**++NDVR SP 15-06**

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**Date Issued: XX/XX/2017**

**Supported Employment (SE)**

**ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

**Policy Summary**

NDVR provides supported employment (SE) services using funds as authorized under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act to those eligible individuals who, because of the significance of their disability, require intensive services to gain employment and on-going support services to maintain employment.

NDVR provides intensive SE services under a place and train model until employment stability is achieved for a period not to exceed 24 months. The individual then transitions into the long-term services needed for job maintenance. These ongoing support services are provided by an agency other than NDVR or though natural supports.

A VR counselor must document a reasonable expectation that ongoing support services are or will become available to the individual prior to initiating planned services.

**I. PURPOSE**

Supported Employment is intended to provide services that lead to employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, who have traditionally been excluded from consideration for competitive integrated employmentthat is individualized and customized, consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.

SE is referred to as a "place and train" model. Individuals who do not possess all the necessary work or social skills required for immediate employment success are placed into jobs. A job coach then trains the individual at the employment site in the specific skills and/or behaviors required for the job. Placement is more rapid as there is no delay due to pre-placement training or skill requirements.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

Competitive integrated employment:

* Competitive earnings that are equal to or greater than the Federal, State or local minimum wage rates, whichever is highest. Wages must be comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities in similar positions with comparable skills, experience and training. Finally, the employee with the disability must also receive benefits comparable to those of employees without disabilities in similar positions.
* Integrated location is in a setting typically found in the community. It is in a setting in which the individual with the disability interacts while performing his or her job duties with employees without disabilities. The primary consideration is the interaction among employees with disabilities and their coworkers without disabilities in the work unit and across the employment site. VR should not make a determination of integrated location on the basis of an individual’s interaction with customers and vendors alone.
	+ Employment settings established by Community Rehab Providers, specifically for the purpose of employing individuals with disabilities, are not integrated settings.

Long-term Support Services (LTS), formerly known as Extended Services:

* Ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment.

Natural supports:

* LTS provided by a supervisor or co-workers on the job site or on a limited basis, family members. Natural supports should be used cautiously as they are often difficult to sustain on a long-term basis.

Opportunity for career advancement

* In many careers, advancement means moving from their current job to a more advanced job with more responsibilities. Along with increased advancement, people typically earn more income and have greater responsibility in their new positions
* The path to advancement varies by organization and industry; however, employees must normally develop skills and abilities for the next-level position. Gaining skills that fill the gap between the current level and desired promotion is the key to career advancement.

Supported Employment Services

* SE is competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, in which an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, is working towards employment that is consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests and informed choice of the individual, with LTS.

**III. Who is eligible for supported employment services?**

Individuals with the most significant disabilities:

* for whom competitive, integrated employment has not historically occurred, *or*
* for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability, *and*
* who because of the nature and severity of their disabilities has had supported employment identified as the appropriate employment service, based on the comprehensive assessment of vocational needs, requires intensive supported employment services and followed by LTS, which continue after the VR case is closed.

Federal regulations do not allow the VR counselor to find an individual ineligible for VR services because the source of LTS is not identified.

If LTS are not identified, the VR counselor will:

* Certify the individual eligible for the VR program
* Document the individual has a most significant disability
* Document that LTS are required;
* Inform the individual that SE services under an IPE cannot be initiated until an LTS resource is identified or there is a reasonable expectation a resource will become available; and
* Seek out the needed LTS including natural supports. If LTS cannot be identified, the individual is moved into interrupted status and the case will be closed within 180 days.

**IV. Identify Long-Term Support Services**

The VR counselor should establish that the individual will be able to access LTS funding before SEP and the IPE begin. Document which LTS category the individual will be receiving.

* Brain Injury (for Traumatic Brain Injury and Acquired Brain Injuries except for strokes) – Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)
* Serious Mental Illness (SMI)
* Most Significantly Disabled, Not Otherwise Served (MSD-NOS) formerly known as “Other Extended”
* Developmental Disabilities
* Natural supports or employer provided supports
* Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE)
* Self-payment

For youth who qualify for and require SE but will not immediately be able to access LTS from an alternative source, VR is able to provide these ongoing services. This is only an option until the youth is able to access alternative funding for LTS but not to exceed 4 years or beyond age 24 (their 25th birthday).

**V. Training and Stabilization**

Individuals once employed begin the training piece of supported employment through the assistance of their job coach. The job coach will provide training to the employer and individual on job tasks, reasonable accommodations, and how to insure the individual has the skills necessary to perform the work tasks, as independently as possible.

Stabilization is the expected point of transition to LTS. Clients are considered stabilized in employment if:

* all support needs have been addressed and necessary modifications and accommodations have been made at the worksite,
* the individual is satisfied with the type of work,
* the individual is satisfied with the numbers of hours worked per week,
* the individual is working to their maximum ability, as independently as possible,
* the individual and employer agree that the person is performing their job, and meeting expectations of employment, and
* the client has reached a constant intervention rate.

**VI. Job Loss Prior to Successful Closure**

The provider, DVR counselor, and DVR Regional Administrator will meet to discuss the circumstances surrounding the job loss. Factors to be considered include the reason for the job loss, if a new employment goal is necessary, if the disability has worsened, if there is a new disability, etc.  For further reference, see the SEP Standardized Procedure.

**VII. SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE REQUIREMENTS**

The following requirements must be satisfied before a counselor can close a case:

* The individual must have completed supported employment services, which may be received for up to 24 months, or longer if the counselor and the individual have determined that such services are needed to support and maintain the individual in supported employment. Should supported employment services take longer than 24 months, it must be approved by the state office and document on the IPE and in case notes.
* The individual has maintained employment and achieved stability in the working setting for a minimum of 90 days after transitioning to long-term support services.
* The job must meet the definition of competitive integrated employment consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.
* The individual must be employed in an integrated setting and earning at least minimum wage or a wage commensurate with people without a disability performing the same or similar tasks, whichever wage is higher.

**VIII. Re-Employment OR CAREER ADVANCEMENT for Individuals in**

 **Long-term SUPPORT Services AND their vr CASE HAS BEEN CLOSED**

Re-employment will be paid by the LTS funding agency at the LTS rate.

However, supported employment training and stabilization may be used for re-employment if:

* a change in jobs is required because the disability has become more severe or they have developed a new disability(ies)
* the individual wants to advance in their career, and requires additional training to advance.

the consumer’s employment ceased due to disruption such as closure of the business were the consumer was employed.

Utilization of SEP dollars for re-employment or career advancement *must* be approved by the Regional Administrator

