

## Director's Report

**Outcomes:** The final tally of employment outcomes came in at 1791 persons with disabilities successfully employed during the FFY ending 8/30/12. This represents a 10.3% increase over the last federal fiscal year. AS you have heard before this reflects the outstanding work of all VR and VABIR staff, the expanded use of progressive employment and Creative Workforce Solutions infrastructure.

**Budget:** Overall, we are on track to have significant carryover funds available for SFY 15 that are necessary to support our program expansion. We are running hot in two regions in our case service expenditures. Managers are reining in and monitoring authorizations. We remain concerned about when the reallocation funds will begin to decrease. We are hearing from reliable sources that the level of reallocation funds should remain high for this year again. We remain transparent with agency leadership about the time limited nature of this funding and our need for additional dollars as these funds disappear to support the GA program and the business account manager positions.

**RSA Audit:** We did not have a good experience during our three day monitoring review and we are distressed at the draft findings that were shared. I can elaborate during my report.

**Retreat Follow Up:** Our VR VABIR Retreat in mid November was a great success. We conducted a retreat follow up survey and the results were overwhelmingly positive. The level of engagement of all staff was very impressive. The heart of the retreat focused on our four strategic themes: valued and empowered staff, prepared job seekers, collaborative partnerships, and organizational effectiveness. The staff were organized into "pods" within each of the four themes. They provided us with volumes of feedback that the senior management team has begun to organize. We will be sharing with all staff the 8 to 10 priorities within each theme over a VIT all staff meeting on 2/11. I see this as an ongoing and iterative process.

**Invest EAP:** Steve Dickens and I are very concerned about the future of our EAP program in light of the major health care reform initiatives planned for the next several years. We have been reaching out to key people and making some connections and agreements. There is likely the chance for tremendous growth or the potential for dramatic loss in revenue in the program. Stay tuned. If members are interested I am sure Steve would speak to the SRC at a future meeting.

**SNAP Employment and Training Funds:** We are very disappointed that the Department of Corrections has decided not to pursue SNAP E & T funds to support offender employment specialists. We are now turning our attention to partnering with the Dept. of Children and Families to develop a plan to support our General Assistance program. DCF seems receptive to the idea.

**Employment Staff Training:** An RFP has been issued to solicit bids to develop a curriculum for employment staff across the state. This will include more generic training on employer outreach and population specific training. We are confident we will receive a number of proposals. We hope to have a vendor selected, a contract developed and the work begun before summer. We will be considering delivery mechanisms for this curriculum. As I have mentioned before we are considering CCV.

**Motivational Interviewing:** The VR expanded management team travelled to Brattleboro last Friday for a one day overview of a counseling technique called motivational interviewing. This has been in use for many years beginning in the substance abuse world. It is currently being used in mental health settings, physical health, etc. VR agencies in Washington and Wisconsin are piloting the use of MI in VR counseling. The team on Friday was very engaged and positive about the potential to improve customer outcomes and change the counseling culture. We made a decision to bring the trainer back to provide the same overview to all VR counselors and see what the level of interest is in implementation of MI in Vermont VR. If we do this we will not just provide a two day training. We will be making a commitment to training supervisors to monitor it, training counselors to use the technique and testing their skill development, and evaluating the impact on counselors and customers. We would then like to roll out MI to employment staff as a phase two.

**Consumer Satisfaction Survey:** We have completed a simplified bid process for a vendor to conduct our bi-annual consumer satisfaction survey. Market Decisions was the only vendor to respond. We have a long track record of working productively with this company. We are expanding our work with them to include conducting phone interviews with a sample of counselor caseload for input into the counselor's annual performance evaluation. We will get better information and we can tie it to our statewide survey.

**Implementation Team:** I want to explore an idea I had about tightening the connections and feedback loop between the I-Team and the SRC. I think the work of the I-Team is integral to the performance review, policy and procedures, and the overall work of the SRC.

**Creative Workforce Solutions:** CWS is developing well. Hugh orchestrated a survey of the CWS team members and employers with very positive results. Employers are very pleased with CWS services. We will be developing CWS district report cards in the near future so we can engage local leadership teams in continuous improvement activities. We are close to having a group of BAMS that are doing outstanding work.

**Overall:** CWS and VR are doing excellent work. Our staff is outstanding; our partnerships strong, our outcomes are some of the best in the nation.