

APPENDIX B: ETA'S RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

U.S. Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary for  
Employment and Training  
Washington, D.C. 20210



SEP 24 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: ELLIOT P. LEWIS  
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

FROM: JOHN PALLASCH

SUBJECT: Response to Office of Inspector General Draft Audit Report No.  
26-19-001-03-370 – *Job Corps Should Do More to Prevent  
Cheating in High School Programs*

Thank you for the opportunity to review the subject draft audit report and provide a response to the recommendations. As noted in your draft audit report, a high school diploma (HSD) significantly improves an individual's chances of getting and keeping a job. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) agrees with the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) observation that obtaining a diploma by cheating is not only wrong, but also can deprive a student of the skills needed to become employable.

The HSD and high school equivalency (HSE) programs provided by Job Corps center operators are typically delivered by contracts with online program providers and/or through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with 77 different local education agencies. A small number of Job Corps centers (15) operate their own high school programs. Job Corps, as the OIG acknowledged in its report, has existing controls in place to prevent, detect, and mitigate cheating. In the past, Job Corps has promoted program integrity and accountability in the area of HSD/HSE through policy changes. For example, on June 17, 2013, through *Job Corps Policy and Requirements Handbook* (PRH) Change Notice No. 12-19, Job Corps added a new requirement that HSE tests taken at test sites on Job Corps centers be given by a third-party test administrator from a local educational or community institution (e.g., community college or local school district). Tests must not be administered by an employee of the Job Corps center. On January 20, 2015, through Job Corps PRH Change Notice No. 14-10, Job Corps added requirements for online HSD programs (PRH 3.11, R5) and added infractions to the student conduct system relating to plagiarism and cheating (Exhibit 3-1).

The OIG's draft audit report reminds ETA that we must remain vigilant and that Job Corps must use additional cheating deterrent, detection, and mitigation methods at its 123 Job Corps centers across the United States. As a result, Job Corps plans to incorporate language in the Job Corps PRH, as appropriate, highlighting the importance of having HSD/HSE third-party providers document their cheating-related controls. Job Corps centers will be required to consider the strength of these controls before entering into contracts and other agreements with these providers. Center operators will be encouraged to establish personnel policies and procedures that clearly inform staff that cheating allegations will be promptly investigated and disciplinary action taken against any staff member that the operator determines aided, allowed, or ignored cheating. Job Corps will also review existing administrative data, its risk management system, and assessment tools to develop ways to identify anomalies, trends, and risks related to the

HSD/HSE programs at centers and, as needed, initiate on-site targeted assessments to determine whether a compliance issue exists. In addition, Job Corps will provide center staff with training on their obligation to report cheating and the reporting process.

ETA appreciates the feedback provided in the OIG's draft audit report and plans to review and implement the recommendations in a manner that is most effective within the program. Each of the recommendations, followed by ETA's response, are below.

**OIG Recommendation 1: Establish basic preventative controls for cheating for all high school programs operated by centers.**

ETA Response: ETA agrees that all HSD and HSE programs made available through Job Corps should have internal controls to detect and prevent cheating. That said, most Job Corps centers do not operate high school programs. The vast majority of students enrolled in Job Corps' high school programs obtain an HSD or HSE through an online program or participate in a program that a Job Corps center operator makes available through a contract and/or MOU with an HSD or HSE provider, such as a local public or charter school.

As acknowledged in Table 1 of the OIG's draft audit report, some preventative controls are already in place to detect and mitigate student cheating in Job Corps' online high school program. In addition, Job Corps will review controls outlined in operating plans and standard operating procedures created by Job Corps centers, as well as controls suggested by the U.S. Department of Education on reducing cheating, to identify additional controls that may help prevent and detect cheating in online and center-operated HSD and HSE programs. As noted in the draft audit report, the OIG acknowledges that Job Corps may have limited authority to require controls to be incorporated into established third-party high school programs, such as those offered by local public or charter school providers.

To support center operators with promptly reporting possible incidents of staff-related cheating, Job Corps will review and revise its policies as needed. Training provided by Job Corps will inform center staff of their obligation to report cheating and the process for reporting alleged staff and student cheating to Job Corps. As with many staff-misconduct incidents, the contract center operator should address how it handles conduct and policy violations in the operator's personnel policies and practices. Job Corps will take measures to encourage center operators to communicate the program's expectation related to cheating and establish policies and procedures that clearly state allegations of cheating by staff will be promptly investigated, and disciplinary action will be taken against any staff member who the operator determines aided, allowed, or ignored cheating.

**OIG Recommendation 2: Ensure centers partner only with those school providers with established cheating or academic integrity policies that include basic preventative controls.**

ETA Response: ETA agrees with this recommendation. As previously mentioned, a center's relationship with a third-party provider may be contractual or by agreement reflected in an MOU. The Job Corps PRH, as appropriate, should include language highlighting the importance of having HSD/HSE third-party providers document their controls related to preventing and



detecting cheating by staff and students. Job Corps centers must consider the strength of these controls before entering into contracts and other agreements with these providers.

**OIG Recommendation 3: Ensure reviews of high school programs are ongoing, consistent, and routine and, at a minimum, cover key controls to detect cheating.**

ETA Response: ETA agrees with this recommendation. Job Corps will review existing administrative data, its risk-management system, and its assessment tools to develop ways to identify anomalies, trends, and risks related to the HSD/HSE programs at centers. Where Job Corps identifies a significant risk or anomaly, regional offices may initiate a Regional Office Targeted Assessment (ROTA) to determine whether a compliance issue exists. Regional offices will also continue to review the HSD and HSE components during their scheduled Regional Office Center Assessments (ROCA).

**OIG Recommendation 4: Regularly collect and analyze center-wide data for unusual trends or outcomes to detect cheating.**

ETA Response: ETA agrees with this recommendation and will use the action described in the response to the previous recommendation to achieve the needed results. This may also include creating a dashboard or monthly reporting structure.

**OIG Recommendation 5: Develop a centralized process to ensure deficiencies are timely mitigated and address their root cause.**

ETA Response: ETA agrees with this recommendation and will use the action described in the responses to OIG Recommendations 3 and 4 to achieve the needed results. This may also include using the current ROTA and ROCA tracking and monitoring tools to manage contractor implementation of corrective actions to address HSD/HSE deficiencies identified during these assessments.