



VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum

February 1, 2022

VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum

Housekeeping

- Welcome to the VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum.
- **ASL Interpreters** are designated as “co-hosts”, so they appear at the top of your participant list. If you need ability to “multi-pin” please message Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us or Jessica.Outhwaite@state.mn.us.
- **Closed Captioning** is available. A livestream is linked in the chat.
- **Your name:** please change the name that Zoom displays to your first and last name. An easy way to rename is: 1) go to the participant list and find your name, 2) hover over your name, 3) select “more,” 4) select “rename.”
- **Questions and Comments:** Please submit feedback, questions, comments via Microsoft Form: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=RrAU68QkGUWPJricIVmCjLskeLmPGlxFoq2oFbqZ2CVUNUdNQVZYOE_s3WFk0MkgyVTg4V002Tkc3TS4u
- **Microphones:** Please keep your microphone muted throughout the meeting.
- **Technical Issues:** If you have technical issues, please contact Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us or Jessica.Outhwaite@state.mn.us.
- **Recording:** The session will be recorded and posted to the VRS website along with the agenda, presentation, and transcript.

Agenda

- **Welcome:** Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships
- **VR Program Contracting Updates:** Janeen Oien, VR Community Partnerships Program Specialist
- **State COVID Vaccination/Testing Policy for P/T Contract Holders:** Jess Outhwaite, VR Community Partnerships Program Specialist
- **MDHR Certifications:** Anne Paulson, VR Community Partnerships Program Specialist
- **Announcing Community Partner Conversations:** Sara Sundeen, VR Community Partnerships Program Specialist
- **Q&A:** Kim Babine
- **Wrap Up:** Kim Babine

2022 P/T Contract Cycle

Contract Timeline

- Most P/T Contracts Expire June 30, 2022.
- New P/T Contracts must be executed before that date.



- RFP Publication
 - Expected Publication: February
 - RFP will be posted on our Community Partners webpage, in SWIFT “events”, and we’ll send an email notice that it is posted.

Contract Process: Applications

- Application form will be posted at time of RFP publication.
- We'll give a specific date when applications can be submitted. (Expected: March)
- We'll give a specific date when applications are due in order to guarantee a Community Partner's contract is ready and waiting to begin July 1, 2022. (Expected: April)
- If you submit your application after the deadline that is given, VRS will not guarantee your contract will be executed by July 1, 2022 and you may have a break in your ability to provide services.

Contract Process: Review and Consultation

- Consultation with Community Partnerships Program Specialist (Expected: March, April, May)
- Virtual (MS Teams, Zoom)
- Purpose: to discuss proposed services and fees.
- If requesting rate increases, please prepare a rationale as to why a rate increase is necessary including a breakdown of (wages vs. administrative expenses, etc.) in any increased costs.

Contract Execution

- Contracts Executed: Early June for July 1 start date
- Avoid rush of contracts through VRS, DEED-fiscal, and Office of State Procurement at the end of the state fiscal year.

Contract Term

- All new contracts will be on a 2-year term.
- For CRPs, there will be the option to extend the contract each year up to an additional 3 years total after that first term.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion changes

- The new application for a Professional Technical contract with VRS will include a section of questions related to your agency's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- This section will include an attestation that the partner agency is committed to staff training practices that result in providing services that are culturally informed, affirming, and appropriate to the served individual's lived experience.
- The State of MN, DEED leadership, and VRS are all focused on a deeper commitment to advancing DEI growth within our work.
- The Community Partnerships team wants to advertise your agency's diverse backgrounds and skills to better help our individuals make a fully informed choice of service provider.

Amendment Requests

- Any current amendment requests between today (2/1/22) and June 30, 2022 will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - Contract liaison will consider short-term necessity of amendment and determine if an amendment is appropriate for the few months remaining of the current contract term.

Contract Timeline Recap



COVID Testing and Vaccination Policy

Why Did the State Issue this Policy?

- The State issued State Policy #1446 in September of 2021 to respond to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- State Policy #1446 is intended to ensure the safety of state staff, Community Partner staff, and the people we serve.

What Does the Policy Require?

- State Policy #1446 requires VRS Community Partners who hold a Master P/T Contract to:
 - Track and maintain data regarding proof of full COVID-19 vaccination
 - or
 - Track and maintain data regarding proof of weekly negative COVID-19 testing results.

Where can my employees find testing?

- There are testing sites across the state that are free and don't require an individual to be symptomatic.
- Minnesotans can also order free at home tests through both the State and Federal government.
- Questions? Connect with VRS Community Partners Team with: Anne Paulson, Sara Sundeen, Janeen Oien or Jess Outhwaite

“Compliance” and “Non-Compliance” with Policy #1446

- **Compliance** means:

- Your organization has a policy to track and maintain data regarding proof of full COVID-19 vaccination or proof of weekly negative COVID-19 testing results,
and
- Your organization is following your organization’s policy.

- **Non-compliance** means:

- Your organization does not have a policy to track and maintain data regarding proof of full COVID-19 vaccination or proof of weekly negative COVID-19 testing results,
and/or
- Your organization is not following your organization’s policy,
and/or
- Your organization does not respond to the survey form requesting information on your organization’s policy.

- **February:** Communication, Communication, Communication!
- **March: Collect Information**
 - March 1 - 14 – Collect Information from Community Partners on Compliance
 - March 15 - 31 – Follow-up with Community Partners who are not in Compliance
- **April: Collect Information**
 - April 1 - 14 – Collect Information from Community Partners on Compliance
 - April 15 - 31 – VRS will initiate a process to discontinue new authorizations to the Community Partner and cancel current authorizations.

Questions on Survey Form

Here are the questions that will be on the survey form.

- Are any of your staff providing in-person services to individuals through a VRS/SSB contracted service?
- Does your organization have a policy in place to track and maintain data regarding proof of full COVID-19 vaccination or proof of weekly negative COVID-19 testing results for employees serving individuals through a VRS/SSB contracted service? (Yes/No)
- Is your organization following your organization's policy to track and maintain data regarding proof of full COVID-19 vaccination or proof of weekly negative COVID-19 testing results for employees serving individuals through a VRS/SSB contracted service? (Yes/No)
- If no:
 - Do you have plans to get into compliance?
 - If you plan to get into compliance, please share details of what steps you are taking to comply and what your timeline to achieve that is.

Consequence for Non-Compliance

- VRS will initiate a process to **discontinue new authorizations** to the Community Partner and **cancel current authorizations** if a Community Partner is not in compliance.
- VRS will consider **cancelling a current contract** if a Community Partner is not in compliance but may simply let them expire with no authorizations June 30.
- VRS will **not award a new P/T Contract** starting July 1, 2022 to a Community Partner if they are not in compliance.

April 15 Non-Compliance: No New Authorizations

- Starting April 15:
 - VRS staff will work to stop new authorizations to Community Partners not in compliance.
- If a Community Partner comes into compliance, new authorizations can begin again.
- VRS staff: you'll receive additional information about the VRS internal process to accomplish this in the coming weeks.

April 15 Non-Compliance: Cancel Current Authorizations

- Starting April 15:
 - VRS staff will send a notification to a Community Partner out of compliance to cancel current authorizations.
 - Authorizations will end 30 days after notification is sent.
 - VRS Community Partners will have 90 days from end of authorization to invoice for all services rendered.
- If a Community Partner comes into compliance, new authorizations can begin again.
- VRS staff: you'll receive additional information about the VRS internal process to accomplish this in the coming weeks.

Minnesota Department of Human Rights Forms

MDHR Certification

- There are certain certifications a contract holder with the state of Minnesota must maintain with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.
- A Workforce Certificate is required for any Community Partner that employs 40 or more employees and whose contract will exceed \$100,000.
- An Equal Pay Certificate is required for any Community Partner whose contract will exceed \$500,000.
- Community Partners provide the necessary certifications when applying for a VRS P/T contract.

If MDHR Forms Expire

- If either one of your MDHR forms expire:
 - SWIFT will not allow VRS to generate new authorizations or payments to be made.
 - SWIFT will not allow new contracts or contract amendments to be executed.
- This interrupts services to individuals.
- It is the responsibility of the Community Partner to track the expiration date of your forms and ensure you renew your forms well ahead of its expiration date.

Introducing: Community Partner Conversations

Community Partners Conversations

- Monthly opportunity for VRS Community Partners to connect with each other and VRS Community Partnerships Program Specialists
- Each month will have a training topic and time for questions and answers
- The first session will be March 2, 2022 from 8:30-9:30
- This will occur monthly on the first Wednesday of the month from 8:30-9:30 am

Who Should Attend?

- Any community partner staff is welcome to attend
 - Community Partner Managers
 - Community Partner Supervisors
 - Community Partner Specialists: placement, job coaches, trainers, etc.
 - Community Partner Support Staff: Billing/invoicing, database managers

Proposed Monthly Topics

- (How to) Market your organization to local offices
- 2022 PT Contract Conversations
- Navigating the Community Partnership Website and resources available to partners
- Invoicing Tips
- New Contract Q & A
- Report writing tips
- WF1 Access

Discussion – Questions and Answers

Please submit questions and comments using the Microsoft Form linked in the chat and listed below.

- *What services do you have trouble staffing for?*
- *What contracted services are unclear/confusing?*

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=RrAU68QkGUWPJricIVmCjLskeLmPGlxFog2oFbqZ2CVUNUdNQVZYOE3WFk0MkgyVTg4V002Tkc3TS4u>



Forum Feedback

- We'd love to hear your feedback on our VRS Community Partner + VRS Staff Forums. Please provide your thoughts in the Microsoft Form used for the Q and A. The forum feedback questions are at the end of the form.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=RrAU68QkGUWPJricIVmCjLskeLmPGlxFoq2oFbqZ2CVUNUdNQVZYOE3WFk0MkgyVTg4V002Tkc3TS4u>

VRS Community Partnerships Program Specialists for VR Program Contracts and Contracted Services

To find out which Community Partnerships Program Specialist is the dedicated liaison for a particular Community Partner, go to: <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/listing>.

- **Janeen Oien:** Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 763-204-1354, Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us.
- **Jess Outhwaite:** Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 763-233-8829, Jessica.Outhwaite@state.mn.us.
- **Anne Paulson:** Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 651-259-7135, Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us.
- **Sara Sundeen:** Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 651-247-9121, Sara.Sundeen@state.mn.us.

Thank you!



Funding Notice

The VR program receives 74.05 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2019, the total amount of grant funds awarded were \$41,796,129. The remaining 25.5 percent of the costs (\$14,300,000) were funded by Minnesota state appropriations.