# DEED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

# COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

# Session Notes for Friday, February 22, 2019: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

## 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

## 2019 membership and schedule

**2019 Community Partner Members (*listed alphabetically)*:** Heather Deutschlaender, Jodi DiMaggio, Jim Durdle, Linda Hogan, Josh Howie, Kassia Janezich, Jolene Juhl, Robert Reedy, Krista Stafsholt, Sarah Timmerman, Bobbi VanGrinsven, Jenny Zebell

**VRS Members:** Sarah Gutzman (RAM representative), Jay Hancock (RM/South Region), Jan Thompson (VRS Field Director), Dee Torgerson (RM/Metro Region), Jeri Werner (RM/North Region)

**Sponsor:** Larry Vrooman, VRS Director

**Co-leaders:** Chris McVey, Director of Strategic Initiatives, and Kim Babine, Director of Community Partnerships

**Facilitator**: Holly Johnson

**2019 Schedule:** Feb 22, Mar 22, Apr 26, May 17 (Woodbury), Sep 27, Oct 25, Dec 6

## February 22, 2019 Session Objectives:

1. Welcome and introduction of 2019 advisory committee members.
2. Review/overview of the approved 2018 VRS CRP Advisory Committee charter in preparation for 2019 charter development and adoption.
3. Engage in preliminary advisory dialogue on 2019 vocational rehabilitation priorities.
4. Provide a conduit for sharing important updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers.

## February 22, 2019 Attendees (listed alphabetically):

Kim Babine, Heather Deutschlaender, Jodi DiMaggio, Jim Durdle, John Fisher, Sarah Gutzman, Jay Hancock, Linda Hogan, Josh Howie, Kassia Janezich, Jolene Juhl, Chris McVey, Robert Reedy, Mimi Schafer, Jan Thompson, Sarah Timmerman, Dee Torgerson, Bobbi VanGrinsven, Larry Vrooman, Jeri Werner, Jenny Zebell

**Absent:** Krista Stafsholt

**Facilitator**: Holly Johnson

## Agenda Topics:

1. Welcome and Opening Introductions
2. Meet the New VRS State Director: Larry Vrooman
3. Charting Our Advisory Committee’s Course for 2019
4. Strategic Topic: Emerging Top Priorities for VRS
5. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
6. Wrap Up/Adjourn @ 3:00 pm

## Meeting Highlights:

* The Advisory Committee welcomed and introduced new members. They also reviewed the 2018 VRS CRP Advisory Committee Charter for content and potential updates in preparation for ratifying the 2019 charter at the March 22nd meeting.
* New VRS State Director Larry Vrooman shared his background and his early perspectives on the emerging 2019 priorities for Minnesota’s VR Program including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). RSA is continuing to provide additional Pre-ETS guidance which is being reviewed by VRS staff for anticipated service contract and performance management implications. VRS will continue to keep the greater VR community apprised of any impacts as they are discerned.
* CRP members provided organizational overviews of populations served, employment service strengths, challenges and funding streams. The combined overviews illustrate the breadth and depth of disability employment services offered around the state.

## Next Steps:

1. **Preparation of Key Messages for Distribution to CRP/LUV partners:** The facilitator will work with the Committee leaders to develop key messages from today’s meeting for distribution to the entire distribution list of CRP/LUV partners on the GovDelivery list within one week of the meeting. To verify/add your email to this list please contact Karla Eckhoff at Karla.Eckhoff@state.mn.us
2. **Document Session Notes:** The facilitator will document the complete session notes, including the Key Messages, for VRS Co-leadership review and approval for distribution to key audiences including the CRP Advisory Committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
3. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled forMarch 22, 2019 at the VRS Fairview Workforce Center location.

## Welcome and Opening

Holly Johnson opened the meeting with an overview of the objectives and agenda before facilitating a round of introductions for the full membership. The advisory committee welcomed four new CRP members and two new VRS members in 2019 as follows:

* Jodi DiMaggio, Epic Enterprise Inc. / South Region CRP representative
* Jim Durdle, Goodwill Easter Seals MN / Metro Region CRP representative
* Sarah Gutzman, DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services / RAM representative
* Linda Hogan, Blue Sky Inc. / North Region CRP representative
* Larry Vrooman, DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services / State Director
* Jenny Zebell, MRCI / Metro Region CRP representative

The committee is scheduled to meet seven days in 2019: February 22, March 22, April 26, May 17, September 27, October 25, and December 6.

## Meet the new VRS state director: larry vrooman

DEED/VRS welcomed Larry Vrooman as the new state director effective January 9, 2019 succeeding long time VRS Director Kim Peck who retired in November 2018. Larry joins VRS after serving 11 years at the federal VR level with RSA (Rehabilitation Services Administration) where Minnesota was one of 6 states and 9 state agencies whose programs he advised and supported, and one of 12 states and 17 state VR agencies he monitored. He has also managed the disability services, alcohol and drug prevention and new student orientation programs at a state college in South Dakota, where he also taught Counseling, Program Development and Evaluation. He has a master’s in VR counseling and received CRC certification.

Larry is thrilled to be in Minnesota and closer to direct services. He plans to leverage his local, state and federal VR knowledge and experiences to engage with the greater VR system and to help Minnesota navigate WIOA policy and regulation implementation, build program support, and effectively deliver person centered services.

## charting our advisory Committee’s course for 2019

The CRP Advisory was first established in November 2010 to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities.

Since its founding, every January the facilitator walks through the committee charter to promote clear and shared understanding of the advisory committee’s purpose, scope of work, team processes and other key aspects that help define the committee. As part of the annual walk through, the facilitator also asks committee members to thoughtfully review the previous year’s charter and offer any relevant updates/enhancements to keep the charter current for the year ahead. The 2019 members were asked to provide any recommendations for updates to the facilitator prior to the March 22nd meeting with a goal of finalizing content and ratifying the updated charter for 2019.

## Strategic Topic: emerging top priorities for vrs

Director Larry Vrooman expressed his intention to continue his predecessor Kim Peck’s use of the CRP Advisory for service provider insights and collaborative work to improve Minnesota’s disability employment services and outcomes.

#### Pre-ETS

Larry shared his initial perspectives on emerging top priorities for VRS based on his first six weeks in the position. Among those priorities is an increased emphasis on responding to RSA’s evolving guidance and meeting WIOA’s requirement that every state’s VR program spend 15% of its VR budget on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

Based on continued analysis of RSA’s latest guidance and VRS’ performance and budget information, Larry believes that the VR program in Minnesota must do more in order to meet the 15% Pre-ETS requirement under WIOA. While the requirement represents 15% of the VR budget, Pre-ETS compliance issues can result in significant penalties impacting the entire VR program making it a critical priority for everyone. Larry noted that VRS staff are in the process of reviewing both previous as well as the most recent RSA compliance information regarding Pre-ETS.

The advisory committee had an initial conversation regarding various Pre-ETS challenges and questions including work-based experiences, set rates, cancellation rate experience and strategies, transportation, language/definitions, and grants. Director Larry Vrooman asked the advisory committee to be prepared for additional strategic dialogue on the topic at the March meeting.

#### P/T Contracts

Larry continued the conversation from the December 2018 CRP Advisory Committee meeting regarding recent RSA guidance disallowing VR funds from being used to pay cancellation fees. VRS is assessing implications for the upcoming contract amendment language and process both near term and longer term.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

## VRS updates:

### Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships

* Governor Walz’s proposed budget includes $4M a year/$8M for the biennium in additional permanent VR funding to continue, and increase slightly, the current biennium’s one-time $3.5M/$7M funding appropriation that will end June 30th. Without this funding, VR would have to close Category 1.
* Kim provided an update on recent changes to invoicing and amendments to VRS Professional and Technical (P/T) Contracts. More information on invoice requirements, report requirements and sample reports can be found on the ‘Forms and Reports’ tab at: <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/resources/> Questions on VRS P/T Contracts should be directed to Anne Paulson, VRS Rehabilitation Program Specialist at [Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us](mailto:Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us)
* After five years of work, the new Extended Employment (EE) Rule has been published in the state register and will be effective March 4, 2019. The rule has been revised so the program will 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.

### Chris McVey, VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives

* DHS/DSD and DEED/VRS staff are continuing work to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). As part of that work, DEED-VRS & DHS-DSD hosted regional roundtables comprised of VRS, Community Partners providing 245D & VRS services and Lead Agencies in Houston, Chisago and Hennepin counties. The goal was to gather “front line” service insights to help inform the MOU development. DEED-VRS has been researching and reviewing agreements from other parts of the nation that will help inform Minnesota’s MOU.
* The team met with DEED/VRS Director Larry Vrooman and DHS/DSD Director Alex Bartolic and received approval to continue development of the MOU. The MOU Team will meet monthly with agency Directors to ensure leadership alignment with the goal of a signed MOU in place by June 2019 with Training and Rollout to follow.

### Larry Vrooman, VRS State Director

* VRS’s federal funder RSA is scheduled to conduct a formal program review of Minnesota’s VR program on August 19-23, 2019. VRS’s last federal monitoring visit occurred in 2010. Early indications are that RSA has increased its focus on performance management, compliance, and outcomes.

## CRP overviews:

* **Robert Reedy, RISE,** Rise has 32 locations located throughout the state and in western Wisconsin serving over 3,000 clients a year. The populations we work with are People with Developmental and Intellectual disabilities, Brain Injuries, Mental Illness and Behavioral Health, People who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Blind. We have service offerings including welfare to work, IPS, PBA, evaluation programs, SSA, and EE. In addition to VR funded services, Rise provides employment services funded through Waivers, Private foundations, County grants, Mental Health Initiatives, State grants, MFIP, Ticket-to-Work, and Social Security Research Project. We do Supported Employment in a variety of settings, group, cluster sites, and independent placement. We use the IPS Model and Customized Employment as well as tradition Supported Employment techniques. Our metro staff includes 50+ employment consultants. We are passionate about IPS, building and growing collaborations, evidence-based practices and finding new service innovations e.g. drug court programs where we are expanding IPS to address employment companion issues such as addiction and criminal justice system. Most challenging is dealing with systemic barriers that are more about the needs of the system than about the people served.
* **Sarah Timmerman, Ability Building Center,** we provide VR, center-based employment and enclave services with approximately 75% of individuals being waiver funded. We have a large center-based population and provide similar level of support in community-based settings; we provide all services with a person-centered approach. The primary location is in Rochester and we have satellite offices in Caledonia & La Crescent. We serve roughly 800 individuals each year primarily in vocational settings, but also have programs with strictly a rec/leisure focus. We are also an Extended Employment provider. The populations we work with are primarily individuals receiving services for mental health and developmental disabilities; we also have a specific program that focuses on individuals with brain injuries. We recently completed an intensive review by the Department of Labor, which has helped provide increasing incentive to move away from sub-minimum wage employment. Our strengths are strong community relationships that have allowed us to have many community-based enclave settings for individuals to choose from and finding innovative ways to support more individuals toward competitive, integrated employment. We are passionate about finding innovative ways to provide support in community settings, despite the constant staffing issues that arise. We have a successful and growing partnership with Mayo Clinic which entails individuals working within their facilities. Most challenging is helping some individuals and their teams to consider and explore options to move from center-based to competitive integrated employment. Sometimes individuals and their teams have an all or nothing mindset so we work hard to help people understand it can be a mixture of programming and an ongoing process. Successfully moving old mindsets requires our staff to help manage perceptions vs. misconceptions.
* **Bobbi VanGrinsven, Lifetrack,** we provide employment services throughout the seven metro counties and those services include one on one community employment support, extended employment, preschool, home visiting, IPS services for 150 people in Washington and Ramsey counties, partnerships with MEC, and services for immigrants with disabilities. We are funded through DHS, IPS and EE programs. We have no waiver funded services. We have just entered into a 5-year business agreement with Lutheran Social Services. Our employment service strengths are providing 1:1 employment support focused on finding the client’s interests and strengths and then working with them to find employment based on those interests and strengths. Most challenging of our aspect is keeping staff.
* **Jolene Juhl, Minnesota Community Based Services (DHS),**  MSOCS is a state administered and operated combination of 17 programs serving approximately 700 people. Our funding comes from waivers, county, VRS, and school contracts.  We are known for serving populations that no one else will serve including criminal offenders and individuals with multiple staff support. The populations we work with include a wide range with many diagnosed with mental illness(es), intellectual disabilities, brain injury and dual diagnosis.  Many of our programs have/are undergoing significant transition.  Our 14C certificate is gone, as is in house work, we emphasize community-based employment options.  We still have DTH services.  We are passionate about challenging individuals, their support teams, and employers to rethink what’s possible for people who are typically ‘doubted’ in their capabilities to work.  Most challenging is being part of a state agency where we are challenged by being a part of a large agency and the growing costs of services.
* **Jim Durdle, Goodwill Easter Seals MN,** we provide employment services in the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Willmar, Mankato, and Rochester. We offer a continuum of services including Pre-ETS, EDS, IPS, EE, employment training in five sectors, placement, retention, re-entry, father project, and college navigation. We serve youth, families, and single adults. Half of the individuals in our VR funded programs are youth. Our funding comes from VR and DEED, DHS, various federal contracts, schools, counties, foundations, and social enterprise. Most of our career services are VR focused. We are passionate about program development and weaving together the best of various service models; creating strong partnerships with schools, providers, government agencies, and employers; and helping participants to overcome barriers to employment. We are working across systems to address complex, interrelated challenges such as employment and affordable housing. Another challenge is the size of our various programs. Minnesota offers many great programs and often we are more challenged by scale to have a deeper community impact than our service models.
* **Heather Deutschlaender, ProAct,** we have five locations (Eagan, Hudson, Red Wing, Shakopee and Zumbrota) with Eagan as its headquarters. ProAct serves a wide range of disabilities including intellectual, mental, physical, ASD and TBI. We are passionate about building effective partnerships and developing new projects and programs to provide a wide variety of options including Pre-Employment Transition Services. Most challenging is dealing with bureaucracy and managing the ongoing, volume of changes. Services are funded by waivers, VR/DEED, EE, private pay, school and counties.
* **Josh Howie, Trillium Works, Inc.** we provide employment services in Northeast Minnesota with the ability to serve individuals along much of the north shore and inland to Aitkin. Our office is in Duluth and most of our services are performed in the Duluth and Cloquet areas. The populations we work with are primarily individuals with developmental disabilities however we serve anyone referred by VR with strengths in connecting with 18-30-year old individuals and helping them achieve their goals. Trillium was founded by a husband and wife team who provided a deep grounding in person centered planning which continues today. PATH/MAPS/ELP etc. is foundational to our philosophy as an agency. We are passionate about helping people plan what they want to do and helping them to succeed at their goals. Most challenging currently, is hiring and retaining staff to meet the needs of everyone who wants services from us, as well as managing the service needs and uncertainties inherent in referrals coming from entities that historically had not referred individuals with that amount of ongoing service needs. We are funded by all waivers (DD, CADI, BI), VR, SSB, and a few grant projects that we have partnered with other agencies to work on.
* **Linda Hogan, Blue Sky Inc.** Blue Sky is a Company based out of Detroit Lakes, with satellite offices in Brainerd and Moorhead. Individuals we support have varying abilities in their employment needs and we can support those needs in these areas: assistance with job seeking skills such as job application preparation, resume development, practicing interviewing skills, job assessment, job development, job placement, job coaching, and individualized supervision. Other areas we support individuals in includes development of work habits, work behaviors, attitude, problem solving and team work. Strengths: Our employment services provide support in an integrated community setting utilizing person-centered planning tools. We are passionate about working with employers and the individual’s coworkers to educate and help build natural supports for greater satisfaction and retention. Challenges: Most challenging is helping support teams recognize when long term supports are no longer needed. Working with individuals in rural areas is a challenge to find business for employment and finding transportation for that individual. We are also challenged by the pay differential for staff and service/agencies differences between Minnesota and North Dakota who pays more. We experience these challenges frequently in the Fargo Moorhead communities. Funding Sources - funded by Vocational Rehabilitation (VRS) and/or through the CADI, DD, and BI waivers.
* **Jenny Zebell, MRCI,** we provide employment services (waivered and VRS), IPS, day services, and CDS services across the south metro and southern Minnesota communities with offices in Shakopee, Mankato, New Ulm, Fairmont, Chaska, and Rosemount. We employ 450 staff and the populations we work with are primarily individuals with mental illness and intellectual disabilities. Our Shakopee location is primarily community-based employment but does have an in-house work program that serves about 42 people. Most challenging is changing mindsets for staff, clients and teams to help them move beyond the deeply held belief that ‘inhouse is safe and community is not’. Like other providers we are seeing more individuals with higher needs and finding staff for what we can pay is a huge challenge. We are funded through waivers, VR, EE, MFIP, and the CDS program.
* **Jodi DiMaggio, Epic Enterprise, Inc.**  we are based in Dundas Minnesota   
  and serve the surrounding area including Northfield and Faribault.  We currently serve 127 people with a broad range of services, 37 individuals seeking or working in competitive integrated employment in Employment Connection, 90 individuals in ‘Community Connections’, (DT&H) and life enrichment including art and music.  My department, Employment Connection, is passionate about incorporating sensory integration and meeting the needs with occupational therapy practices by partnering with OT services, to assist with keeping them on the job longer or helping to find employment that will include meeting their sensory needs. We have been very successful with this approach.  We serve many young people with autism as well as individuals that are deaf, blind, and other developmental disabilities.  Most challenging is recruiting, training and retaining staff in our rural setting.  We are also challenging assumptions of staff, group homes and teams on what is possible through our new services that are available to introduce competitive employment.  We are funded through waivers, SSB, and VR.
* **Kassia Kassie Janezich, Tasks Unlimited** We provide housing and employment services in Hennepin and Dakota counties. We primarily work with adults receiving services for mental health, but our Competitive Placement program is open to all disability categories. Our largest employment program is our Supported Employment. We serve approx. 200-350 people in this program who primarily work at our janitorial contracts. We also offer Competitive Job Placement services (in partnership with VRS/DEED). This program is still relatively new, began serving clients approx. 1.5 years ago. We served approx. 100 people in this program last year and are currently completing Customized Employment Training in order to become ACRE Certified. We are passionate about using a whole person approach. We are working hard to find innovative ways to address the powerful connections between stable housing and employment through programs like our Transition Lodge. This type of work entails managing connections across multiple systems. Additionally, we offer an intensive 4-6-month long training program that provides hands on janitorial training and provides supports to eliminate barriers in getting people to work (i.e. mental health management, chemical health, etc.). Getting to watch folks maintain their jobs and housing while they also build community is very rewarding. Systems and policy change continue to impact the work we do. There is a big push away from group living leading to increased challenges to find employment and housing that is stable and helps individuals out of poverty. Our employment programs are primarily funded through our Extended Employment contract, VRS dollars for Job Placement program, and our janitorial contracts. We hold a 14C Certificate. We hold a 245D license, but we haven't and are not currently receiving any wavier dollars from DHS.
* **Krista Stafsholt, Occupational Development Center –** ODC has nine divisions across Northern Minnesota from Thief River Falls to International Falls with Buhl on the South end of our service area.  We serve nine different counties on a regular basis and over 700 individuals.  We primarily provide services to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and those with mental illnesses.  We offer services in several different programs including HTC, OES, IPS, waiver funded Employment Supports (EDS and ESS), as well as VRS services.  We have several staff trained in Customized Employment, but none certified to provide this service at this time.  Our strength as a company has been the willingness from top leadership to direct support staff to meet the changing needs and service requirements head on.  We have transitioned dozens of individuals from sheltered workshops to community employment.  Our current focus is on supporting the individuals we serve in making choices about where they would like to work.  Many have chosen competitive integrated work, and many have chosen to remain in non-integrated work crews or center-based employment.  As much as possible, we seek to keep all options open.

## February 22, 2019 VRS CRP Advisory Committee 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.

**VRS Leadership Transition**

* DEED/VRS welcomed Larry Vrooman as the new state director effective January 9, 2019 succeeding long time VRS Director Kim Peck who retired in November 2018.
* Larry joins VRS after serving 11 years at the federal VR level with RSA (Rehabilitation Services Administration) where Minnesota was one of 6 states and 9 state agencies whose programs he advised and supported, and one of 12 states and 17 state VR agencies he monitored. He has also managed the disability services, alcohol and drug prevention and new student orientation programs at a state college in South Dakota, where he also taught Counseling, Program Development and Evaluation. He has a master’s in VR counseling and received CRC certification.
* Larry is thrilled to be in Minnesota and closer to direct services. He plans to leverage his local, state and federal VR knowledge and experiences to engage with the greater VR system and to help Minnesota navigate WIOA policy and regulation implementation, build program support, and effectively deliver person centered services.

**VRS Service Provider Contracts and Processing**

* VRS Director of Community Partnerships Kim Babine provided an update on recent changes to invoicing and amendments to VRS Professional and Technical (P/T) Contracts. More information on invoice requirements, report requirements and sample reports can be found on the ‘Forms and Reports’ tab at: <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/resources/>
* Questions on VRS P/T Contracts should be directed to Anne Paulson, VRS Rehabilitation Program Specialist at [Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us](mailto:Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us)

**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS Services)**

* The VR program in Minnesota must do more in order to meet the requirement under WIOA that 15% of the VR budget be spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services.
* The advisory committee had an initial conversation regarding various Pre-ETS challenges and questions including work-based experiences, transportation, language/definitions, and grants.
* Director Larry Vrooman asked the advisory committee to be prepared for additional strategic dialogue on the topic at the March meeting.
* VRS staff are in the process of reviewing RSA compliance information regarding Pre-ETS. VRS is awaiting responses to questions sent to RSA regarding implementation specifics and will continue to share additional information as clarifications are determined.
* Pre-ETS compliance issues can result in significant penalties impacting the entire VR program.

**Memo of Understanding (MOU) Work Continues**

* VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives Chris McVey provided an update on continued efforts by DHS/DSD and DEED/VRS staff to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
* DEED-VRS & DHS-DSD hosted regional roundtables comprised of VRS, Community Partners providing 245D & VRS services and Lead Agencies in Houston, Chisago and Hennepin counties. The goal was to gather “front line” service insights to help inform the MOU development. DEED-VRS has been researching and reviewing agreements from other parts of the nation that will help inform Minnesota’s MOU.
* The team met with DEED/VRS Director Larry Vrooman and DHS/DSD Director Alex Bartolic and received approval to continue development of the MOU. The MOU Team will meet monthly with agency Directors to ensure leadership alignment with the goal of a signed MOU in place by June 2019 with Training and Rollout to follow.

**Other Updates**

* After five years of work, the **new Extended Employment (EE) Rule** has been published in the state register and will be effective March 4, 2019. The rule has been revised so the program will 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.
* **Governor Walz’s proposed budget** includes $4M a year/$8M for the biennium in additional permanent VR funding to continue, and increase slightly, the current biennium’s one-time $3.5M/$7M funding appropriation that will end June 30th. Without this funding, VR would have to close Category 1.
* VRS’s federal funder **RSA is scheduled to conduct a formal program review of Minnesota’s VR program on August 19-23, 2019**. VRS’s last federal monitoring visit occurred in 2010. Early indications are that RSA has increased its focus on performance management, compliance, and outcomes.