

Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB), CareerForce Systems, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), and State Services for the Blind (SSB) Joint Statewide Meeting

Thursday, October 21, 2021

Notes

Natasha Jerde, Director, State Services for the Blind, facilitated the meeting.

Lensa Idossa, Supervisor, Dislocated Worker and Federal Adult Programs at DEED, shared a presentation on the COVID-19 Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant, and the Opioid Dislocated Worker Grant/OMNI program. [See slides](#).

Tammy Biery, Executive Director of Career Solutions in St. Cloud, shared a presentation on the importance of warm handoffs between partners. [See slides](#). Discussion ensued with suggested strategies:

- All-staff meetings at the local level to help increase staff knowledge of various programs and to improve referrals, also to build relationships between staff and across teams
- Ask questions that might benefit the program you are referring to (such as, “can we text you instead of call?”)
- Doing mini conference calls – keep the customer on the line and call the staff contact for the program that is being referred to host a three-way conversation
- Hosting a virtual resource fair to make handoffs immediately in a virtual space
- Staff should utilize the [CareerForce resource database of local staff](#) when making referrals

The Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards shared an update. Currently working on 2022 legislative platform and recommendations for WIOA reauthorization. Planning for the December joint meeting with the Governor’s Workforce Development Board, and the 2022 Summer Meeting in Duluth.

Job Service presented an update on the Good Jobs Now campaign. They have had about 32,000 conversations since March of 2021 with Unemployment Insurance recipients. They have about a 58% connection rate. They have also been following up with RESEA referrals. The Good Jobs Now campaign has provided an opportunity to market CareerForce services and programs provided by partners. Phase II of the Good Jobs Now campaign, meeting with individuals one-on-one, began in August. They have served about 1,200 people with appointments since then. There are 20 appointments available per week at each of the comprehensive/one-stop centers.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services has seen an increase in transition referrals with high school students. VRS staff can now meet with participants in-person. Some staff have returned to working in offices but in-person work has not been required. VRS has seen major challenges in the provider community which is struggling statewide to hire and retain workers, which may be due to uncompetitive wages.

State Services for the Blind has been providing in-person services since April 2021. They provide services to seniors and see about 20-50 seniors each week. Numbers are going down recently due to the delta variant and return to “lockdown” of residential senior living facilities. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and SSB held a presentation with national speakers on employing people with disabilities. Also created [bite-size learning modules](#) for employers about hiring people with

disabilities, which can be shared widely. October 15th was White Cane Awareness Day and there are three videos/transcripts [posted on the SSB home page](#) with reflections.

Lindsey Horowitz, Postsecondary Transition Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education and Alyssa Klein, Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinator gave a presentation on Project SEARCH, an evidence-based one-year internship program for students with intellectual/developmental cognitive disabilities, ages 18-21. [See slides](#).