



VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum

October 7, 2025

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Welcome to the VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum!

- **ASL Interpreters** are designated as “co-hosts”, so they appear at the top of your participant list. If you need the ability to “multi-pin” please email Sara.Sundeen@state.mn.us
- **Closed Captioning** is available. A livestream is linked in the chat.
- **Your name:** Please change your Zoom name to display your first and last name and the agency where you work. An easy way to rename is: 1) go to the participant list and find your name, 2) hover over your name, 3) select “more”, 4) select “rename”.
- **Questions and Comments:** Please submit feedback, questions, and comments via Microsoft Form: [Q&A Microsoft Form](#).
- **Technical Issues:** If you have technical issues, please contact Sara.Sundeen@state.mn.us
- **Recording:** This session will be recorded and posted to the VRS website along with the agenda, presentation, and transcript.

- **Welcome:** Lori Thorpe, VRS Director of Contracts and Partnerships
- **VRS Leadership Updates:** Dee Torgerson, Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- **Youth Services Updates:** Alyssa Klein, VRS Youth Services Coordinator
- **Partner Evaluation Pilot:** Lori Thorpe
- **VRS YesLMS Partner Pilot:** Sara Sundeen, Community Partnerships Program Specialist
- **Q & A:** Sara Sundeen
- **Wrap-Up:** Lori Thorpe

VRS Leadership Updates

Dee Torgerson, VRS Director

DEED-VRS Budget Updates

With the addition of state match funds built into the base along with successful obtainment of Federal reallotment funds and continued cost saving measures, the VRS budget is stable.

Government Shutdown

VRS is closely monitoring developments at the federal level and is not immediately impacted by the federal shutdown.

VRS programs are supported by both state and federal funding and are therefore able to continue operations for the immediate future utilizing non-Federal funds.

This means that services have continued uninterrupted since October 1st, and services should proceed as usual.

VRS Service Updates

The quickest and easiest way to connect an individual to VRS for services is by contacting their local VRS office.

Link to VRS offices by zip code:

https://careerforce.mn.gov/locations?search_api_fulltext=-CareerForce

- An Invitation to Placement form must be completed by the VRS counselor and shared with the placement professional for all PBA's, E1MN PBA's, and Customized Employment referrals. IPS does not use the Invitation to Placement form.
- PBA's as part of IPS Projects do not require VRS RAM approval.
- Placement Plans must be agreed to and signed by the individual or the individual's representative, the VRS counselor, and the placement professional prior to initiating services.

VRS Youth Services Updates

New Model for Introductory Career Services (ICS)

- **Online group classes**
 - ICS Representatives deliver classes- no longer assigned to schools
 - Times offered throughout each school day
 - Students come into classes from all over the state
 - Pathful is a primary tool
- **School staff take lead on:**
 - Helping students apply for ICS
 - Assisting students in registering for classes

...and then are provided email updates after each class



TWO TYPES OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), in close collaboration with schools, offers two types of services for students (age 14 up until 22) with IEPs, 504 plans or other medical/mental health documentation.

Introductory Career Services (ICS)	Full Career Services (FCS)
Help students with disabilities get an early start in career planning, and is typically geared toward youth in 9th, 10th and 11th grade.	May serve as a "next step" for students with disabilities who are typically in 11th and 12th grade (or 18-22 transition programming) to receive more individualized career services.

What are the services?

Free online courses for students to learn and explore within the five Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as needed: - Job exploration - Work-based learning - Training and college exploration - Workplace readiness - Self-advocacy	Based on each student's needs, services may include any of the five Pre-ETS, plus other services and supports during high school and after graduation to help with: - Postsecondary education or training - Finding a job - Keeping a job
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How long can a student receive services?

Available ONLY while enrolled in school.	As long as needed, until they reach their employment goal. People can apply or re-apply for services at any age.
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How does a student access services?

School staff help students apply for ICS and then register for and complete courses that address unmet career development needs.	School staff interested in helping high school students access FCS can contact the VRS counselor assigned to their school to discuss the application process.
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Visit mn.gov/deed/vrs-student for more information about how to get an ICS application packet and to see the list of VRS counselors by school.

Two Types of Services Flyer

Two Types of
Services

School Directory Updated

VRS Student Career Services Staff

Find the VRS staff assigned to your school. For any other information, please email VRS Youth Specialist [Lauren Srdar](#).

Use the tool below to find the VRS staff assigned to your school. If there are multiple VRS staff listed, select one. For private and charter schools, search by city or school name.

To view the schools a specific VRS staff member serves, check that the city, school and district filters are set to "All" and then select the staff member from the VRS staff filter.

Use the filters to find VRS staff who serve your school, school district or city. If you already know your VRS staff member and need their contact info, select their name from the VRS staff member filter.

Type to search a school name	Choose a school district
(All)	(All)
Choose a city	Choose a VRS staff member
(All)	(All)

VRS Staff and Contact Information

Name	Contact Info	School Name
Adler, Jamie	jamie.adler@state.mn.us 651-318-7985 Cell	Journeys Secondary School
Albert, Samantha	samantha.albert@state.mn.us 612-409-3500 Cell	Career and Life Transition Community School of

- [Link to webpage](#)
- Only counselors are assigned to schools

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Authorizations

- **Introductory Career Services (ICS):** Are now delivered through online classes by VRS staff. ICS Representatives will **no longer** be authorizing for Pre-ETS through Community Partners.
- **Full Career Services (FCS):** When a VRS counselor identifies a Pre-ETS need for an FCS student that cannot be provided by a school, they **may authorize** to have the service provided by a Community Partner when necessary.
 - **Support for Student Work Experiences:** VRS can only support student work experiences, internships, and on-the-job evaluations (OJEs) outside of school hours (evenings, weekends, and school breaks). Note that planning for these activities can happen during school hours.

For More Information

- [E1MN Newsletter Announcement](#)
- [DEED-VRS High School Students External Webpages](#)



Community Partnerships Team Updates

Community Partner Program Evaluation Pilot

This upcoming pilot will be aimed at CARF accredited partners who anticipate earning \$400,000/year or less through their DEED professional/technical contract with VRS.

The Program Evaluation will include:

- A questionnaire to be completed by the Community Partner (CP), a questionnaire for the VRS CP Liaison, and input from the VRS teams served by the partner
- A review of the Community Partner's questionnaire responses and a closer look at the various requirements and procedures laid out in the contract with VRS.
- An in-person site visit

Community Partner Opt In for Program Evaluation Pilot

CARF accredited partners, please complete this form by Wednesday, October 15th to express interest in participating in the Program Evaluation pilot:

<https://forms.office.com/g/9BRmm5Ray4>

VRS Community Partner Training Pilot

- VRS has been using the YesLMS learning management system for several years due to its accessibility and ease of use
- VRS wanted to give community partners access to VR and disability related training
- We ran a VR Community Partner YesLMS pilot from July to September 2025 with 10 partner organizations and 18 individuals
- Pilot participants provided feedback the platform and training content on September 30, 2025
- VRS will begin plans for a statewide roll out in 2026

The VRS Community Partners Team hosts CP Conversations (office hours) on the second Friday of the month from 9:00 - 9:30a.m.

- All community partners are welcome to attend
- We share updates and leave ample time for questions and answers

Here is the recurring Zoom link to join us: [Monthly CP Conversations](#)

Upcoming Forums

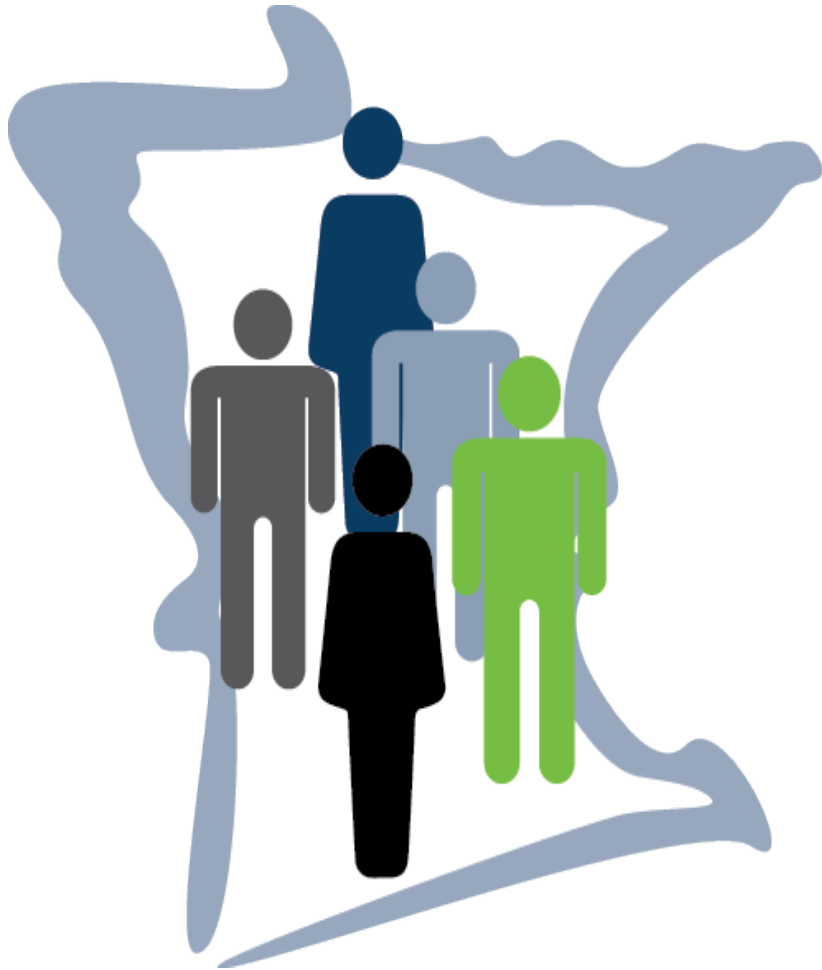
- We will NOT have a December 2, 2025 Forum due to the Regional Meetings
- In 2026 we will continue to host Forums on the first Tuesday of every other month (even months) from 10:30 am - 12:00 pm
- We hope to see you on Tuesday, February 3, 2026
- You can use this recurring Zoom link for **all** 2026 Forums:
<https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1606999321?pwd=H7CvW7Ndu5iaTzht8WrIK7LsiBFFIX.1>

Questions

Use this Microsoft Form for questions:

<https://forms.office.com/g/sJ7BQNM7Ge>

Thank You



We'd love to hear your feedback on our VRS Community Partner + VRS Staff Forums.

Please provide your thoughts in the Microsoft Form below. The forum feedback questions are at the end of the form.

[*MS Form for Q&A and Forum Feedback*](#)

Funding Notice

The VR program receives 76% percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

The state of Minnesota has appropriated 24%.