

## Director's Report

**Outcomes:** We continue to run behind this point last year in employment outcomes. Right now we are 230 behind. I just want everyone to know that taking 14 counselors off the production line will result in a loss of rehabs. As I have said before I think if we do an outstanding preparatory job with students in two or three years outcomes will be on the rise.

**Budget:** We continue to be in a good place. We have a meeting in July where we will know about our carryover funds and will have a proposed budget for next year and we will talk about investment opportunities now and in the future.

**WIOA Common Performance Measures:** All our work on understanding and beginning the implementation of the Common Performance Measures has created a very exciting initiative: Assisting VR consumers to obtain higher wage jobs and increase their job retention. The first three measures are employment at 6 and 12 months post closure and median earnings. We have created some excitement in the field about pilot projects in each district office. The focus of our VR VABIR staff meeting in October will be Career Pathways. We are working with CCV to develop two days of training on Career Pathways with an MI focus. I have found that when leadership sets a direction and allows the field to "own" the solution it is very successful.

**VR Counselor Ratio to Employment Consultant:** I am very excited about an investment we have decided to make to create teams in every office by pairing an employment consultant to every VR counselor. We have been teaming transition counselors and Youth Employment Specialists for years with great success. I have been encouraging early engagement of customers with ECs for the last year and this is a way to make that happen. This will be a practice change for adult counselors. I am confident we will do a better job for our consumers and it will result in higher wage jobs and job retention.

**Training News:** We are developing a training on how to serve customers who are transgender. We have a training coming up on "compassion fatigue" for hiring managers. We have provided performance management training for hiring managers and are now integrating these tools into coaching circles and will be follow-up training twice a year. We are very committed to professional growth and development for staff.

**Jobs for Success:** The FNS SNAP grant has finally rolled out. Last I knew we had enrolled about 200 people and 70% of them were homeless and had multiple barriers to employment including disability. Our EAP clinicians are doing initial assessments and making referrals to VR and elsewhere depending on the person's needs. We have begun to hire VABIR Employment Consultants in those offices seeing the most enrollments. The goal is 1500 people in the treatment and control groups. Local partner meetings are happening. We recently learned that as opposed to most grants that allow a no cost extension beyond the grant original end

point there will be a hard stop and any unspent funds will return to the federal treasury. We will have to be aggressive and thoughtful about getting services to the treatment group.

**Transition Team:** Renee Kievit Kylar has retired and we have hired Tara Howe to replace Renee. Renee leaves very big shoes to fill but we are confident that Tara will do an outstanding job. We are closing out the first school years with in school Transition Counselors. We will be taking stock of how the year went and what is working and what is not. There is angst in the field as the transfers of senior exiting school occur between the transition counselors and the young adult counselors. They have been meeting seniors jointly in the school and bringing students into the VR offices to facilitate a more seamless transfer. We are very worried about losing youth in the transfer process. We will be following this very closely and looking at the data.

**The Career Index:** We literally stumbled onto the existence of the Career Index. This is a career exploration and job finding tool built for VR agencies. We will demo this for the management team and do a webinar for field staff. It seems to be a powerful and useful tool for VR counselors and employment staff. I am sure Hugh would be most happy to do a demo for SRC members.

**Job Coaches:** Before we had expanded VABIR capacity, we had job coaches in-house paid by the hour. Job coaches support consumers who need on the job supports for some period of time (not forever) to be successful in employment. As we expanded VABIR and created Employment Consultants we lost this capacity. I really felt we needed to bring it back. James worked with Human Resources and we were able to secure 13 temporary positions – two in Burlington and one in each of our other offices to be job coaches. Offices have been hiring their job coach, we are providing training and figuring out accountability, case recording, and evaluation. Demand will drive the number of hours these coaches work. People with traumatic brain injury, people with IQs between 70 and 80, people who need short term on site support I believe will greatly benefit from this service.

**Case Reviews:** We have instituted a practice of having senior counselors and managers do a case review of five cases for each counselor every quarter. We are also having CO staff go out and do a case review for each office annually. This is really a bridge solution to the AWARE case management system. We have created a culture where staff see this as supportive and not as a “gotcha” process.

**AWARE:** All is going well with AWARE implementation. IT IS A TON OF WORK! Alice, James, Brian, Lisa are bearing the brunt of that work especially Alice who will handle data migration and touch every other aspect of the system. We are impressed with the professionalism of the Alliance team and the depth of their bench. They are doing the analysis on three of our contingency fund projects: Salesforce interface, CTT integration into AWARE, and a module for our contracts and grants process.

It is early summer, the boat is in the water and all is well. Diane