



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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## **2014 DVR State Plan Public Comment Testimony from Wisconsin Survival Coalition**

May 20, 2014

The Survival Coalition thanks the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for the opportunity to submit public comments on DVR's annual state plan. Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC) has made several recommendations and requests for data from DVR. In addition to the numbers of people on the wait list, Survival Coalition recommends DVR also report to the WRC the following data elements in order for the WRC to evaluate DVR's provision of employment services to employment outcomes and more completely measure outcomes and demonstrate continuous improvement:

- The number of people with disabilities in Category 1, listed by disability, who have been placed in community integrated jobs during the preceding calendar year by DVR.
- The number of new referrals to DVR with a breakout listing the number of referrals to DVR of people with the most significant barriers to employment and the numbers of those groups who were placed in community integrated jobs during the preceding calendar year.
- The number of people with disabilities with a breakout listing the number of people with Category 1 disabilities who retained the same community integrated job(s) for at least one calendar year.
- The number of people with disabilities with a breakout listing the number of people with Category 1 disabilities who had been employed in a community integrated job and are returning to DVR for employment services because they have lost or quit their employment.
- The number of people with disabilities and the number of people with severe disabilities referred to DVR by work centers for placement in community integrated jobs.
- The number of people with disabilities and the number of people with severe disabilities referred to DVR by DHS's HEC program and IRIS consultants.

- The number of transition age youth with disabilities and youth with Category 1 disabilities referred to DVR school districts and the ages of youth referred.
- The average number of hours worked by people with disabilities and people with Category 1 disabilities placed by DVR in community integrated jobs during the preceding calendar year.
- The average hourly wage paid to people with disabilities and people with Category 1 disabilities in placements made by DVR during the preceding calendar year.

Survival Coalition appreciates the strategic use of partnerships to further employment outcomes for people with disabilities, and offers the following recommendations for additional partnership opportunities to improve DVR's employment outcomes, which will require collaborations with other parts of state government as well as private and public resources:

- Issue clear guidance on when and how VR counselors can begin working with students with the most significant disabilities (e.g. earlier than two years before graduation). Include case examples in training to all VR counselors on when and how early VR involvement is appropriate.
- Create career placement accommodations/support to ensure long-term career success for people with disabilities who have graduated with two or four year degrees. Career counseling at post-secondary schools is lacking for students with disabilities, leaving educated workers without key skills and connections to get a job post-graduation. Create a specialized Job Developer position focused on working intensively and specifically with post-secondary students with disabilities to ensure that they have the specific skills for types of available jobs (customized supported employment).
- Establish a statewide best practice model where all students experience job placements in community- integrated, competitive wage employment within a high school transition program are automatically supported within the adult long term care system. DVR counselors, MCO providers, and educators should collaborate so that the job development that was prioritized while the student was in school transitions with them after they graduate.
- Establish an expectation that students entering the long-term care system are connected to Work Incentive Benefits Counseling at time of eligibility, and that individuals are automatically referred to DVR for employment services.

- Establish an expectation that participants in DHS’s Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP) who are not currently earning enough to pay a premium or are enrolled in Health and Employment Counseling (HEC) are referred to DVR for employment services.
- Develop statewide cross-training with MCO and IRIS staff to increase DHS staff involvement in exploring employment goals for all working age long-term care participants. Develop partnerships with schools to train and allow school staff to become service vendors (per West Virginia model referenced in national “Making the VR Connection” webinar May 15), which would alleviate Wisconsin’s significant shortage in supported employment providers while encouraging collaboration between DVR and school districts.

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