



VOCATIONAL REHAB FOR CLIENTS WITH SDMI OR CO-OCCURRING ILLNESSES

Background:

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) currently has 45 Positions Budgeted (PB) Rehabilitation Counselors with an average caseload size of 130. Those caseloads have increasingly served a higher percentage individuals with behavioral health disabilities in the past four years.

Behavioral health disabilities are the highest incidence disability group in Montana, with 1,530 individuals served in SFY24 by VRBS.

Key Points:

- Of the current 4,500 participants receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services, 34% of those have a behavioral health disability.
- Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based practice model demonstrating improved employment outcomes and access to competitive integrated employment for Montanans who live with a Severe Disabling Mental Illness (SDMI) or co-occurring diagnosis.
- In Montana, it is estimated that 163,000 adults live with a behavioral health disability (nami.org). 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.
- Employment is a crucial social determinant of health, reduces mental health symptoms, increases stability, and decreases poverty.
- As of today, there are 1,530 individuals with behavioral health diagnoses who are receiving VRBS services, but without additional PB, VRBS cannot serve the thousands of Montanans from this population that want to work.
- These additional PBs will expand IPS contracts to mental health agencies throughout Montana, therefore increasing caseload sizes while improving employment outcomes for clients with SDMI or co-occurring disorders.

Montanans with a Behavioral Health Disability, estimated	163,000
Montanans with a Behavioral Health Disability served by VRBS in 2024	1,530
Additional individuals who want to work that could be served with 4 PB	520



The table below shows the expected SFY26 and SFY27 costs for these four PB.

	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	\$75,042	\$0	\$277,274	\$352,316
FY 2027	\$72,832	\$0	\$269,101	\$341,933
Biennium Total	\$147,874	\$0	\$546,375	\$694,249