• **Kickoff**: Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships

• **Welcome and Commissioner Updates**: Commissioner Grove

• **CareerForce Updates**: Dee Torgerson, VRS Director

• **SSB Updates**: Natasha Jerde, SSB Director

• **VRS Updates**: Dee Torgerson, VRS Director
  - Chris McVey: VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives, Kim Babine: VRS Director of Community Partnerships, Amanda Jensen-Stahl: VRS Manager of Interagency Partnerships and Business Engagement

• **Q&A**: Moderated by Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships

• **Closing Remarks**: Dee Torgerson, VRS Director and Natasha Jerde, SSB Director
Employment Rates Among Minnesotans with Disabilities

- United States:
  - People without a Disability: 79%
  - People with a Disability: 39%

- Minnesota:
  - People without a Disability: 85%
  - People with a Disability: 48%
What We’ve Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Many of our services can be delivered remotely
- Service delivery often improves when delivered remotely because it removes physical barriers
- We can run a much more efficient system than we currently operate
- In-person services still matter, especially to bridge the digital divide
- Digital transformation means delivering the right service to the right person
- We work in a networked space – partnerships are key to success
Our Evolving Service Model – Core Principles

- **Equity**: Center everything we do around equity
- **Proactivity**: Take a proactive stance – meet people where they are
- **Flexibility**: Embrace the opportunity to try new things and learn as we go
DEED-VRS and DEED-SSB Meets Business Needs

- Shares vital information on in demand careers with students and adults with disabilities
- Connects Minnesota business to an untapped talent pool
- Partners with business to provide disability related information, resources and training
The Job Service Customer

• CareerForce serves everyone:
  • Re-opening to the public and by appointment August 2, 2021.
  • We must provide equal access for employment services to everyone inside and outside of the CareerForce system.
  • We will do this through a mixture of in-person, remote, and online self-services across the state.

• The customers we'll proactively focus on are:
  • People with barriers to employment: BIPOC, veterans, those with no access to technology.
  • People receiving UI and MFIP services.
SSB: A Hybrid Approach

- Philosophy and approach remains the same: “We go to you”
- Hybrid service model based on customer needs and informed choice
  - In home
  - In the community
  - Virtual
- Decreased physical footprint in CareerForce locations, increased presence in the community
- No waiting list for services!
SSB: Resumption of Services Timeline

- April 2021: SSU resumed 1 person per day in-person services;
- May 2021: WDU employment specialists, assistive technologists, and rehabilitation teacher resumed 1 person per day in-person services
- July 2021: No limits to in-person services
- August 2021: Return of Communication Center volunteers
- August 2021: Doors open to the public by appointment only
• Applications exceeding pre-COVID numbers

• Successful closures in competitive integrated employment trending upwards but can be better

• A virtual world forced everyone to look at long-term accessibility of systems and documents, thus increasing opportunities and access for blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind Minnesotans

• Transportation barriers both increased and decreased
  • Public transportation options/schedules have been significantly reduced
  • But remote work is becoming standard
SSB: Priorities and Future Vision

- Hybrid service delivery approach based on individual needs and informed choice
- Spending challenges mean opportunities for initiatives that improve services to customers, especially around Pre-ETS
- Long-term recruitment and retention of diverse and skilled staff
- Community Partner collaboration around service delivery
- Increased and intentional outreach to underserved communities
- A focus on mental health
- Ramping up Aging Eyes Initiative within Senior Services to reach more seniors than ever before
Changing Landscape: Serving Individuals with More Significantly Impacting Disabilities

- 2013-2020 Waiting List
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act
  - Section 511
  - Pre-ETS 15% federal funding spending requirement serving students
  - E1MN MOU (Collaboration with MN Department of Human Services)
The Changing Landscape of VRS – Disability Types

- Serious Mental Illness
- Learning Disabilities
- Autism
- Intellectual Disability
- Other Physical Impairments
- Deaf/Hearing Loss

% of New Participants
The Changing Landscape of VRS – Complexity

![Graph showing the changing landscape of VRS complexity with percentage of new participants over time. The graph compares 1-3 and 4+ functional limitations.](Image)
Services to students are growing:

• Nearly 60% of VRS participants were youth at the time they started VRS services; almost 3,000 (22%) are current high school students.

• In addition, we make services available through schools to another 50,000 students with disabilities through pre-employment transition services, more commonly referred to as Pre-ETS.
Changing Landscape: VRS is Ready

• Categories 1, 2, & 3 opened in 2020 – VRS is ready to serve people with one or more functional limitations at this time

• VRS supports people with wide variety of disabilities reach their career goals

• Benefits Planning is key to making fully informed decisions

• VRS supports people with disabilities plan for careers earning family sustaining wages
VRS Transitioning to a New Model of Services

VRS Mission:

*Empower youth and adults with disabilities to achieve their goals for competitive, integrated employment.*

- Increased choice for our participants
- Person Centered Services
- Eliminate barriers to services
- Increase outreach and engagement to underserved populations
- Increase collaboration with agencies and partners (E1MN)
- Increase access and flexibility for parents and families
- Keep categories of services open
VRS envisions a future for Minnesotans with disabilities where:

- There is **freedom for meaningful choice and self-determination through a planning process directed by the individual** and opportunities for economic self-sufficiency in competitive, integrated employment.
- Person-centered approaches are best practices and employment opportunities are identified and **developed beyond the choices available today**.
- VRS, the business community, Community Rehabilitation Programs, educators, employers, other agencies and representatives:
  - engage with one another as trusted workforce development partners that **break down barriers to employment and independent living**, and
  - are leaders, successful learners, take risks with new ideas, share knowledge, engage, think critically and adopt change.
VRS will offer expanded services options for individuals with disabilities. We want to meet people where they are. The expanded service options include:

- Colleges, Universities and Technical Colleges
- High Schools – VRS is present in over 400 school districts across the state
- County Offices
- Remote or Virtual Services – VRS’s new WF1 app will be launched Fall 2021. The new app will support greater remote connection and communication.
- VRS, CareerForce MN, or partner offices, as well as other community locations in which the individual feels comfortable
- The potential or current participant’s home
DEED Digital Services – where we're headed

• Replacing Minnesotaworks.net with a modern, accessible, mobile-friendly labor exchange and account management platform

• Reviewing customer-facing content to make sure information is accessible, updated, accurate, and easy to find

• Exploring new tools and platforms to provide better direct services

• Launching Workforce One Connect app to help participants communicate with counselors, submit documents, and get information about local resources
DEED - Our approach to physical space

• We are choosing a space footprint that fits our service delivery models
• Our footprint will be a combination of leased space in CareerForce and other partner locations, use of third-party spaces, and mobile services
• Shifting of costs from physical space to direct services
• Physical space reduction is a national trend for VR
• We need your support
VRS: Resumption of Services Timeline

- Safety Protocols for Staff and Individuals Served in Place
- June 2021: Phased In-Person Services Began
- August 2, 2021: In-Person Services Available at VRS onsite and offsite by appointment only
- Continue virtual or remote services if preferred by the individual served
VRS – Partnering with Business

• Employer visits, tours, and meetings to understand an employer’s specific hiring needs and better connect VRS’s talented pool of job seekers to jobs.

• Assist employers with their recruitment needs by reaching out to our wide network of job seekers and coordinating with our partners to meet hiring needs.

• Provide no cost training and consultation on important topics such as creating disability inclusive work environments, understanding who is covered/protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and recognizing an accommodation request and implementing reasonable accommodations.
What this means for you

• Individuals and their Families

• VRS Community Partners and Potential Community Partners

• Advocacy Organizations and Advocates
Q & A: We want to hear from you

Please Submit Questions Using this Form: https://forms.office.com/g/KiVJK6ZuPD

• Which changes are you most excited about?

• What challenges do you anticipate?

• How can VRS/SSB collaborate more intently with you on reaching individuals needing services?

• What additional VRS/SSB changes would you recommend to best serve the persons that you represent?

• What other ideas do you have for VRS/SSB to best meet the needs of employers seeking qualified job candidates?
In Conclusion

- NO wait list! Categories are open.
- Utilize new learning and digital technologies
- Increased availability and more opportunities to connect
- Dedicated to sustaining strong partnerships
- Stronger business partnerships

- Decreasing physical footprint in order to
  - divert funds into direct services for individuals with disabilities
  - keep categories of services OPEN long term
### SSB

- [mn.gov/deed/ssb](http://mn.gov/deed/ssb)
- **Main Line:** 651-539-2300
- **Director Natasha Jerde**
  - Natasha.Jerde@state.mn.us
  - 651-539-2272

### VRS

- [mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities](http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities)
- [Dee Torgerson, VRS Director: Dee.Torgerson@state.mn.us](mailto:Dee.Torgerson@state.mn.us)
- [Chris McVey, VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives: Chris.McVey@state.mn.us](mailto:Chris.McVey@state.mn.us)
- [Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships: Kim.Babine@state.mn.us](mailto:Kim.Babine@state.mn.us)
- [Amanda Jensen-Stahl, VRS Manager of Interagency Partnerships and Business Engagement: Amanda.Jensen-Stahl@state.mn.us](mailto:Amanda.Jensen-Stahl@state.mn.us)
- To be added to the email list for general VRS information: contact Karla.Eckhoff@state.mn.us
Thank You!