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GOVERNOR

## EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation  
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### SERVICE FEE MEMORANDUM

## Lifeworks at Western KY University Autism Program

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**TO:** Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Staff  
Client Assistance Program Administrator

**FROM:** Executive Director  
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

**THROUGH:** Field Services Division Director  
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

**DATE:** Effective: June 7, 2024

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### Introduction

Individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other learning differences possess tremendous abilities to make meaningful contributions to society through employment and service. When your business or organization partners with LifeWorks, you can profoundly change a life. LifeWorks provides customizable options for businesses to integrate our participants into the workforce. Each option is adaptable and seeks to provide hands-on experiences to prepare autistic individuals for gainful employment.

The LifeWorks is a 2-year residential transition-to-independence program that focuses on employment, independent living skills, financial management, and socialization.

## **Vocational Supports**

Program participants receive ongoing employment oversight while in the LifeWorks Transition Academy. This fades after they are employed successfully for over 6 months, but participants continue to receive at least one monthly check-in on how work is going, any changes, or any emergent support needs. All employers have email addresses and cell phone numbers for LifeWorks staff to contact any time a need or question arises during the 2 years the participant is in the Transition Academy. LifeWorks also provides assistance to the employer and participant as the participant transitions out of the LifeWorks program to develop a plan for addressing changes or concerns regarding employment once the participant has completed the LifeWorks program.

## **Employer Support**

LifeWorks vocational staff meet with employers to discuss the LifeWorks program, provide general education on autism, and offer individualized training to the business about how to best support the specific LifeWorks participant hired, if the company desires. LifeWorks vocational staff also provide ongoing support to employers throughout the participant's involvement in LifeWorks by attending any work meetings regarding performance or behavior concerns to help the participant understand what improvements may be needed.

## **Employee Support**

LifeWorks staff provide ongoing training/support on professional behaviors, communication, and work expectations specific to each participant's work experience. This is done in classroom group settings as well as in one-on-one meetings with participants. LifeWorks staff role-play and discuss workplace scenarios, including but not limited to: co-worker communication and interaction, professional behavior when someone you know personally comes into your workplace, how to send a professional email, how to address a concern at work with a coworker and/or a supervisor, appropriate wait time after sending an email, process for asking to talk with a supervisor, appropriately requesting time off, dealing with stress related to employment, etc.

## **All Around Supports**

LifeWorks staff also work with participants on independence components that impact employability such as: studying for drivers permit, driving lessons, financial management (creating a budget and then following through with that budget), diet and

food preparation, physical fitness to increase stamina, nonverbal communication, and active listening, etc.

## **Job Shadowing**

LifeWorks staff do more than just help participants look for part time or full-time employment; staff also work with businesses to create opportunities for participants to be exposed to different types of jobs/employment environments. Staff utilize job shadow opportunities (typically a 10–15-hour commitment from a business) for a participant to go to a job for 2-4 hours over a period of 3-6 days to experience the job and the environment. This helps participants make a more informed decision about what type of work they could see themselves doing for employment. Job shadows are unpaid, short-term commitments that help ease anxiety for many young autistic adults who are unsure what type of work they want to do and are unwilling to commit to a job unless they know what it entails. Job shadows also expose our participants to jobs they may not have considered, but they are willing to try for 10-15 hours.

## **Transportation**

LifeWorks staff provide over 40 hours of transportation per week. This includes participant transport to/from work, group transport to/from volunteering and other pre-vocational experiences, and transport to independence orientated appointments such as medical doctor, dentist, therapy, and more which further an individual's ability to be the most successful in employment.

## **Requirements**

The cost of the program is not to exceed **\$15,000.00** per student per Calander year (**authorized in quarters for \$3,750**). Lifeworks agrees to only seek reimbursement for OVR consumers involved in the Lifeworks Autism Program. Lifeworks will provide a monthly report to the OVR Counselor regarding services provided skill enhancement.

## **Vendor Information:**

Lifeworks At Western KY University: KS0008267