DEED / Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee

Session Notes from Friday, April 27, 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, 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, and Dec 7

## April 27, 2018 Session Objectives:

1. Provide an update on the next steps for Job Coaching 101 as part of ongoing collaboration and communication across Minnesota’s VR community.
2. Engage the advisory in discussion to identify effective person-centered strategies and methods for surfacing jobseeker skills and interests
3. Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and
4. Develop key messages from the meeting to share with the VR community

**April 27, 2018 Attendees** (*listed**alphabetically*): Kim Babine, Lena Balk, Heather Deutschlaender, Kassia Janezich, Jolene Juhl, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Krista Stafsholt, Jan Thompson, Sarah Timmerman, Dee Torgerson (morning), and Bobbi VanGrinsven

**Members not in attendance:** Jay Hancock, Josh Howie, Lisa Parteh, Andrea Pearson, Mimi Schafer, and Jeri Werner

**Guests:** Angela Davis Revak, Sarah Gutzman, Jess Outhwaite, and Margie Webb

**Facilitator**: Holly Johnson

**Agenda Topics:**

1. Welcome / Overview
2. Strategic Topic: Surfacing Jobseeker Skills and Interests
3. March Meeting Follow-up – ‘Job Coaching 101’
4. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Updates
5. Wrap Up: Next Steps and Key Messages

Adjourn @ 3:00 pm

## Meeting Highlights:

* VRS counselors shared their perspectives and real-life examples of person centered work with the Advisory Committee to begin a strategic dialogue on effective ways of supporting the increasing number of individuals with multiple, significant disabilities in career exploration, retention and advancement.
* The advisory committee discussed several strategies for accelerating the availability and delivery of person centered services within VRS and the larger vocational rehabilitation system including: continued education/training, alignment of referrals and supporting forms to person centered language, intake processes, and funding priorities.

## 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. **A current roster of the VRS field leadership** contact information for local Rehabilitation Area Managers (RAMs), Regional Managers (3) and the Field Director will be sent out with the session notes via govdelivery to the community partners distribution list to facilitate collaboration.
4. **Next Meeting:** The meeting scheduled for May 18 has been cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled forSeptember 28th at the VRS Fairview Workforce Center location.

# Welcome and Opening

The facilitator opened with a brief overview of the meeting objectives and agenda. Co-chairs Jan Thompson and Chris McVey welcomed and briefly introduced guests in attendance: Sarah Gutzman (newer RAM, former counselor Hennepin South VRS office), Margie Webb (Counselor, West St Paul VRS office), Angela Davis Revak (counselor, Hennepin North VRS office), and Jess Outhwaite (counselor, St Cloud VRS office).

# Strategic Topic: Surfacing Jobseeker Skills and Interests

Chris McVey opened the topic with thoughts on the ‘sea change’ that the disability employment services system is experiencing. She noted that the change is bigger than it may appear upon first look. Person centered philosophy and practices necessitate that we focus on helping individuals tell us what they want and need, what they like and what they don’t like. Their objectives become the basis for connecting individuals with employers and work. This is a dramatic reframing for many career VR professionals.

To provide perspective for the advisory topic, Chris and Jan invited four VRS staff with direct experience managing the influx of more complex caseloads to provide context and perspective on individuals seeking services and their service needs. Jan Thompson asked the advisory to keep in mind the connections to person centered practices and Pre-ETS services mandated within WIOA enacted by Congress in 2014 and the subsequent supporting WIOA regulations provided in August 2016. Recently, RSA provided clarification that assessment services cannot be used for meeting the 15% set aside requirement.

Kim added that additional clarifications and technical guidance is expected as the new legislation continues implementation nationally. She noted the importance of hearing from practitioners as part of the strategic conversations to connect policy direction to real life application and thanked the guest counselors for sharing their experiences and insights with the advisory committee. With that introduction, Chris invited the four VRS staff to address the committee.

**Jess Outhwaite, a counselor from the St Cloud VRS office:** Jess noted that they are seeing success when they focus on what can be done to support individuals, so they can do the job. In some cases that means working to customize the job. It takes persistence. Jess stressed the need to continually assess: “I want to know what’s going well.” She shared an example of an individual in a subminimum wage job who had presented for services and had a hard time expressing his interests. As staff used person centered practices to explore interests and skills, his mom shared that her son was good at putting away the dishes and took great pride in doing it well. Jess used that insight to move into placement because he had a goal and they knew that he could do the job. The placement professional advocated heavily on his behalf and acted in the role of the job search agent since the individual could not do it independently. Jess said that with support he secured the right job, he is now happily employed and getting additional hours in a job he loves in line with his skills and interests.

Jess noted another example where they learned from a case where things didn’t go as well. In this case, a young woman with an expressed passion in the fashion industry wanted a job in retail. The team tried to give her a preview of what all the job tasks would entail and found a bigger retailer where she could work in a department without being responsible for the cash register tasks. Unfortunately, mental health challenges made the work difficult for her and highlighted the need for help building coping mechanisms for her life outside of work. After reevaluating the situation, she received a subminimum certificate. Jess noted that they learned that in this instance, other supports need to be bolstered before the young woman is better equipped to move into competitive, integrated employment. However, the retail experience provided her an opportunity to explore her passion and gave her a new sense of her skills. Kim noted that Section 511 regulations mean we’ll have other opportunities to check in the next time she wants to engage and we will be ready when/if her circumstances change.

**Sarah Gutzman, newer RAM, former counselor Hennepin South VRS office:** Sarah shared the story of a young man who could not function well in meetings with other people. Employment was never a consideration until last year when we started looking at what was possible for competitive, integrated employment. When asked about career interests, he expressed strong interest in two positions: CEO of a specific major retailer or a preacher. Thanks to an existing employer relationship between VRS and the retailer, he was placed in the desired retailer’s training. He quickly learned that the physical demands of the work were too difficult however he could do the customer service portion of the work. Sarah noted that one of the parents was also a challenging barrier initially until Sarah was able to respectfully but candidly help the parent understand the impact their behavior was having on their son.

As part of career exploration, he also shadowed religious jobs in line with his expressed interest in being a preacher and found that it required listening rather than purely sharing his views, so he ruled out work in that profession. Ultimately Sarah said they were able to use the two career exploration paths to find a job that he loves where he is interacting with people.

Next Sarah talked about a young man with autism who she felt strongly needed to tour and see and hear about a variety of potential job options. The exploration process moved in progressive steps based on his comfort level and now he is taking the bus to work. His mother is amazed and thrilled with her son’s new confidence and enjoyment in talking with people.

Sarah’s third case story involved a transition youth who could not write or read. He was moved into a group home where he loved to clean. Staff at the group home said he took care of everything there when it came to cleaning. Despite new WIOA rollouts, the school said that he should be tracked for DTH or rec leisure; however, Sarah challenged the default conclusion and reminded everyone that he loved to clean so let’s figure out what’s possible. They received assurances that job coaching would be supported by the county. Fairly quickly, he was doing so well that his support team wanted to scale back his hours since it was taking him less time to do the work than they expected. Once again Sarah challenged the default response and said why don’t we try to get him more since he’s doing so well. When the CRP said they were going to have him quit the job because they didn’t have a job coach, VRS shared the ongoing supports challenge with the employer and the employer became actively engaged in finding ways to keep him on staff. Sarah said that even though these cases take much more intensive work, it is extremely rewarding to see the default assumptions crumbling and new successes happening with the focus on person centered practices and possibilities guiding each team’s work with each unique situation.

**Angela Davis Revak, counselor, Hennepin North VRS office:** Angela noted the major shift their team has seen over the past two years and told the story of how just last year in an IEP meeting, a family was explicit in saying “they wanted nothing to do with VR. Our daughter is not going to work. It would not be safe.” However, this year the same family was open to trying work for the first time with school work experiences in the community. One parent felt strongly that the daughter would do well working at the local child care center. For variety in the experience, the school arranged experiences at both the child care center as well as a manufacturing job.

When our team went onsite to observe her in the child care setting, they noticed that the young woman didn’t seem to be engaged either in the work or the children despite her mother’s presupposition. However, when they went to observe her in the manufacturing environment, the young woman was an entirely different person who was smiling and communicating. Because speech was challenging, they worked together to find ways to simplify her communication. She was able to pick up new tasks and took on tasks that needed to be done, but other staff didn't always have time for. Another skill that was quickly observed by the employer was she almost never made mistakes.

Next step, the team focused on conversations with her mom to help her understand the changes and together they supported her mother through the changes and saw her adjusting her own assumptions about her daughter’s interests and skills. Energized by the work experience, the young woman created her own visual resume one character at a time and even added pictures herself. Angela said it has been a wonderful journey and that a few years ago no one would have been even thinking about the possibilities in the way they are today.

Like Jess, Angela said that they still struggle with the challenging situations and not every story has the ending they would like to see yet. In another case, after efforts at securing work experiences for one youth, the family decided subminimum was the ‘best route’. However, they are now looking at reengaging with VR because the work she is doing isn’t meaningful for her even though she is now making minimum wage. Persistence and commitment to person centered practices is an ongoing process.

**Margie Webb, counselor, West St Paul VRS office:** After listening to all the other case studies, Margie shared one final example of an adult male that she has worked with on and off for over seven years who is challenged with a nonverbal disability and extreme anxiety. At 17 he stopped going to school and then due to increasing anxiety, he no longer left the house. Less than two years ago he contacted Margie to say he wanted to work. At 25 he just got a driver’s license. Given his anxiety, Margie started meeting with him and his parents at their home. Gradually she met him at a nearby convenience store. Margie said the key was moving at the right pace and meeting him where he was at. After a while, he started working at his first job answering phones and found that he could give information when he didn’t have to be around people. It was about finding the right employer. He started working a few hours a week and now several months later he is working 18 hours a week. He now has a goal of increasing hours, so he can move out of his parents’ home and into his own place.

Margie shared that over her career she has worked with about a dozen individuals with similar situations however the biggest change in the VR field has been to look at these individuals differently – to focus on understanding where are they at and what they need to pursue their work goals. Margie wrapped up the case studies by stressing the benefits of using person centered approaches and then it’s up to the individual to make their own decisions with the benefit of informed choice.

Kim thanked the guest counselors for sharing a range of real life examples of casework. As VRS looks to providers and partners, there is a big need for staff who ask those questions and have ways of working with interests and strengths, so Minnesota’s VR community can better serve the new individuals we’re seeing as a result of WIOA Section 511. The question is how can we work together as a community with the individuals with the most significant disabilities to meet them where they are at and develop an individualized plan if they want to work? It’s a very different mindset and approach from what many of us were taught and what we’ve done in the past. It’s a reframing to challenge us to persist in the difficult cases and ask, ‘that situation didn’t work so what will work?’. Another key to remember: person centered means we focus on one person at a time and look for what works for that individual to achieve their customized employment outcomes.

Krista shared that they are using a Customized Employment/Discovery approach and mindset with everyone they work with. Staff are focusing on what each person has to offer and what directions can be pursued to build a job concept. Sarah added that even people in the same job often perform the job differently in different environments.

Kim asked providers what percentage of their menu of services consists of traditional/historical evaluation to better understand potential impacts on providers if VRS tapers off onsite evaluations. She noted that in the process of shifting the services to meet the increased demands, VRS wants to understand what can be done to help bring the community along without causing harm.

Krista said they are finding that some of the traditional evaluations are consistently rating individuals below what staff know these individuals can/are doing. Jolene added that their organization is currently in the middle of CARF accreditation and they are currently required to assess 13 categories. Despite some of the categories and tools being outdated, it’s still required to be accredited. In one example, staff are struggling with evaluations that seems counter to DISCOVERY. Some staff feel like traditional evaluations are ‘judgmental’.

Robert stated that CARF cannot adjust their standards as fast as the industry is advancing. Gathering information, updating their processes and shifting the accreditation model takes time. Kim referenced earlier advisory discussions asking if CARF is still the best way to manage quality, if it still provides value, and if it can evolve in a timely way. Currently VRS has chosen CARF however, CARF is not mandated by the federal funder. The advisory agreed that it is critical there be some type of method to guiding and assessing quality delivery of services and outcomes.

Kim Peck said that VRS has had conversations with DHS on 245D to see if their competencies can meet VRS requirements and assurances of necessary competencies. While VRS is accountable for providing access to services and competencies required by WIOA, we would like to make the shift without creating too sharp a turn for providers who provide the services.

Kim Babine asked the advisory if they have seen other places where CARF appears to be out of alignment with the system transformation that is occurring. Members mentioned that training and assessments both seem out of step in some cases e.g. training on grooming and hygiene. Others noted that if VRS is no longer referring evaluations then it’s possible that providers would no longer need to be accredited in that service with CARF. The advisory discussed looking at which categories best align with the services needed now. VRS intentionally aligned the most recent round of PT contracts with CARF language for greater consistency.

Julie agreed with shifting from extensive evaluation to more rapid engagement and said they have found job shadowing to be helpful. Krista added that they have individuals who do not want to do assessment because they know what they want and where they want to go. In contrast, if an individual doesn’t have an initial idea on what they want to do, the team will often try a bunch of things to jumpstart discovery.

Sarah voiced concerns that some individuals may be limited by traditional evaluations as opposed to seeing the information that emerges from observing them in actual work experience/explorations. Kim asked the advisory what could be done to incent and motivate providers and schools to provide more career exploration and work experiences.

Angela Davis added that as counselors they are seeing a trend of more significant needs than they’ve seen in the past and counselors are feeling that traditional evaluations no longer ‘fit’ what people need. She agreed with the shift from evaluation to more exploration and experiences. She also stressed learning more about supports that are needed to make work possible. Margie and Jess added that sometimes the information they seek is not always in the assessment tool so while it may meet the CARF requirements, it does not have everything the counselor is looking for to develop a person-centered plan.

An advisory member said they have challenges with some VRS counselors who are unwilling to share their assessment results and ask the provider to conduct broad ‘evaluation assessment’. Members agreed that there are some pockets of offices and/or counselors who have not yet made the shift to more person centered and tend to become defensive when asked questions or offered ideas for the jobseeker.

Robert talked about their own organization’s ongoing work to shift their mindset, language and actions toward person centered. It’s about what’s important **to** people vs. what’s important **for** people. IPS does not use evaluations – it relies on Customized Employment which assumes that people know what they need. This shift is part of a national trend and it’s part of a greater shift beyond our industry, it impacts other arenas including the housing industry.

Kim asked providers for their recommendations on what VRS can do to help accelerate the transition for providers and to increase capacity for person centered services. Robert referenced the example of the Center for Integrated Employment which created an apparatus and funding over four years. He encouraged VRS as a funder and regulator to have providers answer, and to be able demonstrate, what they are doing to be more person centered. He noted that DHS is requiring person centered training. The advisory agreed that it must be more than simply changing contracts. We must work together as a system to help drive the shift. It is important to be clear about what person-centered means – it is strength (not deficit) based.

Members said it would be helpful if more RAMs encouraged exploration over evaluation and if all counselors statewide were consistently applying a person-centered mindset and approach. Some expressed experiences where counselors in greater Minnesota offices seemed to be less aware than metro counterparts and encouraged VRS to develop training and guidelines to reach all staff more consistently. In part of the Northern region, providers are not always seeing consistency in the referrals and what they are given/being asked. In the Southern region, one provider member said that when their staff have tried to ask questions the response given by VRS staff is sometimes a defensive ‘you can refuse the referral’ which tends to discourage any further questions that might help the team provide better services. Some counselors can become defensive and infer that the questioning is of their judgment rather than about the needs and objectives of the individual considered within the referral.

Jan noted that within VRS, as with other organizations, there are early adopters while others want to continue doing what they know. She acknowledged that we’re seeing the turbulence common with major change and that VRS field leaders are working together to make it easier for everyone to move forward with the person-centered practices. Field leaders continue to stress that work is about what is most important to the individuals. Jan also stressed the importance of shifting our language citing that the use of ‘exploration’ is a whole different realm in language than ‘evaluation’ and helps to shape the direction we’re going.

Kim and Jan noted that VRS can develop spending reports for RAMs to review for authorized services to both reinforce positive movement and identify pockets where more progress is needed. Jan said she would engage the Regional Managers and RAMS to create safe opportunities for CRP managers to alert RAMS/RMs if they are seeing issues with offices/individual staff that are inconsistent with person centered philosophy and practices.

An advisory member noted that in one metro county group of providers that while most are person centered there are a few who are alarming in their refusal to adapt despite the huge push. Another member agreed noting that they are aware of a provider who has chosen to remain center based and are misusing ‘person centered’ language about choice when in practice they are not providing options. Sarah said that while their organization offers both center based and community based, how you present these options matters a great deal. People need to understand their options and that can mean options including exploration and transitions for progression over time.

Chris shared that she recently attended a meeting with the eight Centers for Independent Living in Minnesota. One year into the changes, all the centers report that it’s the front-line service providers who are offering the most resistance in the shift. The annual check-in process is met with frustration e.g. ‘you were here last year, why are you here again?’ There is still a way to go helping people understand what Section 511 requires and addressing staff who fear direct impacts to their jobs with the changes e.g. ‘we might have to close/our jobs will be gone’

Sarah Gutzman recalled when WIOA was first rolling out and she saw ‘people being scared out of their minds’ informed at different levels about what was needed and what it all meant. She said VRS staff were anxious about doing their jobs correctly with the new requirements and that it was not uncommon to hear of arguments with social workers about what person centered meant making for very uncomfortable meetings.

Sarah Timmerman said that they have been studying how to change their center-based program to more of a business model to make it sustainable. They are constantly thinking about the financial implications of the change. Adding to the difficulty, they are still receiving a lot of center-based referrals in the county because some caseworkers view center-based services as the place to start or a place to move through.

Krista shared that they have seen situations where individuals with extreme anxiety have changed over time and gone on to create a resume and go after a job. Using center-based services first can help provide some individuals with the opportunity to develop social maturation and growth so they can step into community employment.

On the innovative front, Sarah shared that they are partnering with Mayo Clinic in Rochester to create a transition from center-based services onsite into work at one of Mayo’s buildings. They are hoping this partnering approach will be successful and expand to other sites.

Kassia said they have been intentional in changing the language in our materials and conversations in a more formal way to be consistent with person centered. They have also reformatted a lot of their documentation. They are wrestling with finding ways to fund the level of conversations needed and to make smaller caseloads feasible e.g. “How can we be having these ongoing/in-depth conversations with people and still make it financially?”

Next the facilitator broke the full committee into three small groups for discussion focused on identifying effective person-centered strategies and methods for surfacing jobseeker skills and interests. Each small group was asked to discuss and be prepared to share their discussion highlights on the following three-part focus question:

**What recommendations do you have to accelerate the evolution of person centered services? a. What can VRS do? b. What can providers do? c. What can we do together?**

Small groups reported and provided their discussion highlights to the full committee as follows:

**What recommendations do you have** **to accelerate the evolution of person centered services?**

## GROUP #1 – Recorder Kassia

### General:

* Reach out to DHS about what they did with new forms/verbiage
* Models that have person centered focus (IPS, Customized Employment, Motivational Interviewing)
* Need to drive the philosophy/having buy-in into the philosophy
* Having a supported failure option
* Willingness to start at year 1 of implementation and stay at year 1 (will take time to shift)
* Communication

### VRS:

* Reach out to DHS about process and funding they used to implement PCS. Asking what they would do differently
* Sharing success stories to increase buy-in
* Frequent trainings with consistent message (inclusion of different perspectives in trainings consumer, VRS, CRP)
* VRS leadership providing consistent message/set the standard for the community
* Frequent and consistent communication (including message that full implementation takes time)

### CRP’S:

* Meeting with VRS counselor or RAM bi monthly
* Keeping the message alive between trainings (ie having it on weekly/monthly team agenda, how have you used PCT since last meeting)

### Together:

* Starting a central body/partnership to communicate, lead, and highlight to greater community and counties (MRA? Placement Partnership meetings)

A) Leadership group (admin professionals)

B) Coaching group (supervisors/direct support staff)

* Increase regional meetings where VRS and CRP’s are together to address regional differences
* Presenting at regional meetings together
* Utilizing Cadre experience
* Reaching out to VRS and CRP’s who have started ICI/DHS
* Making sure communication plan is consistent
* Co-led trainings for greater community VRS/CRP’s
* Focus:
	+ Year 1: Trainings
	+ Year 2: Thinking
	+ Year 3: Practices
	+ Year 4: Address pockets of resistance

## GROUP #2 – Recorder Krista

This is what Group 2 discussed in relation to your question ' "What recommendations do you have to accelerate the evolution of person-centered services?" We did not break responsibility down into VRS, CRP, or Together. Instead our discussion seemed to consistently reflect that the proactive strategies we discussed are all "team" strategies.

We came up with three main areas: **Intakes, Funding, Education**.

### Intakes

We all agreed that getting the right information from and to the individual at the start of services is essential. The various Team members need to know what each agency can do, what the limits are, and what the Individual is expecting and hoping for. This type of immediate and open information sharing will help to align the goals of the various team members - to ensure we are not working against each other in any way. If Person Centered Thinking is established at the beginning (through the language used and the expectations set), it will be a lot easier to maintain a Person-Centered process. It is much more difficult to "back track" and try to establish a Person-Centered plan retroactively. An emphasis was placed on setting up realistic expectations for the Individual and their family/guardians. Very few people will go through a straight path of assessment, job development, job hire, successful career. It is important to be upfront with everybody that most people have a winding and sometimes cyclical path. Sometimes a portion of the process must be repeated several times; sometimes goals or dreams change partway through the process. It is also not necessarily a quick process. Finding a job can be a difficult and lengthy process even for those without disabilities.

### Funding

When funding is behind the concepts and processes that are "desired" and not as available for those that are not, providers will naturally gravitate towards the more cost-effective methods/protocols. If being able to meet an Individual where they are at in their job search (i.e., the example of driving past a potential place of employment before even stopping or going inside) is a priority, then can those options be funded? A suggestion was made to allow more fee for service options and making certain that counselors and CRPs are open to the idea of changing the authorization or PBA as needed to cover services that may not have originally been chosen or discussed. Also, it would be beneficial to make it more widely known that a PBA can be put "on hold" if a need for other services (another assessment, education, etc) is identified.

### Education

We spent most of our time discussing education, which we broke down into two parts: information to be shared and how to share that information. The question was asked, "how do you take education to a deeper understanding of the core way of thinking?" We discussed effective education strategies and the fact that telling somebody a fact does not mean that fact will be used to promote change within the company. It may not even be understood or accepted.

The types of information that need to be shared includes:

* CRPs need more information on services and options that can be requested from VRS (i.e., funds for work clothes).
* Counselors need more information from CRPs on what services they can each provide (i.e., transportation, Customized Employment, etc).
* Services (from both VRS and CRPs) can be fluid - one person mentioned the "squishiness" of the services we provide. For example, an OJE experience for one person does not have to look anything like another person's experience. Also, services can start, stop, pause, and restart as needed.
* Language is a foundational aspect of education. Teach people the words and phrases which promote the concept of Person Centered. Constant use of the language will drive a stronger understanding of the concept.

The ways that information can be shared include:

* Offer the information repeatedly and in different ways. One person mentioned that it takes seven times hearing something to really learn it. Providing multiple opportunities to see, hear, and experience Person Centered Thinking on a regular basis will direct the shift in internal processing that turns "the new way of doing things" into the "status quo".
* Meetings could be a single provider meeting with the VRS Counselors that they work with or group meetings with several providers. Including County Case Management on meetings pertinent to them (i.e., transition of services from VRS to Waiver, etc.) has been invaluable to some of us. We also discussed whether meetings should always be targeted to "management level" staff or if it would be beneficial to include direct care staff. The agreed upon answer was "yes". Targeting meetings to both managers and direct care staff would be beneficial depending on the topic discussed. "Boots on the Ground" involvement and "buy-in", then working your way up through the company can be very effective when seeking systemic change.
* Meetings could be "free-for-all" or "roundtable" style opportunities to bring up whatever issues or concerns are current. Or they could be strictly agenda led and focused on a topic or concern. Even meetings that are focused on one individual lead to a greater understanding of the overall options and limitations.
* The ideal format would probably be a balance between the various types of meetings and including invites to different agencies depending on topic or purpose of the meeting.

Promoting opportunities for CRPs and Counselors to meet (either in group settings or 1:1) can be beneficial in many ways. It would promote stronger partnership relationships. When CRP staff and Counselors know each other somewhat and are comfortable working together and asking questions, the result is far better service to the individual. It would also mitigate turn-over effects - as staff leave agencies, the relationship between the agency must be rebuilt again and again. Having systems in place to promote that relationship building would ease the impact of turnover. These meetings would also help to improve education and accelerate that process of taking information and facts and turning it into an understanding of the concepts and a way of thinking.

## GROUP #3 – Recorder Kim

### VRS COULD:

* Improve communication
	+ Change referral form to include person centered planning (PCP) language
	+ Direct phone discussion in advance of intake meeting to clarify what counselor is looking for
	+ Provide copy of case notes to provider
* Make it harder to authorize for evaluation
	+ Exploration should be the priority
	+ This will simplify documentation required by CARF by avoiding the words evaluation and assessment
* Amend the PT contracts to reference PCP; establish mandates for providers to be more person centered and deliver services that focus on “what is important to” not just “what is important for”
* Less rigidity around the job goal; be more willing to amend the IPE
* More PCP training for VRS staff
	+ Partner with training being provided to providers and counties
* Run reports on VRS authorization/spending to look for patterns that suggest an emphasis on traditional, non-PCP approaches
* Adopt DHS/245D PCP forms or develop our own forms modeled after DHS forms
* Reduce inconsistency in services across (and within) VR teams
* Do more to build PCP culture within VRS

### PROVIDERS COULD:

* Include VRS staff in PCP training
* Change forms; use different words/language
* Provide better training for staff

### VRS and PROVIDERS TOGETHER COULD:

* Work together to develop critical elements for forms and definitions
* Schedule annual meetings between VR and provider
	+ Part of RAMs team meeting
	+ Potluck/food always helps
* Develop Communities of Practice that include VRS, providers, and counties

# March Meeting Follow up – ‘Job Coaching 101’

At the January 2018 meeting the advisory discussed the significant challenges in securing and retaining job coaching capacity to meet the increasing demand for services around the state. At the March 2018 meeting, the advisory unanimously agreed on the need and value of creating a statewide ‘Job Coaching 101’ curriculum to enhance job coaching service quality and capacity similar to what ‘Placement 101’ was able to do for placement services.

After the January advisory meeting, VRS learned of efforts initiated by the Metro CRP Placement Managers group towards the creation of a Job Coaching 101 curriculum. Several CRP member organization serving on the advisory and/or staff from their organizations including ProAct, Lifetrack, and Avivo, are part of the work group. The Metro Placement Managers group met in mid-April and determined that the JPD (Job Placement Division) of MRA would be in better position to develop the new curriculum with more statewide representation.

Marci Jasper, VRS, will be assisting the development and Bobbi VanGrinsven noted that the development team welcomes folks from around the state who are interested in helping with the curriculum creation and/or training as it moves outward for full state coverage. September is the target timeframe for the new curriculum launch.

# Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

## CRP Updates:

* **Julie Peterschick, Productive Alternatives,** has something fun to report… we are working in partnership with the Twins on August 25th to promote people with disabilities. One of the big promotions calls for nominations of individuals/groups who are making a positive impact. The event is being sponsored by Harmon’s Heart and our staff are working with Harmon Killebrew’s widow Anita on the event.
* **Heather Deutschlaender, Proact,** CARF has come and gone and we’re set for another three years. We are offering DISCOVERY in Scott County. Effective May 1 we’ll be providing SILs (semi-independent living) and in-home services.
* **Bobbi VanGrinsven – Lifetrack Resources**, acting CEO Curtis Knutson has transitioned from interim to permanent status. Our CARF visit has been pushed out.
* **Kristi Stafsholt, Occupational Development Center Inc,** is preparing forCARF and an EE audit before that. Our board is working on updating position descriptions. Based on job coaching discussions here in the advisory, I am redesigning our job coaching positions - moving from a specialist to a generalist model for both job coaching and employment specialist.
* **Kassia Janezich, Tasks Unlimited,** is currently posting for a placement specialist. We are now at capacity, so we can only offer EE support. We’re looking at ways to expand our relationship with VRS. Looking at Pre-ETS and other opportunities. CARF in September.
* **Sarah Timmerman, Ability Building Center,** isin the process of doing complete organizational restructuring. We are trying to identify ways to address the staffing crisis and do more with less. Sarah received a promotion and a new title: Director of Program Innovation. We’re looking at ways to increase the buy in for skill building programs e.g. outdoor work, indoor work. We are piloting a new program in one of our counties called ‘Abilities Integrated’ where everyone will leave with increased skills and a complete resume. We’re hoping to expand the pilot to Olmstead county in the future if we can gain more buy-in from caseworkers, individuals and families. Houston County is ramping up services.
* **Robert Reedy, RISE,** isdoing recruitment for a Social Security research project as one of 30 participating sites around the country. We’re doing IPS work in Hennepin County with probation officers, judges, treatment providers, and housing advocates. We are also working on another county 2-year project focused on supported education as part of an IPS pathways project for people who have experienced long term homelessness. Many of the people we’re working with have a lot of barriers and several have never had jobs before.

## VRS updates:

### Kim Peck, VRS State Director

* We’re looking for input on the April 17th VRS webinar on PT contract and amendments updates. VRS wants to hear from providers who anticipate challenges related to the revised P/T contract amendment process. Concerned providers are invited to submit their observations and concerns in writing to Kim Peck, VRS Director.

### Chris McVey, VRS Director of Strategic Initiative and Community Partnerships

* VRS is working with WINTAC to create a Minnesota Customized Employment developed based on national training wisdom. We want to keep the training cost low and we’re studying how to fund the work learning based on the MNSOC model that DHS created. VRS will work with providers to identify who is best suited to participate in this training.
* VRS will present its next webinar on May 15th from 10:00 to 11:30am. The webinar topic is Customized Employment and will include information about key dates for submitting documents for Customized Employment Competency Review, understanding the criteria DEED-VRS will use to ensure competency in delivering CE services to VRS clients, and a preview of the new Minnesota-based Customized Employment training currently in development.

### Kim Babine, VRS Extended Employment (EE) Director

* DEED is proposing changes to the state rules that govern the Extended Employment (EE) Program.
	+ The rule is being revised to reflect principles such as Minnesota’s commitment to person-centered practices, informed choice, and Minnesota’s Employment First policy—especially its focus on competitive, integrated employment. The revision will also align the program with new practices in the broader disability services system driven by the federal Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) rule, the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and stepped up enforcement of the Olmstead decision.
	+ Because the rule rewrite will not be in place before the next provider contracts go into effect (July 1, 2018), EE program staff have documented (to the best of their ability) how the old and new rule will work in SFY 2019 in “Information and Instructions for EE Grant Applicants” found here: https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/grantees.
	+ 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).

# VRS CRP Advisory Committee – Meeting On April 27, 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.*

* Three VRS counselors provided their perspectives and real-life examples of the challenges in meeting the unique needs of the increasing number of individuals with multiple, significant disabilities who are now seeking VR services. Across the state, counselors are experiencing a shortage of relevant services and stressed the need to increase the availability of services focused on the person’s strengths.
* The advisory committee discussed several strategies for accelerating the availability and delivery of person centered services within VRS and the larger vocational rehabilitation system including a continued focus on training as well as alignment of referrals and supporting forms to person centered language. The advisory emphasized that this is a sea change for the entire disability employment services system. It is more than changing culture at the organization level. It requires changing the culture of the greater community.
* VRS wants to hear from providers who anticipate challenges related to the revised P/T contract amendment process. Concerned providers are invited to submit their observations and concerns in writing to Kim Peck, VRS Director.
* VRS will present its next webinar on May 15th from 10:00 to 11:30am. The webinar topic is Customized Employment and will include information about key dates for submitting documents for Customized Employment Competency Review, understanding the criteria DEED-VRS will use to ensure competency in delivering CE services to VRS clients, and a preview of the new Minnesota-based Customized Employment training currently in development.

 *\* End of Key Messages*