

Dear Representative Pugh,

During Commissioner Wehry's recent testimony on the Governor's FY16 Budget, several Committee members posed questions and requested additional information. Those questions and the Department's responses are provided below.

1. Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

A. What was the response rate for the 2014 survey among clients of the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired? How does that compare to the response rate for the previous survey?

Market Decisions is currently conducting a Quality Assurance Survey on behalf of the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Those results are not yet available. In 2011, however, Market Decisions conducted a similar survey by telephone and mail. The response rate was 63%. The informal closure surveys conducted by the Division do not track response rates.

B. To achieve an employment outcome, must an individual be working full-time?

No. To have achieved an employment outcome, an individual must have attained his or her vocational goal for at least 90 days.

C. Are any individuals employed at less than minimum wage?

No. Every individual with a job is paid at least minimum wage. Self-employed small business owners, however, may be earning less than minimum wage.

2. Division of Licensing and Protection

A. How do this year's nursing home survey results compare to prior years' results?

Results of Nursing Home Surveys  
(Both Regularly Scheduled and Complaint/Self-Report)

	SFY12	SFY13	SFY14
No Deficiencies	11%	11%	16%
Potential for Minimum Harm but No Harm	0%	0%	5%
Potential for More than Minimum Harm but No Harm	63%	70%	57%
Deficiencies reflecting Actual Harm or Immediate Jeopardy	26%	19%	22%

3. Developmental Disabilities Services Division

A. In determining the employment rate among those 21 to 64 who are served by Developmental Services HCBS, what constitutes "meaningful employment?"

When looking at supported employment, we consider anyone who is individually matched to employer-paid, competitive employment in the Vermont workforce at minimum wage rate, or higher. We do not specify that individuals need to work any set minimum number of hours per week in order to be considered employed, because what is most important is that the person's employment is meaningful. We also have to consider people have varying levels of disability and/or complicating health conditions, and this may impact a person's ability to work or the number of hours worked.

The language contained in the SFY14 DA Master Grant is also instructive.

The State has established the target employment rate for Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) programs at an average of 45% across the four quarters covered by the grant term. The DA is required to make progress towards achieving the target rate.

The State strongly supports DDS consumer participation in the "Think College" model used by Succeed, College Steps and Think College programs, recognizing that some consumers may choose to leave employment to go to college. Adult participation in the Project Search training program is also supported. The State does not want the employment rate to be a disincentive for DAs to support consumer participation in these campus-based post-secondary programs. Therefore, the State will consider DDS consumers enrolled in colleges and supported by these programs as employed for the purpose of this measure.

Finally, language contained in the SFY14 DA Master Grant also addresses earnings targets as follows:

Employed DDS consumers will maintain average quarterly earnings of \$633 per quarter. For the DA to be eligible to receive performance incentive payments, the employed DS consumers must maintain average earnings at \$1,266 per quarter. The State understands there are concerns about wage targets and possible conflicts with consumer choice and self-determination. The State is interested in exploring this issue further with the DAs to consider possible alternative measures to ensure consumers are working to their full potential.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to communicate with me.

Sincerely,

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Deputy Commissioner

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