

Director's Report

Outcomes: The final tally for people obtaining or maintaining employment for this past federal fiscal year is 1918. Outstanding work by everyone!

Budget: We continue to be underspent and in a good place budget wise.

AWARE Case Management System: The contract is final and has been sent off for review by Alliance Enterprises. If they are in agreement we are getting signatures and launching!!! There will likely be a kick off meeting in January. This has taken way too long but the light at the end of a very long tunnel is in sight!

Expanded Assistive Technology Services: VR and the AT Program have developed a new and expanded partnership to create greater access to AT for VR consumers. We will be funding 50% of 3 AT professionals in Burlington, Waterbury and Rutland to provide comprehensive individual AT assessments. We have created an AT set aside to allow counselors to purchase AT without expending their case service dollars. VR staff will be getting specialized training on AT. Counseling and employment staff are very excited about this new program and see great benefits for their customers.

New Pilot Projects: I wanted to provide brief descriptions of four pilot projects we are starting up.

Employer Driven Training: In partnership with the Rutland WIB, we have identified four Rutland businesses including Ellison Technologies (a feeder to GE) and Rutland Regional Medical Center, who are having difficulty finding applicants with the necessary skill set who are willing to provide paid internships. The program will involve classroom training for six months and then a six month internship. Successful participants will have a high likelihood of being hired.

Mental Health Peer Run Employment Programs: We have been interested in developing an alternative to the CRT program for young adults with severe mental illness. DMH has a federal grant that is ending supporting two peer run programs with a heavy emphasis on employment in Burlington and Central Vermont. These programs have a proven track record of assisting young adults to be gainfully employed. VR in partnership with DMH intends to continue these two programs with a focus on replicability in other catchment areas. There is a meeting with program staff and local VR staff planned for late January.

Recovery Centers: With the huge substance abuse issue in Vermont, we are planning a pilot project with two of the Recovery Centers. We plan to have an employment consultant split their time providing job development and placement services in two centers and to outpost a local VR counselor part time in each of the centers. These centers operate on very small budgets and employment services is a huge need.

Employment Consultant Early Engagement: In Barre and Morrisville they are planning to invite employment consultants into the counselor – consumer relationship very early on perhaps in the Intake

Interview. . Carol Leech is leading the charge. And, noteworthy, Carol is retiring from VR on 12/26 BUT not leaving the system. She is taking the job of Human Resources Manager at VABIR. Carol will leave a huge hole in our management team but be a fabulous addition to VABIR. I believe there is much value to be gained by having the client engage with the employment consultant early on. The SRC may be interested in hearing from Carol's replacement on how the pilot is going next year.

OCS VR Partnership Expansion: We are expanding to southern Vermont our work with non-custodial parents who are not employed and not paying child support and have a disability. The program has been very successful to date. We would like to find additional funding to add employment consultant capacity.

Training for Managers and Supervisors on how to deal with performance issues: We had an excellent all day training on managing your MVPs, your starting line-up and your bench warmers last Friday. All agreed it was immensely helpful to refresh and develop new skills on how to supervise and grow your staff.

WIOA Update:

Unified Plan: There is emerging a draft Unified Plan. James has done a great job as part of the writing team. There is a meeting of the State Workforce Investment Board on 12/9 to get their input and approval of the draft. Commissioner Noonan is planning a VIT session to gather stakeholder input. No date yet. We are developing a set of assumptions in beginning to think about setting our targets for the six Common Performance Measures. The plan needs to be posted for public comment by about mid-January 2016. Due date is 3/2/16.

PETS: We are fully launched. Our focus is on the In School Transition Counselors. They are under some stress to build caseloads and are somewhat anxious about how their performance will be measured. We are trying to support these staff in any way possible. I think it will take us two years to know if this model works for staff, schools, and most importantly the students and their families.

CSAVR: Renee and James did an outstanding presentation at the Fall CSAVR Meeting in Seattle. You could hear a pin drop in the room. A former VR director came up to me afterward and told me we had "taken bold action". I think clearly in line with Congressional intent.

Lots going on as usual. Almost all good. Happy Holidays!

Diane