

Director's Report – June 6, 2013

Outcomes: Our total employment outcomes are lower than last year at this time. And, as has been the case, all our productivity indicators are down this year. We have had significant counselor vacancies and new hires who take time to learn the job. We have had two counselors on paid leave in Rutland. We continue to benefit from the BAMs and the use of progressive employment. We will take a deeper dive into the data with the regional managers.

Budget: We are within our budget constraints although we are a little tighter than expected. Ticket revenue is up thanks to the new ticket tracker system. EAP revenue is fairly consistent. We remain optimistic about reallocation funding but we will not know for certain the dollar amount until August or September. Commissioner Wehry is keeping AHS in the loop on our need for general funds when reallocation dollars start to shrink. Sequestration is manageable but will mean we will have to make some reductions in discretionary grant programs.

Retreat Follow-Up: We continue to work on the staff feedback we heard at our retreat last November. I shared the grid that senior management created with the SRC in February and we continue to cross items off the list and update our progress on others. I am happy to share our updates if SRC members are interested.

VR VABIR Training Day: During the fall we intend to bring together all staff for a one day training session. We will be rolling out our new referral process from counselors to employment staff, and demonstrate via video "Jobsville" or "Worklinks" which is a process to engage all staff in job development activities. We are encouraged by the results in the offices which use this group process.

Baldrige: Related to staff feedback, we are in the final stages of having staff complete and hopefully some SRC members complete the Baldrige Survey. We will receive an extensive analysis of the results which I would be pleased to share with the SRC. I heard from Sam that the language was difficult and I would agree! It is a standardized assessment tool. So, while we adapted some the language and had Laurie Emerson train staff via VIT, we are unable to change the questions. The survey results should drive our strategic planning.

Employment Staff Training: We have selected Transcen as the vendor to develop a curriculum to train front line employment staff and have begun our work with their staff. We intend to involve Community College of VT early in the process. We are hoping to sole source the delivery to CCV and have it offered twice a year. There is considerable turnover in employment staff across the state. There will also be a mentoring component to the program. This will not be credit bearing but be a certificate program. It would be great if we could find a strategy to give people a pay bump with successful completion. This is long overdue infrastructure that should improve staff retention and outcomes.

Motivational Interviewing: We are engaging in an RFP process to select a vendor to do a comprehensive training program for counseling staff and supervisors to use MI as a counseling strategy. A content expert is coming to Vermont this week to do an overview for all our counseling staff. We think this could substantially impact our work with consumers and get people moving towards employment.

Promise Grant: A very exciting opportunity has been created by four federal departments (Labor, Education, SSA and Health and Human Services) coming together to sponsor a substantial grant project to serve 14 to 16 year old youth on SSI and their families towards the goal of self-sufficiency. We are forming a consortium with Massachusetts and Connecticut to develop a proposal. This is a research based grant with a randomized study including a control group and a treatment group. The "N" is 2000 – 1000 in each group. We could not do this alone! We can apply for from \$4.5 to \$10 million per year for up to 5 years. This is a family intervention which makes it very different from with the young person alone. We will be assisting Mom and Dad and go to work or get a better job too. We think we are well positioned to develop a very competitive proposal. Stay tuned!

General Counselors Group: We have several specialty groups of VR Counselors including transition, Reach Up, GA, counselors for the deaf and hard of hearing. These specialty groups meet monthly and have developed a support system and an identity. The General VR Counselors, about 35 staff, have wanted us to support them to form a specialty group and to meet monthly. Alicia Wein, Karen Blake Orne and Lisa Young have been convening and facilitating this group for the last several months. This has been going very well and staff seems to appreciate the opportunity to tackle difficult topic areas and share best practices.

Well it is a boat season again and if it would warm up and stop raining life would be good ☺
See you next week.

Diane