GEAR UP Student and Parent/Family Definitions:
Guidelines for GEAR UP Program Services

A Multistate Collaboration Reported by:
College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
The U.S. Department of Education discretionary grant program Gain-ing Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, or GEAR UP, is designed to increase the number of students from low-income schools who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP provides six- or seven-year grants to states and partnerships to provide services to students at high-poverty middle and high schools.

About the College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium (CCREC)

Fifteen GEAR UP state grantees have formed a member consortium, the College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium, which includes the following states: Arizona, Idaho, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The purpose of the Consortium is to foster collaboration among its members; demonstrate the impact of GEAR UP across local, state, and national levels of implementation; and build a culture of evidenced-based assessment and decision-making. As part of the Consortium’s member state agreement they have set forth a strategic vision and mission as outlined below.

The strategic vision of the College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium is to foster the attainment of the mission, goals, and objectives of the federal discretionary college access program, GEAR UP. High quality research and evaluation will both: a) inform program implementation and administration, and b) demonstrate the program’s value-added impact and efficacy.

The strategic mission of the College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium is to enhance the administration of GEAR UP projects, consistent with the federal Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and Annual Performance Report (APR) guidelines and requirements.

Interstate collaboration, entailing adoption of common standards, indicators, data elements, diagnostics, and data collection and reporting methods, will strengthen the formative and summative evaluation and practice of GEAR UP as a whole.

Consortium Partners: Two partners to the state GEAR UP grantees are (1) ACT, a nonprofit organization and provider of the primary assessment tools used by the Consortium states to facilitate common research and evaluation activities, and (2) National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP), the U.S. Department of Education-designated training and technical assistance provider for GEAR UP nationally. NCCEP serves as the managing partner for the Consortium.

The Consortium acknowledges the importance of its mission and works to advance the evaluation of a national program and, as such, will engage the interest of selected stakeholders, providing them with information and updates on a regular basis. Key stakeholders include: U.S. Department of Education, GEAR UP grantees, congressional delegates, legislative officials, local and state education agencies, students and families, as well as other college access professionals.

As the Consortium works toward an evaluation of the fifteen state grants, products and best-practices will be provided to the larger GEAR UP community in order to assist GEAR UP grantees nationwide with knowledge that could inform their local evaluations and program implementation. This report includes definitions of GEAR UP student and parent/family service definitions that have been adopted by and will be used to guide the work of the Consortium. These student and parent service definitions can be used to guide other GEAR UP programs in effective evaluation as the GEAR UP community strives to provide consistent data nationally.

In order to best provide an effective evaluation of the GEAR UP program, grantees should ensure that
data protocols are consistent and uniform with their national colleagues. Consistent data collection within and across programs is a first step in a robust evaluation that can lead to effective reporting of the program.

While the services outlined in this report are part of the GEAR UP Annual Performance Report (APR), use of these definitions by GEAR UP grantees outside of the Consortium is optional. These definitions are not mandated or endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education. Rather, these definitions have grown out of the College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium as a means to more effectively and consistently evaluate the GEAR UP program across fifteen state grants. This is the first opportunity the Consortium has to share products and best practices with the larger GEAR UP community with the goal of facilitating more effective evaluation of the GEAR UP program nationally through common definitions.

The GEAR UP student and family services defined in this document are mandated by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) and reported on annually in the Annual Performance Report (APR) to the U.S. Department of Education. The required and permissible services for the GEAR UP program are outlined in Section 404D of the HEOA can be found here on pp. 3210-3213: http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-110publ315/pdf/PLAW-110publ315.pdf

The student and family services definitions provided in this report are intended to be an optional guide that GEAR UP grantees could use in the implementation of their program with the goal of more consistently defining and capturing services that are provided to both cohort and priority students and their families through the GEAR UP program. These service definitions are a model of how to structure data collection around services provided to students and families.

**CCREC/NCCEP Partnership**

CCREC has partnered with the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) to advance the Consortium’s mission. NCCEP is dedicated to the fundamental principle that every child deserves an equal chance to obtain a high quality college education. NCCEP is a national non-profit, non-partisan organization working to increase access to higher education for economically disadvantaged students. Confident that education paves the way to social equity, NCCEP advances college access through advocacy, training, and research.

To fulfill this mission, NCCEP establishes community-education partnerships, strengthens research-based college access programs, and develops resources to provide educational opportunities for all students.

**About the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP)**

One of NCCEP’s primary functions is to serve as an intermediary organization for public agencies, private and corporate foundations, and their grantees. Most significant of these efforts is the federally funded GEAR UP initiative for which NCCEP serves as the national technical assistance provider, annual conference convener, and voice in Washington DC. NCCEP works to elevate and encourage replication of GEAR UP’s best practices, and facilitates opportunities for GEAR UP to test program models that hold the promise of increasing student success, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment.

GEAR UP programs provide research-based early outreach strategies that include academic supports, college and career exploration, financial literacy and financial aid information, and other relevant strategies.

GEAR UP currently funds 35 state and 98 partnership grants with an average state and partnership grant award of $3.9 million and $1.7 million, respectively. Federal funding for GEAR UP since the program’s inception has totaled over $4.2 billion. More than 550,000 low-income students benefit from GEAR UP’s programs and services.

**Additional Information**

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GEAR UP Student Service Definitions

Tutoring/Homework Assistance

**Tutoring/homework assistance** services provide additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students. Tutoring can occur one-on-one or in small groups before school, during school, after school, during study or lunch breaks, or on weekends and be provided by GEAR UP staff, hired tutors, teachers, trained peers, and/or volunteers. *Tutoring should be recorded by subject area (Mathematics, English, Reading, Science, Other).*

**Virtual** tutoring/homework assistance: Virtual tutoring services include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

**NOTE:** Data entry needs to indicate whether tutoring is “in-person” or “virtual.”

Comprehensive Mentoring

**Comprehensive mentoring** services are provided when GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff identifies students who would benefit from an ongoing supportive relationship with a trained, caring adult or older student, i.e., “mentor.” Mentors meet regularly with their assigned student(s). Meetings may be on or off campus and either during or outside of the school day. Typical issues addressed during mentoring meetings include academic, social, organization or life skill development. Per the 2008 HEOA, comprehensive mentoring must provide students with financial aid information, and encourage students to stay in school, enroll in rigorous and challenging coursework, apply for postsecondary education, and, if applicable, the GEAR UP scholarship.

**Virtual comprehensive mentoring:** Virtual comprehensive mentoring includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

**Mentoring Programs may include:**

- Traditional mentoring programs that match one youth and one adult.
- Group mentoring that links one adult with a small group of young people.
- Team mentoring that involves several adults working with small groups of young people, ideally with a ratio of no more than four youth to one adult.
- Peer mentoring that connects caring youth with other adolescents.
- E-mentoring that functions via email and the internet.

**NOTE:** Data entry needs to indicate whether mentoring is “in-person” or “virtual.”

Financial Aid Counseling/Advising

**Financial aid counseling/advising** services assist students understanding and navigating the complexities of financial aid, including providing hands-on assistance with the FAFSA and scholarship applications, presentations on financial aid or literacy, using financial aid or literacy curriculum, and the benefits and how-tos of participation in college savings plans.

**Virtual financial aid counseling/advising:** Virtual financial aid/counseling/advising includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

**NOTE:** Data entry needs to indicate whether financial aid counseling/advising is “in-person” or “virtual.”
**Counseling/Advising/Academic Planning/Career Counseling**

Counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling services span a spectrum of activities with individual students or small groups of students. Services are defined as follows:

**Counseling:** Discussing personal growth issues such as decision making, problem solving, goal setting, attendance, behavior concerns, or family issues.

**Advising:** Providing assistance on course selection (secondary or postsecondary), college and/or career choices, or college and/or career planning.

**Academic planning:** Providing assistance on coursework selection, course of study choices, college major selection, assessment advising or interpretation of scores, or assistance with placement tests.

**Career counseling:** Providing assistance about career choices, career planning, internships, or career interests.

**Virtual counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling:** Virtual counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

*NOTE:* Data entry needs to indicate whether counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling services are “in-person” or “virtual.”

**College Visit/College Student Shadowing**

College visit/college student shadowing services take place on college campuses.

**College visit:** A physical visit to a college campus by a student facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, college representatives, or other school staff. College visits should include an official tour, presentation(s) by admissions, financial aid, academic departments, athletics, student affairs, residence life, multicultural affairs, or other college departments.

**College student shadowing:** A one-on-one experience in which a middle or high school student spends a day on a college campus with an undergraduate student seeing typical college life.

**Virtual college visit:** Virtual college visit includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual college visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical college visit.

*NOTE:* Data entry needs to indicate whether college visit services are “in-person” or “virtual,” as well as the name and/or type of college visited, i.e., 2- or 4-year college.

**Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing**

Job site visit/job shadowing services offer students exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest and reinforces the link between classroom learning, work requirements, and the need for postsecondary education. Students witness the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options.

**Job site visit:** A physical visit to a local business/work environment facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff. Job site visits should include visits to local businesses, employers, and agencies to explore different professions or career selections, and can be followed by job shadowing.

**Job shadowing:** A one-on-one experience in which a middle or high school student spends a day at a business or work environment with an employee seeing typical job duties.

**Virtual job site visit:** Virtual job site visit includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual job visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical job visit.

*NOTE:* Data entry needs to indicate whether job site visit services are “in-person” or “virtual.”
GEAR UP Student Service Definitions (continued)

Summer Programs

**NOTE: Summer programs can also include non-school year services for year-round schools**

Summer programs are services that include an experience over one or multiple days during the summer (or other non-school year time, i.e., for year round schools). Summer programs could be a statewide GEAR UP summer camp, a local summer camp funded by GEAR UP, or a residential GEAR UP program hosted by a college/university/community organization, or another camp attended by a GEAR UP student that supports the GEAR UP mission. These programs include academic enrichment, college preparatory programs/camp experience, credit recovery, and/or remediation programs.

**NOTE:** Data entry needs to indicate whether summer programs are providing services for “academic enrichment” or “remedial services.” In addition, summer programs may include other services that should be recorded as such, i.e., college visit.

Educational Field Trips

Educational field trips are services during which students leave their school or travel to another location, and include an academic component that is linked to classroom activities. Examples would include a science demonstration on a college campus (the purpose of the event was the science demonstration not a college visit), a class trip to attend a science or history museum linked to curriculum, academic competitions, cultural experiences such as performing arts, museums, or similar activity, and field trips that complement and enhance existing curriculum in key content areas. Educational field trips should be recorded by subject area (Mathematics, English, Reading, Science, Other).

Student Workshops

Student workshops are services that include interactive informational classroom-level or large- or small-group sessions that involve hands-on experience for each student in the workshop. Workshops are offered to groups of students on topics like secondary school success and college awareness, and general elements of college readiness such as study skills, self-monitoring, goal-setting, time management, and problem-solving. This includes guest speakers that motivate students and highlight careers. Workshops are informational in nature and are not intended to provide direct counseling or guidance to individual or small groups of students. Workshops should be recorded by subject area.

Virtual student workshops: Virtual student workshops include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

**NOTE:** Data entry needs to indicate whether workshops are “in-person” or “virtual.”
GEAR UP Parent/Family Service Definitions

Parent/Family Workshops of College Prep/Financial Aid

Workshops of college prep/financial aid services include a parent/guardian or adult family member’s attendance with or without their child(ren) at a workshop that demonstrates how to assist their student with college preparation or financial aid information. These services include informational sessions for parents focusing on college entrance requirements and financial aid opportunities.

Virtual parent/family workshops: Virtual parent/family workshops include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

NOTE: Data entry needs to indicate whether workshops are “in-person” or “virtual.”

Parent/Family Counseling/Advising

Counseling/advising services span a spectrum of activities that can include one-on-one or small group advising for parents/guardians/adult family member designed to meet the specific needs of the individuals engaged in the activity. These services include when a parent/guardian or adult family member meets with the GEAR UP school staff or counselor, with or without a student, to discuss student’s academic goals, college plans, school progress, etc.

Counseling: Meeting with parents/guardians to discuss student’s personal growth issues such as decision making, goal setting, behavior concerns, family issues, home visits, etc.

Advising: Providing individual assistance to parents/guardians on their student’s college choices, college planning, financial aid planning, etc.

Parent/Family College Visit

College visit services take place on college campuses. A physical visit to a college campus by a parent/guardian, with or without a student, facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, college representatives, or other school staff. The primary objective of the event would be to conduct a college visit. Should include an official tour, presentation(s) by admissions, academic departments, athletics, student affairs, residence life, multicultural affairs, or other college departments.

Virtual college visits: Virtual parent/guardian college visits includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual college visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical college visit.

NOTE: Data entry needs to indicate whether college visit services are “in-person” or “virtual,” as well as the name and/or type of college visited, i.e., 2- or 4-year college.

Family Events

Family events are services in which parents or families participate. These services involve GEAR UP students and their families/guardians or just their parents/guardians. Family events include GEAR UP activities that recognize the role of families in student success, and are not defined under a previous category.


2: Virtual services can take place via internet, webinar, or other virtual means.
