



Retaining Employment
and Talent After
Injury/Illness Network

RETAIN Webinar

Maximizing Workforce Partnerships: How Vocational Rehabilitation Can be a Valued Partner in Your RETAIN Initiative

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>> Hi, everyone. My name is Jeremy Rasterson and I'll be your moderator for today's webinar, maximizing workforce partnerships, how Vocational Rehabilitation can be a valued partner in your RETAIN initiative. Thank you for joining us.

Just for your information about today's webinar, you can submit questions in the chat box at any time during the webinar. Please use the chat box for both content questions and requests for technical assistance. Also, throughout the webinar, you may occasionally, we may be occasionally unmuting you to interact verbally. So, just to warn you.

Lastly, we do have a live captioning service. Please see the chat box for the link. If you have any questions, please raise your hand by pressing the hand with the green arrow icon. Please locate that icon if you haven't yet.

Again, thank you for joining us and welcome to today's webinar. Just to give you some context regarding RETAIN, the reign acronym stands for retaining employment and talent after injury/illness network. RETAIN have a joint initiative led by the U.S. Department of Labor, or DOL, office of disability employment policy, otherwise known as ODEP, and funded by ODEP, DOL's employment and training administration and the Social Security administration. RETAIN technical assistance is funded by ODEP and housed at the American Institutes for Research. The focus on RETAIN is on building state capacity in stay-at-work/return-to-work strategies across eight states. Explore ways to help people who become ill or injured during their working years remain in the labor force.

Today's panel will highlight information on, sorry. The learning objectives today are gaining a better understanding of the VR program, understanding how order of selection affects VR's ability to provide job retention services, learning key concepts of one state's successful job retention program, and without further ado, I'll let today's presenters introduce themselves.

>> LESLIE DAWSON: So, great day, everyone. This is Leslie Dawson. I'm the state administrator of the business relations program for the Alabama Rehabilitation Services. I'm very excited to be assisting with today's webinar and to talk with you all about a project I am very passionate about which is Vocational Rehabilitation and return-to-work/stay-at-work. I've been with Voc Rehab, I initially started and transitioned as the statewide RAVE, which is our job retention program, as the statewide RAVE technical adviser and have now served as the state administrator of the business relations program for the past two years so thanks for having me today.

>> DAVID LEON: And my name is David Leon. I'm the deputy director for worse programs for the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services. I've worked for the rehab agency since 2007 and prior to that I worked in supportive employment and other employment focused programs with community service boards and community rehabilitation programs.

In my current role, I'm responsible for our agency's workforce innovation and opportunity acts implementation of our workforce program in collaboration with the other titles involved, and like Leslie, I am extremely excited for this webinar. I think the focus of the RETAIN grant is a great step forward and I look forward to being a part of this as we move forward. Next slide.

So, we're going to start by talking a little bit about state Vocational Rehabilitation, how that fits in with RETAIN and different ways to potentially look at the services you'll hear about, both from the services we provide to individuals, and the services we can provide as an agency to those employers and the businesses where we're hoping to keep individuals employed after an injury or disabling condition.

Next slide.

>> So, we'd like to start with a poll question. How would you rate collaboration with your state's VR program? So, we have five options here. Very effective, moderately effective, slightly effective, not working at all, unsure.

We will give about a minute for you to answer these and after that, we will move on. So, it's been about a minute. Thank you for answering the poll.

>> DAVID LEON: Okay. It's really exciting to see that almost a third of the folks on this webinar feel that your collaboration with your state's VR program is very effective. For those of you, my hope is you might see a little bit of information about things you didn't realize you could work with them together on and same with those who came in at moderately effective.

For the folks who are unsure or are not working at all or slightly effective, again, our hope through this is that you'll see the example of service that's can be provided that you can be incorporating into your project or you can learn through Leslie's presentation about how you can approach it with the state in a more specific manner.

And next slide, please. All right. So we're going to talk about. So, state Vocational Rehabilitation is a program that helps people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep jobs. It is federally funded. For every dollar the state spends on rehabilitation services, the state is able to draw down almost four dollars in additional federal dollars. For agencies within a state. Some state's Voc Rehab programs fall under health and human services agency while others may be a part of the state workforce agency or under the Department of Education in terms of where the state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency resides in the bigger state structure.

Also, there are a couple of types of VR agencies. Some are general agencies, meaning they serve anybody who has a disability that does not include blindness and their agency specifically serve individuals with visual impairments and then there are combined agencies that serve all individual categories.

And then as an example in Virginia, we have a general agency and we have an agency for people with visual impairments. Next slide, please. So, I wanted to talk for a minute about eligibility criteria for VR services and start, I want to start with just the application process. To apply for VR services, the best step is to contact the agency in your state that administers the program at the office closest based on zip code. For eligibility, VR services, eligible for the following criteria. One is the individual has a disability defined as a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment and who can benefit in terms of employment outcomes from the vocational rehab services. The individual also would require Voc Rehab services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. And some other things. For folks that have Social Security, there's presumptive eligibility. What that means is if the Social Security administration has determined someone is disabled and they

receive SSI or SSDI that they would be presumed eligible for services and would benefit from those services and those individuals would be considered eligible unless there's clear and convincing evidence that they cannot achieve employment due to the severity of their injury.

In terms of who determines eligibility, that would be the role of the vocational rehab counselor who is responsible for that case and I wanted to bring that up again, because as you're thinking about this project, he developing those relationships with your VR agency the at the state level in a way that information flows down to the local office and council level will really improve effective communication and outcome. Next slide, please.

Order of selection is when a state vocational rehab agency does not have the funds to serve all eligible applicants, it must serve those with the most significant disabilities first. And the determinations for this are made prior to each new fiscal year, it must be included in the state plan and be statewide. While a state is in order of selection, categories may be opened ore closed as needed as long as the order is followed. And when we think of what this means and the definition of a significant disability and the definition of most significantly disabled, the definition with a significant disability is a severe physical or mental impairment, serious limitations in one or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and someone that requires multiple vision services over an extended period of time.

The definition for most significantly disabled is defined by each state vocational rehab agency. So, there's variation in that part.

Some states might say their MSD category is someone with three or more functional limitations related to employment. Some state might say it's four or more, and that's going to be a little bit different in each state. But this is a good thing to remember because if you're working with the state that does have order of selection issues, there's a couple of things that are, that WIOA offers to allow states to move folks if they choose to, and we'll talk about that more in a minute.

Next slide, please. The so, I wanted to take a moment and just go through the RETAIN states and which states are in order of selection, related to RETAIN, and which are not.

And what you'll see on this chart is, each state listed, the type of agency, so, if a state has both a general and a blind agency, you'll see two pieces and you can see that ten of the groups are in order of selection. And what's interesting and why I wanted to bring this up specifically is section 412 allows for a state to identify in their state plan that they will allow

individuals who are at risk of losing their job to move into priority category, to receive retention services so that that VR can help the individual maintain their employment where they're at.

And as you can see, roughly half of the groups have in their state plan the allowance for job retention services. So, if you're working with Washington State, or Kansas, or Vermont General or Minnesota Blind, you'll see that you can actually work with that state and even though they may be in order of selection, they are going to be able to work with those individuals and move them into the priority category.

You'll see, I just want to make a note. With Ohio, when we developed the draft of this, they were not in order of selection, and because this has just changed, it is unclear on whether or not their new state plan allows for job retention services. But, that was a change just in the last two months in developing this.

And Okay. Next slide, please. So, I wanted to take a moment and actually talk about if the VR portion of the state does not allow for the provision of job retention services, the first thing is, Leslie is going to talk through a bunch of great numbers and what they've been doing in her state related to this. But U the thought is that you could discuss why VR is not providing those services outside of order of selection. Is it something you could work with the state VR leadership to add to the 2020 state plan? And you can explore opportunities related to that and related to RETAIN funding to see if there are workarounds.

For instance, if the state is worried about, s because they don't have the money to serve all eligible clients, they may be very reluctant to do this. But, if there's a way to combine resources to create the set of services and capitalize on the types of steps that are at each rehab agency, you would have a better opportunity to leverage those skill sets to help more people get back to work.

And then, again, the last piece there is, there also are opportunities to use those consumers as a referral source for RETAIN services. Whereby somebody who may start as a referral because they're going through RETAIN may be able to help bridge that gap with an employer and identify other clients and individuals who may need those services.

Next slide, please. I wanted to talk for a couple minutes about the services offered by vocational rehab. They include physical and mental restoration, assistive technology, home, vehicle, work site modifications, vocational evaluation and career exploration, vocational training, job placement

assistance, situational assessments in the workplace, job development and job coaching.

These are mostly self-explanatory, but when we think about RETAIN and somebody being able to maintain their employment, someone's injury might not take away their ability to utilize all of the skills and institutional knowledge they have within that position. So, if an individual maybe had a stroke and is having trouble speaking, you could use communication devices and VR could work with that individual through a series of evaluations and assessments to find the right communication devices to train that individual on them and allow them to get back to their employment. And that's just one example. Next slide, please. Physical restoration. Vocational rehab can provide services for assessment and therapeutic treatment that is likely within a reasonable period of time, correct or substantially modify a stable or slowly progressive physical or mental impairment that is a substantial impediment to employment.

And again, this can be a wide variety of things. All vision services are going to be -- Vocational Rehabilitation services are going to be individualized to the person receiving the services based on their specific goal for employment and the needs within that setting. Also, with some of the physical restoration services, some of them can be used to help someone take care of things at home to be successful in the workplace as well. Next slide, please.

Again, some of the specific physical restoration services include physical or occupational therapy, speech and cognitive therapy. Podiatry, dentistry, nursing services, mental health services, medications and supplies, treatment for acute or chronic medical complications that are inherent in the condition under treatment. It can be individualized to that specific person's needs, where they're at, what they need to be successful to maintain employment. Next slide, please.

I wanted to talk about this, I was trying to come up with a timeline that I thought would make sense related to someone experiencing a sudden onset of a disabling condition and what early related to that a client of vocational rehab services, how that can work in conjunction. So the top part of the slide, you'll see if the onset of injury, illness would happen, whether it be a spinal cord injury, cardiovascular event, traumatic brain injury. A neurological disorder. There might be a period of acute hospitalization and then acute rehabilitation which would be a great time to apply for vocational rehab services because that process does take a while.

Ideally, then, the individual would return home. During that time, they might receive home health or outpatient

services. Assuming while this is happening, they're going through the application process for those vocational rehab services. If the individual needs therapy services, that might be done within the home community or comprehensive rehabilitation facility. As that part was becoming stabilized and that individual is more and more independent again, they'd be ready to actually work with their Vocational Rehabilitation agency and go through those return-to-work services, which can be a variety of different services. Again, based on that individual's employment needs and the opportunities with their original employer. I wanted to, again, talk for a minute about assistive technology. This is an area that vocational rehab is really great for staff, great at identifying tools for dressing and hygiene, adaptive equipment for household chores, prosthetic or other orthotic devices, visual services, eyeglasses, mobility equipment, computer hardware and software, vehicle modifications, ergonomic work site accommodations.

Really, there's a lot of wonderful low and no tech assistive technology as well as high tech assistive technology and the staff in a vocational rehab agency can be excellent at identifying and helping somebody take advantage of these. Next slide, please.

I also wanted to talk for a moment about employer-focused vocational rehab services and when we think of VR, at least from where I sit, we have multiple customers. The individuals we apply for services and the businesses we are connecting them to. Or, in this case, the businesses where we are attempting to help them maintain that knowledge base and that organizational understanding by keeping people with rich histories of their job duties and their culture employed in those businesses.

And some of those services that you provide are listed again help with assistive technology in the workplace. We can go in and train an entire group on disability awareness, etiquette training, which may make the environment

After a disabling condition, our staff are going to help in understanding the organizational culture so in addition to the hard skills needed for advertised. Unpaid and paid work experience, tax incentives, prequalifying and schedule a hiring.

So, there's a lot of things we can help with and another thing we do a lot here in Virginia is we might have a staff who goes through the business and goes through the process of a job to see each task involved to see if we can help streamline that or create some accommodations within the position so that

the required duties get done, but maybe it looks a little bit different to accommodate someone's disability. Next slide.

>> MODERATOR: All right. We have another poll question here. Which best describes the job retention services provided by your state's VR agency? We have four options. A, B, C, D. A, our state VR agency has a structured process for providing job reProtection services. B our state VR agency provides job retention services but not in a structured manner. C, our state VR agency does not provide job retention services. And D, I don't know if/how our state VR agency provides job retention services. Please select A, B, C, or D. I'll give a few seconds for you to respond.

Okay. Thank you for responding to the poll. Also, I think we would like to take a moment to open the floor to questions. If you have a question, please raise your hand. We also have a questions chat box so if you feel more comfortable using that chat box to ask questions, please do so.

>> DAVID LEON: One thing I want to add because I can't see the results but some of the things we do or help with accessible office equipment such as voice activated speakers, head sets. We may do work to assist with changing the environment slightly so that the work environment is more conducive. Here we go.

Well, again, it looks like many folks are not sure if and how state vocational rehab provides job retention services and a few that don't and some provide it but not in a structured manner. but, almost a third say there is a structured process for job retention services. You're going to get to learn a lot more about this in a moment and with that, I want to, because I don't want to steal Leslie's thunder, I want to transition to Leslie, who should be ready with the next slide.

>> LESLIE DAWSON: Yep. Okay. So, you know, it's okay to be unsure of whether or not your state has a program that provides job retention services because a lot of the services, as you'll see, are the same service. They're just used in a different manner so although I can't speak for every state's VR agency directly, I do feel confident in saying that your state VR agency is definitely providing job retention services in some form. Even if your state is in order of selection, as we have seen that several of you guys are. And even if your state has not elected to provide job retention service outside of order of selection, because order of selection ranks the severity of a person's disability in order to determine who receives services first, it is very likely is. Especially when you're dealing with on the job injuries that result in a substantial limitation or substantial injury.

So, the good news is that again, the same services that VR provides before a job is secured are quite often the same

services or job retention services that are provided when an individual needs assistance in retaining a job.

There are, however, some VR agencies who offer a more structured way of providing job retention services and Alabama's VR program is one of those agencies. And so, these next, over the next few slides, I'm going to share about Alabama's VR job retention program and although we are not in order of selection, and we do have the flexibility to serve individuals with different levels of disabilities, I think you'll find that there are still some very common practices that can be useful for your state's RETAIN program. So, nextslide, please.

So, Alabama's job retention program is called RAVE, and that stands for retaining a valued employee.

Our RAVE program was created in conjunction with our business partners. You once businesses began working with our program in the recruitment and placement of qualified individuals with disabilities, which included assistance with reasonable accommodations, the businesses began seeing the value and the services that we provided to them in accommodating a new employee in their job so they started asking us if we could assist them in retaining existing employees whose job or job performance was affected by an injury, illness or disability.

And that started the RAVE program. So, we began our research and design in collaboration with business. So, they came in. They helped us design the program, told us what their needs were, and so were very instrumental in creating the program. One additional important component of our RAVE program is the word value. So, we wanted to be sure that we were focused on retaining an employee that was valued by our employer. Because if the value is not there, the employer is less likely to be committed and be involved in that particular job retention case.

Next slide, please. So, let's talk about the key components of RAVE. So, we knew right away because of our work with business that we could not provide case management services for a job retention case in the same way that we did case management services for a job placement case. And so, when it came to doing job retention services, we knew, again, it was not business as usual. So, one of the main differences was the involvement of the business. We've always taken the approach within our VR program that we have two customers. That is, the individual with the disability, and the business. So, each customer has different needs and we have to be able to serve the customer according to their needs.

So, the first key component of our RAVE program is that we treat the business as a customer. And what that means is

that we make sure we have the knowledge to know what that business is needing. So, we know what they're faced with, which is a multitude of laws, regulations, policies, et cetera, and the pressure to follow those laws but also trying to build the workforce and retain their workforce.

And that pressure puts a tremendous amount of stress on a business. And so, we have to be sure that when we're working with our business customer, that we're looking out for their needs when it comes to helping them manage disability in the workplace, which includes, of course, job retention services.

The other key component to the RAVE program is recognizing that in the world of business, time is of the essence. So, more times than not when a company comes to us with a referral, they have actually already tried all that they can to help their employee and they are basically out of options, and almost, the person is just about out of their job.

So, rapid response is crucial in keeping the employer engaged and motivating that employer to retain that employee. We want to make sure that we're responding in a rapid manner because state government has not been known to respond very quickly so this is a huge new concept for our counselors, and they actually have embraced it. They really enjoy doing job retention cases. Another component to our RAVE program is team work. So, we have learned that depending on the size of the business, human resource personnel are highly specialized and tend to live in their own silos so you'll have benefits, leave, compensation, legal, employee health, EEO, all of those sorts of different divisions within the human resources, within a company. And they know their areas very well, but they don't always communicate with each other. So, when you're working with an injured worker, and that worker is worried about paying their bills and providing for their families, they aren't really focused on keeping track of all that they have to do with human resources, such as, okay. Go to, you know, office A and then B and then C and then go back to office A. So, it's very important that your return-to-work coordinators, if you have those, as part of your retain program, serve as a coordinator of resources and information to make sure that all players are at the table and everybody is informed of exactly what's happening, what needs to happen, and what should be on the horizon of occurring. So, next slide, please.

So, what we bring to the table when we offer job retention services to a company is what we term our disability management team. What we try to speak the language of business by, and so, they're familiar with in a term ; disability management. And so, we bring in various personnel within our agency. One of such folks is the business relations consultant that is a

bachelor master level person who has marketing or human resources training, experience or background and they come in and take the role of working with that business partner. They know the business culture. They know about employment laws. They know about third party provider and processes and they are the ones that actually help to manage all that information that's coming in.

On our disability management team, we also have Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. They are knowledgeable about the medical aspect pecks of disability. They understand the psychosocial aspects of that disability, and they also have a lot of community resources that they can bring to that person as well. And perhaps one of the most valuable members of our rehabilitation team is our rehabilitation engineers. They are valuable about the system economy, they have the mechanical, industrial and civil engineering background.

They keep up on the latest accommodations and resources so they bring a component to our program that the employer is missing and absolutely, it's one of the biggest values of our job retention program is having that rehab engineer who will come out and do an accommodation assessment. Next slide, please.

So, when we talk about the services that we provide through our job retention program, what you're going to notice is that these are very similar to what David was just calling out as far as VR services and they are. These are the same services that we're going to provide for a job placement consumer but the difference is we're going to have a different focus, we're going to have a different purpose of providing the services so again, those services can be counseling and guidance, education on medical and emotional issues, that's a big one because a lot of people who are currently working, it's very hard for them to accept that they have an injury or illness affecting their level of work to the extent that it is so there's a lot of adjustment. So the other services are of course evaluation by rehabilitation engineer. We come in and look at accommodations and job site modifications. We can provide job coaching and training, especially training on the accommodations that are going to be put in place. We do job follow-up services with that particular employee. We also provide transition employment services and I'm going to speak to that in just a minute but last but not least, if somebody's job is not working out, we can look at alternative placement whether that's in the company or in a job outside of the company.

Now another component of our RAVE services that didn't mention earlier is the promotion and advancement opportunities. Our federal regulations allow us to assist with not only job

placement and job retention services but they also allow us to assist with advancement opportunities within the workplace.

So, we do include that with our services. Now, if we back up to transitional employment services, I just wanted to point out that several RETAIN states have looked at including an incentive for healthcare providers to encourage them to facilitate return-to-work or stay-at-work with the employees or the patients that they're working with. Well, transitional work can also be incorporated as an incentive for the employer to return to work early and basically, it's a financial compensation so if the employee needs to come back to work or is wanting to come back to work and the employer says, well, you know, they're making \$20 an hour. They're not going to come back to that 20-dollar an hour job just yet, we don't know that we want to pay them \$20 an hour, they can just sit at home.

So the idea is, let's bring them back at a job that may pay lower than \$20 an hour but through transitional employment services we can make up the difference in that pay so therefore the employee is getting the same rate, they're going to be more encouraged to come back to work. We pay that difference state to the employer so that the paycheck and payroll systems have no changes in them and the person's back with their benefits and back earning time and earning leave and earning the same amount of pay so it's a pretty successful program there. Next slide, please. We only give that employer the medical information that's needed to facilitate accommodation under ADA so they are not liable for having too much information. We assist with that evaluation and identification. What's interesting with the employer side of it is we only provide recommendations to the employer. The employer makes the decision as to what modifications are put in place because think to answer to ADA and if they don't make the right decision, then they will have to answer the EEO questions.

So, we have to let that decision be on the employer. However, if they say, we will agree to this accommodation then we negotiate the cost and a lot of times we end up assisting with the purchase of the accommodations.

One reason for that is because when we can purchase things that are. If for some reason that person is not able to remain in that current job. Again, modified duty or transitional work plan and then follow-up services. So, next slide, please. P

>> MODERATOR: We have a question from Ronald weber. He asks, in Ohio, we have as an order of selection, therefore VR can only serve a limited population. It's unlikely that many RETAIN participants will be eligible. How can we partner with our state agency and learn more from their expertise?

>> LESLIE DAWSON: That is an excellent question and we are certainly going to address that. We have a slide on that later. If it's okay with you, I'm going to hold on off answering that and definitely will touch on that because there are still ways you can partner with VR. Is that okay if we wait on that? I'm going to pretend I see your hand up.

So, I want to talk about programs. I'm not going to go into details about these. I think they're self-explanatory. So, we look at tracking your data, at least since fiscal year 14, we go way back from there. But, I wanted to really kind of see where are our referrals coming from, so as you can see on the screen, the referrals are mainly coming from employers and physicians and then self-referrals. And I think that for a community of practice focus that we'll look at maybe in a week or so, it's going to be talking about, what are you doing for referral sources and how can you utilize the several category to assist with getting people into the program: I'll let y'all take a look at these. I know an important thing to note is that a lot of grants focus on plus low skeletal disorders and those -- musculoskeletal disorders. I think one important thing is how are you defining and looking at those disorders. Is it going to be very broad or are you really focused in on certain types so we'll discuss that as well. Next slide, please.

So, when we talk about the age range, I think this is kind of understandable we see the majority of our cases falling in that 40 to 60 year age. We had nobody, of course, under 20 years so a lot these are going to be older age and age related disabilities that come into play. Next slide, please. Now, I threw in the average hourly wage rate at closure and I think what's important to this is when you're trying to bring businesses on board to be part of your RETAIN program, the average hourly rate at closure shows the value of the employee that they have working for them. And it can certainly speak to the level of expertise and years of service that the employee brings to that company.

Next slide, please. The last thing I wanted to point out was the average counselor expenditure per case. JAN says, the Job Congress Network says most accommodations range from about \$500 on average. In our experience, we've seen about accommodations or job retention cases falling anywhere from zero to about \$1500. You have to keep in mind a lot of these expenses are for personal use items or vehicle modifications and things that an employer would not pay for. So, this is just another good resource to assist when working with somebody and helping them to retain their job. Next you slide, please.

I wanted to briefly show you an example of ammos low skeletal case that we worked on. So, -- musculoskeletal case.

She had definite problems performing job duties so the length of this case was about nine months and I wanted y'all to see how the case progressed with doing that initial meeting, conducting an assessment, looking at what type of accommodations are needed, putting those accommodations in and then job follow-up took the majority of the time just to make sure that everything was going well in her case. Next slide, please.

So, one of the issue that's this young lady had due to the neck fusion was strains, headaches, neck pains, muscle aches so we looked at changing up the mouse for the data entry. Next slide, please. We also looked at very reasonable accommodation which was a metal book end that we used to be able to hold a binder at a landscape level so that she was able to read the data that she was taking when she was meeting with the patients. Next slide, please.

This is probably one of the biggest, most helpful accommodations that we put in place. And what you're seeing is the patient area, she was responsible for doing ultrasounds on people's necks to look for core out I had arteries so she couldn't holder arms up as well as do the doppler on somebody's neck. So, next slide, please.

So, as you can see, she's using the articulating arm support to hold the weight of her arms and take that pressure off of her neck so she could continue to perform her job. And she was the only resource coordinator on this multimillion dollar research grant. This was extremely important that we retained her job.

So, next slide, please. So, when it comes down to engaging VR as a valued partner, we want to leave you guys with a few specific points to consider. I'm going to throw back over to David real quick to talk about maxing VR partnerships within un RETAIN and then I'm going to talk about the question that had come up just a few minutes ago, so next slide, please. David.

>> DAVID LEON: Thank you, Leslie. And what we wanted to mention is, part of what is very helpful in working with VR through RETAIN is A, identifying points of contact within that VR agency. Related to that question without stealing Leslie's thunder, there are going to be staff that you would want to engage in at the central level who might be responsible for things like memorandum of agreement or who will help spread the message and kind of create the culture related to making this project work from all sides. You're also going to want to -- for collection and those may be geared more toshed the business side of the process so you might not benigning with VR counselors as much as you are with folks like Leslie and myself that work

on the employer engagement side. You're going to want to kind of identify the timeliness if we think back to that continuum of care side and at what point in the process should cases be sent and maybe that's a part of the protocols developed and also, what services VR can bring to the table. We're working with a woman who was a lawyer and that musculoskeletal condition that was making her drive to the office unbearable. She could not drive her vehicle three days a week to the office -- five days a week to the office. What we worked out was, we were able to have a staff go in, and kind of review. Can this individual work from home some. She now works from home two days a week. Once the employer agreed to that, we were able to go to her home and help set her up with a home office where she can work from her computer while lying down and that eased the discomfort and pain and it's allowed her to tolerate the drive to the office three days a week so just by changing a few things that did not cost much money, we were able to help this individual keep her job and really increase her quality of life through some pretty simple accommodations and a little bit of rehab engineering for her to be able to work while lying down in her home.

And again, that's kind of how you identify some of those services that VR can bring to the table and it was done by knowing who could help with what and how to keep the person engaged while having buy-in from the employer.

And with that, we'll go to the next slide and I'll turn it back to Leslie.

>> LESLIE DAWSON: Thanks, David. So that's the question that we heard earlier. So, right now, I want to talk about thinking outside of order of selection. That does seem like it could put a damper on things but there are still resources available through vocational rehab so let's put our Safari hats on because there are some areas I think are worth exploring. These are uncharted territories so I want you to bear with me in thinking outside of the box in some of these manners. Now, this is going to take sitting down at the table with your VR agency and perhaps even bringing in the rehabilitation services administration at the federal level to say, you know, I think it is doable. Again, let's think outside the box. So, first is the business relations program. If you meet them, they will meet your needs. But when a state is in order of selection, placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities can be challenging so it's very important that they continue to build relationships and meet needs of businesses.

And what is a need of business? Job retention services. So, let's just hypothesize that business service absolutely fall outside of order of selection because it's a service to a business, not a service to a consumer. So, if you ensure that

your business services are written into the regulations, well, excuse me. Pardon me on that. Business, providing business services are part of VR's federal regulations so we must provide them to a business. Therefore, they're not going to fall in order of selection. So, I would say partner with your VR business relations program. Ask them to help bring business to the table. To help foster job retention services that would be provided by the RETAIN program because then the business benefits from retaining a worker. RETAIN benefits from providing successful services and VR will benefit by maintaining their relationship with the business and by meeting the businesses need. So, that when a placement is needed for somebody who has a more significant disability, the business will be there to help VR's need. It's kind of a win/win for everybody.

The second is looking at assistive technology. So, VR services are provided free of charge to business. However the regulations do allow for a purchase of services from business. Is, once the job retention services that are provided to businesses could actually be purchased by business from vocational rehab. They could actually come in and purchase the assistive technology, the accommodation portion that VR brings to the table and that helps to bring funding back to VR to assist them with providing other services to individuals with disabilities. So, again, thinking outside of the box. How can RETAIN benefit from partnerships that are not par for the course when it comes to VR.

So, this kind of leads us back to the last bullet which is sustainability for RETAIN services within your state. So, as David helped earlier, VR receives matching money from the federal government. We can use state dollars to draw down federal dollars. So, for states who are focusing on worker's compensation cases, it may be worth exploring the possibility of using state dollars allotted to a worker's compensation program to support a VR employee and draw additional funding. So, in the long run, the more money that can go into a VR program, the more resources the program can provide to RETAIN programs within your state.

Of course, all of this takes more exploration and working with the services administration to see if this sort of matching scenario would be eligible to draw down funds but I think it's definitely worth exploring.

So, next slide, please. I'll turn it back over to Jeremy.

>> MODERATOR: Hello, everyone. So, we are at 1:56. We have four minutes left. So, I'll leave about half a minute here for any questions. Please use the chat box for the questions

or raise your hand. I'll wait about 30-second and if we don't get anything, we'll move on.

Guess not. Just to let everybody know. We will continue the VR conversation at the upcoming community of practice. Our facilitators will be Leslie Dawson and David Leon, both of whom spoke today and it will be happening Thursday, September 5th at 2:00 PM through 3:00 PM eastern time.

So, we also have a webinar survey we'd like you to complete, the link to which has been posted in the chat. The survey will also give you an opportunity to submit topics of interest for future webinars, communities of practice, podcasts and other resources. So, please take a minute to fill that survey out. Thank you.

(Session was concluded at 1:58 PM CT)

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