



VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum

February 3, 2026

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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 ann.macheledt@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 ann.macheledt@state.mn.us.
- **Recording:** This session will be recorded and posted to the VRS website along with the agenda, presentation, and transcript.

Agenda

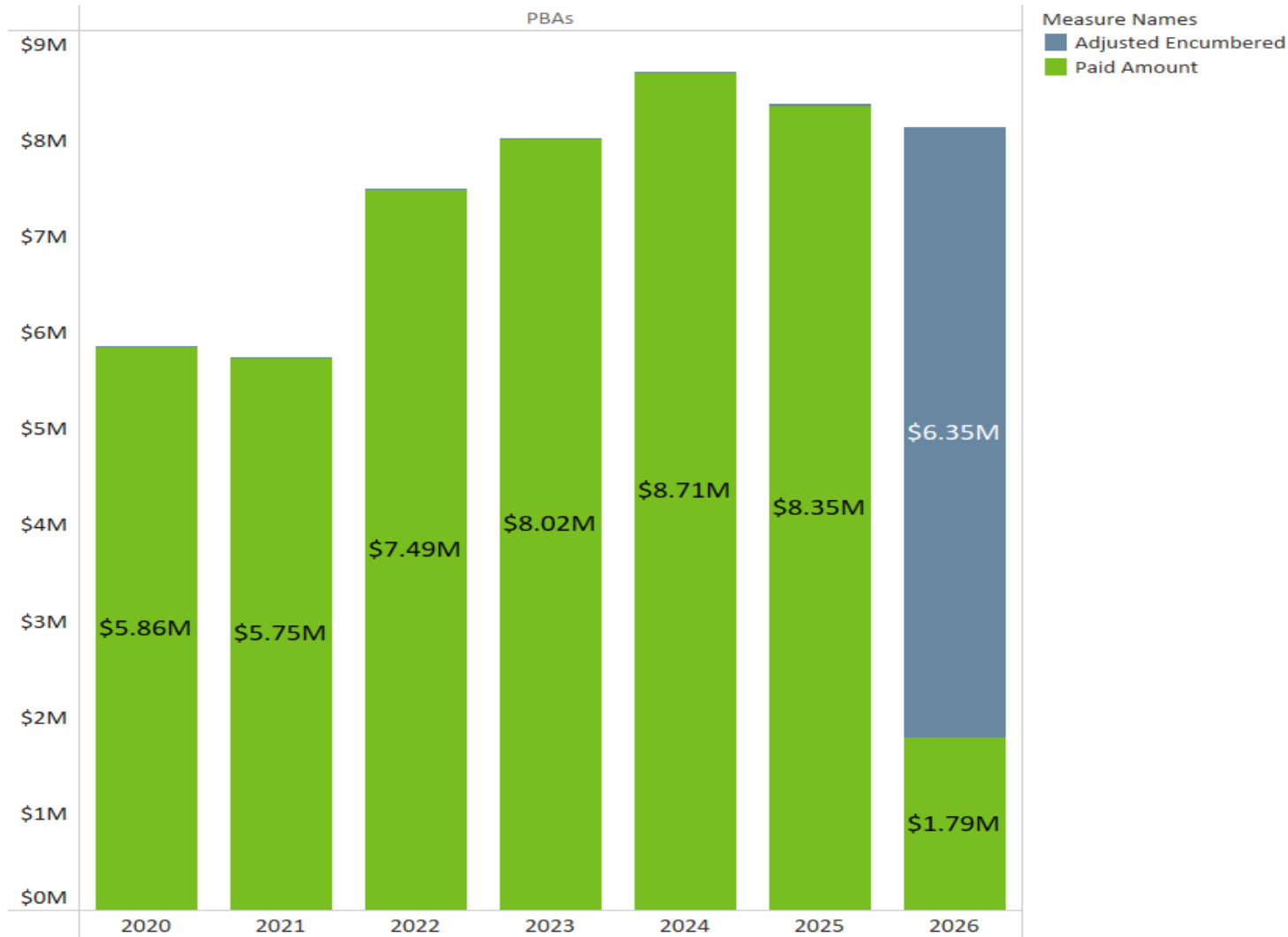
- Welcome: Lori Thorpe
- PBA Referral Data – Carrie Marsh
- State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report – Karla Eckhoff
- Fraud Prevention – Lori Thorpe
- Interagency Alignment Study – Amanda Jensen-Stahl – VRS, Kristy Howe – DHS, and Sarah Arentsen - VRS
- WF1 Access Update – Jess Outhwaite
- MN VRS Community Partner Training Site: Ann Macheledt
- VRS Reminders: Anne Paulson and Holly Sunderman
- Q & A: Meghan Hanson

VRS Leadership Updates

Contracted Performance Based Agreement Services (PBAs)

Authorized and Paid Amounts

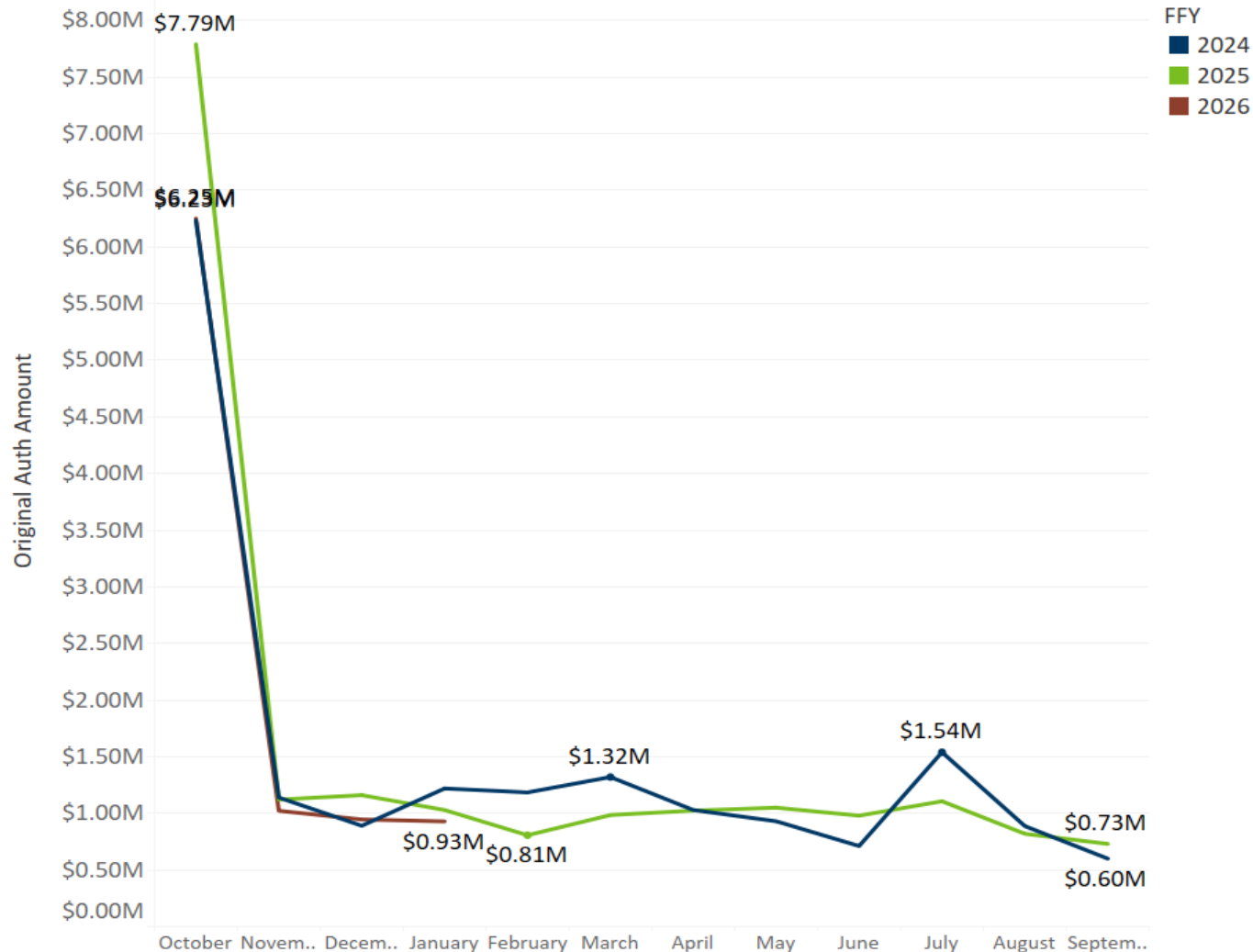
Includes full amount for \$1 PBAs



- FFY 2024 \$8.7M paid
- FFY 2025 \$8.4M paid
- \$8.1M authorized so far in FFY 2026
- As of 1/28/2026

Monthly PBA Authorizations

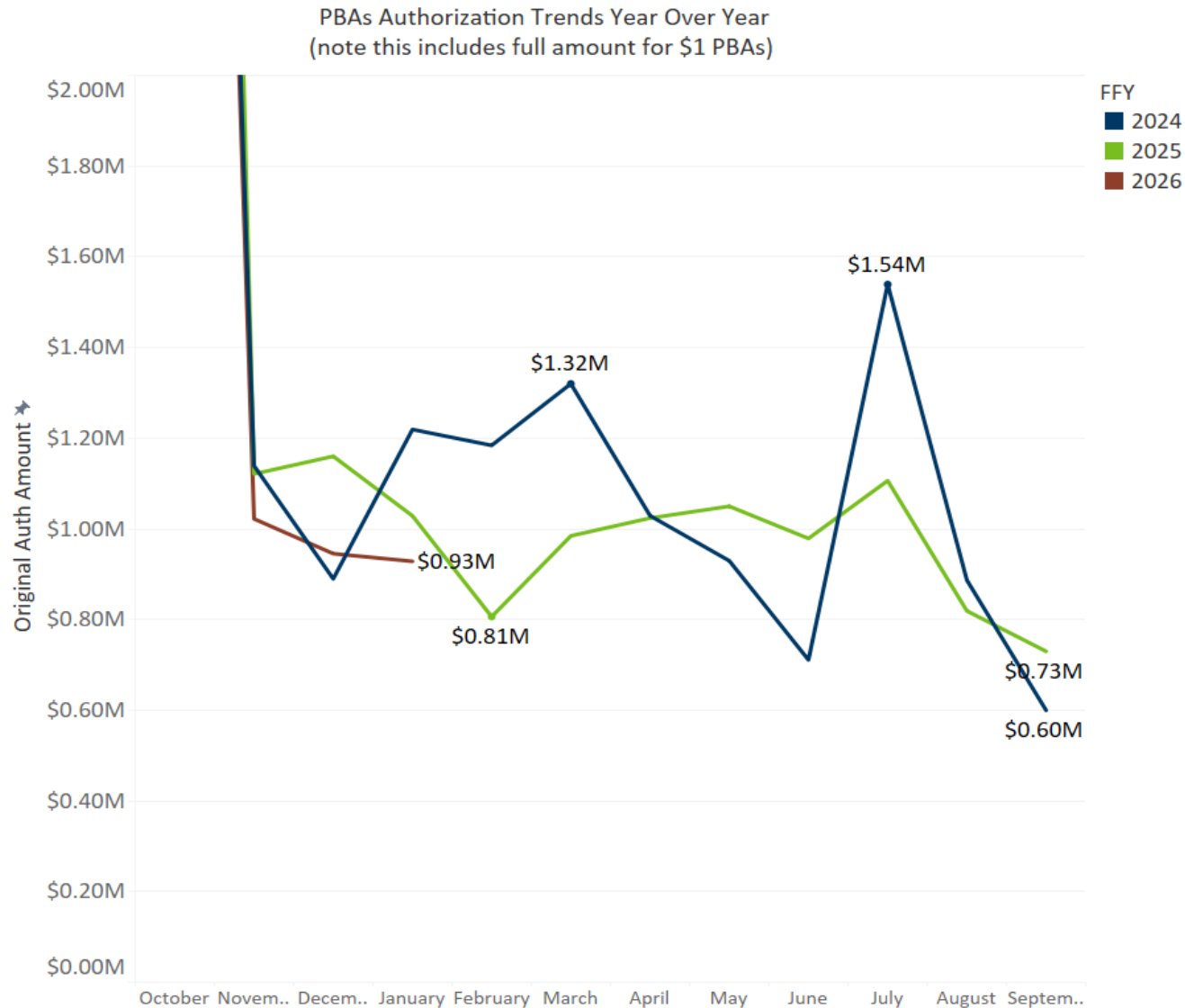
PBAs Authorization Trends Year Over Year
(note this includes full amount for \$1 PBAs)



October is highest month for authorizations

- \$6.2M authorized in both Oct 2025 and Oct 2023
- \$7.8M in Oct 2024

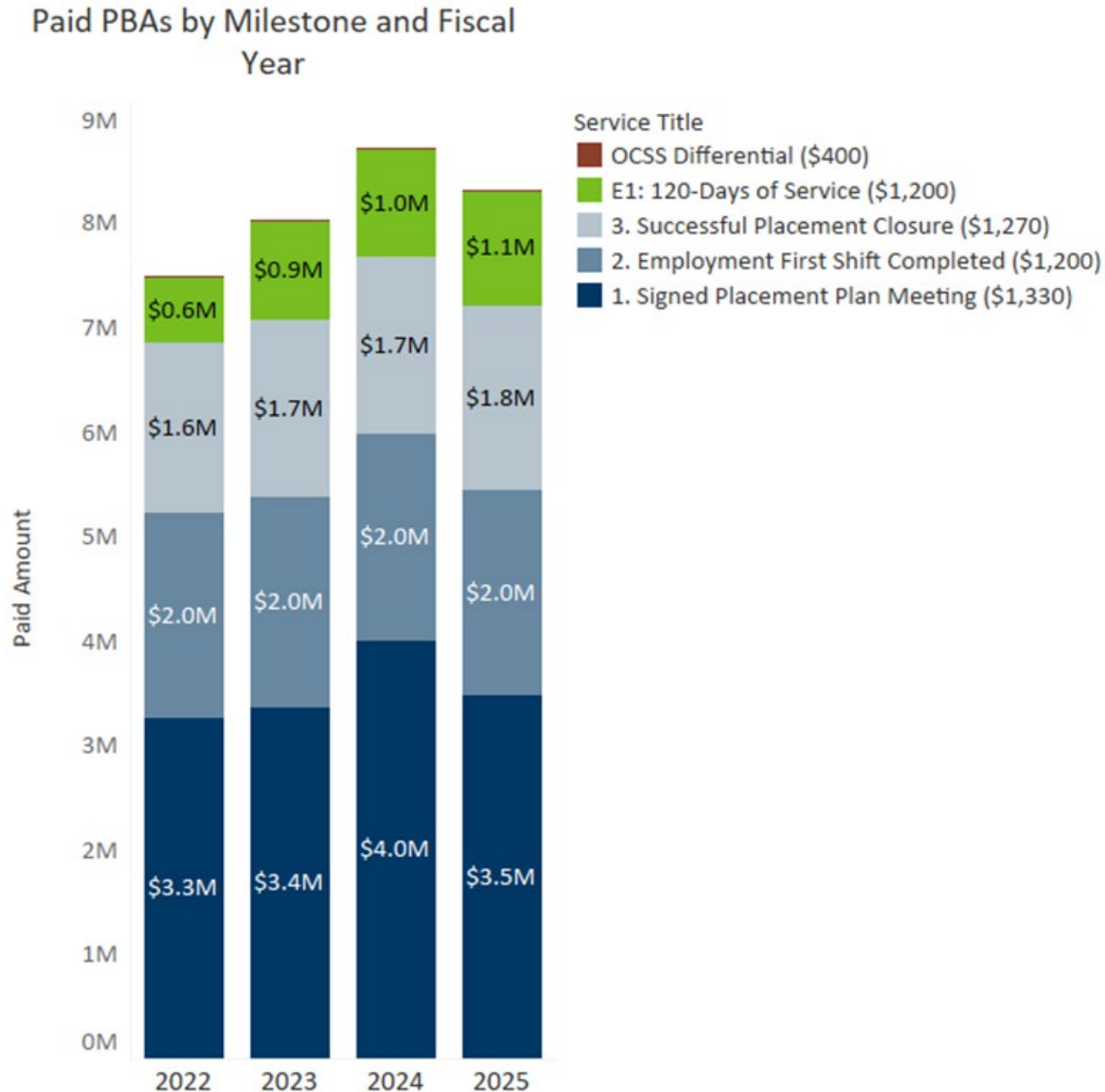
Detailed Monthly PBA Authorizations



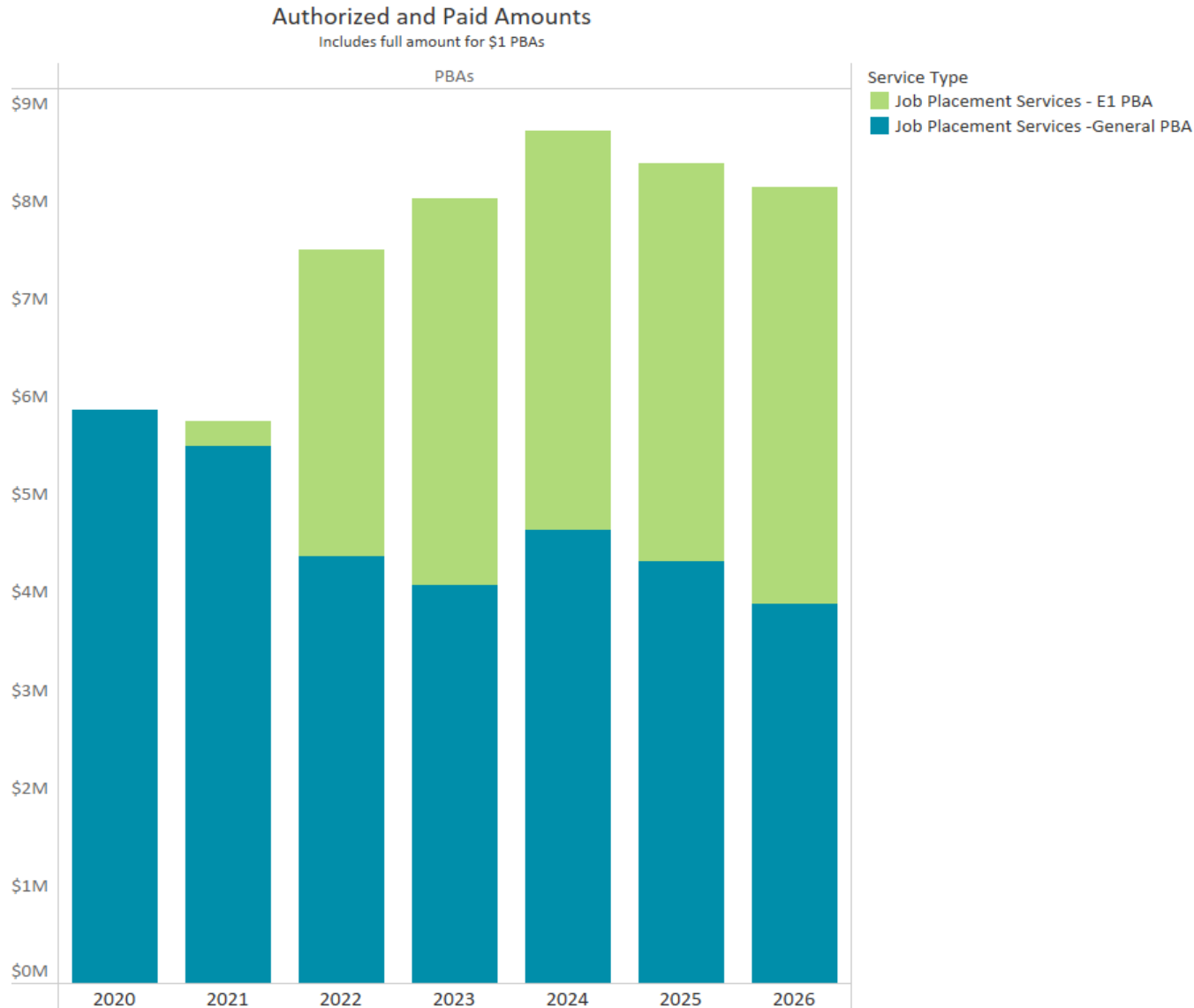
Non-October authorizations

- Feb 2025 \$0.4M less than Feb 2024
- July 2025 \$0.4M less than July 2024

PBA Milestones Paid by Fiscal Year



General PBA and Employment First (E1) PBA's



- About half of PBA payments are made on behalf of individuals with Medicaid waivers
 - FFY 2025, 48%
 - FFY 2026 authorized PBAs are 49.6%

- VRS Priority Category 1 remains open currently.
- Priority Category 1 includes all individuals with three or more areas of functional limitation.
- We encourage all potential or new applicants to continue with our regular intake process and complete an application as appropriate.
- There are currently 352 Individuals on the VRS wait list.



SRC Annual Report

What is the SRC?

- WIOA requirement
- Required to meet 4 times per year – we meet 10
- 21 positions, 2 are non-voting representatives from VRS
 - 1 CP representative - Jenna Askevold
- Required to submit an Annual Report to the Governor and the Rehabilitation Services Administration

Featuring Participants

Participant stories

Cover design by participant



● ● ● VRS MEMBER HIGHLIGHT



THE DISABILITY GLASS CEILING

by Deborah Gleason, SRC SILC Representative

“...the invisible barriers that keep disabled people from fully realizing their potential, even when they have the skills, knowledge and drive to go further.”

● ● ● VRS STAFF HIGHLIGHT



COUNSELOR AND SRC MEMBER

Michael Windsperger

“I love what I do. While there can be challenges at times, it’s rewarding to see the results of working with a participant to connect the dots and achieve goals.”

The background is a dark blue gradient with faint, stylized illustrations of various data visualization elements. These include a pie chart in the upper right, several bar charts of different heights and orientations, and line graphs with fluctuating paths. Three solid green circles are positioned horizontally to the left of the word 'DATA'. The word 'DATA' itself is rendered in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, centered horizontally across the middle of the image.

DATA

Thank you!

For hard copies, reach out to Karla.F.Eckhoff@state.mn.us

At VRS, we work to ensure effective internal controls within VRS to safeguard public funds; minimize fraud, waste, and abuse; comply with laws and rules.

What we do:

- We distribute Grants to Community Partners who provide services to our participants
- We utilize Professional Technical Contracts for services required for our programs
- We engage in Interagency Agreements for services other State Agencies provide for VRS
- We purchase goods and services for our participants and programs

DEED-VRS Fraud Prevention

Processes VRS follows:

- The Office of Grants Management guidance (OGM)
- The Office of State Procurement requirements (OSP)
- DEED's Internal Policy and Procedures Manual for Purchasing, Financial Management, Safeguarding and Sharing information and Assets
- Minnesota State Statutes
- Code of Federal Regulations eCFR200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

We complete Grant Oversight and Monitoring:

- We complete Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Fidelity reviews
- We complete Extended Employment (EE) and Independent Living (IL) Monitoring reviews

Review monthly or quarterly Reimbursement Payment Requests (RPRs) from our IPS and ILC Grantees

Conduct an annual financial reconciliation of grantees expenditures

Encumber funds and monitor award balances

P/T Contract Monitoring

We review performance and costs of our Professional Technical Contracts

We complete Fiscal Reviews of our Community Partners by auditing payments and reports in WF1



VRS COMMUNITY PARTNERS + VRS STAFF FORUM UPDATE ON INTERAGENCY ALIGNMENT STUDY

February 3, 2026

Introductions



- Kristy Howe, Employment First Lead (DHS)
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Director of Strategic Initiatives (DEED-VRS)
- Sarah Arentson, Interagency Coordinator (DEED-VRS)



**A STATE AGENCY PARTNERSHIP
ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT FIRST**

Background



Taskforce for Eliminating Subminimum Wages

Conduct an interagency employment supports alignment study.

The task force recommendation explores opportunities to align rate structures, program requirements and administrative procedures across Minnesota's employment supports to strengthen the state's E1MN collaboration and create a seamless and timely employment support system.

Background



The task force recommends DHS, MDE and DEED contract with an entity to research and propose needed investments to:

- 1) align rate structures between employment supports,
- 2) align administrative procedures to support seamless and efficient transitions between programs and
- 3) align provider enrollment competency and monitoring standards across employment supports administered by the agencies.

Funding was included with this recommendation from the legislature.

Interagency alignment study phase 1



DHS and DEED-VRS contracted with BerryDunn, an independent consulting firm, to complete phase 1 of the study. Phase 1 focused on:

- Service rate alignment.
- Provider enrollment processes.
- Monitoring standards.
- Engagement with interested parties.

Interagency alignment study phase 1



BerryDunn recommended ways we can:

- Make it easier for providers to dually enroll.
- Reduce barriers related to billing, enrollment, contracting and rates.
- The [phase 1 report includes these recommendations.](#)

Interagency alignment study phase 2



Phase 2 of the study will begin in 2026 and focus on:

- Eligibility processes.
- Peoples lived experiences transitioning between employment services.

The goals of phase 2 are to:

- Simplify the processes for people moving between services.
- Address barriers that delay or disrupt people's access to employment supports.

Next Steps



We will prioritize certain recommendations after Phase 2 is complete and will provide more information in the coming months.

Community Partnership Team Updates

- When an authorization is extended, please be sure to email the community partner. There is not a tickler that automatically occurs when an authorization is extended.
- Populate the SWIFT ID on referral form.
- Assign ALL staff referenced on the PT Desk Aid.
- There is flexibility in naming documents, VRS can edit tags.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the state with onboarding partner staff.

MN VRS Community Partner Training Site

- We are ready to launch our statewide MN VRS Community Partner Training Site
- We have identified our first batch of users based on survey replies
- New users will get a communication about the launch and an invite to MN VRS Community Partner Training Site Kick Off/Training
- We will upload our first batch of users in February 2026
- We will send another survey in March in preparation for the second batch of users

Please ensure you're using the most updated report forms by pulling them from our Community Partner Guide under Contracted Services.

<https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/guide/contracted-services/services/pba/>

Specifically, the Monthly Progress Report should be in Word (not pdf) version.

CP Conversations

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

All partner staff are welcome.

Here is the recurring Zoom link for 2026 to join these sessions: <https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1607690258?pwd=bG4vTTR5TnhGSFdKd04zdFJyTm84dz09>

Professional Technical Contract Updates

- All VRS contracts with our Limited Use Vendors (LUVs) expire on 6/30/26.
- VRS will have an open Request for Proposal (RFP) period coming soon for Limited Use Vendors to contract with VRS.
- New and existing partners to VRS can apply during the open RFP period.
- Partners who are CARF accredited currently have contracts that run through 6/30/2027 so they **do not** need to re-apply in January of 2026.

Thank you

Thank you all for the incredible work you do every day. These times may feel challenging, but they also remind us of the strength and compassion that define our team. Together, we have the power to make a real difference—not just for each other, but for the people we serve. Let's keep moving forward with hope, empathy, and a shared commitment to helping every participant reach their goals. We are stronger together, and the work we do truly changes lives!

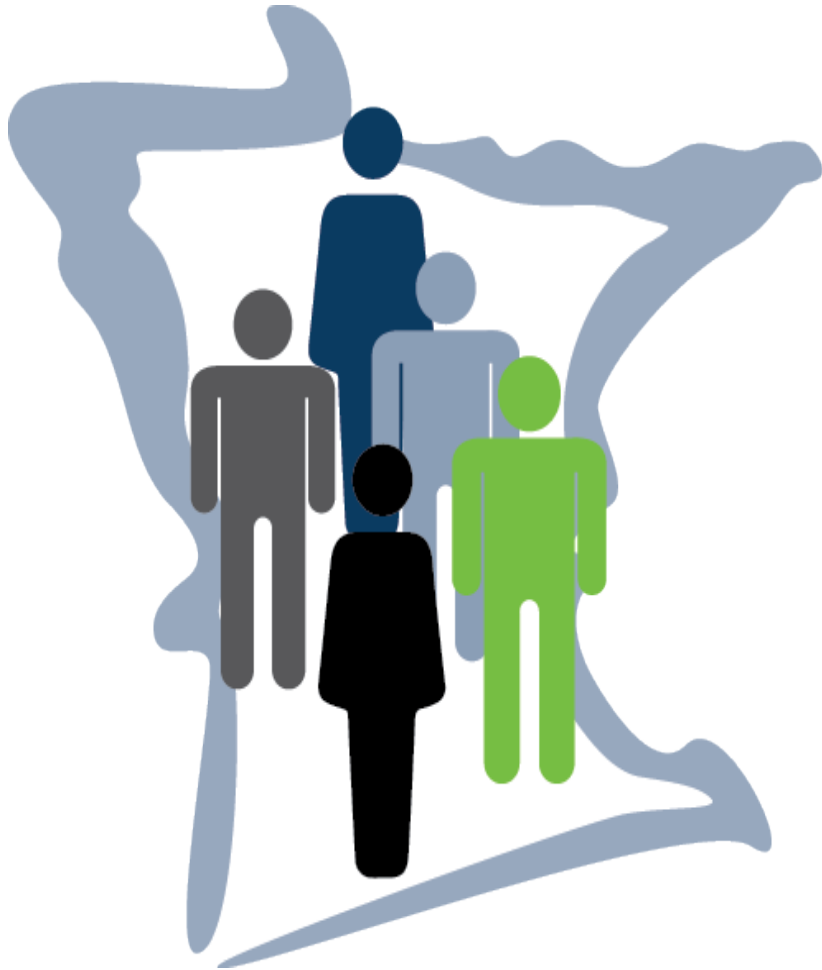
-Dee Torgerson, MN VRS Director

Questions

Use this Microsoft Form for questions:

<https://forms.office.com/g/uZ78ZMdb4L>

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 received 78.70% of federal fiscal year 2025 funding through grants from the U.S. Department of Education. The federal fiscal year 2025 grants totaled \$59,589,639. The required state match for these funds is \$16,127,818. The state of Minnesota appropriated \$17.3 million to meet the match requirement.