



Finding solutions. Generating success.

December 9, 2013

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), during the 2013 legislative session, was asked to submit a report of its outreach efforts to work with community rehabilitation program providers for job placement and retention services for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities.

SF 2321 states: *For purposes of optimizing the job placement of individuals with disabilities, the division shall make its best efforts to work with community rehabilitation program providers for job placement and retention services for individuals with significant disabilities and most significant disabilities. By January 15, 2014, the division shall submit a written report to the general assembly on the division's outreach efforts with community rehabilitation program providers.*

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services has continued efforts to establish, create and maintain partnerships with Iowa Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) in 2013. IVRS continued efforts to promote and encourage collaboration by reaching out to Community Rehabilitation Programs, external vendors and other service providers. The result of this focus has contributed positively to enhancing partnerships, in addition to expanding employment-related options for Iowans with disabilities.

During 2013, IVRS expenditures paid to Community Rehabilitation Providers totaled \$1.383 million dollars. This is an increase of over \$40,000 dollars from 2012 and almost a \$300,000 increase from 2011. This also involved an increased number of referrals and collaborative partner services.

Examples of IVRS efforts in 2013 include:

• **January – March 2013**

- ✓ IVRS met with Optima staff to explore ways to absorb their Project Search program into IVRS prior to its discontinuance by this CRP. This involved partnering with our Menu of Service fee options.
- ✓ IVRS and four CRP partners: Candeco (Johnston), Goodwill of Central Iowa (Des Moines), Goodwill of the Heartland (Iowa City), and Goodwill Industries of NE Iowa (Waterloo) rolled out Iowa's first *Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative (REDI)* at four Walgreen stores. This was part of a national occupational skill training program designed to meet the needs of retail businesses.
- ✓ The partnership between IVRS and Candeco (Creative Community Options) was expanded to include additional services and reimbursement for Project Search, which Candeco took over from Optima.

- ✓ IVRS met at Homestead CRP in Altoona to initiate a partnership and discuss combining training for staff who serves individuals on the Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- ✓ IVRS Administrator proposed revisions to the current *Memorandum of Agreement* between Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) and IVRS to refine processes and responsibilities in moving towards a fair and reasonable method of purchasing employment-related services from community providers.
- ✓ IVRS participated at Deaf Capital Day in support of Deaf Services Commission of Iowa's (DSCI) work for Iowans who are Deaf.
- ✓ IVRS staff spoke at the Iowa Association of Community Provider (IACP) meeting to inform 80+ participants about current initiatives and opportunities to expand partnerships.
- ✓ IVRS and IACP combined efforts to promote free *Job Coaching* and *Employer Development* training through the College of Employment Services (DirectCourse). Training was approved by IVRS and coordinated through IACP to all interested IVRS and CRP staff in Iowa.
- ✓ IVRS Administrator met with LINK staff in West Des Moines to explore training developed by this CRP with Casey's stores, and how IVRS might contribute.
- ✓ IVRS provided information to Inclusion Connection (Waverly) to support their pursuit to become an Employment Network (EN) with IVRS under Social Security's *Partnership Plus*.
- ✓ IVRS staff provided training to Christian Opportunities Center (Indianola) to increase their ability to provide assessment services in the community which IVRS could purchase.
- ✓ IVRS met with North Iowa Vocational Center (NIVC) CRP to review Ticket To Work processes in Mason City.
- ✓ IVRS approved Mid-Iowa Workshop (Marshalltown) as a vendor from whom staff could purchase services.
- ✓ IVRS hosted a meeting for staff hired by Iowa Workforce who began under the Disability Employment Initiative grant (DEI) to collaborate and discuss strategies for service provision. This included furthering discussion on the value of Integrated Resource Teams which promote partnership at the local level.
- ✓ IVRS participated in a national webinar designed to promote Ticket To Work and Work Incentives with an Employer Network (Job Link/Mason City) in a mutual effort to encourage individuals on benefits to consider work.
- ✓ IVRS was also the lead state agency on the Iowa Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program involving seven pilot projects, all representing Iowa Community Providers. Candeo (Johnston), CASS INC (Atlantic), Nishna (Red Oak), Hope Haven (Rock Valley), Story County Community Life (Ames), North Iowa Vocational Center (Mason City), Van Buren Job Opportunities (Keosauqua) were participating members. On-Site visits and monthly conference calls were held with them through the year.

• **April – June 2013**

- ✓ IVRS staff met with DHS representatives to continue alignment efforts and revisit the *Memorandum of Agreement*, including participating in ongoing discussions of community integrated employment and rate alignment to support those efforts.
- ✓ IVRS attended the IACP conference in Ames to join Iowa's provider community and hear from experts about trends, state and national initiatives, and service delivery updates.

- ✓ The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) provided an on-site review of *Employment First* grant activities and praised the high level of collaboration and cooperation between IVRS and community partners, noting Iowa's uniqueness from similar state partnerships.
- ✓ IVRS staff participated in five statewide forums in conjunction with Iowa DHS and the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE). These forums were designed to solicit feedback from people with disabilities, service providers, parents and family members, and other advocates and stakeholders about employment services for people with disabilities. This led to the development of a cross-agency work group in which IVRS was represented. This group reviewed information and data to begin the process of developing definitions for services, restructuring provider reimbursement rates, and establishing standards for service delivery.
- ✓ IVRS and DAC discussed service provision this CRP could provide to job candidates of IVRS in Maquoketa and surrounding counties.
- ✓ IVRS was represented at the Association for Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE) to update legislators and heighten IVRS support for initiatives in place for APSE Capital Day.
- ✓ IVRS initiated a meeting with 11 services providers in Marshalltown to collaborate on ways to deliver services in four county areas where employment services were lacking.
- ✓ IVRS met with staff at Concerned in Atlantic to share information and outline roles, responsibilities and expectations for state funding available in support of community partners.
- ✓ Christian Opportunities Center (COC) hosted an "*IVRS Summit!*" in Pella. IVRS staff from Ottumwa and Des Moines met with community representatives and COC partners to share information and discuss processes and expectations for service delivery.
- ✓ IVRS met with Candeo staff in Johnston to explore possibilities for combining IVRS funds and CRP staff to serve high school youth(s).
- ✓ IVRS participated in ceremonies to honor Project Search graduates and celebrate the Project Search partnership between IVRS, Des Moines Public Schools, Easter Seals and Mercy Hospital. IVRS, along with the Des Moines Public Schools, are primary funding and service coordination for this Project.
- ✓ Information was mailed to all 44 partners by IVRS administration, reflecting outcome information about service provision, recidivism rates and CRP costs.

• **July – September 2013**

- ✓ IVRS approved Exceptional Persons, Inc. (Waterloo) as a partner to provide REDI training at Walgreens.
- ✓ The IVRS State Office hosted a meeting for members of the Iowa Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council to share information about services and discuss community resources.
- ✓ IVRS extended an invitation to 80+ service providers to participate in training classes to learn about Benefits Planning services free of charge.
- ✓ IVRS provided additional support to job candidates involved with the University of Iowa's REACH program (Realizing Educational and Career Hopes).
- ✓ IVRS staff discussed possibilities for Walgreens REDI training with NIVC staff in Mason City.
- ✓ The IVRS State Plan for FY 2015 was approved by federal partners at the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and funds allotted to support state plan partnership goals.

- ✓ IVRS administrative staff completed statewide travels in which input was solicited from the public. A full report has been compiled from information shared at 12 public meetings from 35 job candidates and 86 community partners, and provided to the State Rehabilitation Council. These meetings involved IVRS staff meeting with job candidates and community partners to obtain feedback about IVRS and recommendations for system improvements. These occurred at 12 public locations throughout the state.
- ✓ CHOICE was approved by IVRS as a CRP partner to begin service delivery in both Dubuque and Waterloo.
- ✓ IVRS expanded the current partnership with Hope Haven (Rock Valley) by signing a Partnership Plus agreement. This agreement allows Hope Haven to provide ongoing support to IVRS job candidates as an Employment Network (EN) under the Social Security Administration.
- ✓ Exceptional Opportunities was approved as a vendor by IVRS to provide employment services in Kossuth.

• **October – December 2013**

- ✓ IVRS provided a 1.1% COLA and renewed contracts with 44 external vendors to continue purchase of service agreements for community services from CRP partners.
- ✓ IVRS approved contracts to secure Benefits Planning services from three external vendors.
- ✓ IVRS facilitated conversations with Hope Haven (Burlington) related to the provision of employment and skill training options related to the health care industry.
- ✓ IVRS Administrator presented a keynote address at the Association of Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE) conference. The IVRS vision of Employment First, state initiatives and the role of public and private agencies was shared with over 130 stakeholders attending this conference. CRP partners who attended were provided an update by IVRS on rate restructuring discussions and new service delivery options.
- ✓ On October 17th, the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Senator Harkin hosted the forum, “Empowering Individuals with Disabilities through Employment and Entrepreneurship”. The forum focused on a panel of four businesses, seven job candidates and their representatives, 18 vendors/service organizations and had 225 participants. IVRS facilitated the discussion and assisted with the planning of the event with other state department directors. Representation of service providers and job candidates from our community providers was present.
- ✓ IVRS staff followed-up again at LINK (West Des Moines) to discuss service provision and potential opportunities to partner.
- ✓ IVRS administrative staff met with Terry Johnson (Genesis CRP/Jefferson) to solicit feedback prior to implementing revisions to IVRS’ system for procuring services from CRPs.
- ✓ IVRS services were revamped to include a new service option called Discovery to be delivered by participating CRPs. This was an outgrowth of the participation in the Employment First Initiative.
- ✓ IVRS approved New Focus (Centerville) to provide services to IVRS job candidates in Appanoose and Wayne counties.
- ✓ IVRS state staff met at each IVRS area office to review contracting processes, roles and responsibilities with CRP partners, Department of Human Services (DHS) service providers and IVRS staff. Each of these meetings were held at the IVRS area offices and

community providers were invited to join in these meetings for training and discussion of the 2014 Menu of Services, which are scheduled to be implemented January, 1, 2014.

- ✓ Asset Development and Financial Literacy training occurred through an October webinar which included an invitation to community providers to participate.

2013

Forty-four community rehabilitation extensions were approved by IVRS to increase contract costs for CRP partners by 1.1%. Several CRPs requested an amendment to increase contract costs as new services were added or revisions occurred, all of which were approved by IVRS. Two CRP partners discontinued services: BEST in Waterloo (which operated with one staff) and Optimae in Des Moines (which ended all employment services).

Information about the Ticket To Work partnership between IVRS and community partners continued to be a focus of IVRS Administration. IVRS added a new Employment Network, increasing EN partner numbers to five. IVRS anticipates adding a sixth partner (Inclusion Connection/Waverly) once approval is received from Social Security. Internal procedures have been refined to enhance communication and facilitate the hand-off of a ticket-holder by IVRS to a Partnership Plus partner. Current agreements between IVRS and Partnership Plus partners include: Goodwill of the Great Plains (Sioux City), Frank Varvaris and Associates (Cedar Rapids), North Iowa Vocational Center (Mason City), Hope Haven (Rock Valley), and Iowa Workforce.

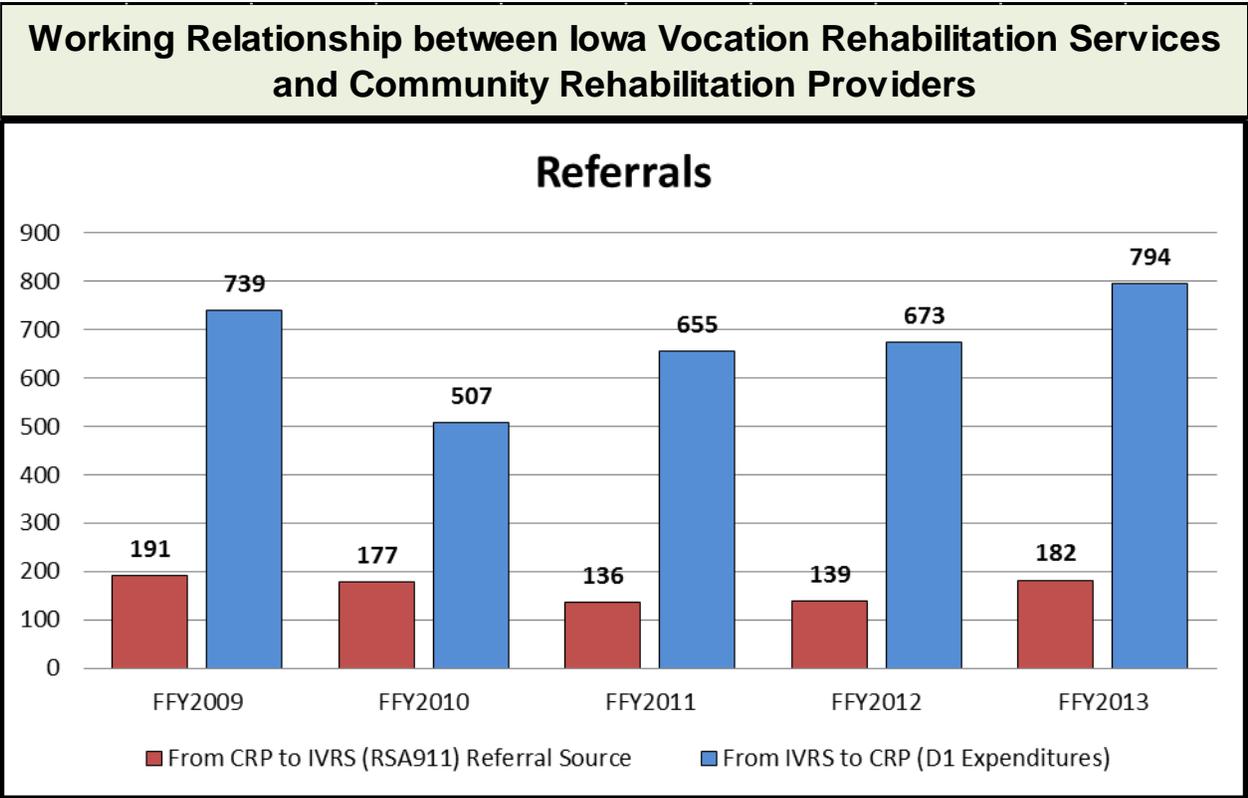
IVRS remains the lead agency with the Walgreens REDI Project and recently expanded training to an additional CRP partner in Waterloo (Exceptional Persons, Inc.). The other four CRPs receiving funding from IVRS to provide REDI training this year were: Candeo, Goodwill of Central Iowa, Goodwill of the Heartland and Goodwill of Northeast Iowa. Walgreens commitment in this partnership is to hire approximately 5,000 individuals nationwide with disabilities into their workforce through the 2013 calendar year. Twenty job candidates received REDI training, one of whom was a client of the Iowa Department for the Blind.

IVRS approved eleven different Occupational Skills training programs provided by CRPs in 2013. These include the following training options: Basic Computer Keyboarding and Intermediate Computer, Retail, Janitorial, Food Service, Health Care, Forklift and Warehouse training.

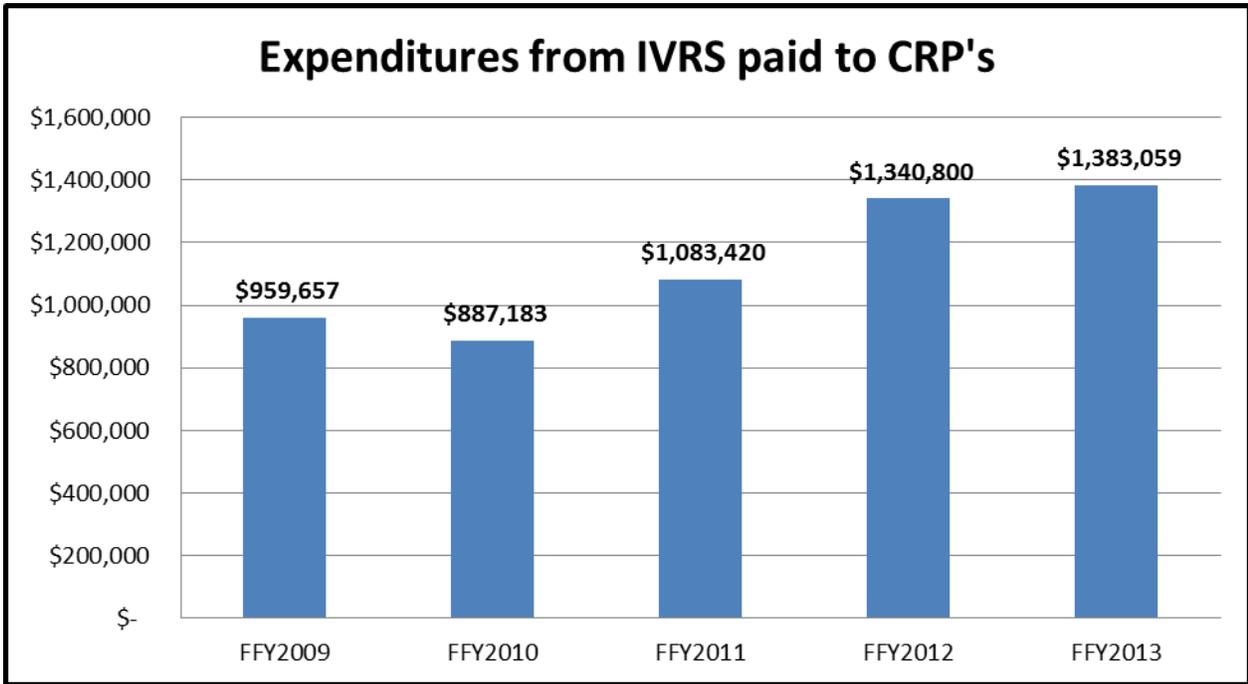
IVRS made a variety of in-service, webinar, on-site and polycom training opportunities available to CRPs throughout the year, as well as data specific to each partner. Vendor data is shared annually by IVRS with providers to stimulate conversations with partners, ensure consistent business practices, promote transparency for purchased services, and provide a statewide basis for comparisons.

IVRS will continue to partner and proactively respond to the demands of an ever-changing job market to fulfill our mission and effectively provide the necessary services to help individuals with disabilities achieve full integration into community employment. Towards this end, IVRS has put forth a dedicated effort to expand opportunities to collaborate, innovate and network with entities and leverage resources with community partners.

Data confirms that IVRS is continuing to expend more funds to CRP partners. Our ability to expand service options is linked to our ability to partner with CRPs.



The above graph reflects the number of referrals from the Community Rehabilitation Provider to IVRS, as well as the number of service referrals from IVRS to the Community Rehabilitation Provider.



The above graph presents the dollar amounts IVRS has expended for services purchased through our Community Rehabilitation Providers during the past five years.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Mitchell

David Mitchell, MS, CRC
IVRS Administrator