

**Maine Department of Labor
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
And
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Adult Mental Health Services**

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

Purpose: This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Adult Mental Health Services (OAMHS) in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities. This Memorandum is not to be used or regarded as a legally binding agreement or contract. Rather, it provides information about the programs and how we intend to work together.

Goals of the MOU:

- Strengthen partnerships between BRS and OAMHS in order to improve and expand employment services for our joint consumers, and to effectively implement the vocational components of the DHHS Consent Decree Plan in *Bates v. DHHS*.
- Ensure ethical best practices, particularly as they relate to consumer rights and meaningful choices.
- Maximize the utilization of all employment and training resources and funds to support competitive employment for people with mental illness in Maine to the extent that available resources permit.
- Improve the rehabilitation rate and increase the number of individuals with mental illness who are successful in working to their full potential, including increasing the numbers of those who achieve a full-time competitive employment goal.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services:

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) are the two state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies in Maine, which are within the Department of Labor (DOL) as part of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). They are charged with the responsibility to administer the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Independent Living Rehabilitation programs.

VR assists individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, and obtain and maintain competitive employment commensurate with their interests and abilities through an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that addresses the disability-related barriers to successful employment. Services identified in an IPE are individualized and may include counseling, training, medical treatment, assistive devices, job placement assistance, and other services.

Office of Adult Mental Health Services:

The primary responsibility of the Office of Adult Mental Health Services (OAMHS) is to develop and maintain a system of mental health treatments, services, and supports for people age 18 and older. These services are directed toward people with serious mental illness who have significant difficulty functioning in the community. OAHMS ensures that a full array of mental health, rehabilitation, residential and other support services are present in Maine communities in order to promote integration of care, quality of life and mental health recovery for adults with serious and persistent mental illness.

The Office of Adult Mental Health Services has funded a Long Term Vocational Support Program for several years; and it is administered by APS Healthcare. As part of its approved Consent Decree plan, OAMHS also funds Employment Specialists and Benefit Specialists (Community Work Incentive Coordinators) who work in conjunction with existing OAMHS and BRS programs to create additional employment opportunities for adults with mental illness.

Joint Responsibilities of BRS and OAMHS:

BRS and OAMHS agree to explore new resources for the purpose of developing and overseeing a comprehensive system of employment and training services for adults with mental illness in Maine. Each will designate a staff person to be the key contact within their respective agencies to coordinate existing agency programs and efforts. The designated staff will convene workgroups as necessary to initiate and coordinate the following activities:

A. System Development

1. Review all employment services offered to mental health consumers to determine what services currently exist, and use qualitative and quantitative data to identify what services and resources are needed to overcome obstacles for the ongoing successful employment of individuals with mental illness who wish to work.
2. Promote the use of evidence-based practices and promising approaches in supported employment in the ongoing effort to improve employment services.
3. Invite stakeholders, including consumers, families, employers, service providers and advisory groups to both agencies, to be involved in the system development process and share areas of expertise and concerns.

B. Coordination of Services

1. Identify and pursue cross-training opportunities for OAMHS and BRS staff in areas pertinent to employment and mental illness;
2. Identify and address regional differences in service coordination and effective service delivery;
3. Design and integrate the OAMHS funded Employment Specialist services with existing OAMHS and BRS vocational services to create a more closely aligned employment service system (See Attachment A.).
4. Offer a handout to inform consumers of the differences between BRS services and the services available through the OAMHS funded Employment Specialist.

C. Maximization of Resources

1. Ensure that State of Maine General Funds intended for the unmet employment service needs of individuals with mental illness are expended effectively in increasing the competitive employment outcomes of this population. Given that this appropriation is divided between BRS DVR and OAMHS, any changes in the use or level of funding must be jointly agreed to by both departments. Additionally, BRS DVR will use its allocation to draw down the maximum amount of Federal matching funds possible.
2. Pursue funding opportunities from all sources, including at a minimum those available through the Social Security Administration, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services, Workforce Investment Boards, and U.S. DOL Employment and Training Administration.

D. Quality Assurance

1. OAMHS will continue to work with BRS to establish and maintain consistency of credentialing standards for staff providing employment support.
2. OAMHS will include in revised Mental Health Licensing regulations employment specific standards for those providers who provide employment support services. The proposed employment specific standards will be the same as those currently recognized by BRS.
3. Any changes made to the BRS In-State Vocational Accreditation standards will be developed and endorsed jointly by BRS and OAMHS.
4. Coordination will occur in the mental health licensing process and the In-State approval process for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) offering employment services under a mental health license. The goal is to assure compliance with all applicable standards for quality community employment services without duplication of review efforts.
5. OAMHS and BRS will periodically collaborate on fidelity reviews of employment support providers.
6. OAMHS will continue to work with BRS to establish an accessible, comprehensive and uniform system of benefits counseling services across the

State of Maine for all individuals with disabilities interested in pursuing employment.

7. BRS and OAMHS will stay current with evidence-based practices and promising approaches available to support employment, and disseminate that information to providers and consumers.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION:

The designated BRS-OAMHS staff identified in the **Joint Responsibilities** section above will be responsible to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the practices and procedures described in this Memorandum. It is expected that these individuals will gather information and propose solutions to problems encountered in the implementation of the Memorandum. If a solution cannot be reached, or if the solution needs administrative or financial resources beyond the scope of their responsibility, the matter will be referred to the Director of OAMHS and Director of BRS.

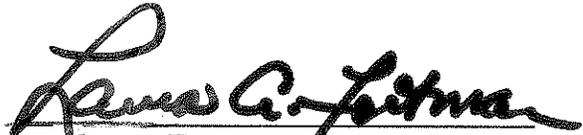
This agreement will be in effect for five years upon the signature of MDOL BRS and DHHS OAMHS. It can be terminated by either party upon a 30-day written notice. Modifications, changes and amendments may be made upon mutual agreement, in writing and with signatures by both departments.



Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner
Dept. of Health & Human Services

12/1/10

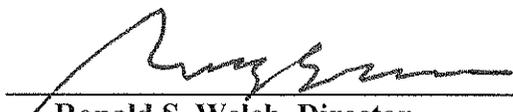
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Laura Fortman, Commissioner
Department of Labor

12-2-10

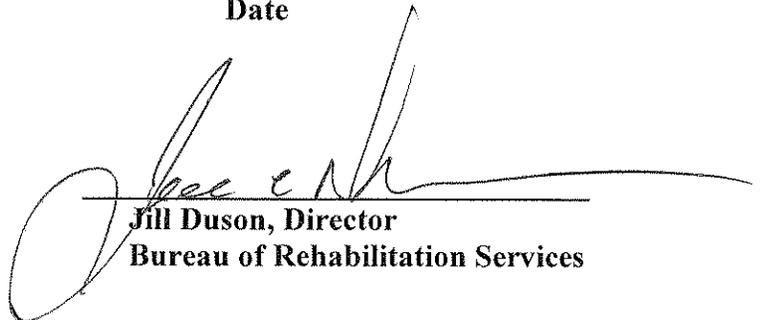
Date



Ronald S. Welch, Director
Office of Adult Mental Health Services

12/2/10

Date



Jill Duson, Director
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

12-2-10

Date

ATTACHMENT A

Coordination of Services Between State of Maine General Funded MH Employment Specialists And BRS VR Counselors

Important Note: This process is in ongoing development and will be reviewed by BRS and OAMHS at least annually.

Eligibility Determination/Referral Process

1. BRS counselors will determine eligibility for BRS services according to existing procedures and mandates.
2. If a consumer qualifies for BRS services and has a community support worker from an OAMHS contracted agency with an Employment Specialist (OAMHS will provide list of agencies to BRS), the BRS Counselor will inform the consumer of the availability of Employment Specialists from the community support agency.
3. If the consumer does not have a community support worker, but qualifies for BRS services because of a psychosocial impairment, the BRS counselor will inform the consumer of the availability of community support and Employment Specialist services through the identified agency.
4. The BRS counselor will assist as appropriate in making a referral to the community support agency.
5. Consumers will be asked by the community support agency to complete the Employment Need for Change scale.
6. The OAMHS funded Employment Specialist and the BRS counselor will follow the consumer's choice regarding employment services, such as type of service requested and who will provide the service. The consumer will also choose whether or not to remain on the BRS wait list if one exists.

Use of Employment Preparation Tools

1. BRS staff will orient the OAMHS funded Employment Specialists to assessment tools generally used by BRS in employment plan development, including the Employment Readiness Scale, World of Work Inventory and BRS Job Readiness Assessment.
2. BRS staff will educate the OAMHS funded Employment Specialists in the criteria for BRS funded employment plans. The Employment Specialists will use that information to develop plans that BRS counselors can use, should the consumer elect to receive services from BRS.

Service Delivery

1. BRS and OAMHS funded Employment Specialists will coordinate Career Exploration and employment preparation groups, consisting of VR clients and clients receiving services through the Employment Specialist, at local Career Centers as space permits.

2. The Employment Specialist will develop employment plans with the consumer in accordance with the criteria described in #2 above.
3. If the Employment Specialist or the BRS Counselor has questions or concerns about the content of the employment plan, the consumer will be asked for consent for the Employment Specialist, BRS Counselor and the consumer to discuss the issue.
4. For consumers who are active BRS clients and elect to receive services through an Employment Specialist located at a mental health community support agency, BRS will provide funding for employment-related ancillary expenses, as agreed upon in the BRS Employment Plan and consistent with that available to others receiving services through BRS outside of this agreement.