



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committee

FROM: Kevin G. Smith

SUBJECT: Core Rehabilitation Services Contracts

DATE: December 9, 2013

AUTHORIZATION(S):

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SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

To provide the Board of Regents with information on new ACCES vocational rehabilitation service contracts to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Reason(s) for Consideration

For information and discussion in order to update the Board of Regents on this initiative.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Board of Regents in a presentation to the ACCES Committee at their December 2013 meeting.

Background Information

Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) provides a wide array of vocational rehabilitation services to nearly 80,000 individuals with disabilities each year. An essential part is specialized services purchased from community rehabilitation providers which include: entry; assessment; assistive and rehabilitation technology; work readiness; job placement; supported employment; driver rehabilitation; and related adjunct services. Previously, these services were purchased through two separate contracts - one for supported employment services and another for all other specialized vocational rehabilitation services. The new Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) contracts will combine all of these vocational rehabilitation services into one set of contracts. Combining these

contracts will streamline the administrative responsibilities for both ACCES and its providers. Starting on January 1, 2014, the new CRS contracts will invest more than \$289 million over five years in delivering high quality vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities through 368 contracts with community rehabilitation providers and other community resources.

New Features of Core Rehabilitation Services

The CRS contracts contain several new features that will strengthen the longstanding partnership between ACCES-VR and the community rehabilitation providers in delivering quality rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. A major change relates to how supported employment services are funded. Supported employment services are the ongoing support and other services necessary to obtain and maintain employment for an individual with a most significant disability. These services will now be funded through a set of performance milestones and outcomes (e.g. payments for 45 days of employment and 90 days of employment) rather than an hourly rate. Two hundred of the CRS providers will have capacity to provide supported employment services. This represents an annual investment of over \$29 million per year for supported employment intensive and extended services. The intensive phase of supported employment consists of assessment, job development, placement and training. The extended phase of supported employment is the ongoing support necessary to maintain employment. The new contracts will also build in additional accountability and quality assurance measures that demonstrate a new level of stewardship in the use of public funds toward the intended purpose.

New Accountability Strategies

Specific strategies that ACCES-VR is taking to improve accountability and the overall quality of services include:

1. Strengthening the deliverables and performance standards for services contained in the new contracts;
2. Instituting a methodology for evaluating performance through a rigorous performance rubric where ACCES-VR counselors will assess the quality of reports and services for each individual; and,
3. Engaging providers early in the contract period to stress the focus on performance and accountability and developing corrective action plans.

Performance will be assessed on key indicators, including the percentage of consumers successfully employed. Additional accountability tools include a Supported Employment Information Directory that contains current performance data, quarterly in-person performance reviews by ACCES-VR district office managers with the providers and provider self-evaluations. ACCES-VR is enhancing these accountability measures to ensure that funds are paid for services that lead to high quality outcomes, but also to allow providers to have the necessary resources to succeed in securing community employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Youth Employment Services

ACCES-VR will initiate a new array of services specifically customized to serve youth, defined as any individual who applies for ACCES-VR services prior to age 25. These services, called Youth Employment Services (YES), will expand options for paid and unpaid work experiences. YES will include community-based work assessment in integrated real work settings and paid community work experiences prior to or immediately upon school exit. A total of \$5.5 million per year in CRS contract capacity is available across a group of existing CRS services. ACCES-VR identified these particular services based on research evidence related to better employment outcomes for youth. Through YES and other vocational rehabilitation services, young adults will be prepared for successful long-term employment. For transition-age youth enrolled in secondary school, YES will be provided after school, during the summer or after exiting high school.

Next Steps

With support of the Board of Regents, the Department will implement the CRS contracts to increase the number and quality of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.