

Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC) Intensive TA State VR 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. In 2015, 11 VR agencies received intensive TA.

2015 JD-VRTAC participating SVRAs include:

Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Delaware DVR has initiated a pilot project focused on using Career Pathways to assist VR consumers with developing vocational goals. Delaware DVR has trained VR counselors statewide on using career pathways, and all staff have developed a personal career pathway for themselves.

Illinois Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

Illinois DVR is designing a strategic business engagement approach to expand capacity to serve business as a customer, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Illinois DVR is developing a business engagement training curriculum for VR staff and strengthening partnerships with Illinois community colleges.

Massachusetts Commission of the Blind

Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) has formed a consortium with the Carroll Center and Perkins School for the Blind, two key agencies in Massachusetts that serve individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Through this consortium, MCB is establishing a coordinated approach to business relations.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation

Nebraska VR is creating a Customized Employment (CE) program to establish middle-skills employment options for traditionally underserved populations. Nebraska VR has established a state leadership team for this initiative that includes membership from the VR agency, other public agencies, providers, and employers. Nebraska VR is implementing a statewide training for field staff and community partners on CE.

New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation

New Hampshire VR is restructuring their Business Relations Unit (BRU) by redefining staff job functions, adding new staff to the unit, and establishing a BRU meeting process. New Hampshire VR is developing business engagement plans locally and regionally and using LMI to address VR consumers' needs.

New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

New Jersey CBVI has created a new Business Relations Unit (BRU), and is hiring two new business relations specialists for the BRU. The commission is training staff on how to integrate LMI into counseling to help consumers make informed choices about their vocational goals. New Jersey CBVI has also connected to the [Talent Acquisition Portal](#) and adopted Salesforce to track employer engagement activities.

New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

New Jersey DVR has developed a comprehensive job description for a field chief to lead the newly established Business Relations Unit (BRU). New Jersey DVR is developing an internal communication plan for its BRU.

North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

North Dakota DVR is creating a training program for VR counselors and consumers around how to use the state's LMI system, *Job Service of North Dakota*. The agency is assessing VR counselor knowledge and use of LMI, which will inform the training program. North Dakota VR is also creating a *Best Practices Guide for Business Engagement* for VR counselors.

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

Oklahoma DRS has defined the role of its new Business Service Team Coordinator. The department has re-established its Business Services Team (BST), and is enhancing internal collaboration within the BST. The BST is focused on developing strategies to increase access to apprenticeships for VR consumers.

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Pennsylvania OVR is codifying the use of LMI across the agency. The agency has surveyed staff on how they currently use LMI to inform a training curriculum on LMI. The agency is also hiring two business services representatives to focus on pre-employment transition services, and is developing staff training on how to engage businesses around issues of hiring minors.

Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Washington DVR is redefining their Business Engagement Team (BET) unit and has created a mission statement and action plan. The agency has explored best practices in business engagement and developed

new job descriptions for business specialist staff. Washington DVR is also developing a BET communication plan to use as a guide for an agency-wide communication plan.

2016 JD-VRTAC participating SVRAs include:

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division

Arkansas RDS plans to engage with business and other workforce development partners to increase competitive, integrative employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Arkansas will use LMI to improve relationships with businesses and consumers, and develop and implement business customer satisfaction surveys to evaluate and improve VR business services.

Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Colorado DVR plans to establish a structure for partnering with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) to obtain and package high-quality, relevant LMI that is accessible and useful to all field staff who work with consumers. DVR will also collaborate with workforce partners to develop business engagement skills and approaches to increase high-wage employment outcomes for consumers in rural and metropolitan regions.

Connecticut Bureau & Education Services for the Blind

Connecticut BESB plans to provide in-service training for all field staff to improve knowledge and tools for workplace efficiency, analyze workforce trends, reach more employers, and maintain business relations that lead to increased employment for consumers. BESB will provide professional development for staff that includes how to research and use LMI to advise and steer consumers towards vocational training opportunities in viable occupations.

Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Maine BRS plans 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 and information about current provider services (including employer outreach strategies) to develop a comprehensive plan to address the issues in the current system.

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services

Montana VRBS plans to establish business services and develop the strategies to reach out to businesses consistently across the state. Montana will create a database to track business information and services, a website to outline VRBS services and resources for employers, and marketing tools for marketing VR to businesses. VRBS will also train staff on business engagement techniques and define staff roles and expectations across the agency.

Oregon Commission for the Blind

Oregon CFB plans to establish a database of employer information that includes business organizations, individual contacts, and outreach/contact histories to centralize employer data and improve and increase consumer employment outcomes. Oregon also will create a standardized employer outreach process and presentation for staff to deliver to businesses across the state.

South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department

South Carolina VR plans 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. South Carolina aims to provide data to staff that will link consumers to appropriate career opportunities and provide business partners with a skilled workforce.

Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Tennessee VRS plans to establish a business relations unit to increase the number and quality of employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment. Tennessee will define the roles of their business relations staff, develop job descriptions, and train staff on broad business engagement strategies and individual job placement strategies.