

# **NTI**

Quality Virtual Staffing

## **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

**Between State of Maine**

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
and**

**National Telecommuting Institute, Inc.**

**January 2, 2014**

This memorandum is intended to be used as an aid to staff in the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the National Telecommuting Institute (NTI). It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these entities. This memorandum is not to be used or regarded as a legally binding agreement or contract. It establishes no new obligations or responsibilities for any of the aforementioned programs. Rather, it provides information for understanding the programs and how we intend to work together.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this MOU is to outline the working relationships between NTI and DVR/ DBVI.

State vocational rehabilitation (DVR/DBVI) agencies prioritize services to individuals with significant and most significant impairment related service needs. This results in individuals within counselor caseloads who need home-based employment.

### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, also known as "DVR," is a Department of Labor program that helps people who have disabilities to get and keep a job. DVR helps people who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. Employment services may include:

- Job Readiness/Skill Training
- Vocational Assessment, Guidance and Counseling
- Job Development & Placement
- Long-term support to maintain employment

### **Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired**

The Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired, also known as "DBVI", provides many services to persons with severe visual impairments. These services include assistance with independent living, or getting an education or a job. As part of the vocational services, individuals who are blind or visually impaired could receive:

- Individual counseling and guidance, and vocational assessment.
- Orientation and mobility instruction to develop independent travel skills.
- Other training, devices, treatment, job placement and follow-up services to enable success in a job.
- DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation services are also available to assist students in transitioning from high school to work.

### **National Telecommuting Institute, Inc. (NTI)**

National Telecommuting Institute (NTI) was established in 1995 as a non-profit organization in Massachusetts. Working in partnership with private-sector employers and federal agencies, NTI develops jobs, trains and places individuals with disabilities into competitively paying home-based jobs. Approximately one-third of clients perform federal agency work answering questions from the public or taking orders for forms and publications. The remaining two-thirds provide technical or billing support to major cell phone, cable or Internets service companies or product/service information to customers of retailers, hotels or airlines. A small number of clients are matched to positions in medical transcription, medical billing, quality control and assurance, government research, recruitment, sales, and survey and data collection. To view descriptions of typical work-at-home jobs NTI develops, please go to <http://www.nticentral.org/>. NTI works with individuals seeking part-time or full-time employment.

### **DVR/DBVI – Referral Process**

To refer a job applicant for consideration by NTI, there must be an identified vocational goal in their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) which is best achieved by home-based employment. The VR Counselor (VRC) should instruct their job applicant to complete an on-line application ([see www.nticentral.org](http://www.nticentral.org)) and submit a resume. The job applicant will be contacted for a Prescreening interview. If the job applicant is successful with the interview and will continue with NTI for assessment, training and/or placement, the NTI representative will contact the referring VRC to request an authorization for services for the job applicant. NTI must receive this authorization prior to initiating any of these services.

### **DVR/DBVI – Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)**

The DVR/DBVI individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) guides and manages the services that are available through these programs. It also sets the conditions under which services are provided and continued. The IPE does this by spelling out job applicant responsibilities and the intermediate objectives that must be met in order to achieve employment with DVR/DBVI assistance. Due to the nature of the DVR/DBVI program, the goal orientation of all involved,

and the need for judgment in what the program can or cannot contribute to the rehabilitation of an individual, the IPE is of paramount importance.

It is critical, therefore that the IPE take the following into consideration:

1. Key elements of the NTI program must be communicated to the VRC and incorporated into the IPE.
2. There must be planning for contingencies that may occur for which resources, other than those provided by NTI and/or DVR/DBVI, will be required.
3. If the outcome of the NTI pre-screening interview is a positive one and the job applicant wants to proceed, the VRC will incorporate NTI's services into the job applicant's IPE and issue an authorization for any agreed upon necessary services prior to their provision. VRC will send a copy of the job applicant's IPE along with the authorization for services.
4. The VRC will plan and budget for the NTI training and for other required equipment, such as a computer or installation of a second phone line as indicated.

### **NTI Services Provided to DVR/DBVI Job Applicants**

NTI is responsible for screening job applicants both those referred by state VR agencies, as well as -"walk-ins," and selects those most likely to be successful in the telework opportunities identified. The process is as follows:

#### **1. NTI Screening of Job Applicants**

NTI will interview all Maine VR job applicants those that are referred by counselors and those that apply on their own. During this 15-30 minute Prescreen interview, job applicants are asked what they have done in the past, what they want to do going forward and what they are capable of. NTI screens for voice quality (due to the majority of NTI virtual positions are as outward facing customer service representatives) Also assessed at this point is the job applicant's home office and computer equipment to see if compatible with NTI's employer clients.

#### **2. NTI Introductory Class**

If the job applicant passes the Prescreen interview, they are then scheduled for NTI's "Intro" class. This consists of a half day virtual training session, where the job applicant must pass the computer test (internet and Google searches, etc.), as well as be able to type a minimum of 20 words per minute (all NTI job applicants communicate with the employer client supervisors through chat).

#### **3. Self-Registration**

If the job applicant successfully completes this Introductory course, they are given the instructions to "self" register for the 3 day "Gen Cert" class (the self- registration is part of the test). Part of the self-registration is to complete and pass the 4 "pre-work" assessments. If these are not completed, the job applicant will not be given access to the class.

#### 4. "Gen Cert" Class

During this three day class, the job applicants are trained on the basics of working as a customer service representative, as well as performing role playing and taking test calls. . Once the job applicant successfully completes the "Gen Cert" class, they are now moved to NTI's applicant pool.

#### 5. NTI Applicant Pool

Job Applicants active in the NTI job pool are given access to the secure section of the NTI website where they can review all of NTI's open jobs and apply for them. By being coded as "applicant pool," they are also now visible to the NTI recruiters who are also trying to fill the open job requisitions. Once they have been identified as having the appropriate qualifications for a position, NTI then assists the job applicant in preparing for the job interview.

#### 6. Preparation for Job-specific Interview

NTI performs a job specific preparation interview where the job applicant is coached and counseled and prepared for the actual job interview. This "pre" interview better prepares job applicants for success when interviewing with NTI's employer client.

#### 7. Employment Offer

The job applicant selected from the interview process may be employed directly by the NTI employer client (direct placement) or be hired by NTI on their payroll but performing work for NTI's employer client (co-employed).

##### 7A. Direct Placement Employment Offer

If the job applicant is chosen by one of NTI's direct placement partners, they are hired directly by the NTI employer client and will begin their on the job training with the NTI partner.

##### 7B. If the job applicant is chosen by of one NTI's co-employment clients then they are given a conditional offer letter and if they accept, they are now hired as an employee and begin the on the job training phase of their on- boarding.

#### 8. NTI Post-placement Follow-up

NTI continues to periodically follow up with the job applicant/employee and the business partner/employer to make sure the placement continues to be successful.

### **Joint Services for Clients Who Have a Ticket to Work**

DVR/DBVI job applicants who also receive SSI/SSDI benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) may be eligible to participate in the Ticket to Work Program (TTW). As an approved SSA Employment Network, NTI will determine a job applicant's TTW status as part of their pre-screening process and will not take action for ticket assignment while an individual

has an open case with DVR/DBVI. Tickets will be processed as “in-use” by DVR/DBVI, following SSA rules and procedures until case closure, at which time NTI may pursue ticket assignment and become eligible for any remaining TTW Phase II and Outcome payments from SSA. To expedite this process, DVR/DBVI will provide monthly electronic notification of case status to Maximus, SSA’s TTW Program Manager, but can also provide a copy of individual case closure letters upon request. If an individual has assigned their ticket to NTI prior to DVR/DBVI involvement, NTI will assist the ticket holder to un-assign their ticket from NTI, so that it can be identified as “in-use” with DVR/DBVI.

## **Fees & Equipment**

NTI has established a total fee schedule rate of **\$5,500** for the training and placement service. This fee is broken down as follows:

- Successful completion of 2 weeks of on-the-job training **\$1,400**
- Employment for at least 90 days in a telework position, **and** that position is likely to continue beyond the 90 days, **and** the client is eligible for VR closure **\$4,100**

In addition to the training, other costs may be incurred by DVR/DBVI. A computer, software, communications equipment, adaptive equipment and/or the installation of a second phone line may be needed.

In the event that a computer purchase is required, close coordination with NTI staff will be necessary to ensure that the computer meets or exceeds minimum requirements for a typical telework job to be performed. NTI will provide a list of standard home office equipment needed.

In the event that adaptive equipment is required and NTI staff does not possess the required expertise, job applicants will be referred back to the VR Counselor with a request for technical assistance.

## **Monitoring and Quality Assurance**

All costs will be pre-authorized by the VR counselor. NTI staff and the VR counselor will both be responsible for monitoring the progress of the job applicant during training. NTI will send an invoice once the job applicant has successfully completed two weeks of job applicant training and then after the first 90 days of home-based employment. DVR/DBVI will monitor and measure the following quality assurance goals:

- NTI will work with individual VRCs to place job applicants in a job consistent with their IPE goal
- At least 70% of job applicants placed will maintain employment in that position for at least 90 days

- At least 70% of job applicants placed will be eligible for successful VR closure
- At least 80% of the referring VRCs and those referred will report satisfaction with the services provided by NTI
- At least half of all job applicants placed in employment will be on the payroll of the company for whom the work is performed (direct placement vs. co-employed).

VR counselors will work directly with NTI staff in relation to services to their job applicants. To resolve issues and provide overall coordination, Thomas Pappas, Director of Finance, at NTI, will function as lead liaison between DVR/DBVI and NTI. Questions can be directed to TPappas@nticentral.org. Karen Fraser, Division Director for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, will provide overall coordination and management of this agreement on behalf of DVR/DBVI. She can be reached at Karen.D.Fraser@maine.gov.

### Terms of Agreement

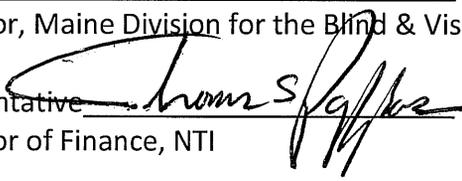
This agreement expires 365 days from the date it is signed by both parties. It can be terminated with a 10 day written notice by either party. Following expiration, a new agreement may be developed after evaluation of the number of Maine VR clients served during the agreement period and the quality of outcomes from the services (placements, duration, wages, etc.)

DVR/DBVI and NTI representatives will teleconference six months into the implementation of this agreement. Progress toward QA goals will be discussed and documented. Adjustments to the agreement may be negotiated at this time if indicated.

This memorandum has been reviewed and is acceptable by both the DVR/DBVI agencies and NTI.

DVR Administrator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Betsy Hopkins, Director, Maine Division of Rehabilitation Services

DBVI Administrator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 John McMahon, Director, Maine Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired

NTI authorized representative  Date 1.9.14  
 Thomas Pappas, Director of Finance, NTI