



Alaska (AK) WIOA Matrix

Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program (EFSLMP)

Alaska's "Employment First" legislation calls for "competitive integrated employment" as the preferred outcome for those with disabilities. DOLWD will pursue a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among DOLWD; Health and Social Services; and Education and Early Development to ensure progress towards that goal. The MOU will include commitments for active participation on the Interagency Council on Employment First, under the auspices of the Employment First State Coordinator. (Page 52)

DVR actively participates with, and has a cooperative agreement with, the Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI), which is made up of a consortium of agencies committed to working together to improve employment outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and the Employment First Initiative. (Page 170)

DVR does not have a current cooperative agreement in place with the Division of Senior and Disability Services (DSDS); however, both agencies' staff collaborates frequently given that many Supported Employment consumers typically receive services under DSDS's Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD) waiver. Additionally, DVR and DSDS, along with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, are working to develop an Employment Service Options Guide for both agency staff to understand the proper definition and sequencing of DVR and DSDS employment services for DSDS I/DD waiver recipients to move into integrated and competitive employment. Due to Employment First legislation, a cooperative agreement will be developed to specifically outline opportunities for competitive integrated employment. (Page 178)

Partner with other service providers to maximize resources and coordinate services for individuals who are in need of long-term SE services.

On-going:

- Support the Employment First Initiative.
- Initiative was enacted in May of 2014, making Alaska an Employment First state.
- Support efforts to establish vocational services from community behavioral health providers.
- Managers document successes/challenges of mental health services in regions.
- Continue Chief of Rehabilitation Services participation in the Vets Success meetings
- Continue support for DVR business point of contact to the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation National Employment Team. (Page 200)

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Customized Employment

DVR provides the services necessary to achieve competitive, integrated employment, such as guidance and counseling, assessment, vocational and other training, transportation, diagnosis and treatment, on-the-job training, job-related services, customized employment, and supported employment. DVR also provides students who have disabilities with pre-employment transitional services. Through the process of informed choice and comprehensive assessment, consumers, jointly with their Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors, create an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to determine the services needed to achieve their vocational goals. Services identified in the IPE are individualized based on strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. (Page 35)

The Mental Health Board and the Governor’s Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse have combined to plan and advocate for policies, programs, and services that help Alaskans who have a mental illness or substance abuse issues. DVR’s Assistant Chief of Rehabilitation Services will be an active member of this board. In addition, DVR has an on-going commitment to quality SE services, as evidenced by the recent formation and active participation in several cross-agency SE related initiatives such as the Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative. DVR has sustained the principles of the system change customized employment grant that focused on wrap-around services for the most severely disabled. (Page 170)

Braiding/Blending Resources

Information cited under DEI Section.

Section 188/Section 188 Guide

Section identified but no detailed information specifically addressing disability focused implementation. (Page 100, 212)

DEI/Disability Resource Coordinators

DOLWD recently received a Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) - Round VI grant entitled “Alaska Youth Works” to serve youth with disabilities. This project will build a cohesive system with multiple partners to meet the needs of Alaska’s youth with disabilities, aged 14 to 24, by expanding access to employment and career pathways to prepare for in-demand careers. The Alaska Youth Works project will offer a multifaceted approach, building on existing systems and services, by creating a bridge framework to provide for coordination, resource leveraging, and blending and braiding of funds to increase access to career pathway programs and lead to self-sustaining employment. (Page 33)

The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) “Alaska Youth Works” grant will build a cohesive system with DVR and other partners to meet the needs of Alaska’s youth with disabilities, ages 14 to 24, by expanding access to employment and career pathways to prepare for in-demand careers. The Alaska Youth Works project will complement DVR services through coordination, resource leveraging, and blending and braiding of funds to increase access to Pre-Employment Transition Services, career pathway programs and ultimately lead to self-sustaining employment. (Page 189)

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Other State Programs/Pilots that Support Competitive Integrated Employment

No specific disability related information found.

Financial Literacy/Economic Advancement

No specific disability related information found.

Benefits

The Department of Health and Social Services is developing a website called “Disability Benefits 101,” an online tool for those with disabilities to provide available work incentives and to determine how their SSI, SSDI, or other public benefits may be impacted by employment. The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) allows eligible persons with disabilities to secure a “taxed advantaged” savings account of up to \$100,000 without affecting public benefit limits. Calculating benefits and ABLE savings is a critical tool for achieving quality long-term outcomes. Once the website is complete, AJC and partner staff will be trained in using the tool with clients. DOLWD will collaborate with the Department of Health and Social Services on its Work Incentives Planning & Assistance Project and on the recently awarded Disability Employment Initiative - Round VI grant entitled, “Alaska Youth Works.” These projects will build a system with multiple partners to meet the needs of Alaska’s youth with disabilities, aged 14 to 24, both in school and out-of-school, by expanding access to employment and career pathways to prepare for in-demand careers. (Page 52)

The state intends to use the governor’s set-aside funding to enhance services to one or more of Alaska’s priority populations, including youth and adults with disabilities. DOLWD will use these funds to leverage other programs and initiatives, for example, DOLWD’s DEI Grant for Youth and American Apprenticeship Initiative for Health Care. DOLWD may also support projects such as the Department of Health and Social Services’ development of the “Disability Benefits 101” online tool and subsequent training for AJC staff and other counselors in using the tool with clients, as well as other programs targeted at serving those with disabilities and multiple barriers to employment. (Page 113)

The racial distribution of those receiving services has been relatively stable over the last few years, reflecting the racial breakdown for the state. The largest minority population is Alaskan Native, which is approximately 14 percent of the state’s population. For SFY2015, 22 percent of those who received services were Alaska Native. DVR is not underserving individuals from a minority background. DVR has consistently met the Federal Performance Indicator 2.1 that measures equal access to VR services. In the most recent CSNA, DVR participants identified the primary barriers to employment as a loss of benefits (Social Security and Medicaid), physical limitations and lack of training, work experience or education. While the respondents to the survey were not broken down into groups by severity of disability, the results can be generally applied across all participants. DVR staff and CRPs identified the three primary barriers to employment as housing, behavioral health services and transportation. Rural Alaska was identified as an underserved area of the state in the most recent CSNA. Rural Alaska encompasses an area larger than many states with much of it inaccessible via roads. DVR defines rural as a community that is not connected by road to a

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community with a DVR office or is at least 50 miles outside of a community with a DVR office. Rural Alaska presents challenges for all state agencies to serve. (Page 188)

- Ensure an adequate number of CRPs and/or DVR staff who are trained to provide benefit analysis in order for Social Security beneficiaries to understand the impact of work on their benefits.

On-going.

- DVR has and continues to partner closely with UAA to guarantee there is an adequate pool of certified Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) in Alaska. Currently there are eight CWICs who work as CRPs. (Page 196)
- Develop cooperative agreement with Senior and Disability Services regarding individual plans of care to ensure long-term funding for those with the most significant disabilities; and
- Explore funding options for comparable benefits including Medicaid waiver funds. (Page 209)

Alaska's population in 2013 was 735,132. Nearly 38.5 percent of the state's residents lived in Anchorage, which is one of three urban areas of Alaska. Alaska Natives/American Indians represent approximately 14.7 percent of Alaska's residents and are a significant segment of the population in rural villages and communities. In 2013, the senior population overall was 158,909, or 21.6 percent of the state's population. In addition to Alaska Natives, other types of seniors who are most in need of the SCSEP program are widowed and divorced persons, minorities, high-school dropouts, veterans, persons not eligible for Social Security benefits, persons with a limited work history, and seniors on fixed low incomes. The SCSEP program operates where there is the greatest need relative to participants, host agencies, and employers. SCSEP-funded services remain available statewide via the AJCs and sub-recipients. The areas with the greatest need for SCSEP-funded services are Anchorage, Fairbanks, Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, and Juneau because many seniors relocate to these regions to be near medical care. Regional economic challenges facing older Alaskans include income insecurity, the need for more reliable access to health care and long-term care supports, an anticipated physician shortage, absence of geriatric education among providers, a shortage of sufficient senior services and health care services workforce to meet future needs, the need for emergency preparedness for a wide range of potential disasters, and soaring energy and utility costs. (Page 242)

School to Work Transition

Through DVR, Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) provides the following required activities to students with disabilities (16 to 21 year-olds) who are eligible or potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services:

1. Job exploration counseling,
2. Work-based learning opportunities,
3. Counseling on postsecondary educational opportunities
4. Workplace readiness training, and

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5. Instruction in self-advocacy. Implementation of (PETS) has resulted in increased coordination among local school districts and DVR. (Page 52)

DVR works closely with local school districts, hospitals and CRPs to implement the national Project SEARCH model in the Matanuska–Susitna and Fairbanks school districts. A collaborative internship model was developed in FFY2012 to provide youth with developmental or intellectual disabilities opportunities to learn real job skills in one–year school–to–work internship positions set up throughout the three hospitals involved. Sites were at Mat–Su Regional Medical Center, Central Peninsula Hospital, and Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and OJT and support through internships or worksite rotations. The goal for each participant is obtaining integrated employment using the skills learned through the internships. The State of Alaska has adopted this model for student interns with developmental disabilities. For FY15, 15 youth participated in Project SEARCH, and 14 successfully completed their internships at the hospitals with seven of those individuals now working in paid, competitive employment. Project SEARCH is no longer being funded by the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education. The Project SEARCH model will be used to provide Pre–Employment Transition Services to Students with Disabilities under the Client Services Component. The model will be used for all disability types rather than only developmental disabilities and will expand to other types of worksites. (Page 209- 210)

Data Collection

The referral process among the core programs is implemented on an individualized basis depending on the specific needs of the individual. All DOLWD staff are trained and expected to be knowledgeable in the requirements and eligibility of other core programs to ensure an appropriate program referral. Appropriate referrals are necessary in order to leverage resources and maximize service delivery to individuals while ensuring non-duplication of services. For example, AJC staff that provide initial intake and career services have been trained through the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to appropriately identify and refer individuals to disability services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, and other supporting entities. This training has provided a high level of thoughtfulness to the reason for each referral, increasing the success for the participant when obtaining needed services. Coordinated data collection mechanisms will be implemented in order to capture cross-agency referrals. (Page 65)

DVR has not reported, nor historically collected data, on the six performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA. DVR is unable to predict its future performance on any of the six performance indicators, including the SE program goals, until baseline targets have been established. DVR is working on data sharing agreements with DOL’s Unemployment Insurance and Research and Analysis units in order to establish the data collection necessary for determining baseline indicators and future reporting. As a result, DVR has proposed all indicators as “To Be Determined” in Appendix C of the Combined State Plan, per instructions. Performance Measure 1: Employment Rate - 2nd quarter after exit DVR is working with DOL programs to develop a formal agreement to access the data that will be required for this indicator. It is unlikely this data will include those who are closed as federal employees or self-employment or out-of-state employment. (Page 74)

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Small Business/Entrepreneurship

No specific disability related information found.

Career Pathways

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) will lead the engagement of industry sector partnerships in in-demand industries including health care, construction, maritime, oil and gas, transportation, technology, education, and mining. Each sector will convene its employers and other sector partners (K-12 education; postsecondary education; regional training centers; economic development organizations; labor unions; AWIB; and other appropriate state agencies). The partnerships will update existing workforce plan(s) pertinent to that industry and gauge the status of current workforce development activities. Each sector partnership will then develop a framework that will result in education and training investments focused on and responsive to employer needs. Career pathways will be accessible to all Alaskans, including all WIOA-targeted populations. (Page 50)

Additionally, the American Apprenticeship Initiative grant will increase the number of Registered Apprentices in Alaska's health care industry. The project will significantly increase career awareness, strengthen existing career pathways, introduce new career pathways, and significantly help employers fill entry-level positions in high-demand health care sector occupations. DVR will promote the availability of this project to individuals with disabilities who are interested in pursuing occupations in the health care industry. (Page 189)

The long-term strategies meeting to improve program goals and services offered SCSEP an opportunity to work directly with its partners in education, industry, workforce development, economic development, and the public. SCSEP attests that it and its partners have been involved in the WIOA joint planning and policy development process. The WIOA Combined Plan for Alaska emphasizes sector partnerships, career pathways, cross-program data and measurement, and job-driven investments with workforce partners. Three public meetings were held in November of 2015 in Juneau, Fairbanks, and Anchorage to provide information and seek feedback from the public to help develop Alaska's WIOA Combined Plan. Alaska's plan stresses the importance of education, training, credentials, and skill attainment. The Combined Plan addresses economic self-sufficiency of workers by aligning workforce development with education and economic development. (Page 242)

Employment Networks

In order to ensure these activities are carried out to the maximum extent possible, DVR will:

- Ensure DETS staff are regularly trained or made aware of DVR and its services. This is especially true of DETS locations that are served by DVR on an itinerant basis.

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- DVR leadership team and managers continue to identify functional DETS issues that require on-going work at all levels of the division including integration and the local management teams.
- Work with DETS staff to develop a means to provide information about DVR to individuals who self-identify as having a disability and who receive job training services through DETS programs. - Develop a referral process to the DETS employment networks.
- Train DVR staff to use DETS services. (Page 189-190)

Develop procedures for referring individuals exiting DVR employed, who are Social Security Ticket to Work holders, to Employment Networks using the Partnership Plus model. (AJCs, Employment Networks (ENs), and others as they become available).

- DVR has partnered with DEI to refer individuals to AJCs for extended services (Page 198)

DVR collaborated with the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) on the implementation of the DEI.

- DVR worked with and supported DETS' effort for the AJCs to become employment networks as part of the Ticket to Work initiative.
- Strong partnership between ETS and DVR to support services to individuals with disabilities in AJCs at all levels of both divisions.
- DVR staff continues to make presentations on VR services at local AJCs.

Priority 5. Enhance the DVR service delivery system through the use of technology. (Page 216)

3. DVR will assist 50 SE eligible individuals to obtain competitive employment.
4. DVR will be able to provide all the identified required VR services to all SE eligible individuals.
5. Explore opportunities for CRPs and other entities to become employment networks to provide long-term supports.
6. Work with the community mental health system to increase and establish work-related programs within that system. (Page 224)

* All enclosed information is cited directly from final state plan as of February 23, 2017

Find your local state plans here: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rso/wioa/state-plans/index.html>