

Case File Review Report – 2023

Division of Rehabilitation Services

Introduction:

A case file review was conducted on the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program on May 8-11, 2023. The purpose of the review was to identify areas we need to improve upon, detect training needs, recognize strengths, improve consistency between offices, and assure compliance with federal and state policies.

The case file review was completed virtually this year made possible by our electronic case file system-FileDirector and improved use/understanding of Microsoft Teams. Additionally, positive feedback from last year's case review, counselor preference, and on-going preference for social distancing lead to the decision to complete a remote review again this year. The review instrument used was the case file review questionnaire incorporated into DH96VRFACES.

Five cases from each active caseload were randomly selected for the review, for a total of 174 cases. Of the five selected from each active caseload three were open, one was closed other, and the last was closed rehabilitated. Based on feedback from previous year's review, the number of cases assigned was hard to manage in a virtual review. This year, reduced number of cases was made possible by the addition of quarterly reviewed completed by Quality Assurance, Transition, and Business program specialists.

The cases were open and closed cases during the last review period from May 2022 to March 2023 with the attempt to review cases for staff who are still working with the division and excluding or minimizing review of cases by staff who have left their positions.

Of the 175 cases selected for review, 174 were reviewed (99.4%). One case was discovered to be done completely by a previous staff, so it was removed from the review.

Reviewers:

Nineteen staff from DRS assisted with this review and each reviewed an average of 9 case files. The reviewers are identified below:

State Office – Eric Weiss, Bernie Grimme, Jordan Trumbo, Katie Gran, Kim Ludwig, Jessica Schnert, Shayna Remund
Aberdeen – Laura Stoltenburg, Adam Poeppel
Brookings – Sylvia Buboltz, Jamie Folk
Rapid City – Ronda Lynch, Ruth Schlueter, Jessica Freeman
Sioux Falls – Vicki Nelson, Kim Christensen, Laura Schmit
Yankton – Jennifer Trenhaile, Renae Gades
19 Reviewers Total

Review Instrument:

The case file review instrument had multiple revisions in the last review. The case file review instrument focuses on the main areas of the VR case process: application, eligibility, IPE, services provided, and case closure. In addition, during the review process, reviewers identified areas of inconsistency and areas of attention that the VR program needs to consider. Ratings were removed during this case file review as a results were set up to capture more feedback regarding the case.

Case File Review Findings:

Percentages that were less than 90% last year that are not this year are highlighted in green.

Percentages less than 90% are identified as needing improvement that are new this year are highlighted in yellow.

Percentages that were less than 90% last year and remain less than 90% this year are highlighted in red.

Readers should also take into consideration the validity of the results when the percent is based on a total less than 50 responses.

Application

All 174 cases were reviewed for application criteria. The questions in this section check to make sure that the signed application is retained in the case file and that the date of application is correctly recorded on the VR case management system. The ratings for this section were positive and did not raise concerns/needs for improvement.

Question		Yes	No	N/A	Percent
1.01	FileDirector contains a completed and signed copy of the application, and the application date on VRFACES matches the application date on the form or the date stamped by the VR office upon receipt.	163	11		93.7%
1.02	If the individual is eligible to receive SS Benefits, verification of the benefits was received, and the correct benefit was documented on the Intake and Special Programs pages.	59	7	108	89.3%

Eligibility

Out of the 174 cases, 173 were reviewed for eligibility criteria for VR services. Of those, 167 (96.5%) were determined in 60 days or less or an eligibility extension was approved by the client.

The average number of days from application to eligibility was 26.79 days. In the previous review, the average time from application to eligibility for all new eligibilities was 28.85 days.

	Question	Yes	No	N/A	Percent
2.01	All eligibility certificates (initial and revised) are signed and in FileDirector, and the dates match the date on the eligibility certificates in FileDirector	157	16		95.8%
2.02	For cases determined eligible, the eligibility letter was sent to the individual.	165	3	5	98.2%
2.03	Upon receipt of evidence that the applicant received SSI or SSDI, presumptive eligibility was completed within 5 working days (or 14 days from application if the case does not reflect the actual date SSA verification was received).	59	5	109	92.1%
2.04	If the eligibility determination was not completed within 60 days of application, an eligibility extension was completed and agreed upon by both the individual and counselor, the eligibility extension browse was completed, and the eligibility extension letter was sent.	30	5	138	85.7%
2.05	Does eligibility documentation meet required eligibility guidelines?	156	10	1	93.9%
2.06	The individual's primary and secondary impairment, if applicable, and cause code(s) are correctly recorded.	153	14	6	91.6%
2.07	The case record documents that the case was assigned the appropriate priority category based on the severity of the individual's disability.	159	8	6	95.2%

Individualized Plan for Employment

A total of 159 cases were reviewed for the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The average length of time between eligibility and IPE for the reviewed cases was 57.21 days. In the previous review, the average length of time between eligibility and initial plans completed that year was 54.29 days. Of the 159 cases reviewed, 150 (94.3%) were completed within 90 days or less or had an appropriate extension approved by the client per federal regulations.

Questions reviewing counselors work on quarterly reporting documentation including MSG's and Credential Attainment were included this year. This year (and last year), directions were given to give NA's on these questions for cases that data completed prior to October 2021 when updated training on quarterly reporting was completed. Those opened after that date or acquired a MSG/enrollment after October 2021 were to be reviewed and included in the results.

	Question	Yes	No	N/A	Percent
3.01	The IPE was completed within 90 days or an extension was agreed upon by the client and VR counselor.	150	9		94.3%
3.02	The client's employment goals are specific and justified by supporting documentation.	140	2		98.6%
3.03	All services planned on the IPE are consistent with achieving the employment goal listed on the plan.	158	1		99.3%
3.04	The IPE includes all services necessary to achieve the employment outcome.	152	7		95.6%
3.05	Comparable services and benefits were considered, used, and properly documented.	154	5		96.6%
3.06	The individual and a qualified VR counselor signed the completed, final plan(s) and all IPE signature dates on VRFACES match the signature dates on the IPEs in FileDirector.	128	31		80.5%
3.07	Annual Reviews were completed in accordance with policy.	151	8		95.0%
3.08	For supported employment cases, the Identification of Extended Services section of the IPE was completed, and the supported employment checkbox marked.	35	7	117	83.3%
3.09	Were the Enrollment Dates of Secondary, Post-Secondary or Adult Education Reported correctly?	71	3	85	96.0%
3.10	Any measurable skill gain recorded has the correct date on VRFACES AND has the necessary supporting documentation in FileDirector.	59	5	95	92.1%
3.11	If enrollment dates and MSG's recorded and the client has completed a program per other documentation, the Date of Completed Education/Disenrolled Date was completed correctly under Measurable Skill Gain on Quarterly Updates Page.	50	5	104	90.9%

Services Provided

A total of 142 cases were reviewed for the category of Services Provided. Only cases with dollars spent for services were reviewed in this section. Findings in this section are mostly related to documentation practices for maintenance, post-secondary, benefit services, and repossession agreements.

	Question	Yes	No	N/A	Percent
4.01	The services provided are listed on the IPE, or the cost of the service was less than \$200.00 and needed to complement an existing service.	139	3		97.8%
4.02	There are no significant differences between the units of services and timelines on the IPE and the actual services delivered.	142	0		100.0%
4.03	Services such as maintenance and transportation were well-documented, justified, and necessary to the employment goal if provided.	58	4	80	93.5%
4.04	All services are pre-authorized.	140	2		98.6%
4.05	Financial Needs was completed correctly if it was needed.	33	10	99	76.7%
4.06	If the individual was required to participate in the cost of services as identified from Financial Needs, their contribution was documented in the Planned Services section of the IPE.	18	2	122	90.0%
4.07	If the individual was attending postsecondary, VR form 336 was completed correctly and in the file.	22	1	3	95.5%
4.08	If the individual participated in Project Skills, the monthly reports were completed by the school as required.	40	5	1	88.8%
4.09	If the individual utilized an employment services provider, appropriate progress reports or feedback was provided.	84	0	58	100.0%
4.10	VR services were provided in a timely manner or delays were justified and well-documented.	40	2		95.2%
4.11	If equipment over \$500 was purchased that was not for medical restoration purposes, the Equipment Responsibility and Repossession Agreement) was completed, signed, and retained in the case file.	33	6	103	84.6%
4.12	If the client failed to complete a training program or left employment for which the equipment was obtained before successful case closure, the counselor retrieved the items or completed an AT referral to DakotaLink to pick up any electronic devices.	5	0	137	100%

Closure

A total of 80 cases were reviewed for the category of all case closures. Of these, 40 cases were successful closures and 40 were cases closed in other statuses.

	Question	Yes	No	N/A	Percent
5.01	The reason for closure is correct and appropriate.	77	3		96.3%
5.02	The individual was informed that their case was closed.	79	1		98.8%
5.03	The SSI and SSDI statuses were recorded correctly on the Closure page for SSA beneficiaries.	38	2	40	95.0%
5.04	The information on the closure page is recorded correctly and the case file has the correct closure information.	75	5		93.8%
5.05	The VR counselor or a benefits specialist offered or provided benefits counseling services for SSA beneficiaries.	33	1	46	97.1%
5.06	Were all FileDirector Documents given a case end date to “close out” the case in FileDirector?	77	3		96.3%
5.07	If determined ineligible, the case file documents the appropriate ineligibility reason and contains an ineligibility certificate.	6	0	0	100%
5.08	If determined incapable of benefiting from VR services due to the severity of the individual’s disability, the case file documentation and case notes contain clear and convincing evidence to support ineligibility.	1	0	5	100%
5.09	For individuals closed before an eligibility determination (typically unable to contact or requested to have their case closed), the case file provides documentation of this closure and no eligibility decision.	2	0	4	100%
5.10	The individual achieved the planned or a closely related employment outcome resulting in competitive, integrated employment.	37	4		90.2%
5.11	VR services provided substantially contributed to the individual’s achievement of the employment outcome.	40	1		97.6%
5.12	The client and counselor knew of and jointly agreed to the case closure.	41	0		100%
5.13	The start date of employment, wages, and hours are verifiable through supporting documentation, such as a pay stub, provider verification from a monthly report, employment questionnaire, a detailed case note, or VRFACES Employment Report completed by the counselor or provider.	38	3	0	92.7%
5.14	A Plan for Sustaining Employment was offered or completed with a provide for Ticket to Work cases.	16	5	59	76.2%

Qualitative Feedback

The qualitative feedback section was revised to remove the rating that used to be given on the counselor's service record documentation; level of contact between counselor and clients; and the counselor's counseling and guidance services provided throughout the case. A comment box where qualitative feedback only with no ratings was provided instead. Because counselors were not able to dispute their rating due to the subjective nature of the questions and the intent of the section to be a training tool for the clients, it was felt that this approach would be more helpful. The questions reviewers were asked to respond to for each case were as follows.

Question	
6.01	What comprehensive assessment activities were noted in the case? Include notes on things done well or that could have been done differently for the case's comprehensive assessment.
6.02	Overall, how would you describe the service record documentation?
6.03	Overall, how would you describe the level of contact initiated by the counselor?
6.04	Overall, how would you describe the individual's level of participation in the VR process?
6.05	Overall, how would you describe the counselor's counseling and guidance services throughout the VR process?
6.06	What are some things that you felt the counselors could have done differently to change the outcome of unsuccessful closures? Please indicate NA if case is still open or closed successfully.
6.07	What did the counselor do well that positively impacted the case that should be more common practice?

Recommendations:

Below is a summary of various findings, recommendations, and potential changes. It is important to understand that many cases selected for the review are older cases with documentation and services prior to trainings and policy changes.

1. Areas where we saw improvement from last year's review
 - Eligibility certificates being signed and in FileDirector
 - 336 Forms-this is great! This has been a low-scoring area for several years!
 - Repossession of equipment when needed-also has previously been a low-scoring area for several years.
 - Correct documentation on closure page
 - Correct wage verification
2. Clarification in policy/training will be provided on
 - SS Documentation
 - Eligibility extension-new guidance
 - IPE documentation
 - Financial Needs
 - Equipment repossession form

- PSE
 - Case management/time management and case documentation training
 - Reading SVES
3. Other topics that arose during CFR that require additional conversation include
- Getting list of cases before hand in review
 - Social security documentation-especially when obtained during case
 - Seeing less in-person contact with clients
 - VR service enhancement-keepign things simple
 - Check marks for case notes
 - Canned Statements
 - Improve, but make available for staff to use
 - GET SARA WORKING
 - FileDirector
 - Organization for 336
 - Guidance for descriptions.
 - Guardian signing document, but guardianship paperwork not in file
 - Does RSA need documentation of presumptive eligibility?
 - Change logic in FACES where it will accept \$0 for amount
 - Could also just change question-is type of benefit reported correctly
 - Are case file review questions getting us what we need?
 - Need guidance how to determine a case can be closed successfully when only C and G was provided
 - Supervisor review? CRC review?
 - Financial need being very limiting to clients
 - Unnecessary delays in services
 - Expanding counseling and guidance and supports to business
 - Being patient with clients who need more time.
4. Changes to review process or case file review instrument
- Resources to Staff
 - List of dates of when policy changes occurred
 - Document with new staff and their start dates
 - Update closure checklist

- Process
 - Review newer cases
 - Way cases are pulled so we aren't reviewing the same cases
 - Try February timeframe for CFR to avoid busy end of school year time
- BIT Tickets to Complete
 - None identified
- Instrument
 - All Sections
 - Section 1
 - Voter registration paperwork question
 - Clarify SS Questions
 - Section 2
 - Section 3
 - 3.06-clarify all plans are in File Director and date and signature are present
 - Section 4
 - Section 5
 - Section 6
 - Move narrative into one box instead of individual boxes or make it so not every box is required
 - Label "additional comments" with current questions as suggested things to cover