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## What Is Possible When Systems Truly Collaborate?

Virginia Statewide Customized Employment Training and Technical Assistance

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Virginia Department of  
Rehabilitative Services

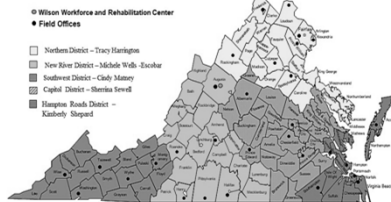


- Virginia's Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Assists people with disabilities to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment
- Participation is voluntary
- To learn more about VA DARS process and services  
<http://www.vaDARS.org/>

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Virginia Dept. for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
Division of Rehabilitative Services



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### The VR and Employment Paradigm Shift

- Virginia VR Today
- ID/DD – focus is on competitive integrated employment – Employment First!
- WIOA and DOJ Settlement Agreement – serve more youth in transition
- Early involvement with youth – emphasis on work experiences and internships – programs like Project SEARCH



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### Employment First: A Better Way of Doing Business



## Enter Customized Employment

At the confluence of policy, marketplace demands, ideals, and long-term change needed for sustainability

Customized Employment is an approach to hiring, retention, and return to work that matches a job seeker's strengths, the conditions under which they will be successful, and their interests to the needs of an employer. CE utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development — *one person at a time and one employer at a time*.  
(LEAD Center - Leading to Employment Information Brief)

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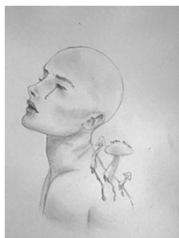
## Virginia's Interagency Customized Employment Project



The Systems Change model ' (Hall et al., 2007)

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## Values – Musings on Disability, Work and Meaning



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## Interagency Collaboration-Leadership and Values

- What is our Vision ? Why are we doing this? What are the measures of Success ? How will we know when it's working/ sustainable?
  - Develop and demonstration- evidence based model that is integrated and fully incorporated into each agencies programs (Proof of concept and buy- in)
  - Establish a core of nationally certified CE providers, model organizations, expert mentors, business/ workforce leaders, and community stakeholder champions (Driving force for innovation, capacity, and sustainability )
  - Improve on CIE opportunities and outcomes for Virginians w/most significant disabilities (CE services are available / documented impacts)

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## Catalyst: Values and Leadership

- VA CE Interagency Advisory Group ( State Level)
  - Interagency effort between DARS, DBHDS, DOE and DBVI
  - DARS has lead role in facilitating this collaboration
  - Advisory workgroup - partners working together and coalescing around the issues
    - Fosters equal participation and task distribution,
    - Supports regular communication and chance to learn from each other
    - Promotes team based problem solving and decision making
    - Maximize systems alignment of products and outcomes

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## Catalyst : Values and Leadership

- A Community Of Practice model ( A work in Progress)
  - Formed to **maximize** interagency communication, collaboration and coordination with ongoing efforts ( ex. CE implementation, training and capacity development, and systems alignment and service coordination)
  - This group is made up of VADARS and ESO representatives from around the state who participated and completed the ACRE training.
  - Capacity development strategies – local area teaming with intensive training and TA; phased approach

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### Value Based Strategies (products of partnerships)

- Interconnected and coordinated (ecosystem approach)
- CE services , practices, standards, and regulations are parallel, or complementary across agencies, blending of resources, and seamless experience for shared clients-vs fragmented and disconnected
- Evidence based programs and practices
- Standards and practices are intentional and strategic-designed for fidelity and informed from evidence based and competency based guidelines.
- Built for the marketplace ( you get what you pay for!)
- Provider rates and requirements are commiserate with actual cost and outcomes. Reinforce excellence and quality to ensure return on investment and a vibrant market place with many quality choices and options

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### Strategy -Training and TA

- CE Training Project –GHA ( capacity and sustainability)
- DARS and DBHDS braided funding and resources on a statewide cross agency competency-based CE development project to include
- Training, technical assistance, and mentorship resulting in ACRE certification for participants,
- Supporting DARS and DBHDS, to develop policy and funding mechanisms to launch and sustain statewide Customized Employment Services (CES).



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### Training-Snapshot

- Total in the GHA ACRE Training - 128
- Fairfax – 31
- Fredericksburg - 23
- Hampton – 22
- Lynchburg - 12
- Richlands – 10
- Richmond - 19
- Rocky Mount - 10
- Total earning Community Employment ACRE Certificate - 118
- DARS CE Providers
  - 28 ESO staff, from 10 different agencies in 3 different DARS districts have been approved for DARS CE services

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### Training and TA ( work in progress)

- VRCs training in CE along with TA from Central Office staff to ensure they are knowledgeable and equipped to manage and monitor the provision of quality CE service
  - Web based mentoring platform
  - VA DARS On-demand toolkit
  - Local CoP development
- Lot more to come- Round II CE transformation training and supports ( summer 2019)

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### Strategies in action – Policy and Funding

- New CE Policy, Guidance, Tools and Milestones framework published April 2019
- Provider requirements
- Rates
- Practice guidelines and expectations of providers, VRCs
- Target populations
- Interagency alignment and practical application

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### Who is customized employment for?

- The principles of Customized Employment can be applied to any job seeker.
- In Virginia, the partnership between DBHDS and DARS in implementing Customized Employment has focused on VR and Waiver clients with an ID/DD diagnosis.
- CE services , practices, standards, and policy are parallel and available across both agencies-
- We prioritized access to high fidelity CE services that are delivered consistently across both systems to maximize impacts on access, quality outcomes for job seekers, statewide capacity development, community buy-in, and long-term sustainability

VA DARS Customized Employment is appropriate for individuals with the most significant disabilities who:

1. Require & meet criteria for supported employment services; and
2. Who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, are not likely to meet the competitive demands set by employers in existing job descriptions even with the provision of supports; and
3. Due to the nature and severity of their disability, would not likely benefit from traditional supported employment services or have been unsuccessful with traditional supported employment services; and
4. Require employment that is individually negotiated to fit the individual's needs as well as employer or labor market needs.

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### WHO Can Provide Customized Employment

- ESO staff certified through an acre-approved training program
- ESO Staff should, upon receipt of an ACRE Certificate for Community Employment Services with an emphasis in Customized Employment from Griffin and Hammis (or another approved ACRE program) send a copy of the certificate to Dionca Coleman-Williams at [Dionca.Coleman@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Dionca.Coleman@dars.virginia.gov)
- The certificate will be kept on file at DARS and will be used to approve authorizations.
- To find out if a training program is approved by ACRE contact the ESSP unit at DARS central office or go to <http://www.acreducators.org/find-training-providers>

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Procedure Code	Procedure Description	SWM Description
CEPhase1	CE Consultation and Service Identification meeting (4 hours)	Completed intake, Roles and Responsibilities agreement, and initial Discovery Action Plan completed
CEPhase2	Complete the Discovery Process (30 hours)	Completed Discovery Staging Record (Stages 1-5), which serves as evidence of the process. DSR stage five (Vocational Profile) must use a narrative format and may be augmented by digital photos.
CEPhase3	Customized Employment Planning (8 hours)	CE Job Development Plan that includes a list of 10-20 specific local businesses (or business contacts) aligned with each vocational theme (DSC Stage 6). Includes supplemental (detailed) list of initial tasks, assignments, and directions for team members.
CEPhase4	Customized Job Development and Negotiation (15 hours)	Customized Job Proposal/Description. CE placement consistent with the client's ideal conditions for employment (including pay, hours, benefits, etc.) Documentation of Ongoing Support needs to be explored or addressed upon employment.
CEPhase5	Customized Employment Job Supports (30 hours)	Intensive on-site supports are implemented to assist the client in new employee orientation, learning the assigned job tasks, implementing needed accommodations, addressing workplace behavior, employer expectations and interpersonal skills.

Quick Facts -  
VA DARS CE Milestones  
The Five Phases

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### CE Strategies in Action

- DARS CE Model-Quick Facts
- Implemented as a comprehensive service
- Discovery will not be a standalone component
- Discovery is not an assessment activity
- Policy and milestones model includes essential elements of CE
- Each phase of CE has associated activities and deliverables ( ex. Discovery Staging Record, CE Job Development Plan, Visual Resume, Customized Job Proposal, CE Job/Task Analysis Form and Systematic Instruction Plan, etc.)

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### Quick Facts Continued

- Allows for the use of other wrap-around paid and unpaid supports such as:
  - WISA Services
  - Therapeutic Behavior Supports & Community Support Services
  - Employment Supports for paid and unpaid work experiences
  - Assistive Technology Evaluation, equipment & supports

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### Virginia Statewide Customized Employment Training and Technical Assistance

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### Project Defined

- A partnership with students and adults having the most significant impact of disability residing in the Commonwealth, their families, advocates and key stakeholders.
- Implementers include local DARS, Employment Service Organizations/Employment Specialists, Department for Blind and Vision Impaired, Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services/Community Service Boards, and Department of Education/Special Education Teachers
- The GHA project staff provided statewide Customized Employment Training and Technical Assistance that resulted in the national ACRE Certificate, as well as, Mentoring in Employment Best Practices.



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## Training & Technical Assistance

### Competency-Based Training

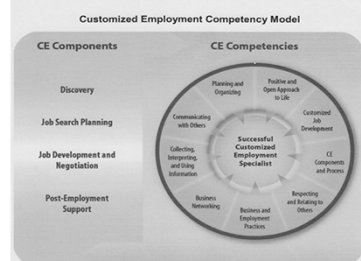
- Knowledge transfer is the goal
- Pre and Post-testing
- By requiring competency-based trainings, the aim is to improve the quality of employment services for people with disabilities, and raise the national service delivery standards.

### Technical Assistance

- Performance improvement is the goal (metrics)
- Delivery method is Immersion
- Involves tracking outcomes
- Provides a roadmap for the path to continuous quality improvement

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Distilled from the input of numerous experts in the field, the diagram below illustrates the four CE components and the nine competencies needed by employment specialists and the CE support team to successfully provide CE services to job seekers.



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Adults approach learning differently than children. They have lived and work experience, value their independence, make decisions and problem solves continually, are self-directed, and sometimes less receptive to change. All of these factors impact their motivation to change. Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in the study of adult learning, observed that adults learn best when:

- The reason the information is being taught is clear
- Learning is task oriented
- The content is relevant to their life or work
- Learning is a less formal process with opportunities for active participation
- They are respected as equal partners in the process of learning
- Socialization is incorporated into the process

### **Adult Learning Theory**

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## Experiential Learning

- Demonstrate
- Practice
- Observe
- De-brief

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## Getting Started

- Forming a team
- Defining roles
- Providing training, technical assistance, mentoring
- Developing timelines
- Identifying job seekers
- Completing the Discovery Process
- Crafting the Visual Resume
- Identifying Vocational Themes and businesses
- Tweak the Visual Resume as needed
- Developing the Customized Employment Plan
- Negotiating the job

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## Phase 1 of the project TRAINING and Team Based Work- Minimum of 40 HOURS



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## Mentoring Community-Based Learning and Practice

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### Informational Interviews Focusing on Businesses & Job seekers - not on CRPs or a pity model of hiring

#### Discovering:

- Business History
- Business Culture
- Business Unmet Needs
- Employee Training
- Business Values and Mission
- Product or service
- Community Involvement
- Expansion goals

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### Field Work - Assessing Business Needs and Culture



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**La Petite Boutique RVA**  
is an independent, locally owned women's boutique that provides customers with unique clothing styles from designers around the world, and accessories ranging from shoes, hats, scarves, and jewelry.

Helen curates a small inventory of clothing and accessories from trusted designers and labels from around the world. She mentions that it is very important for her to source clothing that is eco-friendly and produced in a socially conscious manner.

**Business Opportunities**  
Helen states that she would like to build more local connections and meet new designers, have more time to source clothing and merchandise.

- Hire an assistant to develop customer profiles to help her more seamlessly interact and market to her current customer base.
- Develop opportunities for consignment with local artists to expand merchandise selection, without having to take on the upfront cost (e.g. VCU Fashion Department).
- Hire a concierge for customers in other time zones who are looking to interact with the business outside of her normal hours of operation.

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### Needs and Future

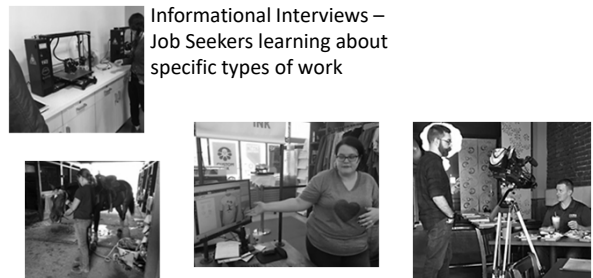
Marketing needs to get customers in the door and introduced to the store culture, unique services and the importance of proper shoe fitting.

Jeff is challenged by working in his multiple stores and trying to be at events and marketing opportunities. Help with events and extra support at high peak retail times and at events.



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### Informational Interviews – Job Seekers learning about specific types of work



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## Visual Resumes

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All the hard work of preparing for and caring for the plants pays off.

When the crops are ripe we pick them. When all the crops are picked we celebrate. We also give to others.




**I am a Happy Harvester!**

- I gently squeeze the fruit or vegetable.
- If it is not hard or too soft, I carefully twist it from the stem.
- If it does not snap off easily, I use garden scissors to cut the stem, to make sure I do not hurt the vegetable or fruit.

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## Job Proposals Developed from Vocational Themes and Informational Interviews

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**Job Duties:**

- Assisting customers with purchases
- Stocking kiosk and maintain inventory
- Maintaining kiosk area

**Wage:**  
\$8.00/ hour

**Cost of Equipment and Initial Supplies:**

Kiosk	\$2,500
Vintage Cash Register	\$500
Vintage Candy Scale	\$500
Various Old Fashioned Candies	\$250
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$3,550</b>

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## Technical Assistance Outcomes

- Completed Home Visits
- Held CE Team Consultation and Planning
- Worked with Job Seekers and Employment Specialists
- Completed Discovery Activities and Discovery Profiles
- Practiced Informational Interviews with local businesses
- Provided TA on Organizational Transformation
- Hosted CE Team Meeting with Job Seekers and Support Teams
- Met with DARS staff to discuss CE & job seeker criteria
- Provided consultation to high school transition staff
- Provided follow – up Distance Consultation

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## What does it take?

- Looking at Community differently
- Creating Social Capital by actually getting outside of office
- Moving toward Economic Development
- Spending more time with local businesses and less time inside traditional systems
- Collaborating around the notion of Person-Centered approaches, driven by the interests, preferences, and strengths, of one person---not a program
- Understanding that “disability” does not occur in a vacuum but rather is part of a local economy/community

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*Conversational Questions for Richard*

There is such effective team work between the state lead organizations that are partners in this initiative. What are the essential elements that make this work?

What preparation do organizations need in order to make informed decisions regarding committing to such projects?

Are there any unintended consequences that arose ?

How can we ensure that individuals with disabilities are included in the design of such initiatives?

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**For Information about DRRP:**

- DRRP on Customized Employment of Individuals with Disabilities
- <https://drdp.vcurrtc.org>
- This project is funded by a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant #90DP0085) on Customized Employment of Individuals with Disabilities.

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