



Department of Human Services (DHS) and Vocational
Rehabilitation Services (VRS):
Partnering Waiver and VRS Services for Employment Success

Odyssey Conference

August 1, 2019

Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe future policy directions and initiatives for Minnesota's Medicaid HCBS waiver day and employment services
2. Effectively partner with local VRS offices so that the people you serve get seamless and timely supports to make informed choices and meet their competitive, integrated employment goals.
3. Understand new agreements between DHS and VRS, including the roles and responsibilities of VRS, lead agencies, and services providers in supporting a person's path to employment

Agenda

- Welcome/Introductions/Motivation
- Waiver employment services 101
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services 101
- Working with your Local VRS Office
- VRS and DHS interagency agreement
- Employment Exploration Services expansion
- Questions!

Principles Driving Employment Efforts

Employment First: Raises expectations and ensures all people with disabilities have the opportunity to work in competitive, integrated employment

Person Centered Planning: Listen to people about what is important to them and for them, and match employment to their interests, strengths and skills.

Informed Choice: People get information, support and experience to make decisions and weigh risks and responsibilities.

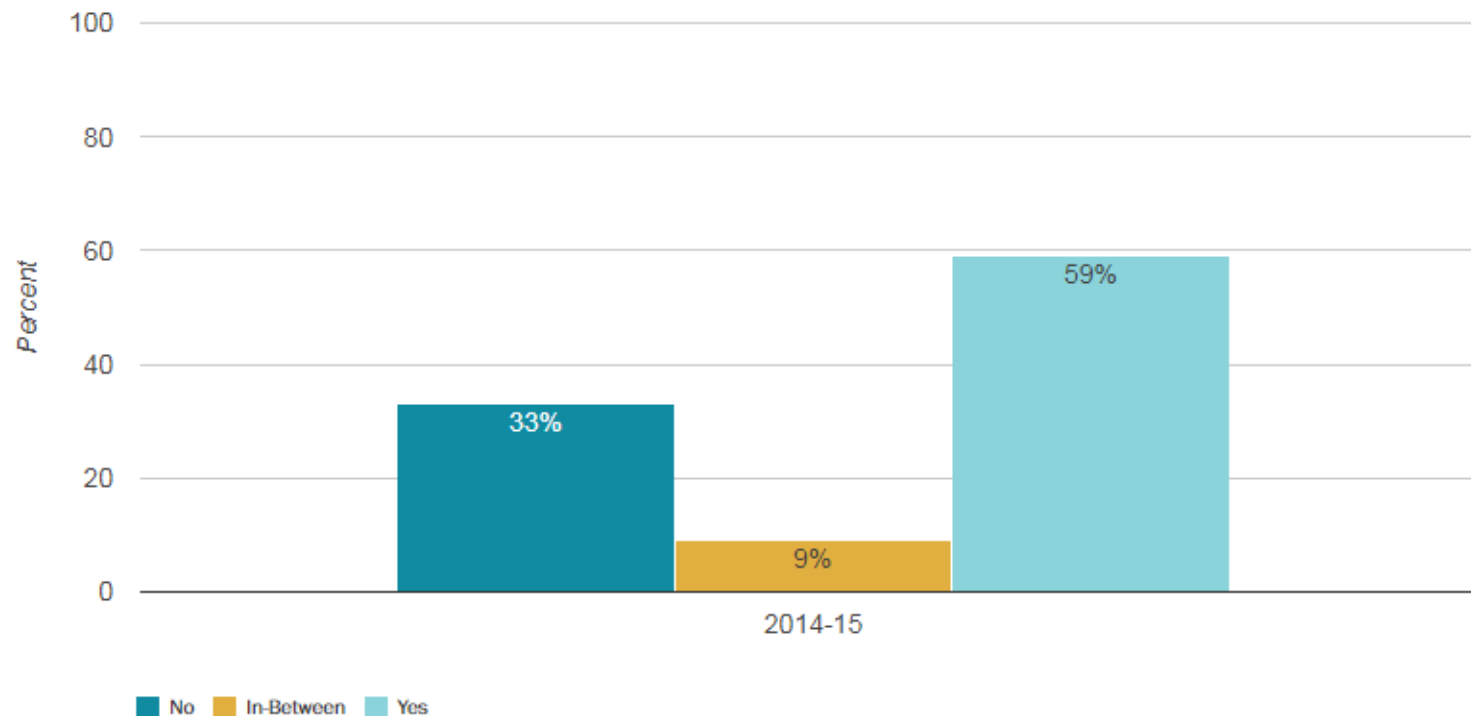
Integration: People are living, learning, working and enjoying life in the most integrated setting.

Minnesota Chooses Employment

Would Like to Have a Paid Job in the Community



The proportion of people who do not have a job in the community but would like to have one.

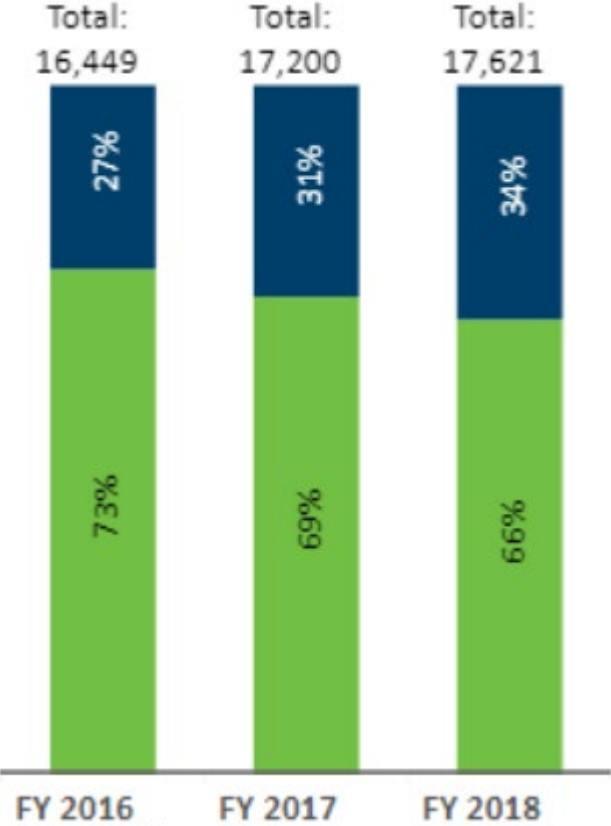


Survey data demonstrate strong demand for competitive, integrated employment.

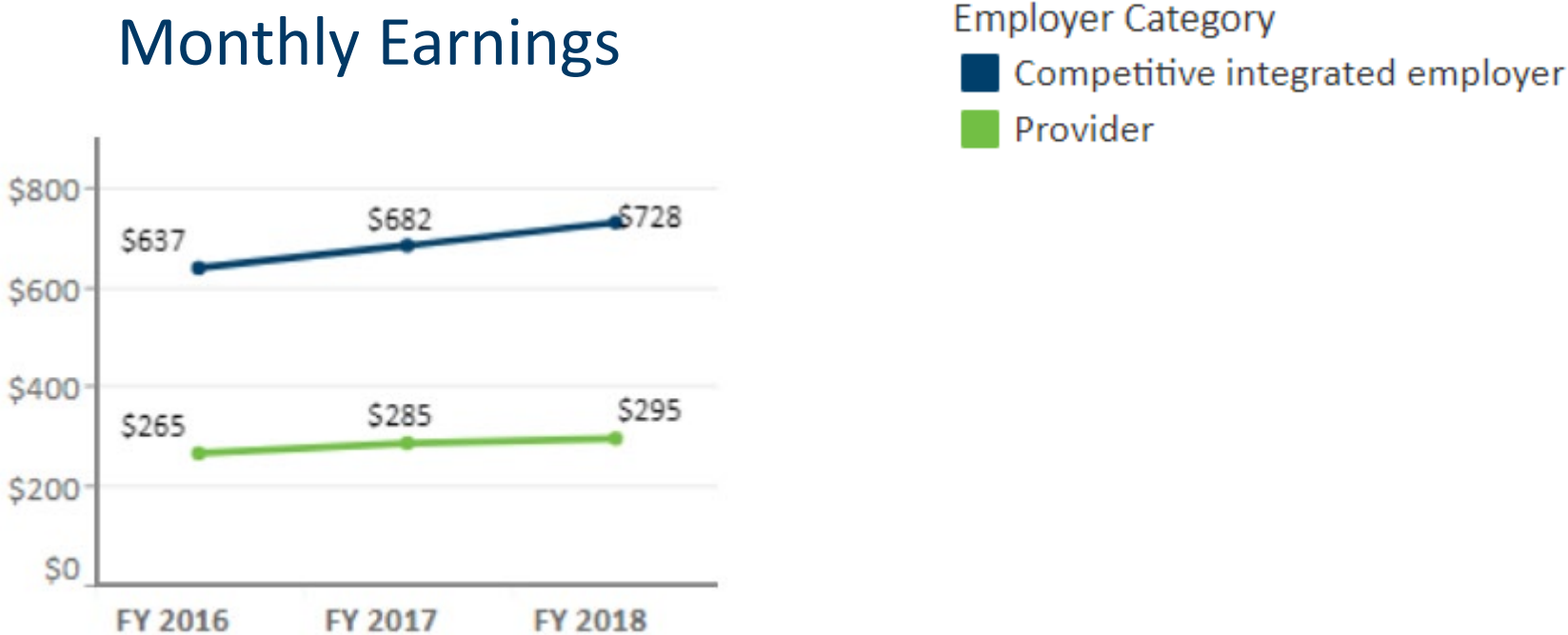
Note: Data is from the 2014-2015 Minnesota [National Core Indicators survey](#). A community job refers to paid work, either individual or group employment, but does not include volunteer or center based work.

More HCBS waiver recipients are in competitive employment

Employer of Record



Monthly Earnings



Source: [Employment First Data Dashboards](#)
Filter: All Waiver Recipients
Accessed: July 2019

We still have a lot to do in Minnesota...

According to the [Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute's Status Report \(2016\)](#):

- The employment rate of working-age people with disabilities in Minnesota -was 48.7%. For the general population it was 85.5%.

According to *StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2016*

- In FY 2015, 51% of the people participating in Employment and Day Services were in facility based employment – many at subminimum wages. This is makes Minnesota one of the top 5 states in the country for facility based work.

Waiver Employment Services 101



Current Day and Employment Services

- **Day Training and Habilitation:** Day training and habilitation (DT&H): Services that develop and maintain life skills for people with developmental disabilities or related conditions so they can fully participate in community life.
- **Prevocational Services:** Services that prepare people with disabilities for jobs with competitive pay and help them achieve greater independence in their community. Prevocational services teach general work skills and concepts rather than specific work skills for a particular job.
- **Supported Employment Services** (sun setting): Services that help people find and keep paid employment in community businesses where people without disabilities are employed



New(ish) Employment Services

Exploration Services: Community-based services that introduce and explore employment, such as work experiences. Service assists people in making an informed choice about working in competitive, integrated employment.

Development Services: Individualized services that help people find competitive, integrated employment or attain self employment.

Support Services: Individualized services and supports that assist people with maintaining community employment in an individual or group arrangement.



New Employment Services – What They Do

1. Separate community-based employment from day training & habilitation (DT&H) and prevocational services
 - Community based work crews provided under employment support services
 - Center based work activities remain under DT&H or Prevocational Services
2. **Development** and **Support** services replaces supported employment services
3. **Exploration** allows for experiences to strengthen informed choice decisions



Overall Day and Employment Services Redesign

- Phase 1: Implement the new employment services (happening now)
- Phase 2: Revise Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) and Prevocational Services
 - DT&H and Prevocational Services available across the waivers (DD, CAC, CADI, BI)
 - DT&H becomes “Day Support Services” – a service that provides opportunities for community based training and support (no employment services)
 - Prevocational Services is used to develop essential work skills and strengthen work capacity in service provider controlled facilities and businesses. Becomes a time limited service based on a tiering system.

Systems Change

- **June, 2014:** Stakeholder workgroups began developing employment services
- **June, 2017:** Minnesota Legislature passes new waiver employment services into law
- **July, 2018:** Employment services became available for waiver participants
- **May, 2019:** Minnesota Legislature passes changes to Day Training and Habilitation Services (DT&H)
- **September, 2019:** By this date, all participants have transitioned to new employment services

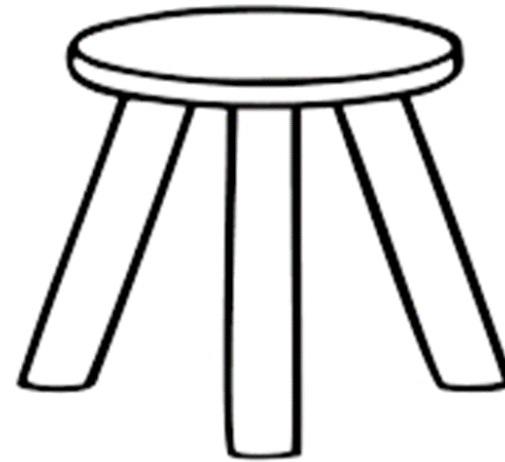
Future Direction with Employment Services

- **Connection with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS):** DHS is looking at how our employment services compliment services provided by VRS. How do we best use both sets of services to support employment?
 - Working on interagency agreement (Memorandum of Understanding – MOU)
- **Employment Exploration Services Expansion:** How can we “do more” under exploration as well as help better define the service

Vocational Rehabilitation Services 101

Vocational Rehabilitation Services 101

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Extended Employment (EE)
- Independent Living (IL)



Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)

Employment for Individuals with Disabilities

Employment and Training Services

*Empowering people with significant disabilities to **FIND JOBS.***

Employment services such as job counseling, job search assistance, training, and job placement services.

Programs at DEED:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Transition Age Youth Services

Ongoing Services and Supports

*Assisting people with significant disabilities **KEEP THEIR JOBS.***

Training or retraining in job tasks, dealing with schedule changes, adjusting to new supervisors, advancement to new job tasks or positions, managing changes in non-work environments or life activities that affect work performance.

Programs at DEED:

- Extended Employment Program (EE-Basic)
- Extended Employment Individual Placement and Supports (Formerly EE-SMI)
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

Live & Function Independently

*Empowering people with disabilities to **LIVE AND FUNCTION INDEPENDENTLY** at home, at work, and in their communities, and relocate out of nursing homes.*

Services and training in collaboration with the state's eight regional centers for independent living.

Programs at DEED:

- Independent Living Program



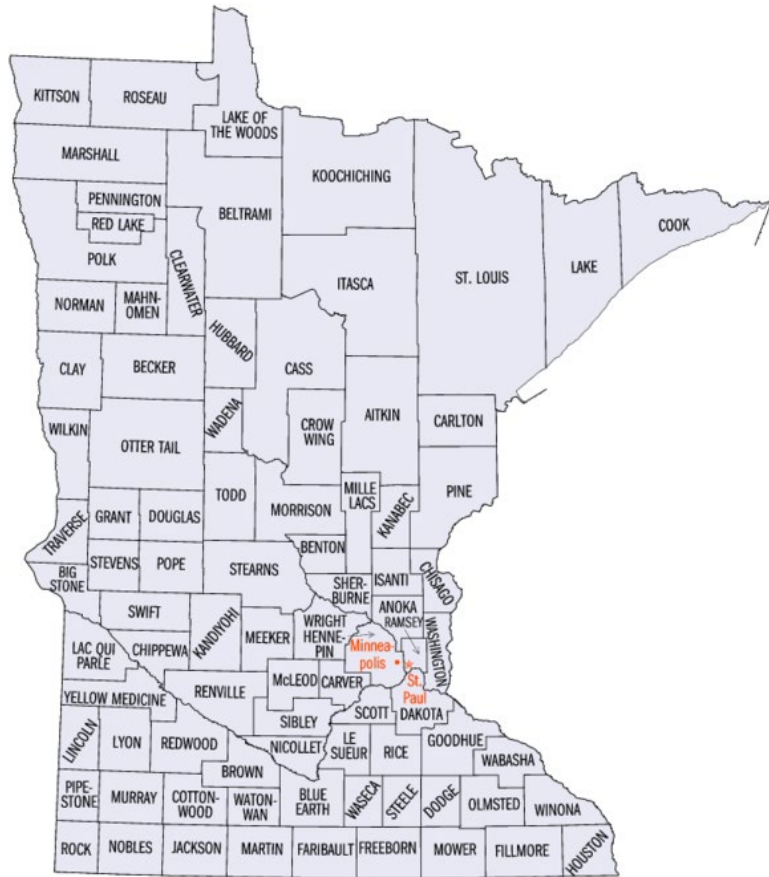
VRS Mission

Empower Minnesotans with disabilities to achieve their goals for competitive, integrated employment and career development.



- Services vary according to individual needs. One of our Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) counselors will work with you to explore the choices and determine which are most appropriate for you.
- Services include:
 - Counseling
 - Training
 - Job Search

Statewide Services



47 VRS Locations

- Most of our VRS offices are located within a CareerForce location. A handful of our VRS counselors work out of our stand-alone offices.
- [Find a VRS office:](https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/find-vrs/)
<https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/find-vrs/>



Independent Living Centers

- Rochester -SEMCIL
- Mankato - SMILES
- Marshall - SWCIL
- Minneapolis/St. Paul - MCIL
- St. Cloud – Independent Lifestyles
- Moorhead – FREEDOM
- East Grand Forks – OPTIONS
- Hibbing - CILMN

Independent Living Services

- Benefits Coaching Supports
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Peer Mentoring
- Advocacy Services
- Information and Referral



Extended Employment

The Extended Employment Program provides long-term job supports to help Minnesotans with significant disabilities to keep jobs once they have them and advance in their careers.



EE Support Services

- Training
- Retraining job tasks
- Dealing with schedule changes
- Adjusting to new supervisors
- Advancing to new job tasks or positions
- Managing changes life activities that affect work performance



Extended Employment (EE)

New rule promulgated March 4, 2019

- Prioritizes funding for competitive, integrated employment
- Aligns with new practices in the broader disability services system
- Reflects principles such as person-centered practices and informed choice
- Clarifies eligibility requirements
 - Effective July 1, 2020: individuals on a medical assistance waiver are not eligible for EE support services
 - Individuals being served prior to July 1, 2020 are exempt and may continue to be served EE

Working with Your Local VRS Office

VRS and Competitive, Integrated Employment (CIE)

- Individuals who express that they want to find competitive, integrated employment, then a referral to VRS is appropriate.
 - Competitive, integrated employment is full-time or part-time employment, paid at minimum wage or higher, eligible for benefits offered and is in an integrated location.
 - Individuals only interested in a work crew or center-based employment, should not be referred to VRS as these employment options would not be considered competitive, integrated employment.
- If someone is not sure about starting a job search or wants to learn more about work, consider authorizing Employment Exploration Services

How To Refer to VRS

- Call your [local VRS office](#)
- Help the person you are serving [prepare](#) for initial meeting:
 - Documentation of disability from doctor or other qualifies professional or SSI/SSDI benefits
 - Proof of income (first page of federal tax return or current gross monthly income)
- If VRS services are “unavailable”, document your determination and authorize Employment Development Services. For more detail, see [Interim Guidance – VRS, SSB, IDEA and HCBS Employment Services](#)
 - Lead agency (not VRS or provider) is responsible for documenting availability

Collaboration Tips

- Develop a relationship with your local VRS office.
- Invite the VRS Rehabilitation Area Manager (RAM) to your team meetings periodically to train case managers on VRS services, timeframes, waitlists and updates.
 - Lead agencies can provide training to local VRS staff about its services as well!
- Having issues? If you can't resolve them at the local level, reach out to the employment first email (dsd.employmentfirst@state.mn.us) and we can help out.

Common Issue #1: Transition to Long Term Supports

- Scenario: Someone has found a job with the assistance of VRS. Yay! They will need ongoing supports (Employment Support Services) to maintain employment. When/how should the transition to waiver services occur?
- Practice: Once a VRS counselor has determined the person has reached “stable employment” – waiver services should begin funding supports.
 - VRS counselors should give advanced notice to case managers
 - Case managers – prioritize getting services authorized in a timely manner
 - 20 hours of job coaching is part of the payment structure for VRS placement and retention services, it is not a measure of stable employment.



Common Issue #2: VRS Plan Development and Ongoing Supports

- Scenario: When developing an employment plan with a person (VRS's job search plan), VRS identifies that ongoing supports to maintain employment will likely be needed. VRS requests the case manager to confirm that supports are available.
- Practice: If a person is using traditional waiver supports, confirm that ongoing supports are available through Employment Support Services. If a person is self-directing, both VRS and case manager should emphasize the importance of prioritizing employment in their budget.

Common Issue #3: Waitlist for VRS

- Scenario: I would refer one of the people I am serving to VRS, but they have a long waitlist for services
- Practice: The majority of people who are receiving HCBS waiver services will likely meet VRS priority for service requirements. For people meeting these requirements (called “category 1”).
 - VRS is currently serving individuals in priority for service Category 1, all other categories are closed.

Any other scenarios you are coming across?



Interagency Agreement – VRS and HCBS Waiver Services

Why a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?

- A state level interagency agreement will help us better clarify how our systems work together so that people get seamless and timely employment supports
- Without widespread, shared understanding of how our services work together, varying practices are occurring across the state – build consistent practices and identify best practices

Drivers of System Change

- **1990:** Americans with Disabilities Act
- **1999:** US Supreme Court Olmstead decision
- **2009:** DOJ steps up enforcement of Olmstead Decision
- **2011:** Minnesota mandated to develop an Olmstead Plan as part of class action law suit settlement
- **March 2014:** HCBS Final Rule
- **July 2014:** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- **September 2014:** Minnesota's Employment First Policy
- **September 2015:** Minnesota's Olmstead Plan

Cross-agency Collaboration

- Update on the Memorandum of Understanding between DEED-VRS/SSB and DHS-DSD
- Main agreements of MOU:
 - Employment Exploration
 - Job Search Services
 - VRS/SSB Payment Structure
 - Provider alignment
 - Roles & Responsibilities
 - Financial
 - Collaboration
 - Communication/Training
- Overview of work plan & rolling implementation of MOU

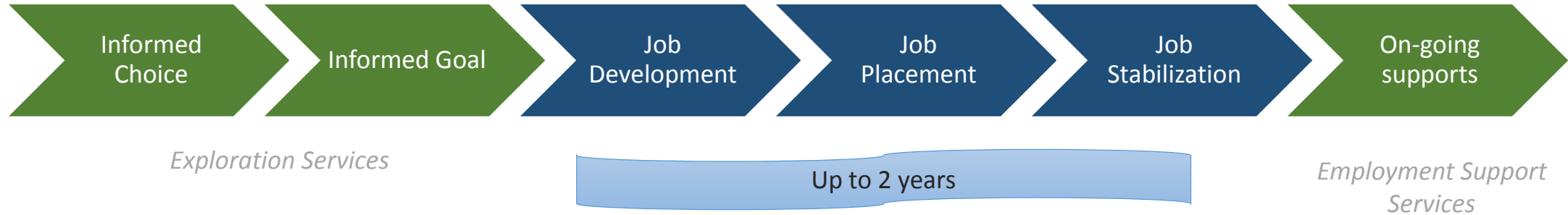
Service Sequencing

Waiver

VRS/SSB

VRS/SSB and School Districts

Not enrolled in secondary education



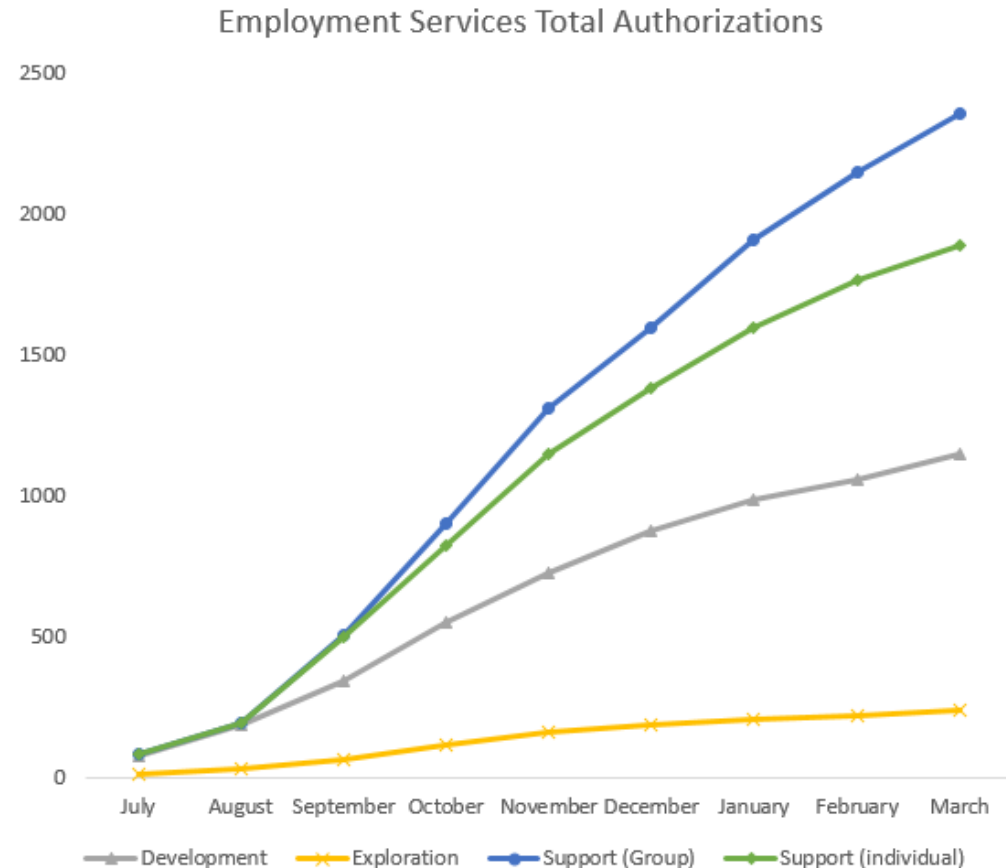
Enrolled in secondary education



Expansion of Exploration Service

Exploration – Current Service

- *Exploration activities and experiences strengthen a person's knowledge, interests and preferences so he/she can make informed decisions about competitive employment.*
- Low authorizations of exploration service compared with other services



Exploration - Expanding the Scope of the Service

- **Informed Goal:** Exploration will help people develop employment goals
- **Navigator Role:** Exploration service providers can stay with people to support them as they transition to job search services (for example, accessing VRS)
- **Consider Customized Employment Discovery:** What are options for providing Discovery as a waiver service? Consider as an option under exploration, as a new service, or as a part of development

Exploration - Giving More Guidance on Service Expectations

- A revised exploration service will result in a personal profile that may include the following “deliverables”:
 - Sample resume or application
 - Documentation of work based learning experiences or work history
 - Benefits report
 - An active Vault account where the person can share information to
- Personal profile can be used in a referral to VRS or in any employment search

Feedback Activity

- Step 1: Overview/handout revised CBSM language (super draft) for Exploration Service
- Step 2: Break into small groups (4-5) and develop questions
- Step 3: Record questions on feedback sheet provided
- Step 4: Debrief as a large group on questions – leave your sheets at the table

Questions?



Thank you!

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