



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program Manual Revisions 2023

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Revision Summary – Added VR policy regarding referral decision guidance for customized employment services provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment Resource Guide; and VR policy for employment settings established by Community Rehabilitation Providers provided by Rehabilitation Services Administration guidance.

VR Policy

1. Customized employment services may be provided for eligible individuals in accordance with the following guidelines and as described in the customer's IPE.
2. Customized employment services must contribute to the achievement of competitive integrated employment.
3. The individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative must be actively engaged in the selection of service providers, employment objectives and employment sites, and support services.
4. The provision of customized employment services is not subject to financial need.
5. Customized employment services do not require a determination of comparable services and benefits.
6. Strategies to achieve a customized employment outcome may also include in addition to the strategies outlined in 9.22.1:
 - a. Task reassignment. Some of the job tasks of incumbent workers are reassigned to a new employee. This reassignment allows the incumbent worker to focus on the critical functions of the primary job. Task reassignment typically takes the form of job creation, whereby a new job description is negotiated based on current, unmet workplace needs.
 - b. Job carving. An existing job description is modified, containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description.
 - c. Job sharing. Two or more people share the tasks and responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.
7. CE services require both placement and training to accomplish the employment objective and therefore constitute multiple VR services requiring at least 6 months to complete.
8. **CE may be considered appropriate for individuals whose disability priority is significantly disabled (2) and in an open priority category, the individual requires Discovery due to the**



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disability, functional limitations, and workplace behaviors to learn about skills and interests, and who meets at least one of the following criteria:

- a. The individual’s experiences have primarily been in segregated settings designed for people with disabilities (e.g., sheltered workshops, day activity programs, clubhouse programs, day treatment centers, etc.).**
 - b. The individual would not be considered a qualified applicant in a position with existing job descriptions.**
 - c. The individual has received supported employment services but has not been successful.**
 - d. The individual does not have a clear idea of what they want to do for a job.**
9. As part of the ENA refer the individual to a CRP (using a Vendor Authorization) for CE discovery to assist with determining a specific employment objective. Collaboration with a BEC may be appropriate. Following determination of a specific employment objective, develop an IPE for customized employment services.
10. The scope of customized employment services may include but is not limited to:
- a. Determination of an individual’s unique strengths, needs, and interests.
 - b. Job exploration and development;
 - c. Working with the employer to facilitate placement that may include:
 - 1) Customizing a job description based on current employer needs or on previously unidentified and unmet employer needs;
 - 2) Developing a set of job duties, a work schedule and job arrangement, and specifics of supervision (including performance evaluation and review), and determining a job location;
 - 3) Using a professional representative chosen by the individual, or if elected self-representation, to work with an employer to facilitate placement; and
 - 4) Providing services and supports at the job location.
 - d. On-the-job skills training; and
 - e. On-the-job supports.



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11. Customized employment services must be provided by an approved Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) with the appropriate training certification required by VR. Go to the CRP Web Site for the CRP Listing to verify that the CRP is approved for customized employment. Referral to a CRP for customized employment services is made by a Vendor Authorization.

Responsibilities of the VR Counselor and the CRP include:

- a. It is the VR Counselor's responsibility to ensure that the CRP strictly follows the service's established procedures and reporting requirements outlined in the CRP Manual.
- b. It is the CRPs responsibility to provide appropriate customized employment services through qualified staff in accordance with the CRP Manual for individuals with significant disabilities and to work with the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative to be actively involved in directing, planning, and participating in determining, securing, and maintaining a successful employment outcome. This is demonstrated by documenting and reporting in accordance with the CRP Manual the provision of customized employment services which includes:
 - 1) Discovery to explore an individual's strengths and capabilities for employment.
 - 2) Customized employment planning meeting to determine an individual's employment goal.
 - 3) Needs analysis, customized job development and job placement to identify potential employers for a successful job match for the individual and for the employer and place and support the individual in customized employment.
- c. Resolve CRP relations issues by direct communication with the service provider. If an issue cannot be resolved, contact the Provider Relations Team in the VR Contracts Unit.
- d. For issues regarding the provision of services, contact the VR Area Director.

12. Customized employment services must result in full or part time competitive integrated employment at a location typically found in the community (in the competitive labor market). Competitive integrated employment is employment where the individual:

- a. Is compensated at not less than either the legal Federal or local minimum wage or at the customary rate for the same or similar work performed by employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar training, experience and skills;
- b. Is eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees who are not individuals with disabilities;



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- c. Interacts with fellow employees who are not individuals with a disability for the purpose of performing the job duties within the particular work unit and the entire work site and with other persons (customers, vendors, etc.) who are not individuals with a disability, excluding CRP or other staff providing VR services, to the same extent as fellow employees who are not individuals with a disability; and
 - d. Has the opportunity for advancement that is similar for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.
13. Documentation to verify that the individual's placement meets the requirements for competitive integrated employment may include information provided by CRP reports or by a letter from the employer. The counselor may also visit the job site with consent of the individual to verify CIE.
14. Part time placements of less than fifteen (15) hours per week must be reviewed by the VR Field Supervisor for meeting all CIE requirements and approved by the VR Regional Supervisor. Document the review and approval in the case file.
- 15. Employment settings established by CRPs specifically for the purpose of employing individuals with disabilities are typically not employment settings found in the competitive labor market and may not satisfy all requirements for competitive integrated employment. However, the following may be considered jobs typically found in the community within CRPs that satisfies CIE:**
- a. Job positions in CRPs, such as job coaches, that are designed to provide services to others, even if those other persons are also individuals with disabilities;**
 - b. Management staff and administrative staff employed by CRPs who supervise and support the CRP's "direct labor workers"; and**
 - c. Job positions that are open to any qualified applicant regardless of disability status and allows for integration among and interaction with non-disabled coworkers in the performance of work duties.**
16. Staffings for reviewing the provision of services must be attended by the VR Counselor in person or by phone.
17. An individual is considered to have achieved a successful employment outcome of customized employment when the individual has maintained employment for at least 90 days and all other requirements for Closed Rehabilitated have been satisfied.



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18. If it becomes apparent that customized employment is not the right service for an individual because of the need for ongoing supports, refer the individual for supported employment services. The individual must be disability priority most significantly disabled (1) for referral to SE. The CRP providing customized employment services may be used if approved for SE services. The IPE must be amended for SE services and the "Program For" must be changed to SE.

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