

# Job-Driven Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC): New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

## Engaging Businesses from a Blindness Perspective: New Jersey's Development of a Business Relations Unit

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# Webinar Objectives

- Explain JD-VRTAC goals, partners, TA, and Learning Collaborative
- Describe New Jersey CBVI background/services
- Explain New Jersey CBVI JD-VRTAC project background
- Discuss New Jersey CBVI JD-VRTAC project purpose & goals
- Describe New Jersey CBVI JD-VRTAC project implementation
- Share New Jersey CBVI JD-VRTAC project accomplishments
- Share challenges & lessons learned from New Jersey CBVI JD-VRTAC project
- Describe current status of New Jersey CBVI JD-VRTAC project
- Discuss what was most helpful from the TA and Learning Collaborative throughout this process
- Share New Jersey CBVI next steps, future direction, & goals



# JD-VRTAC Goals

Improve skills of state VR agency staff, other rehab professionals & providers of VR services, who are trained to provide “job-driven” VR services & supports to PWD, employers & customized training providers.

## Four Topic Areas:

1. Business Engagement
2. Employer Supports
3. Labor Market Information (LMI)
4. Customized Training Providers

[www.explorevr.org](http://www.explorevr.org)



# JD-VRTAC Partners

Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), Univ. of Massachusetts/Boston

## ***In Partnership with:***

- Jobs for the Future (JFF)
- Univ. of Arkansas/CURRENTS
  - Univ. of Washington
- Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
  - United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN)
  - Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)

## ***In Collaboration with:***

- National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB)
  - Technical Assistance Center Collaborative



# JD-VRTAC Technical Assistance

The JD-VRTAC provides 3 types of TA:

- Intensive: 11 VR agencies participated in Cohort 1 of the center's Intensive TA and 9 agencies are participating in Cohort 2 of the center's Intensive TA. Agencies receiving Intensive TA become members of a Learning Collaborative to share strategies and solutions.
- Targeted: Several agencies have requested targeted TA related to one of the four job-driven topical areas. Additionally, the Center is hosting communities of practice and forums on relevant issues.
- Universal: The Center hosts and archives webinars on topics related to the four job-driven topical areas and presents project information at CSAVR and NCSAB.



# JD-VRTAC Learning Collaborative

- As part of receiving intensive TA, states attended 2-3 in-person Learning Collaborative meetings to provide project updates, collaborate across agencies, and participate in topical discussions
- Learning Collaborative states participate in conference calls with their cohort to discuss job-driven topics
- 18 state VR agencies are part of the JD-VRTAC Learning Collaborative



# NJ CBVI Background and Services

- CBVI is in Department of Human Services providing services to individuals who are blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind
- Lifespan services – Infant, Education, Transition, VR, Independent Living/Older Blind
- Services largely provided in-house, other than AT Training for adults, and employment services (job development, placement, SE)
- 3 Service Centers (Newark, Freehold, and Cherry Hill), Satellite Office in Atlantic City, and Joseph Kohn Training Center in New Brunswick



# NJ CBVI JD-VRTAC Project Background

- 2007/2008 – Previous attempts at developing a BRU fizzled due to mission drift and resource allocation
- 2013-2015 – CBVI Strategic Plan – Development of BRU listed as one of the major strategic initiatives
- 2014 – Passing of WIOA; Business Engagement Mandate
- 2015 – Applied for JD-VRTAC Intensive TA





# JD-VRTAC Project Purpose and Goals I

## Year 1:

- Establish a Business Relations Unit (BRU)
  - Goals: Coordinate efforts, improve marketing, operationalize unit, measure efforts, increase employment outcomes
  - No unit existed at this point
- Incorporate LMI on operational level
  - Provide LMI training to staff, evaluate training



# JD-VRTAC Project Purpose and Goals II

## Year 2:

- **Solidify Business Relations Unit (BRU)**
  - Implement marketing plan, finalize internal policies/procedures, launch SalesForce, conduct BRU activities and events
- **Expand training on LMI**
  - TCI+



# JD-VRTAC Project Implementation I

## Labor Market Information Training

- May 2016
  - Pre-Assessment based off survey PA created
  - LMI Training for VRCs – NJ DOL, ICI, and CBVI
- Follow-up Training in March & May 2017 (and every chance I could build it in)
- June 2017 – Business Engagement Training by Mississippi State include LMI component



# JD-VRTAC Project Implementation II

## Labor Market Information Impact

- Issued the same assessment one year later
- Some staff turnover and new counselors brought on board since pre-assessment
- # of Respondents – 2016 = 23; 2017 = 28
- Overall, saw an increase in VRC's self-report of understanding and use of LMI from 2016 to 2017; expanded knowledge, purpose, and type of resources used
- December 2017 - Planned implementation of TCI+



# JD-VRTAC Project Implementation III

## Business Relations Unit Development & Staffing

- May/June 2016 - First two BRS staff hired
  - Job description & performance measures
  - Started outreach to business utilizing resources from JD-VRTAC
  - Identified education-first as a unit priority
- January 2017
  - One staff added, one out on leave
  - Recognized need for BRU Supervisor
- September 2017
  - Fully staffed at 3 BRS and 1 BRU Supervisor
- Assistive Technology Specialist wanted...



# JD-VRTAC Project Implementation IV

## Unit's Outreach Efforts

- July & August 2016 – TAP Training
- October 2016 – NDEAM – consumer-focused events with business partners in each office
- December 2016 – Southern Schedule A with DVRS
- 2017 – Monthly accessibility event w/Princeton University
- May 2017 – 1<sup>st</sup> Business Summit
- June 2017 – 1<sup>st</sup> Reverse Job Fair, Northern Schedule A Hiring Event with DVRS
- October 2017 - First NDEAM as a full unit
  - 3 DMD, collaborative Business Summit with NJ DVRS, Shop Rite Job-Shadow Day, & other awareness events



# JD-VRTAC Project Accomplishments

- Fully staffed as of August 2017
  - 3 Business Relations Specialists, 1 Supervisor
- LMI – VRC's reported increase in frequency, type, and attitudes toward use with consumers
- Career Exploration Center launched
- Marketing materials and SalesForce in process



# Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Recruitment and staffing for unit
- Other agency changes and initiatives led to limited resources for project implementation
- Communication/Collaboration – internal & external
- Keeping focus on business-oriented education and services; not job placement specialists
- Tracking of Data – Salesforce process started in Spring of 2016; just now being customized for our unit, with implementation targeted for January 2018.
  - BUT! Collaborating with larger Department of Labor and Workforce Development for a shared app
- Assistive Technology is HUGE – but resources are limited





# JD-VRTAC Project Today (current status)

## EVOLVING

- Focusing on engaging business through education
- Working on finding what works for us – back to basics
- Honing staff skills and resources
- Increasing business and partner relationships
- Finalizing marketing, Salesforce, policy/procedures
- Cultivating solid relationship with DVRS Business Engagement and other workforce partners



# What was most helpful about receiving TA?

- Not “re-creating the wheel”
- Inspiration from others
- Mini-Conferences
- Check-ins and support from TA Team and LC



# Next Steps, Future Directions, and Goals

- “Finalize” on-going goals
- Expand unit to include dedicated Assistive Technology staff person
- Implement TCI+ training
- Continue to improve partnerships



# Questions?



# JD-VRTAC

## Contact Information

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