DEED / Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee

Session Notes from Friday, September 28, 2018 – 9:00 am – 3:00 pm at the VRS St Paul Fairview Office

# Session Notes:

**Committee Objective**

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota’s rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

1. Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
2. Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level and foster equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis
3. Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
4. Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
5. Consider input from subject matter experts and strategic partners in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
6. Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
7. Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP/LUV service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources

**2018 Community Partner Members (*listed alphabetically)*:** Lena Balk (term completed by Meghan Hanson), Heather Deutschlaender, Josh Howie, Kassia Janezich, Jolene Juhl, Lisa Parteh, Andrea Pearson, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Krista Stafsholt, Sarah Timmerman, Bobbi VanGrinsven

**VRS Members:** Kim Babine, Jay Hancock, Jeri Werner, Mimi Schafer, Dee Torgerson

**Sponsor:** Kim Peck, VRS Director

**Co-leaders:** Chris McVey and Jan Thompson

**Facilitator**: Holly Johnson

**2018 Schedule:** Jan 26, Mar 23, Apr 27, May 18 (cancelled), Sep 28, Oct 26 (cancelled), Dec 7

## September 28, 2018 Session Objectives:

1. Provide an update on the new Minnesota Customized Employment Training.
2. Provide an advisory check-in and dialogue regarding the July 2018 interim guidance provided by DHS Community Based Employment Services to create a shared understanding of the context for the guidance and to gather CRP observations and experiences on how the guidance is impacting their work with individuals on waiver services seeking employment services.
3. Facilitate the sharing of relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers
4. Develop key messages from the meeting to share with the VR community

**September 28, 2018 Attendees** (*listed**alphabetically*): Kim Babine, Heather Deutschlaender, Jay Hancock, Meghan Hanson, Kassia Janezich, Jolene Juhl, Chris McVey, Lisa Parteh, Andrea Pearson, Kim Peck, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Krista Stafsholt, Jan Thompson, Mimi Schafer, Sarah Timmerman, Bobbi VanGrinsven, and Jeri Werner

**Members not in attendance:** Josh Howie, Dee Torgerson

**Facilitator**: Holly Johnson

**Agenda Topics:**

1. Welcome / Overview
2. Strategic Update: Minnesota Customized Employment Training
3. DHS Community Based Employment Services Interim Guidance
4. Advisory Committee Process: 2019 Cohort Application and Selection
5. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Updates
6. Wrap Up: Next Steps and Key Messages

Adjourn @ 3:00 pm

## Meeting Highlights:

* VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives Chris McVey and CRP Advisory Member Jolene Juhl of MSOCS, provided a preview of the new Minnesota Customized Employment Training which is set to launch in January 2019.
* The Advisory discussed the interim guidance on DHS community-based employment services and concerns that a lack of coordination and collaboration of employment-based services could result in an unsustainable demand for VR services.
* The advisory provided input and recommendations for the DHS and DEED/VRS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will fully replace the interim guidance on DHS community-based employment services that was published this summer.
* The Advisory discussed desired changes that would help clarify and develop the collaboration between DHS and DEED/VRS employment services and funding sources.

## Next Steps:

1. **Preparation of Key Messages for Distribution to CRP/LUV partners:** The facilitator will work with the Committee leaders to develop key messages from today’s meeting for distribution to the entire distribution list of CRP/LUV partners on the GovDelivery list within one week of the meeting. To verify/add your email to this list please contact Karla Eckhoff at Karla.Eckhoff@state.mn.us
2. **Document Session Notes:** The facilitator will document the complete session notes, including the Key Messages, for VRS Co-leadership review and approval for distribution to key audiences including the CRP Advisory Committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
3. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled forDecember 7 at the VRS Fairview Workforce Center location.

# Welcome and Opening

The facilitator opened with a brief overview of the meeting objectives and agenda. Co-chair Chris McVey welcomed and briefly introduced new member, Meghan Hanson of Avivo, who has been appointed by VRS to complete the remainder of the term vacated by Lena Balk who recently left Avivo. Meghan has been with Avivo for 17 years.

# Strategic Update: Minnesota Customized Employment Training

Chris McVey began with a brief background on both Griffin Hammis and Marc Gold & Associates (MG&A) customized employment training history in Minnesota. She reflected on the challenges associated with time commitments, reporting requirements, and costs involved with the training series offered by these providers as well as the need to build sustainable training and capacity for customized employment services in Minnesota.

Several months ago, Chris met with Jolene Juhl of MSOCS to learn about MSOCS approach to building internal customized employment capacity. Together with a small team, they have worked to address some of the sustainability challenges and to create the Minnesota Customized Employment Training which is set to launch in January 2019. VRS and MSOCS are currently testing the new curriculum through a ‘soft launch’ training pilot with 35 staff. Chris and Jolene will preview the new training on October 1 via a webinar at 10:00-11:00am on Customized Employment Training. The webinar will be archived for on demand viewing.

The new training will provide the greater MN vocational rehabilitation services community access to affordable, high quality training in Customized Employment with an emphasis on CE-Discovery and CE-Job Development. The training is designed to occur for six days spread over a four-month period. The training includes hands on learning and application as well as five hours of mentoring for each student to support their development of CE skills and competency.

The training will be offered starting in January 2019 with one cohort in St Cloud and a second cohort in the metro area. Cost for the training is $725 as compared to the approximately $2,600 MG&A cost. VRS is in the process of securing ACRE certification for the MN Customized Employment Training.

Next the advisory engaged in discussion as follows:

**Question:** Will managers be allowed to audit the training?

**Answer:** Yes, we will provide our expectations for auditing as part of the October 1st webinar.

**Question:** How big will the classes be?

**Answer:** We are hoping for classes of about 30. The biggest limiting factors will be training space and number of mentors.

**Question:** How many instructors at each training?

**Answer:** We are planning on two trainers at each session. We need both CRPs and VRS trainers to make this sustainable.

**Question:** If you previously attended other CE training, do you recommend auditing this new training?

**Answer:** It would not be required however as a supervisor, auditing the new training might be helpful to understand the curriculum before you send staff. One of the biggest things we are trying to change is a way of thinking and expanding our view of the possibilities for people.

**Question:** It can be difficult to get more job coaching hours for CE approved by some VRS counselors. What do we do in those situations?

**Answer:** We are working with staff to figure out funding sources and sequencing for support needs e.g. waivers, etc. If you are running into difficulties, please consult with your local RAM.

**Question:** When will we know if the training is approved for ACRE certification?

**Answer:** We are actively pursuing ACRE certification and expect to receive feedback on our submitted curriculum in mid-October with a certification decision notification by October 30th.

# DHS Community Based Employment Services Interim Guidance

Kim Peck began with a brief overview of the backdrop and contextual setting of the interim guidance released by DHS in July 2018:

* In 2014, federal regulations were added that required the VR program to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Medicaid to help people in waiver funded services greater gain access to VR employment services.
* Both programs have federal regulations specifying their resources are to be the ‘last dollar in’ resulting in local level confusion so what might have made sense programmatically at the federal level has left the states and local levels scrambling to develop the details for operational implementation.
* In 2016, VRS convened multiple meetings with DHS to discuss local level collaboration to develop a framework for review and approval by the both agencies’ leadership. This collaboration was more complicated and difficult than anticipated.
* In 2017, new VRS Director of Extended Employment Kim Babine, joined the MOU working group to assist in the process and move the framework forward. The framework developed by the workgroup leaned heavily on Medicaid and waiver constructs for habilitation and rehabilitation uses. The essence of the framework was to support individuals with complex extensive and ongoing services through waiver funding with other less intensive service needs funded by VRS. With the framework agreement developed to the point of finalizing the MOU funding responsibilities, agency leaders were asked to re-engage and collaborate to finalize.
* On June 20, 2018, DHS informed VRS that they could no longer support the framework developed by the joint agencies working group.
* In July 2018, DHS published interim guidance to outline how and when they will authorize employment services pending completion of the MOU which was begun in 2016.
* Following the guidance release in late July, VRS shared their concerns with DHS regarding the interim guidance and reiterated the need to complete a MOU that reflects a person-centered spirit and fully replaces the interim guidance. By request of VRS, and agreed upon by DHS, each agency will have representation of their Technical Assistance entities/national expertise to assist in developing solutions.
* An initial meeting is scheduled for late October 2018, to begin again in earnest to create an MOU with a shared vision and requirements that incorporate stakeholders’ input throughout the process. In the meantime, VRS is reviewing the content and implications of the interim guidance with staff and asking them to share what they are hearing from county case managers and others.

Wrapping up contextual remarks, Kim reiterated her appreciation for the many years of input on strategic topics that the CRP Advisory Committee has weighed in on and asked them to provide their perspectives on stakeholder impacts resulting from the DHS interim guidance.

CRP representatives with staff providing DHS waiver services generally agreed that while they are not seeing many changes or impacts yet, they believe the guidance has significant negative potential impacts to individuals and they are watching it closely as the guidance trickles down to the counties level. The CRP representatives also noted that implementation seems to take a long time and causes a lot of confusion for providers as well as communities. Others expressed specific concerns related to potential harm it may inflict on mental health services.

In some counties, providers are being instructed by DHS that they must go through their county level mentors to address DHS questions. Lisa Parteh, an advisory member who also serves as a county level mentor, said the objective was to create a single, consistent point of contact. Other advisory members shared concerns that their county DHS mentor’s interpretation is inconsistent with the interim guidance and they feel trapped. Lisa added that every provider should have both a provider and county mentor. Other members who work with multiple counties noted that different counties frequently have different interpretations.

VRS Director Kim Peck noted that DHS and DEED/VRS will be meeting this fall to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will fully replace the interim guidance on DHS community-based employment services that was published this summer. Both DHS and DEED/VRS are employing their respective national technical assistance entities to incorporate national insights.

With the upcoming meeting in mind, Kim asked the advisory for their input and recommendations for the MOU conversations. She also asked providers what they need to help individuals who want to explore competitive, integrated employment.

Advisory responses included:

* **INDIVIDUAL CHOICE:** It’s important that people can choose if they go through VRS or not; and that they can be referred directly to DHS services without being forced to go through VRS first. As a parent, I want a say in how the waiver services are used for my child.
* **PERSON CENTERED:** Changes should maintain focus on person-centered and individual choice
* **FLUIDITY OF FUNDING:** The MOU should help find more ways to meet the needs by working together. We also need to address rates across services e.g. job development rates are better than career exploration.
* **LONG TERM SUPPORTS:** Who/how do we fund long term supports? Who takes over when? What does a DT&H look like… is that different than Rec and Leisure? Is so, how?
* **SHIFT FROM ‘STABILIZATION’ TO RETENTION FOCUS:** Stabilization is problematic. It will be important to address the confusion around the definition of stabilization, the connection to waiver services, and to put the focus on retention e.g. 90 days limit before handoff to ongoing supports vs. stabilization.
* **CLARIFY DEFINITION AND USES OF NEW CAREER EXPLORATION SERVICES.** Providers do not see a clear path to use the new career exploration services as different than VR services. What services can we offer that fall into the new DHS employment service offerings?
* **CONSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION STATEWIDE:** It’s important to maximize consistency and understanding of the MOU throughout 87 counties. Training, rollout and ongoing support for implementation will be key to success as will providing an effective process for addressing questions/resolving issues.
* **RAPID ENGAGEMENT:** The MOU should support expediting individuals who are ready to find a job and bringing them into the team at different places in the exploration and job search process. Let’s reinforce existing, productive relationships where possible.
* **STRENGTHEN THE COLLABORATION:** Let’s strengthen the collaboration piece and work together on the services that are important to people for keeping their jobs and coordinating services. We need greater role clarification and connections to be able to provide job and independent living services concurrently and ongoing.
* **FLEXIBILITY IS KEY:** We need an MOU that brings everyone to the table so that together we can determine the best services and we adjust if/as things change. We must break out of purely sequential services. There must be a willingness to be more flexible and grant permissions at the local levels to do what makes sense versus rigid ‘one size fits all’ interpretation. When in doubt, we need to review on a case by case basis. Each person we serve is a unique, multi-faceted individual.
* **STREAMLINE THE PROCESS:** The 511 process is ‘taking forever’. Sending individuals to so many places can be a real disincentive and discouragement to individuals who need and want our services. We need everybody at the table with clear roles and process. Education of case managers is critical.
* **PROVIDE WORKABLE SCENARIOS AND EXAMPLES:** To help people understand the flexibility and person-centered nature of the work, it would be helpful to provide workable scenarios and examples. If everyone must go through VR, the benefits of the new DHS employment services will be limited. Can we open doors to some of the people that VRS closed categories have waitlisted with the new DHS employment services? There are a lot of people we used to see that we no longer see because they are no longer eligible for services. If someone is waiver eligible and you’re a 245D provider than you can be considered for the new employment services.
* **FUNDING RESOURCES:** We must talk about resources, it’s part of how we work together and the work we do. The level of funding for DHS employment services is unknown and VRS receives a fixed budget - it is not based on demand for services. How do we combine what we have for the best combined outcomes? If we don’t have the resources, we can’t partner. We must be honest and transparent. We must speak candidly about resources in structuring our MOU.
* **UNINTENDED BARRIERS AND IMPACTS:** How do we provide the new DHS employment services to people with disabilities and how do you begin to offer waiver services if you don’t now? One provider noted that if they are not able to leverage VRS services approximately 75% of the people they are currently serving through VRS funded services will be at risk for joblessness and homelessness given the affordable housing crisis. We must be mindful of the interrelatedness between funding of different services for people with disabilities.
* **INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS:** Who are we trying to provide services to? We recommend bringing all the critical stakeholder voices into the MOU process including key advocates like the Minnesota Disability Law Center.

# Advisory Committee Process: 2019 Cohort Application and Selection

Kim Peck announced her plans to retire effective November 13, 2018. Her boss, DEED Deputy Commissioner Jeremy Hanson-Willis, has announced his intention to conduct a national search and will be posting the position for a three-week period. There may or may not be an interim director. Jeremy has expressed interest in stakeholder input into the selection process.

Kim expressed her strong belief that this committee has been invaluable for strategic partnering with VRS and she will recommend that her successor continue its existence.

Next, Chris McVey reviewed and thanked the members of the cohort who are wrapping up their three-year terms at the end of 2018. They are Lena Balk, Lisa Parteh, Andrea Pearson, and Julie Peterschick. VRS will be soliciting applications for the new 2019-2021 cohort soon.

# Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

## VRS updates:

### Kim Peck, VRS State Director

* There are approximately 1,987 people on the waiting list. VRS received $1.6M in additional money from the federal re-allotment process.
* DEED and VRS are preparing for the upcoming legislative session.
* Chris McVey, Director of Strategic Initiatives, will be in Washington DC to provide a legislative update at the United States Capitol. She will be joined by a counterpart from Iowa. Other invited members from Minnesota include staff from ProAct, Best Buy and an individual who has moved from center-based employment into competitive, integrated employment.
* VR has collaborated with Independent Living (IL) for many years, with IL services embedded in the VR offices. Over a year ago, the VR/IL collaboration shifted focus to benefits planning. VRS has begun evaluating the impact of this focus. In the meantime, we are continuing to work with Centers for Independent Living (CILs) on the 511 work. VR currently pays the CILS $1.5M to conduct the Section 511 meetings.

### Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships

* DEED is proposing changes to the state rules that govern the Extended Employment (EE) Program. The draft rule has been published on the state register and is open for public comment through October 10. For more information and to sign up for email updates, go to [mn.gov/deed/eerule](https://d.docs.live.net/a261969a80b1a5da/Documents/Clients/DEED%20Vocational%20Rehabilitation%20Services/CRP%20Advisory%20Committee/2018%20Meetings/Mar%202018/mn.gov/deed/eerule).

### Jan Thompson, VRS Field Director

* Jan provided a brief snapshot of the last program year which ran from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018: 2,699 employment outcomes (hired and case closed) in the program year with an average wage of $12.50 and 26.5 hours per week average. The average weekly income was $350. 16,679 individuals participated in the program.

### Jay Hancock, VRS Regional Manager Southern

* Announced the following realignment/rebalancing of work statewide with transitions expected to be completed by end of November 2018:
  + Southern Region: Restructured from five to seven teams.
  + Metro Region: the St Paul team has split into two with one team focused on deaf/deaf blind/hard of hearing (DDBHH) services and the other team focused on all other populations.
  + Northern Region: Adding one team.
  + There will be no Supervisor Level Two positions after these changes are complete.

## CRP Updates:

* **Julie Peterschick, Productive Alternatives,** 11 buses transported people to the Twins game on August 25th to help promote people with disabilities. The event was sponsored by Harmon’s Heart and was a wonderful experience. We are launching a new program in October called Perham 180 that is a collaboration with a local, innovative employer who brought in housing options that helped create new housing stock and job opportunities with multiple employers in the area.
* **Heather Deutschlaender, Proact,** was awarded a VRS grant for Pre-ETS working with Scott and Dakota counties. Local schools have responded positively to the Pre-ETS opportunities and are especially looking forward to the work experience for students.
* **Meghan Hanson, Avivo,** we’re working hard to help VRS waitlisted individuals with other services to serve additional people.
* **Bobbi VanGrinsven – Lifetrack Resources**, is happy to report that our CARF accreditation was secured for another three years. They are no longer providing services in Olmsted county. Bobbi recently had Washington and Ramsey county IPS responsibilities added to her position.
* **Kristi Stafsholt, Occupational Development Center Inc,** just finishedour CARF survey. We also completed the customized employment certifications and are shifting several positions across the organization to rebalance workloads with services.
* **Robert Reedy, RISE**, received anew DHS innovation grant working with transition youth who are either on waiver services, or eligible for waivers, for work experience using a pay for performance model. RISE continues to build statewide partnerships. ESR, an east metro/WI provider is joining as a subsidiary bringing 100 members with 1000 served and increases RISE service offerings to include DTH services in Wisconsin. We are also looking into MEC contract opportunities and are excited to finally be able to work across ‘the bridge’. Anticipated effective in January 2019.
* **Kassia Janezich, Tasks Unlimited,** is happy to report that the new placement specialist is up and running. Lots of changes and staffing. We recently completed both CARF and EE audits with Source America next. We are continuing to diversify our services and reviewing expansion of transition housing, services in Dakota county, case management and ARMHS services to the metro. We see lots of possibilities for 2019.
* **Lisa Parteh, Functional Industries,** three staff are out for maternity leave. There is one job coach between the two of us remaining so staffing is our biggest struggle. Unable to find new job coaches, we’re pulling from all different programs for coaching. We completed the EE audit in a half day. We are trying to understand how EE services can mesh with the new DHS employment services. Budgets have been complicated with all the changes.
* **Sarah Timmerman, Ability Building Center (ABC),** DEED EE audit is completed, and the Source America audit is in progress. CARF audit is scheduled for next year. Key roles have turned over resulting in extensive organizational restructuring and reduced administration. Many of the administrative duties have been added to program staff.Sarah now oversees job development and compliance staff as added responsibilities. ABC is looking at how to make programs more financially sustainable. The pilot in Olmsted County went very well and has been expanded to year-round. Houston County has expanded to include transition services. Staffing is still a huge challenge.
* **Jolene Juhl, MSOCS,** we are starting new in-home customized employment services for referrals to help people coming out of the Anoka County Treatment Centers. We are also working with children in homes with very limited resources and multiple barriers. In the staffing area, we are working to hire a supervisor. We received our three-year CARF accreditation from an auditor from Arizona where all the services are contracted and delivered quite differently than the Minnesota model.

# VRS CRP Advisory Committee – Meeting On September 28, 2018

Key Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community

*Note: Key Messages are first distributed via .govdelivery approximately one week after the meeting and posted on the DEED website. They are also included at the end of the official full session notes.*

**Customized Employment**

* VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives Chris McVey and CRP Advisory Member Jolene Juhl of MSOCS, provided a preview of the new Minnesota Customized Employment Training which is set to launch in January 2019.
  + The new training has been developed to provide the greater MN vocational rehabilitation services community access to affordable, high quality training in Customized Employment with an emphasis on CE-Discovery and CE-Job Development.
  + The training is designed to occur for six days spread over a four-month period. The training includes hands on learning and application as well as five hours of mentoring for each student to support their development of CE skills and competency.
  + The training will be offered starting in January 2019 with one cohort in St Cloud and a second cohort in the metro area. The cost for the training is $725. VRS is in the process of securing ACRE certification for the MN Customized Employment Training.
* VRS will present its next webinar focused on the Minnesota Customized Employment Training update on October 1st from 10:00 to 11:00am. The webinar will be archived for on demand viewing.

**DHS Waiver Employment Services Interim Guidance**

* The Advisory discussed the interim guidance on DHS community-based employment services.
* VRS Director Kim Peck provided an update that DHS and DEED/VRS will be meeting this fall to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will fully replace the interim guidance on DHS community-based employment services that was published this summer. Both DHS and DEED/VRS are employing their respective national technical assistance entities to incorporate national insights.
* The Advisory discussed significant concerns that a lack of coordination and collaboration of employment-based services could result in an unsustainable demand for VR services.
* The Advisory discussed desired changes that will help clarify and develop the collaboration of these services and funding sources with VRS funded employment services. Among the desired changes, the advisory committee expressed strong interest in an MOU that:
  + is based on a person-centered approach,
  + provides greater flexibility in access and use of services and funding,
  + allows for an individual’s choice in service delivery by eliminating the guidance that all individuals must first go through VR before utilizing waiver funded services,
  + provides transparency regarding the fiscal realities of both DHS and VRS,
  + accentuates the spirit of ongoing ‘team’ collaboration in service delivery rather than disruptive handoffs between VRS and DHS, and
  + helps to clarify the key roles, services, and definitions for greater understanding and improved outcomes for the individuals the programs are designed to serve.
* As part of the fall MOU development work, DHS and DEED/VRS will be determining stakeholder forums for engagement and input on the Memorandum of Understanding content. The advisory recommends that stakeholders be engaged in meaningful ways early and often throughout the MOU’s development to help ensure a person-centered approach.
* The Advisory Committee also views securing a commitment for joint training on the MOU content and collaborative practices as essential for effective, consistent implementation across Minnesota’s 87 counties.

*\* End of Key Messages*