

# WRC Recommendation #1

The Wisconsin state budget includes language to honor its commitment (maintenance of effort) to provide a consistent level of funding for DVR services in Wisconsin. We recommend that the DVR Administrator provide updates to our council and the state independent living center so we can update the organizations we represent.

# WRC Recommendation #1 – DSU Response

The biennial budget language instructs the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to submit a SFY 2011-2013 budget with GPR funding at a level equal to \$15,060,100 which is the amount allocated in SFY '09, prior to the current biennial reductions. This will assist in meeting the Division's Maintenance of Effort funding level beginning in SFY '11. The instruction is on page 672 of 2009 Wisconsin Act 28 section 9156 2 (c)(a) and 2(c) (b) nonstatutory provisions; Workforce Development

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2009/data/acts/09Act28.pdf> .

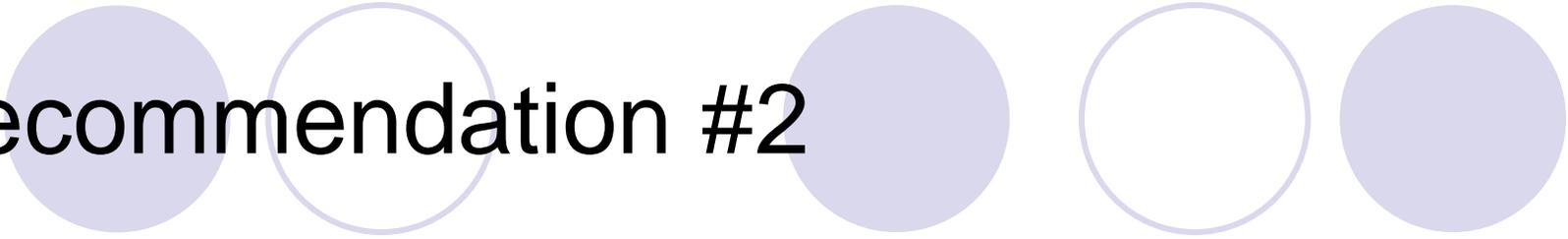
The DVR Administrator will provide updates at the council meetings on the restoration of GPR funding levels.

# WRC Recommendation #1 – Update

Current recommendation: Continue to monitor  
Maintenance of Effort

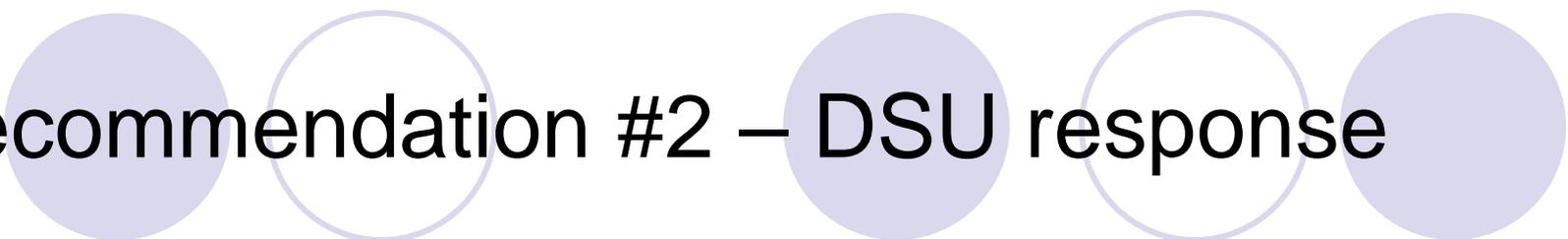
Council Consensus:

- Retain this recommendation, as is?
- Update the wording of the recommendation?
- Remove the recommendation?



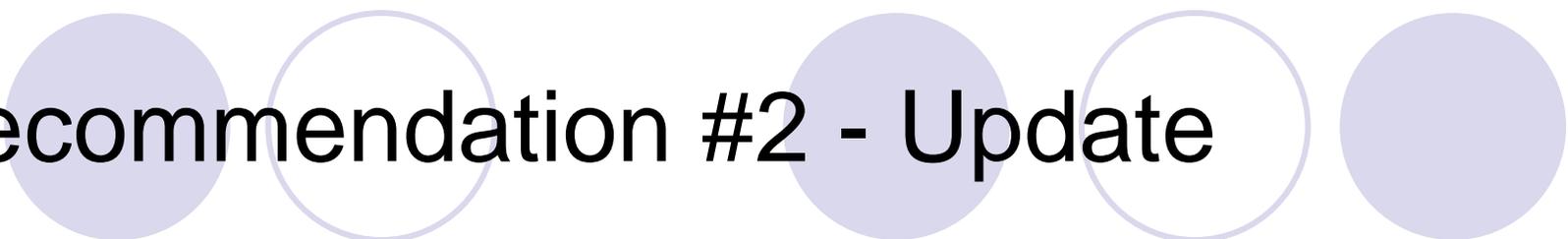
## Recommendation #2

We recommend that the DVR Administrator provide our council with quarterly updates on the wait list numbers.



## Recommendation #2 – DSU response

The DVR Administrator participates in quarterly Council meetings and will continue to provide quarterly updates on management of the DVR caseload and wait list relative to the agency's human and fiscal resources (i.e., case aids budget and staffing levels).



# Recommendation #2 - Update

- Council:
- Continue, as is?
- Revise?
- Discontinue?



# Recommendation #3

WDVR employment outcomes have been lower in recent years and we understand that there may be multiple factors for the reduction. We will be using our tools of public comment, panel discussions, and surveys to seek solutions. We request that DVR provide us with updates on the strategies they are using so we do not duplicate their efforts.

Areas of concern include:

- a. Job development services
- b. Communication between DVR and vendors
- c. Training for staff and vendors on new trends in assessment and job development
- d. Use and timing of assessments
- e. Vendor complaint that clients are not “job ready”

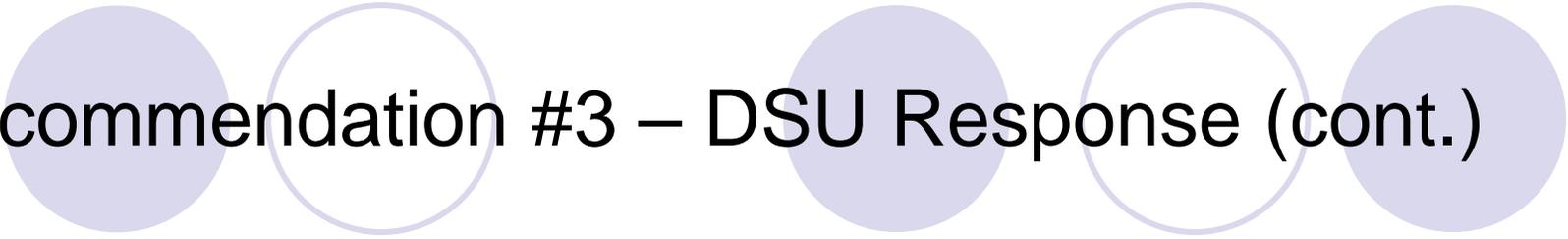
# Recommendation #3 – DSU Response

DVR is also concerned with the reduction in employment outcomes and appreciates the WRC's partnership in seeking solutions. DVR agrees to keep the Council updated on strategies used to address positively impact employment outcomes. Recent strategies that respond to the WRC's areas of concern include:

DVR realizes the importance of the comprehensive assessment in the VR process. Through better understanding consumers and their needs, DVR can better assist them in gaining appropriate employment. DVR is piloting during FFYs '10 and '11 the use of the "employment support plan (ESP)" as a pre-IPE job-readiness assessment tool for consumers who apply for DVR services with the goal of seeking employment.

In addition, staff training is being developed for FFY 2011 on how to best incorporate assessment into the IPE development, as well as how assessments can be best used to identify and address consumers' needs throughout the VR process.

During FFY 2010, DVR staff participated with vendors in MIG-sponsored trainings on promising job development practices and strategies for consumers in need of extended employment supports. During FFY 2011 DVR staff will continue to participate with vendor partners in MIG-sponsored trainings. In addition, DVR will utilize TACE technical assistance to identify and provide information and training to staff and vendor partners on additional promising practices to support consumers in their successful job search

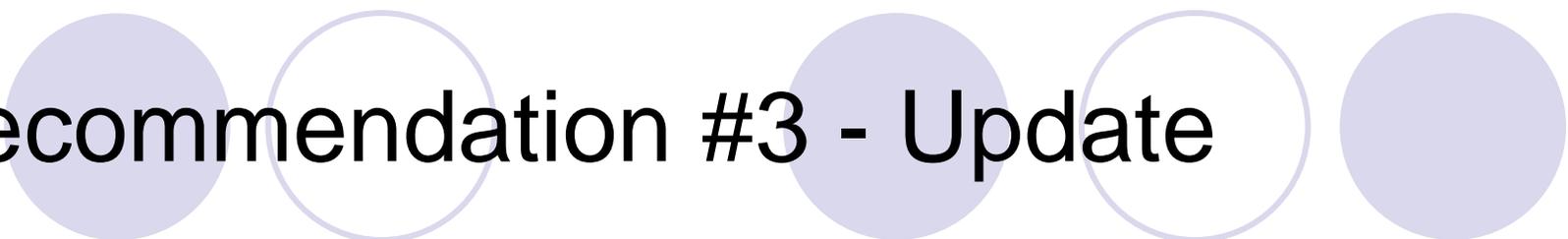


## Recommendation #3 – DSU Response (cont.)

DVR is in the process of improving its quality assurance process for vendors and services provided by vendors. The new process will include competency assurances, outcome standards, and consumer satisfaction measures. During April 2010, the new process was shared with vendors at DVR's 2010 Vendor Training and subsequently implemented. The annual vendor trainings are designed to deliver consistent messages, set DVR standards for vendors, and provide a forum for open communication between service vendors and DVR.

Utilizing ARRA funds, DVR is working to increase employment outcomes for "job ready" consumers through the OJT Hiring Initiative and State OJT LTE Internships. These two initiatives have proven successful in assisting DVR consumers in obtaining necessary job skills training, work experience as well as employment.

Relative to vendor complaints that consumers are not job ready, DVR will continue case review efforts to ensure that DVR consumers in "job ready" status meet the RSA definition of "ready for employment". Closer monitoring of consumer placement into job ready status allows DVR to accurately monitor job ready consumers, refer these consumers appropriately to vendors for job development services, and match them more efficiently and effectively to job openings



## Recommendation #3 - Update

- WRC focus of 2011 is exploring how to increase employment outcomes.
- This recommendation could be retained or updated to include recent WRC discussions.
- We also noted that the RSA report cited concerns about vendor performance. This could be a separate area or incorporated.

# Increasing outcomes by addressing job readiness & the expectations of vendors

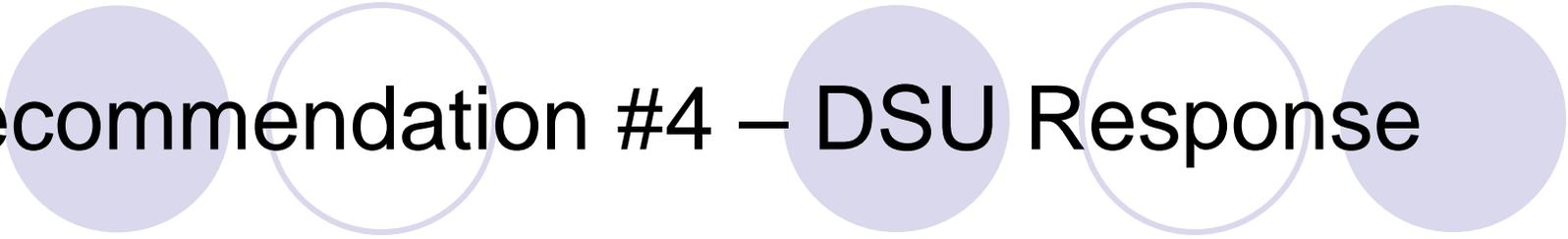
- Instruction for VR consumers on how to describe their disability to employers
- Instruction for VR consumers on understanding and explaining their accommodation needs to employers
- Assess and provide instruction on deficits in workplace etiquette or soft skills
- Emphasis on what the consumer must do to become a qualified candidate (modes)



## Recommendation #4

Employment outcomes for SSI/DI recipients appear to have lower earnings and hours than the general VR population.

We recommend that DVR develop methods to increase consumer awareness of work incentives and Partnership Plus options and evaluate the impact on outcomes for SSI/DI recipients.



## Recommendation #4 – DSU Response

DVR is promoting SSA/CESSI sponsored Partnership Plus VR and EN trainings (national web-based and possible on-site in Wisconsin). During the 2010 vendor training sessions DVR recruited 72 vendors who are interested in learning more about becoming an Employment Network. DVR forwarded the information to CESSI and offered to help host an SSA/CESSI training and recruitment event in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's Partnership Plus model of service delivery is designed to strengthen VR and employment network partnerships and consumer benefit from the SSA Ticket to Work.

DVR will conduct an annual refresher video conference on work incentives for DVR staff in 2010.

DVR's trainings and efforts to increase Wisconsin's Employment Network capacity to serve SSI/SSDI Ticket participants during FFY 2010 and 2011 are aimed at improving the availability of Ticket funding to support extended employment services.

## Recommendation #4 – DSU Response (cont)

DVR 2009 data outcomes in working with SSI/SSDI beneficiaries showed the following:

Those SSI/DI participants who achieved an employment outcome without extended employment supports averaged \$10.13/hr in earnings and worked an average of 19 hours per week. Those SSI/DI participants who achieved an employment outcome with extended employment supports had average earnings of \$7.68/hr. and worked an average of 14 hours per week. These results compare to non-SSI/DI participants achieving an employment outcome during the same period who averaged \$13.23/hr in earnings and 33 hours of work per week.

Many SSI/SSDI recipients continue to seek employment at levels that supplement their cash benefits, but do not jeopardize their Social Security benefits or federal health care coverage. The Social Security Administration has been exploring new methods to encourage recipients to consider employment at levels beyond the threshold of maintaining their benefits.

For example, the Wisconsin SSDI Employment Pilot benefit offset in 2008 allowed SSI/SSDI recipients to have their benefits reduced \$1.00 for every \$2.00 earned over the allowable earnings threshold. This allows for higher earnings and a more gradual reduction of cash benefits beyond the earnings threshold versus a full loss of cash benefits under the regular SSDI rules. Wisconsin' pilot program has transitioned into the national Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND) project.



## Recommendation #4 – DSU Response (cont)

In addition, the Social Security Administration is considering a new work incentive that will affect beneficiaries who receive SSDI called Work Incentive Simplifications. This will make work incentives easier to explain and understand and encourage SSDI beneficiaries to return to work without the fear of permanent loss of benefits and Medicare. While Wisconsin VR is supportive of major changes in Social Security work disincentives that promote increased earnings, it may be several years before this new program is available.

For FFY 2011, DVR anticipates that increased work incentive and Partnership Plus training, an increase in the availability of Wisconsin ENs to provide extended employment services, and the Wisconsin involvement in the BOND project will improve the number of SSI/DI beneficiaries entering work at comparable in wages and weekly hours to the general DVR population. DVR will continue to track and compare the employment outcomes, wages and hours for SSI/DI beneficiaries.



# Recommendation #4 - Update

- Council Consensus:
- Should this continue to be a recommendation?
- Should it be revised?
- Is the goal of this recommendation being addressed in other recommendations?

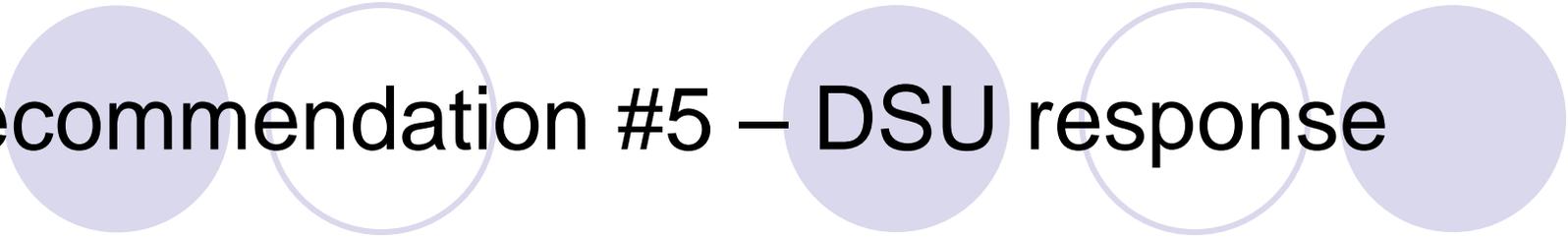


# Recommendation #5

Public comment has raised concerns that the state's transition to a managed care long term care system (Family Care/IRIS) will further reduce access to supported employment long term support

Public comment has also indicated that DVR response to supported employment varies in different areas of the state.

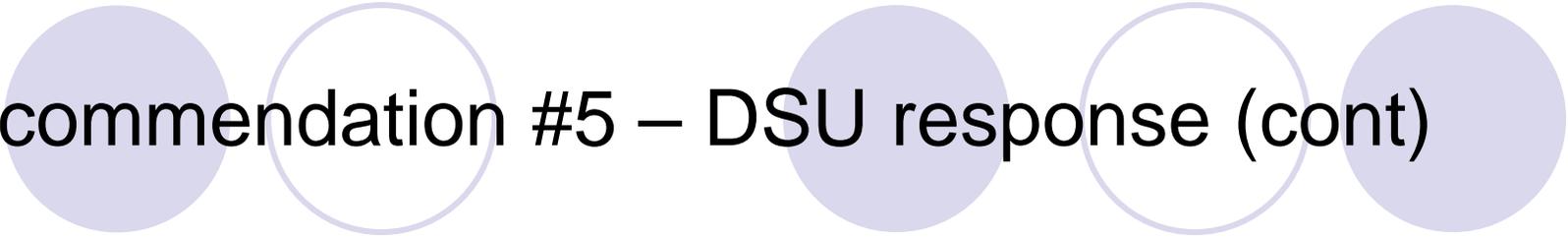
We recommend that DVR provide training to staff on supported employment/customized employment options when working with Family Care and, more importantly, when Family Care services are not available to individual consumers.



## Recommendation #5 – DSU response

To date, DVR's experience with the Family Care managed system is that access to extended employment supports has been increased in counties engaged in Family Care service delivery. However, DVR is aware that Family Care eligibility standards may become more stringent and may exclude some individuals served by DVR who are in need of extended employment supports.

During FFY10 and FFY11 WDVR will continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Health Services and Medicaid Infrastructure Grant programs to increase statewide supported employment resources. Efforts will focus on increasing access to Supported Employment Services (SES) as well as Long Term Employment Supports (LTES), and financial coordination of these services among funding sources such as Wisconsin's county-based Family Care services. To maximize the collaboration and coordination of interagency long term employment supports, in FFY 2011, the Interagency Agreement between DVR, DPI, and DHS will be expanded to include the Adult Long Term Care system.



## Recommendation #5 – DSU response (cont)

During FFY 2011 DVR staff will continue to participate with vendor partners in MIG-sponsored trainings. In addition, DVR will utilize TACE technical assistance to identify and provide information and training to staff and vendor partners on additional promising practices to support consumers in their successful job search and in establishing natural supports with their employer.

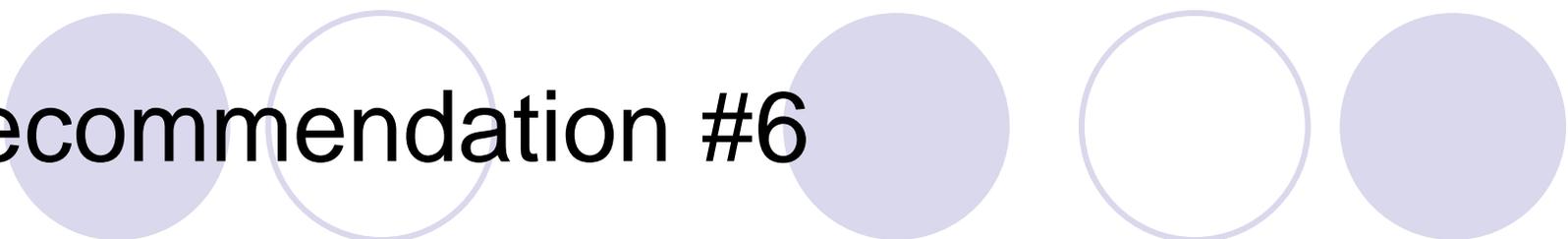
Training activities will also aim to increase the number of supported employment fee-for-service providers in targeted areas of the State who provide integrated community-based SES and LTES in lieu of facility-based extended employment.

As a supplemental or alternative funding source for LTES, the WDVR will continue to utilize the “Partnership Plus” opportunities in the revised Ticket to Work (TTW) regulations to promote funding opportunities to consumers utilizing ENs for on-going employment supports following their successful VR case closure.



## Recommendation #5 - Update

- Given the uncertainty of Family Care, VR will need to emphasize Partnership Plus and/or Customized Employment as means of connecting individuals to employment when long term supports are not available to them.

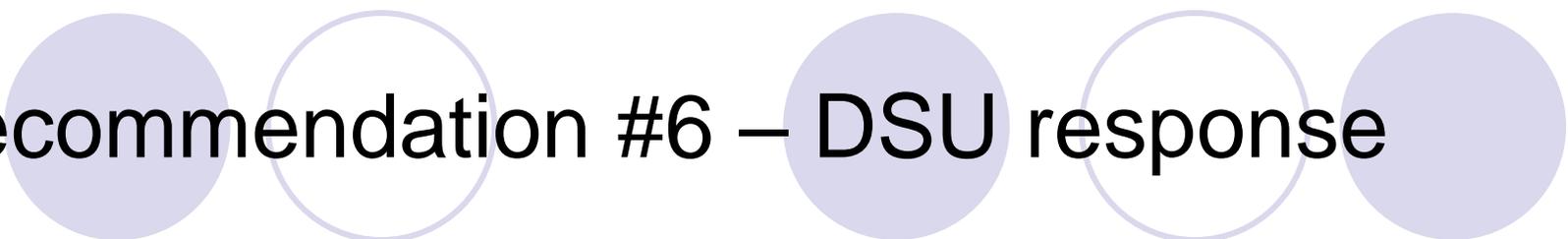


## Recommendation #6

The council recommends that DVR continue to consider an earlier recommendation to simplify the OOS waiting list process.

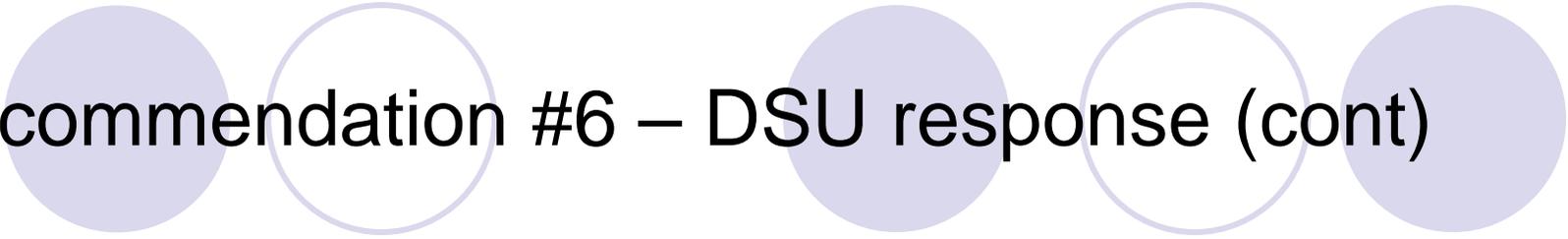
The goals of this recommendation include:

- OOS results should be addressed in the IPE
- OOS should be as objective as possible
- A limitation should be counted when it is significant enough to require accommodation



## Recommendation #6 – DSU response

DVR continues to consider WRC's recommendation to simplify the OOS waiting list process. In 2009 WRC's previous recommendation regarding the simplification of OOS management was discussed with the agency managers and at members of DVR's Policy Academy (PA). The PA developed an "OOS Test Exercise" that was completed on a statewide sampling of prior OOS category assignments. There were inconsistencies in the findings report from the test exercise. The Quality Assurance Unit is reviewing the results from the "OOS Test Exercise". DVR is awaiting OOS management feedback from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) based upon the March 2010 program monitoring visit.



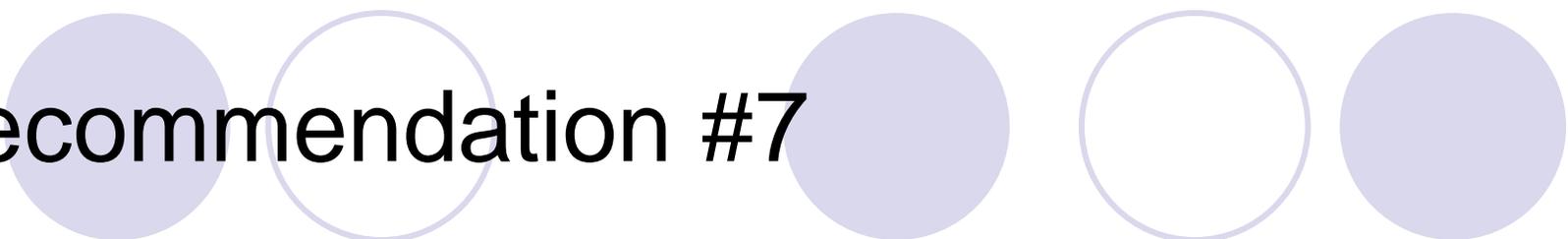
## Recommendation #6 – DSU response (cont)

In FY 2010 an OOS simplification workgroup was formed to gather statewide concerns/feedback on the current OOS process and to review and consider the OOS processes used by other VR agencies. The workgroup is charged with determining what areas of OOS process change are needed and how to best address concerns raised from the statewide feedback effort.

While OOS simplification analysis considerations continue in FY 2011, DVR agrees that there is a need to retrain staff on the application of the current OOS process and will initiate a statewide staff training during FY 2010.

# Response to OOS Recommendation

- Council consensus:
- Retain?
- Revise?
- Remove?

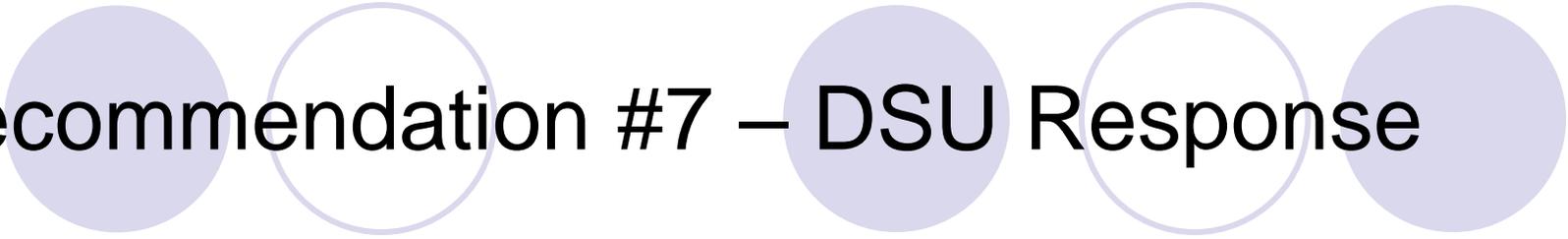


## Recommendation #7

The collaboration between DVR, DPI, and now DHS, has led to a better experience for transition aged students with disabilities.

We recommend that the state agencies provide ongoing training to staff and teachers.

Collaboration and facilitated meetings do not come naturally. We believe the initial positive outcomes warrant the investment in training.



# Recommendation #7 – DSU Response

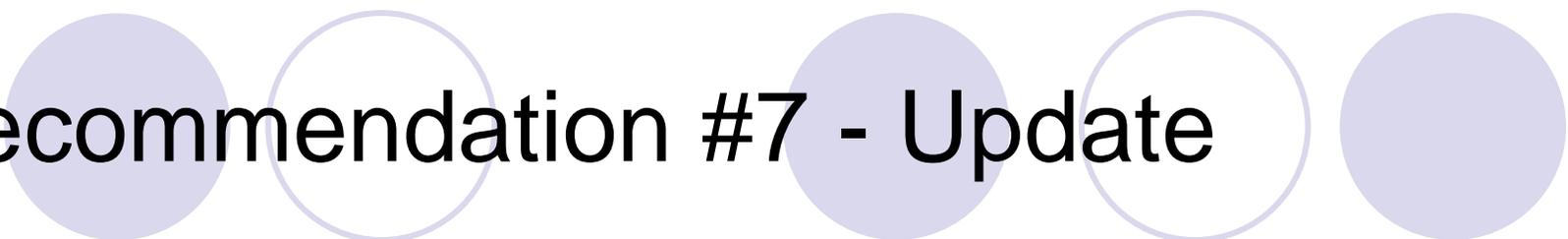
DVR agrees that on-going training is a vital component to the success of collaboration between DVR, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and the Department of Health Services (DHS).

DVR, through their Statewide Transition and Resource Action Team (START) members, surveyed school staff during FY 2010 to determine areas where training is needed. We are developing training modules for DVR staff and school staff. Plans are to provide DVR staff additional training in FY 2011. In addition, DVR liaisons to schools will provide additional training to school staff throughout the 2010-11 academic year. Training will include use of the Transition Action Guide (TAG). The TAG was updated in May 2010 to include additional information and resources to assist in the collaboration process. DHS has printed and will disseminate more than 10,000 copies of the TAG to DVR offices as well as to school districts and other key transition service stakeholder partners.



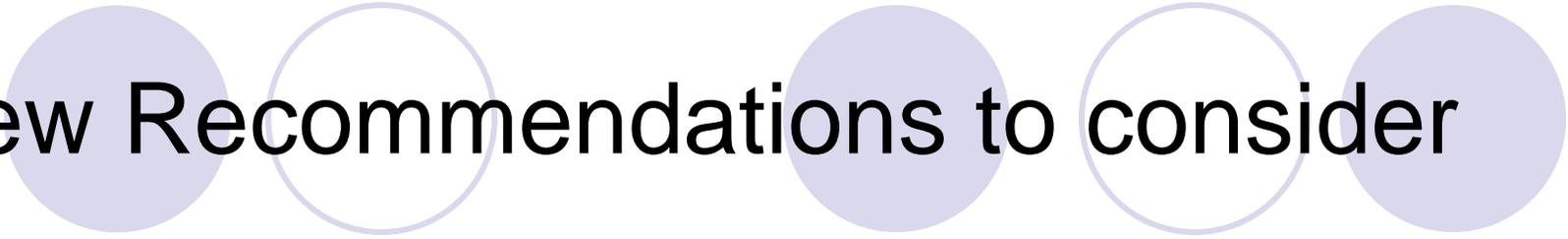
## Recommendation #7 – DSU Response (cont)

The Interagency Agreement between DVR, DPI, and DHS is currently being expanded to include the Adult Long Term Care system. Training and dissemination of this updated MOU will be important to the coordination of post high school employment and community service supports for students with the most significant disabilities. Six MOU training sessions for Special Education Directors will be held during FFY 2010 and 2011 funded by a grant with the Regional Service Network. A key objective of the training will be the use of data to demonstrate improved outcomes for students with disabilities resulting from interagency service collaboration and coordination. The revised Interagency Agreement on Transition to Employment will be introduced and discussed at this training. It is anticipated that an additional Technical Assistance Guide will be developed to translate into practice the service coordination outlined in the agreement.



## Recommendation #7 - Update

- DVR efforts in transition have exceeded our original recommendation. It has been a model for other state VR agencies.
- Are there other aspects of transition that need emphasis?
- Was transition raised in the public comments?



# New Recommendations to consider

- Develop in house expertise in working with employers. Other states have Employer consultants, Workforce Consultants, and Employment Counselors as designated positions that focus on connecting the qualified VR candidate to a business need.



## New Recommendation to consider

- Provide guidance to VR staff (and vendors) on how to communicate with business. As a recent business speaker at CSAVR put it, “we’re a business, not an employer.” We don’t exist to employ. We exist to operate a successful business.”



# New Recommendation to Consider

- Revisit centralizing the eligibility and OOS functions to:
  - improve consistency,
  - eliminate perception that VRC can manipulate the OOS category assignment
  - have VRC focus on IPE development and progress
- Reduce the variety of tasks that make time management more difficult



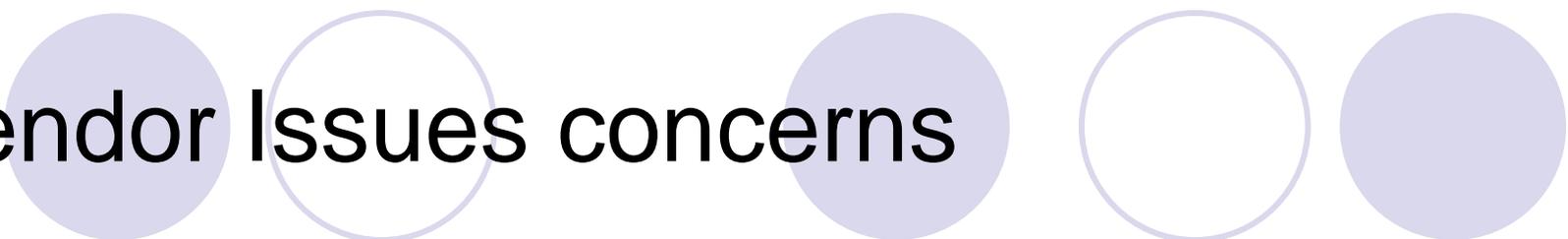
# New Recommendation to consider

- Work with community rehabilitation programs as they reengineer their services to meet the needs of the Family Care and VR program participants interested in integrated, competitive employment.
- Encourage CRPs to seek VR input so any new services or service delivery methods are based on a needs assessment.



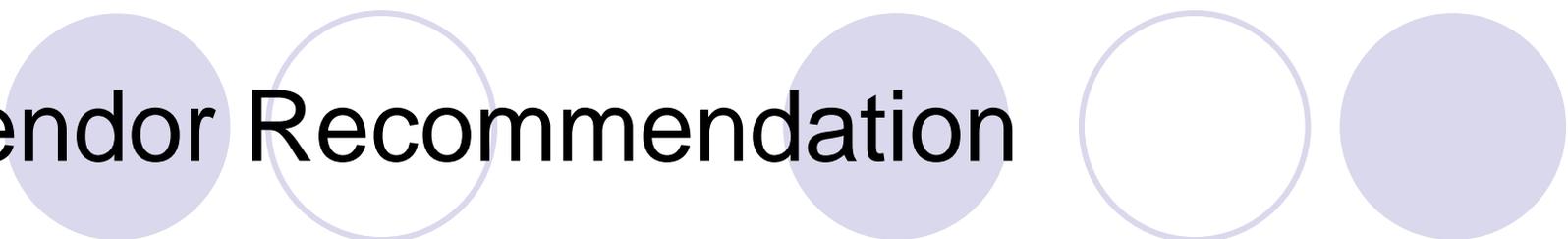
# New Recommendation to consider

- Vendor Issues:
- Concerns about the qualifications or competency of vendors have been raised.
- ?? Do we have recommendations rather than general observations for this?



## Vendor Issues concerns

- VR staff continue to use vendor recommendations for items the vendor sells. We recommend that VR use people who are qualified to assess an individual's rehabilitation technology needs.
- We recommend training for VR staff on AT assessments, AT resources, and what the vendor needs to know to provide useful information for VR.



# Vendor Recommendation

- We continue to receive feedback that VR staff do not provide adequate referral information or direction on what the VRC is seeking from the assessment.