

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Intent

The intent of DVR's comprehensive needs assessment is to gather information that will support the identification of goals and priorities that will position DVR to offer services that make it possible for individuals with disabilities to:

- Achieve work that reflects their potential and offers career growth and advancement;
- Earn enough to be financially secure (hours and wages); and
- Receive benefits that meet their needs

Populations of interest

Specific populations of interest include youth transitioning from school, individuals with the most significant disabilities, including SSI/SSDI recipients, and individuals from minority groups. In addition, we need to increase the visibility of populations that are currently under-represented or unserved by DVR.

Focus of needs assessment

DVR is interested in focusing the comprehensive needs assessment on gathering information that will point us in the direction of organizational improvements, partnerships, projects or practices that will achieve the following results:

- Provide more DVR customers with work-based learning opportunities
- Improve the career and labor market information available to DVR customers
- Assist more adult DVR customers to become employed in middle and higher wage jobs with benefits
- Assist more DVR youth customers to become employed in career pathways that lead to higher wage jobs with benefits
- Improve long-term employment retention and wage progression
- Equal access and service delivery to diverse groups
- DVR customers will achieve outcomes that are comparable to other Workforce Investment Act programs

Groups to be surveyed

To accomplish our intent, we need input and engagement from a broad array of constituents, including individuals with disabilities, community partners and providers, DVR employees, agency and workforce development partners, schools, and employers (large and small, public and private).

In surveying individuals with disabilities, community partners, providers, DVR employees, the needs assessment will be designed to provide information and priorities related to the following broad questions:

- What are the main barriers that prevent people with disabilities (including those with the most significant disabilities) from moving into jobs that reflect their potential and pay a livable wage with benefits?
- What services or assistance would make it possible for individuals with disabilities to go to work in jobs that reflect their potential and pay a livable wage with benefits?
- Once in a job, what long term services or assistance (if any) would individuals with disabilities need to keep the job?
- For individuals who are working now, what services or assistance is needed to be able to advance to?

In surveying employers, DVR is specifically interested in information that will:

- Help DVR establish a linkage from employers to DVR as a key resource in meeting their workforce needs.
- Identify high demand occupations and industry cluster strategies at the local and regional levels that will provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to prepare for and meet the workforce needs of employers
- Identify employers interested in increasing apprenticeships for traditional and non-traditional programs
- Identify business leaders interested in promoting business-to-business collaborations that promote the employment of people with disabilities

In surveying WIA and other agency partners, DVR is interested in information that will create more flexible and responsible systems, including:

- High school students with disabilities (IEP and 504) benefit from Navigation 101 and have effective, integrated 13th year transition plans; the option to complete career and technical education sequence that matches their career interests, articulates with post-secondary education and results in industry certification where applicable and employment in field of study.
- Expansion of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities for youth and adults
- Summer youth employment that links with occupational skills programs or academic programs and lead to employment with higher wages and benefits
- Increase the number of students who complete at least one year of post-secondary training and receive a credential
- Increase co-enrollment of DVR customers in WIA programs.
- Improve supports available to ensure work retention and career advancement

- Continuing training and education for low and mid-level government employees with disabilities to build competitive skills

Data collection methods

We believe a variety of data collection methods will be needed to get the best results from the targeted groups. Methods may include written or on-line surveys, telephone surveys and focus group discussions. We plan to capitalize on the work of other states and programs to assist in the development of assessment tools.

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