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JB Pritzker, Governor

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Dulce M. Quintero, Secretary Designate

100 South Grand Avenue, East • Springfield, Illinois 62762  
401 South Clinton Street • Chicago, Illinois 60607

DATE: 11/30/23

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable John F. Curran, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Don Harmon, Senate President  
The Honorable Tony McCombie, House Minority Leader  
The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Speaker of the House

FROM: Dulce Quintero   
Secretary Designate   
Illinois Department of Human Services

SUBJECT: **Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act**

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The Illinois Department of Human Services respectfully submits the **Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act** on behalf of the **Division of Rehabilitation** in order to fulfill the requirements set forth in **820 ILCS 97/30**.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact **Robyn L. Lewis, Policy Advisor**, at  
e: [robyn.lewis@illinois.gov](mailto:robyn.lewis@illinois.gov) c:217-606-9070

cc: The Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor  
John W. Hollman, Clerk of the House  
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Illinois Senate  
Legislative Research Unit  
State Government Report Center



# Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act

Illinois Department of Human Services  
Division of Rehabilitation Services



# 2022 Annual Report

## Cover Story: Competitive Integrated Employment Success!

Nafesa was referred to Orchard Village as she was seeking a job in competitive employment in the northern Chicago area. She sought a job where she could apply herself as a team member while making new friends and earning money. With her Vocational Specialist's help, she began applying for various jobs. After a few weeks, she applied to her local Jewel Osco where she was hired and began her first job. Nafesa has now been with this job for over one year and continues to do well. She works in the front-end department and helps customers as they are exiting and entering the store. In addition to this, she helps bag and sanitizes the front of the store to make sure it is a warm welcoming environment for everyone. Nafesa has improved her social and independence skills since successfully securing employment with Jewel. Well done Nafesa!

# Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act, (820 ILCS97) Annual Report

## IL Division of Rehabilitation Services

April 2023

### **Background**

Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act was enacted effective January 1, 2020. The Act required that the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), through its Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and in collaboration with the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), shall establish a 5-year Customized Employment (CE) Pilot Program that serves a minimum of 25 individuals by the second year of the Pilot Program.

The Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act, (“820 ILCS 97”) is to assist individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities or a similar condition with a most significant disability who seek employment and require more individualized assistance to achieve and maintain integrated employment at competitive wages through a process of customized planning and negotiation.

During the first six months of the Pilot Program, IDHS-DRS met with members of the community, disability organizations, advocacy groups, the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD), and IDHS-DDD to develop a CE Pilot Program. A workgroup was established and called the Customized Employment Workgroup (CEW). The CEW met frequently and developed a contract for Customized Employment. The contract includes an intensive discovery phase, a customized person-centered planning process phase, and a job development and placement phase. The second portion of the contract focuses on support while on the job. There are six-phases of employment support that allow for individualization based on the customer’s needs. The CEW and DHS-DRS agreed, and the first CE contract took effect July 1, 2020, with six organizations from four of the five DHS regions.

Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) vendors were required to have at least one staff certified in Customized Employment through either Marc Gold & Associates or Griffin-Hammis. In 2020, ICDD, sponsored Customized Employment Gateway Trainings

to professionals across the state and to staff from DDD and DRS. Over 100 individuals received training and were certified as a result.

Since this is a statewide program, assistance is provided through a variety of methods to individuals with Most Significant disabilities in maintaining competitive, integrated community employment. Competitive employment is considered, integrated employment within the community which pays the Customer (employee) at least minimum wage or a wage commensurate to the prevailing wage for those individuals without a disability, applicable fringe benefits, and the opportunity for advancement. Individuals are eligible for Customized Employment SEP once they have been determined Most Significant and have a demonstrated need for this service. This is determined by the Rehabilitation Counselor answering a set of questions about the customer's work history.

During service provision, staffings between the customer, DRS, and CRPs are expected to occur every 8 weeks and continue during the length of the case.

Any CRP doing business with DHS-DRS must meet and maintain national accreditation standards through the likes of the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation facilities (CARF), the National Accreditation Council (NAC), the Joint Commission (TJC), The Council on Accreditation (COA) or The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) for all programs and services identified in the CRP's contract.

## **Results**

### **First Year Participation of Customers:**

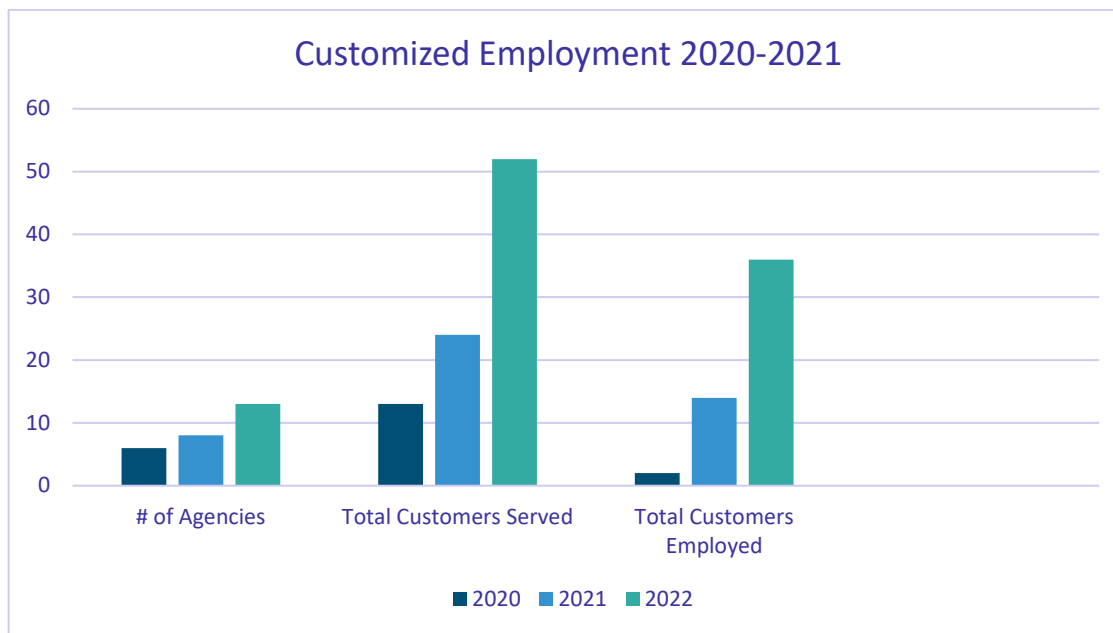
- Six CE Contracts (4/5 regions represented)
- Total Allocation for Six Contracts \$451,350.00
- Total Customers Served in 2020: 13
- Total Customers who Achieved Competitive Integrated Employment in 2020: 2

### **Second Year Participation of Customers:**

- Eight CE Contracts (4/5 regions represented)
- Total Allocation for Eight Contracts for 2021: \$655,200
- Total Customers Served in 2021: 24
- Total Customers who Achieved Competitive Integrated Employment in 2021:

### Third Year Participation of Customers:

- Thirteen CE Contracts (5/6 regions represented)
- Total Allocation for Thirteen Contracts \$735,300
- Total Customers Served in 2022: 52
- Total Customers who Achieved Competitive Integrated Employment in 2022: 36



### Conclusion

The CE Pilot has been in effect since 1/1/20. The process has led to the implementation of a CE contract that took effect 7/1/20 to serve at least 25 new CE individuals over the course of the five-year pilot period. The results through 1/1/23 show a total of 89 individuals served with 52 of those individuals obtaining competitive integrated employment; well in excess of initial goals. Budgeted cost per customer engaged in competitive employment services is \$13,450 for completion of all nine phases. DRS is committed to completing the five-year pilot program, with the intent of evaluating efficacy at the end of the pilot to determine statewide, long-term implementation.

Over the course of the first three years of this pilot, a few challenges have been faced. The first year of the CE Pilot took effect in a pandemic environment but still demonstrated that the pilot should continue, and has continued, with significant success. Additionally, some CE contract holders have seen few to no referrals. DRS will work with local DRS field offices to ensure familiarity with the pilot and to encourage increases in referrals for customized employment. Finally, the provision of customized

employment takes many months, if not over a year. Discovery with the customer, job development, and then 45 weeks of support on the job, are integral to customer success and the success of the program, yet do not lead to rapid outcomes.

DRS is committed to supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in obtaining competitive integrated employment through increased access to Customized Employment services statewide. DRS will continue to track data on impact and outcomes so that trends, successes, and course corrections can be evaluated and implemented to strengthen Customized Employment services within DRS.