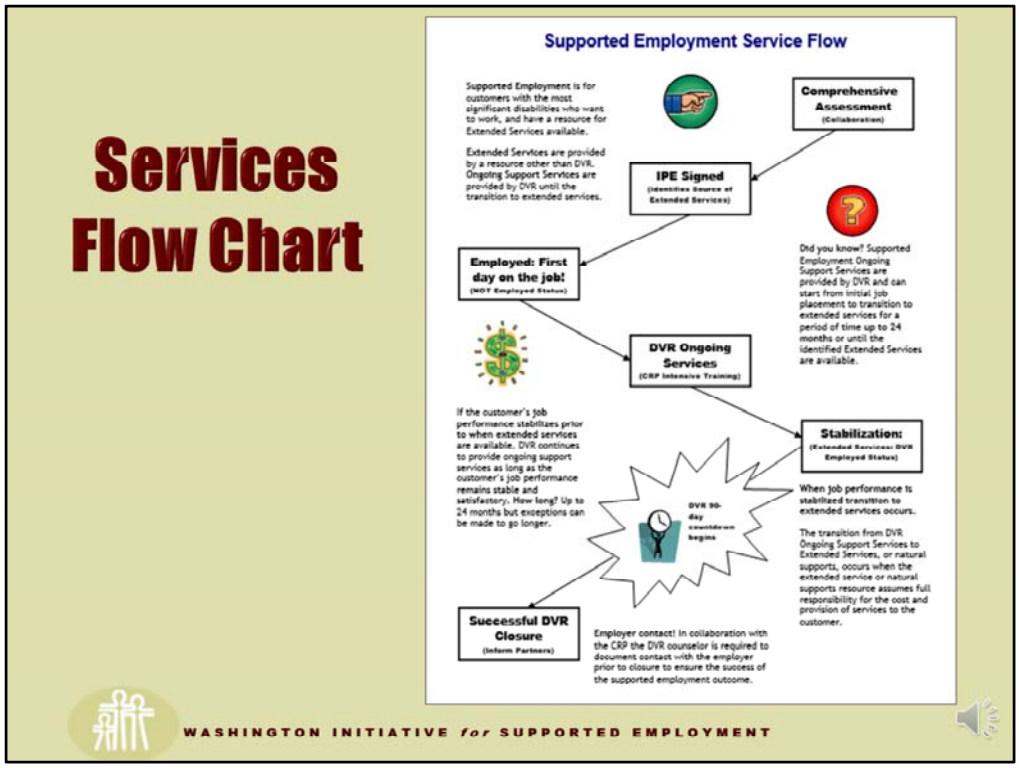
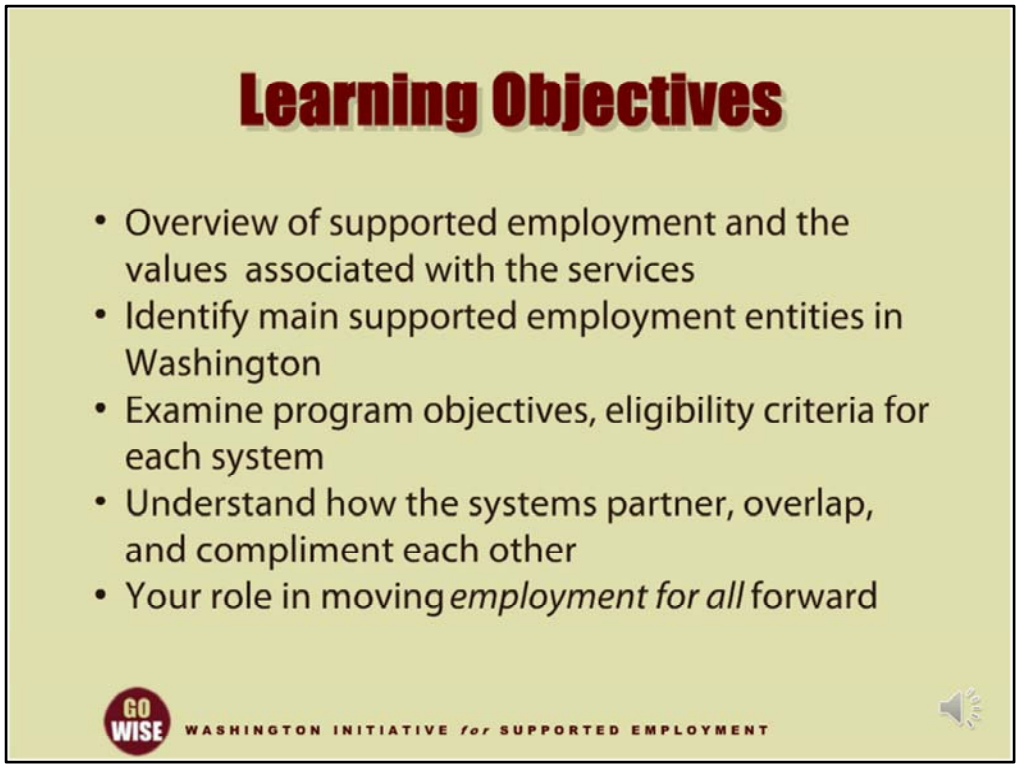
Fundamentals of Supported Employment in Vocational Rehabilitation

Supported Employment Systems Collaborating for Outcomes



Before we begin the content of this training module let's review the supported employment model that the D.S.H.S. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, or D.V.R., must carry out. As an employment consultant serving these customers, it is important that you understand the steps of supported employment that D.V.R. must follow and your role in the process. Let's review each step briefly.

D.V.R. supported employment services are provided to customers with the most significant disabilities who want to get and keep a permanent job. These customers require intensive support to obtain employment, as well as long term support to achieve and maintain successful job performance. Federal rules for supported employment require D.V.R. to provide the upfront vocational rehabilitation, or V.R. services known as on-going services, that a customer requires to get and learn a job. After that, a separate source will provide the extended support or long term supports the customer needs to keep their job once D.V.R. services end. All D.V.R. supported employment customers go through the same application and eligibility determination process. Once an individual is determined eligible for D.V.R. their V.R. counselor works with them to conduct a comprehensive assessment of their vocational rehabilitation needs, including whether the customer will require supported employment to get and keep a job of their choice. The comprehensive assessment often includes a community based assessment that is provided by a community rehabilitation program, or C.R.P., such as the one you work for. After the comprehensive assessment has been completed, the D.V.R. customer is assisted by their V.R. Counselor to develop an individualized plan for employment, or I.P.E. The I.P.E. identifies the customer's employment goal along with the steps and the D.V.R. services they will require to achieve their goal. The I.P.E. must also identify the customer's need for supported employment and what their source of long term support or extended services will be. If the source of extended services is unknown when the I.P.E. begins, there must be a strong expectation that a source will be identified within 24 months. D.V.R. services identified in the I.P.E. begin once the plan is signed by the D.V.R. customer and their V.R. counselor. Typically, the first step of an I.P.E. is for D.V.R. to authorize job placement services to assist the supported employment customer in becoming employed. Once the customer is employed then D.V.R. authorizes intensive training services to assist the customer in learning how to perform their job satisfactorily. However, once a customer reaches a stable level of satisfactory job performance, they must begin receiving their extended services from a source outside of D.V.R.. If a supported employment customer achieves stable job performance sooner than their extended services will be available, D.V.R. will continue providing ongoing support for up to 24 months. Once extended services have begun, D.V.R. keeps the case open during the first ninety days that these services are provided to make sure they meet the customer's needs. If the customer is doing well on their job at the end of this ninety days and their extended services continue without interruption, then the customer's D.V.R. case is closed.



The purpose of this training is to give you, as a new employment consultant, an overview of the main entities that provide supported employment services in Washington State and an understanding of how these different entities may affect the work you do. We will begin by providing a brief overview of supported employment, including the values associated with these services. Next we will identify the three main supported employment providers here in Washington. In order to help you build a framework of the similarities and differences, we will cover some general points about each of the systems, and then look closer at how they collaborate and overlap each other. Finally, we will compare and contrast program characteristics, such as eligibility requirements, the goals of each program, and current supported employment models within each field. The goal of this training is to help you prepare for some of the challenges and opportunities that may lie ahead as you begin to navigate and work within these systems. You are part of the evolution of civil rights and inclusion of persons with significant disabilities. Your work plays a part in moving the challenge of employment "for all" forward into the future, building on the hard work and dedication of other rehabilitation professionals.

Let's start with a basic understanding of what supported employment is today. Supported employment is competitive work, in an integrated work setting, or short-term employment in an integrated work setting in which a customer is working towards competitive wage, with extended or long term services. Supported employment is for customers with the most significant disabilities, who traditionally have not been competitively employed because of the significance of their disability, or their employment has been intermittent because of the significance of their disability, and they require extended services to keep a job.

Washington State
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Supported Employment Values

- Right to work and to earn competitive wages
- Person centered vocational planning empowers workers to choose jobs from a wide variety of integrated work settings in the communities they wish to work
- One person, one job, options need to be available to the customer
- Creativity is necessary
- Limitations are the major barriers to successful employment, not the functional limitations of the worker
- Traditional measures of work readiness are not predictors of ability to work

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Let's look at the values that have been developed around supported employment in Washington State by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' --commonly referred to as DSHS --Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, known as DVR. First, DVR believes that customers with the most significant disabilities have the right to work and to earn competitive wages. DVR also promotes person centered vocational planning with the understanding that it empowers workers to choose jobs from a wide variety of integrated work settings in the communities in which they wish to work. DVR leads supported employment efforts by preferring the model of one person, one job, though they agree that options need to be available to meet the specific needs of the customer. DVR states that creativity is necessary to develop job opportunities with supported employment workers. Washington State DVR perceives limitations such as technology, communities and resources as major barriers to successful employment, rather than viewing those barriers as functional limitations of the worker. And finally, DVR holds the value that traditional measures of work readiness, such as I.Q., verbal ability, or standardized assessments, are not reliable predictors of an individual's ability to work. These six values of supported employment lay the ground work to serve individuals with developmental disabilities, and they are vital to the work you will perform as an employment consultant.

Now let's identify the three main systems that provide supported employment services in Washington State. The three primary providers are the DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, or DVR, which provides vocational rehabilitation services or VR services. The second system, the DSHS Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, or DBHR, provides mental health services. And the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration , or DDA, called the Division of Developmental Disabilities, or DDD, prior to 2013, provides developmental disability services. All three of these agencies are different divisions programs are located within the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, or DSHS. Understanding the general make up of these three entities in DSHS will give you a framework to learn from.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Serves: Adults and high school students with disabilities if disabilities present barriers to competitive employment

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (DVR Counselor or VRC):

- Determine eligibility
- Provide direct service or manage contracted services
- Coordinate services

Comprehensive Vocational Assessment

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

- Vocational Evaluation Services; Brief or Comprehensive
- Trial Work Experience or Community Based Assessment
- Job Placement
- Intensive Training Services

*A legal guardian must participate if applicable.

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Let's first focus on Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or D.V.R. to get a general understanding of the services this state agency provides. D.V.R. serves working-age adults, and high school-age transition students with disabilities if the disabilities are presenting barriers to preparing for, securing, or maintaining competitive employment. The vocational rehabilitation counselor, often referred to as a D.V.R. counselor or V.R.C., is central to the services D.V.R. provides since they have a few different responsibilities. D.V.R. counselors determine if someone is eligible for services. They may also provide service directly to the customer or manage services that are contracted out to a service provider like an employment consultant in a Community Rehabilitation Program, or C.R.P. D.V.R. counselors are also responsible for authorizing and coordinating the D.V.R. services a customer receives. Once eligible for services, all D.V.R. customers participate in a comprehensive vocational assessment to develop a mutually agreed upon vocational goal. This planning process results in an Individualized Plan for Employment, or I.P.E. The D.V.R. counselor works with the customer to determine what services the customer will receive, as well as the level of service the customer will require to be successful.

When a customer requires supported employment, D.V.R. focuses on helping the individual become employed and then provides intensive training at their worksite to help them learn and satisfactorily perform their job. These services are usually provided by a community rehabilitation program, first as job placement and then intensive training services. The customer is also assisted by D.V.R. in identifying the source of long term support that will enable the individual to maintain their employment after D.V.R. services end. These long term support services are known by D.V.R. as extended services. D.V.R. usually does not begin assisting a supported employment customer with job placement until it is know what their source for extended services will be. Once this is known then job placement begins. When the customer starts working, intensive training is provided until the individual achieves a satisfactory, consistent level of job performance, but usually not longer than 24 months. Once the customer achieves a stable, satisfactory level of job performance, D.V.R. must stop its service delivery and the individual's extended services must begin. Once the extended services are underway, D.V.R. keeps the case open for at least another ninety days to assure that successful job performance is maintained and their extended services are continuing without interruption. To learn more about D.V.R. supported employment services, please go to one of the other trainings offered in this training series, such as *The Basics of a Service Delivery Outcome Plan, Services for Individuals Who Experience Developmental Disabilities 1 or 2,* or, *Services for Individuals Who Experience Mental Illness 1* or *2.* And one final piece of information about D.V.R. is that these services require a customer's legal guardian to participate if the customer has a legal guardian.

Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR)

Serves: All ages if eligible

Services: All life domains (medical, therapy, residential, recreation, behavior, crisis management, employment)

Regional Support Networks (RSN): Managed care organizations

- Typically inside county social service systems
- Care coordination
- Service authorization
- Intake evaluation - medical necessity, services and length
- Treatment plan

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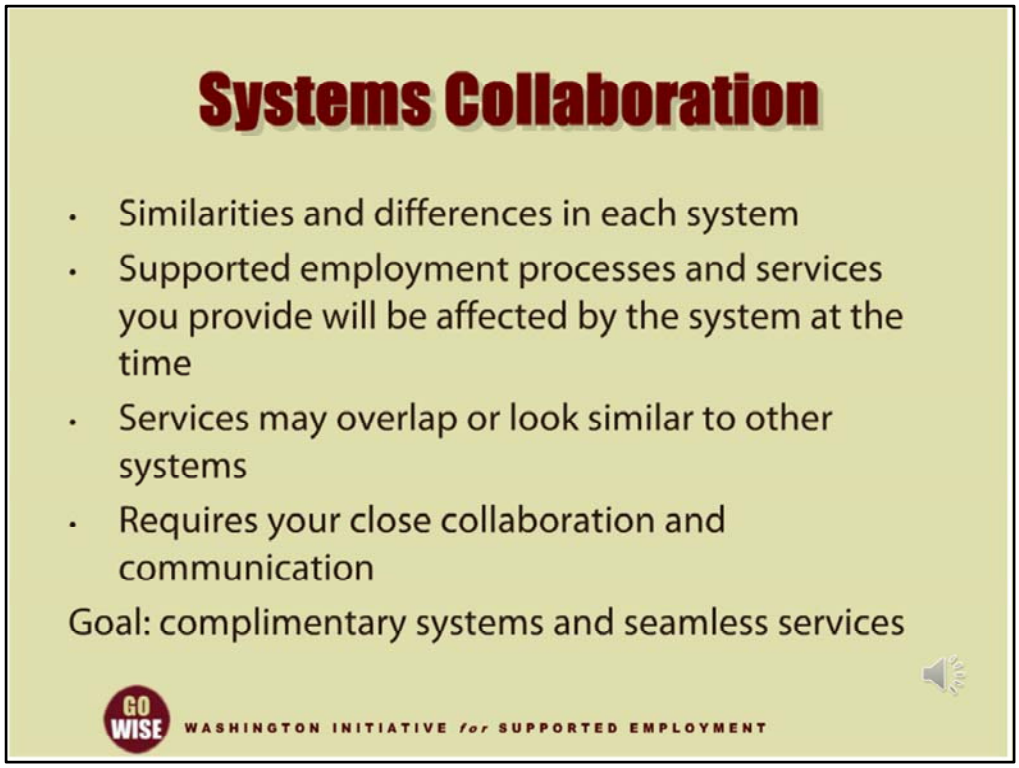
Next let's look closer at the programs provided by the Washington State Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, or DBHR. DBHR serves Medicaid enrolled Washingtonians of all ages as long as they meet diagnostic criteria for services. All citizens are eligible to receive mental health crisis services. In addition, DBHR provides a wide range of services including crisis, inpatient and outpatient services through its contracted services for all ages. For example, some of the outpatient services that may be available to a person accessing DBHR include brief intervention treatment, family treatment, group treatment, high intensive treatment, individual treatment, medication management and monitoring, peer services, and therapeutic psycho-education. One important characteristic of the mental health service system is that while DBHR is a division within the Washington State government system, the actual services are coordinated through managed care organizations called Regional Support Networks, or RSNs. RSNs are typically housed inside county government social services systems and may represent one county or multiple counties. RSNs provide care coordination and authorize services. In addition, DBHR utilizes an intake evaluation to decide medical necessity, what mental health services the person may need, and the length of time the services will be provided. The services are provided in reaction to current mental health needs and are documented on a treatment plan. The goal to obtain employment may be included on the treatment plan. Services can support the objectives to meet the goal, and address the mental health symptoms that may interfere. Some RSNs have other funding to provide Individual Placement and Support Services also known as supported employment.

And finally, let's look at the third supported provider in Washington State, the Developmental Disabilities Administration , or DDA. DDA serves individuals of all ages who are determined eligible for services. Like DBHR, DDA also provides a wide range of services including medical, therapy, residential, recreation, behavior, crisis management, day care and employment. DDA case resource managers, commonly referred to as DDA case managers, are integral to this system because they coordinate the services that DDA clients receive. The services are documented in Individual Support Plans or ISPs. One unique component of the developmental disability service system is that employment services are managed by county developmental disability programs. Much like the RSN's in the mental health system, the county developmental disability programs are also typically housed in the county social service systems. The county programs typically contract supported employment services to employment agencies. County programs also utilize an individualized employment plan to document supported employment services, goals and progress.



Now that we have a general understanding of the three systems that provide supported employment services, let's take a few moments to consider how these systems collaborate. There are obviously similarities and differences between each system. How these similarities and differences play out in the supported employment processes and services can be very important to you as an employment consultant. In fact, the services that you provide may be directly affected by the unique guidelines of the service system you are working within at the time. In addition, there will sometimes be instances where the services you provide will overlap or look similar to services in another system. These instances will require your close collaboration and communication to ensure that the person being served understands and can move smoothly from one system to the next. Optimally, the goal is for the different systems to complement each other and provide seamless services to the common customer.

Systems Overlap

- DVR **coordinates** extended services (long term supports), but does not provide them
- Extended services for mental health: mental health programs and RSN's
- Extended services for developmental disabilities: employment agency, county developmental disability program, DDA case manager
- Extended services depend on eligibility, local community resources and services

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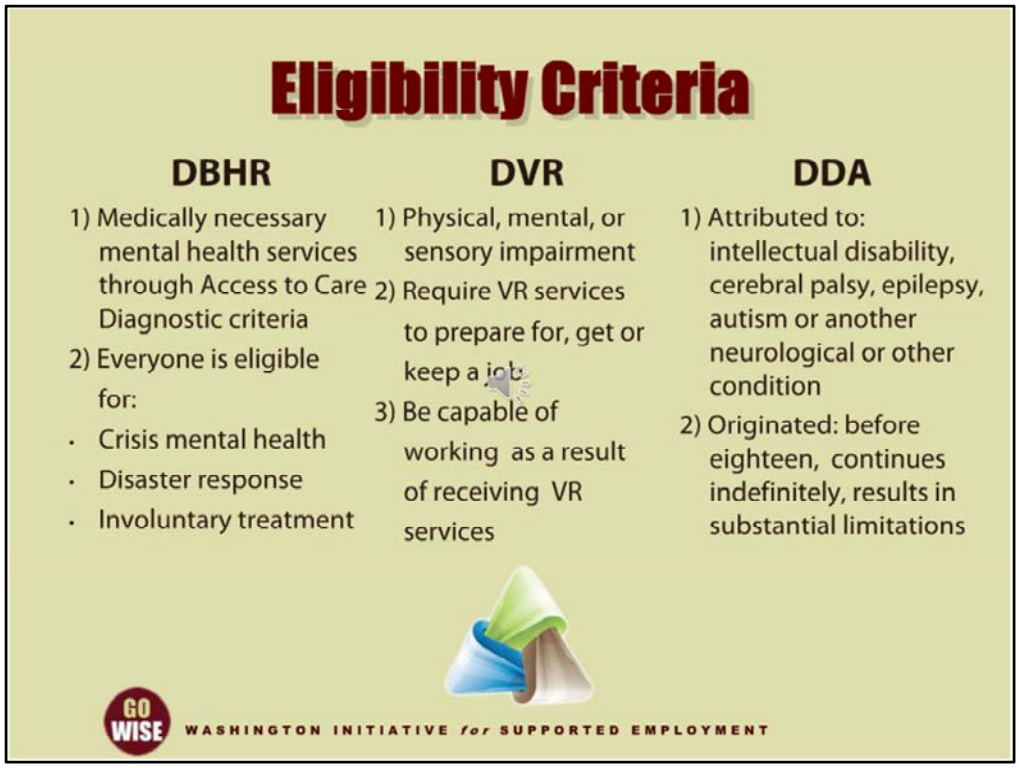
The concept of overlapping systems will become more familiar to you with time, particularly if you serve individuals enrolled in DBHR or DDA. This is because DVR does not provide extended services, commonly called long-term supports. And since customers who receive supported employment services will need extended services to maintain their jobs, DVR helps their customers set up extended services with agencies that do provide these services. This is where the overlap comes in. DVR coordinates extended or long term services for their customers with DBHR, DDA, RSNs and county developmental disability programs. How this coordination happens may look different depending on the community and the systems you are working in. For example, in the mental health system, a DVR counselor from a local DVR office may contract with a mental health program in the community to help a customer find and learn to do a job. Once the customer is stable on their job and DVR services are going to end, DVR works with the mental health program and the local RSN to set up the extended services for the customer to maintain their employment. Please remember that the availability of extended services will vary depending on the mental health program and community services available in the local community. Conversely, in the developmental disability system, a DVR counselor from the local DVR office may contract with a local employment agency to help the customer find and learn to do a new job. When the customer is stable and DVR services are coming to a close, the employment agency, county developmental disability program and DDA case manager will step in to set up the extended or long term supports for the customer to maintain their job. Please remember that regardless of the service system you are working within, the extended services will depend on what your customer is eligible to receive, and what resources and services are available in the local community. To help you understand some of these concepts better, we will now look at some side-by-side comparisons of the components that make up supported employment.



Now let's look at the three main supported employment providers and consider how someone becomes eligible for services. In order to receive DVR services, a DVR counselor must determine that you meet all of the following criteria. First, you must have a physical, mental, or sensory impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment. Second, you must require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, get or keep a job that match your strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. And finally, you must be capable of working as a result of receiving VR services.

Moving on to the mental health system here in Washington; Medicaid enrolled individuals, such as those receiving Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, qualify to receive a mental health assessment at their local community mental health agency. The assessment determines whether they meet medical necessity for mental health services and if they qualify under Washington State Access to Care Diagnostic criteria. If they are not eligible for Medicaid, but have a serious or long-term mental illness, they may still be able to obtain services depending on the resources available in their local community. One final note is that all citizens of Washington are eligible for crisis mental health services, disaster response services, and involuntary treatment services. The developmental disability system determines client eligibility based on a few different components at DDA. First, a developmental disability is attributable to an intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism or another neurological -or -other condition closely related to intellectual disability or requiring treatment similar to that required for individuals with intellectual disabilities. In addition, the disability must have originated before the individual attained age eighteen, continued or can be expected to continue indefinitely, and results in substantial limitations to an individual's intellectual and or adaptive functioning.

Understanding the different eligibility requirements between these systems will help you not only direct your customer to possible services, but it also helps you understand the framework for the types of support someone would need to qualify for different types of service.

It will be useful to you to understand the overall goals or objectives of the different service systems so that you have a grasp of how supported employment fits into the larger system you will be working inside. You will also realize that there may be other services your customer could benefit from. DVR is mainly trying to help individuals that need supported employment services to obtain competitive employment. Competitive employment has two main components to it. First, it is work that is done in an integrated setting where the supported employee can interact with people who don't have disabilities. The second component of competitive employment is that the supported employee earns at least minimum wage and not less than the amount people earn when they do not have a disability and perform the same job.

The objectives of DBHR focus on a much broader range of outcomes. They are defined by the federal Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration National Outcome Measures and include reduced morbidity, employment and education, stability in housing, and social connectedness to name a few. And finally, the DDA also focuses on a broad range of outcomes, and similar to the mental health system, employment is one of those outcomes. DDA outlines the goals of employment services by indicating that services should be individualized, provide integrated employment, with wages that are at or above the State's minimum wage, and that jobs should occur in the general workforce. In addition, DDA and the Washington State Legislature have developed policies and law to better define the objectives of employment services.

When can supported employment services start?

DBHR:

- Medicaid funded outpatient services start when treatment plan is developed
- Supported employment is not currently Medicaid billable service
- Some RSNs purchase supported employment services from community mental health agencies

DVR:

- After eligibility
- Customer receives a vocational assessment
- High School Transition Students: before graduation
- Must identify
- extended services to begin

Developmental Disabilities:

- DDA: after 21 years old
- County developmental disability programs: 18 to 21 years old depending on local programs and resources

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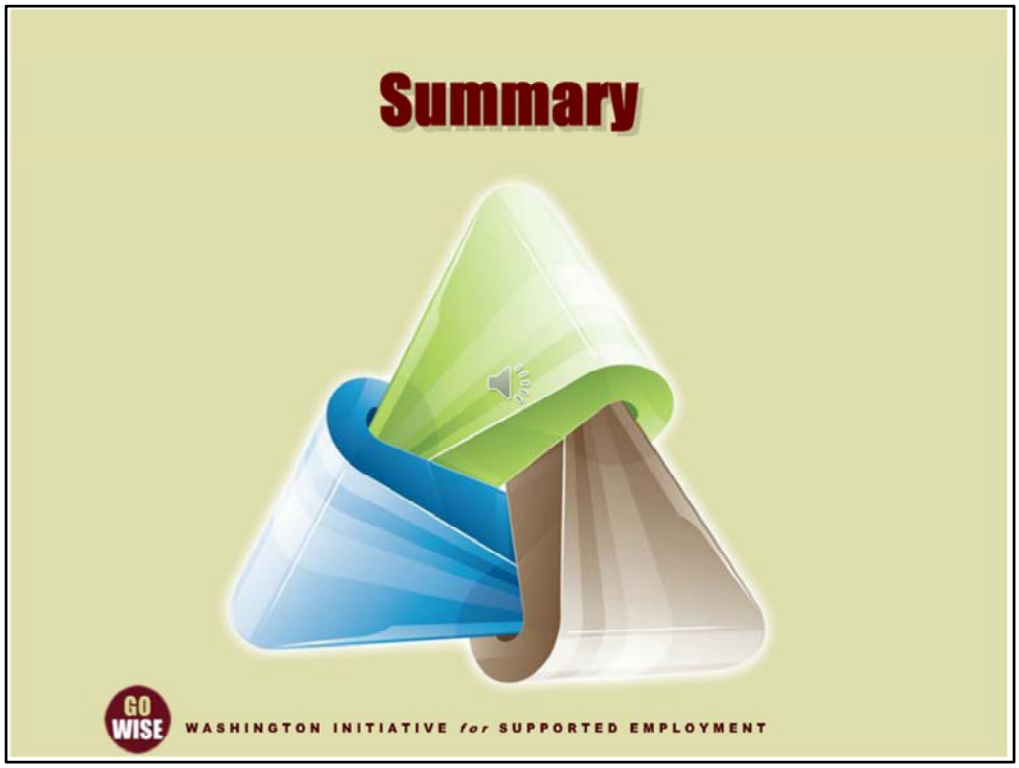
Understanding when services can start in the three systems will help you gain a better understanding of how you may help a customer navigate. You will also see how your services may change as you move from one system to the next. For example, DVR begins services for a customer after they are determined eligible. Once eligible, the customer will receive a vocational assessment, which may include a Community Based Assessment, or CBA, in order to develop their vocational goal. In addition, DVR typically begins serving high school transition students before they graduate from the education system. This is particularly true in communities that have school to employment programs, also called transition programs. These programs are set up to help students prepare for and or obtain employment before they exit the education system. To learn more about transition programs, please watch the training module included in this training series, entitled, *Transition from School to Employment.* One final note about DVR services is that supported employment customers must identify extended services or long-term supports in order to receive services through DVR. In the mental health system, Medicaid funded services begin when a person identifies a goal and objectives on the treatment plan, however supported employment is not currently a Medicaid billable service. Some RSNs purchase supported employment services using other funds. And finally, focusing on the developmental disability programs, we may see a few different times that services can start. For example, DDA case managers typically authorize supported employment services after the individual turns 21 and has exited the transition program, depending on eligibility and available resources. In addition, depending on the specific programs and resources within a local community, county developmental disability programs may be able to provide supported employment services to individuals while they are in school district transition programs, or of transition age, which is typically eighteen to 21 years old. For individuals enrolled with DDA, the expectation is that they will utilize DVR services, if eligible and available, before they access DDA supported employment services.

And finally, understanding the supported employment models within each of these three systems will increase your understanding of what results are expected from you as an employment consultant. For example, in the vocational rehabilitation model, the preferable supported employment option at DVR is one person, one job. However, DVR does recognize that options need to be available to meet the specific needs of the customer. In addition, DVR typically promotes a place-and-train approach, which means the customer is placed in a new job and learns how to perform that job at the work site. This is the opposite of some traditional models, where for example, the customer would learn to do a task and then be placed in a job where they would learn to adapt their performance of the task, based on the specific requirements of the work site. In the mental health system, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMSHA *(Sam-sa)*, has identified specific practices with proven results. For example, the Individual Placement and Support model, or IPS, commonly referred to as supported employment, includes indicators and measurements to determine if the services are effective. Another model that is common in the mental health system is known is the Clubhouse model. Clubhouse is a psycho-social rehabilitation program. To learn more about the IPS model or the Clubhouse model, please visit the websites provided in the resources section at the end of this training. In the developmental disabilities field, DDA typically promotes the Individual Supported Employment model, often called IE. This model views services as part of an individual's pathway to employment and may include intake, discovery, assessment, job preparation, job marketing, job supports, record keeping and support, to maintain a job. Seeing the differences in models will also help you grasp what will be expected of you. However, while all three of these models have differences and similarities, it's important to remember that as an employment consultant, your ultimate job is to help people gain access to their own jobs in the community.



This training gave you an overview of the main entities that provide supported employment services in Washington State. As you saw, DVR, the mental health service and the developmental disabilities service systems have unique characteristics, such as eligibility requirements, program goals, and supported employment models. The training also introduced you to ways in which these different entities may collaborate and overlap each other and how your role, as an employment consultant, will be central to helping your customer utilize the different systems. The goal of this training is to help you prepare for some of the challenges and opportunities that may lie ahead as you begin to navigate and work within these systems. You are part of something significant in terms of the evolution of civil rights and inclusion of persons with significant disabilities. Your work plays a part in moving the challenge of employment “for all” forward into future, building on the hard work and dedication of other rehabilitation professionals that preceded you.

DVR Language

Employment Consultant: also known as an employment specialist, job coach, job developer, etc.

Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP): also known as employment agency, employment provider, vendor, etc.

Customer: also known as client, consumer, person with a disability, supported employee, etc.

Extended Services: also knows as long term supports, follow along services, etc.

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Resources

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/
- Dartmouth Individual Placement and Support Model: http://www.Dartmouth.edu/~ips/
- International Center for Clubhouse Development: http://www.iccd.org/
- SAMHSA Supported Employment Toolkit: http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Supported-Employment-Evidence-Based-Practices-EBP-KIT/SMA08-4365
- Washington State Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery: http://www.dshs.wa.gov/DBHR/
- Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA): http://www.dshs.wa.gov//ddd/
- Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR): http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/

Content for this training was developed by representatives from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

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