



Update in Vocational Rehabilitation by State

Chairperson: Andy Haig, MD

Tuesday, March 29th, 2022

1:15-1:55pm



2022

Work Related Injuries
Workshop

Massachusetts

Voc Rehab Update

Ann Marie Latella, MS, CRC



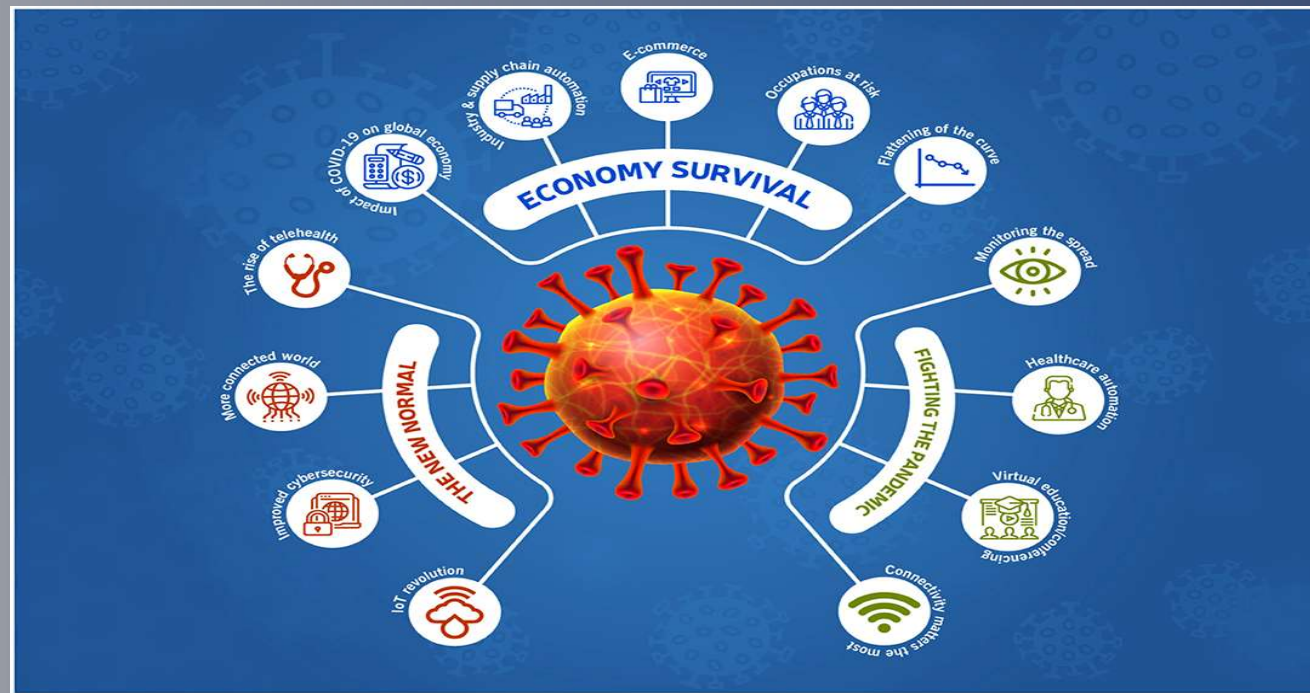
MASSACHUSETTS

UPDATES IN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Changes in Vocational Rehabilitation

Through the pandemic

March 2020 brought forth an unprecedented time in Massachusetts for the vocational rehabilitation community. State agencies, employers, and providers had to change the way they did business. I'd like to give a brief overview of where we started and where we are now.



Pandemic Begins March 2020

Viewpoint from OEVR, Employers and Providers

Office of Education and Vocational Rehabilitation (OEVR)

State offices close

- OEVR Offices close and go remote; transition period of setting up work from home offices
- Courts close to in person conferences and hearings creating a pause in the normal workflow
- Determination of Suitability (DOS) meetings being held via Zoom and phone conference; employee participation declines

Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

Business as usual?

- Vocational Rehabilitation providers also go remote. However, for some business had always been conducted this way so not such a shift
- Client meetings being held virtually. Employee participation is down. Those with technological challenges find it hard to engage with providers due to no access to computers/video conferencing a
- More difficulty getting in touch with employers who seem to be overwhelmed by changes in State policy/mandates, closures, etc.

Employers

Business not so usual...

- State closure causes many employers to have to shut their doors, go remote, and/or furlough employees
- Much uncertainty about how or when businesses would reopen
- Employers facing a loss of employees but unsure how to staff appropriately

Mid Pandemic 2021

OEVR

Mid Pandemic

- OEVR continues remote DOS meetings, although again for those with technical difficulties this poses an issue
- Backlog of cases to review and determine suitability
- OEVR begins to see the fiscal impact of pandemic – unsuccessful Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) closures. Mainly due to client engagement, lack of schooling options due to closures, unemployment rates, etc. Fiscal Year July 2020 through June 2021 the hardest

Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

Changing the way we do business

- Beginning to receive some new vocational rehabilitation referrals, still far fewer than normal
- Continue to hold meetings via video conferencing and phone. Client engagement suffers as some do not have access to this and/or harder to maintain focus virtually
- Employers are desperately needing employees, but we don't have as many clientele

Employers

Where are the employees?

- Employers are opening back up or trying to return to a new normal but there is a lack of employees
- Finding it very hard to hire staff, employees not being dependable – i.e. accepting a job offer then not showing up to start.....frustration on the part of employers
- Some business hiring more than others – restaurants, hospitality, transportation
- Employers willing to be more flexible offering scheduling flexibility, hybrid work, etc.

Heading into 2022

Where are we at now?

- Employers are opening back up or trying to return to a new normal but there is a lack of employees
- Finding it very hard to hire staff, employees not being dependable – i.e. accepting a job offer then not showing up to start.....frustration on the part of employers
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OEVR

Getting back to a new normal

- Fiscal year 2022 showing improvements trickle down from changes in Fiscal year 2021 – employment rates increasing, schools openings, starting to see clients in person
- Number of attorney and self referrals to OEVR are increasing
- Plans are completing successfully due to changes

Providers

Back in the swing of things

- Referrals for services increasing
- Resuming in person meetings, increased client engagement
- Self referrals also correlates with motivated individual seeking work
- Employment rates increasing
- More response from employers, contact and engagement

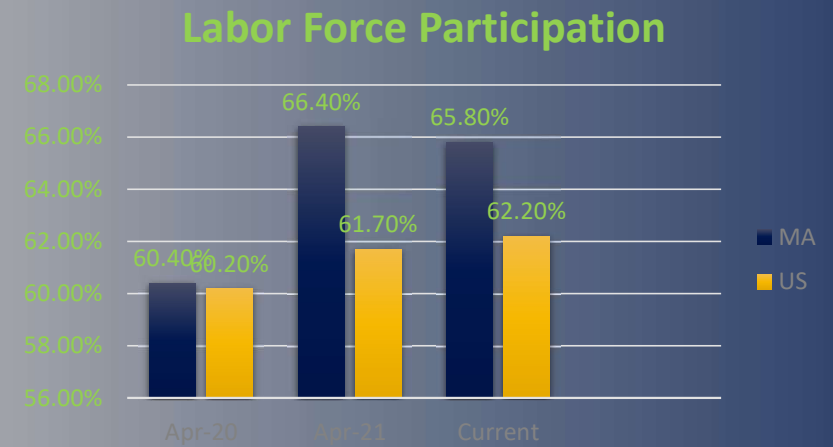
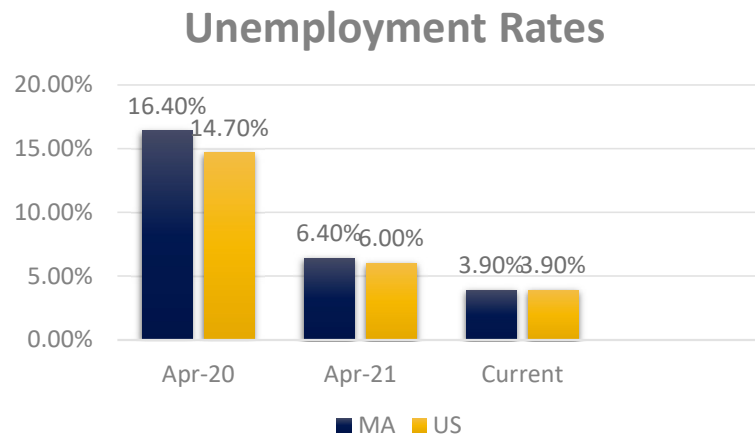
Employers

Lets do business

- Employers still needing responsible employees and still willing to accommodate different schedules, flexible work models
- More responsive to phone calls, providing information regarding jobs
- Still feeling like it is hard to find the employee for the jobs as businesses continue to reopen and increase staffing needs

Unemployment Vs. Labor Force Participation

2020-Current





2022

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Vermont

Voc Rehab Update

Brittany McKenna, MS, CRC



2022

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New Hampshire Voc Rehab Update

Lisa Anastos, MA, Esq.



New Hampshire Rocks

Vocational Rehabilitation

What Now

- IW can't return to pre-injury position
- RSA 281-A
- CVRP to the rescue
- End game: restore IW to pre-injury AWW



It's Easy

603-271-3328

- Attorney: ask adjuster for assignment
- Adjuster: assign a CVRP
- Injured Worker: call DOL or ask adjuster to assign a CVRP
- Family Member: same as IW
- Employer: ask adjuster to assign a CVRP
- Physician: recommend IW ask adjuster to assign a CVRP

Be Productive

Make a difference

Employment

- Purpose
- Financial stability and health benefits
- Cognitive and physical stimulation
- Contributes to society

Workers' Compensation

- Low self esteem
- Increased self-medication
- Financial disasters
- Decreased physical well being

Collaboration

Success

Referral Form
Assessment
IWRP





Rhode Island

Voc Rehab Update

Kayla Villegas



2022

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Questions?