

DHS/DEED Stakeholder Engagement for Interagency HCBS Shared Visioning

Engagement 9 Summary Report: Community Based Services Manual

May 28, 2021

The **Improve** Group

Contents

Report Purpose..... 3

Introduction..... 3

Executive Summary..... 3

Focus Group Findings 4

Appendix22

Report purpose

The E1MN Stakeholder Engagement for Interagency HCBS Shared Visioning is being conducted as iterative, ongoing, agile engagement. As a part of this approach, PIPEin and VIP members are being invited for several data collection opportunities to help improve products and services. This report summarizes findings from E1MN's ninth stakeholder activity: a focus group to gather feedback on clarity of the updated Community Based Services Manual (CBSM).

Introduction

The E1MN Stakeholder Engagement for Interagency HCBS Shared Visioning's ninth engagement was a focus group to gather feedback on clarity of the updated Community Based Services Manual (CBSM). Focus group participants reviewed and discussed three documents of content from the updated CBSM, each divided into several sections. A total of seven case managers/lead agency staff and ten waiver employment service providers provided feedback in the focus group through two separate discussion groups according to their role. The focus group was held on May 24, 2021 and led by The Improve Group (IG), a research and evaluation firm based in St. Paul, Minnesota. IG analyzed the focus group data; key findings and supporting evidence from this analysis are provided below.

Executive Summary

Although many participants expressed that sections of the three policy documents were mostly clear, the group overall had many suggestions for improvement and many unanswered questions that could be addressed by making some additions to the documents. Common areas where more information was desired include more information about roles and responsibilities, more definition around eligibility criteria, and more contextual information in introductions to the documents. Overall, there was a large level of agreement and similar comments across the two focus group participant roles of waiver employment service providers and case managers/lead agency staff.

Focus Group Findings

Document 1: Guidance for employment services authorization

The first document reviewed in the focus group was a two-page document that helps clarify how Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver employment services work together with VRS/SSB and IDEA (school) services to help determine what services are needed through the waiver and how to authorize those services. The group reviewed and discussed this document in three sections, each displayed below along with the groups' input.

Content of Document 1, Section 1:

This resource helps lead agencies:

- Understand how home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver employment services work together with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), State Services for the Blind (SSB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) services
- Determine the services a person needs through the waiver
- Authorize those services.

It includes information about:

- [Policy background](#)
- [Determining VRS/SSB and IDEA availability](#)
- [Background about E1MN, VRS and IDEA](#)
- [Best practices](#)
- [Additional resources.](#)

Policy background

According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), HCBS waiver employment services cannot include services available under:

- [Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#)
- [IDEA.](#)

To comply with this requirement, lead agencies **must** ensure VRS/SSB or IDEA services are not available to the person before authorizing employment services.

Determining VRS/SSB and IDEA availability

The following tables can help lead agencies determine if they can authorize employment services. These tables are based on the person's school status, the employment service they are considering and whether they are able to access VRS/SSB or IDEA services.

Participant feedback on Document 1, Section 1

Participants in both the case manager/lead agency staff group and the waiver employment service provider group expressed that section 1 was "pretty clear," but had the following unanswered questions about the content and/or were able to point out the following areas that could be clearer:

- Is this document only for people on a waiver program, or is it also for people receiving Semi-Independent Living Services (SILS)?
- The following statement is not clear: “To comply with this requirement, lead agencies must ensure VRS/SSB or IDEA services are not available to the person before authorizing employment services.” Does this mean that one type of services must be offered first?
- The first bullet point in this section lists how several roles work together. It would be helpful to define these roles.
- It would be good to have language at the top of the document about how it will benefit individuals and agencies.

Content of Document 1, Section 2:

Person enrolled in high school or age 18-21 transition programming

Waiver service	Can the lead agency authorize it?
Employment exploration	No. VRS/SSB and IDEA provide similar services as part of their transition services. The person should access VRS/SSB and/or IDEA services.
Employment development – plan phase	No. VRS/SSB and IDEA provide similar services as part of their transition services. The person should access VRS/SSB and/or IDEA services.
Employment development – find phase	No. VRS/SSB and IDEA provide similar services as part of their transition services. The person should access VRS/SSB and/or IDEA services.
Employment support	Sometimes. IDEA provide similar services. The person should access IDEA services during school hours. The lead agency can authorize employment support services for out-of-school hours.

Participant feedback on Document 1, Section 2

Participants across both groups agreed that more definitions and parameters would help make section 2 clearer. They offered the following ideas for improvement and unanswered questions about the content:

- A better definition of “age 18-21 transition programming” would be helpful. Transition school or after high school could be open for interpretation – it could be someone receiving ILS services, so this could confuse readers of this document.
- Legal employment age is 14, so what is the policy for people ages 14 to 18? Several case managers/lead agency staff noted they work with multiple people in the 16-17 age group and suggested including ages 14-17 in this or another table.
- Include mention of how day support services fit in for people who choose to not do the employment explorations.

- The definition of “out-of-school hours” is variable and up to interpretation. School programming varies in terms of start and end times each day, and in some cases, students may have special schedules. What about summer or other school breaks?

“School programming varies. I had one student who a couple days a week went to school three hours a day and he started work one hour before the end of the school day and IDEA wouldn’t cover that.” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

Some case managers/lead agency staff felt the table was clear in terms of whether the lead agency can authorize the programming but wanted more information about what to do when the lead agency *cannot* authorize the programming, and more clarity around roles and responsibilities. They said:

“The statement is straightforward. I understand the “no.” But who can authorize? DEED and MDE will access this tool. So who navigates it?” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

“I think it makes sense. It’s clear in whether we can authorize it, but not clear who to refer to if the answer is “no.” Should it be me who helps them connect to VR?” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

“So who is responsible? VRS or IDEA – so which role is responsible to helping for that? Or do we just refer to VR and they refer to the school?” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

Waiver employment service providers also had suggestions about the document overall:

“I think this may be more of an overall document or in each section but really pointedly addressing people using CDCS option of waiver and how they fit into this whole approach.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

“These tables are based on a person’s school services...I don’t really know what this means; if they are able to access it or not – what qualifies for them to not be able to access services, so that is confusing to me.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

Content of Document 1, Section 3:

Person NOT enrolled in high school or age 18-21 transition programming Waiver service	Can the lead agency authorize it?
<u>Employment exploration</u>	Yes. VRS/SSB does not provide this service.
<u>Employment development – plan phase</u>	Yes.

Waiver service	Can the lead agency authorize it?
	Employment development – plan phase provides these supports if identified as needed prior to VRS/SSB application.
Employment development – find phase	<p>Sometimes.</p> <p>VRS/SSB provides similar services. The lead agency can only authorize employment development – find phase if it determines VRS/SSB services are unavailable to the person based on one of the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible/not priority status: A person is determined ineligible, or they do not meet an open priority of service category with VRS/SSB. If a person does not meet an open priority of service category, they will be placed on a waitlist maintained by VRS/SSB. • Services exhausted: A person has received VRS/SSB job search services, and VRS/SSB determines the person can no longer benefit from continued placement services at this time, so the performance-based agreement is discontinued. VRS/SSB will close the person’s case, and the person will receive a closure letter from VRS/SSB stating they can no longer benefit from services. <p>NOTE: If the lead agency authorizes employment development – find phase services for one of these reasons, they must document the reason and how they made that determination.</p>
Employment support	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The lead agency can authorize employment support services once VRS/SSB determines a person is stable in a job.</p>

Additional resources

- [CBSM – Employment exploration services](#)
- [CBSM – Employment development services](#)
- [CBSM – Employment support services](#)
- [E1MN](#)
- [Disability Hub Work Toolkit](#)
- [DHS – Employment First](#)

Participant feedback on Document 1, Section 3

Employment Development Plan Phase

One waiver employment service provider had unanswered questions about the Plan phase in terms of who makes the determination and how:

“There’s a note that, yes, you can authorize employment development for the Plan phase if the supports are identified as needed. That’s vague. Who makes that determination and how is that determined? I understand that the case manager is making the determination but VR could also make that, so that is unclear to me. How do you identify someone needs the plan phase?” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

Employment Development Find Phase

Participants across both groups agreed that the Employment Development - Find phase of section 3 needed to be clearer. They offered unanswered questions about the content and the following ideas for improvement to the Find phase:

- Under “Ineligible/not priority status,” the text says “A person is determined ineligible...” Who makes that determination or is giving that guidance?

“Do we make a referral to VRS for everything and they decide?” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

- A case manager/lead agency staff member asked about the timing of VR services in relation to authorizing:

“I have people who want to do job search but they have to wait two months before they can open with VR. So can I authorize? It takes 60 days to get an intake.” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

- Participants from the waiver employment service provider group asked about the “Services exhausted” section: after a person completes their services with VRS/SSB, what documentation is required from the case manager for the waiver employment service provider to authorize services?

“At the point when the person can no longer benefit from vocational rehab, ...the person will receive a closure letter from VRS/SSB stating they can no longer benefit from services. So if a case manager contacts me and wants to authorize me to do development, do I need a copy of that letter to prove the person went through the vocational rehab process and are therefore eligible for services? Or do I take the case manager’s word for that and assume that’s correct? Who is responsible for determining that before waiver services are authorized?” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

“It would appear that vocational rehab/SSB is making the determination in both phases, but that’s a little unclear, and it is unclear how the case manager is supposed to document the reason that someone is able to use a service again. Do they have to provide a copy again? Am I going to be held accountable for whether or not a case manager documented something properly? Whose job is it to document it and how is it supposed to be documented and how do they need letters from VR?” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

Employment Support

One waiver employment service provider would like to see more clarity on who will make the determination for employment support and how:

“Under employment support, there is a note – the lead agency can authorize support once Vocational Services say a person is stable in a job. I’m sure there is a definition for this but that isn’t clear here. As a provider, I don’t know how that determination will be made.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

Overall comments

One waiver employment service provider had a question about case closure and how it fits into the system:

“I would like to see a bullet point for people who have previously had their VRS case closed or a case closure; does this not apply to them? Do they start fresh? Is there a different path through services if they previously have had a case closure?” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

Document 2: Employment Development Services CBSM

The second document reviewed in the focus group was a four-page document that describes the parameters for employment development services - including definition, covered services, and limitations. This guidance is part of the community-based services manual - a resource for lead agencies in administering waiver services. It will replace the existing employment development services CBSM page. The group reviewed and discussed this document in five sections, each displayed below along with the groups’ input.

Content of Document 2, Section 1:

This page includes policy affected by [Bulletin #20-56-01: Employment services and the right to make informed choices during the peacetime emergency \(PDF\)](#). For more information, see the [June 10, 2020, eList announcement](#).

Page posted: 6/27/18	Page reviewed:	Page updated: XXX
Legal authority	Federally approved BI, CAC, CADI and DD waiver plans, 42 C.F.R 5302(a)(22), Minn. Stat. §245D.03	
Definitions	Employment development services: Individualized services designed to help a person achieve competitive, integrated	

	<p>employment, become self-employed or establish a microenterprise business in their community.</p> <p>Microenterprise business: A commercial business with five or fewer employees, including the owner(s) of the business.</p> <p>Competitive, integrated employment: Employment that pays a minimum wage or an industry standard, customary or prevailing wage with comparable benefits (e.g., health insurance, leave time, etc.).</p>
Eligibility	<p>To receive employment development services, a person must both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be eligible for BI, CAC, CADI or DD waiver services • Have employment development services as an assessed need in their support plan.

Participant feedback on Document 2, Section 1

Participants across both groups noted that the definitions component of section 1 is mostly clear, but that it would be clearer if employment development services were broken down into the component phases (plan, find, etc.) as noted in other documents.

In terms of the eligibility component of section 1, participants also said it was mostly clear, but had the following questions or suggestions:

- One waiver employment service provider expected to see more similarity to the eligibility parameters from Document 1:

“I am a little surprised that there is nothing in the eligibility from Document 1, that someone needs to be this age, or connected with school. This seems like the old definition before we started the streamlining process.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

- Similarly, a second waiver employment service provider suggested adding information about whether or not people are still in school or what the age of eligibility would be:

“If they are in transition, it comes off that they may not be eligible.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

- Another waiver employment service provider noted an opportunity to add detail:

“It seems like there could be a third bullet point that could say ‘they have been determined to not be eligible for services through VRS/SSB’ or something clarifying that there is an extra step to qualify or receive services.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

- A waiver employment service provider asked for more clarity around the support plan and service plan:

“Another thing that is unclear is that they have to have an assessed need in their support plan. I may know what that means, but that isn’t always well-documented in service plans. That piece is a bit unclear. I’m assuming that needs to be documented in the service plan but that isn’t clear.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

- A case manager/lead agency staff participant pointed out that the first bullet point was that a person must be eligible for waiver services, but that VR has their own eligibility criteria. So how would a case manager know if they were eligible according to VR’s criteria, as well?

Content of Document 2, Section 2:

Covered services

Employment development services consist of both job development services and self-employment/microenterprise development services.

Job development services

Requires direct contact (in person or remote participation)

Covered job development services that require direct contact with the person include:

- Individualized, strengths-based assessments and employment opportunity discovery strategies (this plan phase should not exceed 120 days of service delivery)
- Support during new employee orientation for up to 30 days after a person starts a new job position
- In-service transportation
- Skills training to find and keep a job (e.g., interviewing, using community resources, resume writing, etc.)
- Progress review and reporting meetings.

Does not require direct contact (services provided on behalf of the person)

Covered job development services that do not require direct contact with the person include:

- Employment search assistance and support
- Benefit(s) fact-gathering, review and analysis to determine how benefits will interact with employment
- Help with negotiating and finalizing terms of employment
- Development of job applications, resume and cover letters
- Outreach with community businesses about available employment opportunities.

Self-employment and microenterprise business development services

Requires direct contact

Covered self-employment and microenterprise business development services that require direct contact with the person may include:

- Help with determining the type of business the person wants to establish

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with the person about all business development activities and plans • Help with choosing and registering an available and marketable business name • In-service transportation • Progress review and reporting meetings. <p>Does not require direct contact</p> <p>Covered self-employment and microenterprise business development services that do not require direct contact may include collaborating with the person to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a business plan • Find sources of start-up financing • Establish a legal structure for the business • Create a marketing and sales plan • Find a location and get the appropriate certifications, licenses, permits and variances • Purchase all necessary insurances • Develop business forms, records, bookkeeping and accounting systems • Perform benefit(s) fact gathering, review and analysis to determine how benefits will interact with self-employment.
<p>Non-covered services</p>	<p>Employment development services do not cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentive payments (e.g., payments to an employer to encourage or subsidize the employer’s participation in a development program) • Payments for vocational training that is not directly related to the person’s development program • Direct compensation to supplement a person’s wage • Special education services available and funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or vocational services available and funded under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (see HYPERLINK: CBSM – HCBS Waiver Employment Services Authorization Guidance) • Vocational services in facility-based or sheltered workshop settings.

Participant feedback on Document 2, Section 2

Participants noted that they understood the content of section 2, but had several suggestions for additions to improve clarity:

- Some waiver employment service providers had questions about the time frame of service delivery:

“Under direct contact, it says should not exceed 120 days of direct service delivery. Is that from the day the service starts? Those services are billed in 15 minute units.”

So, maybe some clarifying language on what that 120 days really means would be helpful.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

“I just wanted to add that the timetable of the 120 days – is that per time that a person goes through the process, lose the job, does that time start over again? That’s a question I have.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

- Multiple waiver employment service providers had suggestions around terminology, including suggesting keeping the terminology of Plan and Find:

“This might be a big change, I don’t know if I would want this but maybe separating the development find and plan phases. When I look at that second bullet point, it feels like that is a strange jump since VRS would in most places would be finding the job. Do we come back to employment development now for the first 30 days after they find a job before we go to employment support? I’d like clarification on that.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

“It’s the fourth bullet point down under requires direct contact – the “keep a job” language can be very confusing. We think of that language with employment support vs employment development.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant

Content of Document 2, Section 3:

Service phases	<p>Employment development services include both a plan phase and find phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The plan phase (T2019 U1) helps a person plan their employment goals and discover personal strengths, interests and conditions for employment• The find phase (T2019 U8) helps a person search for and obtain competitive, integrated employment or develop a microenterprise business. <p>Services must be authorized and provided under one of these phases. For more information on the plan phase, including expected outcomes and available services, see [HYPERLINK: Plan Phase - Work Toolkit – Disability Hub MN]</p>
Limitations	Reauthorization <p>Employment development services are time-limited and should end after a maximum of 12 months following the initial authorization of services. The plan phase should not exceed 120 days of this 12-month timeframe.</p> <p>In some circumstances, a person might need services to continue beyond these time limits. The lead agency can reauthorize employment development services when the person:</p>

- Has a verifiable change in employment (e.g., person lost their employment, faces reduced hours or wants to seek other employment opportunities)
- Experiences a debilitating health condition or life event that significantly interrupts service delivery
- Changes service providers
- Has submitted an application to Vocational Rehabilitation Services/State Services for the Blind (VRS/SSB) and is waiting on a determination of eligibility/priority for up to 60 days (only applies to the plan phase).

Compensation

Wage and benefit compensation must comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations, as well as state statute and rules.

Microenterprise businesses

Microenterprise businesses are restricted to five or fewer people. Service providers cannot be owners, partners, shareholders, operators, employees, independent contractors, subcontractors or otherwise a financial beneficiary of the microenterprise businesses they assist, support and serve.

Secondary information

Connection with other services

A person can receive both employment development services and employment support services if they seek other competitive integrated employment opportunities while currently employed (see [CBSM – Employment support services](#)).

Participant feedback on Document 2, Section 3

Participants across both groups felt section 3 was mostly clear, but had some unanswered questions:

- “I have a question about the connection with other services part. It seems unclear – it says a person can receive both employment development and support services if they want to seek other opportunities while employment. Does that mean someone can be with a waiver provider getting support services and work with VRS/SSB in the development/find phase, because they were working and are also being provided with supports? It seems unclear what that means.” - Waiver Employment Service Provider participant
- “Is this for both Plan and Find?” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant
- “I don't know what in-service transportation means.” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant
- “Do the 12 months start over if they need to be re-referred to VR in one year? Or is 12 months in a lifetime?” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

- “Do they need to be re-referred every time they want a new job? Who is responsible for referring? And who is responsible for sending in the application to VRS/SSB?” – Case Manager/Lead Agency Staff participant

Content of Document 2, Section 4:

<p>Provider standards and qualifications</p>	<p>Employment development is a DHS enrollment-required service. Employment development service providers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll with Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) • Have a 245D license as an intensive support service provider. <p>For more information, see CBSM – Waiver/AC provider enrollment standards.</p> <p>All providers of employment services must ensure staff competency. For more information, see DHS – Employment specialist competencies.</p> <p>Background study To provide employment development, providers must have a background study. For more information, see CBSM – Waiver/AC service provider overview – Required DHS background studies for direct-contact services.</p> <p>Reporting A provider licensed under 245D must report all uses of controlled procedures, emergency use of manual restraint and prohibited procedures according to Minn. Stat. §245D.06, subd. 5 to DHS via the Behavioral Intervention Report Form, DHS-5148.</p>
<p>Service authorization, rates and billing</p>	<p>Employment development is a framework service. The lead agency uses the Rate Management System (RMS) to determine rates. For more information, see CBSM – Rate Management System.</p> <p>Before authorizing employment development services, the lead agency must ensure VRS/SSB or IDEA school services are not available, in accordance with the [VRS, SSB, IDEA and home and community-based employment services – Authorization guidance].</p> <p>Employment services include in-service transportation. Transportation services occurring between the person’s place of residence and the site of service are not covered as part of this service and should be billed as waiver transportation (see CBSM – Transportation).</p> <p>Employment development services should not be billed as DT&H day services, day support services, prevocational services, structured day services or adult day services.</p>

DT&H day services, day support services, prevocational services, structured day services and adult day services must be authorized and reimbursed on a 15-minute unit basis when employment development services are provided during the same day as these services.

Participant feedback on Document 2, Section 4

Participants had suggestions for section 4 in several areas:

- Include links to additional resources in the second paragraph of the section on service authorization, rates, and billing. (Waiver employment service provider participant)
- It might be helpful to add how to support a provider in how to navigate getting certified with VR - maybe include a link? (Case manager/lead agency staff participant)
- Case managers had multiple suggestions on the section about transportation: Note who is responsible for transportation (the school or county) and note what VR does not cover including related to transportation. Clarify at what point transportation is covered.
- Another case manager suggested that the document do more to address needed collaboration among the different roles:

“As a case manager I’d have to note that the job coach won’t be bringing them to their job. We should always discuss transportation first – we need a plan. Usually we don’t discuss transportation until after getting a job – then we scramble. A lot of the time VR has called me up and said we need you to authorize waiver funds tomorrow because we’re done. We need more collaboration. This text ignores the collaboration piece.” - Case manager/lead agency staff participant

- DT&H services don't exist anymore because they're now day support services. But DT&H is still listed in this document, which is confusing.

Content of Document 2, Section 5:

Additional resources

Employment services

[CBSM – Employment exploration services](#)

[CBSM – Employment support services](#)

[DHS – Employment First](#)

Day services

[CBSM – Adult day services](#)

[CBSM – Day support services](#)

[CBSM – Day training and habilitation \(DT&H\)](#)

[CBSM – Prevocational services](#)

[CBSM – Structured day program](#)

Waiver services

[CBSM – BI, CAC, CADI and DD waiver general process and procedures](#)

[CBSM – Waiver/AC provider enrollment and standards](#)

[CBSM – Waiver programs overview](#)

[CBSM – Transportation](#)

Other resources

[CBSM – VRS, IDEA and HCBS employment services – Interim guidance](#)

[Briefcase resource document: Transportation and day and employment](#)

[services](#)
[Disability Hub MN](#)
[Rate Management System \(RMS\) User Manual](#)
[RMS User Manual – Quick reference guide on billable indirect time](#)

Participant feedback on Document 2, Section 5

The only suggestion on the links and resources provided in section 5 was to remove the CBSM link to DT&H since it is no longer a covered service.

Document 3: Plan Phase of Development Services

The third and last document reviewed in the focus group was a three-page document of content that will be used in the Work Toolkit of the Disability Hub MN website to provide additional information on the delivery of the planning phase of employment development services. It will be linked to the CBSM page for employment development services that was reviewed as Document 2 in the focus group. It will be part of a larger section providing resources for each phase of the engage, plan, find, keep framework. The group reviewed and discussed this document in two sections, each displayed below along with the groups' input.

Content of Document 3, Section 1:

Service Outcomes

- 1. Work goals: Person defines overall work goals that align to their strengths, interests, talents, and conditions for success.**

Expected outcome products

- One page profile
- Summary of work learning experiences
- Summary of formal/informal resources and supports
- Description of their work goals and conditions for success.

- 2. Benefits plan: Person and their "work team" understand how their benefits can support work and initial concerns are addressed.**

Expected outcome products

- Summary of the person's benefits
- DB101 estimator session completed and saved

- 3. Job search launch: Person is set up for success in the "Find Phase." They have a portfolio that informs the person's job search and resources and supports in place to help them reach their work goals.**

Expected outcome products

- Sample application
- Resume
- Positive summary
- Employment Portfolio

Participant feedback on Document 3, Section 1

Participants had a range of suggestions for section 1:

- When the content of this document is incorporated into its home on the Disability HUB website, participants hoped that there will be more context: what the purpose of the document is, who completes it (their role and responsibilities), the timeline for completion, etc.
- Participants also noted that it would be helpful to have templates and examples of the different outcome products listed to ensure consistent approaches, or more guidelines of what the products should contain.
- Another suggestion was that “work team” in “2. Benefits Plan” be defined: what the work team is and who it involves.
- Some case manager/lead agency staff noted that in terms of the benefits plan, the DB101 calculator is too complex and that the document should list more resources where a person can access a free benefits analysis that is easier to use. Suggested resources to list include a benefits analysis offered by VR, and one offered by the Work Incentives Connection.

Content of Document 3, Section 2:

Covered Services

Person Centered Discovery

- Activities to help the person define their strengths, interests, skills, talents, supports and resources.
- Interviews with the individual, their informal supports and people important to the person to learn about their strengths and assets in an employment search.
- Identifying and documenting their educational, employment related and life activity experiences.

Counseling, Learning, and Goal Development

- Peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities to meet and learn from people with disabilities who are employed in competitive, community jobs.
- Career education to learn about specific types of occupations, job positions and work opportunities that meet the job seeker’s unique interests, strengths, needs and conditions of employment.
- Career planning to identify work goals and conditions for success.

Benefits Planning

- Benefits planning activities to help the person understand their benefits, what happens to their benefits when they work and how work incentives can help.

Work Experiences

- Work-based learning experiences, such as: volunteering, job shadowing, and job try out experiences.
- Mock interviews or informational interviews to refine a person's skills and learn about employment options.
- Workplace tours or educational visits to community businesses to learn about various companies, products, services and employment opportunities.

Transportation, Assistive Technology, and Accommodations Planning

- Education on the use of transportation services and planning for the persons transportation needs related to employment.
- Education and planning related to the person's needs for assistive technology (e.g. magnifiers, speech-to-text or text-to-speech software, captioning, audio or visual cueing, etc...)
- Education and planning on disability disclosure and possible accommodation needs. (e.g., modified work tasks or responsibilities, flexible schedules, telecommuting, etc.).

Other

- Synthesizing relevant information into the Positive Summary to assist the job seeker in meeting their work goals.
- Development of a portfolio of outcome products that informs the person's job search and helps set them up for success.
- In-service transportation.
- Progress review and reporting meetings.
- Providing education and assistance with connecting to community employment resources, such as vocational for rehabilitation services.
- Employment search assistance and support for up to 60 days if a person has submitted an application to VRS/SSB and is waiting on a determination of eligibility/priority of service from VRS/SSB.

Participant feedback on Document 3, Section 2

Participants had a range of suggestions and questions for section 2:

- Work experiences should indicate if they are paid or not or could be.
- It would be helpful if there were categories that included 'non-covered services' or notes about when service should be provide in-person or indirectly.
- It would be helpful to have more resources for how to complete benefits planning.
- The document needs an introduction and clarity about roles and responsibilities – who is setting all of this up?

- There should be a note about virtual resumes also.
- Who is providing the assistive technology?
- Will this document include information on how a person can access these services if they are interested?
- This document would be better set up as a grid.
- This document also should include information about how the policy will benefit consumers, agencies, and providers.

Participant characteristics

What is your role?

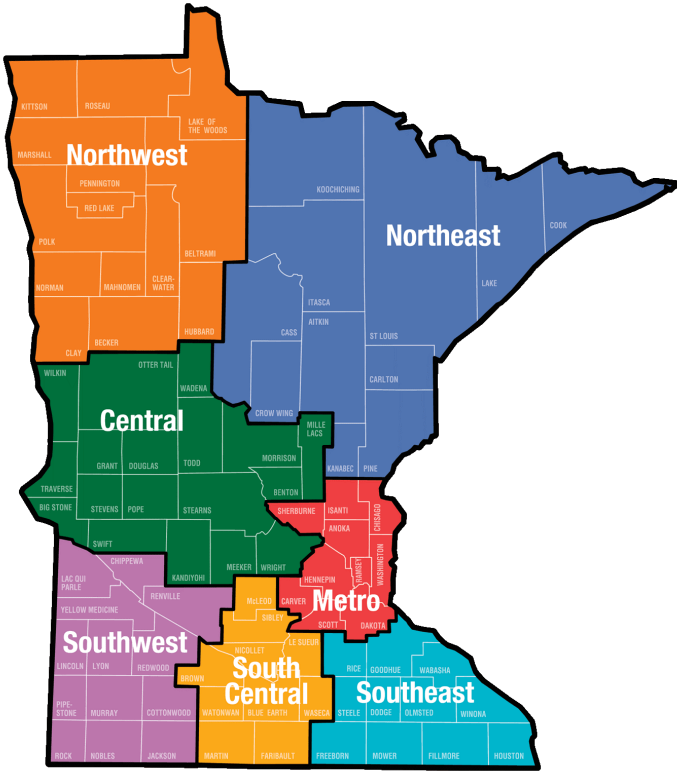
Role	# Participants
Waiver case manager/lead agency staff	7
Waiver employment service provider	10

How many years have you been working in your role?

Years of experience in role	# Participants
10 years or more	8
7-9 years	2
4-6 years	5
1-3 years	2

In what region do you primarily work? (see map below)

Region	# Participants
Metro	7
Northeast	7
Central	2
South Central	1



Map courtesy of the Statewide Emergency Communications Board

Appendix A: Focus Group Protocol

Introduction (5 minutes) 2:00 – 2:05

Hello! Thank you for your participation in today's focus group. [Facilitators introduce themselves]. The Improve Group is a St. Paul-based research and consulting firm, and we are facilitating a stakeholder engagement process with E1MN: the DHS - Disability Services Division (DSD) and DEED - Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and State Services for the Blind (SSB) as they work to align their systems and provide employment services in a more coordinated way.

Your input is critical in this system alignment and redesign. DHS and DEED are using information gathered from stakeholders, including information that we gather today, as they are finalizing their planning and design of the system alignment. During today's focus group, we will be getting your input on how to make a Community Based Service Manual clearer and more easily understandable. **Please note that we are not eliciting input on the policies themselves as those are set; we are eliciting input on how to communicate the information clearly.** DHS and DEED will post key findings from this and all engagements in summary reports on the Disability Hub website in a section dedicated to E1MN.

After this introduction, we will break into two discussion groups – one for lead agencies and case managers, and one for waiver employment service providers. We will aggregate the information you provide into two groups by role so that your input will not be traceable to you individually. We will attribute any quotes to either “lead agency staff/case manager” or “waiver employment service provider.”

We will take notes during the discussions, and we will also record the discussions in case we miss any detail in our notes. The Improve Group staff will access the recordings only if we need more detail than we were able to capture in our notes, and these recordings will not be heard by DHS or DEED staff. Please raise your hand or give a ‘thumbs up’ by clicking on the Expressions button at the bottom of your screen if you are okay with us recording. Thank you.

In today's session, we will review the three documents that I emailed to you – we will project the documents on screen, but you may find it easier to have your copy of the documents in front of you.

Because we will be collecting many opinions, DHS and DEED can't promise that they will make changes based on every comment collected, but they will use our analysis of all the input you provide to help guide them as they move forward. The changes to be made in revising these documents are improvements for clarity, but there will not be changes made to the policies expressed in the documents themselves. Therefore, please limit your suggestions to ideas about how the information is communicated, not suggestions on policy.

The focus group will last 75 to 90 minutes and we will end no later than 3:30 pm.

Before we begin, what questions do you have about the focus group logistics? Great! I will now invite waiver employment service providers to a breakout room, and lead agency staff and case managers will stay in this room with _____.

[Begin breakout groups]

Warm-Up (5 mins) 2:05 – 2:10

As a reminder, please leave your microphone muted if you are not speaking to prevent feedback. Thank you!

1. To open our discussion together, let's each introduce ourselves with:

- a. Your name
- b. Your agency or organization
- c. Your role
- d. One sentence about the most rewarding thing about the work you do

I'll call on each person to go next.

Document 1: HCBS employment services authorization guidance (15 mins) 2:10 – 2:25

Great! Thank you for the introductions. Let's start our discussion about the CBSM manual by looking at the **first document, HCBS employment services authorization guidance.**

Read to the group:

This document helps clarify how Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver employment services work together with VRS/SSB and IDEA (school) services so you can determine what services are needed through the waiver and how to authorize those services.

Sections 1a through 1c

I'll give you a couple of minutes to read section 1, then we'll get your feedback through a combination of questions that I'll post in chat and conversation. Feel free to read the copy that I'm projecting on screen, or you may find it helpful to use the copy emailed to you and highlight or underline any sections where you have suggestions.

[Give time to read section 1]

Feedback on Section 1

1. Looking at section 1, how clear or unclear is this section overall?

2. What concrete changes would make this section clearer? Please focus on concrete suggestions like pointing out specific phrases that need more definition, any missing information that would make it easier to understand, etc.

Feedback on Section 2

Now I'll give you a couple minutes to read section 2, and we'll get your feedback in the same way.

[Give time to read section 2]

3. I'm going to put a statement in the chat box right now and I'm going to ask you for your level of agreement with this statement: **"Based on section 2 of this document, I understand whether or not I can authorize the four listed waiver services for a person ENROLLED in high school or age 18-21 transition programming."**
 - a. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? There is no right or wrong answer.
4. What concrete changes would make this section clearer?

Feedback on Section 3

Now I'll give you a couple minutes to read section 3, and we'll get your feedback in the same way.

[Give time to read section 3]

5. I'm going to put a statement in the chat box right now and I'm going to ask you for your level of agreement with this statement: **"Based on section 3 of this document, I understand whether or not I can authorize the four listed waiver services for a person NOT ENROLLED in high school or age 18-21 transition programming."**
 - a. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? There is no right or wrong answer.
6. What concrete changes would make this section clearer?

Document 1 last thoughts

Thank you for that feedback on document 1.

7. Do you have any other suggestions we haven't yet discussed that would make this document clearer, easier to understand, or more complete?

Document 2: Employment Development Services CBSM (30 mins) 2:25 – 2:55

Let's move our discussion to the **second document, the Employment Development Services Community Based Services Manual.**

Read to the group:

This document describes the parameters for employment development services - including definition, covered services, and limitations. This guidance is part of the community-based services manual - a resource for lead agencies in administering waiver services. It will replace the existing employment development services CBSM page.

Feedback on Section 1

I'll give you 3 minutes to read **section 1**, then we'll do what we did for the last document and get your feedback through a combination of questions that I'll post in chat and conversation. Feel free to read the copy that I'm projecting on screen, or you may find it helpful to use the copy emailed to you and highlight or underline any sections where you have suggestions.

[Give time to read.]

8. I'm going to put a statement in the chat box right now and I'm going to ask you for your level of agreement with this statement: **"From this document, I understand the definitions of all three terms listed ('employment development services,' 'microenterprise business,' and 'competitive integrated employment.') - a. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? There is no right or wrong answer.**
9. What concrete changes would help you better understand these definitions?
10. I'm going to put a statement in the chat box right now and I'm going to ask you for your level of agreement with this statement: **"From section 1 of this document, I understand the eligibility parameters for employment development services."**
 - a. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? There is no right or wrong answer.
11. What concrete changes would help you better understand these eligibility parameters?

Feedback on section 2

Now I'll give you a couple minutes to read section 2, and we'll get your feedback in the same way.

[Give time to read section 2]

12. I'm going to put a statement in the chat box right now and I'm going to ask you for your level of agreement with this statement: **"From both the covered services and non-covered services parts of section 2, I understand what the covered and non-covered services are for employment development services."**
 - a. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? There is no right or wrong answer.

13. What concrete changes would help you better understand what the covered and non-covered services are?

Feedback on section 3

Now we'll do the same process for section 3 of the document. I'll give you a few minutes to read **section 3**.

[Give time to read.]

14. Looking at section 3, how clear or unclear is this section overall?

15. What concrete changes would make this section clearer?

Feedback on section 4

Now we'll do the same process for section 4 of the document. I'll give you a few minutes to read **section 4**.

[Give time to read.]

16. Looking at section 4, how clear or unclear is this section overall?

17. What concrete changes would make this section clearer?

Feedback on section 5

Now we'll do the same process for section 5 of the document. Section 5 is a list of links provided for more information. I'll give you a few minutes to read **section 5 and look at some of the links by clicking on your own version of the document, if you'd like**.

[Give time to read.]

18. Are there any additional links that should be provided as resources in this document? If so, what resources should be listed?

Document 2 last thoughts

Thank you for that feedback on document 2.

19. Do you have any other suggestions we haven't yet discussed that would make this document clearer, easier to understand, or more complete?

Document 3: Plan Phase of Development Services (15 mins) 2:55 – 3:10

Let's move our discussion to the **third and final document, the Employment Development Services - Plan Phase.**

Read to the group:

This document is content that will be used in the Work Toolkit of the Disability Hub MN website to provide additional information on the delivery of the planning phase of employment development services. It will be linked in the CBSM page for employment development services that we just reviewed. It will be part of a larger section providing resources for each phase of the engage, plan, find, keep framework.

Feedback on Section 1

Now I'll give you a few minutes to read **section 1**, then we'll get your feedback.

[Give time to read.]

20. I'm going to put a statement in the chat box right now and I'm going to ask you for your level of agreement with this statement: **"From section 1, I understand the what the service outcomes are for the Plan phase."**

a. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? There is no right or wrong answer.

21. What concrete changes would help you better understand what the service outcomes for Plan phase are?

Feedback on Section 2

Now I'll give you a few minutes minute to read **section 2**, then we'll get your feedback.

[Give time to read.]

22. I'm going to put a statement in the chat box right now and I'm going to ask you for your level of agreement with this statement: **"From this section 2, I understand the what the covered services are for the Plan phase."**

b. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? There is no right or wrong answer.

23. What concrete changes would help you better understand what the covered services for Plan phase are?

Document 3 last thoughts

Thank you for that feedback on document 3.

1. Do you have any other suggestions we haven't yet discussed that would make this document clearer, easier to understand, or more complete?

Wrap-up (2 mins) 3:05 – 3:07

Thank you again for your participation in today's focus group. Before we end this focus group, is there anything else that you would like to share about these documents and how they can be clearer, more understandable, or more complete?

The Improve Group will report learnings from this focus group to DHS and DEED and your input will be used in revising these documents. The summary report from this focus group will also be posted on the E1MN section of the Disability Hub website. If we have any follow-up questions based on the information you provided, we will send follow up questions by email to this group and any who wish to provide more input can do so at that time.

Thank you!