



January 15, 2025

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

Economic Development Appropriations Act, FY2025, also known as Senate File 2432: 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, 2025, 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 Iowa CRPs in 2024. This has been accomplished through direct communication and training with CRPs as well as the availability of virtual, on-demand training. IVRS also participates in meetings heavily attended by CRPs such as the Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) and Iowa's chapter of the Association of People Supporting Employment 1st (APSE). In addition to traditional CRPs, IVRS continued to support an alternative pathway for qualified individuals to be Independent Providers (IP). By the end of September, 2024, IVRS had 69 contracts with supported employment service providers in Iowa. Nine (9) of the 69 are IPs that are serving in areas either a CRP will not cover for various reasons and/or a CRP has a waiting list and a job candidate is in need of immediate support.

IVRS created training and incentive programs to support CRPs and IPs. On demand, online training modules were created to support provider training needs and require providers to successfully complete the quiz after reviewing the training modules. In order to ensure that providers and field staff also understand IVRS-specific rules and expectations surrounding the IVRS supported employment program, CRPs that are providing services for IVRS are also required to review the CRP Menu of Services Manual and to sign an Acknowledgement of Understanding. Three incentives are available for providers. Expanded Area Incentive (EAI) pays for mileage (door-to-door) for a provider to travel to an area that is outside of their coverage area. Native Language Incentive (NLI) pays for a provider who is also able to provide the service in the job candidate's preferred language. Business Partnership Incentive (BPI) pays providers who do quality service like on-the-job training and assessment services that result in a placement outcome for a job candidate. In the contracting process, IVRS also requested verification of training and credentials by all providers.



IVRS has also reached out to Iowa's Medicaid Enterprise (ME)/Health and Human Services (HHS) to continue the alignment of supported employment services and the evidence-based employment service called Individual Placement and Support (IPS). A major effort IVRS also introduced during 2024 is revamping the state's CRP requirement at an agency level and at the staff level. The hope is to ensure that these changes are supported by ME/HHS, because the goal for the change is to:

- Reduce the amount of time and manpower required of a CRP to demonstrate standards of a successful supported employment program
- Reduce the cost for a professional accreditation in supported employment services
- Improve and ensure services are not only reflective of industry standards but specific to Iowa's needs
- Increase accessibility to these criteria by smaller and/or rural based agencies
- Increase free/affordable, accessible training and technical support to all supported employment professionals

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 continue providing training on IPS and ensure fidelity to the model.

Since moving to contracts and fidelity reviews, the number of CRPs partnerships have decreased but the quality of services have improved. Local VR offices and contracted partners report improved overall communication and partnership. CRPs continue to report ongoing struggles with maintaining direct employment support staff and credentialing expectations.

This is demonstrated in the numbers below for 2024, which is significantly lower than in past years.



FFY	Amount Expended to CRP's	Number of Job Candidates with CRP Services
2024	\$3,003,948	1,343
2023	\$2,992,070	1,482
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 the 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 Opportunity Act.

The employment outcomes for individuals receiving supported employment services through our CRP providers in FFY2024 decreased from 383 successful employment outcomes to 359. The data demonstrates an increase of average hourly wage earned going from \$11.78 to \$11.86. This is reflective of the quality of services.

IVRS approved 43 different Occupational Skills Training (OST) programs (increased from 33 in FFY2023), authorizing services for 51 job candidates totaling \$278,166 for FFY024. This decreased from 93 job candidates totaling an overall cost expenditure from \$248,242 in FFY2023. In spite of major workforce issues impacting the direct employment support staff and IVRS offices and the reduced use of the OST programs available, the quality of the services increased as reflected in the average hourly wage earned (increased by 12%) and an insignificant change in the successful employment outcomes (increase of 1 individual). Our CRPs are integral to the success of these training efforts to meet the business skill gap.



IVRS continues to look at 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 FFY2025 and are critical to continuing efforts to identify innovative strategies dealing with the 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 FFY2025.

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,

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