

## Supported and Customized Employment Provider Handbook

The concept of “place and train” is central to supported employment. The client is placed in competitive, integrated employment and provided training and other supports and services needed to develop job performance skills. Successful closure of VR is achieved after the client, employer, provider and VR Specialist agree that the employment goal is met, the job performance is satisfactory, the client is stable in their employment, and transition to extended services has resulted in no need for additional VR services for at least 90 days.

All employment under the Supported Employment (SE) program must be **competitive and integrated** as assessed by Nebraska VR, based on these definitions:

***Competitive*** means work that is typically found in the competitive labor market and is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage with the level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by non-disabled individuals. In addition, the client must receive the same benefits available to other employees who are in a similar status (full or part-time, etc.) Benefits include worker's compensation, paid holidays, paid vacation time, paid sick time, health insurance, etc.

***Integrated*** means the job is in a setting found in the community where people with disabilities interact with non-disabled people (other than those who are providing services to them) to the same extent non-disabled people interact with one another, and where people with disabilities have the same opportunities for advancement as people who do not have disabilities.

SE services may be provided for up to 24 months, unless the client/authorized representative (as applicable) agrees to an extension of services. The 24-month period for SE services begins the day the client begins working.

### **Supported Employment**

A Supported Employment (SE) plan is Nebraska VR’s method of supporting a client:

- 1) with a most significant disability;
- 2) for whom competitive integrated employment (CIE) has not historically occurred, or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and
- 3) who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after transitioning from the support of Nebraska VR to maintain employment.

Supported employment services are based on the person’s primary diagnosis and the most appropriate type of SE to meet their needs: 1) Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD); 2) Behavioral Health (BH); 3) Autism (ASD); or 4) Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

## **Customized Employment**

A Customized Employment (CE) plan is Nebraska VR's method of supporting a person:

- 1) with a most significant disability;
- 2) for whom competitive integrated employment (CIE) has not historically occurred or is unable to sustain CIE without long-term supports; or
- 3) whose experiences have primarily been in segregated facility-based programs, sheltered workshops or subminimum wage positions; or
- 4) who have not had the opportunity to work due to low expectations of abilities.

A Customized employment (CE) plan matches the business needs of the employer to a client whose strengths and skills can meet the need. A customized job description is developed with the employer, including a set of job duties, work schedule, job arrangement, specifics of supervision (who will provide initial, ongoing, as well as performance evaluation and review), and job location. This type of SE may be authorized under any supported employment plan, for people with I/DD, BH, ASD, or ABI.

## **SE Provider Requirements**

SE staff are required to complete the Nebraska VR Supported and Customized Employment training series prior to providing any authorized services. Registration information and training materials can be obtained by contacting the VR Program Director of Supported Employment. SE providers are expected to abide by the requirements that are outlined in the Nebraska VR service agreement and this handbook. Supported and customized employment services must be of high quality and meet the defined standards of best practice, as outlined in this handbook. SE providers are expected to engage in consistent and effective communication with VR staff. Reports and invoices need to be fully completed, free of errors, and submitted in a timely manner. SE providers must maintain documentation of all client contact.

SE providers are expected to have a visible presence in the communities they serve. This includes outreach to area businesses as well as involvement in local organizations; which may include chamber and workforce development boards. Marketing materials must be developed and made readily available to employers, network partners, and community agencies.

## **Supported Employment Services**

Each service requires prior-authorization from Nebraska VR. The reports describe the activities to be completed during each service period. The Supported Employment Provider reports the supports provided, hours of service provision, and other details about the client's performance on the reports and submits them to the VR Specialist. All reports must be completed thoroughly and accurately. Incomplete reports will be returned for correction. SE services cannot overlap with any other service that is funded by DHHS-DD or DHHS-BH. Supported and customized employment services are individualized and are not to be provided in a group setting. Client engagement is a key component towards reaching a successful outcome of service delivery. SE staff need to be flexible and adaptable in their approach to providing SE services to clients.

### **Discovery - \$1,464 flat rate**

Discovery is authorized when a customized employment (CE) plan is being considered. This service includes assessment of the client's interests, strengths, preferences and needs through a series of interviews, records review, and completion of progressive employment activities (employer tours, informational interviews, job shadows, on-the-job evaluation, etc.) with at least three different employers. The VR Profile is completed and sent to the VR Specialist for review. A team meeting is then held to discuss the profile, with the intention of using this information to develop the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

### **Plan for Job Development – (Milestone 1) - \$1,103 flat rate**

This service/milestone requires completion of the activities outlined in the *Plan for Job Development* outcome report; including:

- Completion of a sample employment application or resume
- Identifying and documenting potential employers for directed job search
- Developing a transportation plan
- Identifying and documenting additional individualized activities and supports needed to obtain employment
- Discussing and documenting expectations for job search
- Discussing consent for employer contact

The purpose of this service is to develop a plan that will outline how job search and placement activities will be completed. This includes outlining a plan for what will be the responsibilities of the client and SE provider during the job search phase, meeting times/location, and supports needed to achieve a job opportunity. The sample employment application and resume serves as a template for assisting clients with having all information readily available to apply for jobs.

This service/milestone is expected to be completed within two weeks of referral, but extensions are allowed with VR Specialist approval. The *Plan for Job Development* outcome report must be completed in its entirety prior to submitting it to the VR Specialist. This report must provide a clear plan of how the job search services will be conducted upon authorization. Job search activities should not begin until the VR Specialist approves the *Plan for Job Development* outcome report.

The *Plan for Job Development* outcome report and invoice must be received and approved by the VR Specialist prior to authorizing for the Job Search and Placement service/milestone.

\*This service is not authorized if the client already has a job aligned with their employment goal. If the client is currently working in a job that is being supported by VR, proceed to authorizing Job Coaching/Job Support.

\*Plan for Job Development may be authorized more than once with VR approval. Considerations for additional authorizations will include whether the job goal has changed, or other circumstances require a revised *Plan for Job Development*, such as pursuing a customized employment approach, etc.

Plan for Job Development Outcome Report [https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr\\_forms/528/to\\_form](https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr_forms/528/to_form)

**Job Search and Placement – (Milestone 2) - \$2,586 flat rate**

Job Search and Placement services are individualized, based off the IPE goal, desired number of work hours, and the activities identified in the Plan for Job Development report. The provider is expected to meet with the client weekly (minimum) to provide activities that support job search and placement.

Job placement typically involves a hybrid approach of networking with employers to identify hidden job opportunities as well as assisting clients in applying for positions that are already advertised as part of the community's labor market. Matching the client's skills, interests, and work preferences to the employer's needs is critical in achieving a good job match.

The SE provider is required to provide monthly progress updates to the VR Specialist through a case staffing/discussion.

The *Supported/Customized Monthly Report* [https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr\\_forms/530/to\\_form](https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr_forms/530/to_form) is not a required report but can be used as a template to collect information that will be shared with the VR Specialist during a monthly staffing. A team meeting is held every 90 days when job placement has not yet occurred to problem-solve and determine how to promote progress. When job placement is achieved or a job has been developed, the SE provider will notify the VR Specialist and follow up with the completed *Job Search and Placement Outcome Report* and invoice which are submitted simultaneously for approval and payment.

Now that a job has been obtained, the SE provider should begin the process of doing some preliminary analysis to determine the best approach to assist the client on their first day. This would include a review of the job description and a discussion with the employer regarding the training plan and any projected accommodations.

\*This service is not authorized if the client already has a job aligned with their employment goal. If the client is currently working in a job that is being supported by VR, proceed to authorizing Job Coaching and Support.

\*Job Search and Placement may be authorized more than once with VR approval. Considerations for additional authorizations include whether sufficient support was provided to maintain the job and job loss could have been prevented (an additional authorization would not be supported in such case.) Instances where an additional authorization could be supported include circumstances where the job did not meet the client's needs, when sufficient support was provided but job loss occurred in spite of such support, or when other client-centered reasons for job loss have occurred.

Job Search and Placement Outcome Report [https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr\\_forms/529/to\\_form](https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr_forms/529/to_form)

### **Job Coaching & Support –**

***\$61/hr. or rate based on established coaching/support level (I/DD, ASD, ABI)***

***\$14.03/hr. or rate based on established coaching/support level (BH)***

Job Coaching is provided at the job site (in-person or virtual) and is the preferred method of support provision for those who receive supported employment services. Job Coaching services lead to stable job performance by teaching needed job skills and developing appropriate work behaviors to help the person be successful on the job.

Job Support is provided away from the worksite. Job support, alone, may be provided to a client who requires supported employment services in circumstances such as, but not limited to: has not consented to disclosure of their disability to the employer and so receives no on-site support, or when the job coach is not able to provide the supports on-site for employer or site-related reasons. Job support may include training or reminders to maintain acceptable personal appearance, using transportation to get to and from work, or other supports that enable the person to maintain their job.

The goal of this service is to help clients become as independent as possible in their job. Having a good job match and a proper plan for support is critical in setting a client up for a positive experience. This is accomplished through having a thorough understanding of the client's learning style and preferences, the business's culture, workplace rules, and employer's expectations.

The SE provider needs to be mindful that any strategies in assisting the client does not foster any dependency of the SE provider in any way. These services should augment natural supports and should not be provided as a replacement for the support that is available to all employees. The goal is to facilitate natural support development and to help the business adopt strategies that support the client and reduce, if not fully eliminate, the supports offered by the SE provider. Assistive technology supports should be considered any time the support level is projected to cover 100% of the hours a client works. An analysis of job duties and strategy for fading should be initially developed and discussed with the VR Specialist within the first month of employment. This analysis should include a list of identified natural supports, natural cues, compensatory strategies, systematic instruction, and workplace accommodations. This analysis should also incorporate the new staffing training that is available to all employees, regardless of disability status.

SE staff should not insert themselves into the work setting by completing job tasks or assuming supervisory responsibility for the client. Their role is that of a supplemental support to the client and the employer. Employees of the business should be the primary option for providing assistance and training to the client/employee. SE staff should only be on the job site when it is absolutely necessary. Keep in mind that although total fading from the workplace is the goal, fading too quickly may result in increased errors and longer training time, whereas fading too slowly may foster dependence and will also likely result in longer training time.

When Job Coaching/Support services are needed, the SE provider will initially receive two separate authorizations (4 weeks/28 days each) covering the first 8 weeks of employment. These initial authorizations will be calculated at the \$61/hour times the number of projected hours the client will work over that period. Authorizations are created for the projected number of hours a client will work. The provider will invoice VR for the actual number of hours the client works.

Example: Client is projected to work 25 hours a week (100 hours monthly). The first two authorizations (Months 1 and 2) are calculated out separately at  $\$61 \times 100 = \$6,100$  (total combined authorized amount of \$12,200). Client ends up working 90 hours the first month. Provider invoices for 90 hours x the hourly rate (\$61) = total invoice of \$5,490.

The provider will submit the *Job Coaching/Job Support Report*, a verification of hours worked, and an invoice every month. **Acceptable forms of verification are:**

- 1) *Verification of Employee Hours Worked* form, signed by the client and the employer; OR
- 2) Documentation from the place of employment (e.g. paystub, employee timesheet, email, etc.) that includes the client's name (pre-printed or signature) and number of hours worked per day within the authorized range. If the documentation is not from the place of employment (e.g. client wrote down their hours), an employer signature is required.

\*If the hours invoiced and the documentation (e.g. paystub) all fall within the authorized date range, a breakdown of hours worked per day is not needed.

\*In the event that you are not able to secure verification that meets the aforementioned requirements or have questions about the process for how to verify client hours worked, contact the VR Program Director of Supported Employment to discuss the situation and a possible exception.

The provider is required to meet with the client at least twice-monthly. It is also expected that that provider continue to meet with the VR Specialist monthly to share updates; including sharing of progress towards job stability.

Subsequent authorizations (Month 3 and beyond) will not be made until the prior month's report and invoice has been received. Example(s): Month 3 cannot be authorized until the report and invoice for Month 1 has been received. Month 4 cannot be authorized until the report and invoice for Month 2 has been received. Services provided prior to an authorization cannot be paid.

The hourly rate starting Month 3 will be adjusted based off of the level of job coaching/support that was provided during Month 1. The following matrix provides a graphic on how the hourly rate will be adjusted over time.

Coaching/Support Level	Months 3-4	Months 5-6	Months 7-24
1-23%	23% (\$14.03)	10% (\$6.10)	5% (\$3.05)
24-42%	42% (\$25.62)	25% (\$15.25)	10% (\$6.10)
43-61%	61% (\$37.21)	40% (\$24.40)	25% (\$15.25)
62-80%	80% (\$48.80)	60% (\$36.60)	40% (\$24.40)
81-100%	100% (\$61)	80% (\$48.80)	65% (\$39.65)

Examples:

- A. Client is projected to work 25 hours a week (100 hours/month). The initial rate of \$61/hr. is applied to Months 1 and 2. The client ends up working 100 hours during Month 1. The provider provides 15 hours of job coaching and 15 hours of job support (30 hours combined) during Month 1. The coaching/support level is calculated as follows:  $30/100 = .30$  (30 percent). Using the matrix (above) the new adjusted rate for Months 3-4 will be \$25.62/hr. (42%). This rate will automatically reduce for Months 5-6 (\$15.25/hr.) and Months 7-24 (\$6.10/hr.).
- B. Client is projected to work 15 hours a week (60 hours/month). The initial rate of \$61/hr. is applied to Months 1 and 2. The client ends up working 50 hours during Month 1. The provider provides 30 hours of job coaching and 10 hours of job support (40 hours combined) during Month 1. The coaching/support level is calculated as follows:  $40/50 = .80$  (80 percent). Using the matrix (above) the new adjusted rate for Months 3-4 will be \$61/hr. (100%). This rate will automatically reduce for Months 5-6 (\$48.80/hr.) and Months 7-24 (\$39.65/hr.).

\*Please note that while this service is authorized at the projected number of hours a client may work, it is only paid out at the actual number of hours a client works.

\*This service is authorized upon receipt and approval of the *Job Search and Placement Outcome Report*. This does not apply to situations where the client is already employed at time of IPE development, as no authorization for Job Search and Placement would be made.

\*For job coaching and job support hours, only direct services provided to the client should be counted towards establishing the job coaching/support level. Indirect hours such as attending training, staff meetings, completing reports/invoices, and travel should not be counted.

Job Coaching and Support Report [https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr\\_forms/533/to\\_form](https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr_forms/533/to_form)

Verification of Hours Worked Form [https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr\\_forms/534/to\\_form](https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr_forms/534/to_form)

### **IPE Amendments**

If a client accepts a job that falls outside of their IPE job goal, an IPE amendment will be required prior to authorizing for job coaching and support services. This IPE amendment will need to be reviewed with and signed by the client (and authorized representative as applicable) prior to VR approving the amendment and authorizing for services. Once SE staff become aware of a client accepting a job that does not match the job goal listed on the IPE, they are to alert the VR Specialist as soon as possible so VR can begin the process of amending the IPE job goal. Obtaining a client's signature may be relatively easy in most cases, but obtaining signatures from authorized representatives can be difficult at times. While it is solely the responsibility of the VR Specialist to obtain the required signatures on the IPE amendment, they may reach out to SE provider staff for assistance. To prevent disruption in service delivery, Nebraska VR has developed an exception process for authorizations to be completed if attempts for obtaining signatures have been unsuccessful. These requests will be reviewed by Nebraska VR leadership on a case-by-case basis.

### **Job Stability**

Job stability is defined as the point when VR services are no longer needed as it is anticipated that the client is able to remain stable in their employment using the supports identified in the extended services plan.

Job stability is considered when the documentation indicates:

- The client's performance meets employer's expectations
- There is evidence of significant fading of job coaching/support hours
- The client (and authorized representative, as applicable) is satisfied with the job, hours, wage, etc.
- The client has no further need for VR services

When criteria are met, as noted above, the VR Specialist convenes a team meeting to discuss the job stability criteria being met and extended services being initiated.

A client may transition to extended services once job stability has been achieved. Funding of job coaching/support ends when job stability has been reached. Extended services begin the following day. The client is considered to be fully transitioned from VR supports when extended services, alone, have been sufficient to support job retention (no VR services have been authorized) for a period of 90 days. VR Specialists will maintain contact with the client and provider during this period. If VR authorizes any additional services or supports during this period, the 90-day period will begin again. If no services are authorized by VR over the 90-day period, the case is eligible to be successfully closed.

### **Extended Services for Youth – Hourly rate established at job stability**

This service includes the provision of needed supports to maintain job stability for clients who meet the criteria of a youth with a disability (under age 25) and have no available funding for extended supports. Extended Services for Youth begin the day following stabilization. This service can continue to be funded up to four years or age 25, whichever comes first. This service also can end if extended supports are no longer needed.

This service will be authorized monthly; with the first two months being authorized at the point of stabilization. Authorizations will be calculated at the hourly rate established at job stability. This rate is multiplied by the number of hours the client is projected to work over the next four weeks. The provider will invoice VR for the actual number of hours the client works.

The provider will submit the *Extended Services for Youth Report*, a verification of client hours worked, and invoice monthly. As with the Job Coaching/Support service, subsequent authorizations (Month 3 and beyond) will not be made until the prior month's report and invoice has been received. Example(s): Month 3 cannot be authorized until the report and invoice for Month 1 has been received. Month 4 cannot be authorized until the report and invoice for Month 2 has been received.

Extended Services for Youth Report [https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr\\_forms/532/to\\_form](https://webforms.nebraska.gov/vr_forms/532/to_form)

### **Dates of Authorizations/Invoices**

Discovery – This service is authorized up to 60 days. The service/invoice start date cannot precede the start date of the authorization, but the service can begin the day of or any day after. The service/invoice end date is the date when the activities outlined in the *VR Profile for Customized Employment* are completed.

Plan for Job Development (Milestone 1) – This service is authorized for two weeks. The service/invoice start date cannot precede the start date of the authorization, but the service can begin the day of or any day after. The service/invoice end date is when all activities outlined in the *Plan for Job Development Outcome Report* have been completed.

Job Search and Placement (Milestone 2) – This service is authorized up to 90 days. The service/invoice start date cannot precede the start date of the authorization, but the service can begin the day of or any day after. The service/invoice end date is the job start date.

Job Coaching/Job Support – This service is authorized for four weeks (28 days). The service/invoice start date needs to match the first date the client works during the authorized period. The service/invoice end date will either match the last date the client works during the authorized period or will match the stabilization date.

Extended Services for Youth - This service is authorized for four weeks (28 days). The service/invoice start date needs to match the first date the client works during the authorized period. The service/invoice end date will either match the last date the client works during the authorized period or will match the date when this service ends (i.e. DD waiver funding has become available or extended services are no longer needed).



# Acknowledgment of Understanding

I confirm that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the Nebraska VR Provider Handbook.

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Printed Name

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Signature

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Date

Upon completion, please return this page to DJ Plautz @ [dj.plautz@nebraska.gov](mailto:dj.plautz@nebraska.gov)