

VR Director's Report
State Rehabilitation Council

June 2019

VR Development Team: The team led by James Smith continues to work on increasing revenue to assist more Vermonters with disabilities to join the workforce. In mid-May we submitted a **SAMHSA grant**. This grant will make IPS supported employment available to people served by Adult Outpatient Programs at three designated agencies: Washington County Mental Health, Northwest Counseling Service, and HCRS. The grant is about \$800,000 per year for five years. It will support the creation of treatment teams including a case manager, VABIR employment consultant, .3 FTE benefits counselor and .5 VR counselor.

We made it to the final round for a **Kessler Foundation** grant. We are about to submit a proposal that would create two pilots in Rutland and Bennington to expand VR services to Social Security Ticket to Work participants. The grant will support teams including a VR counselor, .5 FTE benefits counselor and a VABIR employment consultant for two years. When we are successful, we plan to sustain and expand this effort using revenue generated from the Ticket to Work program.

Careers Initiative: As many of you know, with the passage of WIOA, our performance measures shifted from quantitative (how many people did we assist to become employed) to qualitative measures (median earnings, job retention, credential/skill attainment, and employer satisfaction). We have rolled out our new dashboard which is clearly a work in progress. We established five lead indicators that we think will impact our lagging indicators established by WIOA. Our efforts currently are totally focused on encouraging and supporting our staff to do more of the five lead indicators with their consumers. The lead indicators are teaming, assessment, education and training, vocational goals with higher wages and follow along. If you remember the diet analogy: the leading indicators are reducing caloric intake and exercise will lead to the lagging indicator which is weight loss 😊.

Youth Advocacy Council/Youth Summit: Last fall we worked with other public and private organizations including VCIL, VFN, DBVI, YDP and others to put together a Youth Advocacy Council. We were successful in recruiting about 12 young people with disabilities to form the YAC and the group has met five times. One of those meetings was held at the statehouse including a meeting with Governor Scott and participation in a “Card Room” event. The year culminated in a Youth Summit at VTC with about 200 youth and adults in attendance. What has been truly amazing is the way the council has come together, established their priorities and learned to speak up about their needs and advocate for themselves. They ran the summit, introduced the speakers and co-facilitated some of the workshops. Feedback from you included: Based upon the feedback at the end of the event, everyone found meaning in the activities of the day. These include:

There was a lot of information that I did not know before; anyone can speak up for themselves; I liked that I could be open and friendly with people and engaging with them; Speakers were great and supportive and kind; The inclusivity... and meeting new people; [I] liked seeing lots of youth making a difference; [I liked] how positive it was because many people think negative of themselves, and; [I liked the] inspirational conversation and speech about youth needing to use their voice.

We are recruiting for new members and the group is excited to continue their work in the next year and planning the next summit.

Transition Charter: With the passage of WIOA came Pre-Employment Transition Services for students in high school and a requirement to spend 15% of our federal funding on this population. Our 14 transition counselors with their VABIR youth employment specialists have been covering all the high schools in Vermont providing Pre-ETS services. We have been doing this work for over four years and decided it was time to take stock. Our transition counselors have done a time study. They are about to do a process mapping of their work with the VABIR youth employment specialist and students and their families. We have chosen a vendor to do a youth survey via text and include school personnel. The charge to the charter group is to determine whether our current service delivery model for students is working or whether changes need to be made.

Governor’s Summit: As many of you know, we are planning to do a Governor’s Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities on December 2nd at the Doubletree in South Burlington. The theme for the morning session is

“Transportation to Work”. We are partnering with VTrans and others to plan the agenda. We are hopeful to have Ted Kennedy Jr. as the keynote for the luncheon that will be open to the public. He has not been confirmed as yet.

I look forward to our meeting this afternoon.

Diane