



## ONE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR HOUSED AT MONTANA STATE HOSPITAL

### Background:

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) currently has 45 Positions Budgeted (PB) Rehabilitation Counselors with an average caseload size of 130, housed in nine field offices across Montana. Currently the Butte field office has one counselor who is only able to travel to the Montana State Hospital (MSH) at Warm Springs once a month to take applications and provide services to patients.

### Key Points:

- VRBS is only able to serve 25 individuals discharged from MSH per year with current caseloads.
- A Disability Employment Transitions Division (DETD) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor housed at MSH would provide and coordinate services through the VR program to assist patients with preparing for employment after discharge. Services would include career exploration, soft skills training, work-based learning, and training on assistive technology. These exploratory activities and training would lend themselves to patients being more prepared for the world of work upon discharge. The patients would discharge MSH with an employment plan and an assigned VR Counselor in their home community.
- Vocational services would be provided to patients who are actively receiving treatment at the hospital as well as to those who are transitioning back to their home communities.
- Evidence has shown that two-thirds of this population want to work and are not working due to the ineffective existing models of accessing employment supports.
- Assisting with vocational services will not only impact improving a patient's mental health treatment but also prevent homelessness and relapse.
- Research shows that employment is a crucial social determinant of health, reduces mental health symptoms, increases stability, and decreases poverty.

Discharging patients that apply and receive VRBS services per year	25
Additional discharging patients that VRBS could serve per year with an additional PB	130



The table below shows the expected SFY26 and SFY27 costs for this one PB.

	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>State Special</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>	<b>Total Request</b>
<b>FY 2026</b>	\$18,761	\$0	\$69,318	\$88,079
<b>FY 2027</b>	\$18,208	\$0	\$67,274	\$85,482
<b>Biennium Total</b>	\$36,969	\$0	\$136,592	\$173,561