

Appendix 15

Memorandum of Understanding with State VR Administrators

Partnership Between
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
And
The U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Background

Included in this Task Force Report to the Secretary are several recommendations to strengthen partnerships with businesses and employers, universities, community rehabilitation programs, and other state and federal vocational rehabilitation programs. Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Education oversees a federal/state partnership in fifty states and territories that provides rehabilitation and independent living services to individuals with disabilities.

An individual is eligible for the state vocational rehabilitation program if the person has a significant disability that impedes his or her ability to obtain or maintain employment. The state program provides employment services, education and training, independent living services, supported employment, assistive technology, and transition services for youth with disabilities.

The tenets of the program are that the individual has informed choice, and has an opportunity to maximize his or her capabilities to achieve independence.

In order to make use of existing expertise, and avoid duplicating services, many state vocational rehabilitation agencies have Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with other agencies/organizations that serve individuals with disabilities. Examples of such MOUs are: local school districts, State Workforce Investment Boards, employment networks, community rehabilitation programs, universities, Boards of Higher Education, the Social Security Administration, the Worker's Compensation Agency, etc.

Rather than "reinvent the wheel," we recommend that the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment staff in the states work in partnership with the state vocational rehabilitation agency. This partnership already exists in some states, and should be pursued in other states.

Following is a draft Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) to initiate a partnership between state VR agencies and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Membership in CSAVR represents the state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

Memorandum of Understanding

I. Purpose

In order to advance, improve, and expand the work opportunities for veterans with disabilities, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) herein commit themselves to working cooperatively in implementing the objectives set forth in this Agreement.

The CSAVR is an advisory body to the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Education, on policy, regulations and the administration of programs serving persons with disabilities. CSAVR provides a forum for the collective deliberation of State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies on all issues affecting the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities, and informs the public about the effect of disability on the lives of persons with disabilities, particularly with respect to employment and economic dependence.

II. Statement of Need

The CSAVR and VA believe that quality employment outcomes for veterans with disabilities can be increased and improved through a closer working relationship between State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies and the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program.

III. Terms of Cooperation Agreement

The CSAVR and VA will communicate to their respective networks the desire for the State and local VA offices to establish cooperative agreements and the intended outcome of such agreements.

The CSAVR and VA will act as liaisons to their respective agencies to facilitate the establishment of cooperative agreements between State VR agencies and VA regional offices. Such agreements are intended to identify opportunities where collaboration and partnership can result in improved services and increased employment outcomes for veterans with disabilities.

The CSAVR and VA will share information and coordinate activities, as appropriate, to carry out and support the objectives of the cooperative agreement.

The CSAVR and VA will create mechanisms to share case data and initiate cross-matching activities (within the HIPAA guidelines) to identify disabled persons served by both entities. This initiative is intended to enhance services for veterans with disabilities in a more cost effective and comprehensive manner.

The CSAVR and VA will also provide technical assistance and support to any State VR and DVA office that requests their assistance in facilitating the development of a state/local agreement.

IV. Authority

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, As Amended

This agreement does not in itself authorize the expenditure or reimbursement of any funds. Nothing in this agreement shall obligate the parties to expend appropriations or other monies, or to enter into any contract or other obligation.

Further, this agreement shall not be interpreted to limit, supercede, or otherwise affect either party's normal operations or decisions in carrying out its mission, statutory, or regulatory duties. Nothing in this agreement shall be interpreted as altering any eligibility requirements for any VA program or activity authorized under _____ or for the public VR program authorized under Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act.

V. Effective Date

This agreement shall become effective upon the date of signature of the underlined parties and shall remain in effect for _____. This agreement may be terminated at any time upon 30 days advance notice by one party to the other, and may be amended by the written agreement of either parties, and/or their designees.

CSAVR

VA

