

LIGHTLY EDITED FILE

VRS Community Partners and VRS Staff Forum

DEED VRS

Remote CART

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>> Kim: Good morning.

Welcome to the VRS community partnerships and VRS staff forum.

I'm Kim Babine, the director of community partnerships for vocational rehabilitation services.

For today's agenda it is all contracts all day.

We have new contracts that are going to be executed for July 1.

All current contracts with our community partners end June 30 of this year.

So we have -- we're getting towards the end here and want to give you an update on changes that are happening as part of those contract changes.

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So the community partnerships team at VRS will be going through changes today, so you'll hear from Janeen Oien, Jess Outhwaite, Anne Paulson, Sara Sundeen.

Janeen Oien will moderate our question and answer period, so again feel free to send questions via that forum at any time, and we'll wrap up by noon.

So the first thing we want to go through is specifics on the RFP for July 1 contracts.

The request for proposals for contracts, the way we need to do things for our contract process was posted on July -- oops, we're going for July 1 -- it was posted on April 18, and on the next slide there is a link to the page where all the information about the RFP is posted. It's posted not on our VRS community partners site that you might be used to.

DEED has a page for all open contract RFPs, so that's where all that information lives.

You can refer to that.

So most community partners that have worked with us in the past have submitted proposals in response to that RFP.

And that's really important because all organizations that wish to be considered for contracts starting July 1 must submit a proposal in response to the request for proposals, so that means you, that means everyone.

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The request for proposals and the proposal response process is for all community partners, not simply new providers, so the process is the same if you're brand-new, if you haven't worked with VRS before, and if you've worked with VRS for a long time.

So the flip side of that is that if a community partner does not submit a new proposal, that partner's contract will end June 30, that's the expiration date on your contract, and VRS will not be able to authorize for services starting July 1.

This results in a break in service or a gap for individuals, so if you're serving someone, come June 30 you're not going to be able to serve them on July 1, so it's something that's really important that we do in a timely fashion here.

All right.

So the deadline that we set when we published in April was that if you want to be sure that you have a July 1 start date, proposals were due on May 23.

If you missed the deadline, don't -- don't just sit there.

Go ahead and submit your proposal ASAP because again the biggest thing is we want to prevent any breaks in

services to individuals.

It's all about making sure our services reach the

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individuals who need it when they need it.

So because even though we set a deadline, the proposal -- the RFP, excuse me, is an open RFP which means you can submit it any time.

But if you didn't submit by May 23, just because of the volume, we're not sure that you'll have a July 1 start date but we will work as hard as we can to try and get you that July 1 start date.

An important part of the process after you submit your proposal and all of the documents that you need to submit, the community partnerships team program specialists, Anne, Jess, Janeen and Sara, those names I listed earlier, they are your contract liaison, and so if you submitted your application, the next step is after we do a review and evaluation if you're selected to move to the negotiation stage is you schedule a consult with your program specialist liaison, and it's imperative that you schedule that consult ASAP if you haven't already in order to again ensure that July 1

start date.

Doesn't do us any good to have an application sitting there if we can't move forward on it, so if you haven't scheduled your consult, be in touch with your contract liaison and make sure to get that scheduled as soon as possible.

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All right.

I'm going to turn it over to Jess who is going to talk about COVID policy.

>> Jess: Good morning, everyone.

So we do have an update on the COVID testing and vaccination policy, policy number 1446.

As of May 24, 2022, the state of Minnesota's policy 1446, the proof of vaccination and testing, is no longer in effect.

We appreciate your assistance in fulfilling the obligation under this policy while it was in effect.

Please note that continued monitoring of the pandemic is ongoing and updates to policies and changes related to contract requirements may occur in the future.

For existing contracts due to the repeal of policy 1446,

any clause in your current contract regarding the policy is negated and will not be enforced.

This change is effective beginning May 24, 2022.

This means that community partners will no longer need to task to compliance with policy 1446 in their applications.

The sample contract language is also being amended to remove this language, and responders approved for contracts will not see the COVID policy language in their draft contracts.

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And Kim, I think I pass it back to you for a little bit, right?

>> Kim: Yes, thanks, Jess.

>> Jess: Perfect.

Thank you.

>> Kim: Get the spotlights there.

This is Kim.

We're going to talk a little bit about on-the-job work and training options.

As we mentioned in our last forum, we are working on on-the-job work and training options.

We wanted to look at all the services we have under this umbrella, and we made some changes that we want to share with you.

So for the purposes of the -- what you see in the PowerPoint itself, we use the acronym OJWT for on-the-job work and training options.

So I'll try and spell that out when I'm reading through but it just made the slides clunky not to use the abbreviation.

So when we talk about on-the-job work and training options, these are the services that we're talking about.

We receive feedback, we know that the contracted service rate of \$18 for the internship was not reasonably

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covering a provider's cost both to provide services and reimburse wages.

So when we wanted to look at that to straighten -- look at that service, we wanted to look at the whole umbrella of on-the-job work and training options to make sure they all made sense and made sense in relation to each other.



So after review we've made updates to the reimbursement structure for all on-the-job work and training options because we want to increase the availability of the services for -- for our folks.

So there's more training to come for both internal and -- internal VRS staff and for our community partners.

I'm just going to breeze through these services, but for community partners we'll be going into more detail in a training this summer on each of the services, and for VRS staff there will be some policy and policy guidance changes that are being fine-tuned right now by policy core and will be rolled out this summer.

All right.

So the first change is how we pay -- when VRS pays the wages of an individual in an on-the-job work and training experience.

So for general services on-the-job work and training

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options, sometimes an individual has their wages paid through the VR program.

The State of Minnesota, we can't be the payroll agent

for an individual's wages.

We've looked into it.

We've tried.

We're not able to.

So we rely on community partners who are willing to serve as the payroll agent and will reimburse community partners for the cost of those wages and also reimburse for the cost of administrative expenses relating to being that payroll agent.

So just a little bit more about what that payroll agent piece is.

When a community partner is a payroll agent, the community partner is not just responsible for cutting a check for the individual's wages.

They also have other costs for having someone on their payroll like workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, different liability insurance and other expenses that they bear when they bring someone on their payroll, and we want to reimburse and compensate for that.

So in the past for general service, services, we have reimbursed community partners for those wages and

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administrative costs through the hourly service fee, so if someone was getting a certain hourly rate for internship, they were expected to provide the services and provide wages and the administrative costs out of that.

So more recently we experimented with Pre-ETS work experience to separate the services from the wages hours.

So this is what we did for work experience.

So we would authorize for a particular number of service hours under work experience services and a particular number of hours for wages under work experience wages.

So we did talk about this in our last forum but just to recap.

Starting July 1 we're going to use that structure that worked really well for Pre-ETS work experience, and we're going to apply it to all on-the-job work and training options for which VRS pays and funds the wages of the individual.

So we'll reimburse at what we call wages plus 50%, so that is the individual's wage rate plus 50% of the individual's wage is the amount authorized per hour to the community partner under a wages and service title.

So just for an example I feel like it's helpful to just think about it in a real-world type scenario.

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So say VRS contracts with XYZ community partner to help Joe who is 42 find a work experience, pay his wages during the work experience, and support Joe through the work experience.

So the first line on the authorization that community partners would see what VRS staff would be authorizing is for VRS staff to authorize for work experience services, and that is the number of hours for site development, which we'll talk about in a minute, supporting the individual during the experience, and any closure kind of follow-up after the experience.

For work experience wages in that example, we would authorize as a separate line on the authorization for the wages of the individual.

Let's say Joe will make \$16 an hour in his work experience.

Just a little math, 50% of \$16 is \$8, so we have his hourly wage at 16 plus the \$8, that equals 24, so the authorization would be \$24 per hour to the community partner for work experience wages.

Of that the community partner will pay Joe the \$16 per hour and use the \$8 per hour to cover those

administrative expenses of being the payroll agent.

The other change -- so that's the wages and services structure.

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The other change that we are making is regarding site development for on-the-job work and training options. So we talk about site development, we're talking about development of a competitive, integrated on-the-job work and training option.

That's what we're talking about when we say site development.

In current contracts expiring June 30, 2022, VRS, we consider the site development to be an indirect cost and ask the community partners to build the cost of site development into their hourly direct service time.

That hasn't been working so well, and, again, we want to increase the amount of opportunities that individuals have for these options, so starting July 1 VRS will reimburse community partners for site development at the hourly service rate.

VRS staff will assess and determine the number of hours of site development to authorize depending on the goal

of the service, the career goal and the individual.

Again, more information will be coming for both VRS staff and community partners staff on that in further training.

So now I'm going to go through the services and give just a brief description so as to kind of just show how this works with each service.

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So for on-the-job evaluation we're talking about an evaluation -- or an opportunity at a community employment site that's evaluative in nature.

The purpose is to provide VRS with an assessment of the suitability of a particular career or occupation area of interest, gain information on work skills, interests, work tolerance and/or identify work supports that may be needed.

So on the contracts and what authorizations might look like is on-the-job services authorized at -- or on contracts at a certain amount of dollars per hour and on-the-job evaluation wages, if the wages are needed to be reimbursed and the partner is willing to do that, it would be authorized at wages plus 50%.

Job tryout is a short-term work tryout which allows an individual the opportunity to demonstrate to an employer that their capacity to effectively perform a job in a job related to their specific employment goal.

There must be a job opening at the employer with the possibility of getting hired if the job tryout is successful.

So on contracts depending on the community partner could be that they have job tryout services at a certain amount per hour and job tryout wages at wages plus 50%.

Work experience for general service.

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So this one is a little bit new because we had work experience for general services on contracts starting probably around 2020, and it really was -- it started as a Pre-ETS service and then we added what I refer to as bridge services for individuals who may have had a birthday and were no longer eligible for Pre-ETS or maybe something changed in their ability to do their schooling or they no longer qualified as Pre-ETS.

So we had the work experience, and then we put it on general contracts so people could finish their work

experience.

And we found through discussion and some looking into it that this was needed more generally, so we wanted to put a definition to it and put some information around it.

So for general services for work experience, we're defining it as a short-term time-limited work opportunity.

It's experiential in nature, and participants may explore careers, understand the nature of work and/or build foundational soft and work skills.

It serves as a stepping stone on their career pathway.

In addition it will continue to serve as a carryover service when an individual is eligible for VR services but no longer eligible for Pre-ETS.

And, again, it will appear on contracts in the same way.

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Work experience services, work experience wages.

All right.

So the Pre-ETS work experience is what we modelled it on, but it's a little different for Pre-ETS.

So Pre-ETS work experience is intended for a student to understand the nature of work and build soft skills.



For Pre-ETS work experience they can be short-term or for intermediate jobs.

And, again, we can get more into that in further training. Actually information on Pre-ETS work experience is already out on our website, so there's lots of resources available there.

For internship for general service, it's a time-limited professional learning opportunity that allows a person to gain relevant skills and experience in particular -- in a particular career field that aligns with their job goal.

Again, internship service, internship wages.

The Pre-ETS internship is the same thing but for a student who would like to gain relevant work skills and experience in a particular career field.

So like I said, more to come.

We are looking to put together a comprehensive training for community partners and VRS staff, and VRS staff will look for more specific information including VR policy

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and guidance updates this summer.

All right.

I'm going to turn it over to Janeen Oien.

>> Janeen: Good morning, everyone.

I don't know about you, but after all of that information, I'm just going to go ahead and do a little brain gym, just massage above my eyebrows for a second and just kind of --

That was a lot, a lot to absorb, but it was all really good information.

So now we're going to talk about the 2022 contract Pre-ETS updates or that preemployment transition services that are for our ages 14 to 21 Minnesotans that are potentially eligible and also eligible for VRS services.

So some of the changes that are coming with Pre-ETS.

Starting July 1 for the purpose of group rates for Pre-ETS services, a group is now three or more students.

That's a change from our current contracts that will end June 30.

We had groups defined as two or more students, and honestly the math doesn't work in terms of reimbursing community partners for their time.

So a group really is three or more students.

If you only have two students show up for a group or you

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only have two students assigned, can you charge at the individual rate starting July 1, 2022.

We also have made a significant change to preemployment transition services prep time and a change to how it's compensated.

In current contracts which end June 30, VRS compensates our community partners that provide those preemployment transition services for prep time as a billable hourly time.

In our new contracts effective July 1, VRS will no longer reimburse community partners hourly for that prep time.

Instead we're looking to align our services more with general -- and I apologize.

I just lost my slide.

We're aligning with general services.

So unless otherwise specified, activities such as prep time, report writing, invoicing are not going to be reimbursed at that hourly service rate.

It's going to look more like our general services where that indirect time is not billable.

Community partners should look to bill the cost of completing those activities into their hourly rate of direct service.

And, again, in your consultations you probably heard

from all of us, Anne, Jess, Sara and myself, that that is the change happening, so we've had conversations with our community partners about negotiating a different hourly rate so that all of that indirect service time is included.

Prep time was a huge time waster for both our VRS staff and for community partnership staff in terms of billing, invoicing and reporting.

So this change will hopefully create a much smoother and easier system because we have that alignment between general and preemployment transition services.

We've also made a change to Pre-ETS travel, but actually we're taking that back, and now there's no change.

In current contracts VRS compensates community partners for their travel expenses related to the provision of services as billable hourly service time.

In the contracts effective July 1, 2022, there will now be no change in how VRS authorizes preemployment transition service travel and transportation expenses.

If you've had a consultation with one of your contract liaisons, you'll know that we did talk about the

possibility of also taking Pre-ETS travel and transportation out of those hourly service hours, but due to our federal funding requirements, we realized that's not going to be possible at this time.

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So community partners will continue to report and invoice for Pre-ETS travel and transportation expenses within those billable hourly Pre-ETS service times as in our current contracts.

And VRS will continue to case note and authorize for the travel and transportation time as part of those billable hourly services.

So here we have a visual of a general and Pre-ETS services crosswalk.

If you want to take just a moment to look at this, I know some individuals are also looking at our interpreters, so I would like to give everyone a moment just to look at this slide.

These are all of the current Pre-ETS services and their companion current general service that will not be changing with our new contracts.

So as you can see, our Pre-ETS introductory work

activities oftentimes translate to an informational interview with job shadow and general services.

No change.

Pre-ETS work experience services and wages will continue as a general work experience service and wage.

Pre-ETS intake for eligible vocational rehab service participants will also continue.

Pre-ETS work-based learning coaching will transition to

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general services job coaching on both current and future contracts, and our Pre-ETS workplace readiness training will continue to transition to benefits coaching, employee development services, job seeking skills training, public transportation training, and our independent learning services.

On our next slide here, I would like everyone to take a moment to look over preemployment transition services job exploration counseling services.

There is a change here in how it will be authorized under general services.

So we did reference this in our April 5, 2022, forum, but starting July 1, 2022, job exploration counseling is

going to be eliminated as a service option under general services.

Starting on that July 1 date, both activities will either be authorized as employee development services or job seeking skills training.

I'd also like everyone to take a moment to visually look over the preemployment transition services postsecondary education counseling slide to look at the change here.

Again we referenced this in our April 5 forum, but starting July 1, 2022, we are eliminating postsecondary education counseling services as a general service title.

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Instead those same activities from Pre-ETS postsecondary education counseling services are part of the definition of postsecondary supports in our general service titles.

Finally I'd like you to take a moment to look at the Pre-ETS instruction and self advocacy services and the changes that will happen here in our crosswalk.

Currently we have Pre-ETS introduction and self-advocacy services, ut starting July 1, 2022, when you go to authorize under a general service and be authorized

under independent living services rather than instruction and self-advocacy or some of those peer mentoring and independent living advocacy skills service titles.

So all independent living service activities including that instruction in self advocacy will now take place under that one umbrella service title.

And Kim, I believe I get to hand it back to you.

>> Kim: Yes, thanks, Janeen.

All right.

So everyone, again, deep cleansing breaths.

There is one other service title change that we went through in April but I just wanted to highlight again.

So there are changes to the benefit services structure, so we have now two categories.

We have benefits coaching services and benefits planning

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services, and then for benefits coaching we have two service titles.

One is the benefits coaching report, and one is hourly benefits coaching services.

And we went into this in depth in April, so I'm not



going to read through these, but I just wanted to highlight them one more time.

So for benefits planning services we have two different service titles.

One is for benefits summary and analysis report.

That's acronym is BS&A report.

The other service title is for hourly benefits planning services.

And then I wanted to just talk a little bit about rate considerations and what VRS looks for and how we set rates with each partner.

So in the RFP response and application, community partners are welcome to propose rates to reasonably cover the cost for any services.

We do have statewide standardized rates for some services including the job placement and retention performance-based agreement or PBA, or occupational communication specialist service, OCSS differential for that job placement PBA, and we also set that wages for any of those on-the-job work and training options at

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that wages plus 50% that we talked about.

So community partners look at their budgets.

They look at their expenses.

They look at all sorts of things as they determine what they think the rates should be.

So VRS leadership is the final decider on any negotiated rates for any service, and the community partnerships program specialists, the folks that you're hearing from today, Jess, Anne, Janeen and Sara, are the ones who lead those negotiations with community partners regarding rates.

The main thing that we keep in mind as we go through rate negotiations is there are federal regulations for the vocational rehabilitation program that requires any dollar spent from VR funds has to be reasonable and necessary.

And so for the purposes of our rate negotiations, VRS is mandated to look at every rate and for every contracted service and determine if it's reasonable and necessary for the provision of a service to an individual.

So that's something that we're always have those kind of -- always have as our north star.

Some other things that inform the conversation, and this is what we ask of community partners to provide in their rate rational with their proposal and we get into more

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depth in specifics during those consults, we consider other factors such as staff qualifications or resumes.

There's a particular specialization that's supported by education and training.

Look at the cost of doing business, especially increases to the cost of doing business and especially when there's employee compensation increases.

We definitely look at service provider gaps geographically and also service need, or we may consider different rates depending on those factors.

So a few things I wanted to highlight just for folks to be aware of for some rate changes.

The Pre-ETS rate is no longer statewide standardized.

It's not at that \$75 an hour.

As community partners submitted their applications or continue to submit their applications, we'll look at each individually with each partner, but we are considering increases to the cost of doing business, and then you'll also see increases for Pre-ETS rates also because we asked partners to bill prep time as an indirect cost, we asked them to bill that into the rate of their hourly service rate, so that increases the cost of the hourly service rate.

For general services for travel and transportation, we

have seen an increase -- or we have set an increase from

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\$28 per hour to \$50 per hour in response, of course, to the rising cost of travel and transport.

And then just wanted to set the stage for the next few weeks.

So the next few weeks are critical to ensuring that no individual in the VR program has a gap in services after June 30, 2022.

So for community partners if you haven't submitted your applications, submit your application right away.

Please stay on top of communication with your community partnerships team program specialist.

In some places in the PowerPoint I refer to it as the CP team for community partnerships.

If you haven't had your consult, make sure that you get that on the schedule as soon as possible, and then be watching your e-mail.

Watch for draft contracts to review and you may get notes from your community partnerships specialist about any issues with processing your contract.

Watch for the contract for final signature and return it

just as soon as you can.

If you can turn that around quickly, that really helps us move it on to the next steps.

So there are three big steps and other little steps after you sign before the contract is executed and

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effective for July 1, so don't hold on to that.

Get it back to us as soon as possible.

And then for VRS staff, note that more information about how to approach your work in the next three weeks is in the works and will be coming to you shortly.

And just as one of the pieces in that the community partnerships team will send regular e-mail communication to VRS staff that includes the status of contracts, when they're executed, when they're ready to go with new contract numbers. So that's something you can expect to come out from the community partnerships team.

So whoop, that was a good amount of information, and I appreciate everyone's patience as we waded through that.

We're getting some good questions coming in through the Microsoft form, so please submit that, ask your questions and we'll get to that.

So I think we can actually stop screen sharing.

There we go.

And Janeen Oien is going to be our lovely host for the Q&A.

Janeen, I will turn it over to you.

>> Janeen: Thank you, Kim.

So we've had some great questions coming in so far, and I'd like to point again to the chat.

There is a link for our MS form, and we ask that you

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continue to submit your questions and comments through there since you don't have other means of interacting with us in this meeting.

We would love to get to as many of these as we can, and whatever questions we don't answer today, we will post the answers to along with our recording of this presentation.

So to start with, I have a couple that are easy-ish to answer, so I'm going to go with those first.

Regarding the on-the-job work and training options, has there been any discussion about excluding the wage reimbursement from the limited use vendor budget limit?

So for everyone just a reminder that LUV or limited use vendor is a community partner that is not CARF accredited, and so we limit those contracts to two years with a total work authorization amount of \$200,000.

And as we've all experienced, sometimes our limited use vendor partners are just really taking referrals and suddenly hit their max budget.

So the question is can we separate out some of those wage reimbursement service titles from that budget limit.

Regarding has there been any discussion, the answer is yes.

However, there is not a process or a decision made yet

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about that, so as much as I hate hearing this phrase, I'm going to say it right now, and I ask for everyone's forgiveness.

More to come on removing wage reimbursement from the limited use vendor contracts budget limit.

Also regarding on-the-job work and training options, how is work experience for general services different from employee development services?

So work experiences are an experiential opportunity for one of our participants to be exposed to the world of work if maybe they haven't been before, to gain specific knowledge or skills about a certain area of work.

Employee development services are actually a specific training process that gets authorized for, and I'm giving some vague answers, but we can certainly dive deeper into this.

I would also encourage anyone who had the question to go to our community partnership guide website where we have definitions for these services that are listed more clearly.

But essentially an employee development services has specific training goals for that individual, and so while it involves some work experience, it's really focused on those training goals.

The work experience itself might be much more flexible

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in terms of what the goal or the outcome is of that work experience.

But again, I would direct you to the chat and to go check out our definitions because I did not pull them up



and read them verbatim to answer that question.

Can a community employer become the payroll agent?

So always the best practice is for any of these on-the-job work and training options to find an employer-paid site.

So the answer is yes, absolutely.

We really encourage our community partners and our vocational rehab staff to seek internships, to seek evaluation sites, to seek job tryouts where the employer themselves are willing to be the payroll agent.

First of all, that's much better in terms of resume documentation for the individuals who serve, and it also again is reasonable from a value standpoint of what vocational rehab services and all of us stand for which is that all of our individuals we serve bring value to the workplace even if they're there for a short time for a specific purpose.

And so we hope those are paid by community employers.

The reality is is that sometimes in order to get the service to the individual goal, we do need to provide the funding for those wages as a subsidy, and so we do

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that again through those wage options that are on all of the service titles.

And now regarding Pre-ETS prep time and travel time.

How do we get reimbursed for development of work sites for Pre-ETS if we don't get prep time?

Again, site development is different from prep time, and so for those work experiences there still will be an option under Pre-ETS to get reimbursed for your site development time.

I don't know if that fully answers the question.

Feel free to submit a follow-up, and then I'm going to quit answering all these questions and kick it to someone else.

Can job coaching for Pre-ETS be authorized in addition to -- that's a different one.

I'm going to throw this one to Sara.

It's actually regarding our on-the-job work and training options.

Can job coaching be authorized in addition to a job tryout, and in what instances can coaching be authorized?

Is there a cap on like work experiences or that type of thing?

So Sara, I'm wondering if you can jump on and speak a little bit to that about job coaching layered on top of

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job tryouts.

> Sara: Sure. Yes, the answer is that job coaching can be layered on top of -- job coaching can be layered on top of job tryouts, and it's going to follow the same guidance as we use for our placement is is it a follow-up service that kind of lighter touch that people are going to need when they're getting that service, or is it going to be intensive training that somebody is going to need.

So that will be the difference in whether you just start doing job tryout services and following up with that individual as their job tryout is going or if they're going to need intensive coaching.

Was there a second part, Janeen?

I'm sorry.

>> Janeen: Let me pull it back up, Sara, and just verify.

Yes, there is.

Just a moment here.

Also is there a cap on work experience services for the follow-up and support, or could it move between coaching and those work experience services?

>> Sara: Okay.

I'm going to say a little bit more to come in our training.

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We're going to get into a little bit more about general hours for our services, so I think I'm just going to go with more to come unfortunately on that piece because we want to make sure that when we dig into the on-the-job work and training training that we're giving everyone the same message and information.

>> Kim: Janeen, are you there?

>> Janeen: I am.

And I apologize.

I have two barking corgis and --

>> Kim: Do you want me to jump in for a minute?

>> Janeen: And a blurry but awesome son who is supporting me here.

Moving on to some Pre-ETS questions or preemployment transition questions, just to be clear, should travel time be invoiced at the same rate as service time?

Like is the current practice.

For example, if our negotiated rate is \$100 an hour, would we invoice for both service time and travel time

at that \$100 an hour?

And the answer is that's correct.

There's no change to the practice of authorizing and invoicing for your Pre-ETS travel and transportation time.

We had discussed having those items be pulled out of

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service hours, but, again, as we shared during the presentation, our federal funder does not allow us to report our Pre-ETS spending correctly that way, so we are back to the current practice, so go ahead and authorize at your hourly service rate on your contract, and, again, for our VRS staff, you should always have a conversation ahead of time and have that case note in place that indicates how many of those service hours are designated for travel and/or transportation.

Another Pre-ETS question is, What exactly is considered a Pre-ETS intake?

And I don't want to put anyone on the spot, but does anyone want to answer that question?

Yeah, Sara, thank you.

>> I'll take that.

This is Sara, and I think the question is trying to differentiate between a Pre-ETS intake and -- which is for eligible students, and when we use first meeting for potentially eligible students.

And so what we have put on contracts, and it's even clearer as we move into July is if you're providing Pre-ETS services, there is a service title that says intake for potentially eligible students, so intakes are done at each and that is at that first meeting that you're having with a student to get services initiated.

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For potentially eligible students there are some support services we can't authorize for, and then we just put that first meeting we want to pay you for still doing that informational gathering, getting services set up and we call that a first meeting.

So it really comes down to whether a student is eligible or potentially eligible to whether there's an intake or a first meeting.

And I would say to our partners if ever in doubt, just clarify with the VR staff that's referring to you whether it's going to be a first meeting or an intake.

If it's an intake, then you should see the Pre-ETS intake on your authorization specifically.

>> Janeen: Thank you, Sara.

Our next question regarding preemployment transition services is for the group definition if a student spontaneously doesn't show up and the group of three becomes two, can the community provider bill as the individual rate for the two?

And that is accurate, yes.

We know that sometimes you have a group set up of five students, and it is entirely feasible and possible that two of them -- excuse me -- three of them will not show up, and so you're left with two students.

At that point you will invoice for the individual hourly

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rate for the two students that did show up for that date of service.

Another question that was included in this same area is, Will the hourly rate be reflected as an increase from what provider is submitting in the proposal?

I'm not certain what that means, but what I would say is our authorizations should always be authorized for at

the individual rate, so even if I as a vocational rehab service professional am asking you to serve a group of five students, each one of those five authorizations should be authorized at your individual hourly rate on your contract.

For this purpose we could say \$80 an hour.

So you should receive five authorizations that indicate \$80 an hour.

If all five students show up or three or more students show up, you invoice for your group rate of \$450 an hour but that allows for the flexibility of what if not enough students show up that day.

It always allows for flexible if you find one of the students requires individual services rather than group services, and you can be in touch with the referring professional about that change.

And then a final piece of this same question was, Can the hourly rate be broken into 15-minute increments as

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most transportation is a half hour?

Again, I'm a little unclear, but what I would guess that question is referring to is we do ask that you round up



your travel to the closest 15-minute increment.

However, that's not how we authorize.

If we were to authorize for travel, you know, we typically look at how many -- how much time over the space of all the service hours that are authorized are going to be utilized for travel or transportation.

But invoicing, yes, if I travel 10 minutes one way and 10 minutes back and that equals 20 minutes, I would round up to 30 minutes because that's the closest 15-minute increment.

So I hope that answers the question on that one.

If not, feel free to submit a clarifying follow-up.

Will be there a report template offered for Pre-ETS services?

I'm certain that there will be more training options to come.

I know currently there's quite a few resources.

If you go out to the Pre-ETS resources for community partners, it's separate from where we have our definitions.

It's actually under the link for high school students where it refers to all of our preemployment transition

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service links, and hopefully one of my coworkers can pop that into the chat. But there are quite a few resources there on invoicing and reporting that I would recommend you check out.

What is defined as prep time and what can staff do without the individual present versus what's considered unbillable prep time?

So for this answer, I am going to go to -- Jess Outhwaite, do you mind sharing the answer that you had placed in there?

>> Jess: I'll be completely honest, I'm on the back end copying and pasting, and I didn't even catch your question, Janeen, I apologize.

>> Janeen: Never mind, I'll kick it over to Kim Babine.

>> Kim: All right.

Hi, everybody.

It's Kim Babine again.

So when we talk about prep time, we are mirroring for Pre-ETS what we do in general.

So we talk about direct costs and indirect costs.

So direct costs are where VRS has reimbursed community partners for the hours of direct service time meaning person-to-person service time a community partner spends with an individual receiving services.

It can be in-person or virtual but that person to

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person.

We think of indirect costs as the cost of activities outside that person-to-person service time such as report writing, invoicing, preparing for the service, so prep time, and we ask community partners to bill those costs into the hourly direct service rate.

So when you think about what's defined as prep time, that's anything you need to do in order to be ready for the service to meet that person -- person-to-person in person or virtual.

What can staff do without the individual present versus what is considered unbillable prep time.

So you should do with the individual present what you would do normally, and that's where in your conversations with your community partner team liaison, these other folks here on the call, that's where you can discuss a little bit more about how you build that into your hourly service rate so that -- the example I like to give is say you're doing an hour informational interview and your service rate is \$75 an hour, has been -- that's a bad example.

I should do a Pre-ETS example.

So Pre-ETS job exploration counseling, your hourly rate has been \$75 an hour.

Now we're asking you to bill that into the rate.

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So put aside the cost of doing business.

Let's only do this piece.

So if you think, you know what, it usually takes me this much time to prep for having an individual one-on-one session for job exploration counseling, maybe it takes me an hour to do that prep, and this is the cost and this is how it works out, so then I kind of break that down into the hourly service rate.

The other CP specialists can jump in in terms of the conversations you've been having with folks.

But that's -- so whether you're person to person or doing the things without the person with the exception of site development at this point for those on-the-job work and training options.

>> Janeen: Thank you, Kim, for jumping in on that.

One more question that showed up under our other service title types and changes but still related to our Pre-ETS service title, a Pre-ETS work experience where wages are

paid by the employer is really a job placement.

It's not typically time limited and the same effort is made for securing a job.

Will you consider putting a PBA or performance-based service in the Pre-ETS menu of services in the future?

So the definition of a preemployment transition service work experience is slightly different from a general

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work experience in that we're supporting a short-term or intermediate job goal.

Typically if a student ages 14 to 21 is placed in an actual employer paid job, it will not be their final career goal, but it will be a stable intermediate job that helps them pay the bills and get work experience while they're looking to forward their advancement or training options.

So while I appreciate the question, the answer at this time is for the purpose of serving transition-aged young people, work experiences do cover job placements at employer-paid job sites that aren't necessarily short term.

Again, they're kind of an intermediate work experience

or job.

>> Kim: This is Kim.

I would say talk with -- if you're a community partner, have the conversation with your Pre-ETS rep or your VRS staff.

There may be situations where there's some flexibility, but your Pre-ETS staff is going to be the one who knows the best, so that's why we have the work experience in place, and if that doesn't fit the needs of the individual, we'll be looking for what fits the needs of the individual.

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>> Janeen: Thank you.

We've also had a couple questions come in about the internal VRS process around employment plans.

I just updated employment plans for all my graduating students to include job exploration general services and do VR counselors have to update every employment plan for individuals who are currently receiving services that are changing type and title by July 1?

The answer to both of these is yes, you will need to update your employment plans.

However, they are system driven amendments.

They do not require a signature from the individual or guardian, o it's simply a matter of going -- I shouldn't say simply.

We acknowledge that it's going to be some work and that there will be more information coming out in the next three weeks about what needs to happen to accomplish that work.

So, again, acknowledging it will be a process change and take some time, but again these will be system driven amendments so hopefully you can go through and make those changes and it won't be too time consuming.

There's a question about currently we didn't include independent living on our contract because we thought there would be self advocacy.

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Can we add it to our contract?

Please reach out to your community partnership contract liaison with any changes, and do that now sooner rather than later as we're beginning to route your new contracts for July 1 through our process.

So any changes that you need to make, please reach out

to your liaison immediately and discuss making those changes, but it is still possible to make changes to your contracts that will be starting July 1, 2022.

When should we expect service title types and changes to be updated in Workforce One and on SharePoint?

We've had a few questions about those.

So that's a good question.

Kim, do you want to take that one?

>> Kim: Sure.

I would say that for VRS staff those nitty gritty details of when does that list on SharePoint get updated and when are things changed in Workforce One.

We've been working with Laura Cheney and Carrie Marsh so they're aware of them.

We just made final decisions so they will be able to move forward after today on those things, so it's just a matter of coordination with Laura and others to get those pieces done, and that's where expect more information to come from Laura or others on how to make

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all these little pieces -- not little, all these moving pieces happen.



>> Janeen: Okay.

I'm going to go back to our on-the-job work and training options because we've had a few questions come in.

Historically setup or site development has always been viewed differently than prep time, but this has been mentioned now for on-the-job training options that there's going to be site development allowed.

Is the same principle transferable to all services like it had been in the past?

So the idea of authorizing for site development time is going to be limited to the on-the-job work and training options.

That includes general job tryout, general on-the-job evaluation, general services work experience, and then preemployment transition services work experience and internships for both general and preemployment transition services.

It will not be transferrable to any other service that's listed in Pre-ETS services or general services.

Hopefully that answers that question.

And then an example of site development, what would that look like in the real world?

And Sara, I'm going to call on you once again to discuss

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these things.

>> Sara: This is Sara again, and what I will say is that site development is going to be individualized with that referral.

So it's going to be if for a service like internship, if site development is needed like they're making a referral, I want Janeen to get -- find an internship as an accountant and Janeen doesn't have any resources or leads to do that on her own, so site development hours could be authorized to help find that internship that's going to meet Janeen's needs, so that would be the site development for internship under internship services, and then once Janeen was to start that internship, I could also authorize internship services to follow up, make sure that internship is going well.

There are some times that site development may not be authorized if an individual comes in with the resources already, again, looking at Janeen and Janeen needs an internship in accounting and she has a really great resource or she has one almost set up, and so then there might not be site development hours, just support hours as Janeen is doing her internship.

So it's going to be very specific to the individual and their job goals.

We know some of our partners have -- already have some

sites that work out really quickly.

We know that sometimes our participants or the students come in with the resources or the site already developed as well, so it will be individualized, but basically if it's needed it's going to be looking at helping that individual find that on-the-job work and training site that's going to fit their needs.

>> Janeen: Thank you, Sara.

I appreciate that.

This is Janeen again.

So we had a question again come in about preemployment transition services and those changes.

Now that prep time is built into service time, are partners still going to be required to specifically lay out in the reports what and how prep time is used?

The answer is yes through June 30, but beginning July 1, 2022, no, you do not have to document what you did for prep time to prepare for your direct service time with the students.

The reason prep time is being removed is to simplify the reporting and invoicing process for our community

partners primarily but then also for our vocational rehab staff.

So July 1, take everything about prep time that you knew and let it go to the wind because that's exactly why

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it's being removed.

Kim, I'll let you speak more to that.

>> Kim: This is Kim.

I just wanted to jump in on that.

We know it's a change, but we're excited about it because the whole reason we're doing it is because we knew and we heard you loud and clear that Pre-ETS billing and invoicing is so tangled and messy and so time intensive, and so we think by doing this it will reduce some of that burden.

As we said before, this is not new news.

Our federal funder and regularity, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, RSA, has very strict rules on how we authorize and report and how it's tied to specific services and other pieces, and so we wanted to find a way for prep time to make it a little easier, but there's always going to be something.

We can't make it perfect and super easy because of these other requirements, so we hope this is a step in the right direction and one that will be welcomed from all of you.

>> Okay.

This is Janeen again.

I would like some support from some of my coworkers because a qualifying question was asked about Pre-ETS

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work experience services.

We just said Pre-ETS work experience services can be for intermediate jobs but work experience general typically cannot be for an intermediate job.

What if we start looking for an intermediate job with a Pre-ETS student and then they graduate?

So maybe if someone else could clarify what I had said, that would be helpful.

>> Kim: This is Kim.

So if you have a -- you started looking for an intermediate job under Pre-ETS and then they graduate, the -- I think it's a conversation with the VRS staff to determine what's needed now that they're no longer in

Pre-ETS, so it's that distinction between kind of that bridge service.

It can still be that bridge service, but when we were talking about the definition, we were talking about more for any person, not necessarily someone coming out of Pre-ETS.

So we can clarify that a little bit more in training, but we'll really be relying on VRS staff to determine the needs of the individual and what service is right for that general service.

>> Janeen: Okay.

Now we're moving into some of the questions about the

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more general information that you provided towards the end.

Starting with the contract rate negotiation process, there's a question regarding the performance-based agreement.

This rate hasn't changed in over 12 years.

What would need to happen, what do you need from us to talk about raising the rates for this?

It's lagged behind even basic annual increases in cost

and staff wages.

So if you are one of my community partner, shoutout to my southern Minnesota and metro peeps, you have heard me say we will start looking at the performance-based agreement as part of our work moving forward over the next couple of years, and that as a community partnerships team what is helpful is if you have included a really excellent rationale for why the performance-based agreement should be increased.

If you did not include that in your cost attachment proposal, then please e-mail your contract liaison with your thoughts on the performance-based agreement.

We are all collecting that information to serve as a starting point for discussion with our VRS coworkers, with our community partner advisory group, and other groups to really take a look at the performance-based

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agreement.

Again, it's more to come.

I hate saying that, but it is going to be a work in progress, and honestly we receive so much excellent feedback and knowledge from our community partners, and

that anecdotal data and sometimes some of you are very thorough with even real number data, is so helpful to us to inform where we even start the framework for a discussion because you're correct, it's been 12 years.

So getting a current snapshot of what would be helpful is really important to us, and Kim Babine, I see you off mute so please take it over.

>> Kim: This is Kim again.

So absolutely we're always open to the discussion, and as part of moving forward we will be reviewing our services and our generate rate structure on a regular basis so that 12 years doesn't necessarily go by without us having taken a dive into the costs around any of these services.

One thing that's helpful when you do provide the rate rationale, it is -- and again it can just be an e-mail to your liaison or me, and what's helpful is if you also consider some of the changes that have occurred over the 12 years, so just last year we added -- we took out job coaching as part of one of the requirements of things

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that needed to be done within that \$3800, so you can



get -- we have layered services so you can layer that job coaching on.

It would be interesting to hear from you as community partners what the impact of that has been.

If there's been no impact, you can tell us that too.

And so it's helpful if we make tweaks here and there to the expectations of the PBA that that is reflected in your analysis and your rationale that you send to us.

So you can do that for PBA.

We've done it for -- you know, if that's what you did as part of your application for these services, but it's always helpful to have that data and especially if things change.

>> Janeen: Thank you, Kim.

This is Janeen again.

To the person that submitted the question about the process of approval for services provided, the report and invoice process, all of that, if you could reach out directly to your community partner liaison through your contract or if it's a staff person, reach out to any one of the four of us.

We are more than happy to help you through invoicing and billing questions, and we can dive a little deeper or maybe have a meeting with you if there's some more

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specific questions you want to get answered.

Okay?

I know we've had some past trainings and forums and community partner conversations where we talk also about the invoicing and billing process, so please do go to our community partnerships guide website and check out recordings of our past information on that as well.

And then I am going to go back to preemployment transition services really quickly.

Can you please explain the rationale for changing job exploration general to employee development services or job seeking skills training.

I feel like the goals of a job exploration are very different than the goals of employee development services and job seeking skills training.

I can speak to that briefly from the definitions, but then I'd love for Kim Babine or Sara Sundeen or anyone else to pop in and share their thoughts as well.

So job exploration counseling at its highest level is defined as working with a student to explore vocational interests like the labor market, in-demand industries and occupations, non-traditional employment options and look at those career pathways of interest.

Under job seeking skills training, exploring labor

market is oftentimes part of that process, exploring

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career pathways is also part of that process.

So what we felt is it's important to remove anything that could be potentially duplicative in our service titles, and in this case there's those options.

There are also times if you're working more specifically on a specific aspect of training around explorations that it would make sense under employee development services, maybe an option to -- okay, now I'm just rambling so if someone else wants to jump in, I'd appreciate it.

Thank you.

>> This is Sara, and I don't have much more to add.

Janeen I think covered it.

What we wanted to do in this contracting cycle is we actually were just trying to avoid what we felt were duplicative services that already were available.

So if there was a way to provide that service under general services, that's why we made those changes.

And if you have issues or you aren't sure where that's going to fit in your contract, just reach out to us as

liaisons and we can work with you on that.

>> This is Janeen again.

I would also say you can always reach out to us or speak to your RAM, or I had a client, I can offer her up if she doesn't want me to.

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But certainly if you're questioning here's my specific student and circumstance, I'm not sure what I would authorize for or put on the employment plan, please do reach out for support and consultation.

It is not limited to job seeking skills training and employee development services.

Certainly there's always room to individualized those crosswalk options as you're moving from a student receiving Pre-ETS job exploration counseling.

>> Kim: This is Kim.

If I could jump in.

I wanted to mention on this change in particular and some of the other service definitions and other pieces that we went through in April, these are not -- these decisions are not made in a vacuum.

They are made with work group.

These ones in particular have gone to our VRS policy core team, and leadership makes the final decisions on them, so if you have questions, if it's not feeling right, know that it wasn't just Kim Babine in a room alone making unilateral decisions, and so we can provide more justification or more explanation if you need.

Just wanted to let you know about that process.

>> Janeen: Thank you.

This is Janeen again.

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So a couple questions regarding our request for proposal process.

When will the contracts be sent for preview?

This is I believe regarding if you met with your contract liaison and due to some changes we didn't yet have your contract drafted for you to be in the meeting, we would be then sending you out the draft to review before -- just checking for errors, not signing, before we route it through the process of our internal DEED fiscal review.

As far as a timeline on that, all I can say is reach out to your individual contract liaison, stay in close touch

with us.

We are more than transparent about where we're at in the process, but we aren't going to send out a lot of like blanket e-mails, so regarding your specific contract, I recommend you speak to your liaison about that if you haven't yet seen it.

Once -- go ahead, Kim.

>> Kim: This is Kim.

I'm going to jump in on that one.

This is where if you haven't submitted your application, obviously we wouldn't have a draft contract for you to review, and if you haven't had your consult with your contract liaison, then there's nothing to review as

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well.

It's during that consult that you kind of work through the issues to inform the draft contract for preview.

So make sure you get those things on the calendar if you haven't and then again be in close touch with your liaison.

>> Janeen: Another question regarding the request for proposal process, and again this is always kind of the

scary part when we're moving into a new contracting cycle, so we do acknowledge that for both our VRS staff and for our community partners.

What is the guidance for individuals who are receiving services such as work experience coaching, work experience wages, job coaching, that can't easily be paused while the contracts are being finalized?

How far in advance would we likely know which contracts are not going to be finalized by July 1?

And Kim Babine, I'm going to let you speak to this.

Thank you.

>> Kim: Yes.

So as Janeen acknowledged, it's crunch time.

It's the time when VRS staff are going in to do -- look at things for new authorizations for July 1.

Community partners are looking at pieces, and all I can say is we will provide you for on the VRS staff with as

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much information as possible.

So what we plan to do is send a regular e-mail updates, so look in your in-box from Janeen, Sara, Jess or Anne with a list of all the community partners.

If they -- and then the status.

So there are some community partners that we have elected not to renew with us so we want to make sure that folks know that so they can offer different -- or go through informed choice with the individual for a different service provider.

Got some new ones and then just the status of that contract.

So as they become executed, we've already got some in the process, and so once they become executed, we'll mark that.

We'll put the contract number, and then you'll have kind of a running list of which ones so that kind of every e-mail you can say, oh, there's a provider that doesn't have their contract executed, and I know I have a lot of people with them so I need to keep a close eye on that one.

So we'll know a lot more in a week.

We'll know a lot more in ten days, and we can be having conversations about what the next steps are if things seem to be delayed or there might be a gap.

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>> Janeen: Thank you, Kim.

This is Janeen again.

I'd like to also add on to that I'd like to highlight the fact that it will be a running Excel spreadsheet so you only need to keep the most recent e-mail as a VRS staff member that you have received from the community partnership team.

We are hoping that makes it much easier for staff to track the most recent communication that they are receiving from us, and we can thank Jess Outhwaite for that brilliant idea.

I have a question here that I'm going to look to Chris McVey hopefully to answer or one of our regional directors seems like they would be most appropriate.

It seems to be coming from a vocational rehab staff person, so that's why I'm going to ask them to tap in on the answer.

Does the repeal of the vaccination testing policy for COVID also affect the requirement of vocational rehab services to get temperature checks, read through the legal document and ultimately how they meet with adults in person?

>> Kim: Chris, are you -- I wanted to make sure you're good.

>> Chris: Yes, I'm unmuted.

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Thank you for that question.

As I understand it, if I'm hearing correctly what the question was, is that with the repeal of the -- on the MMB side, Minnesota Management and Budget, which has been giving state agencies direction around COVID, the vaccination requirements or proof of testing requirements have concluded.

We are able to go out and meet with people in person. Our daily requirements for doing the health screening are still there as are our requirements to be connecting with adults in a general setting when we're meeting with them about just ask and doing a screening there too. So that has not gone away, ut what we are encouraging absolutely is that people are getting back into in-person services meeting with people directly when possible, so I -- if there are questions from that or if I'm not fully hearing the question, I'll willing to respond further.

>> Janeen: This is Janeen.

Thank you, Chris, for jumping in on that.

I appreciate your help with that.

Some final little clarification questions, and then I believe we have exhausted what's coming into the MS form

at this time.

Just a reminder, that form will remain open for a period

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of time after the meeting, so feel free to submit any questions that occur to you after you log off today.

Can you share the difference between the changes in Pre-ETS VR eligible and Pre-ETS non-eligible.

Are there any changes?

Again the terminology we use is eligible preemployment transition services students and potentially eligible because we serve students who could be eligible for vocational rehab services but are currently able to just receive kind of the higher level lighter touch preemployment transition services that may help them to independently move forward on their path of career and training options without having to apply for the complete vocational rehab services program.

There are no changes to how potentially eligible students sign up or eligible students apply, and there's no changes in terms of our current marketing and definition of what those two different terms mean.

Another little clear-up question is will authorizations

be reissued on July 1 that have these new service titles on them?

And the answer is yes.

All authorizations for all services will need to be reauthorized or newly authorized beginning July 1, 2022, because all of the contract numbers for our community

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partners' contracts with vocational rehab services are changing.

So you as a community partner will see a batch of new authorizations.

They might be reauthorizing your performance-based agreement milestones, or they will be a new hourly service authorization that begins July 1.

Please we ask community partners and vocational rehab staff to be in good communication about requests for hours that will begin July 1, 2022.

We also ask that there's ongoing good communication about what hours from the previous contract can be closed out, invoiced, billed, reported on so we can clear out that last fiscal year funding.

But, again, as community partners you will see all new

authorizations that are dated to start July 1, 2022,  
because we have a brand-new contract in place with a new  
number and new funding encumbered and attached to it.

And then I'm just quickly scanning to make sure we  
didn't get any additional questions.

We have some great feedback about future forum topics,  
so that's terrific.

One other note, I know some of you had heard that today  
we would be providing a training from Outfront Minnesota  
on -- LGBTQIA+ 101, an introductory training that would

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further our diversity, equity and inclusion goals.

We do hope to reschedule that at some point, but, again,  
we had so much important information to share today  
about service titles and these contracts that we  
understand this was a much more timely topic.

So keep your eyes peeled for hopefully more information  
on when we can offer that training that will be  
accessible to all of our community partners and our  
internal VRS staff.

Kim, I believe you're on wrap-up today, so I'll kick it  
back to you.

Thank you.

>> Kim: Wonderful.

Thank you, Janeen, for being our master of ceremonies.

So thank you to everyone who joined today.

Again, we -- there's no great way to share a lot of information at one time, so at first it was an e-mail and now it's a presentation.

We'll get the information out to you in a couple different ways, and we're here to support you.

We're all -- both community partners and VRS staff, everyone is working towards the goal of making sure services to individuals are strong and continue and there's no gap, so we're in this together, and we will continue working together over the coming weeks to make

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sure we have a smooth transition from June 30 to July 1.

If you have any questions, any follow-up, again, the question form has a space for feedback for this forum and future forums.

I'm especially interested in any feedback that -- we are especially interested in any feedback around accessibility.

We're learning.

We're trying to do more to be responsive to different --  
all of our individuals that attended these, but there's  
always more to learn, so if there are things we can be  
doing differently, please let us know, and of course  
reach out to us with any questions or comments or  
follow-up.

Thanks, everybody.

Have a great week.

We'll see you soon.

>> Recording stopped.

>> Kim: All right.

For those of you still on I'm going to close the meeting  
now, so thank you.

Have a great day.

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