

Director's Report

June 4, 2015

WIOA: The more we learn about WIOA the more we are certain that the PETS plan we have put in place is in line with the law, the regulations and congressional intent. Beyond PETS there are significant changes to the law that James will review with the Policy and Procedures Committee Thursday morning. From a high level, the changes include a real focus on “competitive integrated employment” resulting in the elimination of homemaker and unpaid family worker outcomes and the payment of subminimum wages. There are additional requirements for MOUs with developmental services, mental health, Medicaid, and an expanded MOU with education. Across WIOA there is the requirement to file a Unified Plan with VDOL and the VT Agency of Education. Common Performance Measures have been established that focus on job retention and completion of education and training programs and our current standards and indicators are gone. James has been working to create a work plan and to identify training needs for staff.

PETS Updates by Project:

VR VABIR Caseload Reassignment: Major work is going on out in the field. Staff have been assigned to in-school, young adult, and adult caseloads and cases have been identified that need to be transferred based on age and school status. Caseloads have also been “scrubbed” and cases needing to be closed have been closed. It is very impressive that staff have accepted the changes and are moving forward with a can do attitude. There is also a level of worry about workload issues – either too much or too little. We have been meeting monthly over video and VIT. We had an all staff meeting this morning and tried to reassure staff that we will manage workload issues. Overall, I could not be more pleased with the field response.

General Assistance Ramp Down: Karen and Betsy have worked very effectively with ESD staff to transition the remaining GA caseload back to ESD and the remaining VR cases to the appropriate counselor. This will be complete by July 1st. All is going smoothly. Caseload scrubbing has greatly reduced the number of active VR cases to be absorbed. Everyone is sad to see the program go but coming into alignment with our new priorities.

CRT VR Supported Employment Restructuring: Overall we seem to be moving forward with evolving from a contractual relationship to a partnership on the local level. There continues to be some rallying at the AHS Secretary's level to restore the funding. We have two designated agencies that remain very angry and seemingly unwilling to move forward. We have a work group that has met once and is looking at out posting counselors, access to VABIR employment staff, and staff training needs.

Summer Youth Employment Opportunities: We have engaged with the VT Youth Conservation Corps and will be supporting two crews. One at the farm in Richmond and one in Barre. This is a learning year for us. We are impressed with their work. Cost per student is fairly high but there may be ways to bring

that down. We will also be supporting VABIR Youth Employment Specialists to find summer jobs for in-school youth. We have decided not to try to find or run a payroll service for summer employment but to take a year to research various options including partnering with VDOL.

Administrative Support Infrastructure: Alice and Brian are staying very close to each project to ensure that administrative needs are met. The other major thrust is to focus on what AWARE can currently will in the future do to support this new work.

Benefits Counselors: There is work to be done on how benefits counselors can most effectively serve students and their families. Of note, is that we will have a contract in place to work with Transcen, a nationally known organization based in Maryland on serving students and their families. We are extremely pleased with the work we have done with Transcen staff and in addition they are part of a national Technical Assistance Center funded by RSA and OSEP (Special Education) within federal DOE.

AWARE: We are moving full steam ahead with the purchase of the AWARE case management system from Alliance Enterprises. We spent a week with Alliance staff at the beginning of April. Field staff were involved as evaluators. I think it is fair to say that we were all excited by the end of the week about the potential of the product. We have received a final bid/price from AWARE and now will begin to draft a contract. DII requires an independent review by an outside vendor which can happen in parallel to contract development. We hope to have a contract in place by the end of July. We have had one meeting with our business office about funding for both year one and year two costs. We feel at this time we are in good fiscal shape to manage the purchase. We need to discuss how the SRC wishes to be involved. We should definitely offer a demo for the council.

VR Reach Up: We are at a critical juncture with our Reach Up VR partnership.

I look forward to seeing everyone on Thursday.

Diane