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NoQ4U: Eliminate the Waitlist

NEWSLETTER

Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Elizabeth Hopkins; Director

Vol. 1, No. 5
March 2010

WELCOME

Welcome to the 4th bi-monthly Eliminate the Waitlist newsletter! This newsletter is a vehicle for providing information to staff and our partners about the progress of this project. If you missed it, you can get some background information by checking out our first three newsletters, as well as detailed information about the project plans on our website: http://inet.state.me.us/rehab/dvr_waitlist_project

We are moving from the planning stages of the work regarding eliminating the waitlist, and forging ahead with implementation. By March 24th, we will have completed all the training out to staff on new processes that were recommended from the four work group areas. We are in the process of collecting data to help us determine how we are meeting and progressing with our goals.

I am pleased to announce that we have hired two new Regional Directors, Elinor Weissman and Dale Ruopp. Elinor will be covering the Augusta and AUGUSTA offices and Dale the Bangor and Northern areas. Both have extensive experience in vocational rehabilitation services and will be taking on additional project work as we move forward with this initiative.



DVR is very fortunate to have excellent working relationships with our partners at DHHS, specifically Mental Health and Developmental Services. We are looking forward to continuing to work together to ensure that the services we are providing will meet the needs of our joint clients, such as adapting the Career Exploration Curriculum for use with Developmental Services and using some Mental Health State General Funds to obtain our full Federal Funding match.

Most exciting is that as of April 1st, 2010, there will be no wait list for those individuals coming to VR who fall into our Category 1 status (people with the most significant disabilities). The efforts in all our offices have been nothing short of Herculean in order to reach this first major milestone. The additional 16 ARRA funded staff throughout the state, plus using the more streamlined processes, have us well on our way to reaching our goal of no waitlist for people in any category by October, 1st, 2010.

As always, we welcome your feedback and any concerns or comments you may have. If you want, you can ask questions, or provide feedback by using the [feedback form](#): If you are reading this outside the state system, please feel free to contact me through e-mail - elizabeth.hopkins@maine.gov.

Thank you and enjoy!

Betsy Hopkins
Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Oct	Waitlist Elimination complete
Sep	Finalize changes to VR procedures
Aug	
Jul	
Jun	Gather feedback on implementation
May	
Apr	No waitlist for Category 1 clients
Mar	
Feb	Staff training on new procedures
Jan	Implementation of new procedures
Dec	
Nov	New training materials developed
Oct	
Sep	Final recommendations presented New staff begin work on backlog
Aug	
Jul	Groups work on plans; new staff hired
Jun	Plans submitted to Steering Committee
May	Smaller Workgroups formed
Apr	Formalize Project Plans
Mar	Group meetings begin
Feb	
Jan	Groups formed

BRS DIRECTOR SCRIBBLES

It has been incredibly exciting to note the progress DVR is making towards achieving the elimination of the waitlist by October, 2010! With most of the training on new processes behind us, the focus at Central Office is to support managers, supervisors and front line staff as systems changes are assimilated into every day practice. Making adjustments as necessary, the NoQ4u Steering Committee remains actively engaged to help the process move more smoothly.

The fourth system wide session focused on tracking, measuring and reporting systems changes and customer outcomes is scheduled for June 22nd from 1:00 – 4:00. I look forward to sharing preliminary templates for local, regional and statewide data and hearing from front line staff on how these new processes are faring. We will again invite our external partners to attend the last hour of the session to elicit their feedback.

These are challenging times for state employees and for our customers facing a sagging job market. Nonetheless, we have reason to be upbeat. The downward arc of the economy appears to be flattening, we look forward to a successful conclusion to the wait list project and we have mapped out a path to sustaining improved access to service over time.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your commitment and hard work. There is reason to be hopeful, to encourage hope in our customers and to be proud of the day in and day out work you do on behalf of job seekers with disabilities.

By now, you will have received the internal announcement of the recent promotion of Elizabeth Hopkins. As DVR Director, Betsy will join John McMahon, John Shattuck and Karen Fraser as a member of our Bureau Lead Team (BLT).

Please join me in welcoming Betsy in her new role.

Jill Duson
BRS Director

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Maine's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has been embarking on a major initiative to eliminate the wait list and provide the "right service at the right time" to its consumers. Maine DVR has initiated changes in how we provide services by evaluating each major process point with consumers. DVR has identified these points as: "Entering the VR System", "VR Plan Development", "VR Plan Accomplishment" and "Exiting the VR System". The goal has been to provide services to all eligible clients at the time that they need them to achieve competitive, community-based employment.

Use of Recovery Act Money for the Project

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 has provisions that allowed Maine DVR to hire limited-period positions providing they offer support to Title I applicants/clients. The focus of these positions is to perform outreach activities, including contacting clients who have been on a waiting list or have lost contact with our agency for the purpose of engagement in services and ultimately employment. We currently have 9 Rehabilitation Counselor I's and 7 of the 8 Rehabilitation Assistants working in VR offices across the state. In addition to the 16 direct service positions, we have hired two consultants in our central office. One is a ten hour a week position to assist us with following the strict reporting guidelines that the Federal Government has put in place to keep track of this funding, and the other was a half time business analyst position that worked with our Office of Information and Technology department and developed a plan for

Steering Committee Members

Jill Duson-Leader
John Shattuck
Karen Fraser
Betsy Hopkins
Paul Cote
Chris Littlefield
Dale Roupp
Mary Borelli-Bean
Catherine Singleton
Louise Sidelinger
Barbara Michaud
Peter Diplock
Samantha Fenderson
Beth Lehning
Joshua Howe
Drew Bolduc
Anne Wheeler
Wendy Warren

Waitlist
Eliminated

100

200

300

400

500

600

700

800

900

1000

1100

1200

1300

1400

1500

moving to a better statewide data collection system. We have also hired a part time management analyst to help with data collection and reporting.

WORKING GROUP: ENTERING THE VR SYSTEM

Goal of this group: Entering VR: This group's major focus was improving ways in which applicants enter into our system, how eligibility is determined, how Order of Selection classification is made, how Work Readiness is determined, how Trial Work Experiences are utilized and whether Extended Evaluation should be reinstituted. This group has made specific recommendations for how we orient clients to our program by developing a comprehensive, user-friendly orientation program that will be available in a variety of accessible formats. We have started the development of this program and hope to be able to use it consistently with clients by June, 2010. As part of this group's work, they have made a recommendation to adjust our Order of Selection eligibility requirement so that we are in compliance with our rules and are serving the most significantly disabled people first. These rules were adopted and have been in effect since January 1st, 2010.

Membership

Chris Littlefield - Leader
Peter Diplock
Kathy Despres (CARES)
Abbie Miller
Angel McInnis
Linda Besore
David Utter
Anita Hesketh
Rosie Hartzler
Audrey L'Heureux
Beth Coombs
Barbara Greenstein
Jackie Healy
Stephen Crate
Carol Mitchell

WORKING GROUP: VR PLAN DEVELOPMENT - STATUS 10

This group's goal was to address the specific process of vocational goal development and plan writing. This team has been reviewing current activities and counselor practice in developing vocational goals and identifying services needed to achieve an employment outcome for clients, as well as considering alternative tools and tracking systems. The Career Exploration Workshops are up and running across the state in all offices. DVR has included a tracking system to gauge the effectiveness of this new program. The system will help ensure that individuals will come away with clearer vocational goals, which will in turn require less time in VR, and ultimately help them make better job matches more quickly. Initial training for two tools used in this workshop, the Employment Readiness Scale and the World of Work Inventory, has been offered to all staff across the state throughout the past three months, and DVR is providing follow-up Level Two training this spring as staff become more adept at using these tools. An updated procedural directive regarding use of the comprehensive assessment process and form is in use and more in-depth training in the use of this tool will also be offered to staff late spring. Adopting this protocol, using the CEW with clients, and implementing the new tools should improve time and use of resources throughout the VR process for both clients and counselors.

Membership

Dale Ruopp - Leader
Melissa Caron
Susan Chesler-Doherty
Joshua Howe
David Nadeau
Joseph Roquebecil
Mike Shirley
Sheryl Smith
Anne Wheeler
Frank Zeller

WORKING GROUP: PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENT

The focus of this team was on the provision of services deemed necessary for a person to reach their vocational goal. The team has been looking at how cost services are currently being provided and has made some recommendations for how to improve the quality and cost of some of these services. Specifically, they are proposing that Maine revise its procedures when purchasing hearing aids for clients across the state and this process is now under development. This group also developed an updated protocol for referring clients for job development services, and a computer purchase decision tree.

Other initiatives underway include a newly revised Special Appointment Program for State jobs and "We Mean Business", a BRS and BES collaborative employer relations pilot project in Somerset and Kennebec counties. More information and training for all staff in the use of these new procedures will occur in late March.

Membership

Mary Borelli Bean - Leader
Amy LeVasseur
Barbara Michaud
Rebecca Pappas-Jones
Valerie Oswald

WORKING GROUP: EXITING VR

This group reviewed the way in which our clients exit the VR program. Specifically, they have developed unsuccessful and successful closure forms with a written protocol for each. They have provided a group of best practice sample closure letters for counselors to choose from, and they have updated the case review forms, which will provide more consistent feedback to counselors regarding their case work practices. Improving how people exit the VR system from whichever Status it occurs will improve the flow of cases so that individuals will be served more effectively once the wait list is eliminated. Training in the use of these new protocols occurred in late January and early February and all of the forms and practices are in use at this time.

Membership

Cathy Singleton -
Leader
Chris Bean
James Howard
Priscilla Coffin
Allison Trussell
Beth Lehning
Kim Waite
Sue Primiano
Sharon Lowrey
Janet Schlegel

WORKING GROUP: TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

The focus of this team has been to look at the recommendations from all four groups to improve the VR rehabilitation process for the general population and determine how they can best be adapted to working with transition students. This group has completed their meetings and made some specific recommendations, including when and how a student is referred to VR, and adaptations in the use of the new client/counselor agreement form. This group is also providing input into the new orientation product to be adapted for use in the school systems. A small work group will be overseeing the development and adaptation of the career exploration curriculum for use in schools, hopefully by next fall. The proposed changes from the Transition group will be shared with the leaders in early March and then presented to the next Transition Counselors meeting in late March.

Membership

Anne Wheeler- Leader
Wendy Warren- Leader
Samantha Fenderson
Frank Zeller
James Howard
Priscilla Coffin
Helen Corriveau.
Monica Mitchell
Tom Van Tassel
Stephen Conroy
Janet Schlegel
Mary Knowlton
Sandra Lamb-Mickel
Clarissa Gates
Nancy Cronin

WORKING GROUP: DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

The Data and Technology Group has recently had a dual focus of defining and collecting data to measure progress of the wait list project. A new monthly report will be available starting later this month. We have also been working with OIT's Project Management Office (PMO) in moving the project to replace our case management system, ORSIS. We have been working on preparing a request for proposals (RFP) to be released in April to solicit bids on the new system.

Membership

Joshua Howe- Leader
Karen Fraser
Anita Oliver
Mary Borelli Bean
Jeremy Barnard
David Poulin
Scott McNeil

