DEED / Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee

Friday, January 24, 2020 – 9:00 am – 2:30 pm

VRS St Paul Fairview Office

# VRS CRP Advisory Committee – Meeting on January 24, 2020

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.*

**New Members Welcomed**

* Co-chairs Kim Babine and Chris McVey welcomed the following new members:
  + Northern Region CRP/LUV Representative: Vanessa Pikop, Tran$Em
  + Southern Region CRP/LUV Representative: Sheila Ward, WCI
  + Metro Region CRP/LUV Representative: Anna Cahak, ProAct
  + Metro Region CRP/LUV Representative: Alanna Rice, Leading Prospects
  + Northern Region CRP/LUV Representative: Julie Peterschick, Productive Alternative (appointed to complete the term of a member unable to finish their term)

**Expanding Outreach and Collaboration in 2020**

* 2020 will mark the tenth year of the VRS CRP Advisory Committee’s service since it was established in late 2010. After a brief overview of the origins and contributions of the committee’s work to date, the committee discussed ways to expand the connections and collaboration beyond the advisory committee and across the broader range of VR service providers for stronger working relationships and greater coordination and shared impact.
* The committee discussed and agreed to the following changes to expand the outreach of the VRS CRP Advisory Committee:
  + The committee’s schedule will shift from a calendar year (January to December) to follow the school year (September to August). This change will reduce the loss of momentum when the year is split by a summer break and provide better continuity and momentum for the committee’s work.
  + The committee’s name will be updated to better reflect the fuller range of service providers with VRS Professional and Technical (PT) contracts including Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), Limited Use Vendors (LUVs), and Centers for Independent Living (CILs). The name is to be determined.
  + The committee will pilot a new regional forum co-hosted by VRS and CRP representatives for the purpose of topic focused problem solving, idea generation, and improved service coordination this spring. The committee discussed options for both in person and technology options to allow for greater participation across the state’s geography. More information will be sent out as plans are developed.

**Pre-Employment Transition Services**

* Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) were established and mandated with the 2014 federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA requires all state VR program to use 15% of federal budgets for Pre-ETS services.
* As context for the discussion, the committee reviewed RSA’s five Pre-ETS categories:
  + Job Exploration Counseling
  + Work-Based Learning
  + Postsecondary Education Counseling
  + Workplace Readiness Training
  + Instruction in Self Advocacy
* The requirement was passed in 2014 without supporting guidelines. Two years later, the federal funder RSA provided some initial regulations and there has been subsequent additional guidance and information distributed through technical assistance and other state’s findings with more expected as implementation continues.
* The extended delay in clear federal requirements for state VR programs has made Pre-ETS implementation challenging for both VRS and service providers. VRS Field Director Jan Thompson and VRS Transition Specialist Alyssa Klein spoke of the important distinctions and challenges in data collection related to both potentially eligible students (ninth grade and up) and eligible students.
* To provide additional support and capacity to meet the 15% requirement, VRS hired 23 new Pre-ETS focused staff positions across the state last summer and added Pre-ETS as an option for existing service contracts. New staff have been focused on establishing good working relationships with local school districts to better understand and assess their student services, respond to local support needs and variation, and to provide the Pre-ETS oversight required by the federal funder RSA.
* In 2019, RSA advised VRS of the necessity of shifting from grants to P/T contracts for funding of Pre-ETS services.
* Now in early 2020, with both supporting Pre-ETS contracts and local team staff in place, VRS would like to utilize the committee to determine the next best steps for enhancing the capacity and delivery of Pre-ETS Services.

**VR Service Provider Questions and Challenges with Pre-ETS:**

* After a brief review of Pre-ETS for discussion context, the remainder of the committee meeting focused on identifying major challenges VR service providers are experiencing with Pre-ETS. VR service providers challenges with Pre-ETS include:
  + **Pre-ETS Knowledge**
    - There is a need to build a consistent, basic understanding of Pre-Employment Transition Services through readily available, high quality and affordable training and tools e.g. examples of the five service categories, referral process, roles and responsibilities, etc.
    - The committee also discussed a variety of special concerns including transportation requirements, legal questions, and abuse of minors training implications.
    - There is a high level of interest in developing a Pre-ETS curriculum. The committee recommended determining priority topics and key learning points that can be used as the basis for ongoing training available for existing staff, as well as onboarding, for VRS staff and service providers alike. This would be especially helpful for smaller providers who lack the resources to develop curriculum from scratch.
  + **Differences Between Potentially Eligible and Eligible Students** 
    - There are several questions regarding paperwork requirements related to CARF accredited services and contracts.
    - VRS will examine the challenges for service providers in serving potentially eligible and meeting CARF information requirements. CRP members suggested that solutions for these challenges may benefit from engaging with CARF to increase their understanding of the new Pre-Employment Transition Services and associated federal requirements.
  + **Billing and Authorizations** 
    - There are questions regarding the usage and options associated with the 5-hour allotment as well as the 20-hour maximum on Work Experience- Services.
    - There is confusion related to service authorizations and the wide array of calculations indicated based on what services are provided and whether those services were provided for an individual or for groupwork. Groupwork is harder to understand and billing is complicated.
    - CRP members discussed the unique business challenges associated with serving students such as the more transient nature of student populations and students who begin services but drop out or stop attending school. Currently, providers cannot bill for students who do not show up for appointments despite the service provider costs incurred.
    - The committee recommends providing ‘payroll only’ guidelines and training for both VR service providers and VR reps and counselor staff.
    - Committee members noted it would be helpful to have sample invoices and documentation for the range of Pre-Employment Transition Services as well as more information on the best way to streamline paperwork and provide required reporting information.
  + **System Support for Pre-ETS**
    - The committee sees a huge need and value in creating a system to support Pre-ETS service providers, schools, and VRS staff, particularly the Pre-ETS reps around the state. This support would include clarifying roles, responsibilities and connections among those working to provide Pre-ETS to students. Currently, there is significant confusion and variation across the many districts and counties. Providers want to better understand and more effectively collaborate with the new Pre-ETS reps and local schools to reach more students.
    - Having approved Pre-ETS marketing materials to use with schools, students and their families would provide a useful tool for VR rehabilitation reps and service providers.

*End of Key Messages*