

Provider Capacity Evaluation Survey Results Supplement

Strategies to support capacity for the provision of Vocational Rehabilitation services

February 10, 2025

The Performance and Accountability subcommittee of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), in partnership with the VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM), conducted a survey of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) and other service providers to determine their capacity to serve individuals with disabilities referred by the public VR program. The survey occurred from May to June 2024.

The [Provider Capacity Survey Report](#) was completed in September, 2024, outlining four primary recommendations:

1. Improved, regular and consistent communication between service providers and VR programs to improve the quality and timeliness of service delivery to VR consumers.
2. Increased opportunities to support training and professional development for service provider staff.
3. SVRAs and service providers are encouraged to work together to identify ways to reduce administrative burden, streamline, and simplify reporting, billing and payment processes.
4. The survey results indicated that a national training or resource hub for CRPs and other providers would be welcome.

The CSAVR Performance and Accountability Committee outlined several strategies for SVRA consideration, to support improved communication and partnership, and decreased administrative burden for services providers and VR. Proposed strategies may improve capacity for quality and timely service provision and increase participant outcomes in competitive, integrated employment.

Strategies to support improved communication and partnership between State VR Agencies (SVRA) and service providers

- Examine opportunities for improved and increased communication on an ongoing basis through implementing or expanding regular meetings between VR and CRPs. This could occur at leadership levels as well as field staff levels. Possible strategies could include quarterly provider meetings at a regional or state level, joint CRP-VR training, a taskforce or workgroups to identify best practices, understand challenges, and troubleshoot systemic challenges together.
- Set expectations for increased in-person interactions for Employment Specialists and VR Counselors to support a team approach to service delivery. Consider whether team meetings or monthly touch points could replace some written documentation, e.g., monthly progress notes.
- Consider implementing a touch point upon referring a participant to a CRP to ensure the team is aligned around expectations for services. This may reduce back and forth clarifications later in the process if expectations are not aligned up front or there is discrepancy in what services VR may reimburse.

- Examine the role of the VR Counselor and Employment Specialist in the employment services process to identify strategies to support a team approach and not a 'hand-off'. VR Counselors are excellent problem solvers and can help the Employment Specialist and participant troubleshoot barriers and challenges or expand strategies to support achievement of the vocational goal.
- Consider implementing an ¹Integrated Resource Team approach.
- Examine positive relationships between specific VR staff or regional offices and service providers that may already exist in specific geographic areas of the state and identify strategies that could be replicated.
- Identify opportunities for SVRA business engagement team members to collaborate with service providers to build or enhance local business relationships and increase hiring opportunities.
- Communicate early and often regarding significant program changes that may impact providers, such as order of selection, changes in agency goals, rate adjustments, etc.
- Consider documenting the SVRA's commitment to increased communication and improved relationships in the State Plan and Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. This strategy may elevate the importance of these actions and provide a means of accountability for taking action.
 - Example: Establish goals or strategies for improving provider capacity through increased collaboration, e.g., implementing regular provider meetings to improve communication, conducting joint training to roll out program changes, establishing steering committee or taskforce to obtain ongoing feedback, etc.

Strategies to support reduced administrative burden for SVRAs and service providers

- Explore the use of AI for service provider staff to complete VR required documents, e.g., progress reports, case notes, etc. This may be particularly useful for CRP staff who are less confident in written communication skills.
- Simplify and reduce documentation requirements where possible. This could include a reduction in the number of forms, length of forms, or frequency of form submissions. Consider opportunities to consolidate or merge documentation where possible. Additionally, if signatures are currently required on documents, is there an opportunity to reduce required signatures to achieve more simplicity?
- Establish and implement uniform procedures to improve consistency across VR offices, especially pertaining to billing requirements, documentation submission, requests for authorizations or purchase orders, and related actions. It can be very challenging for service providers to meet specific office or staff preferences that result in procedural variances across VR offices.
- Explore strategies to reimburse providers more quickly, such as consideration of a vendor payment system, electronic claims submission, Managed Service Provider, or other strategies.
- Review policies, procedure manuals, written guidance, and practices regarding non-billable activities. Consider opportunities to support more inclusive allowable billable activities.

¹ <https://projecte3.com/integrated-resource-teams/>

- Explore opportunities to align documentation, e.g., monthly progress report, support plans, etc., with other agencies to support streamlining and better consistency across programs and reduce complexity for CRPs.
- Examine referral and authorization processes to support helpful exchange of information. For instance, sending incomplete referral information to CRPs can slow down the process. Consider establishing a standard set of information that should accompany referrals to services providers, such as authorization, IPE, or other case documentation.
- Consider developing guidance to help VR Counselors examine the need for referral to services providers on a more individualized level. It may be beneficial to provide guidance and resources to VR staff to increase their awareness of multiple paths to employment, which may include referral to a service provider for some participants, but access to different paths for other participants, e.g., other workforce programs, self-directed job search, post-secondary career center, VR Counselor led career exploration, etc.
- Consider providing guidance to VR staff on improving the individual assessment of the services needed for each unique participant, particularly with regard to services provided by CRPs. It may not be necessary to authorize for the same comprehensive package of services for each participant, and this may be putting added strain on service providers. The process for determining needed services and authorizations provided upon referral to CRPs should be thoughtful and individualized.
- Consider documenting the SVRA's commitment to streamlining and decreasing administrative burden for CRPs in the State Plan and Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. This strategy may elevate the importance of these actions and provide a means of accountability for taking action.
 - Example: Establish goals or strategies for addressing challenges related to CRP capacity, e.g., using technology innovation to streamline billing for providers, developing and disbursing uniform billing procedures, etc.

Additional Information

- State VR Agencies may wish to reach out to the [VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management \(VRTAC-QM\)](#) or [VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment \(VRTAC-QE\)](#) for helpful resources and technical assistance on the implementation of strategies to reduce administrative burden and improve communication and partnership.
- State VR agencies are encouraged to reach out to peers and colleagues to learn about and share effective practices, through participation in Communities of Practice hosted by CSAVR and the VR-TACs, listservs' through CSAVR, and through direct outreach to other state VR agencies.