

Questions from October 20, 2020 VR/ODDS Stakeholder Call

Frequently Asked Questions (F.A.Q) regarding employment policy questions for Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) on topics including: Contingency Funding,

These questions are taken from a Virtual Meeting with the field and stakeholders held on July 14, 2020, as well as other inquiries sent in via email.

ODDS Updates:

1. ODDS is holding a series of stakeholder meetings to look at provider sustainability. Trying to do everything possible to support providers during this time. Currently about 19 providers and Services Coordinators/Personal Agents and self-advocates participating, along with Vocational Rehabilitation.
2. Adjusted reopening policy to allow for Discovery and some one-on-one facility in Phase 1 counties. Working through reopening plans. Have reissued the Employment Worker Guide and also created a template for providers to help them with their reopening plans.
3. Celebrated National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. Had more than 200 participants for the virtual panel we held. Two major milestones happened as well: ODDS no longer funds sheltered workshop services in Oregon and despite COVID-19, we met Metric 11 for the Lane Settlement, which is the number of people from the sheltered workshop class obtaining competitive integrated employment.

VR Updates:

1. Focused on virtual intakes and training on how to do those and rescheduling intakes from when COVID first hit. Currently partnering with providers to do virtual career exploration and advocacy classes. Continue to look at creative ways to work with providers to provide more opportunities.
2. Pre-ETS and transition team are creating ways to do pre-employment services virtually. There are virtual classes and even some person-centered plans are happening virtually.
3. VR application process normally involves about 30 pieces of paper. VR is working with Office of Information Services and Publications to create an electronic signature page. The release of information and documents can be sent to applicant and they can sign the document electronically. Oregon was one of first VR programs in nation that moved to virtual intake platform.

This is just for intakes at this time. VR is developing a training on the e-signature process.

4. VR has a contract with Cornell Disability Institute to provide employment providers with a virtual community of practice. There will be 12 different learning modules. Will announce those once available.
5. VR has issued temporary rate increases to providers through milestone payments from June 1-Sept. 30, 2020.
6. Holding two virtual job development trainings per month. Have had 40 people per class and always full so demand is huge. Current testing out a virtual job development training for VR counselors. Hope to have that out in November.

Question: What is being done to sustain providers during the pandemic?

Answer: ODDS issued three, 30-day rounds of contingency funding. Currently that is all the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) is allowing. ODDS has also created a policy for flexible billing that allows for virtual job coaching and billing for other services, such as helping someone file for unemployment. ODDS is holding stakeholder meetings and talking with other states to look at other creative ways to support providers.

VR's federal funder, RSA, does not allow for contingency funding. However, VR did issue temporary increase to job developers through milestone payments. The details are in this [message](#).

Question: High unemployment rates mean that job seekers with disabilities are competing against a larger pool of non-disabled candidates. Couple that with the fact that the primary industries hiring (grocery, retail, warehouse and delivery) require physical stamina, a driver's license or ability to work late hours. How can we support those with more significant disabilities to advance their career options during COVID?

Answer: The job search process should always be individualized based on the person's needs and desired outcome, in combination with the job market. Some people may not be interested in re-entering the job market currently, but still want to do virtual career exploration. VR continues to work with providers to find creative solutions.

Question: How do we find the classes offered by VR on iLearn?

Answer: Job Development trainings are online at:

<https://ilearn.oregon.gov/ContentDetails.aspx?id=65CEFCFA8C84F57845E46F286927E68>

Question: Are all VR offices offering remote career exploration?

Answer: We are working with employment providers to provide virtual career exploration as a service to any VR client that is interested across the state. This can allow for capacity building for our rural areas that may not have a provider in the region that offers career exploration.