**Q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.**

Include the following:

1. Describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

(1) Supported employment offers more than just the assistance needed to find and learn a job. It provides the necessary ongoing support to help an individual maintain employment. Kentucky has identified 91 supported employment providers throughout the state. Individualized strategies are also utilized to arrange for supported employment services outside of "organized programs" when necessary (i.e. coworkers at the job site may provide support paid for with various resources; independent supported employment specialists may be hired, etc.). More than three-fourths of Kentucky’s 120 counties have access to supported employment programs. The lack of accessible and dependable transportation often limits access to supported job opportunities. Extended support services are provided by each local supported employment program utilizing funds from a myriad of sources, including the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) , the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities, city and county government, United Way, fund—raising campaigns, PASS funding, Medicaid, Supports for Community Living Waiver funds, Michelle P waiver funds and other resources. Most programs utilize a combination of funding sources for the provision of extended support services. Natural supports are encouraged (such as co-worker, peer, etc.) and are carefully monitored by the supported employment provider. Kentucky OVR’s partner, the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID), has developed a new Medicaid Waiver that would more adequately fund supported employment services for people with developmental disabilities. The new Supports for Community Living Waiver 2 (SCL2) was rolled out, and it has increased the fee structure and modified the service definitions for supported employment. Kentucky’s supported employment programs have primarily served individuals with intellectual disability and individuals with chronic mental illness. This is largely due to greater availability of funding for extended support for these two groups. Individuals with other disabilities are served if funding for extended support is available and if the supported employment provider has the expertise to meet that individual’s needs for employment training and support. Kentucky was the 12th state to participate in the Evidence-Based, Johnson and Johnson sponsored, Supported Employment Initiative via Dartmouth College. Since this time, Johnson & Johnson no longer sponsors the IPS Supported Employment project. Westat, which is an employee supported research facility, now provides oversight of the IPS Evidenced-Based Supported Employment project. The goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) model for supported employment for people with serious mental illness throughout Kentucky. At the beginning, four sites in Kentucky began pilot site implementation. Later, two sites were added, and then three sites were added. BHDDID required that all Community Mental Health Centers implement the IPS program as one of the four evidence based practices required in their state plan. A Statewide Coordinator, employed through the University of Kentucky, Human Development Institute, oversees the pilot sites. A second coordinator was hired. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Kentucky Division of Behavioral Health collaborate as Team Leading agencies for the project. The Kentucky Association for Persons in Supported Employment (KY APSE) has been successful in creating greater supported employment awareness among the legislators in Kentucky’s General Assembly. These awareness/advocacy efforts will continue with the goal of increased statewide funding allocations and possible supported employment legislation to create a more solid funding base for extended services. QUALITY Pursuant to federal regulations, supported employment services provided by approved vendors must contain these elements: 1) competitive work; 2) integrated work settings; and 3) provision of extended support services. In order to ensure that supported employment services are provided according to regulation, the following guidelines must be met: 1. Services will be provided for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have a documented need for supported employment services, including extended support services. 2. Work will be performed on a full-time or part-time basis. Each individual in supported employment and his/her OVR counselor shall jointly establish in the IPE, an appropriate goal for the number of hours per week that will maximize the individual’s vocational potential. 3. Work must take place in integrated settings where most workers do not have disabilities. 4. Wages must be in compliance with Fair Labor Standards Act. Each supported employee will have a goal of earning at least minimum wage. Kentucky’s supported employment providers adhere to the following principles: •The supported employment concept assumes that all persons, regardless of impact of disability, have the capacity and should be afforded the opportunity to participate in real employment with appropriate support. •Emphasis is placed on recognizing and maximizing opportunities in the workplace rather than just providing skills training. •The purpose of the program is employment with all of the general expectations of a job such as wages, job security, and performing meaningful work. Job Development, rather than Job Placement is the focus. •Ongoing, extended supports are tailored to meet each individual’s needs. •Individuals are offered choices in the selection and maintenance of jobs. Decisions about appropriate services are made jointly with the individual and/or the family, the supported employment provider, and the VR counselor. •Integration on the job site is recognized as necessary and important. Opportunities are available for non-work interactions with non-disabled workers. Interactions with non-disabled co-workers are a part of regular job responsibilities. "Natural supports" are developed and emphasized. •Extended services are proactive, not merely reactive. For example, plans are developed with individuals in anticipation of career advancement rather than merely waiting for a job loss, lay off, company closing, etc., before seeking other opportunities. The primary staff responsible for providing supported employment services are "Job Coaches," "Job Trainers," and/or "Employment Specialists." Positions are both full and part-time, depending on the size and service territory of the local provider. Training and consultation for staff is provided by the OVR CRP Branch according to the needs of the provider. Supported Employment Training Project core values training is required for all vendors in the SE Outcome-based reimbursement system. This is funded collaboratively using Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities/OVR dollars and is implemented by the Supported Employment Training Project at the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute. Technical assistance is also provided by the OVR CRP Branch staff. A resource manual and other policies and procedures guidelines were developed for vocational rehabilitation counselors. These are periodically revised and updated so that staff may better understand the rehabilitation process in regard to supported employment. This is a useful tool for supported employment providers as well. Seminars, workshops, and training/awareness sessions are arranged and/or participated in throughout the state with various agencies and organizations that can assist with funding, conversion, employment, and other related supported employment issues. Meetings of this nature are regularly held with such groups as The Arc of Kentucky, the Kentucky Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities, Community Mental Health Centers, Kentucky Consortium for Values Based Training, KY APSE, Kentucky Rehabilitation Association and others. The quality of supported employment outcomes is assessed individually. Such issues as consumer satisfaction, earnings, benefits, employee and employer satisfaction, the degree of integration, availability of dependable transportation, co—worker support, socialization, work environment, and provision of support services are important. On a regular basis, the OVR CRP Branch staff conducts technical assistance visits with each provider for quality assurance purposes. As well, each supported employment provider has established on-going strategies to measure customer satisfaction. EXTENT: As a part of the eligibility determination process for Vocational Rehabilitation services, supported employment will be considered as a possible vocational outcome for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The agency is now in an order of selection, serving individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities in Category 1 and 2. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will be able to provide supported employment services through approved vendors and/or individual providers. These services include: A. Development of a Person Centered Employment Plan (PCEP) with recommendations for job-development; B. Individually designed job development services, including assistance with job carving, reasonable accommodation, technology and/or other support strategies; C. Intensive on-the-job skills training and other support services provided by Employment Specialists and/or co-workers and employers; D. Time-unlimited follow-up services (including regular contact with employer, trainee, parent, guardian, or others deemed appropriate); E. Other services needed to support the individual, such as travel, training, employment advocacy, non-employment advocacy, and counseling; F. Development of a Long-Term Support Plan, which includes an outline of the extended support to be provided, and a plan for review and update. The amount, frequency and type of services will be based on the needs of each individual once eligibility is established for supported employment. If off-job-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, the monitoring, at a minimum, will consist of two meetings per month with the individual and one meeting each month with the employer. Extended long-term follow-up support services will be the responsibility of other relevant state agencies, private organizations, and other sources of funding. These services will be considered and planned for prior to an individual receiving the services listed above. Vendor status is not approved unless assurance is made of the availability of extended support services. If extended services are not fully assured at the onset of the IPE, the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and the OVR CRP Branch staff will collaborate with the provider in making arrangements for these services before the Vocational Rehabilitation case is closed.

In 2018, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation conducted a statewide survey of field counselors to explore the need and availability of Customized Supported Employment services for individuals with the most significant impact of disabilities. It was expected, due to Section 511 of WIOA, that there would be an increase in the need and demand for Customized Supported Employment Services. Fifty-six percent (56%) stated that there are Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) providers in their area that provide CSE. However, 56% also states that it’s not readily available due to limited staff or oversized caseloads. Around 79% of the counselor’s state that only 3 or fewer of their individuals have been able to utilize this service due to lack of availability. When asked if there was a need for CSE in their area, overwhelmingly, 89% stated that there was a need. Over 77% stated that they have at least 4 or more consumers on their caseloads that could benefit from CSE. Over 42% state that they have at least 8 or more consumers that need this service. As a result, the OVR was able to develop contract opportunities to assist in making this service readily available to individuals with the most significant impact of disabilities in the areas of the state that need it most. This need continues to grow, and the data retrieved from a recent survey illustrates this vividly. The CRP Branch within the OVR is making this a main priority to ensure the needs of the individuals being served are met, which will assist them in accomplishing their vocational goals and dreams. There were eight proposals received from non-profit organizations with four CRP’s receiving contracts. The four CRP’s are Mattingly Edge, Options Unlimited, Mental Health America and Build Inclusion. The CRP’s are located in Louisville, Northern Kentucky and Lexington, respectively. The contracts will be subject for renewal in July of 2020.

The OVR developed and implemented a CRP Qualitative Survey procedure in 2019 to better evaluate quality of services among the various supported employment providers. The Survey will be conducted every October and completed by participating OVR counselors. This tool will be utilized to identify quality of work and to identify potential training areas.

2. The timing of transition to extended services.

Transition from Title VI, Part B funds to extended services occurs after 90-days of stable employment. Monitoring of services continues for a minimum of 90 additional days to assure that the job is stable. Extended services continue to be provided by the CRP indefinitely using funds other than Title VI, Part B. The VR case is closed when the supported employment provider, the VR counselor, and the consumer determine that 90-days of stabilization have been achieved. Stabilization is measured for each individual by considering all circumstances including support needs, consumer choice and satisfaction regarding services, and employer feedback. Extended services are funded and made available without delay for youth with the most significant disabilities.

Extended Services are those services provided to individuals with the most significant impact of disabilities, which may include youth with the most significant disabilities. Services may be provided by the State agency, a private nonprofit or for profit organization, employer or any other appropriate resource when the individual no longer receives support services from the OVR. The OVR will determine the need for and fund services on a case-by-case basis dependent upon each individual need for services.

OVR will reserve and expend half (50%) of the State’s allotment for the provision of supported employment services and extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. Extended services will be available for youth without delay for a period not to exceed four years or until the youth no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability. OVR will work with providers to ensure another source of extended services to available to there will be no interruption of services for individuals with significant disabilities.

In January of 2019, the OVR implemented new milestone payments to CRP’s for the provision of supported employment services. Payment for Stable Employment Outcomes will be administered for 30, 60 and 90 days of stable employment. The OVR also increased fees for outcome services to aid in the retention of supported employment providers throughout the state. After the 90-day milestone has been met, the CRP will provide extended support services and provide Monthly Summary Reports to the OVR for days 120, 150 and 180, in which time the OVR counselor will then be able to close the case successfully if the person has been stable and working on a job that is consistent with the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and is no longer in need of vocational rehabilitation services.