

Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC)

Intensive Technical Assistance

State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

The **Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC)** released a request for participation open to all state vocational rehabilitation agencies (SVRAs) to participate in intensive technical assistance (TA) activities on four job-driven topical areas: business engagement, employer supports, customized training, and labor market information (LMI). Agencies receiving intensive TA were assigned a team of content experts to guide the development and implementation of the SVRAs' customized job-driven project. Agencies receiving intensive TA have joined as members of a Learning Collaborative to share strategies and solutions around these job-driven topics.

The goal of the JD-VRTAC is to build state VR agencies' capacity to improve and expand job-driven employment practices for consumers. The JD-VRTAC has developed tools and resources to help improve skills of VR agency staff and other rehabilitation professionals and providers who provide job-driven VR services and supports to people with disabilities, employers, and customized training providers. Job-driven services use the dual customer approach in which both employers and job-seekers are important customers in VR service provision.

Technical assistance is based on promising and emerging job-driven strategies that have been shown to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Eighteen SVRAs currently receive intensive TA from the JD-VRTAC. Ten SVRAs began their JD-VRTAC projects as part of the first cohort of states in 2015, and eight additional SVRAs joined the Learning Collaborative as part of the second cohort in 2016.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division (ARS) is a general agency located within the Arkansas Department of Career Education with 80 VR Counselors and 12 Business Relations Consultants/Representatives across 19 offices statewide. ARS contracts with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) for supported employment.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Rodney Chandler, rodney.chandler@arkansas.gov

TA Lead: Jeanne Miller, University of Arkansas- CURRENTS, jmiller@uacurrents.org

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Employer Supports, Labor Market Information

Goal: The goal of ARS's JD-VRTAC project is to engage with businesses and other workforce development partners to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes for people with disabilities. ARS will use labor market intelligence to improve relationships with businesses and consumers, and to develop and implement business and customer satisfaction surveys to evaluate and improve VR business services.

Objectives:

- Understand and apply LMI to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes
- Increase collaboration between Business Relations Team and the rest of the agency
- Increase agency engagement and participation with business leadership and partner service agencies

Key Activities

- Develop business intelligence strategies and data collection tools to improve collaboration at all levels of the agency
- Provide training at all levels to integrate the tools and the thinking behind the tools
- Plan and incorporate business data in ARS information system
- Develop and implement a customer satisfaction survey for business customers
- Draft recommendations for continuous improvement of ARS BRU and services to business



Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is a combined agency housed in the Colorado Department of Labor with 105 VR Counselors and 9 Employment Specialists across 27-29 offices statewide. Colorado DVR contracts with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Jennifer Scilacci, jennifer.scilacci@state.co.us

TA Lead: Dr. Dana Jefferson, Institute for Community Inclusion, dana.jefferson@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Labor Market Information

Goal: Colorado DVR aims to establish a structure for partnering with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment to obtain and package high quality and relevant LMI that is accessible and useful to field staff working with consumers. DVR will also work with its workforce partners to develop business engagement skills and approaches to increasing high-wage employment outcomes for consumers in both rural and metropolitan areas.

Objectives:

- Increase the systematic use of LMI within DVR to produce better client outcomes including increased client wages
- Increase business engagement effectiveness through partnerships and skill building

Key Activities:

- Explore and implement the best avenue for staff to access useful LMI
- Determine and implement how to equip VRCs to use targeted LMI effectively in the client counseling process
- Explore and implement the use of LMI in relationship to career pathways, emerging industries, sector strategies, and informed choice
- Refine the use of Business Outreach Specialists including enhancement of business engagement skills
- Enhance the partnership of Business Outreach Program with other workforce agencies/groups



Connecticut Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind

Connecticut Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is blind agency located within Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services with 10 VR Counselors in one office statewide. BESB contracts with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Mary Burgard, Mary.Burgard@ct.gov

TA Lead: Vito DeSantis, Institute for Community Inclusion, vito.desantis@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Employer Supports, Labor Market Information

Goal: The goal of Connecticut BESB's JD-VRTAC projects is to maintain business relations that lead to increased employment for consumers. BESB will provide professional development for staff that includes how to research and use current LMI to advise consumers regarding vocational training opportunities in viable occupations.

Objectives:

- Increase VR counselor involvement in Business Engagement activities and employer supports (including best methods for tracking and using business engagement data)
- Provide training for all field staff to improve knowledge and tools for workplace efficiency
- Increase systematic use of LMI

Key Activities:

- Review current VR Counselor activities to determine how to increase job placements
- Determine if there are ways to effectively reduce caseloads
- Plan for ways to make better use of One-Stop resources
- Connect with BRS concerning more effective use of CRPs
- Review Career Index Plus to determine suitability for use
- Gather and review available LMI training materials



Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Delaware Division of Rehabilitation (DVR) is general agency housed in the Delaware Department of Labor with 40 VR Counselors and VR Counselor Assistants and 5-7 Employment Specialists across five offices statewide. Delaware DVR is co-located in One-Stop career centers and contracts with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Project Lead: Jocelyn Langrehr, Jocelyn.Langrehr@state.de.us

TA Lead: Linda Mock, Institute for Community Inclusion, linda.mock@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Customized Training

Goal: The goal of Delaware DVR project is to create a statewide approach for developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) that focus on career pathways. Career pathways emphasize an interconnected sequence of educational coursework and work experience that aligns with employer-validated competencies and certifications. DVR intends to build on the work of other agencies, also housed within the state Department of Labor, that have experience using career pathways (called "Lattices").

Objectives:

- Educate all staff about career pathways
- Create a career pathways assessment toolbox
- Pilot the career pathways approach in the Georgetown office, in which the career pathways process is discussed with consumers at application for VR services and consumers engage with LMI and Business Relations Specialists before service planning

Key Activities:

- Trained agency counselors to increase awareness and familiarity with the career pathways process, Joblink, O*NET, and other available tools and information
- Staff developed their own Career Pathways and modified performance plans accordingly
- Reviewed available assessment resources (e.g., Career Index, ACT Work Keys)
- Initiated the hiring process for a contracted assessment provider
- Initiated the pilot of the new approach in the Georgetown office
- Developed and completed the first round of consumer and staff satisfaction surveys

Achievements:

- ✓ Trained VRCs in use of LMI
- ✓ Modified VRC performance plans to reflect career pathways
- ✓ Initiated hiring process for contracted assessment provider
- ✓ Initiated pilot project in Georgetown office



Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services

Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is a combined agency located within the Illinois Department of Human Services with 225 VR Counselors and 5 Employment Resource Specialists across 47 offices in five state regions. Illinois DRS contracts with CRPs for job placement.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Project Lead: Doug Morton douglas.morton@illinois.gov, John Marchioro john.marchioro@illinois.gov

TA Lead: Jeanne Miller, University of Arkansas- CURRENTS, jmiller@uacurrents.org

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Employer Supports

Goal: The goal of the Illinois DRS project is to develop and implement a business engagement strategy for the agency. Although the DRS has employed dedicated business relations staff for several years, the role and function of these individuals has varied by locality with no consistent, statewide focus. Moreover, with only seven business relations positions in the agency and no possibility of hiring additional direct service positions, VR counselors and other field staff must assume business engagement responsibilities.

Objectives:

- Develop a strategic plan for business engagement
- Train VR counselors and supervisors on business relations and their role in increasing and improving such activity
- Develop an employer database
- Engage new business in high demand sectors

Key Activities:

- Developed a business relations plan
- Defined the roles, functions, and performance expectations for business relations staff
- Initiated the development of training curriculum for business relations staff including pre- and post-training skills tests; and
- Defined the format and structure for an employer database to track business engagement
- Initiated training for the first cohort of DRS field staff

Achievements:

- ✓ Developed a business relation strategy for the agency
- ✓ Defined business relation staff roles
- ✓ Developed training curriculum for agency staff
- ✓ Defined format and structure of an employer database



Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is general agency located within the Maine Department of Labor/Bureau of Rehabilitation Services with 66 VR Counselors and 1.25 Business Relations Specialists across nine offices statewide. Maine BRS contracts with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Libby Stone-Sterling, Libby.Stone-Sterling@maine.gov and Betsy Hopkins, Betsy.Hopkins@maine.gov

TA Lead: Linda Mock, Institute for Community Inclusion, Linda.Mock@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Employer Supports

Goal: Maine BRS's goal for the JD-VRTAC project is to improve and maintain employer relationships by addressing its provider payment system for job development and assessment vendors. Maine will gather and analyze all available data about current provider services (including employer outreach strategies) to develop a comprehensive plan to improve the current system.

Objectives:

- Reduce CRP expenditures
- Improve the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers served by CRPs
- Increase efficiency in moving consumers into employment
- Create a cross-agency, statewide approach to business engagement that improves the availability of job development resources throughout the state

Key Activities:

- Host meeting to analyze the impacts of changes to CRP payment structure for partner agencies
- Clarify where the business database is housed, who has access to the database, who can input data, and what information is shared, and how to maintain client confidentiality
- Develop communication strategy to ensure counselors/single point of contact, partners all have information regarding business contacts
- Initiate expansion of the pilot to implement progressive employment principles beyond the transition population
- Develop a new payment system and train CRPs and VRCs on the system



Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) is a blind agency housed in Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services with 17 VR Counselors and 4 Employment Specialists across four offices statewide. MCB contracts with CRPs for some job development, job coaching, and training.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Joe Buizon, Joey.Buizon@MassMail.State.MA.US

TA Lead: Linda Mock, Institute for Community Inclusion, Linda.Mock@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Employer Supports

Goal: The MCB project goal for the JD-VRTAC is to develop a partnership with two nationally recognized non-profit organizations serving blind persons – the Perkins School for the Blind and the Carroll Center for the Blind (CCB) – to establish a coordinated approach to business engagement.

Objectives:

- Create a consortium of the three organizations
- Develop a cooperative partnership agreement
- Create branding/marketing material for consortium activities
- Establish a data collection system to track employer engagement/relations

Achievements:

- ✓ Developed vision statement
- ✓ Drafted MOU

Key Activities:

- Developed a vision/goal statement for the consortium
- Secured buy-in for all partner organizations
- Established work groups in key areas (e.g., MOU, database and technical issues, marketing)
- Drafted a plan for internal and external communications
- Drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among the partner organizations
- Developed a one-page project description and a brochure for marketing the collaborative
- Identified Salesforce as the software they will use to track business engagement
- Identified information the employer database will contain



Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) is a combined agency located within the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services with 48 VR Counselors and one Employment Specialist across 11 offices statewide. Montana VRBS contracts with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Mark Mahnke, MMahnke@mt.gov

TA Lead: Laurie Ford, University of Washington, Lhf4@uw.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Labor Market Information

Goal: The goals of Montana VRBS's JD-VRTAC project are to develop its capacity for engaging and supporting businesses and better integrate LMI into the VR counseling process. Montana VRBS will establish business services and develop strategies to reach out to businesses across the state.

Objectives:

- Track business information and services
- Train agency staff statewide on business engagement techniques
- Highlight VRBS services and resources to market VR to business
- Define staff roles and expectations

Key Activities:

- Identify pilot sites for business consultants
- Meet with business representatives and identify goals for the partnership
- Collect baseline data on business activities with VR clients
- Look into VR access to Job Service Database
- Conduct Windmills train the trainer for 10 VR and 10 Job Service Staff
- Implement regular meetings for project team and the larger Business Consultant Team
- Develop preliminary marketing materials for pilot sites
- Evaluate need for additional training on LMI
- Rewrite job descriptions and evaluation criteria for business consultants



Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (NVR) is a general agency housed in the Nebraska Department of Education with 45 VR Counselors, 3 Business Account Managers, 19 Evaluators, and 35 Employment/Placement Specialists across 11 offices statewide. NVR contracts with CRPs for benefits analysis and supported employment services.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Paige Rose, paige.rose@nebraska.gov

TA Lead: Neil McNeil, Institute for Community Inclusion, Neil.McNeil@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement

Goal: The goal of the Nebraska VR JD-VRTAC project is to expand and enhance customized employment (CE) services and opportunities for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) using a job-driven dual customer approach. The project represents an expansion of the dual-customer approach to VR service provision that NVR has implemented for many years, including recent adoption of a “Meet You Where You Are” model that includes a rapid engagement focus engaging individuals in an element of work as quickly as possible (Progressive Employment). VR staff (business account managers, evaluators and placement specialists) is actively involved in the development and support of businesses that partner with VR.

Objectives:

- Increase agency buy-in of CE
- Increase development of business engagement competencies
- Develop CE components and competencies for VR staff and providers
- Increase business engagement in CE
- Establish policies around CE and Discovery

Key Activities:

- Hosted ongoing discussions with partner agencies regarding reciprocal eligibility for students with IDD
- Provided training on the CE process (with assistance from Virginia Commonwealth University) to 98 VR staff and 66 service providers
- Developed and implemented a pre-/post-training survey of staff and provider awareness of CE
- Filmed two videos which highlight successfully executed CE opportunities from an employer perspective
- Used Sigma 6/LEAN strategies to collaborate with DD/IDD for more successful referrals and outcomes
- Applied for acceptance into the Employment Learning Collaborative for TA to better serve individuals with IDD

Achievements

- ✓ Trained 98 VRCs and 66 service provider staff on CE
- ✓ Completed pre-post training survey
- ✓ Developed two videos highlighting CE from an employer's perspective



New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation

New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation (NHVR) is a combined agency housed in New Hampshire Department of Education with 41 VR Counselors, one Business Engagement Administrator, 2 Employment Placement Specialists, and a Public Relations Specialist across seven offices statewide. NHVR contracts with CRPs for job placement.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Jim Hinson Jr., jim.hinson@doe.nh.gov

TA Lead: Bob Burns, Institute for Community Inclusion, Robert.Burns@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Employer Supports

Goal: The goal of the New Hampshire VR JD-VRTAC project is to implement agency policy and strategies that enhance business engagement. NHVR has actively engaged in a dual-customer approach to VR service provision for several years and maintains a Business Engagement Unit (BEU) that includes a central office supervisor and two employment specialists located in the state's larger regional offices.

Objectives:

- Provide an agency framework and planning parameters for regional staff to develop regional/area business engagement plans
- Evaluate the agency's current business engagement, job development, and job placement services relative to WIOA
- Strengthen and enhance the foundation to implement WIOA requirements for services to businesses
- Formalize the role and function of the agency's central office corporate/business relations unit

Key Activities:

- Established an Agency Business Engagement Team and a business engagement/relations menu of services, and a framework for regional office business engagement
- Established a schedule for twice monthly meetings of the BEU (beginning in February 2016)
- Developed and initiated implementation of WIOA-aligned business engagement training for VR counselors
- Developed business education training for business partners
- Completed supplemental job descriptions for four business relations consultant positions
- Hired a Program Specialist III to provide support to the BEU, vendors, and business partners
- Reviewed training and new vendor approval process
- Completed job shadow and NHVR process training to vendors in Portsmouth

Achievements:

- ✓ Established a Business Engagement Unit (BEU) and a schedule of regular meetings
- ✓ Established a menu of business engagement/relations services,
- ✓ Established a framework for regional business engagement,
- ✓ Hired a program specialist to support BEU, vendors and businesses,
- ✓ Developed business education training, and completed job shadow and NHVR process training for vendors in Portsmouth.



New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NJCBVI) is a blind agency in the New Jersey Department of Human Services with 29 VR Counselors, 2 Business Relations Specialists, one Business Relations Manager, and 12-14 Technology Services Specialists across four offices statewide. NJCBVI contracts with CRPs for supported employment services.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Amanda Gerson, Amanda.Gerson@dhs.state.nj.us

TA Lead: Linda Mock, Institute for Community Inclusion, Linda.Mock@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Labor Market Information

Goals: New Jersey CBVI has two main project goals to establish a Business Relations Unit (BRU) for the agency and to increase use of LMI as a counseling tool. Although NJCBVI staff has interacted with employers for many years, the lack of dedicated business engagement staff precluded a coordinated, consistent approach.

Objectives:

- Coordinate the business engagement efforts of agency staff
- Improve marketing strategies
- Measure business relations outcomes
- Increase the number of consumers obtaining high-demand employment

Achievements:

- ✓ Defined Business Relations Unit (BRU)
- ✓ Recruited four individuals to serve in BRU
- ✓ Trained VRCs on use of LMI and on the TAP

Key Activities:

- Created a defined Business Relations Unit (BRU) and recruited a Supervisor, two Business Relation Specialists and a Technological Specialist to staff the unit
- Contracted with the College of NJ to assist with developing a marketing plan
- Had staff complete an LMI pre-test
- Trained counselors on the use of LMI and initiated staff development activities promoting a cultural shift in the agency
- Developed an interface for the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) and trained staff on using the TAP



New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NJDVR) is a general agency housed in the New Jersey Department of Labor with 140 VR Counselors and a Business Outreach Chief across 18 field offices (16 of which are co-located in One-Stops). New Jersey DVR is in the process of hiring six Program Development Specialists to coordinate business outreach activities. NJDVR contracts with CRPs for supported employment services.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Janice Fishbein, Janice.Fishbein@dol.nj.gov

TA Lead: Dr. Dana Jefferson, Institute for Community Inclusion, dana.jefferson@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement

Goal: New Jersey DVR's project goal is to establish a business outreach unit (BOU) and create a consistent and unified approach to business outreach and engagement. Located within the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), NJDVR only recently obtained authority to develop its own business outreach positions, having relied in the past on the efforts of volunteer counselors to stay abreast of possible job opportunities and maintain good employer relations.

Objectives:

- Develop a position description and a performance plan for the BOU chief
- Develop position descriptions for BOU field staff, which includes six regional program development specialists (PDS)
- Draw a map of what the BOU will look like and describe how each objective will be achieved, include interactions with the state's talent networks,
- Ensure that the interactive map is ready for use as a visual aid for agency staff

Key Activities:

- Developed a comprehensive job description for the Field Chief position
- Worked with LWD to secure HR approval, posted the job announcement
- Received five applications from DVRS staff for the position and identified the individual to be hired
- Developed job descriptions and initiated the interview and hiring process for BOU field positions
- Worked with the department leadership to establish a statewide service delivery system based on the history of DVRS employment programs, national initiatives and the response to statewide need
- Initiated development of a communications plan that includes process mapping to identify key partners (e.g., regional workforce development regions and talent networks)

Achievements

- ✓ Hired Chief for the Business Outreach Unit (BOU)
- ✓ Developed job descriptions
- ✓ Began recruitment process for BOU team positions



North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NDDVR) is a general agency located within the North Dakota Department of Human Services with 42 VR Counselors and 3 business engagement staff across eight offices statewide. Most NDDVR offices are co-located in One-Stops. ND DVR also collaborates with the four Tribal VR programs across the state, and contracts with CRPs for supported employment services.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Brenda Vennes, bvennes@nd.gov

TA Lead: Terry Brigance, University of Arkansas – CURRENTS, tbrigance@uacurrents.org

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Labor Market Information, Business Engagement

Goals: North Dakota DVR's two JD-VRTAC project goals are to improve business engagement practices throughout the state and to more effectively use LMI to assist agency clients. Existing business engagement staff within the agency, including a National Employment Team (NET) point of contact person and two other business representatives, are assuming the lead on business engagement efforts and will serve as models for how to provide effective business services.

Business Engagement Key Activities:

- Developed an outline of potential best practices in specific areas of business engagement currently implemented in 4 regional offices
- Each office received the 2016 Federal Contractor list, tips on landing Federal job, Federal resume writing & Schedule A letter revision
- Initiated twice monthly meetings between Business Service Specialists and VR counselors to discuss employer needs
- Established VR counselor business engagement goals of 40 employer contacts and 5 presentations to employers per year;
- Initiated use of the Rapid Response process in some regions

LMI Key Activities:

- Developed an LMI lesson plan to use with clients in accessing LMI
- Developed a worksheet to keep track of LMI for three careers of interest to be explored with VRC
- Implemented an LMI pilot group to instruct clients on how to use O'NET and Job Service websites
- Collected data on VR counselor use of LMI prior to implementation of the pilot
- Developed plans for outreach to employers working with the federal government to meet targets for hiring individuals with disabilities

Achievements

- ✓ Developed best practice guidelines for business service
- ✓ Initiated bi-weekly meetings between Business Engagement Specialists and VR counselors
- ✓ Established annual business engagement goals for VR counselors
- ✓ Reintroduced use of Raid Response approach related to business engagement
- ✓ Developed training curriculum for VR counselors on use of LMI
- ✓ Implemented LMI pilot project



Oregon Commission for the Blind

Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) is a blind agency and an independent Commission with 9.5 VRCs and one Business Relations Coordinator across five offices statewide. OCB's Business Relations Coordinator also does business relations work for the Oregon general VR agency (OVR). OCB contracts with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Morgan Rincon, morgan.rincon@state.or.us

TA Lead: Vito DeSantis, Institute for Community Inclusion, vito.desantis@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Employer Supports

Goals: OCB's goal for the JD-VRTAC project is to strategically build a highly responsive and efficient business relationship capacity by maximizing resources available in state. OCB will establish a database of employer information to centralize employer data and improve and increase consumer employment outcomes.

Objectives:

- Create a comprehensive cloud-accessible database to facilitate and increase the number of business contacts, employment opportunities, business engagements, and business services
- Develop a training curriculum for VRCs, vendors, and CRPs in order to enhance dialogue with business and consumers
- Build a highly effective Business Relations Team to include vendors, CRPs and OVR staff
- Coordinate activities and resources with OVR and CRPs

Key Activities:

- Identify data elements for business engagement tracking system
- Outreach to CRPs and OVR
- Inventory OCB staff skill sets to determine if they are being utilized to full extent
- Develop a survey to identify CRPs, vendor, and staff training needs and use of LMI
- Review current CRP contracts
- Initiate state-wide business engagement collaboration



Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a combined agency in the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry with 400 VR Counselors and a centrally managed team of Business Services Supervisors, Counselors, and Representatives across 21 offices statewide. Pennsylvania OVR contracts with CRPs for business engagement services.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Cindy Mundis, cmundis@pa.gov

TA Lead: Vito DeSantis, Institute for Community Inclusion, vito.desantis@umb.edu; Dr. Dana Jefferson, Institute for Community Inclusion, dana.jefferson@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Labor Market Information, Business Engagement

Goals: The two primary goals of Pennsylvania OVR's JD-VRTAC project are to integrate LMI into the VR process and increase work-based learning opportunities for students through business engagement. OVR enjoys a good working relationship with the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), the agency with responsibility for employment statistics and LMI.

LMI Objectives:

- Collaborate with staff from the CWIA on a website redesign for the LMI website, Workstats
- Develop and administer a pre-training survey of OVR staff use of LMI
- Develop and deliver LMI training to agency staff

Work-based Learning Objectives:

- Solicit employer perspectives through a business roundtable
- Gather information about the challenges involved in hiring minors
- Hire two Business Services Representatives (BSRs) dedicated to the pre-employment transition populations in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh
- Develop and deliver training to staff statewide about engaging businesses in an informed discussion about hiring minors

Achievements:

- ✓ Developed and delivered on training on integrating LMI into VR process
- ✓ Initiated statewide implementation of integrating use of LMI
- ✓ Hired Business Services representatives in two pilot sites
- ✓ Developed and delivered statewide staff training on work-based learning



South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department

South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) is a general agency and an independent Commission with 287 VR Counselors and 21 Business Development Specialists across 24 offices statewide. South Carolina VRD does not contract with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Stephen Marshall, SMarshall@SCVRD.STATE.SC.US

TA Lead: Russ Thelin, Institute for Community Inclusion Russ.thelin@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Employer Supports, Customized Training

Goal: South Carolina VRD's goal for its JD-VRTAC project is to develop a robust data collection and reporting system to measure the effectiveness of business services and consumer trainings and to drive agency decision-making. SCVRD aims to provide data to staff that will link consumers to appropriate career opportunities and provide business partners with a skilled workforce.

Objectives:

- Expand and develop a Network of Business Development Specialists (BDSs)
- Increase utilization of Customized Training opportunities
- Implement a new version of Career Connect

Key Activities:

- Develop a training platform for BDSs to onboard new staff and develop existing staff
- Increase the number of BDS staff and align unit structure to best serve business, consumers and agency staff
- Improve the linkage of assessment services with LMI, sector strategies, and BDS priorities
- Conduct a survey of and document current customized training initiatives
- Identify growth sectors/occupations by region
- Build partnerships with technical colleges and aligned business sectors
- Establish a new charge/mission for the Career Connect user group
- Build out the Employer-side elements of Career Connect to include case notes/account history
- Assure Career Connect is responsive to the data elements required in WIOA relative to services to businesses, employee retention opportunities



Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is a combined agency in the Tennessee Department of Human Services with 105 VR Counselors and 12 Business Employment Consultants across 11 offices statewide. Tennessee VRS contracts with CRPs for business engagement.

Initial TA Date: May 2016

Agency Lead: Yovancha Lewis-Brown, Yovancha.Lewis-Brown@tn.gov

TA Lead: Kathe Matrone, University of Washington, matrok@uw.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement, Employer Supports

Goal: The goal of Tennessee VRS's JD-VRTAC project is to establish a business relations unit to increase the number and quality of competitive integrated employment outcomes achieved by its consumers. Tennessee plans to train VRCs to use LMI more consistently to inform their clients of their career choices.

Objectives:

- Determine organizational structure
- Develop strategies for enhanced communication between all levels of the agency
- Create formal Business Relations Unit in agency and define the roles of business relations' staff
- Strengthen training opportunities for staff on employer engagement and LMI
- Identify data collection needs
- Enhance marketing efforts to business

Key Activities:

- Develop job descriptions for business relations staff
- Identify and evaluate tools/training resources
- Train staff on broad business engagement and individual job placement strategies
- Explore use of career index
- Explore data collection capability in CMS
- Develop marketing materials
- Increase presence of business on website



Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is a general agency housed in the Washington Department of Social and Health Services with 117 VR Counselors, 99 Rehabilitation Technicians, 18 Business Relations Specialists, a Business Relations Manager, and 3 regional Area Managers who support VRCs across 39 offices statewide. Washington DVR contracts with CRPs for supported employment services.

Initial TA Date: October 2015

Agency Lead: Karen Miceli, micelk@dshs.wa.gov

TA Lead: Joe Marrone, Institute for Community Inclusion, joseph.marrone@umb.edu

JD-VRTAC Project Focus: Business Engagement

Goal: Washington DVR's JD-VRTAC project goal is to develop an organizational framework to integrate and coordinate the work of the agency's business relations staff. Although DVR maintains a business relations staff that includes a Business Relations Manager and 18 Business Specialist positions, there was no clear strategy for overall business relations efforts within the agency.

Objectives:

- Develop a mission statement for the business engagement team
- Identify best practices in the area of business engagement
- Create consistent performance expectations for business engagement team
- Develop a draft position description for Washington DVR

Key Activities:

- Gathered input from Area Managers, Supervisors and Business Specialists regarding Mission and Vision, Position Description, and Performance Expectations
- Reviewed other states' position descriptions for business specialists

Achievements:

- ✓ Developed a common Mission and Vision for the Business Engagement Team
- ✓ Completed focus statement defining Business Specialist unit mission

