System Transformation
One Person at a Time:
Moving Towards Models of
Community Based Employment

Abbie Wells Herzog, State of Minnesota
Megan Zeilinger, Dakota County
Welcome

Welcome to “Make Work A Part of Your Plan.” Thank you for joining us! Sessions are being recorded and will be captioned for future viewing.

Jeffrey Nurick
Project Specialist
Today’s speakers

- Joe Timmons, University of Minnesota
- Abbie Wells Herzog, State of Minnesota
- Megan Zeilinger, Dakota County
In Today’s Session

- Person Centered Practices and Employment
- The Role of Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- A New Model of Collaboration and Community Based Employment
Desired Experiences

- Personal relationships
- Sharing places & activities
- Making choices
- Being treated with respect
- Having valued social roles

John and Connie O’Brien
Important To and Important For

- What makes a person happy, content, relaxed, energized, and engaged?
- What makes a person healthy and safe?
Taking Risks

- Balancing Important To
  and Important For

- Benefits
- Benefits
- Benefits
New Philosophy in Old Bottles?

- Person Centered Thinking
  - From the top to the bottom
  - In state and county agencies
  - In community-based organizations

- Person Centered Planning
  - What the person wants; not what is available in existing programs
  - Many people have (had) no options
Overview:
What’s new in 2016?
VRS: Three Distinct Programs

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Extended Employment (EE)
- Independent Living (IL)

All work together to assist Minnesotans with significant disabilities to secure and retain employment, live independently, and reduce their dependence on government supports.
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

- A time-limited employment and training program for persons with significant disabilities
- Federal-state funded
Who is Eligible for VR

- Anyone with significant disabilities who wants to get or keep a job
- Most people who receive SSI or SSDI benefits and who want to work
Qualifying for VR Services

1. Disability Effect
   - Impairment creates or results in a substantial obstacle to employment
   - Person requires VR services to prepare for, secure, keep, or regain employment

2. Disability Documentation
   - Review of existing educational, mental health or physical health reports
   - Additional evaluation or assessment may be needed to clarify barrier to employment

3. Disability Limitation
   - The impairment results in the ability to engage in some daily living functional areas.
   - The seven functional limitation areas are: mobility, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal, communication, work tolerance, and work skills
Referral Process

- Contact VR office and ask to sign up for orientation
  - 40-minute session held weekly

- A VR counselor will be assigned and an intake meeting scheduled

- Complete the applicant data form and bring it to the intake meeting
  - It’s helpful to also bring medical or psychological records and documentation if receiving SSI or SSDI benefits
Cost of VR Services

- No cost for vocational services
  - Counseling and guidance, job placement, vocational testing, job coaching, post-placement follow-up

- Some purchased services require a sliding fee schedule (or co-pay) based on individual or family income
  - These may include assistive equipment or technology, post-secondary training, books and supplies, tools and equipment, transportation
VRS Statewide Offices

Most VRS offices are located within Minnesota’s statewide network of WorkForce Centers. In addition to the WFC offices there are seven stand-alone VRS offices.

VRS Stand-Alone Offices
- Apple Valley
- Carver County – Chaska
- Crookston
- Park Rapids
- Roseau
- Staples Motley High School
- Woodbury
For More Information

- mn.gov/deed/vrs
- 651-259-7366
- Toll Free: 800-328-9095
Way To Work Pilot

A Multiagency Pilot to get Folks Working in Jobs in the Community
Why did *Way to Work* Happen Now?

**Big Changes:**
- Waiver Rates, 245D Licensing, MN Choices
- MN Olmstead Plan
- Employment First Policy
- CMS Defines the Term “Community Setting” for purposes of Home and Community Based Setting
- Workforce Investment Opportunity Act
Changing the Way We Do Business

- Person Centered Thinking
- Person Centered Planning
- Discovery
- Customized Employment
- Employer Engagement
- Creative Methods designed for placing people with more significant barriers
- Changes in Funding options
Career Exploration Options

- Job shadows
- Employment site tours
- Job try-outs
- “Seeing” jobs before applying
- Reviewing work settings to see what works
- Employment skill verification
- Solidify employment skills & requirements
How was Way To Work imagined?

- Ohio’s Employment First Project
- VRS invited Dakota County, Proact and DHS to learn about the Ohio’s project
- Proact, Dakota County, and VRS decide to work together to help people get jobs in the community
What is the *Way to Work* Pilot?

- Assists people earning subminimum wage, in enclaves or workshops, to MOVE to working for at least minimum wage or above at jobs in the community.
- Right now, WTW only works with individuals attending Proact in Eagan, MN.
What is the Way to Work Pilot

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors listen to people talk about their goals, interests, and skills, and help them figure out a job goal.

DHS staff assist with benefit questions.

Placement Specialists from Proact make a match between the job seeker and the employer.

Dakota County staff provide input and coordination services.
How Meetings are Different

- At a large team meeting you talk about your goals.
- The team and individual look at funding, benefits planning, transportation needs, and support needs while not working.
- We would then begin the work of finding a job with you that makes sense, makes you money, and meets your goals.
Impact of Employment?

- People are seen as competent
- We define ourselves by what we do
- Employment gives people choice and power
- Allows greater independence, options, and income
Challenges and Barriers

- Social Security & other benefits vary by person and are complicated
- Need more in-depth information than DB101
- Job Placement is more complex; job developers need smaller caseload (10-12)
- Coordinating Employer Engagement training
Challenges and Barriers

- Transportation-limited in outer areas, weekends no busing, need creative options
- Transporting individuals in the community-VRS typically does not transport
- Getting full team members in attendance for PCP-some people just throw out their limits
- Getting everyone involved to believe that an individual CAN work.
Surprises

- 75 individuals at Proact completed an Expressed Interest Form
- County case managers have high turnover, don’t know individuals well in many cases
- Social Security and benefits planning was more cumbersome and complex than anticipated.
- Many people really don’t know what they want to do for work-only that they want a job.
What we have learned so far

- Individuals want to work, many people want competitive employment
- Individuals, families, teams are willing to take some risks, make compromises for employment
Success

- Worked with one individual to resolve a large back payment with social security. He now has enough money to live on monthly.
- Individuals are doing more PCP, talking about moving into more independent settings.
- Individuals are getting permits, driver licenses, wanting to be more independent with transportation
Outcomes

- 4 individuals have secured employment
- 32 people are currently enrolled in job placement
- Many individuals are exploring different work options for the first time
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