

e. Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

1. Acceptance of title VI funds:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

2. If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of Title VI funds received under Section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of Title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

The methodology of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) for distribution of Title VI-B funds is based exclusively on a fee-for-service authorization process with approved vendors of supported employment (SE) services. WVDRS uses no Title VI-B funds for administrative costs. Utilizing the WVDRS fee schedule for SE services, rehabilitation counselors utilize Title VI-B and Title I funds to provide needed SE services for eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities.

WVDRS established a statewide fee-for-service funding approach for job development services for SE-eligible individuals. This structure provides vendors an effective and efficient way of meeting the costs of this critical element of the job placement process. The process provides reimbursement for employment outcomes and brings increased energy and vendor resources to support job development activities.

In February 2023, WVDRS increased compensation for Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), including a higher rate for Supported Employment services. Following this, in 2024, DRS developed a Tier-based fee-for-service model for SE. This tiered approach encourages DRS-approved CRP Providers to pursue education and certification, thereby improving service delivery to DRS Consumers. Reimbursement rates are now based on credentialing across three Tiers:

*****Tier 1: Non-Credentialed-Approved CRP Provider DRS**** - All approved CRP Providers must maintain certification with DRS through internal controls and ongoing programmatic evaluation by the DRS CRP Unit.

*****Tier 2: ACRE (Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators) Credentialed-Approved CRP Provider DRS**** - In addition to Tier 1 requirements, providers in this tier hold an ACRE credential. ACRE is a national organization dedicated to improving employment services for people with disabilities, promoting competency-based training for employment service professionals. The ACRE credential requires initial training and continued membership.

*****Tier 3: CESP (Certified Employment Support Professional) Credentialed-Approved CRP Provider DRS**** - This is the premier reimbursement Tier, signifying that the CRP has completed the CESP credential. This credential recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a sufficient level of knowledge and skill to provide integrated employment support services to individuals with disabilities. CESP credentialing requires knowledge demonstration through examination and ongoing continuing education.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 encouraged the reduction in the use of 14(c) Certificates. As a result, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and DRS were tasked with annually educating, training, and counseling individuals employed in subminimum wage CRP programs. New employees under the age of 25 entering these programs were also given the opportunity to seek services targeting community-based employment at minimum wage or higher prior to working at subminimum wage. Since the inception of these WIOA efforts, the number of CRPs in WV holding a 14(c) Certificate has significantly decreased from 10 (employing approximately 342 individuals) to one active 14(c) Certificate holder (employing 24 individuals) as of October 2024. Section 511 Training was completed with the 24 employees in September 2025.

Additionally, the WV APSE Chapter was established in May 2025, with three WVDRS staff members serving as at-large board members. The WV APSE's mission is through advocacy and education, APSE advances employment and self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities. We have also initiated a collaboration with WVDRS, WV Behavioral Health, and the newly appointed Program Director for Title XIX Waiver to increase the utilization of Waiver funding for SE. This collaboration is particularly important as some CRPs faced challenges maintaining their programs and faced staffing challenges due to employment losses during COVID.

In 2024, WVDRS instituted a Benefits Counseling Program. Currently, there are 3 providers in the state, with 3 additional providers having staff enrolled in the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Training Program. To ensure consistent quality and adherence to criteria, the CRP Unit closely monitors all SE extended support cases. Counselors seek guidance from District Managers and the CRP Unit before making funding decisions, ensuring that cases meet established criteria and that an Extended Supported Employment Services (ESES) Plan is in place. This process has significantly enhanced knowledge and awareness, building confidence in moving forward with Supported Employment cases. Furthermore, WVDRS and CRP Quarterly meetings were established to increase communication and collaboration between staff. These meetings incorporate education and training, along with discussions involving any issues that may need to be addressed. We have increased our monthly Liaison contacts since February of 2024, maintaining a monthly log. We continue to provide technical support to both staff and providers by following up on missed reports or any concerns that may need to be addressed. A District Manager is assigned if a staff member is not available, and the list is updated as changes occur. We have also increased access to SE services by maintaining five statewide providers that travel into rural areas.

In Program Year 2024, WVDRS authorized \$375,501 of its Title VI-B funds to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities in its SE program through community rehabilitation program (CRP) services. When Title VI-B funds (\$300,000 total per year with \$150,000 available only for youth with disabilities) are exhausted, WVDRS defrays supported employment program service costs with Title I funds for individuals who require the services or who qualify and have not yet been served under the supported employment program. In Program Year 2024, WVDRS authorized \$132,157 in SE services for 38 adults with the most significant disabilities and \$243,344 in SE services for 49 youth with the most significant disabilities.

WVDRS plans to continue using three prevalent models of supported employment services: individual placement, mobile work crews, and enclaves. Additionally, WVDRS will encourage and

support development of affirmative industries that integrate workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities throughout the CRP network. WVDRS considers each placement on an individualized, case-by-case basis to ensure the placement setting meets the definition of an integrated employment setting. For consumers with the most significant disabilities in supported employment, WVDRS strives for each consumer to achieve a competitive, integrated employment outcome.

WVDRS policies defining competitive employment settings promote linking CRPs with federal and state work contracts that may exist within the community. Such links expand job opportunities for individuals receiving SE, particularly those who reside in rural locations. This approach also directs Title VI-B and Title I funds into placement-related services and activities.

As appropriate, WVDRS will use the State funds allocated (\$78,000) for ESES to expand employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities (MSD). WVDRS will continue to educate the legislature regarding ESES for youth with MSD to ensure continued funding for ESES.

3. Supported employment services may be provided with Title 1 or Title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with Section 101(a)(22) and Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) vendor acknowledgment process includes an in-service training session for prospective new vendors and training updates as requested. During the training session, participants receive a Service Provider Guide and an introduction to the WVDRS process for providing supported employment (SE) services. WVDRS also loans SE training books and materials at no cost.

The quality of SE services is directly tied to the competency of the personnel performing job development and community-based training services. WVDRS encourages and supports the provision of a broad range of in-service training programs for personnel directly involved in SE service delivery.

WVDRS is committed to ensuring the availability of SE services throughout West Virginia as reflected in progress toward WVDRS Goal 5, which is to continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers including Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), Independent Living, and other community providers to enhance the availability of services to WVDRS consumers. There are currently 64 WVDRS-acknowledged SE vendors from all districts across the state, a substantial increase from PY 2021. These vendors make SE services available to an increasing number of individuals with the most significant disabilities. This trend is expected to continue with the increase in the number of providers, due in part to the increase in reimbursement rates for SE vendors.

In accordance with federal regulations, the SE services that may be provided to individuals and youth with disabilities placed in SE include:

1. Evaluation of rehabilitation potential for SE to supplement the comprehensive assessment conducted under the Title I program;
2. Job development;
3. Job placement;
4. Intensive on-the-job training provided by skilled job coaches/employment specialists;
5. Case management services;
6. Job monitoring, whether performed onsite or offsite, that includes regular contact with employees, employers, parents, guardians, and other professionals to reinforce and maintain the job placement;
7. Rehabilitation technology assessment and services as appropriate; and
8. Post-employment services (following transition to extended SE services) that are available from the extended service provider and that are needed to maintain the SE job placement.

The demand and need for SE services continues to be significant, particularly in rural areas, as well as for those individuals who are transitioning from school to the workforce. WVDRS continues its commitment to expanding the statewide capacity for SE services.

WVDRS will continue to provide SE services to its consumers and will acknowledge additional SE service providers where needed. The Division will continue to consider non-traditional approaches to SE service delivery and will increasingly emphasize the development of natural supports wherever possible. WVDRS anticipates that more individuals will receive services with the increased number of approved SE providers.

WVDRS authorized SE services to 591 individuals in Program Year 2024.

While SE services may be expected to vary in scope and duration from individual to individual, core services that may be provided to individuals and youth with disabilities placed in SE can include:

1. Assessment of the individual's environmental circumstances;
2. Job analysis and job development;
3. Rehabilitation technology assessment;
4. Job placement following appropriate match of job/consumer characteristics identified during assessment, job analysis, and job development (services 1 and 2 above);
5. Intensive, one-on-one, on-the-job training;
6. Job stabilization, job coach fading as much as possible; and
7. Extended Supported Employment Services (ESES), optimally including natural supports.

THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

WVDRS receives state funds earmarked to provide ESES for SE clients closed as successfully rehabilitated who, after an assessment of their progress and continuing needs for services, are found to require ongoing job coaching to maintain employment and are not eligible for services through other funding sources. The consumer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) includes an estimate of the time needed for transition to extended services. Provision of ESES (job coaching) to all eligible SE clients, including youth with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with an approved IPE will not exceed four years, as required by federal regulations.

Consumers in SE placement are eligible to receive any services traditionally available through the WVDRS Title I program.

4. Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(a) and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(19)(v).

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) continues to concentrate efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a non-traditional provider source for supported employment services. A variety of supported employment provider choices are needed, particularly due to the rural nature of the state.

WVDRS continues to focus on providing technical assistance and coordinating training for vendors of supported employment services, WVDRS staff members, and staff members of other public and private agencies. WVDRS keeps current on changes and advances in supported employment through documented research, literature, and reviews of best practices.

Other agencies with which WVDRS collaborates for the provision of time-limited supported employment services are:

1. West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council funds;
2. West Virginia Title XIX--Home and Community-Based Waiver Program for intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) recipients; and
3. Social Security Administration work incentives programs.

In implementing school-to-work transition services for individuals exiting the school system, WVDRS also collaborates with family resource networks.

Through a combined effort with other disability organizations, \$78,000 was appropriated (annually since 2017) by the West Virginia Legislature for supported employment follow-along services (extended supported employment services). WVDRS serves as the fiscal agent for these funds. WVDRS has created program guidelines governing the use of state-appropriated funds for extended services under the supported employment program created by state statute in 1993. The sole use of the state funds attached to this program is to provide extended services for individuals not eligible from any other funding source. All providers of supported employment services may access these

funds for individuals who are eligible under the guidelines. At the end of Program Year 2024, WVDRS had sponsored 32 individuals in the extended supported employment program so they could maintain and retain their jobs within the community. This figure represents the cooperative efforts of ten CRPs.

Agreements between WVDRS and all acknowledged providers of supported employment services document collaboration for extended services. Each agreement details the time-limited and extended services that WVDRS will secure through the vendor.

Extended services specified in the agreement will be provided by the vendor and include, at minimum, monitoring two hours per month (no more than eight) at the job site of each individual unless the individual can be better served through offsite monitoring. If offsite monitoring is determined to be appropriate, it must, at a minimum, consist of two hours per month with the individual and at least one contact with the employer during those hours. The vendor also agrees to provide other support services as needed and specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment.

In addition to the basic vendor agreement identifying the time-limited and extended services to be mutually provided by WVDRS and the vendor, WVDRS has attempted to collaborate with other agencies and organizations to provide funding for extended services.

These sources of extended supported employment services are:

1. West Virginia Title XIX--Homes and Community-Based Waiver Program for I/DD recipients;
2. WVDRS program funds for persons receiving extended services at WVDRS-acknowledged CRP work centers; and
3. Social Security Administration programs such as Impairment Related Work Expenses and Plan to Achieve Self Support for approved Social Security recipients.

WVDRS continues its efforts to expand the number of acknowledged vendors of supported employment services, particularly in areas underserved and unserved within the current system. As of November 2025, the number of supported employment service providers was approximately 60.