



Interagency Employment First Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for September 17, 2020

Date: Thursday, September 17, 2020 **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 page 2

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](#).

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 12-18 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 | • September 17, 2020 | • March 18, 2021 |
| • July 16, 2020 | • November 19, 2020 | • May 20, 2021 |
| | • January 21, 2021 | • July 15, 2021 |

Best Source of Information:

<https://disabilityhubmn.org/hub-partners/work-toolkit/policy-and-practice/dhsdeed-memorandum-of-understanding-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	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 September 17, 2020

Meeting Objectives

1. To gather Advisory Committee input on the initial 2020 MOU Update communication along with feedback to help inform future update communications.
2. To provide the Advisory Committee a preview of a strategic communication milestone for the state agency partnership advancing Employment First.
3. To participate in a small group session to help prepare for a smooth transition from the interim guidance to the new interagency services launch in summer of 2021. While each committee member will participate in one of the two sessions, all committee members will hear the highlights from both sessions in a full committee session after the concurrent small groups meet.
4. To provide an open, respectful forum for committee members to engage in thoughtful discussion and advice to help shape the interagency partnership advancing Employment First and implement the Memo of Understanding.

Agenda Topics

1. Full Advisory Committee Updates
2. Communication and Training for an Effective Launch in 2021
3. Increasing Minnesota’s Network of Dual Enrolled Employment Service Providers

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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: Full Advisory Committee Updates

30 minutes

Facilitator with Interagency Steering Team (see list on page 3)

A new communication has been designed and posted to provide ongoing updates on interagency partnership efforts including progress by the interagency staff workgroups and key stakeholders input from the Interagency Employment First Advisory Committee as well as PIPEin and VIP activities. The communication is available online at <https://disabilityhubmn.org/media/1827/july-2020-mou-update.pdf>

Agenda Item #2: Communication and Training for an Effective Launch in 2021

60 minutes

Small group hosts: Lesli Kerkhoff, Beth Grube and Russell Barnes

This small group discussion focused on gathering ideas for important stakeholders who need to be included in communication and training efforts for a successful launch in 2021. The small group responses to the three focus questions are synthesized as follows:

1. Who do we need to communicate with for successful launch? E.g. individuals and their families/support, advocacy organizations, supporting professionals

- **People with disabilities and their families** – both those accessing employment supports and those who are not.
- **Transition-age youth** - to help students understand the employment services that are available to them and who they need to work with to access the various services. Helping youth using employment exploration services to understand how they can transition among all the employment services.
- **Advocacy Organizations** - who can be a bridge between the agencies, individuals, and parents/family members; clarify misinterpretations about employment opportunities and continue to promote competitive integrated employment in employment services.
- **Educating educators** - especially those who manage Individualized Education Programs (IPE) which are documents developed by school special education departments.
- **Self-Advocacy Groups** - there are a lot of online groups and leaders in self advocacy groups that can communicate with other people.

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- **Supervisors Groups** – there are many supervisor groups in the state including the RRS regional communities of practice, MOHR, NAPSA, and residential providers.
- **Service Professionals** – helping professionals such as waiver case managers understand the process changes to make sure each person’s experience is a good one.
- **Other groups that do trainings for families and people with disabilities** – there are opportunities such as conferences that could be helpful for getting the word out on available employment services.

2. What methods and medium will be most effective to reach them?

- **Person-centered team meetings** – provide great opportunities for everyone who is working with the individual to meet each other and get on the same page using a person-centered approach. These meeting help the client know who does what on their team. In person opportunities are especially helpful for DeafBlind people.
- **Videos with captions and interpreters** – as we have learned from providing guidance around COVID-19, shorter (~3 minutes) case videos with accessibility components often connect with people better than text on a page. Videos can also be effective in communicating with people from culturally specific communities such as the Somali community.
- **Webinars** – offer a structured opportunity to ask questions. Webinars require access to technology and internet availability so they do not work for everyone.
- **Social media/live streaming** –is another popular option people use to access information.
- **Beyond social media** - we need to challenge ourselves to reach a diverse range of communication needs including people who rely on low tech tools and letters with large print or braille.
- **Monthly community of practice online meetings** – are used by county case managers to share and discuss ideas and practice changes. These meetings help case managers absorb the volumes of detailed information they receive.
- **Regional Supervisors Meetings** – good place for those who supervise waiver case managers to share information and help people to understand, prepare and embrace the ideas and practices for upcoming changes.

3. Who should communicate to the various groups?

- Interagency teams composed of staff from DEED and DHS
- A co-facilitation model that includes people from the agencies (DEED and DHS) along with people with disabilities sharing in the presentations
- Volunteer groups, spokespeople who represent people with disability groups, and ‘ambassador groups’ who can engage directly with people with disabilities

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Agenda Item #3: Increasing Minnesota's Network of Dual Enrolled Employment Service Providers

60 minutes

Small group hosts: Natasha Jerde, Chris McVey and Ryan Merz

This small group discussion focused on gathering advice on strategies for increasing Minnesota's network of employment service providers who are dually enrolled in both DEED vocational rehabilitation services (VRS and/or SSB) through a professional and technical (P/T) contract, and in HCBS waiver employment services as part of their 245D licensing with DHS. About 50% (160) of DEED Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) are dually enrolled with a positive trend in recent years.

The small group responses to the four focus questions are synthesized as follows:

1. What are the most important reasons an employment service provider should become a 'dually enrolled provider'?

- **Consistency:** Increases consistency of quality services for the person. Change is challenging for many individuals; consistency can be good for both the provider and the person/support team.
- **Easier Transitions:** A customer can get everything they need in "one place". Creates easier and smoother service transitions for the person when they do not have to switch service providers.
- **Business Viability:** Providing a fuller range of services can support financial business needs for continued operations.

2. What are the biggest questions/barriers we need to address?

- **245D licensure is more difficult and expensive than becoming a VR provider:** Highest level of barriers are associated with a DEED Limited Use Vendor (LUV) becoming DHS 245D licensed for waiver employment services.
 - The process for 245D licensing is much more difficult and expensive than applying for a P/T contract.
 - Keeping up on required training can be challenging for smaller providers.
- **Disability Specific Providers:** Some providers specialize their services for one specific disability and may be less interested in enrolling as a 245D provider
- **Staffing Challenges:** Long term services may require a different set of employees. It is a bigger commitment to provide long term services. There continues to be a severe shortage of employees that providers can attract and retain within the current rate structure and workforce environment. High staff turnover and lower pay make it hard for providers to find key capacity such as job developers.
- **Transportation System Issues:** This is an ongoing challenge with many dimensions.
 - Availability and flexibility of transportation. Most models are designed to meet the needs of a group rather than individuals.

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- Challenges for both rural vs urban service areas
 - Transportation costs
 - **Two Distinct Systems:** Dual enrolled providers must become fluent in two different systems with different rules, which are sometimes similar but not the same, who use different vernacular, and have different processes and reporting requirements. Complying with dual systems requires more administrative staff time and higher costs e.g. two billing specialists
3. **What is the best way to increase the number of dual providers and address critical service gaps?**
- **Enhanced financial model:** Increased rates to support the hiring of quality staff. Consider some type of monetary incentives around application for dual enrollment.
 - **Increased education and training:** Provide a clear vision and path to help providers understand how being a dual provider can work for them.
 - **Greater flexibility:** Find better options to address chronic systems issues such as providing transportation and writing service agreements.
 - **Pilot projects:** Consider a pilot that targets 245D providers who are not currently dually enrolled to assist with securing a P/T contract. Members cited the VRS/Education partnership around Employment First as an example of how a pilot might work.
4. **How do we encourage the development of existing providers or recruitment of new providers representing culturally specific communities to help address: geographic disparities, equity gaps, and services for a range of disability types? E.g. race, disability, gender, geography, etc.**
- **Use Data as a Tool:** Gather and analyze interagency data to identify the areas of greatest need.
 - **Create and Build Relationships:** Be intentional about identifying and engaging with underrepresented communities, developing understanding and trust, attracting staff talent from those communities, and being inclusive during the rollout in key areas such as policies and communication.
 - **Focused Connections:** Focus on one person/community at a time and meet them where they are, rather than bringing everyone together in one place.
 - **Address Rural Access Gaps:** Incentivize providers to start and sustain additional programs in underrepresented rural communities.



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Meeting Recap

Topic 1: The advisory committee received an update on the two interagency staff workgroups and stakeholder engagement activities on both PIPEin and VIP platforms. Updates will be posted and distributed to communicate progress toward interagency employment first commitments and objectives.

Topic 2: A committee small group identified important stakeholders who need to be included in communication and training efforts to support the launch of enhanced services in summer of 2021. The small group also discussed a wide variety of approaches for effective and inclusive outreach.

Topic 3: A committee small group discussed the benefits and barriers to increasing Minnesota's network of dually enrolled employment services providers. They also provided input and ideas for increasing the number of dual providers and addressing critical staffing and service gaps across culturally specific communities.

Next Steps

1. Progress updates on the MOU work are posted on the Disability HUB website <https://disabilityhubmn.org/hub-partners/work-toolkit/policy-and-practice/dhsdeed-memorandum-of-understanding-mou>
2. The next meeting of the Interagency Employment First Advisory Committee will be on November 19, 2020.

Meeting Adjourned

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

** End of document*