



NEMO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

VR/RSB Coordination Policy

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Northeast Missouri Workforce Development Board is committed to the partnership developed with Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB). Together, we believe it is necessary to explore every resource available to magnify the provision of vocational rehabilitation services that promote the expansion of competitive integrated employment opportunities and self-sufficiency for customers while meeting the needs of employers.

Our joint goal is to develop and improve coordination and collaboration to braid services and assist clients in obtaining employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities. We will also use this partnership to enhance employer engagement activities to increase employer services and recruiting, hiring, retaining, and promoting individuals with disabilities.

RSB provides training, joint referrals, and support to the job centers through an individual vocational counselor, along with in-demand training on such topics as accessibility, referral process, and the use of assistive technology for the blind. RSB will continue to work with the Board to develop innovative programs that serve common clients, to develop new ways to provide job creation, and to work cooperatively towards removing the stigma associated with having individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

NEMO WDB is able to work with RSB to provide assistive technology and aids through contracted vendors. RSB has the capability internally and through the Center for Braille and Narration Production at the Missouri State Prison to produce information in accessible media for staff and clients, including braille, large print, audio tape and electronic formats. RSB serves only blind and visually impaired individuals, so assistive technology services and devices are provided to almost every client throughout the VR process.

Northeast Region has identified Agriculture as a Sector Strategy so the Board will work with RSB to refer people with disabilities employed in agriculture, technical assistance, and agriculture based education through Missouri AgrAbility Project, a program developed between RSB and a Cooperative Extension Service through the University of Missouri, Columbia, administered by the USDA.

Both RSB and Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation collaborates with the Training and Employment Administration of Missouri (TEAM). TEAM is an association of local Workforce Development Board (WDB) Directors serving as advocates for the workforce development system. The NEMO WDB Executive Director serves as a member of TEAM. TEAM holds monthly meetings allowing the opportunity for all WIOA partners and all local WBD's to come together at one time to discuss program updates and developments. This collaboration opens the door for widespread communication among partners throughout the state, cultivates local partnerships and serves as a conduit for agency alignment.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation's (MVR) workforce development activities assist youth and adults with disabilities to prepare for, enter into, engage in, advance in or retain competitive integrated employment. These activities include assessments, vocational guidance and counseling, job placement, and job preparation activities such as disability awareness, resume writing and interviewing skills. Additionally, MVR provides eligible individuals with training (OJT, apprenticeships, supported employment to include customized employment, funding for community colleges and universities). NEMO WDB has been able to work with MVR on several projects to braid services between the two agencies, including Registered Apprenticeships.

Through the MOU with NEMO WDB, MVR is the primary referral source from job center partners for individuals with disabilities. MVR counselors have a regular presence at our Job Centers to provide services to consumers in a timely fashion. MVR also provides training and technical assistance to job center staff regarding rehabilitation technology and accommodations in the workplace. A MVR representative serves on the NEMO WDB and Executive Committee, and chairs the disability subcommittee (ACCESS). They have staff that also serve on the Business Services Team, Youth Committee and Employment Engagement Committee.

A Reverse Job Fair was held in 2019 through a partnership of Vocational Rehab and NEMO WDB. Rather than traditional job fairs where jobseekers meet with employers, MVR clients have booths for employers to visit. They create displays to showcase their talents, skills and abilities. This event was very well received so there will be five RJFs held in 2019. These popular events are well attended by local HR managers, clients, service providers, potential employees and employers of individuals with disabilities. These events bring stakeholders together for education on employing individuals with disabilities and offer the opportunity to network.

NEMO WDB and MVR have a long-standing partnership with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) in Missouri. The CRP's are subcontractors of MVR and assist individuals with obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment. The services offered include supported employment, employment skills training and employment services, which provides specialized services for deaf and hard of hearing, autism spectrum disorder, and brain injury.

These services also include job development, placement, on-the-job supports and retention services to assist individuals with obtaining and maintaining employment. NEMO WDB has had a long-term partnership with these agencies. A representative from Learning Opportunities/Quality Works serves on the ACCESS Committee and the Youth Council.

Two years ago, NEMO WDB established a partnership with MVR's paid six-week summer work experience program for students with disabilities. For those clients that want to continue to work for a longer period of time, MVR refers their client to our program operators and they are enrolled in our Youth Job League where they can work an additional 320 hours. This has been a successful program growing annually.

NEMO WDB has contracted with Family Support Division to offer services through the SkillUp program. The collaboration between MVR, FSD, and NEMO WDB will ensure clients who are on SNAP receive SkillUP services to provide educational, training, and employment services that will reduce the MVR wait list and allow additional clients to be served.

NEMO WDB works with MVR to serve justice-involved individuals leaving prison and returning to our communities. We are working with two correctional facilities in our region and numerous local, regional and county law enforcement agencies. Our goal is to ensure that these individuals have supports in place to reduce recidivism.

Additional individuals that have been identified as underserved are students with disabilities involved in the justice and foster care systems. Research indicates that a large proportion of youth in the juvenile justice system have disabilities. This population is four to five times greater in number than youth with disabilities in public schools. Approximately a third of youth in the juvenile justice system have a disability. There is research that reports approximately 800,000 youth are served in the foster care system. Almost 13 percent have at least one documented disability. It is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of foster youth are in special education. The assessment also indicated that justice and foster care involved students with disabilities are an underserved population. The NEMO WDB Youth Council will work with MVR to set a strategy to expand pre-employment transition services based on this population's need.