

Chapter 209: Casework Practices Under WIOA

Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Policy and Procedures Manual

Revision Date: December 2018

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Section I. Overview and Purpose

- A. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Common Performance Measures are the federal indicators used to evaluate the DVR program. These measures are:
1. Employment rate during the second quarter post program exit;
 2. Employment rate during the fourth quarter post program exit;
 3. Median earning during the second quarter post program exit;
 4. Measurable skill gains;
 5. Credential attainment; and
 6. Employer satisfaction.
- B. The WIOA Common Performance Measures encourage DVR to support consumers achieving long-term aspirational career goals. DVR policy is to promote practice that will support consumers achieving higher level employment beyond entry level jobs. The purpose of this chapter is to provide DVR counselors with policy guidance specific to the new career-focused paradigm in the following areas:
1. The development of IPEs and management of cases;
 2. Case expenditures.
- C. Nothing in this chapter overrides or replaces DVR policy and guidance in other chapters of the DVR Policy Manual. This guidance is intended to supplement those chapters and support counselors to manage casework and case services within the new career focused paradigm.

Section II. Development and Amendment of IPEs to Support Careers

- A. WIOA gives DVR counselors significant flexibility in how they support a consumer to achieve a long-term career goal. The IPE process allows the counselor and consumer to explore career options and change direction during the rehabilitation process.

Guidance – IPE and IPE Amendment Case Examples.

The following case examples are intended to illustrate how a counselor can use the IPE and IPE amendment processes to support careers.

Case Example 1:

Bill has a long-term career goal but also needs help getting a job right now to pay the bills. Can the counselor help Bill get the “right now” job, as well as support him with a long-term career goal?

- *Yes, if Bill needs immediate income to be able to pursue a long-term goal, it is perfectly acceptable to support the consumer in obtaining a “right now” job. The services necessary to obtain the immediate job should be listed on the IPE and might include the following:*
 - ⊕ *Referral to an Employment Consultant for job placement;*

- ⊕ *Work clothes or money for gas; and*
- ⊕ *Car repairs.*
- *The counselor should document the purpose behind these services in the IPE case note. For example:*
 - ⊕ *Bill is starting a CDL program in July, however he needs current income to be able to participate in the program. I have referred him to an Employment Consultant for assistance finding an interim job while he completes his CDL training.*

Case Example 2:

Through a comprehensive assessment and counseling process, Wendy identifies Licensed Nursing Aide as her employment goal. She completes the certification through Community College of Vermont and gets a job at a local nursing home. During the process, Wendy's confidence in her own abilities has increased. Through the counseling and guidance process, the counselor might encourage Wendy to explore further aspirational goals before closing the case. If she is interested in exploring a Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Nurse credential and feels that will lead to an employment goal that better meets her informed choice, the counselor can amend the IPE to reflect the new goal.

Case Example 3:

Sarah comes to DVR just wanting a job. She is not able to think about long-term career goals, even though her counselor sees great potential in her. Can the counselor develop an IPE to meet her immediate need, but also work with her to see if she might consider other opportunities?

- *You must engage the consumer where they are, related to their immediate need. However, it is important to remember the most essential part of vocational rehabilitation is vocational guidance and counseling. It is through this process, and appropriate use of assessments, that you can help the consumer explore their vocational goal.*
- *If, after a comprehensive assessment and counseling, Sarah continues to only be focused on an immediate job to pay the bills, the counselor should honor her informed choice and support her IPE employment goal. However, if during the process Sarah becomes open to a more aspirational goal that is better suited to her abilities and interests, the counselor can amend the IPE.*

Case Example 4:

William has lots of ideas about potential career goals but is struggling to narrow down his focus. He is young and has limited work experience, so it is not surprising he does not know exactly what he wants to do. Can the counselor develop an IPE for career exploration?

- *The counselor cannot create an IPE solely for career exploration purposes because the IPE requires an employment goal. (School to Work cases for high school students are the exception to this rule and can develop IPEs with a “projected post-school employment outcome”). The counselor should select an employment goal that is broad enough, such as “Sales and related workers, all others”, to allow the consumer to explore a prospective career in that field.*
- *Once William has completed the exploratory activities, the counselor should develop a new IPE with the specific employment/career goal and services necessary to achieve that goal. At this point, the IPE can include:*
 - ⊕ *Substantial training and educational services; and*
 - ⊕ *All the case service expenditures necessary to achieve the goal.*
- *The IPE and IPE amendment process in this case example provides the counselor with a framework to go from a vague, general employment goal to something more specific and focused.*

End Guidance.

Section III. Case Service Expenditures to Support Employment and Careers

Assistance with Basic Needs

- A. While many DVR applicants and consumers have basic support needs for food, housing and other essential items, it is important to recognize that DVR is an employment and training program, and case service expenditures must be directed toward assisting DVR consumers with achieving their employment goals. It is also important for DVR, as an organization, to be compassionate and help people access the appropriate non-DVR resources available.
- B. When assessing DVR applicant and DVR consumer requests for case services, it is important for DVR counselors to keep the following in mind:
 1. DVR is an employment and training program and not a basic support program.
 2. DVR case service expenditures must be directly related to the achievement of an employment outcome, as described in the IPE. It is not allowable, under WIOA, for DVR to expend funds simply to meet a basic need. Basic support services can only be provided if determined necessary for the individual to achieve their employment goal, as identified in their IPE.
 3. There is no entitlement to DVR services as there are with some basic support programs.
 4. Employment is the only reliable route out of poverty for most DVR applicants and consumers. DVR resources should be focused on helping people achieve long-term sustainable employment, not to provide short-term financial support.

- C. In some situations, basic support might be the key service that helps the person achieve an employment goal. DVR can assist a consumer with basic support needs, if it can be directly tied to the achievement of the employment outcome on the IPE. To make this determination, the counselor should consider the following factors:
1. Are there other potential sources of support available, including comparable benefits?
 2. Will the expenditure(s) help move the consumer to a sustainable situation? For example, can the consumer afford to maintain the car they are asking DVR to help repair?
 3. Is the basic support service(s) necessary for the consumer to achieve the employment goal?
 4. Is the consumer engaged in the DVR program and their plan for employment, or are they simply looking for financial assistance? The following factors would be evidence that the consumer is engaged:
 - a) The consumer is participating in a short-term training program;
 - b) The consumer is working with an Employment Consultant or participating in a Supported Employment program;
 - c) The consumer is actively looking for work;
 - d) The consumer is participating in a career assessment or job readiness activity; or
 - e) The consumer is currently employed or has a confirmed job offer.

Please note, these factors are examples that can be used and are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Guidance – Basic Needs Case Examples.

The following case examples are intended to illustrate when a counselor should and should not provide financial support for a consumer's basic needs. Please note that every case should be assessed on an individual basis.

Case Example 1:

Joe applied for DVR services a year ago. He presented an immediate need for car repairs to help him get back to work. After finding Joe eligible and developing an IPE, DVR authorized \$800 in car repairs. Not long after, Joe stopped showing up for meetings and his counselor eventually closed his case. Now he is back asking for more help fixing his car.

- *In this situation it is reasonable, and appropriate, to evaluate if Joe truly has an employment goal or is just seeking financial assistance. The counselor should use the initial interview and assessment process to make this determination. If Joe is reluctant to engage in the employment process, this may indicate he is not serious about pursuing an employment goal and the counselor should consider closing the case.*

Case Example 2:

Mary is currently working 40 hours per week in retail, making minimum wage. She has an opportunity to enroll in an LNA program but will have to reduce her hours. The training will be paid for with a VSAC non-degree grant, but she estimates she will need \$2,500 over the next three months to pay her rent so she can complete the program.

- *In this situation, the basic support is clearly going to make it possible for Mary to complete the LNA program and is therefore allowable as an IPE service. Even though it is a large case service expenditure, it will put Mary in a higher earnings category and give her a credential that has value over a lifetime.*

End Guidance.