

Memorandum

TO: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Job Placement Specialists
CC: Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists, Nancy Sedlacek
FROM: Glenn Morton
DATE: April 8, 2016
SUBJECT: Meeting Announcement & Results of January 29, 2016 Meeting

The next informal meeting between court staff and certified vocational rehabilitation service providers is scheduled for Friday, April 22, 2016, at 10:00 am. Please note that the meeting time has been adjusted from previous meetings. The meeting will be held at the court's administrative offices at 1221 "N" Street, Suite 402, in Lincoln. Regular meetings are typically held on a quarterly basis, with future meetings tentatively scheduled for July 29, 2016, and October 28, 2016. Meetings typically last no more than two hours.

The following are the results from the January 29, 2016 meeting. Please bring any questions or concerns regarding the discussions or decisions to the attention of court's Vocational Rehabilitation Section and they will be considered at the next meeting.

1. Possible VR Legislation: It was announced that no legislative bill relating to workers' compensation vocational rehabilitation was introduced during the 10 day period at the beginning of the 2016 legislative session when bill introduction was allowed. This was despite concerns raised at the October 1, 2015 hearing on Legislative Resolution 246 regarding the effectiveness of the current vocational rehabilitation system. However, it was also announced that behind-the-scenes discussions have continued, with the possibility of an amendment to another workers' compensation bill to address vocational rehabilitation. As of the date of this memorandum no such amendment has been introduced, and vocational rehabilitation will likely not be addressed this session.

2. Data Collection: There were preliminary discussions regarding possible revisions to the Case Closure Form (VR-37E) or other options for capturing better vocational rehabilitation cost and return-to-work data. This discussion was prompted by concerns regarding the inadequacy of currently available data that were raised by Business and Labor Committee members and testifiers at the October 1, 2015 hearing on LR 246. It was decided at this meeting that the court staff would draft revisions to the case closure form for consideration at the next quarterly meeting on April 22, 2016. There was also discussion at this meeting regarding a vendor in Montana who provides vocational rehabilitation data collection services for other states. A NE IARP representative offered to contact the vendor on behalf of the association to arrange for a presentation from the vendor. That presentation subsequently took place on February 11, 2016.

3. Return-to-Work Assistance During Formal Training: The court's specialists urged counselors to assist clients during the last term of a formal training plan in obtaining employment following completion of the plan. This would hopefully reduce the need for job placement plans following completion of formal training. It was also suggested that when developing a plan for submission to the court the counselor should address what he or she will be doing during the last term to assist the employee in returning to work.

4. Client Questions: The court's specialists observed that workers are increasingly bypassing the counselor and calling the court directly with questions regarding a plan. These questions often relate to general supplies, mileage reimbursement, or ReliaCard information. Counselors are asked to remind clients that questions regarding the plan should be directed to the counselor rather than to the court staff. Counselors should then contact the court regarding questions the counselor is unable to answer, rather than suggesting the client contact the court directly.

5. Continuing Education Units: Counselors are reminded that for renewal of certification CEUs approved by CRCC, ABVE, IARP, or other organizations listed in Rule 40,C,8 will automatically be accepted by the court. For other training, counselors are encouraged to contact Nancy Sedlacek prior to participating in the training to be sure the training will be approved by the court for CEU credit.

6. Next meeting agenda items: At the next meeting on April 22, 2016 the following will be addressed:

- a. Further discussion of 2016 legislative session activities relating to workers' compensation vocational rehabilitation and possible 2017 legislation.
- b. Further discussion of plans for collecting better vocational rehabilitation data in advance of the 2017 legislative session.
- c. Discussion regarding monitoring of client employment status following case closure. Should this be done by the counselors or court staff? What type of cases should be monitored?
- d. Discussion of two draft forms to replace the current Case Closure Form (VR-37E) and a new Plan Closure Form prepared by court staff. (See attached.) How should costs for services (e.g., labor market research) be allocated when the results are used for both LOEP evaluations and plan development?
- e. Discussion of any other issues of concern or interest to the counselors or court specialists.

7. Future meeting agenda items: No additional agenda items are currently identified for future meetings. Suggestions are welcome.