



AgrAbility, VR, and WIOA

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Financial questions related to agricultural employment

- Can farms meet the minimum wage requirement for successful VR closure?
- How is minimum wage determined for a farmer?
- Is farming the primary occupation if the farmer is working an off farm job?
 - What if the job is seasonal?

As an AgrAbility staff member keep in mind...

- VR and AgrAbility have similar goals.
- As an AgrAbility professional no one is more passionate about helping the farmer than you are.
 - Keep that in mind and in perspective.
- State VR programs work with thousands of clients a year.
- Disability related equipment vs. Business related equipment.

AgrAbility/VR Working Group: Initial goals

- Understand the issues related to state & regionals AgrAbility projects (SRAPs), VR agencies, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
 - WIOA = need to show minimum wage
- Understand the regulations related to SRAPs, VR, and WIOA
- Understand how all these issues mesh

Activities of the NAP and working group

- Individual discussions with staff and consultants
- AgrAbility all-staff call on VR issues (2/7/19)
- Query of SRAPs' VR issues (July 2019)
- Multiple working group calls
 - National AgrAbility Project (NAP) + VR consultant Steve Etheridge
 - Paul Leverenz, AgrAbility of Wisconsin
 - Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
 - Karri Wilson (MO) & other state VR staff & consultants
 - Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) at San Diego State University

Goals

- Provide guidance (white paper) to VR counselors
 - How they can serve farmers and meet the requirements of WIOA
 - Why they should serve farmers
 - Success statistics
 - Success stories
- Provide guidance to SRAPs and clients
 - Best practices in working with VR related to WIOA
 - Financial information needed/desired

Development process

- Consolidating information from calls into an outline
- Produced multiple drafts and “final” version
- Vetting with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
 - Exploring options through CSAVR and the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management
 - No permanent RSA commissioner for Biden administration

Some conclusions

- Self-employment is unusual for VR counselors, and agricultural self-employment is even more unusual
- Most “self-employment” VR ag clients need AT
- Not unusual for farms to show little profit/loss (e.g., tax advantages; WOIA disadvantage)
- Viability and profitability are different
- Complexities of farm finance are beyond most people, including VR counselors
- Can't fully understand viability through a few documents (like Schedule F)

Some conclusions

- Nothing says that profitability (minimum wage) has to be established before VR services are provided
- Self-report is an acceptable means of establishing minimum wage
- There is latitude within the regulations to be inclusive or exclusive
- There are pressures to be exclusive
 - Order of selection
 - 15+% of VR funding to transitioning youth

Dissemination strategies

- NAP publication/white paper
- NAP webinar
- CSAVR
 - Monthly networking calls
 - Conference
 - Webinars
- State VR agencies
- Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management

Thoughts from Karri Wilson
