

Section 511 Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Do I need to fire or lay-off all current employees who are under the age of 25, started working prior to 7/22/16, and who have not been to VR?**
 - a. No. If they were already working at your facility prior to July 22, 2016 and have not had a break in employment since that time, they do not need to go through Vocational Rehabilitation services to continue their employment in a sheltered setting. They do have to participate in semi-annual and/or annual career counseling and information and referral trainings with Vocational Rehabilitation and be provided with documentation of their participation.
- 2. Do all employees, regardless of age, need to be referred to VR for paperwork in order to be eligible for continued employment at the sheltered workshop or 14c facility?**
 - a. VR is already aware of the 14c facilities in the State of Missouri, and the list of all employees working for subminimum wage in the facilities. There is no need to refer employees to VR.
 - b. Any employees wishing to pursue competitive integrated employment should be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation.
 - c. All employees, regardless of their age, who are earning subminimum wage in a sheltered workshop or 14c facility will be required to participate in semi-annual and/or annual career counseling and information and referral, which will be provided by Vocational Rehabilitation twice yearly:
 - i. November/December for semi-annual reviews in 2016 for employees who began employment between 7/22/16 and 12/1/16;
 - ii. May/June for any additional semi-annual and all other annual reviews in 2017, meaning anyone beginning employment after 12/1/16 or who is already employed.
- 3. Is VR going to persuade sheltered workshop's employees to leave?**
 - a. No. Vocational Rehabilitation's intent is to provide information for workshop employees to make an informed choice regarding their employment setting. Vocational Rehabilitation will provide information regarding employment options, including options for competitive integrated employment. It is not Vocational Rehabilitation's intent to persuade employees to leave. The employee and their parent/guardian will continue to have input into their employment options.
- 4. How do I make a referral to VR for someone under the age of 25 who wants to work at a 14c facility for sub minimum wage?**
 - a. Email their referral information, to include their name, address, phone number, and guardians name and phone number, to smwage@vr.dese.mo.gov. This website is monitored daily and a Competitive Employment Evaluator will be assigned to the case and will contact the client and their guardian to arrange an appointment. Please provide any supporting documentation you may have to expedite the process.
- 5. Can we hire students who are still in high school?**
 - a. No. WIOA prohibits local education agencies from entering into contracts or agreements with 14c facilities for the purpose of subminimum wage employment.

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- 6. How is VR going to be able to provide semi-annual and annual Career Counseling and Information and referral services to 6,700 current workshop employees statewide before 7/22/17?**
 - a. VR staff will be providing the semi-annual reviews for those individuals who began employment on or after 7/22/16 and not after 12/1/16. This will occur in November/December 2016. VR is entering into an arrangement with the Hook Center for Educational Renewal to work closely with their 36 Pre-Employment Transition Specialists to provide the annual trainings from mid-May throughout the month of June. VR is committed to provide the reviews, along with the supporting documentation, before the target date of 7/22/17.
- 7. Why do employees have to participate in this training?**
 - a. WIOA enacted new requirements that must be met for a worker with a disability to be paid a subminimum wage. All workers, including youth, must be regularly provided with career counseling and information about training opportunities as a condition of payment of a subminimum wage. All workers, including youth, must also receive information about local self-advocacy, self-determination, and peer mentoring training opportunities. These trainings must be provided every six months during the first year of employment, and annually thereafter.
- 8. What will happen to the Social Security and Medicaid benefits of employees who choose to pursue competitive integrated employment?**
 - a. Earning more money may affect your social security and Medicaid benefits. An employee or their parent/guardian can access a free online tool at: <https://mo.db101.org/> . There are also Certified Work Experience Counselors who can provide assistance.
- 9. What will happen if an employee attempts competitive integrated employment, but it does not work out? Can they return to work at the sheltered workshop?**
 - a. Employees may be provided an opportunity to pursue competitive employment if they choose. They should be encouraged to speak to their 14c employer to determine what guidance the employment handbook of the 14c provides regarding returning to work if competitive employment does not work out. A certification for subminimum wage employment provided by DESE will remain active for 1 full year after the individual has left employment with the 14c facility (unless they are under the age of 25 and have never been through VR).
- 10. What if the employee does not want to participate in the trainings?**
 - a. WIOA requires employees earning subminimum wage in a 14c facility to be provided semi-annual or annual career counseling and information and referral to state and federal programs, as well as information regarding self-advocacy, self-determination, and peer mentoring as a requirement in order to continue earning commensurate wages. If an employee refuses to participate in the trainings they will have to determine with their employer if they can be paid at least minimum wage to maintain their employment at the 14c facility.

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11. How can VR assist with finding another job?

- a. Vocational Rehabilitation will open a case, talk to you about your interests and the type of job you are most interested in doing, and help you choose a community rehabilitation provider who will assist you with looking for a job. VR can also provide supports while you learn your new job.

12. Who is the Competitive Employment Evaluator assigned to my area?

- a. Competitive Employment Evaluators are located around the state. Right now CEE's are working in some designated counties, but sometimes, due to caseload size, CEE's from other parts of the state may provide coverage. For this reason, all referrals must be sent to the smwage@vr.dese.mo.gov email address and an assignment will be made to the appropriate CEE based upon caseload size.

13. What is the process for making a referral if someone wants to pursue competitive integrated employment?

- a. Contact the VR office that serves your area. A list of offices and the counties they serve can be found at: <https://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation/vr-offices>

14. If a workshop has an applicant who is age 25 or older, so they still need to be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation?

- a. **No.** Individuals aged 25 or older who apply to work at the workshop do not have to apply to Vocational Rehabilitation. Their cases should be referred to the DESE Certification Specialist for consideration for certification for subminimum wage employment. Individuals age 25 or older should only be referred to VR if they are interested in pursuing competitive integrated employment.