



The Leader in Disability-Related Solutions

Best Practice Guidelines for Business Engagement

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has historically focused upon one customer, the client with disabilities. With the implementation of WIOA, the emphasis has been on two primary customers, the individual with a permanent injury, illness or impairment; and the employer hiring this individual.

What is Business Engagement?

Business engagement is interaction between employers, vocational rehabilitation (VR), and other workforce development and education organizations to create effective partnerships and improve desired outcomes for both parties.

What are the Objectives of Business Engagement?

The intent of the following objectives will subsequently enhance DVR's capacity to provide quality employer services.

- Increase the visibility and change the misperceptions of DVR
- Create awareness of DVR's available labor pool, and DVR's employer services.
- Determine the employers' specific needs (i.e., job analysis, open positions, plans for expansion, training needs, etc.).
- Expand DVR's employer base

How do we achieve these Objectives?

- Through one-on-one contact with employers via DVR counseling and Business Services staff
- Utilizing marketing materials describing DVR services
- Presentations to employers and community organizations
- Involve staff in service clubs such Rotary and Lions, the local Chamber of Commerce, HR Association, job fairs, trade associations and partner agencies

The focus of Business Engagement will be the variety of DVR services to employers. These value-added services make hiring an individual working with ND DVR more valuable to the employer, therefore, increasing employer satisfaction.

- Workforce recruiting and rapid response
- Job training and education, including OJT and formal educational programs
- Assistive technology options and potential workplace solutions
- Business tax incentives
- ADA recommendations and referrals



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Guideline Tools which could be disseminated to VR staff who engage in employer contacts.

Employer Contacts: Two primary groups that we serve:

- a) North Dakotans with permanent injuries, illness or impairments
- b) North Dakota Businesses

Communicating from an Employers Perspective

- Use business/corporate terminology versus VR language
- Understand that an employer's primary motivation is to maximize profits
- Share economic benefits of employing clients working with ND DVR
- Engage business leads; actively listen to needs and concerns, listen more than you talk
- Keep it simple!

First Employer Contact (Establishing Employer Relationships)

- Work with employers to identify both long and short term personnel needs
- Provide a brief summary of the programs offered by ND DVR – tailor it to the specific industry / employer and keep it relatively time constrained and focused
- Develop effective consulting relationships with employers
- Understand the employer's needs and business motivation

Follow Along Employer Contacts

- Use business/corporate terminology versus VR language
- Inquire about current or anticipated staffing needs
- Actively listen to needs and concerns
- Ensure that you are responding to the employer within the time frame you have discussed
- Maintain regular contact with the employer, whether it be monthly, quarterly, etc as the needs of the employer dictate
- Your goal is to become a go-to resource for employers
- Keep updated on employer needs by looking, listening and observing events in the community and in the news
- Make yourself easily and readily available
- Participate in business and community organizations and activities
- Ensure the Employer is given a brief overview of our program from the client's perspective

Become an Employer Resource (Develop Effective Employer Relationships)

- Be able to explain Tax Credits such as Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Barrier Removal Tax Deduction
- Be knowledgeable on how to access information on various tax credits for employers specific to disability related issues
- Be knowledgeable on potential accommodations and referral to community partners such as IPAT
- Be available as needed for Rapid Response to employers regarding concerns they may voice pertaining to specific employees and the potential need of VR services for the employees retention
- Get releases in place IF a client or potential client is discussed

Respond to Employer Needs and Provision of Services to Employers

- Early and long-term employment assistance
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) and support
- Training on disability related topics
- Identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations