



January 15, 2024

In accordance with Economic Development Appropriations Act, FY2024, also known as Senate File 559, division 1, §9.6, the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) Division is required to submit to the General Assembly a report of its outreach efforts with community rehabilitation program providers for job placement and retention services for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities:

For purposes of optimizing the job placement of individuals with disabilities, IVRS 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, 2024, the division shall submit a written report to the general assembly on the division's outreach efforts with community rehabilitation program providers.

IVRS has continued efforts to create and maintain partnerships with 65 Iowa community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) in 2023. IVRS continued efforts to promote and encourage collaboration by reaching out to CRPs, external vendors and other service providers. In addition to the CRPs, IVRS established an alternative pathway for 17 trained qualified individuals to be independent providers, bringing the total to 82 employment support providers that IVRS is able to partner in providing employment support services. The number of provider agencies have decreased by two from FFY2022 and some providers have decreased the area of coverage leaving gaps primarily in services for Iowans with disabilities living in rural areas.

In FFY23, IVRS continued to collaborate with Mental Health Regions, Mental health providers, DHHS and eight CRPs to provide the evidence-based service called Individual Placement and Support (IPS) to individuals with severe mental illness. The plan is to stand up more providers in FFY24 with hopes of two providers focusing on youth in transition. Since piloting IPS, rehabilitation rates have gone from 38.5% in FFY2019, to 47% in FFY2021, and 53% in FFY2022. The rehabilitation rate in FFY2023 for individuals using IPS decreased to 40%.

IVRS also continued collaborations with Griffin Hammis & Associates to provide technical assistance for local IVRS staff and CRPs in doing research-based service called Customized Employment (CE) to individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disorders and similar diagnoses such as individuals on the Autism Spectrum. The plan is to improve CIE outcomes through the use of customized discovery processes that impacted customized job development and consultative employment support services. In FFY20, CE resulted in a 50% rehabilitation rate; 50% in FFY21; 58% in FFY22; and 41% in FFY23.

IVRS continues with a proactive plan that includes on demand 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 these employment partnerships. This plan includes collaboration with the Center of Excellence for Behavior Health (CEBH) at the University of Iowa’s Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) to do training on IPS and Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA) to train on Customized Employment. Local IVRS offices continue to have regular routine meetings with the individual, parents and guardians, CRP providers and long-term support providers.

The significant drop in rehabilitation rate for IPS and CE services was mostly due to workforce issues within IVRS as well as CRP Partnering agencies. Some providers are no longer serving previously offered employment services, geographic areas and some lack fidelity trained staff to provide employment services. In order to support our CRP capacity issues, some IVRS staff have provided direct services and some have reached out to individual providers to support rural locations and areas that currently have no CRP coverage with the Expanded Area Incentive (EAI). This incentive enabled IVRS to temporarily cover for mileage to offset the expense. IVRS encouraged CRPs to provide virtual employment services whenever applicable in order to prevent knowledge and skill regression during any employment gaps. Many providers lacked funding, knowledge and skills to use technology as a means to support individuals virtually. Some rural areas lacked online connectivity capabilities.

This is demonstrated in the numbers below for 2023, which is significantly lower than in past years.

| FFY | Amount Expended to CRP’s | Number of Job Candidates with CRP Services |
|------|--------------------------|--|
| 2023 | \$2,816,465 | 1,435 |
| 2022 | \$2,852,171 | 1,472 |
| 2021 | \$2,751,318 | 1,611 |
| 2020 | \$2,274,001 | 1,689 |
| 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 |

IVRS has continued to see a decrease in number of services provided to our adult caseload, primarily due to the ongoing attention and focus on transition and pre-employment transition services required by the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act.

The employment outcomes for individuals receiving supported employment services through our community rehabilitation providers in FFY2023 decreased from 386 successful



employment outcomes to 383. The data demonstrates an increase of average hourly wage earned going from \$11.20 to \$11.78. This is reflective of the quality of services.

IVRS provided financial support to 33 different Occupational Skills Training (OST) programs (reduced from 44 in FFY2022), authorizing services for 147 job candidates totaling \$568,344 for FFY2023. This increased from 132 job candidates totaling an overall cost expenditure from \$464,152 in FFY2022. In spite of major workforce issues impacting the direct employment support staff and IVRS offices and the reduced number of OST programs available, the quality of the services increased as reflected in the average hourly wage earned (increased by 5%) and an insignificant change in the successful employment outcomes (decrease of three individuals). 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 will occur throughout the FFY2024 and are critical to continuing efforts to identify innovative strategies dealing with current work environment.

IVRS continues to build CRP incentive programs to address workforce issues through opportunities such as financial support; encouraging the hire of direct service providers with disabilities; and to recognize quality employment programs and services. IVRS, now under Iowa Workforce Development, has increased service capacity in areas such as business services and marketing in FFY2024.

IVRS will also 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,

Dr. James Williams,
IVRS Administrator