

**Vermont Care Partners**  
**Vocational Rehabilitation Funding Reductions in FY18**  
**February 9, 2017**  
**Julie Tessler**

The federal VR cuts call for elimination of the Pre-Employment Transition Services funding (PETS), which DAIL/VR has estimated will impact about 120 students who will not have access to DS supported employment services. Thirteen of our 14 Vermont Care Partner member agencies providing developmental services (DS) receive vocational rehabilitation (VR) grant funding. The majority of those funds cover job development and infrastructure for the agency's supported employment program. These costs generally are not incorporated into Home and Community Based Services waiver funding.

The upcoming 15% (\$344,448) reduction in federal VR grant funds will likely impact directly close to 70 people who would otherwise receive these services; however, it will have a larger impact on the ability of the agencies to sustain their supported employment programs. Agencies will need to reduce staff that conduct job development. This will not only impact their ability to develop new job opportunities, but also their ongoing relationships with employers.

With 48% of working age people served in DS programs employed, Vermont's DS system of care has been a leader in the country in assisting people with developmental disabilities to enter the workforce and become tax paying members of their communities. This reduction will negatively impact the ability to support this very positive outcome.

As part of performance based contracting, the agencies are also able to earn bonuses if they meet their contract goals with VR. Because of the positive outcomes DS has achieved, agencies have been earning bonuses that will also be impacted.

Additionally, an \$800,000 in JOBS funding will mean that 350 students with emotional /behavioral disabilities, many of who are at risk for involvement with the criminal justice system, will not receive pre-employment training and support with employment, as well as the loss of 9 full time equivalent (FTE) staff.

Vermont Care Partners would like to see the loss of federal VR funds back filled with Global Commitment funds to maintain these services. However, we would not want the funding to come at the expense of other services we currently provide given our ongoing funding challenges.