To: DDRS Stakeholders  
From: Kylee Hope, Director, Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS)  
Theresa Koleszar, Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)  
Re: Vocational Rehabilitation Services Order of Selection  
Date: March 10, 2017

The ability to provide quality services to all eligible consumers, in accordance with federal and state timeline requirements, is vital to the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program in assisting job seekers with disabilities to achieve their competitive, integrated employment goals. This capacity has become increasingly difficult over the past year due to an increase of referrals to the VR program. VR anticipates an additional surge of referrals over the coming months and years as a result of implementing new federal requirements, namely pre-employment transition services, as well as new requirements regarding the limitations on sub-minimum wage employment.

After thorough review and evaluation, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is seeking approval through an amendment to the Unified State Plan to implement a process called “order of selection” for Indiana’s VR program. Once approved and implemented, VR will prioritize individuals with the most significant disabilities to receive services. A state VR agency is required to implement an order of selection when it anticipates that it will not have sufficient fiscal or personnel resources to fully serve all eligible individuals. Indiana will be the 35th state to implement this process, which must be used to prioritize consumer services in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). BRS anticipates implementing the order of selection by the end of the current federal fiscal year, pending approval from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The decision to implement this process follows identification and implementation of numerous strategies to improve capacity over the past few years. Despite those efforts, BRS continues to experience significant challenges in building and retaining adequate resources to serve all eligible individuals, and meet expectations for timeliness and quality of service provision. In addition, efforts to comply with expansive new federal requirements under WIOA are requiring BRS to shift financial resources estimated at $10-12 million annually.

BRS will be working to address these challenges with the goal of building sufficient resources and capacity to create a sustainable system to serve all eligible individuals in accordance with federal timeliness requirements and with a high standard for quality of service provision. Additionally, BRS recognizes this as an opportunity to enhance our collaboration with the Department of Workforce Development and local WorkOne locations, as well as other state and local programs in assisting job seekers with disabilities to achieve their employment goals.
The amendments to the VR section of the WIOA Unified State Plan will be posted later this month. Details about public hearings and opportunity for public comment is forthcoming. Additionally, BRS will conduct a webinar this spring to address questions and provide more information. All information will be posted on the DDRS Announcements web page.