

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

*The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:*

### **a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council.**

*All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:*

*(1) input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;*

### **Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

The State Rehabilitation Council is known in South Dakota as the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR or Board). The Board provides advice to and works in partnership with the general vocational rehabilitation agency in South Dakota/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division).

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively and remains responsive to the needs of those served. The Board works in partnership with the Division in developing policies, planning activities, evaluating program effectiveness and carrying out other functions related to South Dakota's vocational rehabilitation program. The working relationship between the Board and the Division is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services resulting in successful employment outcomes for those served.

The Board met on four occasions during Program Year 2018. These meetings were held on 9/12/2018, 12/4/2018, 3/27/2019 and 6/19/2019. These meetings were open to the public and held in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and the State's open meeting law, SDCL, 1-25-1. In addition, the Board's Executive Committee meets on separate occasions before each board meeting. These meetings agendas, minutes and handouts are posted on [boardsandcommissions.sd.gov](http://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov).

#### ***Annual Report to the Governor and RSA Commissioner***

The Board directed staff, both BVR and Division, to draft and complete the annual reports. The reports were finalized by Board consensus and submitted to the Governor and RSA Commissioner prior to the end of December.

#### ***Employment Works Initiative & "Ability For Hire" Campaign***

The Division has been working on activities prompted by Governor Dugaard's initiative to have the State of South Dakota become a model employer of people with disabilities. The Board fully supports these activities. An example is the Division contracted with a Sioux Falls marketing firm to conduct an employer outreach program. The Board's Public Awareness Committee participated in presentations at various stages of the development process. Input and recommendations from members concentrated on accessibility features, video captioning and website ease of access.

#### ***Governor's Awards Ceremony***

The Board annually collaborates with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council on the Governor's Awards Ceremony. During this reporting period, the Board moved forward with the solicitation process and approved funds to support this event.

#### ***National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)***

The Board approved financial support for the 2016 & 2017 events with the expectation that proposed activities would emphasize employment issues, greater need for employer involvement, increase efforts to obtain the involvement of smaller employers, and improve marketing efforts to reach employers, businesses and HR managers.

#### ***Division's Program Initiatives***

The Board fully supports the Division's efforts to increase provider expertise and capacity, as well as increase provider earnings, and employment retention (e.g., establishment grants to advance supported employment efforts, increasing the number of certified providers, providing specialized training sessions). The Board encouraged the Division to continue activities to increase the number of certified providers, which increases consumer choice for individuals with disabilities seeking employment supports.

### ***State and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Collaborations***

The Board recommended hosting its' December meeting to coincide with the Division/Tribal VR staff meeting, and to adjust its' meeting agenda to allow time for them to come together and continue dialogue on shared areas of interest, e.g., independent living services, case services, assistive technology, promoting disability awareness and youth and transition services.

### ***Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP)***

The Board fully endorses activities which interface with the educational and workforce systems, as well as post—secondary education, independent living, and other necessary supports to assist students with disabilities and their families in making meaningful choices. The Board frequently requested updates on various projects or activities and during the June meeting, TSLP staff addressed the projects' purpose, provision of technical assistance and training, and updates on the Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave, transition forums, interagency councils, Project Skills, and Project SEARCH.

### ***Consumer Satisfaction Survey***

The Board recommended changes to the Consumer Satisfaction Survey instrument and process. A new survey instrument was added for individual's whose case was closed unsuccessful. The existing surveys had language changes and a comments section added. The results of the consumer satisfaction survey are reviewed annually with the Board.

### ***Board Nominations and Appointments***

Annually, the Board consults with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council about the need to solicit statewide nominations for their respective board/council membership. Nominations were sought during March/April, forwarded to the Governor for his consideration and action in April, and the Governor made appointments and/or reappointments to each board/council in July.

### ***Employer Initiatives***

The Board was provided presentations and updates at meetings throughout this reporting period related to employer initiatives. These presentations were done by the Division's Business Specialists, Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills, and the Business Resource Network of Sioux Falls. Updates were also provided on employee seed grants in Yankton, Brookings and Aberdeen. The South Dakota Retailers Association presented to the Board on their partnership with the Division.

### ***Project Search***

The Board was provided information and presentation on the Brookings Project Search initiative. The Division is funding 5 Project search initiatives. These programs have a very high employment success rate for students with disabilities.

### ***Master's degree in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling***

The Board was provided information and presentation on the South Dakota State University master's degree Program in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling. This program has been very successful in assisting the Division's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors obtain their master's degree and certification as a Rehabilitation Counselor.

### ***Developmental Disabilities Employment Services***

The Board was provided information and presentation on employment services through the Medicaid Waivers in the Division of Developmental Disabilities. The information focused on the Employment Toolkit that was developed in coordination of the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

### ***Customized Employment***

The Board was provided information on the implementation of the Customized Employment initiative in South Dakota. The Division is funding the training costs for providers to develop their expertise in providing customized employment services.

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### **Post-Secondary Education Programs for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities**

The Board had conversations on Vocational Rehabilitation’s role in funding post-secondary education programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The Board drafted questions for the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The Division submitted these questions and received a response for future Board meeting discussions.

### **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and State Plan**

The Board received the draft results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and participated in an activity to help narrow down future goals/strategies for the new State Plan. The Consumer Services Committee will be taking the lead in recommending revisions to the State Plan.

*(2) the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and*

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided valuable input into the Division’s activities and policies. All recommendations by the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services were accepted.

*(3) the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.*

No recommendations were rejected

**b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness** *When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non- statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:*

*(1) a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;*

The South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) has implemented a work experience program for students with disabilities called Project Skills. This venture is a cooperative arrangement with the local school districts and the Division. South Dakota has 151 public school districts and 20 Tribal/Bureau of Indian Education Schools statewide. The Division makes this program available to all schools with approximately 143 public/tribal school districts participating in the program. The program is available to the remaining school districts, but they have chosen not to enter into a contract with the Division.

### **Types of Services to be Provided**

Many students with significant disabilities don’t have an opportunity to gain paid employment experience while in high school. Although willing, most employers cannot afford the supports these students frequently require on their first job. This is an important learning, maturing, and socializing experience. The Division of Rehabilitation Services funds a program entitled “Project Skills” to address this need. This program is a cooperative arrangement between the State VR Agency and the local school systems. The Division funds the wages, workers compensation, and FICA while the schools provide the job development, job coaching, and follow—along services for the student at the job site. By entering into a contractual agreement with the Designated State Unit, the local school districts are assuring that they will provide the non—federal share of the matching funds, including funds contributed to the school by a private agency, organization or individual.

*(2) the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and*

Written Assurances Each participating school enters into a written agreement with the Division for Project Skills. This agreement requires the school district to provide written assurance that they will use non-Federal funds for their share of the Project Skills program. The Project Skills program is available only for Vocational Rehabilitation clients. School Districts cannot serve non-Division clients and the Division approves the Project Skills Program by completing a work agreement and authorization of services. All state plan requirements for the Division will apply to all services approved under the waiver

*(3) requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.*

Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver. All services provided under this waiver are provided under an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)

and authorized by the vocational rehabilitation client's VR Counselor. The Division assures that all State Plan requirements, including the Order of Selection if appropriate, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

- c) ***Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System. Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:***  
***(1) Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;***

The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) have an excellent working relationship with the Workforce System in South Dakota. The cooperation between our agencies is done by formal written agreements and informal arrangements.

The Department of Human Services updated in March 2018, a ***Memorandum of Understanding*** with DLR. This agreement addresses:

- Provide comprehensive services designed to assist the unemployed citizens of the State of South Dakota in obtaining gainful employment;
- Support the underemployed citizens of the state in preparing for a new and more rewarding career;
- Provide the youth of South Dakota with a positive introduction into the world of work and subsequently providing follow-up and guidance to youth once they enter the workforce;
- Provide universal access to all customers, including those with special needs or barriers to employment;
- Provide customer choice in the way they access services, and in the services themselves, based on individual need;
- Allow integrated services through a planning process at the state and local levels, coordinate activities and services for customers, and share information and client data; and
- Be fully aware of the role each Partner has within the system and to understand the services each Partner provides.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with DLR on 3/26/2018 and then amended on 3/6/2019. This agreement addresses data sharing between agencies for common performance reporting.

Other interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system consist of:

### ***Project Skills***

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has cooperative agreements with local school districts throughout South Dakota for the provision of transition services. This program provides paid work experiences in student's career areas to help them prepare for adulthood and the world of work.

### ***Project Search***

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has cooperative agreements with local the Project Search sites for Aberdeen, Brookings, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and Sturgis locations. This agreement lays out each party's responsibility for the Project Search activities.

***(2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;***

The Division of Rehabilitation Services receives funding under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. A contract is developed annually with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative/Dakota Link for the implementation of these services.

***(3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;***

These agreements typically are associated with AgrAbility Programs. South Dakota did receive an AgrAbility grant on the Pine Ridge Reservation during the summer of 2019. Currently there is not an agreement in place with this project.

***(4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and***

The Division of Rehabilitation Services currently does not have any formal agreements with non-educational programs

serving out-of-school youth.

*(5) State use contracting programs.*

The State of South Dakota does not have a “State Use Law

**d) Coordination with Education Officials. Describe:**

*(1) The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (Designated State Unit) plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) has been a leader in innovative transition services for students with disabilities. Most recently a new administrative position within the Division was developed whose sole focus is increasing transition services for students with disabilities and coordination efforts with Education Officials. The focal point of this success in transition services is the partnership between the DRS and the Office of Special Education in co-funding the Transition Services Liaison Project. This project initiates the following successful transition activities:

- Transition Services Liaison Project: TSLP provides technical assistance and training to students with disabilities, families, local education agencies and adult service agencies to promote the movement from school to post-school activities. There are four Transition Liaisons and a Transition Services Liaison Project Coordinator to provide these activities. TSLP manages the transition programs listed below.
- Project Skills: Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local school districts which provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps to build the student’s work history, references and assists them with experiencing different career fields as they mature and take on new challenges.
- Project Search: Project Search is a national model partnering with a large employer, local school district and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program. South Dakota currently has 5 Project Search Initiatives in operation in Aberdeen, Brookings, Sioux Falls and Rapid City. A 5th Project Search initiative has been added in Sturgis and began the 2019 fall school year.
- Youth Leadership Forum: YLF is a unique career and leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors to learn more about self-advocacy skills and disability awareness. Students with disabilities cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills as a result of participating in this annual five-day event. The YLF was implemented at the state level by the Governor’s Advisory Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and other state and local partners.
- Catch the Wave: A one-day conference designed specifically for high school students who have a disability and are considering post-secondary education (either college or technical institutes). Students learn about preparing for college life, securing appropriate accommodations, and developing self-advocacy and communication skills.
- Let’s Talk About Work: A one-day conference designed specifically for high school students who have a disability who are needing to learn more about what it takes to be a successful employee. They are also given the opportunity to meet local employers to discuss needed employment soft skills for specific jobs.
- Regional Transition Forums: These forums are informal and interactive meetings for providers of services, transition-age students with disabilities, as well as consumers and family members.
- Post-Secondary Disability Coordinators Forums: This forum is held annually in Chamberlain inviting all the Disability Coordinators from South Dakota Post-Secondary programs. This has been a very successful initiative helping the transition process for students with disabilities.
- Summer Institute: The Summer Institute is a statewide training opportunity for Special Education teachers who are assisting students in the transition process. It is held for one week in the summer and offers training in areas of IDEA, introducing self-determination curriculum and other assessment materials, and IEP planning. Teachers receive graduate credit for the class and gain knowledge from Disability Services Coordinators from post-

secondary schools, vocational rehabilitation staff, Transition Liaisons, community mental health agencies and independent living services staff.

### **Pre-Employment Transition Services**

The Division is networking with the Office of Special Education and other transition agencies to assure Pre-Employment Transition Services are available throughout the State. A brochure targeting students with disabilities has been developed and distributed across the State. Most of the services listed above qualify for the Pre-Employment Transition Services. In addition, the Division is looking at ways to expand the self-determination training component to be available in all the school districts

### ***Development and Approval of an IPE before leaving school***

The Division is making great efforts to assure that students with disabilities access the vocational rehabilitation program and develop their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before they complete high school. Following are some of these activities:

- Division VR Counselors contact school counselors and 504 coordinators on a regular basis to identify and meet with students.
- Division VR Counselors inform school staff what services are available to students with disabilities and eligibility requirements. VR Counselors then follow up on referral in a timely fashion in order to determine eligibility prior to graduation.
- Division VR Counselors and other Division staff will attend interagency meetings in order to inform other service organizations about Rehabilitation Services and obtain referrals of these students.
- The Division will continue funding Project Skills to include serving students with disabilities who are not receiving special education services.

#### *(2) Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:*

##### *(A) consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;*

The South Dakota Cooperative Agreement Concerning Transition Services for Students with Disabilities was revised on July 2017. This agreement includes the following South Dakota entities: Office of Special Education, Division of Workforce and Technical Education, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, DLR, Division of Behavioral Health, and Division of Child Protection Services.

The agreement was created to operationalize South Dakota's transition process, Local Educational Agencies and Adult Services Agencies who are part of this agreement, will coordinate transition services for students and youth with disabilities. Coordination maximizes existing resources, thus avoids duplication and promotes continuity of service provision. This coordination is important as it assures compliance with providing required services as well as compliance with federal and state laws. The cooperating agencies will also encourage staff to take part in trainings sponsored by the other cooperating agencies to ensure that services are provided by qualified and appropriately certified staff.

##### *(B) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;*

The cooperating agencies agree that a transition plan, as a component of the Individual Education Plan (IEP), will be initiated for every student with a disability age 16 and older or at a younger age as determined by the Local Education Agency. To the extent possible, the IEP will be integrated in the planning documents of all coordinating agencies, and where possible, eliminates duplication of such plans. The IEP will outline all transition services necessary to successfully transition to the next environment or service delivery system and have access to appropriate independent living options in integrated community-based settings.

##### *(C) roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;*

The agreement identifies each agency's roles and responsibilities including:

- Consultation and technical assistance to assist in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;

- Transition planning by personnel of the Division of Rehabilitation Services and school district personnel;
- Roles and responsibilities of each agency including State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
- Financial responsibilities; and
- Procedures for outreach and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

*(D) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.*

The cooperating agencies will work together to market the services available between Local Educational Agencies and Adult Services Agencies to increase access to and opportunities for transition services. For these agencies to carry out effective planning and assessment of transition services, meaningful data on student needs and service outcomes must be available. The cooperating agencies agree to share with each other data on the needs of students with disabilities and the outcomes of services and programs

**e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations. Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.**

Due to the geographic reality which exists within South Dakota, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) recognizes one of the best sources available for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services are Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). CRPs consist of Community Support Providers, Mental Health Centers, Career Learning Centers, Centers for Independent Living, Communication Services for the Deaf, and the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. These programs are located in local communities throughout the state.

***Utilization of CRPs and other Employment Specialists Providers***

During Program Year 2018, 26.34% of the Division’s client services expenditures (approximately \$1,158,308 was paid to CRP’s. In addition, establishment grants were issued with CRPs for the expansion of supported employment services.

***Manner in which cooperative arrangements are established***

The Division utilizes Program Guide DRS/DSBVI 2019-01 - Provider Standards to establish approved service providers and procedures to approve service providers. Applicants/eligible individuals are provided choices in available service providers for them to select from. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor then issue authorizations to the provider for services agreed upon in the Individual Plan for Employment. The scope of services purchased depends upon the individual’s needs and employment goal.

***Improve capacity and quality of services from CRPs***

To help expand the capacity and quality of services from community rehabilitation programs, the Division of Rehabilitation Services offers establishment grants to develop or expand their service capacity. The focus of these establishment grants is to expand supported employment services for youth with disabilities and other individuals with significant disabilities.

The Division continually works on improving the quality of services from CRPs. The Division has provided numerous training initiatives and opportunities for CRP personnel to become a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP). Service providers who become certified and complete a two-day Person-Centered Training will receive a 25% increase in their service rates. Maintaining their CESP certification will require the service provider to complete 36 continuing education hours every 3 years.

**f) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services. Describe the designated State agency’s efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.**

Describe the designated State agency’s efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The heart of supported employment is the coordination of the time limited and the on-going support services. The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) has been very proactive in working collaboratively with service providers and public agencies to coordinate funding sources and policies. These efforts are categorized into two areas: Formal Cooperative Agreements and Informal Cooperative Efforts with Agencies.

### **Formal Cooperative Arrangements**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has in place a formal cooperative agreement for transition services for youth with disabilities. This agreement is with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Divisions of Rehabilitation services, Developmental Disabilities, and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired; Department of Social Services (DSS) Division of Behavioral Health Services; Department of Education (DOE) Office of Special Education, and DLR. The purpose of the cooperative agreement is to define:

- services including supported employment,
- eligibility requirements,
- referral process,
- responsibilities of each agency,
- extended support services to be provided by the Division of Developmental Disabilities,
- extended support services to be provided by the Division of Behavioral Health Services,
- time-limited services to be provided by the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired,
- service plan development,
- requirements for transition to extended services, and
- responsibilities for post-employment services.

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The Division of Developmental Disabilities updated the Policy Memorandum on June 18, 2018 with the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This Policy Memorandum defines how each agency's funding sources are coordinated regarding the time limited and on-going support services. This policy agreement has had a significant impact in changing how services are provided to individuals with the most significant impediments to obtain and maintain their employment.

On July 7, 2018, a document was updated to coordinate the services and funding between the Divisions of Behavioral Health Services, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired. This document serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness:

1. What services can and should be provided by the Community Mental Health Centers,
2. What services are available from Vocational Rehabilitation, and
3. Which Division pays for the different services.

### **Informal Cooperative arrangements with agencies**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services continually works collaboratively with other State agencies on a day-to-day basis to better serve individuals with disabilities. Following are some of these collaborative efforts:

- The State Office of the Division of Rehabilitation Services is co-located with the Divisions of Developmental Disabilities, and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. Our agencies can easily communicate to coordinate services between Divisions.
- Eight of the eleven Division's field offices are co-located with DLR job service offices.
- The public vocational rehabilitation agencies are working closely with all partners identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to collaborate in the implementation of the new law. Division staff serves on implementation workgroups, task forces, the State Workforce Development Council and on local Workforce Committees

**g) Coordination with Employers.** *Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:*



*(1) VR services; and*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) has been very proactive in working collaboratively with employers. These initiatives consist of:

- “Ability For Hire” initiative: “Ability For Hire” is an business outreach campaign emphasizing the promotion of hiring, advancement, and retention of employment for people with disabilities in South Dakota’s workforce. The content materials consist of a website (www.abilityforhire.com), printed materials in the form of brochures, previous radio advertisement, commercials, videos, and other success stories. It officially launched on 08/11/2015. This is also designed to promote the public’s awareness of the available resources and services that DRS offers to employers and people with disabilities.
- Point of Contact: The Division has designated a single point-of-contact (business specialist) to disseminate materials, conduct trainings, and serve as a resource to employers, providers, and people with disabilities throughout the state.
- Business—Led Models: There are two nonprofit entities available in South Dakota offering supports to the business communities which are led by employers (business—led model). They are the Business Resource Network in Sioux Falls and the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills. Each entity has an Executive Director. Both entities have an approved contract in place with the Division to provide education, consulting, and technical assistance to businesses on the hiring, accommodations, supports, and retention when employing people with disabilities. DRS has also developed, through small Seed grants, for three business-led initiatives. These initiatives are in Yankton, Brookings and Aberdeen. They promote information to businesses/employers on hiring people with disabilities through various business connections and social media.
- Business Organization Involvement: The Division is working towards increasing memberships and regular involvement of staff within non—disability related organizations in efforts to collaborate with employers. Some examples of the organizations consist of the local Chamber of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and the South Dakota Retailers Association. These opportunities allow for connecting with businesses to learn more about their workforce needs and identify any disability training needs they may have.
- Employer Resource Guide: The Division has an Employer Resource Guide consisting of information and resources available to employers regarding various aspects of disability—related topics.

*(2) transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) has been very proactive in working collaboratively with employers for transition services. These initiatives consist of:

- Project Skills: Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local school districts which provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps to build the student’s work history, references and assists them with experiencing different career fields as they mature and take on new challenges. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and school staff identify employment sites, businesses, employers to match the areas which students have expressed an interest in working.
- Project Search: Project Search is a national model partnering with a large employer, local school district and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program. South Dakota currently has 5 Project Search Initiatives in operation at Aberdeen, Brookings, Rapid City, Sturgis and Sioux Falls.

**h) Interagency Cooperation. Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:**

*(1) the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) has other formal and informal interagency arrangements and levels of cooperation.

### **State Medicaid Plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act**

DSS is the state’s Medicaid Agency. DHS has the following agreements with the DSS Medicaid Agency.

- Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation as well as Guardianship and Conservatorship: This agreement was updated March 2018 to assure each agency’s response to meet the needs of persons who are at risk for abuse, neglect

and exploitation or in need of guardianship and or conservatorship services.

- Money Follows the Person: This agreement was implemented on June 10, 2014 for the implementation of the Money Follows the Person initiative involving persons eligible for waiver services.
- Medicaid Fraud Control: This agreement was implemented on July 1, 2015 for the purpose of defining mutual responsibilities in the Medicaid Program to ensure maximum efficiency and benefit to the State and to minimize duplication of effort.
- Title XIX Medicaid Funding Memorandum of Understanding: This agreement was implemented on February 15, 2013 for the purpose of defining administrative and fiscal accountability responsibilities.
- Protected Health Information Memorandum of Understanding: This agreement implemented policy on restrictions of disclosing protected health information.
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*(2) the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and*

The South Dakota Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities. This agency is in the same department as the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs allowing regular communication between programs.

### Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities

This agreement was updated on July 2017 for the purpose of enabling students with disabilities to reach their maximum potential in their transition from high school to the adult world. This agreement included the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, Developmental Disabilities Agency, DSS Division of Behavioral Health Services, DOE Special Education and DLR.

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### Policy Memorandum with Developmental Disabilities

The Division of Developmental Disabilities updated the Policy Memorandum on June 2018 with the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This Policy Memorandum defines how each agency's funding sources are coordinated in regards to the time limited and on-going support services. This policy agreement has had a significant impact in changing how services are provided to individuals with the most significant impediments to obtain and maintain their employment.

*(3) the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.*

The DSS Division of Behavioral Health Services is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with mental illness. In December of 2018, the Memorandum of Understanding was updated to help coordinate the services and funding between the Divisions of Behavioral Health Services, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired. This document serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness:

- What services can and should be provided by the Community Mental Health Center,
- What services are available from Vocational Rehabilitation, and
- Which agency pays for the different services.

**i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development.** Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

**(1) Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

**(A) Qualified Personnel Needs.** Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- (i)** the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) has implemented several strategies to ensure trained staff is delivering quality services to applicants and clients with whom division personnel work. Currently one employee is primarily responsible for activities related to the comprehensive system of personnel development.

## Data System of Personnel and Personnel Development

The current system to collect and analyze data related to qualified personnel needs and personnel development consists of two components. The South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) maintains a database of all training activities attended by Division staff including BHR training, seminars, workshops, conferences, and undergraduate and graduate level courses supported by the Division. Individual offices maintain files on educational backgrounds, training activities and goals and plans for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to meet the personnel standards to become a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and receive Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). Supervisors are required to address training needs as a part of the annual employee evaluation. Individual training needs are reported to the Training Officer to be considered in the implementation of results from the annual training needs assessment.

The Division utilizes a web-based management information system (VR FACES) for data tracking of the CSPD for staff. The VR FACES tracks all the employees of the Division, their office structure, race, supervisor, disability, job classification, and other relevant information to the position. The system also tracks if VR Counselors are a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) or their development plan to become a CRC. Input of information is required of individual employees and supervisors with access to all information by the Training Officer and other management staff. This system is efficient for addressing individual training needs as well as projecting for future personnel and training priorities and progress of staff toward meeting CSPD requirements. The following table identifies current staffing patterns for the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

### Total positions FFY 2019

FTE Clerical = 11 Counselor Aides = 7 VR Counselors = 38 Supervisors = 5 Management = 8 Other = 1 Total = 70

Current staffing patterns include the following: Clerical — Secretaries, Senior Secretaries and Administrative Assistants; Support — Counselor Aides; Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors — entry level VR counselors and senior level VR counselors; Supervisors — District Supervisors, Management — Division Director, Assistant Director, VR Specialist, IL Program Specialist, Transition Specialist, Policy Development and Quality Assurance Specialist, Business Specialist and Deaf Services Specialist. The “Other” category refers to one Interpreter.

For FFY 2019, the ratio of counselors compared to applicants and eligible individuals served is an average 102 clients per counselor. The remaining active caseload as of 11/07/2019 was an average of 55 active clients per caseload. The changes in the caseload size are typically impacted by the changes in the economy and unemployment rates. It is the goal of the Division of Rehabilitation Services to remain under the ratio of 80 active clients for each counselor. The Division evaluates the need for a position before replacing it. In previous years, vacant positions have been relocated to other parts of the state with more need or change to a different position type as needed.

*(ii) the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel*

Current Vacancies as of 11/4/2019

- Clerical = 0
- Counselor Aides = 1
- VR Counselors = 1
- Supervisors = 0
- Management = 0
- Other = 0

*(iii) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services anticipates the need to recruit at least 10 Qualified VR Counselors in the next five—year period. This includes vacancies for five vocational rehabilitation counselors who are eligible for retirement in the next five years.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services anticipates the need to recruit 3 clerical positions, 1 counselor aide position, 5 VR counselor positions, and 1 management position over the next 5 years.

- (B) *Personnel Development. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:*
- (i) *a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;*
  - (ii) *the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and*
  - (iii) *the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.*

During FFY 2017 three students graduated from SDSU Masters in VR program and all were on the RSA funding. During FFY 2018 three students graduated from SDSU Masters in VR program and all were on the RSA funding. During FFY 2017 and FFY 2018, the South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Programs hired 4 of their students. The Division has a cooperative agreement with SDSU in providing internship opportunities, participation on their advisory board and recruitment of qualified candidates. The Division has been providing paid internship opportunities for students pursuing their master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation. The Division also offers unpaid internship opportunities for students with other degrees when our offices have space available. The Division works cooperatively with the South Dakota State University in providing professional educational career tracks for individuals with disabilities. Some of these interns are recipients of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program needing the internship as part of their Individual Plan for Employment.

DRAFT

- (2) ***Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel.*** *Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.*

Recruitment of qualified staff including individuals with minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities is accomplished through promoting vacancies at universities in Region VIII with master level programs. The University of Colorado, Montana State University, South Dakota State University and Utah State University are also sources for recruitment of graduates with master's level degrees in vocational rehabilitation counseling. In addition, South Dakota has three State public universities with programs offering master degrees in counseling. These three State Universities have expanded their class locations to other universities and distance learning options. Graduates of the following programs are recruited for vocational rehabilitation counselor openings: Doctorate of Education program options, Counselor of Education and Counseling Practice; School Psychology and Educational Psychology, Mental Health Counseling, or Master of Arts in Counseling or Educational Psychology. Graduates are hired and trained to prepare for the CRCC to meet the highest qualifications in the state for rehabilitation counselors. During the next five years, it is projected that up to 6 counselors will be hired who are graduates of these programs.

The announcements for all state positions including the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions are posted on the State web page. The Division forwards the job openings to the South Dakota professional organizations such as the South Dakota RehabACTion Association. The announcement is also sent to client organizations such as the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities.

Retention and advancement are accomplished through the opportunity for all entry—level vocational rehabilitation counselors to participate in masters level vocational rehabilitation education programs and, once meeting the requirements for "Senior Counselor", receive promotion to this level. Leadership and management training and assignments with senior level management teams assist counselors to prepare for supervisory and administrative positions. Senior rehabilitation counselors are encouraged to apply for management and administrative positions when vacancies occur. Opportunities for promotion are available through announcements of supervisory and management positions provided those candidates meet the requirements for the position.

To address the priority of recruiting individuals with disabilities, BHR has in SD Administrative Rule the requirement that individuals with disabilities are automatically certified applicants to be interviewed. In addition, any eligible applicant for

employment who has been certified severely disabled by a rehabilitation counselor will be certified (eligible to interview) regardless of the ranking the applicant receives compared to other applicants. This ensures individuals who have disabilities have the opportunity to interview and compete for openings in the designated state unit.

- (3) ***Personnel Standards.*** Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:
- (A) standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

Working in conjunction with BHR, the Division has established minimum standards for vocational rehabilitation counselors, senior vocational rehabilitation counselors and district supervisors. These standards are reviewed periodically in light of changing personnel needs, labor market supply and training resources. The Division relies on state standards for secretary, counselor aide and program administrator positions. These are generic job classifications within the BHR system. The Division has established specific knowledge, skills and ability requirements in order for individuals to enter these positions.

Newly hired rehabilitation counselors are preferred to have a degree that will lead towards CRC certification or, if they possess only a bachelor's degree, are encouraged to pursue a master's degree as a condition of employment. Senior rehabilitation counselors are certified through the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor process. The priority in filling counselor vacancies is a master's degree and CRC certification. Eligibility for CRC certification (already possesses a master's degree but no certification) is the next preferred option. Due mostly to lower starting salaries compared to surrounding states, it is necessary to hire individuals with bachelor's degrees for entry—level positions and prefer they become qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors.

**Rehabilitation counselors** are preferred to have a master's degree that will lead towards CRC certification or if they possess only a bachelor's degree, each new hire is encouraged to pursue a master's degree. The Division does support costs associated with pursuit of master's degrees. Funds for support of employees to obtain a master's degree consist of RSA stipends and program 110 funds. Once entry level counselors have accomplished obtaining a master's degree and CRC certification, they can request a promotion to Senior Rehabilitation Counselor.

The **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor** is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) by the Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) and they have demonstrated the ability to work independently in developing Individual Plans for Employment.

Currently all **District Supervisors** meet the requirements for a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Meeting this standard is preferred but not required for a District Supervisor. District Supervisors must have experience in working with people with disabilities, knowledge of the vocational rehabilitation program, and must have the ability to manage a budget, personnel and office operations. If the District Supervisor does not have the credentials of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), then a timeline will be established to obtain the CRC.

- (B) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act as amended and the Vocational Rehabilitation regulations refer to personnel as "Qualified Personnel" and "Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors". The Division has defined these positions as follows: Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor: All Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, District Supervisors and State Office Personnel

- a. meets the standards for Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor;
- b. meets the standards for Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor except is not CRC certified; or
- c. meets the standards for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor; has been employed by the Division as a VR Counselor for a minimum of six months; and has an approved plan to be eligible to take the CRC certification test by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification in eight years. (This employee does receive oversight and monitoring of the non-delegated functions of the VR process.)

The approved plan must be signed by the Supervisor. The plan will include at a minimum one course each semester unless the individual can present extenuating circumstances that are approved by the State Office. As of 11/05/2018, 7 VR Counselors are in a plan for CRC with 1 of them able to take the CRC examination. 20 VR Counselors are Senior VR Counselors and have their CRC.

## Qualified Personnel

The Division is committed to assist vocational rehabilitation counselors to obtain the necessary academic training and professional experience to meet the standards of a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. During FFY 2018 and FFY 2019, 11 Division employees were pursuing their Vocational Rehabilitation master's degree program through Southern University, South Dakota State University or Virginia Commonwealth University. Five individuals graduated during the past year with a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation and received their CRC. Another important strategy is coordination of resources to access the most comprehensive training opportunities. This category of individuals includes 7 Counselor Aides.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services approaches personnel development through a number of avenues. Each employee's current level of education and training, as well as short term and long-term training needs are tracked by supervisors who evaluate methods for addressing these needs annually through the **Accountability & Competency Evaluation (ACE) review system**. Individual training needs assessments are conducted to evaluate current levels of education, understanding of fundamentals of vocational rehabilitation, disability-related issues, professional development and related topics. Self-evaluation and supervisor input and recommendation sections on the ACE assist in assessing needs for training which may be pursued through a number of approaches. The results of the assessments are recorded for individuals, groups of related positions (i.e. rehabilitation counselors, supervisors, managers, clerical etc.) and for the agency. The state's in-service plan and annual updates outline the strategies that the Division has developed to meet the professional or paraprofessional training needs of staff that includes specific training related to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology. This training is delivered through workshops, conferences, video conferencing, one-on-one mentoring and webinars. The Division also utilizes e-mail and web links to disseminate information on research, studies and other relevant information related to disabilities and vocational rehabilitation.

The ACE system allows for ongoing feedback between employees and supervisors by incorporating a self-audit while addressing professionalism, work quality and areas for development as well as areas of strength. Training needs are addressed utilizing a form that not only identifies needed training, but also includes fields for the date the training is scheduled and the date it is attended. BHR workshops are identified under the following headings: supervisory, job enrichment and technology with "other training" and "job-specific skills" included in the document used to track need and attendance. The training officer works with agency supervisors to identify resources for obtaining training in areas related to vocational rehabilitation (including the Rehabilitation Act Amendments, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and RSA regulations), including serving individuals with the most significant disabilities and those of minority backgrounds. Training needs are also identified through input from clients responding to satisfaction surveys and input from the State Rehabilitation Council.

Cooperation with other entities in South Dakota state government such as DLR, Department of Health (DOH), and DOE, ensures that **training opportunities** are available which address topics relevant to the field of rehabilitation. Staff has access to intensive training which applies to serving individuals with disabilities. These conferences and/or seminars are also an opportunity to collaborate with other entities who deliver services to individuals with disabilities. In addition, vocational rehabilitation personnel regularly provide training concerning considerations when working with individuals with disabilities to DOLR employees. Paraprofessional staff (i.e. counselor aides and clerical staff) are offered ongoing training in word processing, other software applications and office related courses such as effective writing, organization skills, etc., through BHR. Courses specific to the vocational rehabilitation management information system and requirements specific to vocational rehabilitation staff are offered through in—service training sessions usually provided by agency specialty staff.

Now more than ever, the Division is aligning resources to better support businesses in South Dakota in their efforts to

hire people with disabilities. The labor force is evolving, and the labor needs of businesses are evolving as well. In order to stay in tune with these changes, the Division will use available training resources such as DLR and available data through the Labor Market Information Center to identify labor market trends and opportunities. DLR offers a Labor Market Information e-Learning Series which is based on a benchmark PowerPoint version provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA). This training is a five-part video series available to all Division staff and addresses workforce information relevant to the 21st century labor force.

Leadership development and capacity building are addressed through distance learning courses as well as agency sponsored training sessions. Assistive technology training is available through **DakotaLink** (state's assistive technology project the State Bureau of Information and Telecommunications (BIT) (for employees with disabilities who utilize assistive technology on the job). Annual training conferences and monthly video conferences address policy changes or training needs that have been identified in the annual training needs assessment.

Cooperative agreements are in place with the state's five Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Projects to provide training to staff on cultural diversity.

**(4) Staff Development.** *Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:*

*(A) a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and*

The Division is committed to assist vocational rehabilitation counselors to obtain the necessary academic training and professional experience to meet the standards of a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. During FFY 2018 and FFY 2019, 11 Division employees were pursuing their Vocational Rehabilitation master's degree program through Southern University, South Dakota State University or Virginia Commonwealth University. Five individuals graduated during the past two years with a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation and received their CRC. Another important strategy is coordination of resources to access the most comprehensive training opportunities.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services approaches personnel development through a number of avenues. Each employee's current level of education and training, as well as short term and long-term training needs are tracked by supervisors who evaluate methods for addressing these needs annually through the Accountability & Competency Evaluation (ACE) review system. Individual training needs assessments are conducted to evaluate current levels of education, understanding of fundamentals of vocational rehabilitation, disability-related issues, professional development and related topics. Self-evaluation and supervisor input and recommendation sections on the ACE assist in assessing needs for training which may be pursued through a number of approaches. The results of the assessments are recorded for individuals, groups of related positions (i.e. rehabilitation counselors, supervisors, managers, clerical etc.) and for the agency.

Training for personnel is delivered through workshops, conferences, video conferencing, one-on-one mentoring and webinars. The Division also utilizes e-mail and web links to disseminate information on research, studies and other relevant information related to disabilities and vocational rehabilitation.

The ACE system allows for ongoing feedback between employees and supervisors by incorporating a self-audit while addressing professionalism, work quality and areas for development as well as areas of strength. Training needs are addressed utilizing a form that not only identifies needed training, but also includes fields for the date the training is scheduled and the date it is attended.

BHR workshops are identified under the following headings: supervisory, job enrichment and technology with "other training" and "job-specific skills" included in the document used to track need and attendance. The training officer works with agency supervisors to identify resources for obtaining training in areas related to vocational rehabilitation (including the Rehabilitation Act Amendments, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and RSA regulations), including serving individuals with the most significant disabilities and those of minority backgrounds. Training needs are also identified through input from clients responding to satisfaction surveys and input from the State Rehabilitation

Council.

Cooperation with other entities in state government such as DLR, DOH, and DOE, ensures that training opportunities are available which address topics relevant to the field of rehabilitation. Staff has access to intensive training which applies to serving individuals with disabilities. These conferences and/or seminars are also an opportunity to collaborate with other entities who deliver services to individuals with disabilities. In addition, vocational rehabilitation personnel regularly provide training concerning considerations when working with individuals with disabilities to DOLR employees. Paraprofessional staff (i.e. counselor aides and clerical staff) are offered ongoing training in word processing, other software applications and office related courses such as effective writing, organization skills, etc., through BHR. Courses specific to the vocational rehabilitation management information system and requirements specific to vocational rehabilitation staff are offered through in-service training sessions usually provided by agency specialty staff. Leadership development and capacity building are addressed through distance learning courses as well as agency sponsored training sessions. Assistive technology training is available through DakotaLink (state's assistive technology project) or BIT (for employees with disabilities who utilize assistive technology on the job). Annual training conferences and monthly video conferences address policy changes or training needs that have been identified in the annual training needs assessment.

Cooperative agreements are in place with the state's five Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Programs to provide training to staff on cultural diversity.

***(B) procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.***

The Division has established liaison relationships and cooperative agreements with the other partner agencies that are included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act and the State Unified Plan. The training officer is on a work group with other agency's training officers to plan joint training initiatives. The Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services as a member of the state's Workforce Investment Council deals with training issues system wide.

Training needs of the state's Native American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs, Centers for Independent Living, the Client Assistance Program and Community Based Rehabilitation Programs are considered in planning annual training activities. Training needs are addressed through a variety of resources including workshops, conferences and seminars hosted by other organizations such as Special Education, DLR, Parent Connection, BHR training, professional organizations, client organizations (SD Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, SD Association of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind of SD, Community Support Providers of South Dakota, SD National Alliance of Mental Illness and the SD Association of the Deaf), and distance learning are examples of sponsors of training activities in which staff participate. Independent study and mentoring by supervisors and senior rehabilitation counselors are other means for meeting individual staff development needs.

The Division does not currently participate in research to disseminate to staff.

***(5) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs. Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.***

The Division does employ an interpreter who is available for all training sessions to clients who are deaf or deaf/blind. If additional interpreters are needed, the Division contracts for these services. Braille, materials on disk and enlarged print are provided to all staff or clients who request alternative formats. The Division has developed fee schedules and vendors to pay for interpreters of foreign languages and Native American interpreters. The Division also purchases foreign language interpreting services such as Linguistica and Interpretalk service for interpreting services through phone services.

***(6) Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.***



Training on IDEA and transition services for students with disabilities is coordinated with the DOE Special Education Program and the State Transition Project. The annual Youth Leadership Forum is planned in collaboration with the Special Education Program, Rehabilitation Services, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Transition Project. The annual Fall Conferences were a combined effort with the Special Education Program, DLR which offered a series of transition presentations.

**j) Statewide Assessment**

*(1) Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:*

The Division of Rehabilitation Service and the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation jointly conducted the "Comprehensive State-wide Needs Assessment" (CSNA) in November 2019. The results of the CSNA were then utilized in the development of the goal and strategies for the FFY 2020 "VR Portion" of the WIOA South Dakota State Unified Plan. As a core partner in the WIOA Unified state Plan, DRS has conducted an assessment of the needs of all individuals with disabilities as per the needs assessment section of the State Unified Plan and the requirements of the revised state plan guidance. Public vocational rehabilitation has collaborated with their WIOA program partners in this assessment and subsequent planning process to assure that the workforce needs of the state to include individuals with disabilities was addressed.

The 2020 Triennial Needs assessment was constructed around the guidelines of the Rehabilitation Services Administration's six steps to assessing and addressing VR Needs. The executive process was developed in collaboration with the DRS Board of Vocational Services and established both goals and process for the CSNA. The summary of the process is below:

1. Review of key data and service narrative points generated from latest available federal program year to establish if there exists any need for revisions of previous CSNA findings.
2. Supplement the CSNA to establish a new baseline of need and strategy regarding Transition services and other needs relative to the new and additional requirements of WIOA.
3. Work directly with the South Dakota Workforce Council to identify the service and program needs expand the infrastructure required by enhanced mission, goals, and strategies of WIOA.
4. Revise in collaboration with the South Dakota Boards (SRCs) the VR Portion of the Unified State Plan to reflect both the new WIOA emphasis, the service needs of South Dakota individuals with disabilities, and finally adjust the goals and strategies as necessary.

Source Reports and Data (Base 2019 CSNA Documentation)

1. DRS Data Summary
2. DRS/SBVI Field Needs Assessment
3. Governor's Task Force On Employing People with Disabilities
4. DRS 2019 Staff CSNA Survey of Needs
5. South Dakota DRS Board Meeting Minutes (2017-19)
6. SBVI/DRS Consumer Satisfaction with Vocational Rehabilitation Services
7. South Dakota Indicator 14 2018 Report/South Dakota Department of Education
8. WIOA Primary Performance Indicators

Source Reports and Data (Key Data and service narrative bridge analysis conducted in 2017/19)

1. DRS: Agency Year End Data (Board Report),
2. Consumer Satisfaction Surveys
3. South Dakota Department of Human Services Mission and Strategic Plan
4. South Dakota Office of Special Education Indicator 14 Results
5. South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation Annual Workforce Reports
6. American Community Survey Data

*(A) with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;*

“Individual with a Most Significant Disability” means an individual with a disability who meets the criteria for having a significant disability and in addition has serious limits in two or more functional capacities (such as, but not limited to, mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome. Individuals who meet the criteria for this Priority Level I category are determined to be individuals with the “Most Significant Disability”. The needs identified for this category were as follows:

**1. Administrative Infrastructure**

The highest weighted category of needs for this group was Administrative Infrastructure. This category of need represents requests from the line of service (consumers/counselors) state leaders (Directors and Administrators) and VR Management for policy enhancements or clarifications, additional resources, or expertise to meet the needs of persons with the most significant disabilities. What ties these needs together is the common request for broader systems change both intra and inter agency. Fueling this category of need is the increasing complexity of need and service required for the most significantly disabled individuals who are leaving sheltered employment. The need for systems enhancement in this service area was expressed by school officials, VR field staff, and management/leadership.

**2. Additional Community Rehabilitation Program/Provider Options**

The needs of this group were predominately focused on the capacity of Vocational Rehabilitation to expand their service capacity to serve persons with the most significant disabilities through the provider network. Again, as in Administrative Infrastructure, pressures on this dimension of service are being compounded by the need to move from sheltered work services and the need to develop a range of longer term supports resources. Deeply rural communities describe the need to find providers with the necessary skills to address the complexities of service needs for this group and to provide an expanded range of vocational options. Finally related to this category is the overall higher incidence of expressed service needs for persons with most significant Behavioral Health disabilities concentrated in rural counties.

**3. Disability Specific Training**

The needs of persons in this group generated requests for more deeply trained provider staff in areas such as autism spectrum, brain injury, and behavioral health. The need for behavioral health specific expertise arose in this group primarily in the context of co-occurring disabilities.

**4. Transitions Cooperative Agreement**

Data and commentary pointed to a need to strengthen the referral track between schools and VR adult services. This also included reaching students and families with education about transitions and adult services. This need is exacerbated by turn over of staff particularly in schools.

**5. Job Development/Placement**

This category revealed perceived needs for more job placement services, job coaches, frequently references specific rural placement challenges. In this category of need are a number of statements that could have also easily been categorized in the Public Outreach/Education as the reporters often included a need for outreach and education from the VR service sector to the employment sector.

**(B) who are minorities;**

DRS reviewed data, inquired through the DRS Board and surveyed staff regarding possible underservice for individuals with disabilities with particular attention on assessing any unmet needs of individuals who are members of minority communities.

	2017	2018	2019	State Pop
White	77%	75%	76%	85%
American Indian or Alaska Native	14%	15%	14%	9%
Black or African American	4%	4%	4%	2%
Two or more races	4%	4%	4%	8%
Asian	1%	1%	1%	1%
Did not self-identify race		1%	1%	

The surveys/interviews conducted for the CSNA surfaced these needs and concerns:

1. **Language Culture and Public Education:** While data revealed a proportionate response to population, narrative responses emphasized the need for staff, employer and public education activities and events that addressed language and communication, cultural sensitivity and training. Also described were immigrant attitudes and fears regarding ‘government services’ and the difficulty previous immigrant experiences presented in referral finding and service. Significantly this set of responses regarding minorities is become more diversified particularly in larger communities such as Sioux Falls with growing immigrant communities. In the data sets many immigrant groups are likely to be statistically underrepresented. Respondents expressed an increased awareness that the success of VR services is contingent on public awareness and willingness to work with minorities and immigrants.
2. **Behavioral Health** and services to very rural communities combined created a perception at different levels of the assessment that individuals in rural communities were likely to be underserved based on the lack of specialized supports. Human services management/leaders expressed a particular desire to strengthen the response for this group. This need interacts in the responses with cultural sensitivity and the desire to better serve Native Americans in the rural reservations in the area of behavioral health.

*(C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;*

The surveys/interviews conducted for the CSNA surfaced these needs and concerns.

1. **Behavioral Health** and services to very rural communities combined created a perception at different levels of the assessment that individuals in rural communities were likely to be underserved based on the lack of specialized supports. Human services management/leaders expressed a particular desire to strengthen the response for this group. This need interacts in the responses with cultural sensitivity and the desire to better serve Native Americans in the rural reservations in the area of behavioral health.
2. **Rural Service Access/Economy:** The underserved and hard to serve frequently live in sparsely populated counties covering large geographic areas and far from metro areas. These deep rural parts of the state tend to impact everyone living there regardless of race and ethnicity. The logistics of service delivery and the economy of scale play a large role and the outcome of this needs assessment pointed toward the need for interagency and public policy/resource to address these seemingly intractable barriers for rural populations.
3. **Transportation Services:** Although transportation scored 4th in the weight of responses, transportation is unquestionable one of the overall most frequent needs distributed across all the sectors of service delivery. Because transportation was often coupled with issues in rural areas, infrastructure needs, and interagency cooperation this service need remains a serious service need for people with disabilities including most significantly disabled.
  - f) **Administrative Infrastructure:** Respondents looked to the agencies to develop more resources and techniques to more effectively respond to the underserved, hard to serve and/or minority groups. Particularly line-of-service respondents felt their tools were limited or scope of service was too constricted to effectively deal with such problems of economy, housing or the basics of subsistence. Interagency cooperative services (particularly in rural areas) were brought up with some frequency.

*(D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services and DLR share a commitment to serving individuals with disabilities in their goals for employment. Over the course of the needs assessment it became clear the partners work together to educate regarding their shared mission providing information and education to the public and employers regarding disability disclosure, workplace accommodations, Universal Design, the ADA, the Workforces Diversity Network of the Black Hills, Business Resource Network, Dakotalink and assistive technology. That said, the needs assessment also pointed to areas that may need attention in the upcoming years.

**Administrative Infrastructure:** The results of surveys predominately placed the focus more on the service delivery system’s capacities and less on discrete individual needs of person’s with disabilities. People described the importance of continued improvement in teamwork, communication and networking between the partners of the network. Continued improvement in data sharing and cross walking to help improve the consumer experience was articulated at leadership and line of service levels. At the DRS Board level there was a recommendation for expanded consumer participation in the administration of the system.

**Skilled Employment Training:** Job carving, customized employment, specific skill training for providing customer service

in the tourism/hotel industries were articulated as needs that might be addressed through Work Force Partners. Respondents requested exploring linkage to support Project skills in serving youth.

**Employer Education and Support:** Respondents discussed the need for more coordinated employer contacts in small communities to avoid duplication. They also promoted education provided to employers to better understand the assets people with disabilities can be to their businesses.

**Employment Related Skills:** Respondents did articulate continuing need for direct employment skills training which historically may have been considered vocational technical skills with shorter specialized skills curriculums in terms of time. This survey surfaced expressions of need for job carving for persons with more complex disabilities and customer service training including soft skills for access to the service sector of employment.

**OJT/Apprenticeship:** Both On-the-Job training and Apprenticeship programs surfaced as needed and valued services that could be enhanced through the Workforce system.

*(E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.*

Youth with disabilities are defined as individuals with disabilities between the age of 14 and 24 (under 25). Students with disabilities are defined as individuals with disabilities between the ages of 16 and under 21 as of July 1st; and enrolled in a secondary school receiving services under an Individual Education Plan or 504 Plan. Students with disabilities can receive Pre-Employment Transition Services without applying for Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) are required, in collaboration with the local educational agencies, to provide, or arrange for the provision of, pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) for all students with disabilities in need of such services without regard to the type of disability from VR funds reserved for this purpose.

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies are required to set aside 15% of the Federal Award each year to provide the Required and Coordination of Pre-Employment Transition Services. The remaining balance can be utilized for Authorized Activities. These categories are explained below. In addition, Pre-ETS may be provided to all students with disabilities, regardless if they have applied for VR services. These students with disabilities who have not applied are recorded as Presumed Eligible (PE) in VRFACES.

#### **Calculation of 15% Reserve Funds for FFY 2020**

- I. Total Number of Students with disabilities in South Dakota  
Using Special Ed data for SFY 2019  
2748 on IEP  
749 on 504 Plans  
3497 Total Students with Disabilities ages 16-21
- II. Determine the number of students with disabilities who need Pre-ETS  
Using VR data, 1234 students with disabilities were in the VR FACES for SFY 2019
- III. Calculate the cost for the provision of Pre-ETS  
\$1,638,380.13 needed for Pre-ETS
- IV. Calculate the amount of funds reserved for the provision of Pre-ETS  
DRS & SBVI FFY 2020 Award is \$11,107,868.00  
15% is \$1,666,180.20
- V. Set Aside Amount  
\$27,800.07

*(2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and*

The term Community Rehabilitation Provider or CRP is falling out of common usage in terms of how we articulate that extension of VR services through professionals outside the formal VR system and whose services are linked with VR by the IPE. What is expressed below combines references to CRP and also language referring to the external provider system that, in formal coordination with VR, provide services to individuals with disabilities in South Dakota.

- **Additional CRP Provider Services:** This category contains frequent references to the need for more providers and more choices for consumers among providers. There were also frequent requests for more providers qualified to provide customized employment services and more placement capacity, particularly outside the metro areas.
- **Behavioral Health Providers:** Behavioral health requests targeted the need for more specialized counseling, and case management services with a strong emphasis in rural areas. Related to this category was the need for resources and investments leading to longer term support providers in rural behavioral health services.
- **Rural Access/Economy:** This category in this context is a straightforward request for more providers in rural areas, and underlying this request is a described need to deal with the rural economy of scale which makes it economically difficult to field placement staff in sparsely populated areas.
- **Administrative Infrastructure:** In the rural provider context this represents a request for individual and collective agencies to use interagency leverage to generate both the design and resources to field more placement and support providers in service to people with disabilities.
- **Transportation:** In this context the requests were related to generating unique provider-based models of the transportation services for persons with disabilities in both rural and urban areas.

*(3) Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*

**Transitions Cooperative Agreement:** Requests for training in bridge programs between VR and Schools in the areas of public policy, parental rights and responsibilities for transition age youth/students. Ongoing tuning of interagency service scopes in cooperative agreements in support of transitioning students.

**Administrative Infrastructure and Services:** The CSNA feedback regarding transitions was a blend of discrete service needs and administrative level issues. In terms of administrative needs, both data and survey comments point the need for ongoing training for professionals in the areas of public policy and systems coordination. Comments also pointed to the need for parents to receive ongoing information and training in assisting their children through the transitions process. These needs are increased in their intensity by continuous personnel changes in the schools as well as the staffing changes that occur in VR offices. The data addressing the numbers in VR School connections suggest the need for the adult systems to focus on refining efforts in this arena

There was also commentary on the need for more consistent supports to level the quality of services across the state and possibly more Work Force partner involvement earlier in the student's transition. Finally, while there was much praise and support for Project Skills, there was also growing support of customized employment and the possibility of enhanced waiver support to customize employment.

**k) Annual Estimates. Describe:**

*(1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.*

According to the US Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey, an estimated 51,003 working age people with disabilities live in South Dakota. This constitutes 10.1% of the state's overall working age population.

During FFY 2020 the Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) estimates that the following outcomes will be accomplished based on prior year's data and service projections:

**Title I, Vocational Rehabilitation** — A total of 3600 eligible clients will be served at a case service cost of \$3,739,276.62.

**Title VI Part B Supported Employment** — A total of 780 eligible clients will be served at a case service cost of \$500,000.00. If these funds are not available, then Title I funds will be used.

*(2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:*

*(A) The VR Program;*

During FFY 2012, the economy began to recover from the recession of the early 2000's, and the division saw a decrease in applications for services following several years of increased applications and requests for services during the recession. Since FFY 2016, the division has seen a gradual decline in the number of applicants per year. Based upon historical trends, it is estimated that the Division will have 2000 new eligible individuals in FFY 2020 with hopes of an increase in applicants and eligible individuals FFY 2021. Efforts are currently being made to increase outreach attempts and increase availability/variety of services to meet the needs of more individuals or those that may have been underserved in the past.

*(B) The Supported Employment Program; and*

Supported employment is when an individual with the most significant disability is working in the community in an integrated setting above minimum wage alongside individuals who do not have disabilities. Supported employment is receiving the training at the job site and having available the necessary ongoing supports to help maintain the employment. The total number of clients for supported employment in FFY2018 was 1115, FFY2019 was 919 clients and estimated for FFY 2020 is 780 clients.

*(C) each priority category, if under an order of selection.*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is not in an order of selection.

*(3) The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and*

All eligible individuals are currently being served.

*(4) The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.*

During FFY 2020 the Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) estimates that the following outcomes will be accomplished based on prior year's data and service projections:

- **Title I, Vocational Rehabilitation** — A total of 3600 eligible clients will be served at a case service cost of \$3,739,276.62.
- **Title VI Part B Supported Employment** — A total of 780 eligible clients will be served at a case service cost of \$500,000.00. If these funds are not available, then Title I funds will be used.

**1) State Goals and Priorities.** *The designated State unit must:*

*(1) Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.*

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division or DRS) mission is to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain good jobs, economic self-sufficiency, personal independence, and full inclusion into the community. To accomplish this mission, the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division have jointly developed the Goals and Priorities listed below. These goals will be developed based on the analysis of the comprehensive statewide assessment; performance of Division's accomplishment in meeting the standards and indicators; and public input.

*(2) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.*

- Goal 1: Students and youth will enter their adult lives capable of self-advocacy with sufficient experience to make choices about work and career, being appropriately supported and living as independently as possible.
- Goal 2: DRS will facilitate the development of a strong statewide community with partnerships with workforce systems, businesses, State Government, tribal systems, schools, service providers and service organizations.
- Goal 3: DRS clients will have access to transportation services needed to obtain and maintain employment.
- Goal 4: The VR Service delivery system will result in enhanced earnings, employee benefits, retention and career advancement for DRS clients.
- Goal 5: DRS clients will have the skills, motivation and supports necessary to make an informed choice for successful daily living, employment, money management, personal and work relationships.

**(3) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:**

These goals were developed based on the analysis of the comprehensive statewide assessment; performance of Division's accomplishment in meeting the standards and indicators; and public input.

**(A) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;**

These goals were developed based on the analysis of the comprehensive statewide assessment; performance of Division's accomplishment in meeting the standards and indicators; and public input.

**(B) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and**

These goals were developed based on the analysis of the comprehensive statewide assessment; performance of Division's accomplishment in meeting the standards and indicators; and public input.

**(C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.**

These goals were developed based on the analysis of the comprehensive statewide assessment; performance of Division's accomplishment in meeting the standards and indicators; and public input.

**m) Order of Selection. Describe:**

**(1) Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:**

**(A) The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is able to serve all individuals and is not in an order of selection.

**(B) The justification for the order.**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is able to serve all individuals and is not in an order of selection.

**(C) The service and outcome goals.**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is able to serve all individuals and is not in an order of selection.

**(D) The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.; and**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is able to serve all individuals and is not in an order of selection.

**(E) How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is able to serve all individuals and is not in an order of selection.

**(2) If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is able to serve all individuals and is not in an order of selection.

**n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds**

**(1) Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.**

The South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) is committed to ensuring that rehabilitation services are made available on a statewide basis to individuals with the most severe disabilities who have not traditionally been competitively employed or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent. These services are available through the Supported Employment Program.

South Dakota's annual allotment of Title VI-B funds is \$300,000. Over 97.5% of the Title VI-B funds are spent for consumer services. The state spends less than 2.5% of its allotment of Title VI-B funds for administrative costs. Supported employment funds are not expended until individuals with disabilities have been determined eligible for the 110 Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Supported Employment services are purchased by the vocational rehabilitation counselors through an authorization system. Expenditures exceeding the Title VI-B allotment are covered with funds from the 110 Program.

The Division will continue to expend over 97.5% of the Title VI-B funds on direct services for supported employment consumers. Supported employment expenditures exceeding the Federal allotment will continue to be paid from the 110 Vocational Rehabilitation funds. Supported employment funds will be authorized for approved providers of the consumer's choice. The amount of funds authorized will be based upon the individual's needs, type of placement, hours and type of employment.

During the next fiscal year, the Division plans to distribute the Title VI-B funds through the fee for service system as traditionally done in previous years. This allows for consumers who have greater needs to receive the level of services necessary to help them obtain supported employment. The Division will continue outcome-based contracts with mental health centers for supported employment services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. This contract model has encouraged the mental health centers to provide supported employment services and is a more accessible method of supported employment services for these consumers. These initiatives will help promote the employment of individuals with the most severe disabilities.

Supported employment clients rehabilitated successfully for FFY 2017 214 clients, FFY 2018 was 200 clients; the estimated number for FFY 2019 is 186 clients and for FFY 2020 173 clients are estimated to receive supported employment services.

*(2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including :*

*(A) the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and*

Extended services will be available for youth with the most significant disabilities for up to 4 years with other entities providing long term supports after that time period. With the addition of Customized Employment as an available service, this will better serve youth that may not have been well-served by more traditional services.

*(B) how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.*

Medicaid waiver funds are available for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities through the public-school system and Medicaid waiver services.

**o) State's Strategies.** *Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):*

*(1) The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.*

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Rehabilitation Services established the strategies to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain good jobs, economic self-sufficiency, personal independence, and full inclusion into the community. The strategies listed below are key steps in accomplishing these goals.

- Strategy 1.1: Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for clients who are attending post-secondary programs.
- Strategy 1.2: Increase and strengthen transition services for eligible students who are exploring their employment future.
- Strategy 1.3: Implement outreach and informed choice strategies to include strategies to enhance effective communication for youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Strategy 1.4: Conduct outreach activities for teachers, students with disabilities and their family members to provide information on vocational rehabilitation services.
- Strategy 1.5: Increase and strengthen transition services for students who are Native Americans or other minorities with disabilities exploring employment future.
- Strategy 1.6: Increase the availability of Pre-Employment Transition Services to school districts across the State.
- Strategy 1.7: Increase the number of applicants and service delivery for transition services for students with disabilities prior to age 16.
- Strategy 2.1: Increase the service capacity and quality of services delivered through the service providers.



- Strategy 2.2: To maintain and expand partnerships with the business community.
- Strategy 2.3: To maintain and expand partnerships with organizations serving Native Americans and other minorities with disabilities.
- Strategy 2.4: To maintain and expand working relationships with entities, agencies, and organizations to enhance the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to underserved rural areas.
- Strategy 2.5: To maintain and expand the extended services for assuring successful employment for supported employment clients.
- Strategy 2.6: State Government will be a model employer in increasing the employment of people with disabilities in State Government.
- Strategy 3.1: Increase knowledge of the available transportation systems and compatibility with the employment systems.
- Strategy 3.2: Promote the participation with disability agencies, local communities and workforce partners to improve transportation services.
- Strategy 3.3: Expand transportation options for Vocational Rehabilitation clients with a focus in rural areas and underserved populations.
- Strategy 4.1: Improve the employment retention of Vocational Rehabilitation clients.
- Strategy 4.2: Increase the knowledge base and understanding of supports and services for people with mental illness by VR staff, providers and businesses.
- Strategy 4.3: Increase awareness and referrals to Benefits Specialists services for VR clients.
- Strategy 4.4: Increase the knowledge base and understanding of the Ticket to Work initiatives for Social Security beneficiaries, VR staff, providers and businesses.
- Strategy 4.5: Increase work experience opportunities for adults with disabilities with a focus on individuals with mental illness, those living in rural areas and underserved populations.
- Strategy 4.6: Continue in the development and increase utilization of vocational skills training for individuals with disabilities in South Dakota.
- Strategy 5.1: Provide training on strategies and tools for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to assist VR clients to reach their employment goal.
- Strategy 5.2: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will utilize counseling strategies and tools for assessing critical strengths and barriers to enhance the client's personal life status and employment skills.
- Strategy 5.3: Expand provider supports for life skills development.
- Strategy 5.4: Increase awareness, supports and the utilization of self-employment as an employment outcome for VR clients.
- 

*(2) How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services makes assistive technology available to our Vocational Rehabilitation clients during each stage of the rehabilitation process. The primary provider of assistive technology in South Dakota is Dakota Link. This provider has AT resource areas throughout the state and they provide AT assessment for VR applications and clients. Many of the DLR job service offices have resource rooms available and have computers with assistive devices for individuals with disabilities.

*(3) The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.*

**Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities**

In 2017, the Census Bureau estimated that 82.3% of South Dakotans were White, 8.6% were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3.6% were Hispanic or Latino, 1.9% were Black or African American and 1.2% were Asian. Native Americans represent the largest minority group in South Dakota. South Dakota has nine reservations with autonomous governing bodies. Collectively they represent the Great Sioux Nation and share a common culture and language. Typically, these reservations are very rural, isolated, with high poverty, and high unemployment rates. Nearly half of all Native Americans in South Dakota live on reservations.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who serve each of the reservation areas.

These VR Counselors meet with local Indian Health Services and tribal government staff to identify potential referrals. Generally, staff work out of tribal offices when meeting with applicants/clients on living on the reservation. Native Americans living on reservations face unique challenges. First, they are eligible for a combination of tribal, federal and state programs to meet their vocational and health care needs. This requires extensive coordination and cooperation between agencies. Secondly, they are faced with significant cultural and economic barriers. Unemployment on South Dakota's reservations varies from 70 % to 89%. There is very little private employment. Most individuals are employed by either tribal or federal governments.

South Dakota is fortunate to have five American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs (AIVRS). A sixth AIVRS has started on 10/1/2019. These programs have greatly improved access to vocational rehabilitation services for those Native Americans served by these AIVRS Programs. The Division has established an on-going working relationship with each of the programs. We have assigned a VR Counselor to work with each Project to assist them in program development. Native American clients living on reservations have the choice of either being served by the AIVRS, the state unit or jointly by both programs. We encourage clients to be served either by the AIVRS Program or jointly by both projects. The AIVRS Programs have a better grasp of the cultural and the service delivery barriers that exist on reservations. The state agency has access to specialized programs and services which are not feasible for an AIVRS Program to maintain. On those reservations where an AIVRS Program exists, the Division does not plan to conduct extensive outreach activities. This function can more effectively be conducted by the AIVRS Programs. Our efforts will be to network with the AIVRS Programs to ensure that Native American clients have access to the full range of vocational rehabilitation services. DRS has a formal cooperative agreement with each AIVRS Programs.

A number of Native American client organizations have developed in the state. The Division works closely with these organizations to identify special needs and strategies to meet these needs. Working in conjunction with the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Division has expanded its financial support for this organization. This organization has local liaisons on each reservation that refer directly to vocational rehabilitation. Both the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Independent Living Council have Native American representation. These individuals provide guidance and consultation to the Division on policy issues affecting Native Americans.

*(4) The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).*

- Strategy 1.1: Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for clients who are attending post-secondary programs.
- Strategy 1.2: Increase and strengthen transition services for eligible students who are exploring their employment future.
- Strategy 1.3: Implement outreach and informed choice strategies to include strategies to enhance effective communication for youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Strategy 1.4: Conduct outreach activities for teachers, students with disabilities and their family members to provide information on vocational rehabilitation services.
- Strategy 1.5: Increase and strengthen transition services for students who are Native Americans or other minorities with disabilities exploring employment future.
- Strategy 1.6: Increase the availability of Pre-Employment Transition Services to school districts across the State.
- Strategy 1.7: Increase the number of applicants and service delivery for transition services for students with disabilities prior to age 16.

*(5) If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.*

- Strategy 2.1: Increase the service capacity and quality of services delivered through the service providers.
- Strategy 2.4: To maintain and expand working relationships with entities, agencies, and organizations to enhance the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to underserved rural areas.
- Strategy 2.5: To maintain and expand the extended services for assuring successful employment for supported employment clients.

- Strategy 4.2: Increase the knowledge base and understanding of supports and services for people with mental illness by VR staff, providers and businesses.
- Strategy 4.3: Increase awareness and referrals to Benefits Specialists services for VR clients.
- Strategy 4.4: Increase the knowledge base and understanding of the Ticket to Work initiatives for Social Security beneficiaries, VR staff, providers and businesses.
- Strategy 5.3: Expand provider supports for life skills development.

*(6) Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.*

- Strategy 4.1: Improve the employment retention of Vocational Rehabilitation clients.
- Strategy 4.2: Increase the knowledge base and understanding of supports and services for people with mental illness by VR staff, providers and businesses.
- Strategy 4.3: Increase awareness and referrals to Benefits Specialists services for VR clients.
- Strategy 4.4: Increase the knowledge base and understanding of the Ticket to Work initiatives for Social Security beneficiaries, VR staff, providers and businesses.
- Strategy 4.5: Increase work experience opportunities for adults with disabilities with a focus on individuals with mental illness, those living in rural areas and underserved populations.
- Strategy 4.6: Continue in the development and increase utilization of vocational skills training for individuals with disabilities in South Dakota.

*(7) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.*

- Strategy 2.4: To maintain and expand working relationships with entities, agencies, and organizations to enhance the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to underserved rural areas.
- Strategy 2.6: State Government will be a model employer in increasing the employment of people with disabilities in State Government.
- Strategy 3.2: Promote the participation with disability agencies, local communities and workforce partners to improve transportation services.

*(8) How the agency's strategies will be used to:*

*(A) achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;*

The Division will work with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation to measure and report progress on goals and priorities, including those needs identified in the statewide needs assessment.

*(B) support innovation and expansion activities; and*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has reserved a budgeted amount for the utilization of the Innovation and Expansion. These funds will be used for the following activities:

- Support the cost of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation. This includes staff cost, accommodations and other direct costs involved in VR Board activities.
- Support the cost of the State-Wide Independent Living Council (SILC). This includes staff cost, accommodations and other direct costs involved in SILC activities.
- Support initiatives approved by the Board of VR to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State.
- Support the functions of the VR Board as described in Section 105 (c) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- Support the establishment, development and improvement of community rehabilitation programs.
- Support improvement in service provision as measured through standards and indicators.
- Support initiatives to assist partners in the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

*(C) overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.*

Overcome Barriers to Equitable Access to and Participation in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs. The Division has been very proactive in overcoming barriers for applicants and clients to access and participate in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs. Follow is a list of key activities implemented to assure equitable access:

- All District Offices are in accessible locations.
- All District Offices have a Z phone available for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Three District Offices have purchased Ubiduo communication devices for office staff to communicate with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- All DRS public meetings are held in locations that are physically accessible to people with disabilities.
- All applicants and clients are informed that alternative formats for information (Braille, diskette, large print, and auxiliary aids and reasonable accommodations) are available upon request for all Division events.
- The Division makes special efforts to provide interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, individuals who speak foreign languages, and individuals who speak Lakota, Dakota or Nakota.
- The Division participates in a "Loss Control Committee". The purpose of this committee is to evaluate the accessibility and safety issues of all area offices.
- The Division's Internet Home Page is accessible for individuals with disabilities who may be using assistive devices to access the information. The home page was evaluated for accessibility utilizing an application called "Bobby Approved".
- The Division has implemented a policy to coordinate referrals for the provision of state-wide assistive technology devices and services to ensure clients can overcome barriers they encounter during the rehabilitation process.
- The Division administers a telecommunication adaptive devices (TAD) program for free distribution of accessible telephone equipment to South Dakota residents with disabilities.
- The Division administers a telecommunication equipment distribution (TED) program for free distribution of accessible telephone equipment to South Dakota residents who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Division staff are working with all partners in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act offices to assure physical access, program access and services access.

**p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. Describe:**

*(1) An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:*

*(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.*

## **Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals**

**Goal 1: Students will enter their adult lives capable of self-advocacy with sufficient experience to make choices about work and career, being appropriately supported and living as independently as possible.**

**Strategy 1.1:** Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for clients who are attending post-secondary programs.

DRS sponsors an annual meeting/training for the South Dakota post-secondary disability coordinators. This training promotes the coordination of services for individuals with disabilities. On May 22, 2019, twenty-one people attended, eight of which were from vocational institutes and college universities. The annual event was held in Chamberlain, SD. A new video was created where the disability coordinators provided tips to students, families and teachers on what to expect for accommodations when they get to post-secondary level.

DRS collaborated with eight post-secondary institutes in the state to host seven "Catch the Wave" events. These are one-day workshops intended for high school students planning to attend post-secondary educational opportunities. Attendance numbers included a total of 665 individuals: South Dakota State University – one-hundred-fifteen (115), Northern State University – one-hundred-seventeen (117), SD School of Mines and Technology and Western Dakota Technical Institute – one-hundred-forty-one (141), Mitchell Technical Institute – one-hundred-twenty (120), Oglala Lakota College – seventy-one (71), and Sinte Gleska University – one-hundred-one (101).

DRS works closely with the Dakota Wesleyan University/Lifequest program in Mitchell. This program provides students with disabilities employment skills classes while also providing a post-secondary opportunity. There have been about 4 students who have participated in 2018-2019.

DRS assisted with funding for 7 students to participate in Augie Access at Augustana University for the 2018-2019 school year. Students with developmental disabilities attend a post-secondary program for three years. DRS also funded a post-secondary program with the Aberdeen School District in coordination with Northern State University.

**Strategy 1.2:** Increase and strengthen transition services for eligible students who are exploring their employment future.

The Division annually sponsors the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). YLF is a five-day event held on a college campus and provided an opportunity for forty-three (43) high school students with disabilities, including members of ethnic and racial minority groups. The YLF assists students with disabilities explore personal leadership, career planning, develop self-advocacy skills and enhance their knowledge of the services and supports available in the transition process.

Sioux Falls DRS staff attend monthly Interagency Transition Council (ITC) meetings that include VR staff, Special Education Professionals, and Community Agency Professionals. Meetings are organized by the TSLP with various topics focusing on providing information and services for transition aged students with disabilities. DRS and the Transition Services Liaison Program (TSLP) staff attended a national transition conference in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 2018.

DRS staff present at school transition classes, high school classes and Independent Living training sessions. These presentations covered information about VR, employment skills, post-secondary opportunities and job searching.

VR Counselors regularly attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and meet with students at the school and/or in their office to discuss post-secondary goals and training needs. Services are set up on an individualized basis for transition students that we are working with. Approximately 54% of individuals applying for VR services are students with disabilities on an IEP. Another 5% are students with disabilities not on an IEP.

VR Counselors utilize the World of Work Inventory (WOWI) along with other interest inventories to help students with disabilities identify their interests, values and aptitudes for certain employment considerations. Additional training WOWI has been scheduled in 3 locations during the fall of 2019.

DRS provides a work experience program, Project Skills, for students with disabilities to try various employment options. A student can receive up to 250 hours of a paid work experience during a school year. During PY18, 438 students with disabilities participated in the Project Skills program.

DRS sponsors 4 Project Search sites in South Dakota where 36 students participate during Program Year 2018. An additional Project Search site was added starting July 2019.

**Strategy 1.3:** Implement outreach and informed choice strategies to include strategies to enhance effective communication for youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.

DRS hosts annually 7 Regional Transition Forums in 7 communities across the state. Approximately 150 people attend these annual forums. The forums provided an opportunity for the participants to learn about and meet the various service providers in the area (ex. Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Benefits Counselors, IL Services, DD Resource Coordinators, Community Support Providers, Assistive Technology Services, etc.).

DRS has provided funding for students to attend the RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology) Summer Camp for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The one-week camp at the RIT campus focuses on informing students that are deaf or hard of hearing about career choices in the medical field.

DRS offices have purchased the UbiDuo communication machines to communicate with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. VR Counselors have also promoted various telecommunication devices for individuals to use for effective communication. DRS also utilizes the Purple application for video relay communication.

**Strategy 1.4:** Conduct outreach activities for teachers, students with disabilities and their family members to provide information on vocational rehabilitation services.

VR Counselors attend Parent Teachers Conferences and other open house events at schools in order to meet with students and parents regarding available VR services. VR also attends the annual Project SEARCH Open House to provide information on VR Services for students participating in the program. DRS presented at the Lighting the Way Conference at Augustana University in Sioux Falls to discuss VR services for youth on the Autism Spectrum. DRS presented at the Special Education Conference and the Adult Education Conferences annually.

DRS sponsors at least 12 transition events (Catch the Wave, Regional Forums) annually through the Transition Services Liaison Project. During these events, DRS provide teachers, students and family members information on VR services.

DRS staff implemented an outreach effort to contact Special Education Directors and 504 Coordinators in the school districts. Out outreach efforts are reported monthly to the State Office.

**Strategy 1.5:** Increase and strengthen transition services for students who are Native Americans or other minorities with disabilities exploring employment future.

DRS sponsors Catch the Wave events annually on at least one of the Native American Reservations. These events are beneficial for students with disabilities when considering attending post-secondary programs. VR Counselors meet directly with school districts on the reservations to promote referrals for DRS for students to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services.

DRS works closely with the 5 Tribal VR programs in South Dakota. Annual meetings are held with the Tribal VR Programs to coordinate services with eligible VR clients. Agenda topics for these annual meetings always include transition services for students with disabilities. DRS provides technical assistance to the Tribes in South Dakota to apply for Tribal VR funding to serve students with disabilities on the Reservations. During Program Year 2018, DRS funded 2 summer initiatives on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

**Strategy 1.6:** Increase the availability of Pre-Employment Transition Services to school districts across the State.

DRS worked closely with TSLP staff to expand the training event called “Let’s Talk About Work”. This past year, there was a total of three (3) training events held throughout South Dakota; Sioux Falls, Aberdeen, and Rapid City. This is a one-day conference designed specifically for students who have a disability and want to learn more about careers and strategies that lead to competitive integrated employment. Over 200 individuals attended this event. During the summer of 2019, DRS provided funded 11 initiatives that focused on Pre-Employment Transition Services to high school students with disabilities.

DRS works closely with LifeScape to support the development of the Pathways to Life program, which provides a transition to adulthood for 18 to 21-year old’s with mild to severe disabilities. Students with the Pathways to Life program participate in the Project Skills work experience program. The curriculum includes Pre-employment: Job-Exploration counseling, social skills, and self-advocacy; Workforce readiness: Attitude, communication, problem-solving, and professionalism; Community readiness: Accessing transportation, shopping, voting, and banking; and Domestic skills: Home care, meal planning/cooking, paying bills, and scheduling appointments. DRS also funds Project Skills work experiences for students at other 18-21 programs such as Sioux Falls Teachwell Transitions, Rapid City Workforce Development, Aberdeen Transition Learning Center, and Sioux Falls Community Campus.

DRS works closely with the Dakota Wesleyan University/LifeQuest program in Mitchell. This program provides students with disabilities employment skills classes while also providing a post-secondary opportunity. There have been about 4 students who have participated in Program Year 2018.

DRS provides work experience for students with disabilities to try various employment options. A student can receive up to 250 hours of a paid work experience during a school year. During PY18, 438 students with disabilities participated in the Project Skills work experience program.

**Strategy 1.7:** Develop strategies to increase transition services for students with disabilities prior to age 16.

DRS and Transition Services Liaison Program (TSLP) staff present transition related information to college students planning to enter the special education field at the Northern State University. Staff presented at one class to 21 college students. DRS, TSLP and other contract staff also present to other high schools on VR services and referrals prior to 16.

TSLP staff collaborated with the State Office of Special Education Programs to provide eight (8) Individual Education Plan (IEP) workshops with a Transition focus to about one-hundred-fifty (150) High School special education teachers across the state. The focus of the training went beyond IEP compliance and included best practice strategies and predictors of post-school success.

TSLP staff hosted the Transition Summer Institute, a conference for high school special education teachers. Seventy (70) educators attended the two-day event that included various transition related topics including WIOA and Pre-employment transition services, IDEA law, charting the life course curriculum, career assessment tools, IEP development and collaboration with state and local agencies and work experience programs for youth in transition.

VR counselors attend IEP meetings at school districts starting as early as age 14. Sioux Falls VR works closely with Southeastern Behavioral Health to provide transition services for students with mental health issues.

DRS staff participated in events targeting students younger than 16 years old. These events consist of Watertown Disability Awareness Day activities for the 5th graders which enhance their understanding of disabilities and the Aberdeen Disability Awareness day.

DRS is a participating agency in a regional consortium with five other states in a grant initiative called the Promise Grant. Utah Vocational Rehabilitation has taken the lead role in this consortium with the other states, North Dakota, Montana, Colorado, South Dakota and Arizona. The Promise Grant started on 10/1/2013 and is a 5-year initiative with South Dakota receiving \$2,260,581 during these 5 years. The Promise Grant is to conduct a study of 2,000 youth receiving Social Security Insurance between the ages of 13 and 16. Currently South Dakota has 628 individuals who meet this requirement.

**Goal 2: A strong statewide community with DRS presence and partnerships with business, service providers, schools, State Government, workforce system and service organizations.**

**Strategy 2.1:** Increase the service capacity and quality of services delivered through the service providers.

DRS meets monthly with WIOA Core Partners to improve collaboration between the partners. DRS also meetings quarterly with other community partners to learn about and discuss topics such as low-income housing, transportation, food stamps, training programs, financial services and resources, etc. to better serve our mutual clients.

DRS has developed a website to post provider resources. This website provides template forms, policies, and past training videos. DRS has also promoted providers to become Certified Employment Support Professionals (CESP) certified by the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) to be reimbursed at a higher reimbursement rate. At the end of PY 2018, there were 94 certified CESP providers.

DRS has funded establishment grants to expand the service capacity of service providers with 18 agencies to add 21 Employment Specialists/Job Coaches available to provide services for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

DRS has begun training on and providing Customized Employment services to meet the needs of individuals with significant barriers to help them to achieve their employment goals. This will increase the groups of people we can serve and provide them a more quality service for their needs than we were able to provide with traditional services.

**Strategy 2.2: Strengthen partnerships with the business community.**

DRS has established a single point-of-contact at the state level to establish and maintain partnerships with businesses by offering customized assistance or support. In addition, DRS contracts with two nonprofit entities in two communities in the state to provide local assistance, support, and training to businesses (form of a business-led model) in which each of them has a full-time executive director. This initiative includes a local business to meet with providers and DRS staff at least 6 times per year.

On July 16, 2019, DRS facilitated a webinar for the South Dakota Retailers Association to businesses on Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining Employees with Disabilities: Vocational Rehabilitation Services Available to Businesses. DRS has personnel in all districts who are members of Human Resources groups and Chamber of Commerce offices as another strategy for outreach and partnership opportunities with businesses. The DRS business specialist, Yankton District supervisor and Aberdeen District supervisor are currently in leadership roles in these organizations.

DRS and the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation sponsor at least 13 events annually for the National Disability Employment Awareness Month events. The events are promoted to business organizations, which also promote the hiring and retention of people with disabilities.

DRS also conducts outreach to businesses by attending business-related events held throughout the state. For example, DRS had a booth during the DLR Registered Apprenticeship event held on April 30, 2019; and had a booth during the State Society of Human Resource Management Annual Conference that was held May 8-10, 2019.

DRS has developed, through small Seed grants, for three business-led initiatives. These initiatives are in Yankton, Brookings and Aberdeen. They promote information to businesses/employers on hiring people with disabilities through various business connections and social media. DRS funds two large initiatives in Sioux Falls and Rapid City with the main purpose of providing training and technical assistance to employers.

DRS is tracking the number of services and supports being provided to employers. During PY 2018, DRS provided services and supports to 173 South Dakota employers.

**Strategy 2.3: Strengthen partnerships with organizations serving Native Americans and other minorities with disabilities.**

VR Counselors actively work with Tribal VR programs in their area and have regular schedules at the Tribal VR offices. Through these connections, VR Counselors maintain active and positive relationships within those communities. DRS continues to meet at least annually with all five Tribal VR Programs. DRS VR Counselors and State Office staff participates in meetings on the Native American Reservations with individual Tribal VR Programs and events such as catch the wave, regional forums or public listening sessions. Each Tribal VR program has a VR Counselor assigned to their programs.

DRS staff have also assisted 2 Tribes in submitting proposals for Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation funding. One of these was approved for funding increasing the number to 6 Tribal VR Programs in South Dakota.



DRS contracted with the Oyate' Circle at the Center for Disabilities in providing disability awareness trainings on the Reservations. All the Division staff attended this training. DRS helped in the Independent Living system receive funding for independent living services on the 9 reservations.

The Aberdeen District staff is a member of the Aberdeen Area Diversity Coalition. The Aberdeen District Supervisor is also the Diversity Chair for the local Society of Human Resource Managers. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work closely with Lutheran Social Services to assist clients with ESL classes, citizenship classes and other ways to increase their language skills to increase their employability.

**Strategy 2.4:** Strengthen working relationships with entities, agencies, and organizations to enhance the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to underserved rural areas.

DRS has developed contacts in rural communities where some have evolved into regular interagency meetings in rural communities.

DRS staff work closely with the Oyate' Circle at the Center for Disabilities in providing disability awareness trainings on the Reservations. DRS staff also participate on the Department of Labor Youth Council that establishes relationships in rural areas to promote education and employment.

**Strategy 2.5:** Strengthen the extended services for assuring successful employment for supported employment clients.

DRS annually sponsors an "Employment and Benefits" workshop in Aberdeen designed for students in transition, parents, teachers, and adult service providers working with youth entering the employment arena. The workshop covers topics such as the age 18-redetermination process, section 301, SSI work incentives, how SSI payments are calculated, and the difference between Title II and Title XVI of the Social Security Act.

DRS local offices work closely with Community Support Providers to strengthen employment outcomes to include job coaching and related services. This partnership also includes development of plans for sustaining employment for individuals who are Social Security recipients.

DRS participates in the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) with the Division of Developmental Disabilities. This initiative includes redefining policies and services to support the extended employment services for people with significant disabilities.

DRS has funded establishment grants to expand the service capacity of service providers with 18 agencies to add 21 Employment Specialists/Job Coaches available to provide services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. DRS has funded grants to Community Support Providers to develop their expertise in Customized Employment. DRS has completed contracts with about half of CSP's in South Dakota to cover training expenses for providers interested in learning about and providing Customized Employment Services in South Dakota. This will allow providers to provide a more individualized service appropriate for individuals with more significant needs that have not been well-served by traditional services.

**Strategy 2.6:** State Government will be a model employer in increasing the employment of people with disabilities in State Government.

DRS has expanded the work experience programs within state government as a strategy for South Dakota's state government becoming a model employer of employing people with disabilities. This initiative provides a paid work experience for individuals with disabilities. A total of 49 individuals have participated in work experiences with various state agencies since July 2014.

**Goal 3:** DRS clients will have greater access to transportation services needed to obtain and maintain employment.

**Strategy 3.1:** Increase knowledge of the current transportation systems and compatibility with the employment systems.

VR staff attend local community interagency meetings to become more aware of transportation services. This information is then shared with new applicants and current clients. This includes information on available transportation options in their local community.

Training on transportation services is available and provided to current VR clients when it relates to their employment goal.

**Strategy 3.2:** Promote the participation of disability agencies and local communities to improve transportation services.

DRS staff participate in mayor's committees in Aberdeen, Brookings, Mitchell, Watertown, Sioux Falls, and Rapid City. The mayor's committees in these communities promote initiatives and strategies to improve the transportation services in their area.

DRS staff participated in an initiative (Care Council) to receive grant funding in Brookings for continued transportation services.

**Strategy 3.3:** Improve the availability of transportation for Vocational Rehabilitation clients.

DRS staff actively network with local transportation systems in their community. Many of these systems are utilized for transportation services for VR clients to obtain/maintain employment. An example is the Aberdeen Area Community Transportation Coordination Committee. DRS funds driver assessments, vehicle modifications and driver training for VR clients when it relates to their Individual Plan for Employment.

Lyft now provides free rides for people with disabilities when they have job interviews. DRS promotes this service in addition of funding transportation services from Lyft for current VR clients.

**Goal 4: A VR Services delivery system that results in enhanced earnings, employee benefits, retention and career advancement for individuals with the most significant disabilities.**

**Strategy 4.1:** Improve the employment retention of Vocational Rehabilitation clients.

VR Counselors work to ensure that prior to closure of a client's VR case, all related services or long-term supports are in place. For individuals who are Social Security recipients, this includes completing the Plan for Sustaining Employment or ensuring that independent living and other needs are met prior to closing a case file. Clients are made aware that they can reach out to the VR Counselor after closure if concerns arise and often, we are able to remedy or assist with concerns without needing to formally open up another case file if contacted to assist someone in maintaining employment.

DRS has established various milestones payment incentives for providers to promote the employment retention of VR clients.

Starting in 2018, the Division of Rehabilitation Services began an initiative to bring Customized Employment services to South Dakota. Customized Employment takes a different approach to services than traditional VR services and encourages the job developer to get to know the job seeker on a much deeper level than is required or needed for most participants. Customized Employment is specifically meant for individuals with the most significant barriers to employment and will likely be appropriate for individuals who have never received VR services due to the assumed significance of this disability or for those who have not been able to reach employment success with traditional VR services in the past. Providing this service will allow DRS to not only serve more individuals with disabilities in South

Dakota but will also help to create good employment scenarios that will be long-term for the individuals receiving the service.

**Strategy 4.2:** Provide specialized support services based upon individual’s unique needs to keep their employment.

DRS sponsors two trainings annually for VR Counselors and Providers to utilize person centered thinking (PCT) tools and strategies to identify each individual’s unique needs and supports for employment. Additional PCT trainings are held by the Community Support Providers and this information is distributed to providers in their area.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has also begun training employment service providers and counselors on Customized Employment that will provide a more in-depth service to individuals with significant barriers to employment that have never received VR services or have not found successful employment with traditional services in the past. Customized Employment includes an in-depth analysis of the person and their environment to determine potential good fits before any job seeking is done allowing the employment specialist to individualize all aspects of the job search to the unique needs of the individual.

**Strategy 4.3:** Strengthen the Benefits Specialists services for VR clients.

The SD Benefits Specialist Network (funded by DRS) provides counseling and advisement services to beneficiaries of SSI and SSDI who are currently working or seeking employment. Benefits Specialists answer questions about how work will impact SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare and other public benefits. Benefits Specialists also provide information about how work incentives can help beneficiaries increase their earnings. During PY 2018, 606 VR clients received services from a Benefits Specialist. The Benefits Specialist Network also provided a series of training sessions in six different communities. This training is for VR Counselors, Community Support Provider staff, Mental Health Center staff, and state agency staff. Training objectives include: understanding the Social Security Administration’s eligibility process; understanding how income from employment impacts eligibility for benefits; identifying and directing individuals to programs providing support; recognizing key SSA work incentives; and dispelling myths and encouraging people with disabilities to work. There were 106 individuals who attended these training sessions.

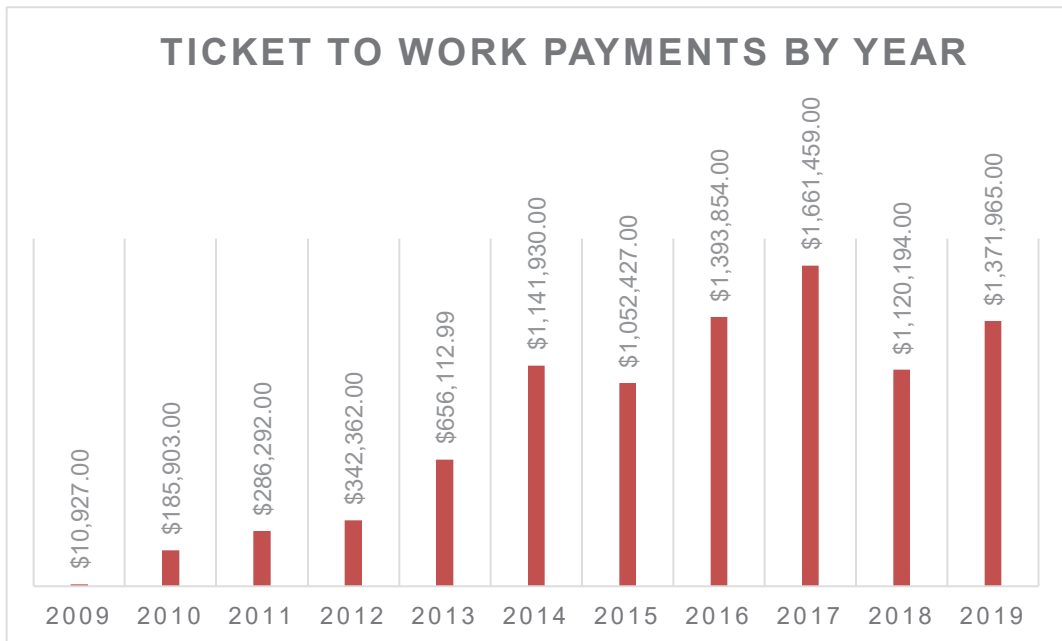
DRS has increased the number of Benefits Specialists with 2 additional contract staff. This increased the total Benefits Specialist to 7.

**Strategy 4.4:** Increase the utilization of the Ticket to Work initiatives for Social Security beneficiaries.

DRS funds incentives to providers when working with individuals who are Social Security beneficiaries. Below is the chart showing the increase in the utilization of the Ticket to Work initiative.

**Strategy 4.5:** Increase work experience opportunities for adults with disabilities.

DRS utilizes a work experience program titled “Employment Skills” where adults or

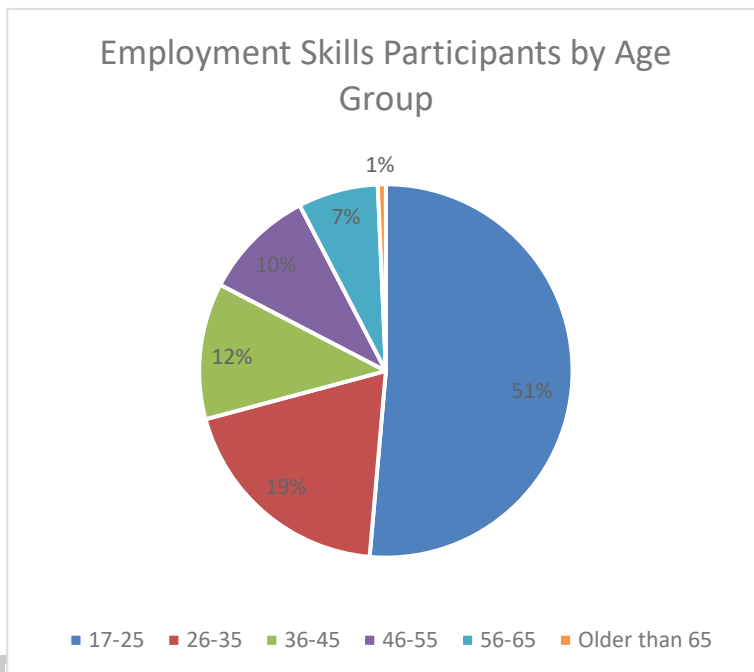


students who are not on an Individual Education Plan can receive up to 250 hours of paid work experience. In FFY 18, 147 individuals participated in this program.

DRS also coordinates with DLR work experience programs to provide job coaching and other support services to individuals in need of additional services for successful employment beyond those that can be provided through the DLR program. This partnership gives consumers the “best of both worlds” from each program expanding their success in these kinds of experiences.

**Strategy 4.6:** Promote the development & utilization of vocational skills training for individuals in South Dakota.

DRS works closely with the four technical institutes in South Dakota and other vocational skills training programs. In FFY 2018, 67 VR clients were receiving vocational skills training from the technical institutes.



With new reporting requirements, DRS has started tracking Measurable Skills Gains as well as Credential Attainment for clients to get a more accurate look at progress and benefit from services beyond a successful closure with employment. With this, there is a requirement to get documentation verifying progress, which staff are in the process of negotiating with schools and figuring out with consumers. At this time, number are not reflective of actual MSG’s and Credentials Attained due to difficulties in receiving necessary documentation to report on this progress.

DRS utilizes other vocational skills training programs typically through Career Learning Centers and other providers. These programs consist of programs such as computer training, medical transcriptionist services, office operations and other skill-based training programs.

DRS has revised the On the Job training procedures to increase utilization of vocational skills training directly from employers. DRS also works closely with DLR on the Registered Apprenticeship program.

**Goal 5: DRS clients will have the skills, motivation and supports necessary to make an informed choice for successful daily living, employment, money management, personal and work relationships.**

**Strategy 5.1:** Implement strategies and tools for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in assessing the motivational state of VR clients as to their desire for employment.

DRS has provided extensive Motivational Interviewing (MI) training for VR Counselors to provide them the skills to assess their clients. MI is discussed during regular staff meetings to ensure that VR Counselors are utilizing the tools and assessing motivation during all phases in the VR process.

In 2019, DRS contracted with Trevor Manthy to provide MI Training for beginners (an initial training as well as follow up training) as well as a refresher training for more seasoned staff. In total, 69 DRS staff received training on MI practices and concepts.

Strategy 5.2: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will utilize strategies and tools for assessing critical strengths and deficits in the client’s personal life status and skills.

DRS has provided extensive person center thinking (PCT) training for VR Counselors to provide them the skills to assess their clients. DRS now sponsors two PCT trainings annually for VR Counselors and providers. Additional PCT trainings sponsored by other agencies are shared with staff and providers. DRS also utilizes tools and information from the “Supporting Real Lives Across the Lifespan” folder developed by Developmental Disabilities.

**Strategy 5.3: Develop potential provider supports for life skills development.**

DRS has sponsored small grants to providers to provide employment and independent living skills training. These initiatives have utilized curriculum such as “Skills to Pay the Bills” for young adults. VR Counselors also work closely with the two Centers for Independent Living in providing life skills services for eligible VR clients.

During the 2019 summer, DRS offered funding for the Pre-ETS Initiative offering training opportunities for high school students with disabilities focusing on training in workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, instruction in self-advocacy, and information about VR services and other programs available to assist individuals with disabilities. A total of 11 entities were involved in this. Altogether, a total of 107 participants or students were involved in the trainings, 64 are currently receiving services VR, and 43 are potentially eligible for VR services.

**Strategy 5.4: Increase the utilization of self-employment as an employment outcome for VR clients.**

DRS has developed a policy on self-employment and has provided training for VR Counselors to promote the utilization of self-employment. This training promoted ways to best assist VR clients who have a goal of operating a business. This has been promoted further in rural areas and discussions on identifying various generational things (including on the reservations) that may be happening where a next generation could take over and continue to provide a meaningful service to the community. DRS has been successful in working with the Oglala Sioux Tribal VR Program in jointly funding a number of self-employment cases on the Pine Ridge Reservation

**(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.**

The state unemployment rate affects achievement of goals and priorities. When the unemployment rate is high, there is an increase in applicants for services as well as increased difficulty with finding competitive employment.

**(2) An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:**

**(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.**

In June 2015, the Division implemented a 25% higher reimbursement rate to supported employment service providers who obtain a Certified Employment Support Professional credentials. The Division has also provided establishment grants to expand the capacity for supported employment services. In addition, the Division has been sponsoring trainings to help service providers improve their service ability and maintain their continued education credits.

In the fall of 2018, the Division implemented a new initiative to develop expertise in customized employment. The Division contracted with Griffin-Hammis Associates to provide training and technical assistance to Community Support Providers (CSP) and the Division. Community Support Providers will receive 40 hours of training using the curriculum on Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators. The initiative is divided into 4 phases allowing comprehensive training for all CSPs and the VR Counselor that works with the agency.

**(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.**

The state’s low unemployment rate affects achievement of goals and priorities. When the unemployment rate is high, there is an increase in applicants for services as well as increased difficulty with finding competitive employment. Staff turnover with Employment Specialists continues to impede the supported employment program. With the establishment grant initiative, 12 new additional Employment Specialists were hired by CSPs. During the following 4 years, these positions have a turnover of two times.

**(3) The VR program’s performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.**

There are six primary indicators of performance under section 116 of WIOA:

1. **Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit:** The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit);
  - a. 65.48% of participants were in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
2. **Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit:** The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit);
  - a. 58.18% of participants were in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. **Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit:** The median earnings of participants who were in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
  - a. For program year 18, the median earnings of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit was \$2,676.29.
4. **Credential Attainment:** The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program;
  - a. In program year 18, the Division recorded 13.42% of participants attained postsecondary credentials or a secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. The Division is making ongoing efforts to train staff for better understanding of credential attainment and obtaining documentation of participant progress. It is expected that this percentage will increase with improved data collection.
5. **Measurable Skill Gains:** The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment.
  - a. The Division recorded 21.85% of participants obtained measurable skill gains leading to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment. This percentage is expected to increase in conjunction with staff training.
6. **Effectiveness in Serving Employers:** addresses the program’s efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time.
  - a. The Division provided services to 125 employers in program year 17. This increased to 173 in program year 2018. Of these, 23 were repeat customers from the previous program year.

*(4) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.*

Section 101 (a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended requires the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to reserve and use a portion of the funds for:

1. The development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State; and

2. To support the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Prior to the 1998 Amendments of the Rehabilitation Act, the Division of Rehabilitation Services was required to utilize 1.5% of the Federal 110 funds for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) activities. The Division continues to use these funds at an increased percentage. During the Program Year 2018 , \$96,696 was spent for I&E activities through a contract with the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities to provide staff support for the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Independent Living Council. The contract provides for the following:

- Support staff for the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council contracted through the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. This includes wages and benefits for .9 FTE Board support staff.
- Operational costs, equipment and travel for support staff and office supplies paid through the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities.
- Costs involved in having members of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Statewide Independent Living Council attend meetings/training.
- Strategic Planning Initiatives approved by the Board of VR to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services budgets approximately \$200,286 annually for support services and strategic planning activities for both the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

**q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.** *Include the following:*

*(1) The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.*

Ensuring that quality supported employment (SE) services are being provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities in South Dakota is a priority for the Division. Quality is measured by more than just the number of individuals who receive supported employment services. Quality also incorporates key values such as self-determinism; choice; person-centered supports; quality of life; and full inclusion.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) is committed to providing quality supported employment services to individuals with disabilities. Providing training to VR counselors and supported employment service providers is essential to improving services. The Division currently contracts with the South Dakota Center for Disabilities to provide comprehensive training for supported employment service providers in South Dakota.

In June 2015, the Division implemented a 25% higher reimbursement rate to supported employment service providers who obtain a Certified Employment Support Professional credentials. In addition, the Division has been sponsoring trainings to help service providers improve their service ability and maintain their continued education credits.

In September of 2018, the Division also began contracting with Griffin-Hammis Associates to provide Customized Employment training to Division staff and employment service providers to increase knowledge and expertise in service created to better meet the needs of individuals with more significant limitations to employment. This will make available a new kind of service that will allow staff to personalize the job search and placement process more to increase successful outcomes for those who could not be served or who were not well served by more traditional services in the past.

*(2) The timing of transition to extended services.*

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency provides time-limited services needed to support an individual in employment. Vocational Rehabilitation can fund a maximum of 24 months of job coaching and follow-along services unless the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) indicates that more than 24 months of services are necessary for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transitioning to extended services. For individuals who are youth with intellectual disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation can fund a maximum of 48 months of job coaching and follow-along services.

Prior to the purchase of supported employment services, the need for the services, the appropriate extended services and funding, and the appropriate agency agreeing to provide the services are established and identified on the IPE. The transition to the extended services (long term funding source) occurs when 18 months of job coaching and follow along services have been provided or earlier if the following three requirements are met:

1. The individual's employment is stable;
2. The individual has met the hourly goal of employment established in the IPE; and
3. The extended services are immediate without any interruption in the provision of the ongoing services to maintain employment.

If the IPE indicates that more than 24 months of services are necessary for the individual to achieve job stability, the time-limited services of job coaching and follow along can exceed 24 months. After the individual has transitioned to extended employment, the individual must maintain employment for at least 90 days before the consumer's case is a successful closure

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