



Finding solutions. Generating success.

January 15, 2022

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) is asked to submit a report of its outreach efforts to work with community rehabilitation program providers for job placement and retention services for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities.

HF868 states: *For purposes of optimizing the job placement of individuals with disabilities, the division shall make its best efforts to work with community rehabilitation program providers for job placement and retention services for individuals with significant disabilities and most significant disabilities. By January 15, 2022, the division shall submit a written report to the general assembly regarding the division's outreach efforts with community rehabilitation program providers.*

IVRS has continued efforts to create and maintain partnerships with 67 Iowa community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) in 2021. IVRS continued efforts to promote and encourage collaboration by reaching out to CRPs, external vendors and other service providers. This includes developing a collaborative partnership with the Iowa DD Council to provide technical assistance for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 to 18 additional CRPs consisting of 28 new employment support providers to provide Customized Discovery service. This expanded the Employment First Pilot Project from the geographic regions of Des Moines, Ames, Cedar Rapids and Dubuque to the rest of the state. It also includes a contracted effort with the Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment hosted by our State Rehabilitation Council. That work provided nine webinars on topics of professional interest to our providers, professional staff and constituents. The result of this focus has contributed positively to enhancing partnerships, in addition to maintaining a focus on competitive, integrated employment-related options for Iowans with disabilities.

The employment outcomes for individuals receiving supported employment services through our community rehabilitation providers increased from 298 successful employment outcomes to 362. This is reflective of the quality of services, and an overall change in the numbers being served from the previous year due to the pandemic. The data demonstrates an increase of average hourly wage earned going from \$9.59 to \$10.04.

In FFY21, IVRS collaborated with Mental Health Regions, Mental health providers, DHS and two CRPs to provide an evidence based service called Individual Placement and Support (IPS) to individuals with severe mental illness. The service was provided to the geographic areas of O'Brien, Sioux, Hardin, Hamilton, Franklin, and Cerro Gordo Counties with plans to expand to more counties and three more providers by the start of FFY22. The plan is to stand up more providers each year. Since piloting IPS, rehabilitation rates have gone from 38.5% in FFY2019 to 47% in FFY2021. In spite of the pandemic, there was an almost 10% improvement.

Positive outcomes from both the Customized Discovery and IPS services have resulted in positive employment data points. The unexpected outcome is the significant change in partnership between IVRS, DHS, MH Regions and CRP providers. Providers involved in these programs all report a significant increase in communication, contact, knowledge about a case, courtesy, and collaboration. This improved partnership results in a seamless referral and intake process, service implementation process, and transitioning period to long-term support services for the individual with disabilities.

IVRS has a dedicated staff position performing the outreach activities in collaboration with our CRPs. In addition, IVRS has a proactive plan that includes training and ongoing collaboration with long-term support providers to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities continue to be successful with the employment design customized through the efforts of this employment partnership. Local IVRS offices have implemented regular routine meetings with the individual, parents and guardians, CRP providers and long-term support providers.

The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on provider services including their ability to support staff in the provision of on-site services needed for job development, job placement and supported job coaching. A number of providers have closed or delayed service operations related to employment.

Other providers are no longer serving previously covered geographic areas and some lack trained staff to provide employment services. In order to support our CRP capacity issues, IVRS has reached out to individual providers to support rural locations and areas that currently have no CRP coverage. IVRS has also reached out to CRPs to provide virtual employment services in order to prevent knowledge and skill regression during any employment gaps. IVRS will continue to explore innovative approaches to support CRP capacity and ability to recruit qualified staff. IVRS will also review internal processes with the goal of reducing the administrative burden on CRPs.

| FFY | Amount Expended to CRPs | Number of Job Candidates with CRP Services |
|------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 2021* | \$2,639,520* | 1,650* |
| 2020 | \$2,443,891 | 1,742 |
| 2019 | \$3,738,006 | 2,269 |
| 2018 | \$3,754,427 | 2,228 |
| 2017 | \$3,363,602 | 2,010 |
| 2016 | \$2,961,365 | 1,871 |
| 2015 | \$2,836,035 | 1,432 |
| 2014 | \$1,845,630 | 988 |

*The FFY2021 numbers are not final as authorizations and claims for the FFY21 are not resolved.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act requires attention and focus on transition and pre-employment transition services. As a result, IVRS is now serving over 12,500 potentially eligible students; a significant increase in student-focused services. These services are provided through IVRS direct services and IVRS contracts through programs such as Intermediary Networks, Making the Grade and Transition Alliance Programs to assist with capacity issues experienced by CRPs which prevent complete closures of employment programs by some providers.

IVRS provided financial support to 41 different Adult Work-based Learning Experience/Occupational Skills training programs, authorizing services for 141 job candidates totaling \$501,247 for FFY21 an increase from FFY20 of \$497,691. A decrease to 141 individuals served from 170 the past year, but the overall cost expenditure decreased only \$224. This was due to the nature of the Adult Work-based Learning Experience/Occupational Skill Training programs being accessed by our job candidates. Our CRPs are integral to the success of these training efforts to meet the business skill gap.

IVRS implemented a variety of in-service, webinar, on-site and video conference training opportunities available to CRPs throughout the year, as well as performance data specific to each partner. Vendor data is shared annually by IVRS with providers to stimulate conversations with partners, ensure consistent business practices, promote transparency for purchased services, and provide a statewide basis for comparisons and quality assurance improvement. IVRS included additional data points related to time in supported employment, the rehabilitation rate, hours worked and dollars earned. Data was shared across systems to provide an opportunity to review outcome quality to set standards and review the effectiveness of office and CRP collaboration. The data measures are the same standards IVRS is held accountable to with federal reporting. All CRP providers were contacted and received specific communication and outreach from IVRS staff. These conversations occurred in the fall and winter of 2021 and are critical to continuing efforts to identify innovative strategies dealing with the work environment caused by the pandemic.

IVRS will continue to collaborate and proactively respond to the demands of an ever-changing job market to fulfill our mission and effectively provide the necessary services to help individuals with disabilities achieve full integration into community employment.

Respectfully Submitted,

Daniel Tallon

Daniel Tallon
IVRS Administrator