

Job-Driven Technical Assistance Center  
(JD-VRTAC):

North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
**Getting More People Employed in North Dakota:  
Improving Business Engagement and  
Utilizing Labor Market Information**

Brenda Vennes, Business Services Specialist, NDDVR

Jeff Jenkins, Career Assessment Specialist, NDDVR

Terry Brigance, JD-VRTAC

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# Webinar Objectives

- Explain JD-VRTAC goals, partners, TA, and Learning Collaborative
- Describe North Dakota DVR background/services
- Explain North Dakota DVR JD-VRTAC project background
- Discuss North Dakota DVR JD-VRTAC project purpose & goals
- Describe North Dakota DVR JD-VRTAC project implementation
- Share North Dakota DVR JD-VRTAC project accomplishments
- Share challenges & lessons learned from North Dakota DVR JD-VRTAC project
- Describe current status of North Dakota DVR JD-VRTAC project
- Discuss what was most helpful from the TA and Learning Collaborative throughout this process
- Share next steps, future direction, & goals for North Dakota DVR



# JD-VRTAC Goals

Improve skills of state VR agency staff, other rehab professionals & providers of VR services, who are trained to provide “job-driven” VR services & supports to PWD, employers & customized training providers.

## Four Topic Areas:

1. Business Engagement
2. Employer Supports
3. Labor Market Information (LMI)
4. Customized Training Providers

[www.explorevr.org](http://www.explorevr.org)



# JD-VRTAC Partners

Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), Univ. of Massachusetts/Boston

## ***In Partnership with:***

- Jobs for the Future (JFF)
- Univ. of Arkansas/CURRENTS
  - Univ. of Washington
- Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
  - United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN)
  - Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)

## ***In Collaboration with:***

- National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB)
  - Technical Assistance Center Collaborative



# JD-VRTAC Technical Assistance

- Each state in the Learning Collaborative is assigned to a TA Team
- TA activities vary based on project needs, as outlined in mutually agreed upon TA Plan
- TA can be delivered via regular contact via email, TA Conference Calls, and/or site visits



# JD-VRTAC Learning Collaborative

- As part of receiving intensive TA, states attended 2-3 in-person Learning Collaborative meetings to provide project updates, collaborate across agencies, and participate in topical discussions
- Learning Collaborative states participate in conference calls with their cohort to discuss job-driven topics
- 19 state VR agencies are part of the JD-VRTAC Learning Collaborative



# Brenda Vennes, Business Services Specialist

Brenda Vennes is the Business Service Specialist for the ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Minot, ND regional office. She has over 20 years of private and public sector marketing experience. As a DVR Business Services Specialist, Brenda creates a broad awareness and understanding of DVR employer and employee services throughout the Minot region.



# Jeff Jenkins, Career Assessment Specialist

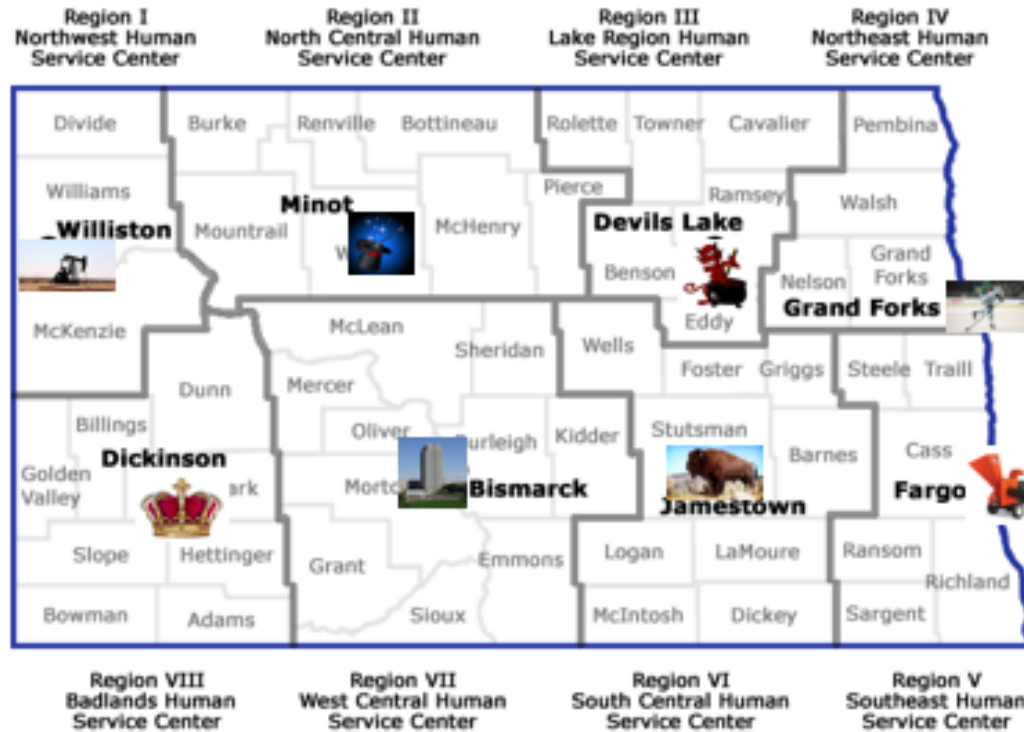


Jeff Jenkins is the Career Assessment Specialist for the ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NDDVR) in the Fargo regional office. He has an M.Ed. in Community Counseling and 12 years of experience assisting those who have special needs or disabilities. For the last five years, he has provided career assessment administration and interpretation, resume writing, interviewing skills training, and job search assistance to VR clients.





# North Dakota DVR



- 8 Regional VR offices
- 41 VR Counselors
- 7 Vision Rehabilitation Specialists
- 3 Business Services Specialists
- 2 Career Assessment Specialists
- 2 Rehab Technicians



# NDDVR Services

## VR (Individual)

- Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling/ Guidance
- Employment Goal Identification
- Employment Maintenance
- Accommodations
- Training
- Job Placement (Team Approach)
- Safety and Independent Living Training
- Mobility Instruction for those with Vision Issues
- Assistive Technology training

## VR (Business)

- Staff Retention
- Accessibility and ADA Consultation
- Recruitment Source
- Financial Incentives
- Disability Consultation
- On-the-Job Training/Job Coach Services
- On-Site Consultation and Recommendations



# North Dakota DVR JD-VRTAC Project Background

ND DVR sought technical assistance and training in enhancing staff skill in the use of labor market information (LMI), business service to employers, and building partnerships with employers as well as implementing effective strategies to increase program performance over time.



# Purpose & Goals

## 1. Improve Business Engagement

- Develop best practice guidelines using community resources
- Establish number of business contacts each VRC is to make on an annual basis
- Train VRCs on best practices
- Focus more on rapid response approach
- Hold business meetings in each office, twice monthly, to update on new job openings, new business openings, etc.



# Implementation

## 1. Business Engagement

- Senior Business Services Specialist was tasked with developing Business Engagement practices for ND DVR
- Developed Best Practices and VRC employer contact goal after discussions with states having similar demographics and regular conversations with DVR and JD-VRTAC staff
- Provided guidance and technical assistance to staff on how to work with business via video-conferencing, in person instruction and during ND DVR's annual training
- Networked with over 400 employers and human resource professionals while presenting DVR Recruitment & Retention services at the annual Governor's Workforce Conference



# Purpose & Goals

## 2. Improve use of LMI

- Develop a way for clients to learn about LMI in a group format
- Develop materials for the group
- Train VRC's regarding the process of the group



# Implementation

## 2. LMI

- Two Career Assessment Specialists and One Rehab Technician were assigned to develop this part of the project
- Conducted survey about VRC use of LMI
- Developed instructional guides and worksheets to be used in a group format after several meetings with one another and many including JD-VRTAC staff
- Implemented a pilot in the Fargo and Bismarck regions for the summer of 2016
- Discussed project with staff in all regions around the state during a video-conference



# Data

## Business Contacts (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter)

- 2015 – 88 (Before Project)
- 2016 – 432 (After Project)



## LMI (Fargo Region)

- 32 received LMI instruction
- 6 completed LMI worksheet for VRC
- 1 obtained employment a month after finishing LMI worksheet
- 1 brought LMI worksheet for VRC, but has no desire to work on it





# Challenges

- Communication
  - How to provide the information to our staff on effective business engagement and utilization of LMI with our clients (in person training, video conferencing, phone calls, etc.)
  - How many regions should be provided this information at one time to best incorporate this project statewide
  - How this is a part of WIOA and will remain an important aspect of the work we do with our agency
  - Being sure to present both aspects of the project as one rather than two separate projects
- Establishing business engagement guidelines that are relatable in both rural and urban ND regions



# Lessons Learned

- Involving/informing all staff throughout the process may have led to an easier transition to utilizing the strategies developed from this project
- Clearer goals from start may have been helpful
- Being flexible is key to finishing this project



# Future Goals

- Increase the amount of successful closures
- Increase the number of businesses contacting VR for their hiring or employee retention needs
- Decrease the amount of time it takes to develop an Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE)
- Decrease the number of closures before the IPE is established



# Next Steps

- Continued training of staff regarding business engagement strategies and using LMI to help clients with their career exploration process
- Exploring ways to get clients more motivated to research LMI and use in their career exploration process
- Collecting additional data such as the projects effect on the amount of time to develop the IPE and the amount of successful closures



# Questions?



# North Dakota DVR and TA Contact Information

## State VR Agency Presenter Contact Information:

»Brenda Vennes [bvennes@nd.gov](mailto:bvennes@nd.gov) 701-857-8651

»Jeff Jenkins [jmjenkins@nd.gov](mailto:jmjenkins@nd.gov) 701-298-4489

## JD-VRTAC TA Contact Information:

»Terry Brigance, University of Arkansas, CURRENTS  
[tbrigance@uacurrents.org](mailto:tbrigance@uacurrents.org) 501-463-2895

