



NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY
ASSISTANCE
 40 NORTH PEARL STREET
 ALBANY, NY 12243-0001
David A. Paterson
Governor

Informational Letter

Section 1

Transmittal:	10-INF-08
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Center for Employment and Economic Supports
Date:	May 7, 2010
Subject:	Elevate America Program
Suggested Distribution:	Employment Coordinators
Contact Person(s):	Deborah McMahon (518) 408-4764 or Deborah.McMahon@otda.state.ny.us
Attachments:	Attachment 1-Step by Step Instructions for Microsoft Learning
Attachment Available On – Line:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
		385.6 385.7 385.9		Temporary Assistance and Food Stamp Employment Policy Manual Sections 385.6, 385.7 and 385.9	

Section 2

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Informational Letter (INF) is to inform social services districts that New York State, in cooperation with Microsoft Corporation's *Elevate America* Program will distribute free vouchers for select e-learning courses and certification exams. Elevate America is intended to support individuals who want to acquire, develop, or improve technology skills necessary to obtain, retain, and succeed at employment in today's workplace, especially those individuals who are unemployed or dislocated workers.

II. Background

The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) issued Workforce Development System Technical Advisory #10-4 to announce the availability of 71,000 vouchers from Microsoft Corporation that will be distributed through One-Stop Centers, Displaced Homemaker Centers and a network of other State agencies. These include 31,500 vouchers for Microsoft Windows and Office online training, 31,500 vouchers for Microsoft Business Certification Exams and 8,000 vouchers for advanced technical professional-level online training. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has received 500 vouchers from NYSDOL to enable public assistance and food stamp applicants and recipients to access Information/Business Workers e-learning courses at no cost. Courses offered with these vouchers include:

- Windows Vista
- Word (2003/2007)
- Outlook (2003/2007)
- Excel (2003/2007)
- PowerPoint (2003/2007)
- Access (2007)

These vouchers each have access codes to allow a single Microsoft course selection. Access codes must be activated by **June 24, 2010**. Once activated, individuals will have twelve (12) months from the date of activation to complete the e-learning courses available to them under their voucher. The vouchers are for Microsoft Windows editions of the programs and cannot be used with Apple computers.

Microsoft also makes two introductory courses available free of charge on the internet at www.microsoft.com/elevateamerica. When the Microsoft Elevate America Web Site appears click **Getting Started** on the top bar and under **Resources That Can Help You Today** section follow the instructions to the Get started learning now. A web page listing the available training appears. Click the training entitled Digital Literacy Training for Individuals New to Computing. These courses should be helpful in developing skill level readiness for the Information/Business Workers e-learning courses. The introductory courses are:

- Digital Literacy Training for Individuals New to Computing
- Windows Vista and Office 2007 Essentials

NYSDOL has also provided OTDA with 500 certification exam vouchers that will allow individuals to take certification exams for computer programs included in Office 2007, such as Word 2007 and Excel 2007. Each certification exam voucher covers a test for a specific Microsoft Office program listed on page 2. Each certification exam voucher must be used by **June 24, 2010**. OTDA can request additional vouchers if needed.

III. Program Implications

Social services districts are encouraged to inform public assistance and food stamp applicants and recipients who may benefit, based on the individual's assessment and employment plan from participation in e-learning of this time limited opportunity, to obtain vouchers in order to develop skills in the Microsoft programs listed on page 2 that may help an individual obtain employment.

Individuals will need to have or establish an e-mail address to set up a Microsoft account to use the vouchers provided. Additionally, OTDA is required to track the access code numbers assigned by name and e-mail address. Therefore, individuals who express interest in receiving a voucher(s) under the Elevate America Program will need to provide their name and a valid e-mail address to their worker. District staff should contact Deborah McMahon at (518) 408-4764 or e-mail Deborah.McMahon@otda.state.ny.us to provide the name and e-mail address of interested public assistance and food stamp applicants or recipients to request an access code to activate a voucher made available to OTDA. OTDA will assign and provide an access code for the worker to provide to the individual for each voucher requested. Each access code enables an individual to activate one online training course. Given the time limited availability of these vouchers, districts will be limited to no more than six e-learning vouchers and six certification exam vouchers per participant, but the number of vouchers requested should be consistent with the individual's assessment and employment plan. Interested individuals may also contact the local One-Stop Center directly, to inquire about the availability of vouchers to participate in the Elevate America Program.

Activating vouchers for e-learning courses

Individuals who do not have access to a personal computer may take the access code to the One Stop Center or another computer with internet access (Internet Explorer 6.0 and higher), such as in public libraries and SUNY ATTAIN labs. SUNY ATTAIN has 38 locations throughout New York State. Please see the ATTAIN website - http://www.attain.suny.edu/labs_list.php for address and contact information. SUNY ATTAIN labs will offer on-site instructional support as well as assistance with setting up e-mail addresses and Microsoft accounts for individuals who do not own or have access to computers. When requesting vouchers, district staff should notify Deborah McMahon if the individual intends to utilize a local ATTAIN lab. This will ensure that ATTAIN staff is able to anticipate upcoming referrals and thus provide effective service to the client. As previously noted, these vouchers are time limited and **must be activated by June 24, 2010**. Once activated, individuals will have 12 months from the date of activation to complete the e-learning courses available to them under their voucher.

Step by Step Instructions for activating the e-learning voucher are available to users through www.microsoft.com/About/CorporateCitizenship/us/CommunityInvestment/learning/business_workers_LP.msp. There are also instructions attached to this document.

Using exam vouchers

Participants using exam certification vouchers should be advised that the voucher **must be used by June 24, 2010** and instructed and assisted to:

1. Locate a testing center: <http://www.certiport.com/Portal/Pages/LocatorView.aspx>.
Note: SUNY ATTAIN labs are certified Certiport testing centers.
2. Schedule an exam by phone to take the exam at the testing center by June 24, 2010.
Note: Some of the testing sites may charge a “proctor’s fee.” Efforts should be made to take the exam at a testing center that does not charge a fee, such as a SUNY ATTAIN lab, if available. Participants should inquire about this fee when calling to schedule an exam. The payment of the “proctor’s fee” necessary for a public assistance recipient to take the exam could be authorized via WMS as a supportive service, or as a participant reimbursement for a food stamp work registrant or volunteer who is not receiving assistance funded by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
3. Go to the testing center with the exam voucher.
4. Register and take the exam, which may take 1-2 hours.

According to the information available, participants will receive their exam results and score upon completion of the exam. In addition, they will receive an acknowledgement e-mail from Microsoft upon exam completion. Individuals who pass the exam will receive a letter and certificate in the mail from Microsoft.

Timeframe Limitations

The program exam vouchers must be used by **June 24, 2010**. Because the timeframe for use of free exam vouchers is limited, individuals with solid basic computer literacy skills may be most able to benefit from the free certification option.

Documenting hours of participation in e-learning

Hours of participation in the course identified above made available through the Elevate America Program may be countable as job skills training for public assistance recipients. However, the amount of time spent online in instruction under the Elevate America Program is not tracked by the computer system. Social services districts would need to be able to either directly, or through program providers document hours of participation, including the time spent taking the exam, in order to report for work participation rate purposes.

Issued By

Name: Russell Sykes
Title: Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Center for Employment and Economic Supports