DEED / Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee

Friday, December 6, 2019 – 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

VRS St Paul Fairview Office

# VRS CRP Advisory Committee – Meeting on December 6, 2019

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.*

**VRS Updates**

* Dee Torgerson was named the new DEED-VRS Director in October. Prior to her appointment, Dee served in VRS leadership positions for the past seven years, as regional director for the metro area as well as for the southern and central Minnesota regions. She also served as a director of the Vocational Rehabilitation unit in Workers' Compensation at the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.
* Dee provided a brief update on the national direction and trends presented as part of the October conference of CSAVR (Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation). In September, the U.S. Department of Education announced, Mark Schultz, as its new commissioner for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).
* Dee shared that there is a high degree of optimism and confidence in the new head of RSA. He has a great deal of experience with VR and knows the challenges and value of the work that state agencies and VR community partners provide for thousands of individuals each year. She is hopeful that there will be changes in federal processes to help improve the system transformation occurring with WIOA’s implementation.
* As part of those process changes, RSA Commissioner Schultz has committed to catching up on the backlog of state monitoring reports and shortening the cycle time from visit to findings going forward. In line with the new focus on cycle time, RSA has told Minnesota to expect a report based on their August 2019 monitoring visit to be provided in March 2020. In the meantime, VRS is already working to address known RSA priorities such as effective contract management with a greater focus on outcomes compared to costs as well as greater attention to quality standards especially for providers without CARF accreditations.
* RSA also communicated a clear expectation that Minnesota develop a consistent standard for rate setting including methodology and structure. VRS anticipates engaging with the CRP Advisory Committee and community partners to help address the key concerns and opportunities raised by RSA’s visit.

**VR Contract Management**

* Director of Community Partnerships Kim Babine provided an update on VRS’ work to improve contract management. The Rehabilitation Services Administration has made clear that there are three main areas VRS needs to address related to contract management:
  1. The standards community partners must meet in order to receive a VRS P/T contract. This includes a discussion of the budget limit set for Limited Use Vendors.
  2. The methodology by which VRS determines which service rates proposed by community partners will be accepted, rejected, or negotiated. This is not intended to be a rate-setting exercise, but an effort to outline guidelines VRS will follow in making service rate decisions.
  3. A system of performance management for community partners that will involve developing the desired outcome measurements, building a data collection strategy, then providing that data back to community partners, VRS staff, and individuals receiving VR services. VRS asked for feedback from the CRP Advisory Committee on what outcomes should be considered. The responses included:
     + Placement rate, placement plan to first day on the job in time at team member and program level,
     + Time between second and third milestones
     + Survey 6 months after 90 day close to see if still employed
     + Extended Employment (EE) data - knowing where spots are open
     + Average wage
     + Consumer feedback/satisfaction
     + Average wait
* All three of these priority areas will be addressed in collaboration with community partners and VR field staff. VRS plans to use the CRP Advisory committee as the primary, but not only, avenue for partnership on these matters. VRS is planning additional opportunities for dialogue as each of these areas is developed. Stay tuned!

**Next Steps for DEED-VRS/SSB and DHS-DSD Memorandum of Understanding**

* DEED VRS and State Services for the Blind and DHS Disability Services Division signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Monday, September 23. The MOU represents an interagency commitment to better align systems so that common customers – those who receive home and community-based service disability waivers and vocational rehabilitation services from VRS or SSB – can receive more seamless and timely supports to make informed choices and meet their competitive integrated employment goals.
* The terms of the MOU are specific to individuals on a waiver (DD, TBI, CADI, CAC) who want to pursue competitive, integrated employment. Employment First and Person-Centered principles form the basis of the shared vision for how our agencies can provide employment services for people with disabilities in a coordinated manner.
* The MOU provides the framework for more detailed work planning over the next 12-24 months. DHS’s [Interim Guidance](https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs-305378) will remain in place while we work on the MOU’s implementation. Agencies are collaborating on a MOU work plan to review and improve service processes and experience that will include engaging key stakeholder input (including opportunities for staff from VR/SSB/DHS/MDE, CRPs and lead agencies) along the way.

**Expanding Outreach and Collaboration in 2020**

* As part of the final meeting of the year, co-chairs Kim Babine and Chris McVey thanked members for another year of service. 2019 was a challenging year for VRS in many ways with new policies at the state and federal levels, the ongoing implementation rollout of WIOA, multiple changes in both agency and division leadership, and the first RSA monitoring visit since 2010.
* Members shared their observations on the value and importance of the ongoing dialogue and work of the committee to connecting statewide efforts to local and regional work. An initial list of potential advisory topics for 2020 includes further discussions on strategies for recruiting, hiring, training and retaining of staff; Pre-ETS, contracts management, and supported employment for placement and retention as it relates to the new MOU.
* Next, Kim and Chris invited the committee to share ideas on ways to expand the connections and collaboration beyond the advisory committee and across the full VR system including CRPs, LUVs, CILs, counties, tribes and schools for stronger working relationships and greater impact.
* The committee brainstormed ideas to expand the outreach of the VRS CRP Advisory Committee including regional VR partners meetings co-hosted by VRS and CRP representatives focused on problem solving and idea generation, video conferencing, and topic-based task forces. The co-chairs thanked the committee for their ongoing work and promised to continue joint work focused on building positive employment services system connections and collaboration across Minnesota in 2020.

*End of Key Messages*