



# VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum

October 5, 2021

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## Housekeeping

- Welcome to the VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum.
- **ASL Interpreters** are designated as “co-hosts”, so they appear at the top of your participant list.
- **Closed Captioning** is available. A livestream is linked in the chat.
- **Your name:** please change the name that Zoom displays to your first and last name. An easy way to rename is: 1) go to the participant list and find your name, 2) hover over your name, 3) select “more,” 4) select “rename.”
- **Questions and Comments:** Please submit feedback, questions, comments via Microsoft Form: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=RrAU68QkGUWPJriclVmCjPZziNO3vctElqxVZCB47BNUNDdUS0VYUjJUV0FOWjRHNEU0MEFXNzlEMS4u>
- **Microphones:** Please keep your microphone muted throughout the meeting.
- **Technical Issues:** If you have technical issues, please contact [Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us](mailto:Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us) or [Jessica.Outhwaite@state.mn.us](mailto:Jessica.Outhwaite@state.mn.us).
- **Recording:** The session will be recorded and posted to the VRS website along with the agenda, presentation, and transcript.

# Agenda

- **Welcome:** Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships
- **VR Program Contracting Updates:** Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships
  - 2022 P/T Contracting Cycle
  - State COVID Vaccination/Testing Policy for P/T Contract Holders
  - Community Partnerships Team Updates
- **Pre-ETS Updates:** Alyssa Klein, VRS Pre-ETS and Transition Coordinator
- **Q&A:** Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships
- **Wrap Up:** Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships

# 2022 P/T Contract Cycle

# Preview: 2022 Contracting Cycle

- Most P/T Contracts Expire June 30, 2022.
- New P/T Contracts must be executed before that date.



# COVID Testing and Vaccination Policy

# Why Did the State Issue this Policy?

- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring unprecedented challenges to our State.
- The ongoing community transmission of the Delta variant of COVID-19, especially among those who are unvaccinated, presents a continuous risk of infection.
- In response, the State issued State Policy #1446.
- State Policy #1446 is intended to ensure the safety of state staff, Community Partner staff, and the people we serve.

# What Does the Policy Require?

- State Policy #1446 requires VRS Community Partners who hold a Master P/T Contract to track and maintain data regarding proof of full COVID-19 vaccination or weekly negative COVID-19 testing results.

# Who is Affected by this Policy?

- This policy affects all state employees and most state contractors and vendors.
- Your organization is not alone in navigating uncharted waters in COVID vaccine and testing policies.
- In many ways, each state agency is in a similar boat as each of you.
- VRS is itself working with DEED to develop internal processes to implement the policy as it relates to our 375 VRS staff.
- To get a sense of the breadth of state contractors and vendors this applies to – you can look at this [Guidance-Vaccination-and-Testing-Vendors-and-Contractors](#).

# Effective Date and Implementation

- The effective date of Policy #1446 was September 8, 2021.
- VRS does not expect that our Community Partners will implement this policy overnight.
- We recognize there is a lot of information to digest in the state policy and logistics to put in place.
- We do expect that our Community Partners will work diligently to develop and implement internal policies to comply with Policy #1446 as soon as possible.

# Does Policy #1446 apply to my organization?

- Policy #1446 applies to any VRS Community Partners who hold a P/T Contract with employees who are:
  - Providing in-person services to our customers or other state employees.
  - Entering State office buildings for more than 10 minutes.
- Policy #1446 does not apply to VRS Community Partners with a P/T Contract with employees who are:
  - Only providing virtual services.
  - Onsite for less than 10 minutes.

# Does Policy #1446 apply to employees of my organization who provide services only through a VRS Grant Contract?

- Policy #1446 does not apply to grant contracts from VRS. However, most of the VRS Community Partners who have a grant contract through VRS also have a VR Program P/T Contract. Thus, the vast majority of VRS Community Partner organizations are affected by this policy.
- If an organization has both a VRS grant contract and a VR Program P/T Contract, this policy is applicable at a specific employee level.
- If a Community Partner employee provides only services through a grant and do not provide any VR program services, then the Community Partner does not need to track and maintain data regarding proof of full vaccination or weekly positive test results for that individual employee.
- If a Community Partner employee provides both grant services and VR program services, then the Community Partner does need to track and maintain data regarding proof of full vaccination or weekly positive test results for that individual employee.

## Does Policy #1446 apply to employees of my organization or business such as the office administrator, receptionist, accountant?

- Community Partners are required to track and maintain data regarding proof of full vaccination or weekly positive test results only for staff who will provide direct, in-person services funded by a state P/T contract.
- Community Partners do not need to track and maintain data regarding proof of full vaccination or weekly positive test results for office staff (such as office administrators, receptionists, accountants).

# What to Document and Track

- Completed attestation forms for all staff
- Copies of Accepted Proof of Vaccination
  - A paper or electronic copy of a CDC COVID-19 vaccination card
  - If vaccinated in another country, then an original or copy of an alternative official vaccination record
- A list of staff who will require weekly testing
- Testing completion records

# What to Send to VRS

- Nothing at this time.
- Please maintain your own records until we provide additional information regarding compliance monitoring.

# Where can my employees find testing?

- There are testing sites across the state that are free and don't require an individual to be symptomatic.
- Minnesotans can also order free at home tests.
- Click here to find [testing options in Minnesota](#).

# VRS Community Partnerships Team Updates

# Community Partnerships Team Structure

- Supporting VRS Community Partners particularly on matters relating to the Vocational Rehabilitation program:  
Janeen Oien, Jess Outhwaite, Anne Paulson, Sara Sundeen.
- Brad Westerlund continues his work on the Community Partnerships team supporting grants and special contracts work with the CILs, the Deaf-and-Hard-of-Hearing grants, and Extended Employment grants.
- Claire Courtney continues her work with Behavioral Health and Individual Placement and Supports grants.

- Behavioral Health
- Individual Placement and Supports

- Centers for Independent Living
- Deaf-and-Hard-of-Hearing Grants
- Extended Employment Program

# Supporting Community Partners on Matters Relating the VR Program

- Every VRS Community Partner with a VR Program P/T contract has a Community Partnerships Program Specialist assigned as a liaison: Janeen Oien, Jess Outhwaite, Anne Paulson, or Sara Sundeen.
- With the expansion of staff, we are reassigning those liaisons.
- To find out which Community Partnerships Program Specialist is the dedicated liaison for a particular Community Partner, go to: <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/listing>.

# Community Partner + CP Team Liaison Notes

- Anne and Jess generally support providers based in the Northern region.
- Sara and Janeen generally support providers based in the Southern region.
- The Metro Region is supported by Anne, Janeen, Jess, and Sara by provider, not geography.
- Anne is the primary contact for the Centers for Independent Living (regardless of region).
- Sara is the primary contact for the Title I Partners (regardless of region).
- We've found that the "mini-teaming" approach we've used in the last several months has worked well. This means that each Community Partner has their primary liaison and will also receive some support from the primary liaison's "mini-team" member. The mini-team member is the primary liaison's natural back-up when someone is out of the office.
  - Anne and Jess will continue to be a "mini-team."
  - Sara and Janeen will continue to be a "mini-team."

# Community Partnerships Liaisons

- A Community Partner's liaison is available to meet (virtually at this time) and discuss any questions about VRS contracts or services.
  - Discuss potential changes or additions to a Community Partner's menu of services on current or future contracts.
  - Provide technical assistance on a variety of topics like invoices/reporting, implementation of new policies, etc.

# No Wrong Door!

- There is no wrong door to connect with the Community Partnerships team.
- You can always default to contacting any or all of us and we will figure out who follows up on our end.

- ABC
- Academy of Whole Learning
- Advance Opportunities
- Avivo
- Beyond Limits
- BP Placement Services
- Bridges MN
- Career Discovery
- Career Ventures
- Cedar Valley Services
- Christensen, Nancy
- CSD
- Defined Care
- Designing Dreams by Loramy Inc.
- Digital Workshop Center
- Dungarvin MN
- Empower Inclusion LLC
- EON, Inc.
- Epic
- eQuality Pathways to Potential
- Fraser
- Goodwin, Nancy
- Great Works
- KCQ, Inc.
- Lead the Way MN
- Learnability Network
- Lifeworks Services
- Merrick
- Midwest Special Services
- MRCI
- Nobles County DAC
- Phoenix Alternatives, Inc. (PAI)
- Placement Partners MN Inc
- ProWorks
- River Connections
- Rock County Opportunities
- STEP, Inc.
- Vocational Support Services
- Yes Works, LLC

# Sara Sundeen

Serving: Southern MN, Metro, Title I Partners Statewide  
Sara.Sundeen@state.mn.us, 651-247-9121

- Community Involvement Programs
- Kaposia
- JFCS
- Kota Connections
- Partnership Resources
- Tasks Unlimited
- Leading Prospects
- Market Communications
- Opportunity Partners
- AccessAbility
- Anoka Co JTC
- Career Solutions
- Central MN JTS
- City of Duluth Workforce Development
- Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute (Alina Health)
- Creative Employment Opportunities
- Enlightening
- Goodwill Industries, Inc. dba Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota
- Hennepin County Vocational Services
- Hope Haven
- Illies Consulting
- Inter-County Community Council
- LJ&A
- Minnesota Career Solutions
- MN Valley Action Council South Central Workforce Center
- Navigate Career Consulting
- NE MN OJT
- Northwestern College, NEXT Program
- Opportunity Services
- Pearl Consulting
- ProAct
- Sanders Placement Services
- Service Enterprises
- Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (SW MN PIC)
- TSE, Inc.
- Winona ORC Industries
- Workforce Development Inc. Southeast Minnesota
- Bridgeway to Independence Inc.
- West Central Industries

# Jess Outhwaite

Serving: Northern MN, Metro

Jessica.Outhwaite@state.mn.us, 763-233-8829

- African Economic Development Solutions
- Arrowhead Community Employment
- At The Turn (Caddie U)
- Breaking Barriers
- Choice Unlimited
- Companion Linc, LLC
- Custom Inclusion, Inc
- Employment Enterprises
- Employment Links
- Falls Diverse Abilities Group
- Focus Corp
- Functional Industries
- Guild Incorporated
- HomeBee
- Hubbard County DAC
- L&S Consulting
- MN Custom Employment
- My Path
- NE Contemporary Services
- Norman Co DAC
- Northern Opportunity Works
- NorthStar Community Services
- Opportunity Connections
- Options
- Options for Employment
- Peace of Mind of Duluth
- Pine PHASE
- Polk County DAC
- Range Center, Inc
- Reach For Resources
- Ready Set Go
- Rising Phoenix
- Spectrum Connections
- Stellher Human Services
- Success Unlimited
- TLC of Duluth
- TramsEM
- Trillium Works
- WACOSA

# Anne Paulson

Serving: Northern MN, Metro, CILs Statewide  
Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us, 651-259-7135

- Access North CIL (CILNM)
- Adaptive Experts
- Baker, Cindy
- Becker County DAC
- Blended Youth & Family Services
- Blue Sky
- Capital Health
- Driving Ambition
- Employment Solutions
- Freedom CIL
- Goodwill GIVE
- HDC
- Heartland Industries
- ILICIL
- Live Well Consulting
- Lutheran Social Service
- MCIL
- MDI
- Motivation on Wheels
- MSOCS
- Oaktree Residential
- ODC
- Options CIL
- Pinewood-Cloquet
- Pinewood-Duluth
- Productive Alternatives
- Residential Services (RSI)
- Rise
- Schwartz, Paul
- Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL)
- Southern Minnesota Independent Living Enterprises and Services (SMILES)
- Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL)
- Speech Gurus
- Stevens County DAC
- Stubbe and Associates
- Thor Transitional Services
- UDAC
- Webber Placement
- WinWay

# Pre-ETS Updates

# Pre-ETS Staffing Updates

## Pre-ETS Representatives, Pre-ETS Placement Coordinators

- Total Pre-ETS Staff: 58
  - Pre-ETS Representatives
    - Current: 36
    - To be hired: 11
    - Total: 47
  - Pre-ETS Placement Coordinators
    - To be hired: 11
- 100+ Counselors

## VRS Specialists

- 4 Regional Pre-ETS Specialists
  - 2 Metro
  - 1 North
  - 1 South
- 3 Additional Placement Specialists:
  - 2 North
  - 1 South

# VRS School Directories

- VRS school directories will be updated shortly
- See what VRS staff works with a particular school here:  
<https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/youth/contacts/>

# Northern Region

- **Northwest MN Team - Jeff Bjornson, RAM**
  - Aimee Berger
  - Leah Zimmerman
- **North Central MN Team - Randa Lundmark, RAM**
  - Michael Francis
  - John Ulrich
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Duluth Team - Sonia Vinnes, RAM**
  - Renae Hampton
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Representative
- **Alexandria/St. Cloud Team - Andrea Chirhart, RAM**
  - Eric Theede
  - 2 Vacancies: Pre-ETS Representatives
- **Monticello Team - Lori Thorpe, RAM**
  - Eden Meinke
  - David Schreiber
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Cambridge Team - Joy Beise, RAM**
  - Emily Galzki
  - Brittany Kellum
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Fergus Falls Team - Eric Wittbrodt, RAM**
  - Caroline Rogers
  - Tanya Stoll
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff

# Metro Region

- **Hennepin North Team - Connie Schultz, RAM**
  - Allison Marcus
- **Hennepin South Team - Sarah Gutzman, RAM**
  - Brendan Lebsack
  - Kevin O'Brien
- **Minneapolis North Team - Thant Pearson, RAM**
  - Song Lee
  - 2 Vacancies: Pre-ETS Representatives
- **Minneapolis South Team - Jodi Yanda, RAM**
  - Lauren Srdar
  - Yasmin Awad
  - 2 Vacancies: 1 Pre-ETS Representative, 1 Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **North St. Paul Team - Jennifer Germain, RAM**
  - Shanda Copeland
  - Kelly Perkins
  - Lindsey Wolfe
- **St. Paul Team - Dawn Witwer, RAM**
  - Susan Fox
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Representative
- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Team - Elise Knopf, RAM**
  - Jada Johnson
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Representative
- **Blaine/Anoka Team - Becky Johnson, RAM**
  - Mary Steinmetz

# Southern Region

- **Faribault Team - Karla Tauer, RAM**
  - Ryan Lais
  - Stacy Mason
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Rochester Team - Erin Main, RAM**
  - Jennifer Hoffman
  - Danielle Littleton
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Southwest MN Team - Mimi Shafer, RAM**
  - Amy Berghorst
  - Krista Kube
  - Vacancy: Pre-ETS Representative
- **Mankato Team- Christine Olson, RAM**
  - Jake Hoerst
  - 2 Vacancies: 1 Pre-ETS Representative, 1 Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Shakopee Team - Heather Felderman, RAM**
  - Sam Bravo
  - Heather Lindgren
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Apple Valley Team - Rich Wagner, RAM**
  - Rebecca Knutson
  - Taylor McLaughlin
  - 1 Vacancy: Pre-ETS Placement Staff
- **Woodbury Team - Erin Kampa, RAM**
  - Matt Shipp
  - 2 Vacancies: 1 Pre-ETS Representative, 1 Pre-ETS Placement Staff

# 2 Levels of Career Services

- **Introductory Career Services (“Pre-ETS Only”)**
  - VRS staff: Pre-ETS Representative
  - Typical starting point for 9<sup>th</sup> - 11th graders
  - **\*\*VRS needs: *Verification of disability*\*\***
- **VR Career Services (“Pre-ETS Plus”)**
  - VRS staff: VR Counselor
  - Typical starting point for 11th, 12th graders and age 18-21 transition students
  - **\*\*VRS needs: *Documentation of disability*\*\***

For more information: [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/student-services-levels\\_tcm1045-496681.pdf](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/student-services-levels_tcm1045-496681.pdf)

# Other Pre-ETS Items

- **Metro Pre-ETS Community of Practice (CoP)**
  - Community Partners and VRS Staff
  - Meets virtually the 3rd Thursday of each month, 9-10:30
  - Contact Taylor McLaughlin, [taylor.mclaughlin@state.mn.us](mailto:taylor.mclaughlin@state.mn.us), to get the link and get on the email list.
- **E1MN-Youth Professionals Email List**
  - Subscribe here:  
[https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNDEED/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=MNDEED\\_1111](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNDEED/subscriber/new?topic_id=MNDEED_1111)

# Discussion – Questions and Answers

Please submit questions and comments using the Microsoft Form linked in the chat and below.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=RrAU68QkGUWPJricIVmCjPZziNO3vctElqxVZCB47BNUNDdUS0VYUjJUV0FOWjRHNEU0MEFXNzIEMS4u>



Thank you!



## Funding Notice

*The VR program receives 74.05 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2019, the total amount of grant funds awarded were \$41,796,129. The remaining 25.5 percent of the costs (\$14,300,000) were funded by Minnesota state appropriations.*