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TO: OVR Staff, CAP, Vendors and Community Rehabilitation Staff

DATE: June 10, 2020

FROM: Cora McNabb,

Executive Director

RE: Essential Services and COVID -19

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is open for business and continues to work with all consumers to the greatest extent possible. OVR is committed to protecting the health and well-being of our staff and the individuals we serve. OVR is following physical distancing measures and providing services in different ways. As businesses in the Commonwealth begin to provide in-person services again, OVR staff continue to telecommute and are not permitted to provide face-to-face services. OVR can *purchase essential services* for consumers that are provided in-person. In an effort to provide some clarity regarding essential services for individuals with disabilities, this memo identifies those services considered essential to individuals receiving Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

OVR and community rehabilitation providers should continue to deliver services remotely (by phone or other virtual options) to the maximum extent feasible. If a service or activity cannot be provided remotely, the team (i.e. counselor, consumer, and vendor) should determine if the services can be delivered safely in person or if the team should consider postponing the service and revisiting at a later time.

To provide Counselors assistance in making good counseling and guidance decisions for the area of vocational services and authorizing for providers services the following applies:

- Essential Services for individuals are those services that are required in order for an individual to obtain and maintain their employment. In cases where an individual is in danger of losing their employment due to behavior or performance issues those services are deemed necessary. This means any service that, if it were not provided, would result in the individual losing their employment. If an individual is working at a business that has determined it complies with Healthy at Work and the individual wants to continue to go to work, a job coach may continue to support the individual. This support may be done in-person to support immediate health and safety needs, or remotely if possible.

- Essential Services for individuals are those services that are required in order for an individual to successfully participate in an educational or training setting. This would include essential assistive technology, orientation and mobility or other services deemed necessary that, if not provided, could result in the risk of the individual not being able to participate successfully in post-secondary education and training that leads obtaining a credential (i.e. barbers, cosmetology, truck driving, etc.). This applies to outside providers/vendors of services and does not include OVR merit employees.
- Essential Services for individuals are those services that are required in order for an individual to protect their immediate health and safety. This includes consideration of treatment for mental health disorders, needed accommodations (i.e. wheelchair, vehicle modifications) or other necessary medical procedures such as surgeries.

Individuals must have an opportunity to make an informed choice about using employment, training, education or other services in the community. This includes holding a team discussion to evaluate the pros and cons of continuing or returning to work or accessing services in the community. Examples of this may be:

OVR funded employment supports

OVR support and funding to access the community services (counseling, medical care, testing, etc).

OVR funded benefits counseling.

OVR funded assistive technology needed to enable an individual to function independently in instances where the lack of assistive technology is identified as a barrier for them of immediate health need. This may include necessary accommodations for online learning or new technology needs as a result of COVID-19.

OVR Counseling staff, in conjunction with the consumer (and the consumer's parent or guardian as appropriate), will make the individual decision to authorize and provide the needed service on a case by case basis and document the agreed-upon decision in the case file. When appropriate, the counselor will utilize a team approach in developing a plan that mitigates the effects of COVID-19 in delivering services. Once the OVR counselor and consumer are in agreement regarding the provision of in-person services, the case file documentation will clearly illustrate the consumer's awareness of potential risks associated with these services. The team should continue to monitor the individual's overall physical and mental health and safety and other concerns or challenges presented as a result of COVID-19.

The Counselor will inform the consumer and vendor of the need to make sure that all methods of reducing exposure and the potential spread of COVID-19 are in place as outlined by the CDC and Healthy at Work guidelines (<https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthy-at-work>). Vendors are to provide assurance of their organizations' Healthy at Work practices. A Written Plan or Policies & Procedures to address the health and safety of individuals should be in place. Providers that deliver services at an employment site or in a congregate service setting will be required to submit a plan for Healthy at Work to the Counselor prior to the OVR Counselor authorizing for services.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.