

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER ENTITIES REGARDING THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND EXTENDED SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

DVR staff and managers conducted a Long Term Support Summit three years ago in cooperation with the Wisconsin APSE conference. Following this, the state Medicaid agency, through its Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, sponsored a Managed Care Employment Taskforce whose charge is to keep integrated employment for persons with disabilities a high priority as Wisconsin's long term care system converts from a county based approach to regional managed care organizations (MCO's).

The various committees of the Taskforce obtained information from other states on conversion from sheltered to integrated supported employment, effective methods of purchasing long-term support services, use of work incentives to support integrated employment and other topics to prepare recommendations for statewide systems change. DVR leadership was actively involved on the Taskforce and sees the Taskforce recommendations as a viable blueprint to expand supported employment opportunities and services in Wisconsin.

In FY 2009 DVR developed and published policy, technical specifications, a fee schedule, and guidance for the delivery of supported employment and extended employment services (e.g., long term employment supports) to its website for staff use.

During the FFY09 and FFY 10, DVR is co-funding intensive supported employment training for 75 individuals (both VR and community rehabilitation program staff) from various areas of the state. The training is aimed at improving the quality and capacity of supported employment providers statewide. The training is provided by the Long Term Care Division of the Department of Health Services in cooperation with DVR and APSE.

A local project has led to new strategies and replication efforts. In Dane County, DVR partnered with the Development Disabilities Services program to develop supported "self employment". The provider agency is now providing training statewide to replicate the project in other areas of the state. Representatives from this project consulted with DVR policy staff who will create a supported self employment guide for DVR staff use in FFY10.

DVR continues its collaborative agreement with the PACT program. PACT is the original Assertive Community Treatment Program and consults in the development of ACT programs nationwide and internationally. PACT is a unit of the state Mendota Mental Health Institute. DVR provides staff funding for licensed VR counselors at PACT who work as mental health supported employment specialists. The PACT VR counselors have access to DVR's case management system and work under the direction of a DVR counselor. This cost-effective partnership will continue in FFY10.

During FFY09 and continuing into FFY10, DVR is piloting a unique Health Care training and employment partnership in Rock County, WI. Mercy Health Systems is partnering with Blackhawk Technical College, the Southwest Workforce Development Board, Rock County Developmental Disabilities Board, DVR and local CRP's to provide Health Care Assistant training and internships for DVR consumers with the most significant disabilities.

For youth in transition from high school in need of supported employment services, DVR has a tri-agency Interagency Agreement that defines necessary relationships, policies and procedures, between the DVR, the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health Services (DHS). The MOU creates common understanding, and provides clarification of roles and responsibilities of staff within school districts, DVR and for entities contracting with DHS regarding students with disabilities, including mental health and substance abuse issues, who have identified long term needs in employment and independent living. Another primary goal of the Interagency Agreement is to establish collaborative efforts regarding services that will ultimately improve employment outcomes for students with disabilities who are eligible for and/or enrolled in an existing home and community-based waiver program, Family Care, or Mental Health/Substance Abuse services. The agreement is published on the DVR public website.

Provision of Extended Services

Wisconsin DVR has, through its local offices, working relationships regarding extended services for supported employment with most of the counties in the state. Most counties have processes in place to assure extended services for individuals served in supported employment. These procedures have been formulated locally and therefore are unique to each county and local VR office in terms of resources and opportunities. The local activities and working relationships have significantly increased the number of consumers placed successfully in supported employment in Wisconsin during the last decade.

The increased demand for supported employment coupled with significant budget reductions across public sectors and agencies has forced some counties to reduce and/or limit the number of consumers for which they agree to provide extended services while in supported employment.

To address these problems Wisconsin DVR provides policy guidance to staff to help them identify new and appropriate extended support resources. This guidance has been circulated statewide and has improved compliance with the Rehabilitation Act. The guidance paper includes a decision tree to enable counselors and their local partners to assure that individuals have adequate opportunities for community work experiences to assess their ongoing support needs and to explore all possible sources of ongoing support.

DVR anticipates that the current environment for supported employment and extended services will greatly improve in the near future as the Wisconsin Medicaid agency deploys the new infrastructure for the funding of long-term community living and employment supports. The new infrastructure is called "Family Care". Family Care is designed to provide funding for long term employment supports and also to eliminate wait lists for such supports. Since 2006, DVR has also successfully negotiated extended services funding agreements in Family Care counties where wait lists for supported employment services have been successfully eliminated. Local agreements continue to be developed as the expansion of Family Care counties continues. The local agreements will be compiled and analyzed in FY 2010 to determine common elements and practice