

# Chapter 310: Supported Employment

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Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Policy and Procedures Manual

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## Section I. Definitions

- A. **“Extended services”** means ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability/disabilities in supported employment, and that are provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource from funds other than funds received under the Code of Federal Regulations Title 34, Parts 363, 376, or 380, after an individual with a most significant disability has made the transition from DVR services.
- B. **“Supported Employment”** – The term ‘supported employment’ means competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, or employment in an integrated work setting in which individuals are working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment, that is individualized and customized consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals involved, for individuals with the most significant disabilities:
1. For whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred; or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and;
  2. Who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition from DVR services in order to perform the work involved
- C. **“Supported Employment Services”** – The term ‘supported employment services’ means ongoing support services, including customized employment, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment, that:
1. Are provided singly or in combination and are organized and made available in such a way as to assist an eligible individual to achieve competitive integrated employment;
  2. Are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment; and
  3. Are provided by VR for a period of not more than 24 months, except that period may be extended, if necessary, in order to achieve the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment.

## Section II. General Policy

- A. A plan for supported employment services may be written for persons for whom competitive employment has either not traditionally occurred or has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability. Supported employment is most often provided as a service for individuals with developmental disabilities or severe psychiatric disabilities. However, individuals with other types of disability may require supported employment services to access competitive employment. Therefore, the assessment of the need for supported employment services should not be based on any particular disability.

- B. Typically, DVR provides supported employment services through grant agreements with community rehabilitation providers (most often Designated Agencies and Specialized Service Agencies). Often, the agency providing supported employment services has a long term and ongoing relationship with the consumer. This relationship can be very helpful in developing a plan for employment. However, the counselor **must not** delegate his/her responsibility for all aspects of the rehabilitation process. In particular, the counselor must ensure the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the eligible person are honored during the process.
- C. Supported employment services can include:
1. Vocational assessment;
  2. The provision of job coaching and intensive job skill training at the work site;
  3. Job development and placement;
  4. Social skills training;
  5. Regular observation or supervision of the person;
  6. Follow-up services including regular contact with the employer, the person, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the person, and other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement;
  7. Facilitation of natural supports at the work site;
  8. Any other service identified in the scope of vocational rehabilitation services.
- D. The ongoing support services needed to maintain a person in employment shall be identified in the IPE.
1. Ongoing support services may be furnished by DVR from the time of job placement until transition to extended services. DVR will not provide ongoing supports if those supports already exist through the extended service provider. For example, if an individual has Division of Developmental Services, Home and Community Based Waiver funding for supported employment or long term supports through the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program.
  2. If provided by DVR, ongoing support services:
    - a) Shall be limited to 24 months unless, under special circumstances, the person and the Counselor jointly agree to extend the time in order to achieve the objectives identified in the IPE;

**Guidance – Example of “special circumstance” affecting IPE timeline.**

*An example of a “special circumstance” is: an extended support service provider has been identified but cannot begin service provision for a month.*

**End Guidance.**

- b) May be delivered as post-employment services if not available from an extended services provider and are necessary to maintain or regain the job placement or advance in employment.

3. Ongoing support must include a periodic assessment of the individuals' employment stability. It must also include a periodic assessment of what services are required both on the job site and away from the job site to maintain the stability of placement. The VR case must continue to be open during this period.
    - a) At a minimum, twice-monthly monitoring at the work site of each person in supported employment; or
    - b) If under special circumstances, especially at the request of the person, the IPE provides for off-site twice-monthly meetings with the person.
- E. The IPE for a person whose vocational goal in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate must contain:
1. A description of the supported employment services to be provided by DVR; and
  2. A description of the extended services needed and identification of the source of extended services or, in the event that identification of the source is not possible at the time the IPE is developed, a statement explaining the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that services will become available. For example, a consumer is a student in high school, who has a developmental disability, is not guaranteed to be eligible for Home and Community Based Waiver Services through the Division of Developmental Services (DDS). However, if the counselor determines the consumer is likely to meet the DDS, System of Care Priority then it is reasonable to identify the Waiver Services as a likely source of extended services.

#### **Guidance – Managing grant-funded supported employment services.**

*DVR provides grant funding to two major supported employment programs in the State of Vermont. These are:*

- *Developmental Services (DS) programs for adults with developmental disabilities*
- *JOBS programs for youth with severe emotional/behavioral disabilities*

*In State Fiscal Year 2012, the Agency of Human Services introduced performance based grants for supported employment programs. One performance measure that is included in all supported employment grants is the DVR rehabilitation or employment closure. Because performance incentives and holdbacks are attached to the grants, it is very important for DVR counselors to apply **consistent** criteria to considering both when to open and to close a case as well as determining if a supported employment consumer has achieved a successful rehabilitation.*

*The following is intended to provide guidance around frequently asked questions DVR counselors may have when managing a supported employment caseload:*

**How involved should the DVR counselor be in the process of identifying and developing the employment goal, when the supported employment staff do most of the work with the consumer?**

*The DVR counselor has all the same responsibilities and requirements for the development of a supported employment case as they do with a non-supported employment case. However, it is often a reality that the supported employment staff may know the consumer much better than the DVR counselor and may have worked with them for years. Therefore, the DVR counselor may have to rely on the supported employment staff to help them establish the employment goal. However, the DVR counselor should not hesitate to challenge the supported employment staff if they feel:*

- *The consumer can and wants to work more hours than is proposed.*
- *The consumer's choices and interests are not reflected in the process.*

**To what extent is an Initial Interview beneficial when a DVR counselor is working with someone already involved with a supported employment provider?**

*Initial Interviews are an effective way of developing a rapport with an individual and gaining an understanding of their needs as they relate to developing an IPE that includes supported employment services. Through the Initial Interview the DVR counselor gains a sense of the projected need for services that may be necessary to augment those provided by the SE provider.*

- *An Initial Interview should be done with any consumer who is enrolling with VR for the first time. The counselor may choose to include the supported employment team member based on the individual circumstances.*
- *An Initial Interview should be considered for consumers who return to VR and apply for a second case. If the DVR counselor is confident that the consumer's circumstances have not changed; they should use their discretion to not do a second Initial Interview.*

**What are some key considerations when determining that an employment placement is successful?**

*As with the establishing the employment goal, the DVR counselor is ultimately responsible for determining if the employment placement has met the conditions for a successful employment closure. Things to consider are as follows:*

- *The placement matches with the individual's employment goal.*
- *Compensatory wages and benefits are being earned.*
- *The person is working at their maximum potential based on their choices.*

- *The person is working in an integrated competitive setting; i.e. there are not multiple supported employment consumers in a grouped setting.*
- *Supported employment supports have been faded to a minimum level possible.*
- *The placement is not a sheltered or congregate or otherwise non-competitive work setting. For example, the supported employment agency creates a job in their facility for a VR consumer, that would not otherwise exist.*

*These criteria can be extremely subjective. However, it is important to ask these questions and seek support from your regional manager or the DVR supported employment or JOBS program coordinator if you feel a placement does not meet these criteria.*

**Are there certain levels of post-employment type services that the Supported Employment provider is expected to provide as part of their paid ongoing supports?**

*For CRT and DS, follow-along services are expected to take place as part of the Supported Employment service. These are the services that occur once a consumer has achieved stability within their employment and are provided by staff supported by non-VR funds (DS waiver, CRT case-rate). VR grant funded CRT or DS employment staff may be involved in providing follow-up services, but their activities tend to be more focused on continued relationship building with the employer to identify other jobs that consumers might want to pursue.*

*For the JOBS program, these services can be provided until the JOBS participant is deemed a successful completion, ages out of the JOBS program, or is closed for other reasons. Generally, the VR counselor should place these consumers in a status 32.*

**I have been asked to open a case on an individual who has previously been closed with DVR after successfully achieving their employment goal and is still employed at the same job. How do I handle this?**

*By definition, CRT and DS consumers who receive supported employment services require long term supports in order to maintain their employment. Therefore it is expected that the supported employment provider will provide the necessary support to consumers who have occasional difficulties without opening up a new VR case. If the consumer needs a single paid service to help retain their current employment (e.g. transportation money) the counselor may consider reopening the case in post-employment to allow the expenditure. **Post-employment closures do not count toward a supported employment program's outcomes.** In general, this situation will not apply to JOBS consumers.*

*Reopening a case may be justified if multiple services will be required over an extended period of time or if the consumer has a new employment goal. For example, the consumer has been reassigned to a different job within the*

company and will require extensive retraining or support with the help of the supported employment program. **However, the VR counselor must be convinced that the situation truly requires multiple services over an extended period of time or that a new employment goal is justified before reopening a new case.**

The supported employment program placed an individual this year and I closed them as a successful employment outcome. Soon after, the person lost their job and has started work at a new employer. Can the program claim a second employment closure outcome in the same grant year?

*It is allowable for a supported employment program to count two employment closures for the same person during the same grant term. **However, this should be the exception.** In determining if you are going to allow the second employment outcome, the issues you might want to consider are as follows:*

- *You should consider if the second placement is the result of “substantial services” provided by the supported employment provider. If not, you may consider opening up the case in a post-employment status or simply determine the second placement was the result of ongoing supports covered by the supported employment provider.*
- *You may require that the second placement last for more than 90 days before you consider it stable and appropriate for closure. This might especially apply if the consumer has a history of many short term placements.*

*Frequent turnover in placements could be a sign of issues around appropriate job matching and/or supports. If the DVR counselor thinks this is the case, they should bring it to the attention of their regional manager or the DVR supported employment or JOBS program coordinator.*

**End Guidance.**