

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council
Director's Report
December 6, 2018

Careers Initiative: Our all VR VABIR Staff Meeting at Lake Morey is December 4th. I will be able to share how it went with the group at our full meeting. I believe the planning group has designed a great day. The focus of the morning will be on sharing the district projects and the afternoon is how to reduce stress and avoid compassion fatigue. A consumer will speak to the group and Mat Barewicz will keynote on labor market information.

We are proceeding with the work on the six charters. The first dashboard indicator, teaming, is close to being launched. A new spending policy has been developed. Each district is working on a grid of occupational clusters, training providers and employers hiring in that cluster. All the district leadership teams and CO team has taken the White Belt LEAN training and early next year we will be rolling out process mapping for each step in the rehabilitation process from referral to inactive. We are infusing all the work with the spirit of Motivational Interviewing.

I am so impressed and excited by the work field staff are doing on their district projects. District staff chose their projects and have ownership of them. They are rolling them out and learning what is working and what needs to be tweaked. Projects focus on job retention, assessment, training stipends, building blocks portfolio, co-enrollment with VDOL, early engagement and much more. All staff are making the concept of building career pathways real for them and for our consumers.

Linking Learning to Careers: We are closing in on the end of enrollment in the project. It has been hard work and difficult work for some staff. Usually people with disabilities come to us and so marketing the program to students and families is not familiar or easy work. Staff have risen to the challenge and as of today out of 800 required enrollments we are at 721 with two weeks to go. We will celebrate the end of enrollment and the beginning of a total focus on service delivery in January.

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College Steps: I have spoken about our College Steps pilot in Rutland as it was just getting off the ground. A few weeks ago, I attended a first progress meeting where each student was discussed. Five students were presented. I was so pleased with the student's commitment to being successful in college and the appropriate supports provided by College Steps staff and mentors. In some cases, it is clear the supports can be faded over time. I am very optimistic that this pilot will be successful and replicated at other colleges where College Steps has a presence. We are in early discussions with the VT Department of Labor and the Department of Children and Families about investing in this program to serve their program participants.

Development Team: Our Development Team has been meeting and talking about opportunities to create additional revenue streams to better serve Vermonters with disabilities. Mathematica has been awarded a very large grant from Health and Human Services to focus on the development of employment strategies that move people with complex barriers to employment to work. It appears there may be possibilities for Vermont to participate in the grant. It may be an opportunity to move Progressive Employment to an evidenced based practice.

Youth Advisory Council: The Youth Advisory Council held its first meeting and by all reports it was quite successful. Twelve youth participated, and all were very engaged. They identified four topics they wished to work on including jobs and careers and post-secondary training and education. Bullying was also one of the topics. I think all adults involved including Martha Frank and Tara Howe are very pleased. So far so good. Tara has also become part of a Community of Practice for those supporting youth advisory councils. VT Family Network has also applied for funding to support our annual youth summit.

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Problem Solving Treatment (PST) and Mapping: We are going to do a pilot using the mapping strategies Burlington counselors are exploring as their district project in conjunction with PST, a short-term focused counseling tool. Lisa Lax, an EAP staff person will train staff in the use of PST. Counselors will then use the PST strategies and the mapping techniques with consumers. This pilot is to facilitate engagement on the part of the people we serve and to assist staff to get people engaged. Part of our overall strategy to streamline caseloads and work with engaged consumers.

Overall: It is an exciting time at Voc Rehab. Staff are very engaged and excited about our paradigm shift in serving our program participants in a new way.

Happy Holidays! Diane