



## Memo

**Date:** 2/24/21

**To:** Our stakeholders

**From:** Natasha Merz, Director of Disability Services Division  
Dee Torgerson, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
Natasha Jerde, Director of State Services for the Blind

## RE: E1MN efforts for people on waivers

In late January, we introduced E1MN — Minnesota’s state agency partnership to advance Employment First outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities. Now, we want to update you on what is coming from E1MN next: We plan to create more seamless and timely employment supports for **people who access disability waivers**.

People who use waivers need to access employment services and supports provided across multiple state agencies. The experience can be confusing and complicated for all involved. To help define the issues and develop solutions, we’ve spent the last several years working together (as agencies) and with our stakeholders.

We are excited to introduce some of the system enhancements that will be **coming soon**. They include training, communications, and other help to support people and professionals along the way.

## Key updates

Service sequencing

We clarified how our services work together so it is clear who provides which service.



- To align our services to people’s needs, we created the *Engage, Plan, Find, Keep* framework to explain how our services work together. Each step is for people who access waivers (and are no longer in school) who need support to do the following:
  - **Engage** in exploring competitive work as an option so they can make an informed choice: Waiver employment exploration services.
  - **Plan** for what type of work they want and set some preliminary goals: Waiver employment development services (planning phase).
  - **Find** a competitive, integrated job and get settled in that job: VRS/SSB services.
  - **Keep** their job through ongoing supports: Waiver employment support services.
- To align to this framework and federal funding guidance, waiver employment development services will be two defined phases: One to plan for employment and another to support a job search. This work can occur within the current service definition for employment development services.
- In July 2021, DHS will replace the [interim guidance on VRS, SSB, IDEA and waiver employment services](#) with new policy guidance that will clarify when job search supports are available through VRS/SSB and limit the conditions when waiver case managers can authorize job search supports through employment development services.

#### Provider alignment

We are building a shared network of providers to improve access to employment services and support smooth transitions across funding streams. Some updates:

- We contracted with Star Services Inc. to educate and support providers to become enrolled as a waiver and VRS/SSB provider.
- To make it easier for waiver employment services providers to become dually enrolled, DEED-VRS/SSB now allows limited use vendors to bill up to \$100,000 per year (up from \$20,000 per year).
- VRS is creating a new performance-based agreement for people on waivers
- We mapped locations of both VRS/SSB and waiver employment service providers and are analyzing data to identify service gaps and set goals.



## Shared processes and tools

We are creating shared processes, training and tools to build a more seamless delivery of services and supports for the person. These include:

- An updated referral process and customer flow that will support timely transitions and maintain engagement.
- Shared person-centered tools to support a common conversation about employment.
- Training on new tools for waiver case managers, employment service providers and VRS/SSB counselors. These will help them work together to support competitive, integrated employment.

## What is coming next?

### February/March

- Introduction of the details of the *Engage, Plan, Find, Keep* framework for waiver services
- Outreach to employment development services providers regarding dual enrollment

### April/May

- VRS will launch a new Performance Based Agreement (PBA) funding structure for people who access waivers.
- Training for waiver case managers, VRS/SSB staff and service providers will begin.

### June/July

- Publication of changes in the DHS policy manual for lead agencies. It will include replacing interim guidance on VRS, SSB, IDEA and waiver employment services, as well as separation of employment development services into two phases.
- Technical assistance to support implementation of changes.



## Staying informed

### Coffee talks

Coffee talks are monthly 60-minute webinars that will allow for updates and discussion. They will take place on the second Thursday of each month from March to July. During the webinar, we will address questions we receive ahead of time from stakeholders.

### Details

Register in advance for each meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email that will contain information about how to join the meeting.

- 9 a.m. CST, March 11, 2021, [March 11 link to register](#)
- 9 a.m. CST, April 8, 2021, [April 8 link to register](#)
- 9 a.m. CST, May 13, 2021, [May 13 link to register](#)
- 9 a.m. CST, June 10, 2021, [June 10 link to register](#)

### Submit questions

To submit a question that you would like addressed, use the [Coffee Talk Question Form](#). Submit your questions at least three days before the meeting.

### Accommodations

We will provide ASL and transcription services for the webinar. If you have other accommodation requests or questions, submit your request using the question form.

### Disability Hub MN

To stay up-to-date on our work, provide feedback and see what we've learned along the way, visit the [E1MN](#) section of the Disability Hub MN website.