

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE)

Policy Summary

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (NDVR) provides supported employment (SE) using funds as authorized under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act to those eligible individuals who, because of the significance of their disability, require intensive services to gain employment and extended services to maintain employment.

NDVR provides intensive SE under a "place and train" model until employment stability is achieved for a period not to exceed 24 months. The individual then transitions into the extended services needed for job maintenance. The extended services are provided by a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) or through natural supports.

A VR counselor must document a reasonable expectation that extended services are or will become available to the individual prior to initiating planned services.

I. PURPOSE

SE is intended to provide services that lead to employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, who have traditionally been excluded from consideration for competitive integrated employment that is individualized and customized, consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.

SE is referred to as a "place and train" model. Individuals who do not possess all the necessary work or social skills required for immediate employment success are placed into jobs. A job coach trains the individual at the employment site in the specific skills and/or behaviors required for the job. Placement is more rapid as there is no delay due to pre-placement training or skill requirements.

II. DEFINITIONS

Competitive integrated employment:

- Competitive earnings that are equal to or greater than the federal, state or local minimum wage rates, whichever is highest. Wages must be comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities in similar positions with comparable skills, experience and training. Finally, the employee with the disability must also receive benefits comparable to those of employees without disabilities in similar positions.
- Integrated location is in a setting typically found in the community. It is in a setting in which the individual with the disability interacts while performing his or her job duties with employees without disabilities. The primary

consideration is the interaction among employees with disabilities and their coworkers without disabilities in the work unit and across the employment site. NDVR cannot make a determination of integrated location on the basis of an individual's interaction with customers and vendors alone.

Employment settings established by CRP, specifically for the purpose of employing individuals with disabilities, are not integrated settings.

Extended Services:

- Extended services and other appropriate services that are needed to support an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, receiving SE, and will need support once the VR case is closed.

Natural supports:

- Extended services provided by a supervisor or co-workers on the job site or on a limited basis, family members. Natural supports should be used cautiously as they are often difficult to sustain on a long-term basis.

Opportunity for career advancement

- In many careers, advancement means moving from their current job to a more advanced job with more responsibilities. Along with increased advancement, people typically earn more income and have greater responsibility in their new positions.
- The path to advancement varies by organization and industry; however, employees must normally develop skills and abilities for the next-level position. Gaining skills that fill the gap between the current level and desired promotion is the key to career advancement.

Supported Employment (SE)

- SE is competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, in which an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, is working towards employment that is consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests and informed choice of the individual with extended services.

III. WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT?

Individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- for whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred, or
- for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability, and
- who because of the nature and severity of their disabilities has had supported employment identified as the appropriate employment service, based on the comprehensive assessment of vocational needs, requires intensive SE and followed by extended services, which continues after the VR case is closed.

IV. IDENTIFY EXTENDED SERVICES

The VR counselor should establish that the individual will be able to access extended services funding before SE and the IPE begin.

For youth who qualify for and require SE but will not immediately be able to access extended services from an alternative source, NDVR is able to provide these extended services. This is only an option until the youth is able to access alternative funding for extended services but not to exceed 4 years or beyond age 24 (their 25th birthday).

V. TRAINING AND STABILIZATION

Individuals once employed begin the training piece of SE through the assistance of their job coach. The job coach will provide training to the employer and individual on job tasks, reasonable accommodations, and how to insure the individual has the skills necessary to perform the work tasks, as independently as possible. An individual has completed training and is considered stable in their job when there is assurance that the individual has learned their job and they have adjusted to the demands of the work environment. Stabilization is the expected point of transition to extended services.

VI. JOB LOSS PRIOR TO SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE

The CRP, VR counselor, and VR Regional Administrator will meet to discuss the circumstances surrounding the job loss. Factors to be considered include the reason for the job loss, if a new employment goal is necessary, if the disability has worsened, if there is a new disability, etc. For additional information, see the Supported Employment Standardized Procedure, NDVR SP 17-03.

VII. SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be satisfied before a VR counselor can close a case:

- The individual must have completed SE, which may be received for up to 24 months, or longer if the VR counselor and the individual have determined that such services are needed to support and maintain the individual in SE. Should SE take longer than 24 months, it must be approved by the state office and documented on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and in the case notes.
- The individual has maintained employment and achieved stability in the work setting for a minimum of 90 days after transitioning to extended services.
- The job must meet the definition of competitive integrated employment consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.
- The individual must be employed in an integrated setting and earning at least minimum wage or a wage commensurate with people without a disability performing the same or similar tasks, whichever wage is higher.

VIII. RE-EMPLOYMENT OR CAREER ADVANCEMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EXTENDED SERVICES

VR Regional Administrator must approve SE services for re-employment or career advancement.