



In this Issue

Chief's Corner

Written by: Cathy McEachron, Chief, Bureau of Vendor & Contracted Services

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2019. I can hardly believe it, but February will mark the one-year anniversary of The Benchmark. The successful rollout of VR's first ever Provider Newsletter was just one of many new initiatives launched in 2018. Last year also brought us face-to-face Area Wide Group Provider Training Sessions, VR Provider Fairs, and numerous other training and networking opportunities. Collaboration between VR staff and our invaluable Provider Partners has never been better, and we're just getting started! In 2019 we plan to pursue an outward facing Learning Management System (LMS) for our Providers. This LMS will allow Providers 24-hour access to web-based training modules on topics such as disability etiquette and customer confidentiality. Other initiatives include a full rate study (currently underway), expansion of the Service Provider Choice Directory, and complete overhaul of the Vendor Qualifications Manual. It's shaping up to be a busy, exciting, year already!

Since our last edition, we've had a few staffing changes. Our previous Field & Provider Relations (FLPR) Unit Manager, Heather Servais, accepted a well-deserved promotion and now serves as the Assistant Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Field Services. We miss having her in our bureau, but are so happy to be able to continue to work with her in her new role. Our very own Jennifer Powell now leads FLPR and is doing a great job! We have also added another new member to our bureau management team. Monica Moyer joined us in November as Unit Manager for the Contract Administrative Management (CAM) Unit. Last, but certainly not least, our vacant Area 5 Provider Liaison position was filled by Kelly Dague. Kelly has been with VR for over four years, serving most recently as a Senior Counselor. You can learn more about our fabulous new Provider Liaison in this quarter's "Staff Profile" featured on page 3.

As always, I hope you enjoy this quarter's edition of The Benchmark. Thank you all for your partnership! I look forward to a joyous and successful New Year.

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VR Youth Peer Mentoring

Written by: Carmen Dupoint

Can you remember someone in your teen years who was slightly older and wiser than you and showed you the ropes? That person was a mentor. Allow me to introduce you to the new VR Youth Peer Mentoring service. VR Youth Peer Mentoring is an intensive self-advocacy training service available to VR eligible customers ages 14-24. This service uses like-aged peers for young VR customers to help them learn to independently advocate for the supports and services they may need as they transition to postsecondary training, education or employment.

Unlike traditional mentoring models where the primary objective is companionship, VR Youth Peer Mentoring services aim to connect youth with community resource agencies, social engagement, or employment networks. For instance, a Mentor may show the customer how to research, inquire about, and visit the Disability Services Office on the college campus where he/she plans to attend after high school. The ultimate goal is for youth to learn to independently advocate for services and supports.

Only VR Employment Services Providers may deliver Youth Peer Mentoring, as it requires experience working with youth that have the most significant disabilities. Providers of this service have two roles to fill: Coordinator and Mentor. The Coordinator plans, oversees, and manages the Mentor and the Mentor/Mentee relationship, while the Mentor personally meets with the Mentee to accomplish the service goals set by the customer and VR Counselor. Training is required for Coordinators and Mentors. Providers must also complete the Youth Peer Mentoring Provider registration application.

To learn more about this exciting new opportunity and how to get involved visit http://rehabworks.org/stw_ypm.shtml or ask your local Provider Liaison. You may also send questions to VRTransitionYouth@vr.fldoe.org.

Business Relations Team Update

Written by: Kathy Davis

Hello and Happy New Year from the Business Relations (BR) Team! Throughout 2018, we made some great strides towards working together with you to serve VR participants and business customers. Here are a few highlights:

1. One year ago this month, Business Relations contributed its first article to the Provider Newsletter in which we overviewed our team's history, listed many of our services to employers, explained how Providers can be paid for placements when you refer participants to BR employer positions, and introduced the WIOA indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.
2. Midyear, we presented at the training sessions developed by VR's Field and Provider Relations Unit, where we met and networked with many of you. We followed those presentations up with a FAQ in the August edition of the Provider Newsletter. If you would like a copy of those, please email me at the address below.
3. Throughout the year, we participated on several Provider related calls and webinars as subject matter experts to offer technical assistance on matters related to Business Relations. Along with VR area and unit staff, Business Relations attended many meetings with you, employers, and community partners to plan and implement several projects, such as a Job & Resource Fair and work-based learning experiences in the construction, manufacturing, and IT industries.



4. In October, Business Reps in VR's Area 7 (Palm Beach and Broward Counties) launched a "Job Board" that highlights ongoing job opportunities with our business partners. The Area's Provider Liaison emails the Job Board to the Provider points of contact. It is then displayed in all VR units throughout Area 7 so it is available for everyone to view. Based upon preliminary feedback and outcomes, we are optimistic that a Job Board can be replicated throughout all VR areas. This means you will have notification of many of the positions that are available

with BR's employer partners and will be able to work with participants and their counselors to refer individuals to these positions. Stay tuned for more details in the next newsletter on the Job Board coming to your area!

That sums up where we've been and where we are going – with the goal of working together to create great employment outcomes for VR participants and business customers.

If you have any questions about Business Relations or you would like to connect with your Business Rep, please email VRBusinessRep@vr.fldoe.org. In addition, you may provide that email address to employers if you want to refer them to Business Relations for any reason.

Until next time,

Kathy Davis, Business Relations Administrator, Kathy.Davis@vr.fldoe.org

Area 4 Hosts Hernando & Pasco County Provider Fair

Written by: Marilyn Figueroa

Area 4 hosted a Hernando and Pasco County Provider Fair at the New Port Richey VR office on November 8, 2018. Fourteen Employment Services Providers serving Hernando and Pasco counties had informational booths set up at the event. The event was well attended by Area 4 Counselors, who circulated throughout the morning. VR staff were eager to speak with the local Providers serving their customers and gather some additional information about the services offered and the geographical area served. This was a great networking opportunity for both the Counselors and Providers!



Left to Right Names: Alli Armstrong and Margaret Cote with The Arc Tampa Bay

REBA Support

Written by: Marilyn Figueroa

REBA IT Support is available by emailing REBA_Svc@vr.fldoe.org or by calling (850) 245-3472. REBA IT is available to assist you when you receive an error message within the REBA application or when the system isn't functioning properly. If you receive an error message, it's helpful to include a screen shot. This will assist the REBA IT Team with determining the cause of the issue and reaching a quick resolution.

For questions about REBA referrals, benchmark payments, or rejected invoices please contact your assigned Provider Manager or local Provider Liaison for assistance. For your convenience, a list of all Provider Managers and Provider Liaisons is included within this newsletter.

Staff Profile: Kelly Dague

Kelly Dague is our newest Bureau of Vendor & Contracted Services team member. Kelly joined the Field Provider Relations Unit in October 2018 as the Area 5 Provider Liaison. Kelly worked as a Counselor and Senior Counselor for VR for over four years prior to becoming the Area 5 Provider Liaison.

Kelly comes to us with a wealth of knowledge. Kelly holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, a master's degree in mental health counseling, and she also earned her CRC certification in July 2018. Additionally, Kelly is a nationally Certified Mental Health Counselor.

Kelly is originally from a small town in Pennsylvania and moved to Florida 7 years ago. Outside of work Kelly enjoys spending time with her husband and 5 year-old daughter, visiting Walt Disney World, going to the beach, bowling, and reading motivational literature. Kelly's favorite quote is from Ella Magers, stating, "When we align our actions with our values, we're able to attract the energy we want back and there's no limit to what we can accomplish."

When asked what she would like for her Providers to know about her Kelly replied, "I am here to help providers to achieve the overall goal of helping our customers. I believe everything is team work." Kelly does not want anyone to hesitate to reach out to her for assistance.

We are excited to have Kelly as part of our team and we hope that you will join us in welcoming her.



How to Update Demographic Information

Written by: Nikki Moody

It is important to remember to keep your information and profile up to date on the Service Provider Choice Directory (SPCD). The SPCD is a tool used for Informed Choice and helps VR Customers choose the Provider they wish to work with in their area. If there has been a change in locations that you serve, services that you provide, specializations, etc., then you should complete the Demographic Information Form and submit it to your Provider Manager so that your profile on the SPCD can be updated. This form can be found on our website: <http://www.rehabworks.org/docs/contracts/PROVIDERDEMOGRAPHICFORM.pdf?id=1>. Please reach out to your Provider Manager or Provider Liaison if you have any questions about this form.



Success Story: Nolan Vance

Submitted by Gulfstream Goodwill Industries

Nolan Vance is a 21 year-old young man who has Autism Spectrum Disorder. Nolan found Goodwill through a referral from Florida Atlantic University's (FAU's) Center for Autism Related Disabilities (CARD). Nolan came in for an Informational Interview in March 2018. He learned about the Discovering Your Potential (DYP) program and was accepted as a participant. When Nolan first came to the DYP program, he had bouts of depression and anxiety, and he wasn't socializing with his peers. Nolan hoped that DYP could help him get into a busy working schedule, out of the house, around his peers, and earning steady income. Nolan's largest barrier was his self-defeating attitude. Nolan wanted to lead a more fulfilling life and become more independent. At the time he didn't believe he could achieve his goals. The DYP team saw Nolan's potential and understood the importance of addressing his defeatist attitude.

The DYP Team worked with Nolan to instill positive thoughts in his daily life. Nolan attended the SUCCESS Classes and learned about the basics of work skills such as dependability, job retention, self-presentation, motivation, and attitude. Through the DYP program, Nolan began to regularly attend the Pro-Social activities where he began to find a community of peers and friends. Nolan said that he wanted to work with his hands. He was interested in the agricultural industry and expressed that he wasn't afraid of a hard day's work. The DYP program provides the opportunity for 12 week On-the-Job-Training experiences. Nolan was placed at Brown Family Farm in Ft. Pierce, which is an organic produce farm with a small market where they sell the farm's organic produce. Once Nolan started working, he really hit the ground running. Nolan's work ethic astounded the DYP team, as his desire and commitment to work was impressive.

DYP's Job Coach, Kimberly Halhofer, worked closely with Nolan during this On-the-Job-Training. She visited Nolan at the Brown Family Farm often, and ensured that communication between Nolan and his supervisor was going smoothly. Kimberly redirected Nolan's self-defeating attitudes when they would arise. Every time Kimberly visited, she asked Nolan to say one positive statement about himself or his life. Kimberly stated that his smile would shine as bright as the sun when he spoke positively about himself. Nolan also came in for meetings with the DYP program's Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) who provided Nolan with direct intervention when Nolan became negative in his thoughts and actions. The BCBA would reiterate the importance of being positive in his daily life.

When Nolan's On-the-Job-Training came to an end, the DYP team spoke with Nolan about Job Placement within the DYP program. DYP's Employment Consultant set Nolan up with an interview for a full-time position at the CVS Distribution Center. Nolan interviewed for the position and accepted a job offer! Nolan has been working full-time for nearly 2 months now. He has been consistently progressing in his work, and is forming friendships with his co-workers. Nolan has become friends with a few of his peers within the DYP program. He has gone out to dinners, bowling, and movies with his new friends. Nolan is currently studying to obtain his driver's license, and he is saving money for a car. Nolan's life has positively changed because of the DYP program, because he has taken full advantage of the program's services. Nolan is continuing to blossom, and he is creating goals and dreams for himself. Nolan stated, "When I got involved with Goodwill's Discover Your Potential program, I was impressed with how quickly I was placed for employment. My Case Manager and Job Coach are very helpful. My Case Manager took me to different small businesses to get a feel for how different companies worked, and both of them would often check up on me at my job placement. I'm very grateful for the DYP program."



BVCS Headquarters

Staff Directory

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Jennifer Powell Unit Manager, FLPR	Email: Jennifer.Powell@vr.fldoe.org Phone Number: 850-245-3352

Provider Liaisons

Provider Liaison Name	Contact Information
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