



**Illinois**  
**Department of Commerce**  
& Economic Opportunity  
**OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING**  
JB Pritzker, Governor

## **WIOA NOTICE NO. 26-NOT-02**

**TO:** Chief Elected Officials  
Local Workforce Innovation Board Chairpersons  
Local Workforce Innovation Board Staff  
WIOA Fiscal Agents and Grant Recipients  
WIOA Program Services Administrators  
Illinois workNet® Operators  
WIOA State Agency Partners  
Other Interested Persons

**SUBJECT:** Commercial Driver's License (CDL) English Language Proficiency Requirements

**DATE:** July 24, 2026

### **I. PURPOSE**

This notice establishes how the Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) ensures that customers seeking Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training meet all federal English language proficiency requirements. It aligns local practices with U.S. Department of Labor Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 01-26 and federal CDL regulations.

### **II. ISSUANCES AFFECTED**

#### **A. References:**

U.S. DOL Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 01-26, Public Workforce Training for Acquisition of a Commercial Driver's License (July 8, 2026)  
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, 49 CFR § 391.11(b)(2)  
Executive Order 14286, Enforcing Commonsense Rules of the Road for America's Truck Drivers (April 28, 2025)  
Executive Order 14224, Designating English as the Official Language of the United States (March 1, 2025)  
Minimum Job Requirements for the Operation of Commercial Motor Vehicles, published by the Employment and Training Administration's Office of Foreign Labor Certification (May 14, 2026)

Press Release: US Department of Labor reinforces English language proficiency requirements for foreign workers operating commercial motor vehicles | U.S. Department of Labor (May 14, 2026)

B. Rescissions:

None

### III. **BACKGROUND**

Federal law requires all CDL applicants to demonstrate basic English proficiency. Under 49 CFR § 391.11(b)(2), a driver must be able to read and speak English well enough to communicate with the public, understand road signs, respond to law enforcement, and complete federally required reports. These requirements apply nationwide and cannot be waived by any state or local entity.

TEN 01-26 reinforces that English proficiency is required at every stage of CDL preparation—from training enrollment to CDL testing to commercial vehicle operation. Training materials, manuals, and tests must be in English.

### IV. **COMPONENTS**

This guidance details what Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs) and CDL Training Providers must do to implement CDL English proficiency requirements responsibly, consistently, and in compliance with federal law.

#### Local Workforce Innovation Responsibilities

To meet these obligations, each LWIA must carry out the following responsibilities:

#### 1. Provide Accurate and Consistent Information to Customers

LWIAs must ensure that all staff clearly explain CDL licensing requirements, including mandatory English proficiency, during initial engagement with customers. Staff must disclose that federal regulations require CDL applicants to “read and speak English sufficiently to converse with the general public... understand highway traffic signs... respond to official inquiries... and make entries on required reports.” This information must be provided before enrollment decisions are made.

#### 2. Conduct and Document English Proficiency Screening

LWIAs must use structured interviews or valid assessments to determine whether a customer meets, or can reasonably meet, English proficiency requirements. Documentation must include:

- Results of the assessment or interview
- Staff determination of training readiness
- Any recommended next steps (e.g., Adult Education referral)

This documentation becomes part of the customer's case file and supports compliance with WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(A) and 20 CFR 680.210.

Testing should not be used to deny someone access to WIOA services. WIOA-funded programs must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency, including interpretation and translation services when needed.

### 3. Ensure Appropriate Training Eligibility Decisions

LWIAs must only approve CDL training for customers who have the skills and qualifications needed to participate successfully. If a customer does not meet English proficiency requirements, staff must not approve training until the individual completes necessary language instruction and/or meets the CDL language requirements.

### 4. Coordinate Referrals to Adult Education and Language Services

LWIAs must maintain active referral pathways to Adult Education providers for customers who need English language instruction. Staff should support co-enrollment when appropriate and ensure that referrals are timely and documented.

### 5. Implement Integrated Education and Training (IET) Options

Where feasible, LWIAs should work with partners to develop or utilize Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs known as Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) in Illinois that combine English language learning with CDL-related workforce preparation. LWIAs should encourage providers to adopt contextualized English curricula that incorporate trucking terminology, safety language, and communication skills needed for CDL testing and on-road operation.

### 6. Maintain Partnerships with CDL Training Providers

LWIAs must collaborate with CDL training providers to ensure:

- Training materials and tests are delivered in English
- Providers maintain clear proficiency benchmarks aligned with federal standards
- Providers understand LWIA screening expectations and referral processes

LWIAs should regularly review provider practices to ensure alignment with federal requirements.

7. Protect Public Safety and Reduce Compliance Risk

LWIAs must not enroll customers in CDL training who cannot meet federal English proficiency standards, as doing so creates safety risks and exposes the LWIA and training provider to compliance violations. Staff must ensure that all decisions are based on documented assessments and federal requirements.

8. Monitor and Review Local Implementation

LWIAs must periodically review their CDL-related procedures to ensure:

- Staff are consistently applying screening and referral processes
- Documentation is complete and compliant
- Partnerships with Adult Education and training providers remain effective
- Training approvals align with federal standards

Monitoring results should inform staff training, process improvements, and updates to local policy.

Expectations for Training Providers

1. Training providers must follow the State's Eligible Training Provider policy and procedures

2. CDL training providers working with the LWIA must:

- Maintain clear, written English proficiency benchmarks aligned with federal CDL standards.
- Use CDL-specific English curricula that emphasize oral communication, listening comprehension, safety terminology, transportation vocabulary, and regulatory language.
- Deliver all CDL training materials, manuals, and tests in English, as required by federal regulation.
- Comply with the CDL program license and regulations established by the Illinois Secretary of State.

**V. ACTION REQUIRED**

LWIAs are responsible for ensuring that all CDL-related services, referrals, and training approvals comply with federal English language proficiency requirements and must have local procedures in place.

LWIAs should review their training policies to ensure that customers seeking a CDL are prepared to meet all that occupation's licensing requirements, including language requirements. Please also share this notice with staff and other partner agencies.

Failure to follow this policy may result in non-compliance findings, required corrective action, restrictions on training provider use, and questioned costs.

**VI. INQUIRIES**

Inquiries should be directed to the appropriate OET Regional Manager, Kristen Chevali at [Kristen.I.Chevali@illinois.gov](mailto:Kristen.I.Chevali@illinois.gov) for the Northern Region, Ruth Whitis at [Ruth.Whitis@illinois.gov](mailto:Ruth.Whitis@illinois.gov) for the Central Region, or Bryan Ellis at [Bryan.Ellis@Illinois.gov](mailto:Bryan.Ellis@Illinois.gov) for the Southern Region.

**VII. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This notice is effective upon release.

**VIII. EXPIRATION DATE**

This notice will remain in effect until amended or rescinded by DCEO, Office of Employment and Training.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julio Rodriguez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julio Rodriguez, Deputy Director  
Office of Employment and Training

JR:ld