

## COVID 19 Response

3/16 – decision made that all VR staff would telework from home. Inventory of phone and IT equipment needed. Initial guidance provided on shifting work with consumers from face to face to phone, Skype, Facetime and texting. All supervisory sessions, staff meetings, Career Links meetings continue via Skype or Microsoft Teams. Employer outreach all shifted to remote methods. Division remains open for business. AWARE is hosted in the cloud and makes it possible for all staff to work from home. Citrix tokens and VPN make it possible to use personal computers for work.

3/23 – all VR staff working from home. Offices doing daily check-ins with staff. CO staff checking in 3x per week. VR managers checking in 3x per week. Administrative staff check-in regularly. Guidance centrally developed and disseminated on casework procedures, i.e. signatures and administrative tasks, mail and scanning, etc. We are striving for as much normalcy as possible during this time. We think we will learn lots about ways to work that will be helpful after the crisis subsides.

All VR managers and teams continue to resolve issues as they come up. Schools closed, day care centers closed, businesses closed, leading to complex issues for staff to manage families and work during this time. Flex time is encouraged and there is an option for some staff to code their time to COVID 19. We are encouraging the use of EAP counselors to manage stress and other issues. We are encouraging staff to find a “work at home rhythm” – take breaks, get outside, stay connected with co-workers in fun ways.

Regular communication seems critical to keep services available to our customers and staff morale up. Staff report consumers appreciate being contacted and supported during this time. Transition Counselors are prioritizing seniors for planning purposes. TCs are staying connected with Special Education Case Managers and Tara Howe is connected with the Agency of Education. We continue to work with our partners including VT Department of Labor, designated agencies, CCV, and other training providers. Managers are communicating what’s working and what the challenges are in telework.

Staff continue to focus on the five lead indicators contained in the dashboard. Now is the time to do assessments. Now is the time to engage consumers in progressive education. Now is the time to follow up with consumers post-placement. We should see the dashboard dial go up.

Business Account Managers are maintaining relationships with both businesses who are hiring and those that are closed during the crisis. Some consumers are choosing to go to work and others are inclined to wait until the situation improves. We are working to make sure consumers are making an informed choice about the risk of going to work.

We are settling into our new way of working and hope we will be back in the office as soon as it is safe to do so.

Stay safe and healthy!