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Topic: 3.14 Supported Employment

Subject: Revisions to Supported Employment policy 3.14 to align with the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act of July 22, 2014.

Applies to (check all that apply):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation – All Staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation – Executive Team
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation - Administration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation – Branch Managers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Background:

Supported employment is a rehabilitation strategy and an employment outcome. Supported Employment developed nationally in the 1980's, because the overall system had failed to secure and maintain competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Supported employment strategies were developed to better serve individuals who experience intellectual or developmental disabilities; mental illness; or, traumatic brain injuries as well as those who, because of the nature and severity of their disability need long term extended supports to maintain employment. Beginning in the 1990's, state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies including Oregon, received annual supported employment funding from Rehabilitation Services Administration

Supported Employment focuses on identifying an appropriate vocational goal, vocational rehabilitation services, and long-term support services to assist a participant to find and keep a job. Comprehensive pre-employment activities set the stage for Supported Employment and information gathered during these activities facilitates development of the participant's Individualized Plan for

Employment (IPE).

VR Roles and Responsibilities:

Supported Employment is employment with supports in competitive integrated employment that is individualized and customized, consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the participants involved.

Supported employment services are collaborative, combining short-term vocational rehabilitation services with long-term, extended services designed to maintain employment after VR has successfully closed a participant's case file. Publically funded, extended ongoing supports, regularly available from designated community-based providers is a hallmark of long-term, extended services. Natural supports or employer provided supports may also be an option for some participants' ongoing support needs.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) responsibilities are:

- 1) Determine eligibility, 2) Provide counseling/guidance, 3) Develop the individualized employment plan and actively coordinate services (e.g. training, placement) necessary to secure employment, and 4) Evaluate and assure employment is stable.

Applicants with intellectual or developmental disabilities should not be denied services because they do not have a Career Development Plan or Discovery Profile at the time of the referral. For more information about DD-funded employment services, see Supported Employment -- I/DD TAG.

When working with applicants with a mental health disability who are receiving individualized placement and support services (IPS), see the “Supported Employment – Mental Health IPS Model TAG” for information.

VR is responsible for the determination of necessary rehabilitation services. Counselors shall maintain an active role in the development, implementation and monitoring of supported employment files. Counselors shall evaluate the appropriateness of services recommended by the referring and/or providing agencies, using them to shorten eligibility and plan development timelines whenever possible.

Supported Employment Policy Features and Definitions

Collaboration – supported Employment is, by definition and ideally, collaboration between VR and the applicant's team (e.g., applicant, referring and other professional staff and/or family). The counselor will ideally work with members of that team from referral, through IPE development, employment, job

stabilization, and transition to extended services. Decisions made will impact both the time limited and extended support services. Joint planning and review are essential throughout the process.

Competitive integrated employment — full or part time work where the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act requires that the individual: 1) receives compensation at not less than the higher of Federal or State minimum wage and not less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who do not have a disability; 2) is eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees; 3) is employed at a location where they interact with other persons who do not have a disability (not including supervisory personnel); 4) is provided, as appropriate, opportunity for advancement.

Customized employment -- means competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is: 1) based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs and interests of the individual with a significant disability, 2) designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual and the business needs of the employer, and 3) carried out through flexible strategies.

Extended services – are defined as on-going support services and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual in competitive integrated employment; that are provided by a state agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from support by VR.

Group employment (i.e., work crew) is not an acceptable VR outcome.

Integrated setting is typically found in the community and the employee with a disability interacts to the same extent that employees without a disability, with other employees within the work site and , as appropriate, other persons, who do not have a disability (not including supervisory or individuals who are providing services to the employee).

Job carving – for competitive integrated employment occurs when an existing job description is modified — containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description (United States Department of Labor website www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/CustomizedEmployment/what/).

Job development specialized strategies – when seeking customized-integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities,-job carving and customized employment are strategies that should be considered. Job developers and other employment specialists should know about and have the expertise to use these specialized tools.

Job stabilization -- is the expected point of transition to extended support services funded by an agency other than VR, that has been jointly agreed upon. The extended services are identified in the IPE and occur when the participant:

- Is working the number of hours per week identified in the IPE, or close to the number with plans to increase hours;
- Is satisfied with the type of work;
- Is performing adequately in their own opinion and according to the employer,
- Extended services are available and on-going to maintain the job.

Ongoing support services – are the specific, time limited VR funded supports designed to address job site and work related skills deemed necessary for the specific participant to succeed on the job. Examples are job training, social skills, building natural supports, and twice a month check-ins with the employer. Ongoing support services are provided by VR until job stabilization is reached and the transition is made to extended support services, natural supports, or both. Each participant’s need determines the length of time that VR provides on-the-job support services.

For more information see:

- Supported Employment -- Intellectual/Developmental Disability TAG
- Supported Employment – Mental Health IPS Model TAG
- VR --- Informational Transmittal (IM) – 15 – 01: Job Stabilization.

References:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act; proposed regulations, released 4/15/15.

Current Code of Federal Regulations

- 361.5(b) Other definitions:
- 363.1 What is the State Supported Employment Services Program
- 363.3 Who is eligible for supported Employment Services
- 363.4 What are the Authorized Activities under a State Supported Employment Services Grant
- 363.6 What definitions apply
- 363.54 What requirements must a State meet before it provides for the transition of an individual to extended services
- 363.55 What are the requirements for successfully rehabilitating an

individual in supported employment

Discussion/Interpretation: Revision of 3.14 Supported Employment policy released 7/11/15.

Training/Communication Plan: No; all staff were already trained on original Supported Employment Policy 3.14.

Local/Branch Action Required: Change practices, as needed to align with revised policy.

Administrative Action Required: Post final policy on VR Website. Revise policy on release of final W.I.O.A. regulations, as needed.

Field/Stakeholder review: Public hearings held 3/19, 23, 25&27/15

Filing Instructions: File with VR Staff Policy Manual; replace former 3.14 Supported employment

If you have any questions about this information, contact:

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