

Innovation & Expansion Projects Press Release

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry Secretary Kathy Manderino announces \$1,358,127.84 in contracts awarded through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to 10 organizations for Innovation & Expansion Projects to assist students with disabilities in obtaining competitive, integrated employment. The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act directs OVR to invest 15 percent of federal funds in Pre-Employment Transition Services to empower students with disabilities to successfully transition to competitive, integrated employment after graduation. The awarded contracts will provide work experiences for potentially eligible or eligible OVR student customers with disabilities, deliver training for parents/family members with students who are transitioning from school to work, and invest in training and certification for professional Community Rehabilitation Provider Agency staff in Discovery & Customized Employment, all services that will help students with disabilities access the same information as their peers, helping them obtain the same training, opportunities and jobs that pay. The Innovation & Expansion Projects were competitively bid through the Request for Proposal process. The following organizations were awarded contracts in six different categories.

Category: Parent/Family Engagement

These projects will provide information, education, information, support and services to parents/families who have students with disabilities in transition from school to work to facilitate the family members' understanding of and involvement in their students' successful transition to competitive, integrated employment.

Contract Awardees:

Disability Options Network

BVRS New Castle District Office

\$93,360.19

This project will serve Butler, Beaver and Lawrence Counties.

Vocational & Psychological Services

BVRS New Castle District Office

\$125,400

This project will serve Armstrong, Butler, Beaver and Lawrence Counties.

Vocational & Psychological Services

BVRS Erie District Office

\$125,400

This project will serve Crawford, Mercer and Venango Counties.

Category: Clubhouse Model

This project will be based on the International Standards for Clubhouse programs as set by Clubhouse International and is designed to help students with mental health challenges find successful employment through paid work experiences.

Contract Awardee:

Goodwill of Keystone Area

BVRS Allentown District Office

\$99,920.00

This project will serve Lehigh County.

Category: Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is based on the international model for Project SEARCH, operating out of the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Throughout the program, students who are OVR eligible or potentially eligible will participate in classroom learning and internships at the host business/organization with the goal of competitive, integrated employment for the participants.

Contract Awardee:

Vocational & Psychological Services

BVRS New Castle District Office

\$300,000

This project will serve Lawrence County.

Category: Community-Based Vocational Instruction

This project will serve OVR eligible or potentially eligible students, providing vocational instruction and work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school, after school, summer opportunities or experiences outside the traditional school setting that are provided in a competitive, integrated employment site in the community.

Contract Awardee:

Lawrence County Social Services

BVRS New Castle District Office

\$150,000.00

This project will serve Butler, Beaver and Lawrence Counties.

Category: Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE)

These projects will serve OVR eligible or potentially eligible high school students by providing a work-based learning experience for them, which may include in-school, after school, summer opportunities or experiences outside the traditional school setting that are provided in a competitive, integrated employment site in the community.

Contract Awardees:

Family Services Association

BVRS Norristown District Office

\$150,000.00

This project will serve Bucks County.

Slippery Rock University

BVRS New Castle District Office

\$150,000.00

This project will serve students in the school districts in Butler, Lawrence, Crawford and Mercer Counties.

Goodwill of Keystone Area

BVRS Reading District Office

\$84,282.50

This project will serve Berks County.

Category: Discovery and Customized Employment

This project will provide training and certification for professional staff from Community Rehabilitation Provider Agencies, resulting in certification in Discovery & Customized Employment. Upon completion of the training and certification process, each staff person will be responsible for providing Discovery Profiles, Visual Resumes and Plans for Customized Employment for individuals with disabilities interested in accessing competitive, integrated employment opportunities.

Contract Awardee:

KenCrest Services

BVRS Reading District Office/Statewide

This project will serve Berks and Schuylkill Counties, as well as Statewide.