



NEWS RELEASE

Utah State Board of Education

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State Office of Rehabilitation Opens Waiting List to Serve More than 2,300 Utahns with Disabilities

SALT LAKE CITY – Starting immediately, the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation’s (USOR) Vocational Rehabilitation Program will open its waiting list in order to begin providing services to 2,353 additional Utahns with disabilities, with the goal of achieving successful employment for each client. While USOR has opened its waiting list twice in the past year, inviting this many clients to be served is unprecedented and will be accomplished over the course of the next five months.

“This is a remarkable day in the history of USOR and for the more than 2,300 clients we are now able to serve,” said Darin Brush, USOR Executive Director. “Originally, we thought it may take years before we could again help this many people. But through the hard work of agency reform the past two years, and with the commitment of a dedicated staff of vocational rehabilitation professionals, we are well ahead of schedule.”

Waiting lists are created when a state’s vocational rehabilitation agency enters into an Order of Selection, a system for prioritizing the clients the agency intends to serve. The federal government allows vocational rehabilitation agencies to use an order of selection when an agency does not have enough money or capacity to serve everyone who is eligible. Utah entered into an order of selection in

February 2015 after demand for vocational rehabilitation services peaked. As such, USOR established three categories in order to prioritize who receives vocational rehabilitation services first when funding and capacity allow: Individuals with most significant disabilities, Individuals with significant disabilities, and individuals with disabilities.

By applying its new Client Service Expenditure Rate Modeling System, USOR determined last year that it was able to open, and hold open, the first priority category, Individuals with the most significant disabilities. Shortly after, USOR also moved some eligible clients in the individuals with significant disabilities category off of the waiting list (the same category from which the 2,353 clients are now being released). But, this is the biggest release of clients yet, explains Aaron Thompson, director of USOR's vocational rehabilitation program. "Our focus on greater efficiency and continuous improvement has begun to pay off, and we have developed the tools to better predict our client services spending. In the end, it's about serving the clients and their successful, long-term employment and independence. Helping this many more clients is exciting for everyone involved."

Vocational rehabilitation is a federal-state program that helps people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep a job and succeed in meaningful careers. USOR is a national leader in administering the vocational rehabilitation program, and Utah's oldest public social services agency, originally founded in 1919 to assist wounded World War I veterans. USOR serves more than 50,000 Utahns each year, which has a significant, positive economic impact.

USOR encourages clients to contact their vocational rehabilitation counselors if they have questions about the order of selection, their priority category, or if they are scheduled to be included in the current waiting list release. Additional information is available through the recently updated website, usor.utah.gov.

www.usor.utah.gov