

JUST WORK PROGRAM

“JUVENILES UTILIZING STRUCTURE TO WORK”

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

AND

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

2010/2011

AGREEMENT PROPOSAL

CONTRACT TYPE - Interagency Agreement

CONTRACT PERIOD – July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011

LOCATION – The Vocational Rehabilitation Office in Omaha, Nebraska

POPULATION SERVED – Youth who are wards of the Department of Health and Human Services or DHHS-Office of Juvenile Services who are adjudicated status offenders or adjudicated delinquents and who are eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation.

SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED – Vocational/Academic Assessment and Planning, Disability Awareness Counseling, Vocational Counseling, Pre-employment Readiness Training, Job Placement, Job Retention, Employment Follow-Up, GED Preparation Classes, and Employment Warranty Services.

PROGRAM STANDARDS

The purpose of the interagency agreement between the Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is to provide employment opportunities to wards of DHHS or DHHS-Office of Juvenile Services, who are adjudicated status offenders or adjudicated delinquents, and who are eligible for VR services. The program will provide employment and educational opportunities to youth as an alternative to continued Court involvement, out-of-home placement, and institutionalization.

The partnership assists youth in preparation for obtaining and maintaining employment. These youth are experiencing a wide range of disabilities. Whether it's a mental or behavioral health disability, a verified disability through their previous or current school, or a physical disability, the youth is often more successful by learning "hands-on" in a 1:1 or small group environment. That is how the VR Specialist approaches the concept of education and employment in this program.

I. POPULATION TO BE SERVED

This interagency agreement serves adjudicated youth, ages 15–19 who meet the eligibility criteria for Vocational Rehabilitation. The youth served in the program are wards of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services or DHHS-Office of Juvenile Services who are adjudicated status offenders or adjudicated delinquents. The JUST WORK program has always been co-located with one or both of these DHHS units. Co-location is an essential factor for the success of the program.

II. PROGRAMMING

Vocational Rehabilitation understands that many factors influence acceptance into entry-level jobs. To address the educational needs of the large number of youth who have exited school settings, GED classes, basic computer skills, career assessment and planning are key programming elements. Job placement and follow-up services focus on matching interests, skills and capabilities. While this position may not lead to maximizing the abilities of each youth, Employment Warranty Services are offered to support movement along a career path for those who have achieved an employment outcome.

III. PROGRAM COMPONENTS

A. Assessment and Planning

All youth entering the program receive an assessment of their vocational assets (focusing on strengths and building on them), interests, abilities, and transferable work skills. If this information has been obtained through another source, that information will be utilized and not duplicated. However, many other evaluations have not taken into consideration how disability related factors specifically apply to work. If it has not, we utilize the existing information, discussing with the student how their disability may affect work. Disability awareness counseling may be incorporated as needed. If additional vocational instruments are given, they are either from a disability related perspective, or a pre-screening for a perspective employer. Once a job goal has been established, an Individual Plan for Employment is developed with the youth. It is very important that the youth actively participate in the development of the job goal and that it is something the youth wants to do (taking into consideration age and disability).

The Nebraska Career Information System, Kenexa and O*NET are utilized with the youth to match interests with potential careers. Educational requirements, income potential, and marketability information is provided. These activities are geared for longer-term career goals. Since the youth need to experience and observe the world of work, this component may include job shadowing, informational interviews, or other community-based activities. In addition, the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Workbook may be utilized to provide a variety of employment related activities to assist participants with making an informed choice about their vocational future.

B. Job Placement and Follow-up

The main goal of this partnership is successful, sustained employment. Youth need to learn about the world of work to become better prepared to successfully enter and maintain employment. Many have never worked, or have repeatedly been terminated from jobs for inappropriate behaviors. The VR Specialist works with the youth and arranges services needed for a successful job match.

This component could include activities such as: job readiness training, job seeking skills training, mock interviewing, resume development, job retention training, social skills practice, familiarizing youth with employers in the community, and identifying the many resources available to find a job. This program component is generally offered individually, but at times, is conducted in a small group setting. Other services provided may include short-term transportation assistance, work clothing, work tools, on-the-job evaluation, on-the-job training funds, assistance with trade school tuition and job coaching. The VR Specialist works closely with the employer, the Protection & Safety Worker/Juvenile Services Officer, and the youth to make the placement a successful experience. Follow-up is provided for a minimum of 90 days after the placement.

C. Employment Warranty Services

Vocational Rehabilitation may assist former wards with services, as necessary, to retain, regain, or advance in employment. Employment Warranty services promote the value of “work first” and provides the framework permitting movement along a career path. It also is responsive to expressed needs of employers for continuing support dealing with issues that arise in changes to job sites, duties, supervision and other work conditions. When a successful employment outcome has been achieved, the youth will be contacted at six (6) month and one (1) year intervals from the date of employment. Necessary services will be provided based on a revised Individual Plan for Employment.

D. GED

Vocational Rehabilitation coordinates with the Omaha Public School (OPS) system to provide GED classes to youth at the VR office. Three schedules are available at classes held Monday-Thursday: 8:30-10:30, 10:45-12:45, and 1:30-3:30. Schedule changes were made during the last year to accommodate the large number of youth requesting GED classes. Each session can provide instruction for up to 8 students. The instructor administers the Test of Adult Basic Education and other assessments necessary to determine the youth’s strengths and areas needing improvement. A plan is developed for each youth, individualizing his or her course of study.

In 2001, VR and DHHS agreed to co-fund the cost of the teacher's salary for the afternoon classes to address the long waiting list for the morning program. OPS has agreed to maintain the co-funded amount at 7.5 hrs/wk.

E. BASIC COMPUTER SKILLS

Since moving to the State Office Building in 2007, the youth have access to the VR computer lab. The lab is utilized to teach typing and entry-level computer skills to enhance employment options. The computers are also utilized to research post-secondary training programs, occupations, job openings, complete resumes and apply for employment via the Internet in a fully supervised setting.

IV. PERSONNEL

The program is staffed by one (1) FTE, a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, employed by Vocational Rehabilitation. The VR Specialist is required to meet the educational and training requirements of Vocational Rehabilitation.

V. EQUITY

The program encourages applications for services from eligible participants and provides equal access and treatment to members of traditionally under-represented groups, particularly those with the most severe disabilities, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, and those with a juvenile Court background and history.

VI. EVALUATION

Quarterly updates are provided to the administrators of the partnering agencies to show progress toward annual goals. Annual reports of the program's success are also done to present the overall annual statistics. This evaluation includes:

1. The number of youth referred.
2. The number of youth served.
3. The number of youth who achieve a "successful employment outcome" (employed at the same job for 90 days or more).
4. The number of GED graduates.

Proposed Budget For July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

Salary (one VR Specialist)	\$ 48,131
Benefit Package	\$ 7,870
Educational/Training Materials	\$ 1,000
Office Supplies/Equipment	\$ 1,000
Mileage Reimbursement	\$ 2,000
Staff Training/Conferences	\$ 500
GED Program (Teacher salary-afternoon classes)	\$ <u>8,168</u>
	\$ 68,669

Office Space for 1 VR Specialist &
 GED Classroom Space: **\$ 11,053**
(VR in-kind)

This partnership agreement states that Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Health and Human Services will each contribute 50% of the proposed budget. The Department of Health and Human Services will transfer 50% of the budget to Vocational Rehabilitation on or by 6-30-2011.

BUDGET NOTE: Since the program's inception in 1998 and until the move from Cedar Street in 2007, DHHS was responsible for providing the office space for the VR Specialist and the GED classroom. However, since the move from Cedar Street, VR assumed this responsibility and will continue to incur the entire expense for the 2010/2011 contract period.

JUST WORK PROGRAM

EMPLOYMENT**GED GRADUATES**

4-98 through 9-98: Total Referrals: 96	Cases Opened: 77	Successful Closures: 17	N/A
10-98 through 9-99: Total Referrals: 115	Cases Opened: 74	Successful Closures: 35	3
10-99 through 9-00: Total Referrals: 99	Cases Opened: 80	Successful Closures: 31	20
10-00 through 9-01: Total Referrals: 118	Cases Opened: 107	Successful Closures: 47	16
10-01 through 9-02: Total Referrals: 111	Cases Opened: 99	Successful Closures: 51	13
10-02 through 9-03: Total Referrals: 104	Cases Opened: 93	Successful Closures: 45	26
10-03 through 9-04: Total Referrals: 88	Cases Opened: 67	Successful Closures: 45	23
10-04 through 9-05: Total Referrals: 79	Cases Opened: 64	Successful Closures: 40	23
10-05 through 9-06: Total Referrals: 78	Cases Opened: 65	Successful Closures: 48	25
10-06 through 9-07: Total Referrals: 70	Cases Opened: 55	Successful Closures: 32	27
10-07 through 9-08: Total Referrals: 53	Cases Opened: 50	Successful Closures: 9	26
10-08 through 9-09: Total Referrals: 110	Cases Opened: 110	Successful Closures: 30	17
10-09 through 3-10: Total Referrals: 53	Cases Opened: 53	Successful Closures: 4	5

VR Terminology/Process – Quick Overview

When a case is “referred” by a caseworker, the youth may be in DCYC, a treatment facility, or coming up on a release date. Many things can happen between referral and the time they actually return to the community, which impacts whether they are actually available for services. For example, the youth may be in Intensive Out-Patient Programming 4 nights a week, and in GED during the day, and the treatment provider/caseworker may want to see the youth stabilized with that schedule before adding the work component. The youth may not be amenable to work, may go on the run, or may not have transportation to see the VR Specialist for services. With the increase in significant mental health diagnoses, the youth may not be appropriate for work at the time of referral, and a case may not be opened at that time. Once stabilized, the youth can be re-referred.

If the youth is at home or living elsewhere in the community, the youth must want to work and desire our assistance to obtain employment, as VR is a voluntary program. Many times, employment is not required on the Conditions of Liberty, and the youth sees no incentive to get a job. These are some of the factors that could lead to a case not being “opened”.

An “Opened” case starts with a youth’s interest, and a VR services orientation provided by the VR Specialist. If the youth continues to be interested in pursuing our assistance in finding a job or possibly post-secondary programming, the youth and the caseworker sign an application for services and a release of information. From there, an Individualized Plan for Employment is developed based on that individual’s informed choice utilizing their strengths, abilities, interests, and capabilities. The VR Specialist works with the team of family (if available and willing), professionals and the youth to work toward the goal chosen.

The caseload is ongoing. For instance, when 70 referrals are made and 55 cases are opened during 1 year, and 32 are “Successful Closures”, the remaining 23 cases continue to be served by the VR Specialist on the caseload. If a youth is in a post secondary program, there’s a probability that the youth will be on the caseload for years.

A “Successful Closure” is when a youth has maintained the same job for a minimum of 90 days.