



VRS Updates for MOHR EE Conference

Janeen Oien
August 31, 2023

Introduction to VRS Staff

Lori Thorpe is the new VRS Director of Contracts and Partnerships. She has been in the field of vocational rehabilitation for nearly 30 years. Her career started with Opportunity Partners where she worked for five years as a Job Developer, Job Coach, and Service Planner. She joined VRS in 1999 and has worked as a Counselor, Staff Development Specialist, and most recently as a Rehabilitation Area Manager for ten years.



Introduction to VRS Staff, cont.

Meghan Hanson is the Extended Employment Program Specialist working remotely from Monticello. She is very excited for the opportunity to work in a program that she feels so passionately about. Meghan worked in various community provider organizations providing direct Extended Employment Services and managing the EE program along with other workforce development programs. In her most recent position she worked on a grants team distributing grants to childcare providers in partnership with DHS.



Introduction to VRS Staff, cont.

Janeen Oien has been working in the world of disability services for over 25 years, first in Special Education and then in VRS. She worked for VRS in the State of Oregon for 2 years before moving back home to Minnesota and working as a VR Tech in the Brooklyn Park office for 5 years. Janeen then moved to the Contracts and Partnerships team as a P/T contract specialist over 2 years ago. She had the privilege of serving as Interim Director over the summer and has supported the Extended Employment SFY24 contracts as well as working on the rate increases.



EE Rate Updates

Funding for Extended Employment

- Minnesota legislators during the 2023 legislative session passed funding that will support increased rates for providers of extended employment services for persons with severe disabilities.
 - The EE base will continue to be \$6,995,000 from the general fund and \$6,830,000 from the workforce development fund for fiscal years 24-25.
 - An additional \$4,500,000 has been appropriated from the general fund each year to maintain and increase rates for providers of extended employment services for persons with severe disabilities.

Funding for Extended Employment, cont.

- Of the \$4.5 million allocated per each state fiscal year, \$2 million has been allocated to maintaining prior rate increases and supported funding all SFY24 grants to providers.
- \$2.5 million has been allocated to increasing rates. Based on budgets submitted by all EE provider agencies, VRS has determined the increase to Supported Employment will be \$0.94/hour, and the increase to Community Employment will be \$0.51/hour.
- New SE rate: \$6.49
- New CE rate: \$4.38

E1MN Updates

Updated E1MN Trainings Available

New self-paced, virtual training on E1MN is now available through Disability Hub MN. E1MN is a state agency partnership to promote Minnesota's Employment First policy for people with disabilities. Training modules will help waiver case managers, employment service providers (both waiver and VR), and vocational rehabilitation staff better understand their roles in supporting the employment of people using waiver services.

This flexible training is designed for:

- Waiver case managers
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services/State Services for the Blind (VRS/SSB) staff
- Employment service providers
- Supervisors of employment service providers

Updated E1MN Trainings Available, cont.

How to access the training:

To get started, visit [E1MN training](#) in the Hub's Work Toolkit.

Begin with [Basic training for all roles](#), and then select the training that best fits your role:

- [Case managers](#)
- [VRS/SSB staff](#)
- [Waiver employment service providers](#)
- [VRS/SSB job placement providers](#)

Updated E1MN Trainings Available, cont.

Support for supervisors:

If you're a supervisor, guide your staff through the training.

Begin with [Basic training for all roles: Guidance for supervisors](#), and then check out the tips for specific roles:

- [Case managers: Guidance for supervisors](#)
- [VRS/SSB staff: Guidance for supervisors](#)
- [Waiver employment service providers: Guidance for supervisors](#)
- [VRS/SSB job placement providers: Guidance for supervisors](#)

GO MN! Updates

Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant Go MN!

Overview: The Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) proposes the Go MN! Model Demonstration to offer 1,200 people with disabilities in or contemplating sub-minimum wage work settings to explore careers with 700 businesses in the Transportation Industry. VRS together with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Department of Education will partner with the Minnesota Transportation Center of Excellence to identify business needs for talent. The Go MN! Project will adopt the Progressive Employment Model as a dual-customer strategy to connect students, youth, and adults across multiple counties in Northeast Minnesota, the Metropolitan Twin Cities, and Southwest Minnesota with work experience opportunities in the transportation industry.

Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant Go MN!, cont.

The expected outcomes of Go MN! are to increase:

- a) the number of adults earning and youth contemplating sub-minimum wage who apply to VRS;
- b) the number of jobseekers who have work experiences in the transportation industry;
- c) the number of partnering businesses in transportation; and ultimately
- d) the number of adults and youth who transition from sub-minimum wage to competitive integrated employment and meet the workforce needs of the transportation industry.

Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant Go MN!, cont.

Update:

We are in the first year of a five-year grant. This first year is a planning year and we are gearing up for the launch of the first pilot location in Northeast MN on October 1st. We have hired a Go MN! Manager, Tyler Sadek, who started on August 16th. We will soon be hiring a Business Engagement Specialist, Youth Navigator, and Adult Navigator for the pilot location in Northeast MN. We will be looking for providers in the pilot area who are interested in partnering with us to provide Progressive Employment through a Letter of Interest process. Look for more information on this soon.

Discussion – Questions and Answers

