standards or requirements for the percentage of students to be pre- and posttested. Yes No

2a. **If yes, indicate the standards or requirements. Iowa has set a standard of 65% pre-post assessment percentage for Program Year 2003**

3. State has made available to local programs on a continuous basis additional technical assistance and resources on assessment, data collection and follow-up procedures (e.g., site visits, contact persons, manuals, online resources). Yes No

3a. **If yes, briefly describe the assistance and how it is provided. The state of Iowa utilizes a series of e-mails, staff development, technical publications and technical assistance strategies to inform the field.**

4. If state uses survey follow-up method for any measure, the state has taken steps (e.g, through data review, discussion with staff or observation) to verify that the survey is being conducted according to NRS guidelines (check NA and skip to the next item if survey is not used). NA Yes No

4a. **If yes, briefly describe your verification procedures.**

5. If state uses survey follow-up method, the state has provided written guidance or assistance on how to improve response rates to survey staff (check NA and skip to the next item, if survey is not used). NA Yes No

6. If state uses data matching, the state has written procedures on how to conduct data matching that comply with NRS guidelines (check NA and skip to the next item if data matching is not used). NA Yes No

Exemplary Quality

1. State has a system for verifying that local programs are following state data policies and procedures through program reviews, auditing or a certification process. Yes No

1a. **If yes**, briefly describe your verification procedures. The TOPSpro software system has quality control data checks built into the system. **(See attached description of TOPSpro software).**

2. State has conducted (or reviewed reports of) the validity, reliability and comparability studies of its assessments and other data collection instruments.

Yes No

2a. **If yes**, briefly describe how you conducted these studies. **CASAS has conducted several validity studies on their assessment instruments in conjunction with Iowa.**

Data Collection and Verification

Acceptable Quality

1. The state has an electronic management information system (MIS), used by all programs, that has individual student records within a relational data base structure. The MIS incorporates NRS measures using common definitions and categories. Yes No
2. Database has error checking functions used by state and/or local programs (e.g., that identify out-of-range values and missing data). Yes No
3. State has standardized forms (electronic or paper) for collecting student information (e.g., intake, attendance, goal setting) that include all NRS measures and have correct NRS definitions and categories. Yes No
4. All programs are required to use state student data forms. Yes No
5. State has provided to local programs guidelines or procedures for recording contact hours that conform to NRS requirements. Yes No

6. All or most local programs have staff with clear responsibility for data collection and data entry. Yes No

7. State staff checks data for errors after submission by local programs. Yes No

7a. **If yes, explain error checking process, including what data are checked and how often. The data are checked through quality control checks in the software. The data are also checked when sent to the Iowa Literacy Resource Center (ILRC) at the end of each program year. The state, in conjunction with CASAS, is developing a web-based reporting system which will transmit data on a daily basis to the ILRC.**

Superior Quality

1. Programs and/or state at least quarterly data entry into MIS. Yes No

2. State staff reviews local data at least quarterly for errors, missing data, out-of-range values and anomalous data, and to identify program improvements and accomplishments and has a system to resolve them. Yes No

3. State has timely (e.g., quarterly) follow-up back to local programs to have them correct missing and erroneous data. Yes No

4. State has documented procedures for correcting errors and resolving missing data that programs use. Yes No

4a. **If yes, briefly explain your data review and error correction system. The software will not allow local programs to transmit data to the ILRC until required edit checks have been cleared and all missing data items are completed.**

5. State provides additional technical assistance to local programs with poor data, as needed. Yes No

Exemplary Quality

1. State has a regular system for verifying (through software, onsite auditing, contact with local staff) that local programs are following state data collection procedures. Yes No

1a. **If yes**, briefly describe the methods used for verification, including use of the correct assessments and assessment forms, reporting of accurate score ranges for placement and for reporting advancement for accountability. **The software has quality control edit checks which does not allow transmission of data to the ILRC until all edit checks are cleared and missing data items are completed. The data collection forms are CASAS TOPSpro forms which are completed on each enrollee. Accurate scores for pre-post assessment must follow standard procedures as outlined in the TOPSpro Data Dictionary.**

2. State verifies data have been corrected in state or local database after errors have been found. Yes No

3. State has procedures for regular contact with local staff on data issues to identify problems and provide assistance. Yes No

3a. **If yes**, specify procedures and type of contact. **Iowa has a CASAS/TOPSpro certified trainer who provides technical assistance to the TOPSpro Records Specialists. The state also has a technical TOPSpro listserve where questions and answers are constantly posted. In addition, all TOPSpro Record's Specialists are connected via e-mail with the certified trainer.**

4. If state uses survey follow-up method, state tracks survey response rates on at least a quarterly basis and takes corrective action if problems are identified (check NA and skip if survey is not used). NA Yes No

Data Analysis and Reporting

Acceptable Quality

1. The state MIS can produce NRS required reports for state, including federal NRS tables. Yes No

2. NRS tables are calculated accurately to include error checks and prevent double counting. Yes No

3. State staff (or designee) checks NRS reports for errors and missing data and obtains corrected data from local program reports. Yes No

4. The MIS is capable of reporting disaggregated data by subpopulation (e.g., student age, race, sex) and program. Yes No

Superior Quality

1. State staff person familiar with the data, but not directly involved with collection and data entry, reviews NRS data reports for errors and accuracy.

Yes No

2. State staff uses data for program management and improvement.

Yes No

3a. **If yes, provide at least one example of use of data for this purpose in the last year. Iowa utilized the benchmark data as part of the on-going Continuous Improvement Model to project realistic NRS benchmark goals and Program Year 2003. Iowa also used the benchmark data to set a pre-post assessment benchmark percentage goal.**

3. Local programs can access data reports that are useful for program management and improvement.

Yes No

4a. **If yes, briefly describe the usefulness of two reports produced by your system. 1. The benchmark report which shows benchmark attainment for all local programs (see attached). 2. Various reports which can be produced at the local level to track learner progress and competency attainment.**

4. Local staff uses data for program management and improvement.

Yes No

Exemplary Quality

1. State has a system of regular contact with local programs on data analysis issues and reporting needs to identify technical assistance needs.

Yes No

2a. **If yes, specify method and frequency of contact. The contact with local programs is continuous given the fact that all local programs are connected via e-mail with all state staff and the CASAS certified TOPSpro trainer. In addition, software updates are constantly posted on the TOPSpro listserv. There are several planned NRS staff development activities scheduled throughout the program year.**

2. State has documented procedures for dealing with analysis problems and deviations. Yes No
3. State compares data among programs and with prior years' data for discrepancies, reasonableness and to identify trends in good and bad performance. Yes No
4. State has procedures to verify that local reports accurately reflect data collected (e.g., through review of local program documentation, onsite auditing). Yes No

5a. **If yes, describe the report verification process. The data collection and reporting procedures are outlined in the Iowa TOPSpro Data Dictionary and supplemental documentation. The TOPSpro software has numerous quality control edits and cross checks which helps to insure the accuracy of collected adult learner and program data. In addition, the CASAS certified TOPSpro trainer is constantly providing technical assistance and staff development opportunities for the local programs.**

Staff Development

Acceptable Quality

1. Local programs and state staff have been provided training on general NRS requirements, including assessment policy and procedures, follow-up policies and goal setting procedures. Yes No
 - 1a. **If yes, briefly describe when the most recent training occurred, its duration and about what percent of local providers attended. The most recent training for local program occurred at the fall 2002 NRS tri-fold meetings. The bi-annual NRS training sessions are approximately six hours in duration. It is a state mandate that all local program directors must attend. Therefore, Iowa has 100% local program attendance at the NRS training sessions.**
2. Local staff has received training on data collection procedures. Yes No
3. State and local staff have been trained on data entry into the state or local MIS. Yes No
4. Local staff has had training on how to produce and/or interpret reports produced by the MIS. Yes No

5. Training has been provided on conducting follow-up survey or data matching procedures, to state or local staff involved in survey or matching. Yes No
6. State provides at least one additional training annually to local programs on NRS issues, MIS data entry or data analysis issues. Yes No

6a. **If yes, briefly describe when the most recent additional training occurred, its duration and about what percent of local providers attended. This training should not be the same as the one described above in item number 1. Iowa has scheduled three additional training sessions for January-February 2003 for the local program directors to discuss strategies for attainment of NRS benchmarks and state mandated benchmarks. In addition, local program directors will be oriented to the Iowa NRS Continuous Improvement Benchmark model. Since all local program directors are required to attend, the attendance will represent 100% of the local programs.**

Superior Quality

1. There is planned, continuous training (at least one training annually) on data collection and NRS issues. Yes No
- 1a. **If yes, briefly describe frequency, duration and content of trainings. As referenced in item # 1, Iowa conducts a series of NRS issues tri-fold meetings with all local program directors on a semi-annual basis. The tri-fold staff development meetings are designed to provide NRS updates and discuss various NRS related issues. The tri-fold meetings are generally held in April and October of any given program year.**
2. NRS training is planned and delivered based on needs of local staff and evaluations of previous trainings. Yes No
- 2a. **If yes, briefly describe your needs assessment process. The NRS tri-fold meetings always include a time for identification of unresolved NRS/TOPSpro issues. These identified issues are researched and the policies, procedures, strategies, etc. for issues resolution is passed on to the local programs. In addition, the CASAS certified TOPSpro trainer is constantly identifying and resolving technical issues. Iowa works hand in glove with the CASAS TOPSpro technical team to insure that updated and technically accurate information is contently provided to the local programs.**

3. State has ongoing technical support to local programs to improve data matching and/or survey follow-up procedures, such as collecting the data and setting goals. Yes No

3a. **If yes, describe support and how it is provided. As referenced in numerous other responses, Iowa has a CASAS certified TOPSpro trainer who constantly provides technical support and staff development to the local program staff.**

Exemplary Quality

1. State has developed and is implementing a plan for ongoing staff development on NRS and data use issues to promote continuous improvement. Yes No

1a. **If yes, briefly describe the plan. Iowa has developed an NRS benchmark Continuous Improvement Model which is designed to assist local programs project and attain realistic program benchmarks. The model is constantly being improved and updated as new developments, innovations, procedures, etc. evolve at the national or state level. The local program directors receive constant orientation to the program improvement model. In addition, a statistical benchmark model is in the process of being researched.**

2. State has a system for continuous training of local staff on NRS issues, data collection and data reporting through regularly scheduled training sessions or other resources. Yes No

3. State has timely intervention strategies to identify data problems as they occur and to provide training to programs to correct the problems. Yes No

3a. **If yes, briefly describe the process. As referenced in other staff development responses, Iowa conducts bi-annual NRS tri-fold meetings for all local program directors and related technical staff. In addition, the CASAS certified TOPSpro state trainer constantly visits local programs and conducts technical workshops for the TOPSpro Record's Specialists. Iowa also provides technical information and updates posted on the TOPSpro listserv.**



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DATA QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The state *must* submit a quality improvement plan for each content area that does not meet all of the standards within the acceptable level. A separate plan must be completed for each content area. *Optionally*, the state may submit a plan for content areas that meet acceptable level standards, but not superior level. The plans should not exceed one page and include the following information.

1. Content area (e.g., Data Foundation and Structure, Staff Development) and specific standard(s) not met.
2. For each standard not met, describe your planned approach to implementing changes that will allow you to meet the standard.
3. Describe the barriers or problems you anticipate, if any, to implement these plans.
4. Describe any technical assistance you might need to implement these planned changes.
5. If you believe you will be unable to meet any standard please explain why.



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NRS DATA QUALITY CHECKLIST CERTIFICATION

Note: The state director of adult education or head of the state administrative agency in which the federal adult education program resides must sign this certification.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this document is true and correct and accurately reflects the state's data collection policies and procedures for collecting and reporting data for the U.S. Department of Education's National Reporting System for adult education.

John Hartwig _____

Signature

John Hartwig, State Director of Adult Education _____

Name and Title

12-20-2002 _____

Date

Seal