

Coordinated Team Approach: Best Practices for Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

The Sustainable Gainful Activity (SGA) Project's innovative use of a Coordinated Team Approach (CTA) is an efficient method to lead Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries towards earning above SGA-level funding. CTA provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to SSDI beneficiaries' rehabilitation engagement and employment process by bringing together team members with an array of expertise.

The results of the Mathematica Report from Kentucky and Minnesota demonstration sites indicate five best practices to assist with integrating CTA in vocational rehabilitation services:

1. **Involve leadership and get staff buy-in.** CTA requires that leadership and staff be on board with the new approach to services. Resistance to change may occur. Involving leadership and staff with planning can help mitigate tensions and encourage participation from reluctant personnel.
2. **Cultivate open and active communication.** Establish strong lines of candid communication that define roles and responsibilities for leadership and CTA team members. Develop a communication mechanism that encourages feedback during the planning and implementation process to quickly respond to issues and celebrate successes.
3. **Offer early and continuous training and support.** Early and ongoing training is vital to successful implementation of CTA. Training may include elements like these:
 - SGA-enhanced service provision training
 - Leadership and facilitation skills training
 - Financial and benefits training
4. **Make adaptations as needed.** Survey the unique issues and challenges of your agency, and adapt CTA based on the needs of your clients and staff. This may include adopting flexible scheduling, making changes around use of technology, or shifting staff members' roles and responsibilities.
5. **Ensure adequate staffing.** VR agencies that have enough staff support are more successful in implementing CTA. Effective "teaming," or delegation of roles and responsibilities among CTA members, can help with the challenges of understaffing and large case loads. Increasing an agency's number of support personnel to assist CTA members has proven to be effective.

For more information about CTA see:

Sevak, P, Kehn, M., Honeycutt, T., & Livermore, G. (September 2017). *Minnesota Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) Project Demonstration Final Evaluation Report*. Mathematica Policy Research. Washington, DC.

Sevak, P, Martin, F., Livermore, G., Honeycutt, T., & Morris, E. (September 2017). *Kentucky Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) Project Demonstration Final Evaluation Report*. Mathematica Policy Research. Washington, DC.



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