



January 15, 2023

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) is 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.

*2019 Iowa Acts chapter 135, as extended by House File 2643: For purposes of optimizing the job placement of individuals with disabilities, IVRS 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, 2023, the division shall submit a written report to the general assembly on the division's outreach efforts with community rehabilitation program providers.*

IVRS has continued efforts to create and maintain partnerships with 72 Iowa community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) in 2022. IVRS continued efforts to promote and encourage collaboration by reaching out to CRPs, external vendors and other service providers. In addition to the CRPs, IVRS established an alternative pathway for 8 trained qualified individuals to be independent providers. This includes developing a collaborative partnership with the Iowa DD Council to provide technical assistance for the Federal fiscal year 2022 to 23 additional CRPs consisting of 37 new employment support providers to provide Customized Discovery service. This not only expanded the Employment First Pilot Project from the geographic regions but also provided research-based programming option for providers and for persons with the most significant disabilities. It also includes a contracted effort with the Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment hosted by our State Rehabilitation Council. That work provided nine webinars on topics of professional interest to our providers, professional staff and constituents. The result of this focus has contributed positively to enhancing partnerships, in addition to maintaining a focus on competitive, integrated employment-related options for Iowans with disabilities.

In FFY22, IVRS collaborated with Mental Health Regions, Mental health providers, DHHS and five CRPs to provide an evidence based service called Individual Placement and Support (IPS) to individuals with severe mental illness. The plan is to stand up more providers in FFY23. Since piloting IPS, rehabilitation rates have gone from 38.5% in FFY2019 to 47% in FFY2021 and most recently, FFY22 resulted in 53% rehabilitation rate.

Positive outcomes from both the Customized Discovery and IPS services have resulted in positive employment data points. The unexpected outcome is the significant change in partnership between IVRS, DHS, MH Regions, and CRP providers. Providers involved in these programs all report a significant increase in communication, contact, knowledge about a case, courtesy, and collaboration. This improved partnership results in a seamless referral and



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intake process, service implementation process, and transitioning period to long-term support services for the individual with disabilities.

*“New Hope values the relationship we have with IVRS. We would not be supporting as many individuals to gain employment without this partnership. The counselors we work with are outstanding as well as the office support that is provided. Customized Discovery has definitely impacted the success rate we are able to achieve by allowing the time to dive into a person’s desires and abilities to solidify a job match that benefits all involved, Job Candidate and Employer. Through New Hope’s partnership with IVRS we have been able to expand our outreach to provide supports not only in Carroll County but to surrounding counties, generating success for individuals seeking employment.”* Jen Daniel, Director of Vocational Services, New Hope, Carroll, IA

And Eva Castillo, Director of Employment Services at Hope Haven Area Development Center covering the Southeast counties, provides fees for services, IPS and CD. Castillo said:

*“For over three decades Hope Haven Area Development Center has worked with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. In that time, many things have changed in the disability service world but the one thing that remains the same is the passion and drive that our two agencies share in helping Iowans have success in employment. Our partnership with IVRS has blossomed, and in the last two years alone, HHADC has developed two Occupational Skills Training curriculums, started Individual Placement and Support services for individuals with severe mental health diagnoses, and provided Customized Discovery services, all in addition to the many other employment supports provided through this partnership. Countless individuals have benefited from these supports and are working competitive jobs in their communities. None of this would be possible without the support and guidance from IVRS.”*

IVRS has a dedicated staff position performing the outreach activities in collaboration with our CRPs. In addition, IVRS has a proactive plan that includes training and ongoing collaboration with long-term support providers to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities continue to be successful with the employment design customized through the efforts of this employment partnership. This plan includes collaboration with the Center of Excellence for Behavior Health (CEBH) at the University of Iowa’s Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) to do training on IPS and Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA) to train on Customized Employment. Local IVRS offices have implemented regular routine meetings with the individual, parents and guardians, CRP providers and long-term support providers.

The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on provider services including their ability to provide continuity of services which impacts motivation and timeliness of services. A number of providers closed or delayed service operations related to employment at the



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beginning of FFY22 but some have been able to reopen and take on new referral by the end of the fiscal year.

Some providers are no longer serving previously covered geographic areas and some lack trained staff to provide employment services. In order to support our CRP capacity issues, IVRS has reached out to individual providers to support rural locations and areas that currently have no CRP coverage. IVRS has also reached out to CRPs to provide virtual employment services whenever applicable in order to prevent knowledge and skill regression during any employment gaps.

This is demonstrated in the numbers below for 2022, which is significantly lower than in past years.

FFY	Amount Expended to CRP's	Number of Job Candidates with CRP Services
2022	\$2,514,238	1,381
2021	\$2,751,318	1,611
2020	\$2,274,001	1,689
2019	\$3,738,006	2,269
2018	\$3,754,427	2,228
2017	\$3,363,602	2,010
2016	\$2,961,365	1,871
2015	\$2,836,035	1,432
2014	\$1,845,630	988

CRP services have decreased especially in rural areas thereby limiting IVRS's ability to access CRP services.

IVRS has continued to see a decrease in number of services provided to our adult caseload, primarily due to the attention and focus on transition and pre-employment transition services required by the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act. IVRS is now serving close to 9,000 more potentially eligible students than ever before with the change in federal legislation.

The employment outcomes for individuals receiving supported employment services through our community rehabilitation providers in FFY22 increased from 362 successful employment outcomes to 386. The data demonstrates an increase of average hourly wage earned going from \$10.04 to \$11.20. This is reflective of the quality of services.

IVRS provided financial support to 44 different Occupational Skills training programs, authorizing services for 121 job candidates totaling \$523,238 for FFY22. This decreased from 152 job candidates totaling an overall cost expenditure from \$523,238 in FFY21. Though numbers decreased in the number of job candidates and cost expenditures, quality of services



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increased as reflected in average hourly wage earned increasing by over 10%. Our CRPs are integral to the success of these training efforts to meet the business skill gap.

IVRS implemented a variety of in-service, webinar, on-site and video conference training opportunities available to CRPs throughout the year, as well as performance 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 and quality assurance improvement. IVRS included additional data points related to time in supported employment, the rehabilitation rate, hours worked and dollars earned. Data was shared across systems to provide an opportunity to review outcome quality to set standards and review the effectiveness of office and CRP collaboration. The data measures are the same standards IVRS is held accountable to with federal reporting. All CRP providers were contacted and received specific communication and outreach from IVRS staff. These conversations will occur throughout the FFY23 and are critical to continuing efforts to identify innovative strategies dealing with work environment caused by the pandemic.

IVRS continues to build CRP incentive programs to address workforce shortage related issues surrounding financial barriers; to encourage the hiring of direct service providers with disabilities; and to recognize quality employment programs and services.

IVRS will also continue to collaborate 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.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Daniel Tallon*

Daniel Tallon,  
IVRS Administrator