



Interagency Employment First Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for March 18, 2021

Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 **Time:** 9:00 am – 12:00pm

Location: Zoom Video Meeting

Advisory Committee Co-Chairs in alphabetical order:

- Natasha Jerde, Director, State Services for the Blind (DEED/SSB)
- Lesli Kerkhoff, Human Services Manager, Disability Services Division (DHS/DSD)
- Chris McVey, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DEED/VRS)

Membership and Stakeholder Representation on pages 2-3

Facilitation and Documentation: Holly Johnson, Lanterna Consulting, Inc. contracted through Management Analysis & Development, Minnesota Management and Budget

Advisory Committee Overview:

The **Interagency Employment First Advisory Committee** is a voluntary 14-member committee representing diverse stakeholders’ perspectives from around the state including individuals and their families, support professionals, and advocacy organizations. The committee is an important part of a state agency partnership to fulfill the interagency agreement between Minnesota’s Department of Employment and Economic Development and the Department of Human Services that was formalized in the September 2019 joint memorandum of understanding which can be read here:

<https://disabilityhubmn.org/media/hirdrm05/dhs-deed-mou.pdf>

The committee’s role is an advisory role established as part of the agreement to assist and inform the interagency partnership in the complex work of creating a more seamless and timely employment support system for people on HCBS waivers seeking competitive integrated employment.

The committee will meet bi-monthly over the next 18 months to assist the interagency work in preparation for replacement of the current interim guidance and implementation of enhanced interagency services in summer 2021.

Meetings will be hosted on Thursdays from 9:00am to 12:00pm on the following dates:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| • May 21, 2020 - Kickoff | • November 19, 2020 | • July 15, 2021 |
| • July 16, 2020 | • January 21, 2021 | • September 16, 2021 |
| • September 17, 2020 | • March 18, 2021 | • November 18, 2021 |
| | • May 20, 2021 | |

Best Source of Information: <https://disabilityhubmn.org/for-professionals/work/deed-dhs-mou/>



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Membership attendance in alphabetical order:

Name	Stakeholder Representative Appointment	Attended	Did Not Attend
Jon Alexander	Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)	✓	
Tim Dickie	Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR)	✓	
Jessica Eggert	People receiving services & their families or supports	✓	
John Filek	Deaf Blind service provider	✓	
April Ildvad – resigned Jan 2021	Broader stakeholder community (Mental health, brain injury specialist)		✓
Danielle Mahoney	University of Minnesota’s Institute on Community Integration	✓	
Alicia Munson	Advocacy organization for people with disabilities (The Arc Minnesota)	✓	
Jillian Nelson	Advocacy organization for people with disabilities (Autism Society of Minnesota / The Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities)	✓	
Julie Peterschick	VRS Community Partners Committee (CPC), formerly known as VRS Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Advisory Committee	✓	
Kristina Petronko	Client Assistance Project (CAP), Minnesota Disability Law Center	✓	
Yekaterna (Kate) Probert Fagundes	Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) Metro Minnesota representative	✓	
Phyllis Reller	Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) Greater Minnesota representative	✓	
Rita Wiersma	Association of Residential Resources in Minnesota (ARRM)	✓	
Barb Ziemke	People receiving services & their families or supports	✓	



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DEED VRS/SSB and DHS staff attendance in alphabetical order:

Name	Agency and Responsibility	Attended	Did Not Attend
Beth Grube	Benefits Planning Coordinator for Disability Services Division (DHS)		✓
Amanda Jensen-Stahl	Program Specialist for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DEED)	✓	
Natasha Jerde	Director of State Services for the Blind (DEED)	✓	
Leslie Kerkhoff	Human Services Manager, Disability Services Division (DHS)	✓	
Chris McVey	Director of Strategic Initiatives for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DEED)		✓
Ryan Merz	Employment Planning and Resource Coordinator for Disability Services Division (DHS)	✓	

Meeting Minutes for March 18, 2021

Meeting Objectives

Our objectives for the March 2021 Advisory Committee meeting are to:

1. Provide overall E1 MN updates on several content areas including training, communication and engagement opportunities that are being developed for the July 1, 2021 launch.
2. Engage in small group breakout sessions to gather advisory insights and input on what committee members need to feel ready and equipped to serve as ambassadors for the changes ahead.
3. Engage the committee in an open, respectful forum to answer questions on the important changes and to gather insights and advice to inform and improve launch preparations.

Agenda Topics

1. E1 MN Advisory Updates
2. E1 MN Curriculum and Training Overview
3. Small Group Breakout Sessions and Full Group Discussion Highlights
 - Individuals, Families and Advocates Perspectives
 - Providers Perspectives
 - Lead Agencies and Waiver Case Managers Perspectives

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Welcome and Opening

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am by facilitator Holly Johnson who provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Discussion

Agenda Item #1: E1 MN Advisory Updates	
20 minutes	Ryan Merz

Ryan introduced the committee to the ‘Engage, Plan, Find, Keep Framework’ using a series of three high-level visuals depicting E1 interagency services and funding sources for both adults and students receiving waiver services who are seeking competitive, integrated employment. The graphic framework also describes the anticipated results for each of the four service areas.

For adults receiving waiver services, the waiver is expected to fund the engage, plan, and keep service areas of the framework while DEED- VRS/SSB is expected to fund the find service area.

For students receiving waiver services, DEED – VRS/SSB together with School Districts are expected to fund services associated with the engage, plan, and find areas of the framework. Waiver services will provide funding for employment support services outside of school hours while school transition services will provide services during school hours.

For his next update topic, Ryan encouraged the advisory to register and encourage others to also register for the new series of E1 MN Coffee Talks. The monthly 60-minute webinars will be hosted by interagency staff to provide an informal place to share updates and foster discussion for anyone who is interested in attending. The first Coffee Talk was held on March 11 and additional webinars are scheduled for 9:00-10am on April 8, May 13 and June 10. Feedback on the initial session has been positive.

Ryan also updated the advisory on continued work in the development of E1 MN tools including ‘My Positive Summary’ which was the focus of a recent PIPEin stakeholder engagement opportunity. ‘My Positive Summary’ is part of a series of materials call Charting the Life Course and can be accessed at this address: <https://disabilityhubmn.org/hub-tools/activities-and-guides/charting-the-lifecourse/>

The committee expressed support for the variety of communication options and tools and advised the interagency team to continue to be mindful of the wide range of reactions that may occur for those already in waiver services. While some will be excited, others including families, may experience high levels of anxiety and nervousness about changes or perceived changes in services.

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Agenda Item #2: E1 MN Curriculum and Training Overview

45 minutes

Amanda Jensen Stahl

Amanda provided an overview of the training plan being developed to support the launch of E1 MN. A two hour online introductory training for service professions at Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), State Services for the Blind (SSB), waiver case managers and employment service providers is being developed and will be available on multiple dates: April 27 (9:00-11:00am), April 29 (1:00-3:00pm), and May 5 (9:00-11:00am). All attendees must register in advance for training and need only attend one event. A recorded version of the training will be available in mid-May. ASL Interpreters and CART captioning services will be available for each training. For other accommodation needs, please contact Susan Kusz at kusz@state.mn.us.

E1 MN Kickoff Training Goals: By attending this two-hour interactive session, participants will:

- Learn why and how E1MN came to be
- Understand how E1MN will benefit people in Minnesota who have disabilities
- Be able to explain the Engage, Plan, Find, Keep framework
- Have a high-level understanding of E1MN team member roles and responsibilities
- Recognize the importance of their individual contribution to E1MN success
- Be prepared for next steps leading up to the July 1, 2021, E1MN launch.

In addition to kickoff training in April and May, targeted training on specific tools and guidance will be developed and offered this summer. Regional trainings are planned for the fall and on an ongoing basis to provide hands-on forums for learning, discussion, and practice.

Amanda also shared plans for an online session focused on the benefits and steps to become a dual services provider. The joint DEED/DHS Service Provider Alignment webinar, designed for employment service providers and interested stakeholders, is scheduled for 2:00-3:00pm on April 8. DHS is encouraging currently enrolled employment service providers (especially those that actively deliver employment development services) to consider becoming a Vocational Rehabilitation Services/State Services for the Blind (VRS/SSB) service provider (or vice versa).

Information and registration links for both trainings will be sent out by participating agencies the week of March 22nd.

The committee provided feedback on the training plan and discussed the significant value experienced when different stakeholders have access to the same information at the same time together. The committee also noted challenges with geographic service access gaps as well as use of signing for accessibility to training and associated announcements/communication.

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Agenda Item #3 : E1 MN: Stakeholder Perspectives on Launch Preparedness

45 minutes and 30 minutes

Small Groups with Steering Team Hosts (45 minutes) followed by a Full Group Session (30 minutes) facilitated by Holly Johnson

Holly provided instructions for the small group breakouts. The three breakout groups were composed of the following three advisory stakeholder representative perspectives:

1. Individuals, Families and Advocates Representatives
2. Provider Representatives
3. Lead Agencies and Waiver Case Manager Representatives

The three breakout groups were given the same set of discussion questions in advance of the meeting.

The discussion questions were:

Thinking about E1 MN...

What are the positive messages that staff and/or the people in your world need to understand?

What do you, as advisory ambassadors, need to be able to get those messages out?

What problems and concerns are you sensing?

What do you need from interagency partners to feel prepared to help address concerns?

Each breakout group was hosted by 1-2 members of the interagency steering team and asked to summarize their small group responses to each discussion question. Following the small group breakouts, the full committee reconvened to share the highlights from each of the three breakout discussions. Here is the recap from each of the three breakout groups:

1. **Feedback from individuals, families, and advocates representation breakout group** (Jessica Eggert, Danielle Mahoney, Alicia Munson, Jillian Nelson, Kristina Petronko, Barb Ziemke facilitated by Natasha Jerde and Holly Johnson):

What are the positive messages that staff and/or the people in your world need to understand about what is changing and what is staying the same?

- Positive changes are coming, this is a new effort to provide the best/most seamless services for people who are eligible for both waiver services and VR services.
- This work is about the long-term effectiveness of people getting and keeping jobs.
- This effort involves a lot of state agencies working together with the whole system coordinating to help support people in finding competitive integrated employment (in alignment with Minnesota's Employment First Policy and our state's Olmstead Plan)
- There will be greater flexibility and resources for providers to meet people's needs.
- On the ground services should not look much different however individuals will spend less time coordinating their own services so they can focus on getting/keeping a job

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What problems and concerns are you sensing?

- It may be difficult to enroll new providers especially in counties without a lot of options.
- What options are available for people if there is a waiting list? Note: currently all service categories are open and there is not waiting list.
- We have parts of the state where we need more service options to help people with intellectual/developmental disabilities find jobs.
- Parents may be reluctant or resistant to service changes.
- VR Limited use vendor (LUV) applications are moving very slowly.
- We need more clarity on who is helping students/youth with what and who to talk to when there is a problem.

What do you, as advisory ambassadors, need to be able to get those messages out? What do you need from interagency partners to feel prepared to help address concerns? *Note: responses for these questions were combined given the high degree of overlap in the feedback.*

- Sample social media (graphics with brief text, hashtag) with branding that contains consistent messages that can be shared widely with different stakeholders.
- Short communications composed of less than 200 words that can be easily inserted into a newsletter.
- Plain language
- Clear website that includes an accessible FAQ written in plain language
- Knowledgeable people who can be called upon to do outreach, attend meetings, answer questions, etc.
- Videos (in multiple languages, especially oral languages like Somali)
- Materials in multiple languages
- Scenarios (4-6 sample scenarios) using 'real life' examples to show how this abstract process will work.
- Provide clear contacts to respond/resolve problems.
- Effective training for waiver case managers so they can understand how the system will work.
- Help people with disabilities and advocates who have not had good experiences in the past understand things are changing and why they should give it another try.

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2. **Feedback from the providers representation breakout group** (Jon Alexander, Tim Dickie, Julie Peterschick, Rita Wiersma facilitated by Amanda Jensen-Stahl and Ryan Merz):

What are the positive messages that staff and/or the people in your world need to understand?

- Aligning services is an opportunity for providers and counties to help reduce the current confusion with a clear and consistent understanding of when each service is used.
- Services following the person is a positive thing.
- Consistency amongst providers and other team members will be a big positive.
- July 1 is the start of aligning of our frameworks. We know that we are going to learn things along the way. There may be an understandable tension as we try to provide greater clarity knowing we are learning as we go.

What problems and concerns are you sensing?

- There is still confusion around the “Engage, Plan, Find, Keep” framework
- This is a massive switch for providers: different staff, different requirements, different services (professional technical (P/T) contracts vs. waiver funded). Still a need to understand and navigate two different, complex systems which includes:
 - Different rates for similar/same services depending on the funding source.
 - The VR performance-based agreement (PBA) uses milestones (outcome based) vs. waiver payment for 15-minute service increments (billable time/activities). Is there an option for a hybrid? Balance between the two?
 - VR utilizes CARF accreditation/standards; waivers utilizes 245D.
 - Two hugely different teams (VRS and Waiver): Providers would love to do things the same for training and efficiency purposes. How can we move away from two systems?
- Several concerns related to Work Experience which primarily fall into four areas:
 1. Liability coverage for unpaid work experiences – today when these services are funded/reimbursed by VR, the provider is paying the consumer for work experience and therefore becomes the ‘employer of record’ which then requires that the consumer be covered by the providers insurance in the event of injury during the work experience. In addition, some providers still do a lot of contract work with consumers on their payroll through contracts with employers in which they bill the employer for services provided. In these instances, those employers are then listed on the provider’s liability certificates. What happens when work experiences take place under the waiver exploration and/or development services?
 2. What constitutes work experience? Concerns that DHS does not necessarily equate work experience to actual on the job work experiences but that it may also include other activities like a tour or job shadow. Many referrals are made to determine emotional or physical endurance, and this is difficult to assess without actually putting the individual on

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the job. Providers want on the job work experiences to continue to be available and seamless with the switch to waivers as the funding source.

3. DOL compliance around wages and work. Years ago, providers started paying wages to help test and prove key questions such as: Can you prove the employer is not benefitting from the work being performed? Can you prove the job being done is not an actual position and taking work from an employee?
 4. Rates. VR pays providers \$75 per hour for many services while the waiver would pay about \$44 or \$56 depending on if the services are authorized under exploration or development. Providers are concerned about the rate differences, whether services will be consistently authorized in waiver development, and if there will be inconsistent determination at the county or case manager level.
- Concerns if the new VR PBA will adequately support people on waivers with more barriers to employment and who typically take longer to achieve competitive integrated employment than others served by the same providers. Providers need to figure out how to serve the people in a way that works financially.

What do you, as advisory ambassadors, need to be able to get those messages out? What do you need from interagency partners to feel prepared to help address concerns?

- Be truly clear on what the July 1st effective date means and what will happen/be different.
- Provide clarity around funding responsibilities and differences between the waiver and VRS/SSB; clear guidelines for who pays for what when e.g., waiver funds services up to placement and VR funds placement services. There still seems to be many layers to everything.
- Be clear about what falls within “Engage” and when something falls under “Plan” (like Discovery). There is a lot of confusion in this area.
- Provide guidance on how to manage multiple service authorizations.
- Providers will need support for all the changes we need to make, and each provider is coming from a different place. Can I make this work with the staff I have? Do I need more staff? What supports are out there to make this happen?
- Providers need help creating the pipeline to attract and prepare qualified staff. How do we prepare people coming out of college for this type of work (Employment Consultant role)?
- Providers need clear and firm guidance on how this should work while understanding we will adjust as we go. People want to know what to do and be clear on what it means for us.
- Information on the new E1 PBA structure.
- Messaging designed for small providers including the benefits of being a dual service provider, tools and strategies to operate differently, support options, etc.
- Messaging for smaller employers
- Website: start with a clear Q & A with basic guidance and consider sections for providers, for counties, and for VRS/SSB staff. Provide an accessible way for people to reach out and ask for guidance.

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3. Feedback from lead agencies and waiver case managers representation group (Kate Probert Fagundes and Phyllis Reller facilitated by Lesli Kerkhoff):

What are the positive messages that staff and/or the people in your world need to understand?

- It has always been confusing about who pays for what so if we can clarify that it will be good, and we should emphasize that.
- We should also emphasize how the process is designed to positively impact the people we serve.
- If service providers are dual providers, then they can provide a fuller range of service and people will not need to switch providers to get what they need.
- Be clear on the purpose of the change – and how it will simplify the case manager’s job and benefit the person at the same time.
- Be equally clear on what is changing and what is not changing.
- Motivate passion through positive case scenarios – how E1 changes lives will help motivation. Communicate the positive outcomes we are expecting to result from this effort and from employment.
- This is about getting the right people in the right seat for all the right reasons and results.

What do you, as advisory ambassadors, need to be able to get those messages out?

- It is all too much on top of everything else and case managers are already overwhelmed. It will be important to break this into smaller chunks, so they do not get overwhelmed.
- Paint an integrated picture by connecting these changes into all the other changes case managers are going through. Clarify how this connects to Waiver Reimagine.
- Keep it simple/simplify it for supervisors. Leverage the existing supervisor meetings and provide some core ideas for content/discussion.
- Clarity is key! Look for and address what is not clear. There is still confusion on engage vs. plan. Clarify what VRS does versus waiver especially at plan stage. People do not understand the difference between engage and plan. More needs to be done to make this simple and clear.

What problems and concerns are you sensing?

- People do not understand waiver exploration service.
- There is a ‘fuzziness’ of who pays for placement and the experience in placement.
- DEED Performance Based Agreements (PBAs) are confusing for case managers.
- Is there a situation where the PBA and an employment waiver service would be serving the same person at the same time? If yes, we should be illustrating how that works.
- Waiver does not support paid work experience while VRS does. Case managers have some concerns about the VRS model of paid experience.

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- We need clear guidance on billing – what do you bill, how much do you bill, etc.
- There are inconsistencies across counties in how waiver management happens.
- Case managers do not have time to attend two-hour meetings.
- It is important to recognize there are different roles. There are case aids, case managers, and contracted case managers. Small county case managers do ‘everything’ and need a broader range of knowledge. Case managers in larger counties might be more focused however their caseloads are typically larger, and they are always working with crisis.
- Case managers are overwhelmed with all the toolkits, tools, resources plus that takes time too.
- Case managers need training in motivational interviews.
- With launch a few months away, it is getting real.
- Remember spring breaks impact planning now too.

What do you need from interagency partners to feel prepared to help address concerns?

- Smaller caseloads and time to do additional work!
- More lead time for trainings. Case managers are booked a good month out on the calendar. Even a ‘save the date’ announcement would be helpful.
- Attend existing regional meetings.
- Be clear on billing and what case managers need to do.
- Provide good case scenarios to give us examples.
- Provide different training and support options.

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Meeting Recap

Topic 1: The advisory committee received updates on the ‘Engage, Plan, Find, Keep Framework’ using a series of three high-level visuals depicting E1 interagency services and funding sources for both adults and students receiving waiver services who are seeking competitive, integrated employment. The graphic framework also describes the anticipated results for each of the four service areas. The committee also received updates on the Disability Hub Work toolkit which features information and tools designed to assist support professionals.

Topic 2: The steering team provided an overview of the training plan being developed to support the launch of E1 MN which includes a two hour online introductory training for service professionals on April 27 (9:00-11:00am), April 29 (1:00-3:00pm), and May 5 (9:00-11:00am). Training plans also include monthly ‘coffee chats’ and targeted training for providers, waiver case managers and VRS/SSB staff. The committee provided feedback on the training plan and discussed the significant value experienced when different stakeholders have access to the same information at the same time together.

Topic 3: The advisory committee engaged in small group discussions about preparations for launch from three different representative perspectives: 1) individuals, families, and advocates, 2) employment service providers, and 3) lead agencies and waiver case managers. The small groups reconvened to share discussion themes and insights with the full committee.

Next Steps

1. Information on the MOU and E1 MN work is on the Disability HUB website using this link: <https://disabilityhubmn.org/for-professionals/work/e1mn/>
2. Toolkits for support professionals working with adults can be accessed using this link: <https://disabilityhubmn.org/for-professionals/work/>
3. Information on E1 MN training opportunities and registration can be found using this link: <https://disabilityhubmn.org/for-professionals/work/e1mn/e1mn-trainings-and-events/#article-start>
4. The next meeting of the E1 MN Interagency Advisory Committee will be on May 20, 2021.

Meeting Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00p.m.

** End of document*