**Vermont (VT) WIOA Matrix**

**Employment First State Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)**

No disability specific information found regarding this element.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customized Employment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding of Time-Limited Supported Employment Services Except for youth with significant disabilities, DAIL/DVR/DBVI funding of supported employment is time-limited for a period of not more than 24 months. Funded services must be based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment. DAIL/DVR/DBVI will fund: • Supported employment assessment services • Supported employment job search and placement services • Supported employment work supports • Customized employment • Benefits and work incentive counseling • Progressive employment • Case services for additional work supports such as work clothes and transportation. (Page 136) Title I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Braiding/Blending Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe how the State’s strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E). Vermont is committed to increasing access to education to all Vermonters and using every available resource to do so. The core partners intend to leverage WIOA, TAA, Vocational Rehabilitation, Pell Grants, public and private grants, and other resources to assist participants in their educational goals. Additionally, the core partners coordinate with the Vermont Students Assistance Corporation, which provides grants, loans, scholarships, career and education planning, and general information for those seeking educational opportunities in Vermont. The core partners will take advantage of the Vermont High School Completion Program that provides a flexible pathway to a high school diploma or equivalent to all Vermonters aged 16 and older with the use of State funding. (Page 39-40) Title I</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEI/Disability Resource Coordinators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No disability specific information found regarding this element.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Financial Literacy/Economic Advancement</th>
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<td>No disability specific information found regarding this element.</td>
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<th>School to Work Transition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Core Partner: VERMONT DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (DVR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Vermont (VT) WIOA Matrix

1. **Vocational Rehabilitation.** DVR provides employment services for individuals with disabilities in order to offset barriers to their employment. DVR serves individuals with any disability, with the exception of people with visual disabilities who are served by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). Services provided by DVR are highly individualized and can include a wide range of activities as long as they support an employment goal. After a determination of eligibility, DVR and the consumer develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) which outlines the employment goal, the services to be provided, and the responsibilities of the consumer. A consumer is determined to have achieved an employment goal when they have been employed a minimum of 90 days and are stable on the job...

2. **Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS).** In order to meet the requirements of PETS, DVR has established a cadre of fourteen VR counselors assigned to work exclusively with students in high school. Each counselor has an assigned Youth Employment Specialist to develop real work-based learning experiences. DVR has the capacity to provide PETS services for eligible students in all 60 supervisory unions. Supported Employment for Youth and Adults DVR partners with the Division of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health to provide supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities and youth with emotional behavioral disabilities. (Page 17) Title I

Although Vermont’s high school graduation rate is one of the best in the country, increasing college and career readiness, and learning and skill development among Vermonters remains a State priority. The core partners must continue to engage our educational institutions to ensure that a skilled and ready workforce is available for the high-demand occupations and industries. Schools must develop courses of study and work-based learning opportunities that align with real career and job opportunities. The partners are committed to the use of accurate labor market information in order to promote a job-driven education and training system. Vermont’s labor market information is developed by the VDOL Economic and Labor Market Division and has increase outreach to secondary and postsecondary institutions, including career and technical education programs and eligible training providers, to help them focus on current, accurate labor market information, as opposed to relying on anecdotal information when determining program offerings. (Page 37) Title I

Clarifying the requirement to develop and complete an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) for an eligible consumer within 90-days; and • Defining clear procedures and timelines in the appeals process. The Committee began work on additional chapters. The first is a new chapter that will provide guidance to VR staff on the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for youth, a new requirement under WIOA. The new chapter was published in December 2017. The second is the revision of the chapter providing guidance on VR funding of hearing aids. Work on this chapter will continue into FFY 2018. The committee agreed to review Chapter 310 related to supported employment to clarify the substance of the chapter. The committee also agreed to develop two (2) new chapters on Cost-Sharing and Denial of Benefits. The committee decided not to develop a Progressive Employment chapter. In addition to work on the Policy and Procedures Manual, the Committee discussed two possible changes to the SRC bylaws. One is related to the advocacy function of the SRC. It was deferred for further discussion and consideration. The other, proposed adding “a parent or another immediate family member of
a person with a disability” to the requisite criterion for the position of Chair or Vice-Chair of the SRC. This proposed change conforms to parallel provisions in bylaws of similar councils/committees. This proposed change was approved by the committee and voted on by the full SRC at the October 2017 meeting. (Page 127) Title I

Financial responsibilities are laid out in the draft MOU with AOE as follows:

DVR/DBVI Responsibilities: To the extent funds are available, DVR/DBVI is responsible for paying for Pre-Employment Transition Services for potentially eligible students. In addition, to the extent funds are available, DVR/DBVI is responsible for paying for vocational rehabilitation and school-to-work transition services for students and youth determined eligible for DVR or DBVI services with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). (Page 131) Title II

- The Purpose of the Service Is the purpose of the service primarily related to an educational outcome or an employment outcome?
- Customary Services: Is the service one that the school customarily provides under IDEA Part B? For example, if a school ordinarily provides work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities, the fact those services are now authorized under the Rehabilitation Act as Pre-Employment Transition Services does not mean the school should cease providing those services and refer those students to DVR or DBVI.
- Eligibility: Is the student with a disability eligible for transition services under IDEA? Because the definition of “student with a disability” for the DVR and DBVI programs includes an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, it is broader than the definition under IDEA. DVR and DBVI are authorized to provide transition services for students with disabilities who meet the definition of an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. (Page 132) Title I

(F) Staffing of Pre-ETS Required Services 14 VR counselors providing Pre-ETS services were deployed statewide to serve all 60 supervisory unions in the state. VR Counselors were out posted to an average of four high schools each, to ensure statewide access for eligible students. The daily presence of VR counselors in local high schools allows them to build strong working relationships and coordinate services with school staff. DVR also contracted with our primary CRP VABIR, to support 14 youth employment specialists to provide Pre-ETS services. The school-based counselors and youth employment specialists essentially work as a team. The focus of the youth employment specialists is work place readiness training, arranging for work-based learning experiences and instruction in self-advocacy. (Page 150-151) Title I

A) Students with Disabilities: The State of Vermont has sixty supervisory unions serving students in primarily rural communities. During the 2016 to 2017 school year, 5,390 Vermont high school students were served. All were either on an IEP or 504 plan, and therefore met the definition of a student with a disability.

(B) Youth with Disabilities According to American Community Survey (ACS), 7.5% of youth ages 16 to 20 (3,450) reported having a disability. The ACS does not provide data for youth ages
Vermont (VT) WIOA Matrix

14 to 24 who report having disability, which is the WIOA definition. However, extrapolating the ACS data for youth ages 16 to 20 would suggest that there are approximately 8,600 youth with disabilities in Vermont. It is important to note that the ACS uses primarily self-reported data and youth may be less likely to self-identify as a person with a disability. Therefore, this number maybe an underestimate of the actual prevalence. (Page 149) Title II

In FFY 2017 1,287 DVR consumers achieved an employment outcome. This is compared to 1,574 consumers who achieved an employment outcome in FFY 16. DVR believes there are two major factors that impeded the program achieving this goal. First, the loss of re-allotment funds dramatically decreased staff and case service resources. For example, DVR had to reassign or not fill ten DVR counselor positions. This has clearly had an impact on outcomes. Secondly, the shift of resources to Pre-ETS has clearly affected employment outcomes. While DVR supports the goal of Pre-ETS, there was no way to manage the re-assignment of 15% of federal funds to Pre-ETS without a drop in outcomes. (Page 174) Title II

In April 2016, a member of the SRC from the Agency of Education gave a presentation about the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) process and how it will work for students on IEP and 504 plans to meet graduation requirements. Vermont high schools are now moving away from credit-based graduation and are now phasing-in the PLP process. The SRC and DBVI staff are hopeful that this will allow some instruction in the use of assistive technology to count towards meeting a graduation standard. It was also discussed that DBVI should create and archive webinars that shows students using assistive technology that can be shared with schools.

The last part of the agenda was led by the DBVI Director including a discussion about “strategies for employment.” The group discussed the Section 503 for federal contractors and schedule A requirements for hiring people with disabilities. The SRC also discussed connections with DOL. Rose from DOL was present and said that there will be many opportunities with federal initiatives for “apprenticeships.” She will provide information to the group. (Pages 188 -189) Title II

The DBVI Director meets quarterly with the Special Education Director of the Vermont Agency of Education, AOE Transition staff, and VR to coordinate the annual Transition Conference and to provide general updates. A person from the AOE Transition staff is a member of DBVI’s SRC. He provides regular updates about school initiatives and resources for transition planning. He recently explained the requirements of the new Personal Learning Plans and how they will be implemented for students with and IEP. AOE, DVR, and DBVI are currently in the process of drafting a new Interagency Agreement as required under WIOA. (Page 194) Title II

New initiatives to address services for students who are visually Impaired and to ensure they are receiving the PRE-ets core services. DBVI staff attended the annual Transition conference and the Core Transition Event seminar. Counselors are attending the regional Core transition meetings that offer opportunity to network with other service providers. DBVI counselors are active team members for the Core transition meetings and attend and provide information at IEP meetings for students age 14-21. DBVI will be working closely with Vermont DOL Youth case managers to support students with visual impairment. DBVI staff will provide training to DOL staff regarding adaptive skill instruction, orientation and mobility, rehab teaching and low vision
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training to assist with progressive employment. (Page 214) Title II

DBVI works in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Vermont Department of Labor. The development of the Unified State Plan ensures compliance with the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). These steps ensure students with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 are receiving comprehensive and unduplicated services. DBVI is a partner on the Core Transition teams located in regions around the State of Vermont. DBVI counselors work closely with DVR Youth Transition Counselors, VABIR Youth Employment Specialists, Guidance counselors and Case managers to ensure that students on IEP are receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services and participating in activities as required in WIOA. DBVI works closely with the teachers of the Visually Impaired partially funded through the AOE and the School districts. The student receives training and adaptive equipment to be better prepared for participating in job exploration counseling, work-based learning and workplace readiness training. DBVI has access to program for students who are Visually Impaired through the LEAP program (Learn Earn and Prosper). (Page 219) Title II

The ultimate need is to work together with AOE and local schools to help students to use their IEP and Personal Learning Plans to create a great transition to employment training or work. DBVI has created transition action plan forms that are used for each student for entering the workforce directly, attending vocational training, or attending college. The needs for each of these future goals are specified on each form. The forms help guide the Local Education Agency IEP and 504 teams as they plan for the unique transition service needs of students who are blind or visually impaired. (Page 252) Title IV

Career Pathways

Partnerships with state agencies and community programs serving youth who are at-risk and living in poverty, including youth with emotional behavioral disabilities served through the JOBS program.

Strategy B: Expand workforce development and training initiatives and programs for Vermonters in high-demand and high-wage jobs. This will include:

- The development and expansion of sector-based training programs.

- The development and expansion of apprenticeships training, certification programs, and industry recognized credentials in high demand sectors.

- The development and expansion of state-endorsed Career Pathways in target sectors, beginning in middle school and culminating in a variety of credentials, degrees and employment outcomes at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.

- Ensuring Career Pathways have entrance points for lower-skilled adults that connect to adult education programs with outreach specific to this population.

Strategy C: Explore opportunities to address disincentives to work built into state and federal
Vermont (VT) WIOA Matrix

benefits programs, such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or TANF.

- Seek federal waivers to test alternative benefit structures and work incentives to make work pay. (Page 24) Title I

- Establish transition to post-secondary education and training programs in all regions to prepare underskilled out-of-school youth and adult learners for successful entry into and progress within post-secondary education and training programs within a career pathway.

- Connect skills learned in school with their application in the workplaces of the future; become a resource for students and schools in addressing Personalized Learning Plans and other career aspirations.

- Reach out to youth who are leaving school to engage them in workforce development opportunities, specifically WIOA youth and adult activities.

- Maximize effectiveness of the Pre-Employment Transitions Services (PETS). (Page 25) Title I

DVR recognizes one of the goals of WIOA is to help consumers retain employment and develop career pathways to higher wage employment. The DVR management team had a two-day retreat to consider strategies to achieve this goal. One of those approaches is to engage consumers post closure to determine if they could benefit from additional services to help them advance in their current employment. This might include:

- Exploring the use of post-employment services to support DVR consumers advancing in their current employment or accessing a new higher wage job.

- Exploring outreach to closed cases to determine if individuals could benefit from re-engagement with DVR. (Page 168) Title I

### Apprenticeship

- Customary Services: Is the service one that the school customarily provides under IDEA Part B? For example, if a school ordinarily provides work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities, the fact those services are now authorized under the Rehabilitation Act as Pre-Employment Transition Services does not mean the school should cease providing those services and refer those students to DVR or DBVI.

- Eligibility: Is the student with a disability eligible for transition services under IDEA? Because the definition of “student with a disability” for the DVR and DBVI programs includes an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, it is broader than the definition under IDEA. DVR and DBVI are authorized to provide transition services for students with disabilities who meet the definition of an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. (Page 132) Title II

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## Vermont (VT) WIOA Matrix

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## Work Incentives and Benefits

While all DVR services are highly individualized, DVR has developed some specific programs and initiatives to better meet workforce needs. Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) DVR uses a dual customer approach that promotes meeting the needs of both employers and consumers. DVR’s primary interface with the business community is through its business outreach program called Creative Workforce Solutions. CWS consists of 13 Business Account Managers housed in twelve Agency of Human Services’ Districts, who coordinate with local employer outreach teams. DVR funds or partners with over 200 community non-profit staff who provide placement services for individuals with disabilities. Employer outreach by these providers is coordinated through the CWS Business Account Managers.

2. Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). In order to meet the requirements of PETS, DVR has established a cadre of fourteen VR counselors assigned to work exclusively with students in high school. Each counselor has an assigned Youth Employment Specialist to develop real work-based learning experiences. DVR has the capacity to provide PETS services for eligible students in all 60 supervisory unions. Supported Employment for Youth and Adults DVR partners with the Division of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health to provide supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities and youth with emotional behavioral disabilities.

3. Rehabilitation Services for the Deaf (RCD). DVR has four Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf to provide specialized employment services to adults and students who are deaf or have hearing impairments.

4. Work Incentive and Benefits Planning. Approximately 30% of individuals in the DVR caseload receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Individuals on SSDI or SSI often need assistance understanding and managing the effects of earned income on their benefits. DVR Benefits Counselors provide this guidance to beneficiaries and assist them in taking advantage of available work incentives. (Page 17-18) Title I

Strengths of Workforce Development Activities Vermont sees the following as strengths to the workforce development system in the state: • Intimate, Individualized Services — core partner
## Vermont (VT) WIOA Matrix

Programs are highly accessible to individuals and program participants would rarely encounter wait times in program centers across the state. Additionally, the state has highly ranked education and training programs. For example, DVR has been ranked number one nationally in per capita individuals served, in employment per capita outcomes achieved, and in access to services for individuals with the most severe disabilities and determined eligible for Social Security disability benefits based on Ticket to Work participation rates. • Strong Employer Engagement — The state workforce programs have a strong emphasis on the employer as a customer. These business services come through engagement with businesses, economic development partners, and community organizations and leaders. The DVR, through CWS has over 2,500 active employer accounts in a Salesforce Strong database. (Page 20) Title I

DVR maintains Social Security Administration, Ticket to Work cooperative agreements with most of the private non-profit employment service providers in the state. Agreements exist with all community mental health and developmental services agencies. In the spring of 2008, DVR negotiated a new Ticket to Work cooperative agreement with the agencies in anticipation of the new regulations to be published later that year. The new agreement has been in place since July 1, 2008 and has generated significant new revenue for providers that help beneficiaries earn at higher levels. (Page 132-133) Title II

A specific staff group, the DVR Benefit Counselors, receive specialized training to ensure the provision of quality services in working with customers who receive monetary or medical benefits. Ongoing training and support is provided by a DVR Project Manager. The local Social Security Administration (SSA) Area Work Incentives Coordinator provides quarterly trainings to the Benefits Counselors on a variety of SSA Work Incentives issues. SSA also provides training and technical assistance for Benefits Counselors through contracts with Cornell and Virginia Commonwealth University. DVR is the SSA Work Incentives Planning and Assistance grantee for the State of Vermont. The four Benefits Counselors working under that project are certified by SSA as Certified Work Incentive Counselors (CWIC). To achieve certification, Benefits Counselors must attend a week long training and complete a comprehensive “take home” assignment that is evaluated by Virginia Commonwealth University staff. (Page 145) Title II

DVR will implement the following strategies to mitigate FFY 2016 and FFY 2017 reductions in re-allotment funding that resulted in substantial cuts in services and capacity:

- Partnerships with other programs and state systems to sustain employment services for people with disabilities;
- Increasing program income through the Ticket to Work program;
- Exploring federal and state grant opportunities to pilot new service models;
- Continually assessing the assignment of DVR resources to ensure funds are going toward activities that are most likely to result in an employment and career outcome.

Program Year 2019 Measures:
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a. State government or other community agencies that have contributed resources to sustain programs affected by the loss of re-allotment. b. Social Security Administration Ticket to Work and Cost Reimbursement revenue. c. Federal or state grant applications.

Program Year 2018 Targets:

a. Baseline b. DVR will generate $2.5 million in Ticket to Work Revenue in Program Year 2018. c. DVR will apply for at least one grant application in Program Year 2018. (Page 156-157) Title II

First, DVR has been very successful in generating program income through the Ticket to Work program. In calendar year 2017, DVR received $2.5 million in Ticket payments. This income has helped offset the loss of re-allotment. Second, DVR’s strong partnerships with other state agencies allowed for those agencies to pick up funding for some programs that DVR had funded. Specifically, the Department of Mental Health agreed to fund a peer directed supported employment program for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. Also, the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Division funded employment services housed in peer run recovery centers. These partnerships enabled DVR to focus resources on core VR services. (Page 162) Title II

DVR will implement the following strategies to mitigate FFY 2016 and FFY 2017 reductions in re-allotment funding that resulted substantial cuts in services and capacity: • Partnerships with other programs and state systems to sustain employment services for people with disabilities; • Increasing program income through the Ticket to Work program; • Exploring federal and state grant opportunities to pilot new service models; and • Continually assessing the assignment of DVR resources to ensure funds are going toward activities that are most likely to result in an employment and career outcome. (Page 165) Title II

Employer/Business

While all DVR services are highly individualized, DVR has developed some specific programs and initiatives to better meet workforce needs. Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) DVR uses a dual customer approach that promotes meeting the needs of both employers and consumers. DVR’s primary interface with the business community is through its business outreach program called Creative Workforce Solutions. CWS consists of 13 Business Account Managers housed in twelve Agency of Human Services’ Districts, who coordinate with local employer outreach teams. DVR funds or partners with over 200 community non-profit staff who provide placement services for individuals with disabilities. Employer outreach by these providers is coordinated through the CWS Business Account Managers. (Page 17) Title I

The VDOL and ACCD, in consultation with other workforce development partners, are currently developing a workforce needs assessment to survey Vermont businesses to better understand the needs of employers in the State. This outreach should be conducted in consultation with the DVR in order to ensure the workforce needs of all employers are identified, including those employers who employ individuals with disabilities. Additionally, both the VDOL and DVR will conduct job fairs, hiring events, and provide job seeker referrals in coordination. The VDOL and DVR will develop protocols to ensure that employer outreach is jointly conducted. Included among
**Vermont (VT) WIOA Matrix**

These protocols are joint job fairs and business recognition events, as well as holding regular meetings between the partner employment representatives to share contacts and local outreach activities. The VDOL and DVR will further expand partnerships with local workforce development leaders. (Page 37) Title I

Employer engagement is just as important to the success of the Vermont workforce development system as are individual services. Both the VDOL and the DVR engage Vermont employers to meet their workforce needs. These activities must be better aligned and coordinated to ensure Vermont employers are getting the most out of Vermont’s workforce development system. The VDOL and DVR are committed to coordinated employer outreach and marketing to ensure the needs of employers are being met. Arguably the most important aspect of employer services is knowing the employer needs within the State. The mismatch in workforce skills was acknowledged as a major issue in the Economic Development Strategy produced by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development in 2014. The VDOL and ACCD, in consultation with other workforce development partners, are currently developing a workforce needs assessment to survey Vermont businesses to better understand the needs of employers in the State. This outreach should be conducted in consultation with the DVR in order to ensure the workforce needs of all employers are identified, including those employers who employ individuals with disabilities. Additionally, both the VDOL and DVR will conduct job fairs, develop protocols to ensure that employer outreach is jointly conducted. Included among these protocols are joint job fairs and business recognition events, as well as holding regular meetings between the partner employment representatives to share contacts and local outreach activities. The VDOL and DVR will further expand partnerships with local workforce development leaders. Although Vermont is a Single State Area with one SWDB, there are numerous local partners with extensive knowledge of local employers. The core partners intend to engage these local leaders to help in identifying skill gaps and developing training pipelines to meet the needs of local businesses. (Page 69-70) Title 1

As noted in the prior section, the Business Account Managers are a major resource to the 14 DVR Transition Counselors and 14 Youth Employment Specialists, who work exclusively with students to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services. In particular the Business Account Managers provide:

- Contacts with employers who are willing to provide work based learning experiences for students;

- Contacts with employers who are willing to participate in informational interviews, company tours, practice interviews and other exploratory activities with students;

- Information on industry trends, skill requirements and other factors related to particular employment sectors;

- Identification of summer or part time competitive employment opportunities for students. The Business Account Managers also convene local employment teams including the Youth Employment Specialists. The local employment teams coordinate outreach to employers across DVR programs. This coordinated approach maximizes the impact of DVR employer outreach.
Supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities are provided through a system of approved nonprofit community providers, including the Designated Agencies (DA), the Specialized Service Agencies (SSA) and Independent Service Organizations (ISO). DDSD, DVR and DBVI fund supported employment services jointly through grant and contractual relationships with these community providers. The agreement sets out the following guiding principles: DDSD, DVR and DBVI are sister Divisions within DAIL and operate under the direction of the DAIL Commissioner. As such, DVR, DBVI and DDSD take a “one agency” approach to the funding and implementation of supported employment services for adults and youth with developmental disabilities. DVR, DBVI and DDSD have collaborated for over thirty years to implement supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities. DVR, DBVI and DDSD are committed to continuing this collaboration based on the following: • All people with developmental disabilities, who want to, can work with the appropriate supports. • Work benefits people with developmental disabilities in the same way it does people without disabilities. Increased income, a sense of contribution and skill acquisition, increased confidence, independence and social connections all enable people to develop meaningful careers. • The value of work extends far beyond wages earned. Employers and the community benefit from the social inclusion and diversity people with developmental disabilities bring to the workforce through improved morale, customer loyalty and overall productivity. The agreement includes an inter-division planning and policy group that will meet at least quarterly and include all of the Directors.

The state of Vermont is an equal opportunity employer and there is emphasis on recruiting and hiring individuals with disabilities. We encourage DVR consumers to apply for posted positions and obtain the education necessary to be competitive. DVR also promotes close working partnerships with the Vermont Center for Independent Living, Designated Mental Health Agencies, the Refugee Resettlement program, Vermont Works for Women and other organizations who serve people with disabilities and/or are of a minority status. Older Vermonters with Disabilities: The percentage of individuals with disabilities age 55 and above, increased from 12.3% to 13.9% between 2013 and 2016. This seems to reflect the overall aging of the Vermont demographic. The percentage of people served over 65 also increased during this period, from 1% to 3%. Individuals over the age of 55 are working longer, not only for financial reasons but because people are living longer and choosing to remain in the workforce. It is likely that many individuals over the age of 55 experience disabilities and may be eligible for VR services. DVR now oversees the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and has hired a “Mature Worker Program Coordinator”. A primary role of the coordinator is to facilitate the referral of eligible individuals to DVR, by building and supporting strong linkages with services for mature workers. Individuals with Physical Disabilities DVR suspects that individuals with physical disabilities may be under-served, especially since the number of individuals with psychiatric disorders and substance disorders has increased. It may be that individuals with physical disabilities are not seeking services because their needs are less complex. In addition, DVR recognizes that employers require a more diverse selection of...
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candidates to fill more skilled positions. (Page 147) Title II

DVR consumers need opportunities to gain industry recognized credentials in middle skills professions. DVR data suggests that consumers who gain industry recognized certifications such as Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA) or Commercial Driver’s License (CDL), are closed in higher wage employment. Such middle skill certifications are often the quickest way to help individuals move from entry level employment to higher paying employment with genuine career prospects. There is a high demand from employers for individuals with these types of certifications. Historically, DVR has set aside case service funds to support consumers in certification programs. DVR may need to expand these set asides and look at more system wide efforts to make these opportunities available. (Page 159) Title I

DVR will increase consumer opportunities to participate in and gain industry-recognized credentials in middle skills professions. Industry-recognized credentials are a proven mechanism for consumers to access higher wage employment. This will include sector-based training programs in collaboration with technical centers; D. DVR will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS). Employer engagement continues to be a critical activity to ensure DVR consumers have access to employment opportunities; (Page 164) Title I

FFY 17 Results: In FFY 2017, DVR had 2,013 active relationships with employers statewide. Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included: • The maintenance of the Business Account Manager (BAM) Capacity statewide. Despite loss of re-allotment, DVR has maintained 10 BAM positions statewide, a reduction of two positions. Two BAMs are covering two of the twelve DVR districts. • DVR has invested in the training and development of the BAM staff to improve their effectiveness. Factors that impeded the implementation of the goal: • The loss of two FTE BAM staff naturally had an impact on the employer outreach overall numbers. (Page 174) Title II

□ Providing education to employers and human resources professionals about job accommodations, including where to find additional information, is necessary and would be an appropriate strategy to use when interacting with employers.

□ Encouraging job seekers to volunteer information about how they perform specific activities and their transportation options. Answering the unasked question is important because what the employer is imagining probably is not accurate.

□ Educating employers about visual impairment and how it affects functioning.

□ Creating opportunities for increased contact between employers and persons who are visually impaired.

□ Sharing testimonials and newspaper articles of success stories.

□ Doing presentations each month to describe the whole process and the benefits of hiring a
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blind person.

- Offering training about the Americans with Disabilities Act to employers.
- Providing community education days. (Page 240) Title IV

Nearly all DBVI consumers are considered to have a most significant disability. The CSNA included many of these individuals in focus groups, interviews, and customer satisfaction surveys to determine their employment needs. The findings from all of these assessment methods plus a review of the JVIB research show some major categories of need. They include needs for training and work experiences that lead to good jobs, adaptive skills training, and assistive technology computer training. There is also a significant need to educate employers about the abilities of people who are blind.

DBVI has strong partnerships for individuals who need supported employment. Eligible consumers can access programs through the Developmental Services Agencies. DBVI strives to have all individuals participate in trial work experiences using supported employment when appropriate. (Page 245) Title IV

Data Collection

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DVR and DBVI track all consumer services through the 911 case tracking system. This system collects demographic, service, expenditure, and case-flow data. The system is used for all required federal reporting for both the DVR and DBVI programs. The system is managed by the DVR Program Evaluation Unit. This Unit matches 911 data to other administrative data sources such as the State Unemployment Insurance Wage Reporting System and the TANF system to coordinate and evaluate services across programs. DVR and DBVI are in the process of developing data sharing agreements with our core partners to allow matching of data for reporting outcomes under the WIOA common performance measures. The agreement hopes to allow the core partners to track co-enrollment across programs and coordination of services. (Page 43) Title I

Training programs, particularly for youth who are not planning to go to college, are inconsistently available across the state. Technical Centers connected to high schools sometimes offer adult training and some have been willing to work with employers to develop sector-based training programs. A more systematic approach to training would ensure that employers are able to hire skilled workers for available positions within their companies.

I. The need for a comprehensive quality assurance system incorporating the new AWARE case management system.

VR would like to develop a quality assurance system that will ensure a cycle of continuous improvement. VR is part of a New England effort to develop such a system. The system would organize and align a state’s organizational goals and objectives; performance measures; program evaluation; data analysis; and dissemination and communication strategies. In September 2017 DVR went live with an electronic case management system, called AWARE. Aware is a
The goals of this needs assessment are to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals in Vermont who are blind or visually impaired.

METHODOLOGY

Information gathering included the use of:

- Existing disability population statistics including the Cornell Study;
- Disability population estimates from available data including the American Foundation for the Blind;
- Population projections and economic forecasts from federal and state data; Department Of Labor projections by state;
- Existing DBVI data, studies and experience; 911 data, type of service, cost, whether people currently served by DBVI are representative of the racial and ethnic minority distribution of people with disabilities within the state; data provided by CRPs; Counselor input;
- State level statistics from other federal programs; WIA, IEP, 504, Social Security,
- State and local data and reports;
- Stakeholder input: Surveys, focus groups, SRC meetings, interviews, Statewide Town Meetings, Customer—Centered Culture Focus Groups, and public hearings. (Page 220) Title IV

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No disability specific information found regarding this element.

Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination: Section 188

- Implement programs to increase the number of individuals training for and placed in non-traditional employment, including internships, work experiences, workforce preparation activities, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities;
- Coordinate activities with state and regional economic development and regional planning activities;
- Coordinate and provide business services for Vermont employers; develop plans for effective outreach to and partnerships with Vermont businesses;
- Disseminate the list of eligible training providers, and information on OJT, customized...
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training, incumbent worker training, internships, work experience or transitional jobs, providing information on the costs, performance, physical and programmatic accessibility of training programs; and

o Implement programs to increase the number of women training for and placed in nontraditional, high-demand, high-paying fields. (Page 75) Title I

Staff Training. Parties agree to assist the One-Stop Operator in coordinating ongoing trainings and sharing information so that program staff are trained in ways to modify environments, procedures, and information dissemination to avoid discrimination and to meet individual needs. Trainings will include instruction on how to provide services for all customers in compliance with the laws referenced above and best practices concerning accessibility, inclusiveness, and universal design.

Partners in Vermont’s AJC Network will ensure that all locations where program services are available to customers meet the standards of physical and programmatic accessibility described below.

Evaluations of the Burlington AJC’s physical and programmatic accessibility will include how customers with disabilities can access, fully participate in, or benefit from available services compared to customers without disabilities.

Physical accessibility refers to the extent to which facilities are designed, constructed, or altered so they are accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. AJC partners will use universal design and human-centered design strategies to help all customers access services. Evaluations of physical accessibility will take into account exterior and interior accessibility and will include criteria evaluating how well the AJCs and delivery systems take actions to comply with disability-related regulations implementing WIOA section 188.

Location and Facility. The Burlington AJC is accessible by public transportation, driving, biking, or walking. The center’s sign is clearly marked and visible from a main road. The required number parking spaces are dedicated and marked for individuals with disabilities and are located closest to an accessible entrance. (Page 312) Title IV

Vets

Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans. These representatives also monitor all job listings from federal contractors and agencies to ensure veterans receive priority of service in referrals to these positions. LVER staff conduct seminars for employers and job search workshops for veterans seeking employment. LVER staff facilitate priority of service in regards to employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans by all staff members.

The referral process for veterans starts at their first point of contact with the workforce development system. Individuals are prompted at their point of entry to self-identify their veteran
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status, in order to ensure that they are able to take full advantage of the available services. Whether the individual or their spouse has ever served in the U.S. military is asked either by staff at physical locations, or through the online VJL registration system, depending on how the individual enters the system. Once veterans or eligible spouses self-identify their status, they are asked to provide more detailed information on an intake and intensive services determination form. If the individual does not indicate that they have a significant barrier to employment, then they are referred for assessment with the first available case manager to determine their eligibility for programs. If they check any of the factors that indicate a significant barrier to employment, then AJC staff attempt to connect them immediately with a Disabled Veteran’s Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (JSVG). If a DVOP is unavailable to see the individual immediately, then AJC staff make a referral to ensure that the veteran or eligible person is seen by a DVOP specialist. (Page 65) Title I

Mental Health

DVR has a long-standing agreement with the Department of Mental Health, Children’s Unit, Department of Corrections, and Department for Children and Families to fund the JOBS program serving youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities. The JOBS program is a supported employment program serving youth with emotional behavioral disabilities ages 14 to 22. The partnering departments provide the state general fund match for the Medicaid Global Commitment to fund the ongoing support services. The JOBS programs are housed within the Designated Community Mental Health Agencies within the twelve Agency of Human Services Districts. (Page 129) Title II

The Jump on Board for Success (JOBS) program provides supported employment services for youth with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities. The JOBS programs are operated through local community mental health agencies. JOBS staff and the Transition Counselors coordinate outreach and services with the local high schools for students who are at risk of dropping out of school and six months prior to graduation. The Developmental Services program also works collaboratively with the Transition Counselors to ensure that students who may be both eligible and meet funding priorities for developmental services are referred through the schools to the local Designated Agencies. The Benefits Counseling team collaborates with the Transition Counselors to ensure that students and their families have access to accurate and appropriate benefits information that will allow them to make informed decisions around employment and education choices. (Page 130) Title II

DVR has a well-established agreement with the Vermont Development Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) to provide extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The primary source of funding for extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities is Home and Community Based Medicaid Waiver funds. DVR funds supported employment services for youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities in partnership with the Department of Mental Health, Children’s Division. The JOBS programs are a model for serving this high need and high risk population. DVR provides the upfront job placement and support through grants to community agencies. The extended supports are provided through Medicaid Global Commitment funds. In prior fiscal years, DVR also had an agreement with the Department of Mental Health to provide extended services for adults with significant mental
illness served through the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment Program (CRT). In July 2015, DVR decided to reallocate the VR grant funds to Pre-Employment Transition Services in order to meet the federal mandate. The CRT programs continue to provide supported employment services using a Medicaid case rate funding model. DVR continues to partner with the CRT programs to provide VR services at the local level. For individuals with other disabilities, no state funding for extended services exists in Vermont. As a result, there are limited options for providing extended services for individuals with brain injuries, sensory disabilities, severe learning disabilities and other disabilities. There are some limited options to use Social Security Administration Impairment Related Work Expenses or Plans to Achieve Self Support. These options however, are only feasible in a minority of cases. (Page 133) Title II

As Divisions within the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), DVR and DBVI have entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA). The agreement will be in effect for five years once it is signed. The purpose of the agreement is to describe how Vocational Rehabilitation Title I and Title VI-B funding will be utilized with Medicaid Global Commitment funding to support employment services for the following populations:

- Supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities served through the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) Developmental Disabilities Services Division, hereinafter referred to as DDSD.
- Youth with severe emotional disturbance (SED) served by the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Children’s Division through the JOBS programs.
- Adults with psychiatric disabilities served through the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program administered by the Department of Mental Health (DMH). (Page 135) Title II

DVR and DMH have a long history of collaboration around the provision of supported employment services for adults with psychiatric disabilities and youth with severe emotional behavioral disorders. This is reflected in the MOU’s overview and purpose as follows: The purpose of this agreement is to describe how DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH will cooperate to implement, and improve employment services, supported employment services and evidence based supported employment services for youth and adults with psychiatric disabilities in the State of Vermont. Supported employment and employment services for youth and adults with psychiatric disabilities are provided through a system of approved non-profit community providers, including the Designated Agencies (DAs). DMH and DAIL/DVR/DBVI fund supported employment services jointly through grant and contractual relationships with these community providers. There are two primary programs within the DMH system that provide employment services: • The JOBS Program: JOBS provides supported employment services for youth with Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED) • The Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) Program: CRT provides employment services and supported employment for adults with severe psychiatric disabilities. (Page 138) Title II

The agreement forms an inter-agency planning and policy development group including the
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DVR/DBVI Directors and the DMH Directors of Adult Mental Health and Children’s Mental Health, and is in effect for five years from date of signature. The agreement also includes a commitment to joint monitoring of the programs and joint training and technical assistance. DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH support two models of individualized supported employment services in competitive, integrated employment settings. The agreement describes the eligibility criteria for both systems and the service models as follows: JOBS The JOBS Program is an innovative supported employment and intensive case management service for youth with psychiatric disabilities, who have dropped out or left school. It uses work as a means to reach this challenging population. JOBS is a voluntary program where youth, once engaged, are assisted in transitioning from school, prison, or the streets and supported in accessing services to help them reach their individual goals and greater independence. Individualized Placement and Support (IPS): Evidence Based Supported Employment Services. IPS supported employment is an evidence-based approach to providing vocational services for adults with severe psychiatric disabilities. IPS integrates employment services within community mental health treatment and case management services. (Page 139) Title II

DVR recruits qualified personnel through Assumption College, University of Massachusetts, and Springfield College of Human Services, who have received a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. These graduates meet the highest standard of education and are able to obtain certification at the highest level for this field. DVR also recruits qualified personnel in a related field such as Social Work, Special Education, School Guidance, Mental Health Counseling, or Community Mental Health Services from New England colleges, by posting positions on internal employment pages of the various college websites. All of these graduates are candidates for counseling vacancies if they are willing to complete the four core rehabilitation courses. (Page 142) Title II

Adults with Significant Mental Illness DVR has historically worked closely with DMH to support the integration of employment into the broad array of clinical mental health services available to individuals with significant mental health issues. Similar to its relationship with DDSD, DVR funding was braided with the DMH Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) Medicaid case rate to provide a seamless structure of upfront and ongoing support. Up until SFY 2016, DVR funds have been specifically allocated to provide assessment, training, and placement services until closure, with the CRT Medicaid case rate funds providing the necessary long term follow up. Starting in SFY 16, DVR decided to reallocate the $700,000 in Title 110 funds committed to adult mental health to the JOBS program. This decision was made to enable DVR to come into compliance with the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) requirement. In order to meet the 15% Pre-ETS expenditure target, DVR had to reassign funds from adult services to services for students and youth. This was a very difficult decision for DVR and we are greatly saddened by the impact on supported employment services for adults with mental illness. While DVR no longer has a formal contractual program with the CRT programs to deliver supported employment services, DVR continues to partner with CRT programs at the local level. Many CRT programs have sustained their supported employment services despite the loss of VR funding. (Page 178) Title II

DVR and DMH continue to work together at the state level, to support evidence based supported
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Vermont was the first state to pilot a Johnson and Johnson Dartmouth initiative, now in 13 states, which continues to demonstrate that adherence to the principles of evidence based supported employment is key to increasing employment rates. Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbances The JOBS Program is an innovative supported employment and intensive case management service for youth with emotional and behavioral disturbances (EBD) that uses work as a means to reach this challenging population. As a result of a unique partnership between the Department of Mental Health’s Child, Adolescent and Family Unit (CAFU), the Department for Children and Families, the Department of Corrections, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and contract agencies, the JOBS Program is operational in twelve (12) sites across the state. The JOBS Program is funded through a combination of Medicaid Global Commitment funds and a VR grant funds. JOBS involves employers and the business community in meeting the needs of youth through intensive job development, placement, and on and off site training support. (Page 178) Title II

RTW/SAW

State Agency Overview Department of Labor The VDOL is an independent department within the State government. The VDOL is led by a commissioner that reports directly to the governor. The VDOL has roughly 290 employees, with approximately 150 staff working from the central office located in Montpelier. Within the Department are the following divisions: Unemployment Insurance; Workforce Development; Worker’s Compensation; VDOL Safety Division (VOSHA & Project Work-SAFE); Economic and Labor Market Information; and Wage and Hour and Employment Practices. The VDOL administers multiple one-stop partner programs, including: the WIOA Title I youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs; Employment Services authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act; Trade Adjustment Assistance activities authorized under the Trade Act; Jobs for Veterans State Grants programs; and Vermont’s Unemployment Compensation programs. VDOL maintains a central office located in Montpelier and oversees 12 regional offices offering job seekers and businesses recruitment and placement assistance. These American Job Centers (called Career Resource Centers) provide workforce development assistance to Vermonters. (Page 45) Title I

Staffing of Pre-ETS Required Services 14 VR counselors providing Pre-ETS services were deployed statewide to serve all 60 supervisory unions in the state. VR Counselors were out posted to an average of four high schools each, to ensure statewide access for eligible students. The daily presence of VR counselors in local high schools allows them to build strong working relationships and coordinate services with school staff. DVR also contracted with our primary CRP VABIR, to support 14 youth employment specialists to provide Pre-ETS services. The school-based counselors and youth employment specialists essentially work as a team. The focus of the youth employment specialists is work place readiness training, arranging for work-based learning experiences and instruction in self-advocacy.

The Number and Proportion of Students Receiving Pre-ETS Services and/or VR Services The number of students receiving Pre-ETS and/or VR services increased between the implementation of Pre-ETS in federal fiscal year 2015, and FFY 2016. This increase would be expected since Pre-ETS services were being ramped up during this period. (Page 150-151) Title II
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*All enclosed information is cited directly from final state plan as of June 30, 2019*

Find your local state plans here:

[https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/state-plans/index.html](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/state-plans/index.html)