



# Case Studies

## Piloting a Process to Refer Individuals with Developmental Disabilities from Day Habilitation to Vocational Rehabilitation

Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### Abstract

The Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation piloted a process for referring individuals with developmental disabilities (DD), who receive day habilitation services from community rehabilitation provider agencies and who are interested in employment, to the Missouri state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program to access services and supports necessary to obtain community employment. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DMH/D-DD) proposed the effort as a joint collaboration between the DVR regional office in Springfield, DMH/D-DD, and the Arc of the Ozarks. The Arc of the Ozarks provides a range of services to individuals with disabilities, including employment services, and is a vendor for both DVR and DMH/D-DD. Implementation of this pilot project began in January 2010 with the goal of referring at least five individuals to the pilot over the life of the project. As of February 2012, four individuals had been referred. The pilot is a small one in number of individuals, but it is emblematic of a larger system issue in that multiple public systems and a provider agency can realign services and encourage those that had been placed into non-work settings to choose employment services. What is to be learned about the realignment and the effort to persuade individuals attending day habilitation facilities and their families to opt for employment services has larger implications than the numbers served in the original pilot.

### Implementation of the Practice

The referral process for the pilot begins when staff members at the Arc of the Ozarks identify an individual who would like to work. Many of the individuals have prior work experience from the Arc of the Ozarks and want to become more involved in the community through employment. The VR counselor meets with the individual and his or her support team, including Arc of the Ozarks staff, a community support worker, and family members, before the individual applies for VR services. The purpose of this preliminary meeting is for the VR counselor to meet with the individual and his or her support team and to build rapport. This aims to increase the seamlessness of the referral process to the VR program.

This case study is an excerpt of a larger report, entitled “Case Studies of Emerging/Innovative Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Practices in Improving Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Intellectual/Development Disabilities” from the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Vocational Rehabilitation at the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston. The full report can be found at [vr-rrtc.org](http://vr-rrtc.org). Its suggested citation is:

Burns, R., Haines, K., Porter, E., Boeltzig, H. & Foley, S. (2013). Case Studies of Emerging/Innovative Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Practices in Improving Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities. University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

Arc of the Ozarks staff assess the individual’s employment interests and support needs. This helps reduce VR counselor time and cost for customer assessment, and allows for individuals to receive services and supports more quickly. Arc of the Ozarks staff use the Career Planning Guide: A Guide for Career Discovery<sup>1</sup> developed by the Missouri Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities for assessment purposes. A key informant elaborated on using the guide: “The provider has modified some of the things a bit more with the individual client...So even if the provider isn’t using the entire manual, they’re picking and choosing what they think is appropriate [for the client’s goals].” In total, the Arc of the Ozarks’ assessment and referral process takes approximately three months.

Arc of the Ozarks staff participate in career team meetings prior to VR eligibility and establish career goals for individuals. The VR counselor involves him- or herself approximately halfway through the assessment to help address employment and other related issues. The VR counselor may also provide any additional input on an individual’s goals. After the assessment, the individual is referred to the VR program for employment services and supports. The VR counselor provides the individual with network resources to help achieve his or her career goal.

<sup>1</sup> Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities. (2010). Career planning guide: A guide for career discovery. Retrieved from [www.mpcdd.com/pageDownload.php?docID=3354](http://www.mpcdd.com/pageDownload.php?docID=3354)

Once the individual has found a job, he or she may receive post-employment extended supports or other community services to help him or her maintain employment.

Key informants emphasized the participatory nature of this pilot. Individuals are involved in the assessment process, lead their own meetings, and serve as the major decision makers. This in turn acts as a source of empowerment. With the help of their job developers, individuals create an agenda to run their meetings and establish a set of rules for the meetings. They also have the opportunity to share career development skills and discuss any concerns or issues. These meetings occur once a month.

The braiding of VR and DMH/D-DD funds at the individual customer level is key to facilitating the referral process. Braiding funds also helps to ensure customer success in gaining and maintaining employment. In the pilot project, DMH/D-DD funding, typically used for day habilitation, is put toward the costs of individual assessment and extended services. DMH/D-DD pays for the assessment component, costs that DVR otherwise would incur. DVR covers the costs of employment services and related expenses until the individual obtains employment and his or her case is closed. Once the case is closed, DMH/D-DD funding can be used to provide post-employment extended supports or other community services to the individual as needed.

Our key informants noted that one challenge in implementing this pilot project was the extended amount of time it takes to make a referral. Team members come from multiple agencies so coordinating schedules and following through with tasks can be time consuming. Furthermore, staff turnover delayed some of the pilot's progress, as training was needed for the new staff members.

## Project Outcomes and Future of the Practice

The pilot began in January 2010 and the first referral to the VR program was made in May 2010. As of February 2012, four participants have been referred to the VR program. Successful closures are currently being used to gauge the effectiveness of the practice, and two individuals have successfully found jobs. One is currently detailing vehicles and the other is performing janitorial services. The pilot project intends to refer at least five individuals to the VR program over the life of the project. An individual, who was referred to the pilot's service delivery process through a work crew rather than day habilitation, is also using the job development techniques of the pilot to seek employment.

A key informant emphasized that the project has increased collaboration between all of the participants and helped all parties use various resources to serve individuals in day habilitation: "This two-year project has helped with partnering and making sure that we get all of the stakeholders involved. Also we make sure that everybody is networking as much as possible to help the individual move forward." VR counselors have found that their relationship with the Arc of the Ozarks has improved as partners have learned to understand each other's roles in the process. Although this collaboration is still in its early stages, a VR key informant indicated that DVR is considering replicating this pilot project in another location in the state.

### INTERVIEWEES

Kim Conrad  
Teresa Coleman  
John Harper  
Anita Michel

### EXPERT DELPHI PANEL

Jon Alexander  
Tamara Amsbaugh  
Carol Blessing  
Valerie Bradley  
Abby Cooper  
Bryan Dague  
Bill Gardam  
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Becky Harker  
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The VR-RRTC, a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, is a five-year cooperative agreement with the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the US Department of Education, Grant # H133B070001.