

Department of Education
Office of Inspector General – Internal Audit
Report # A-2324DOE-007 Issued: January 14, 2025
Six Month Status Report on: Abilities, Inc. of Florida
Status as of: July 14, 2025

Finding	Recommendation(s)	Previous Management Responses	Management Response as of July 14, 2025	Anticipated Completion Date & Contact
Abilities, Inc. did not meet all required contract deliverables, and DVR failed to impose financial consequences on the final invoice.	We recommend that DVR consider seeking reimbursement for the financial consequences associated with unachieved deliverables in the 2022-23 fiscal year and provide written communication to Abilities, Inc. of any financial consequence to be imposed. Should DVR approve deviations from the contractual requirements in future years, DVR should ensure those approvals are documented in the contract file. We further recommend that DVR adjust the deliverables in the Abilities, Inc. contract to more accurately reflect the current demand for services. Finally, we recommend DVR count the Pre-ETS referral deliverable at the time Abilities, Inc. makes the referral rather than waiting until the referred service is completed by a separate vendor.	<p>Management Response as of January 14, 2025</p> <p>Concur. DVR will ensure that any deviations from contractual requirements are properly documented in the Abilities, Inc., contract file. DVR executed a new contract with Abilities Inc., that included new deliverables that accurately reflect the current demand for services. Going forward, DVR will count the pre-ETS referrals at the time Abilities, Inc. makes the referral instead of waiting until the referred service is completed by a separate vendor. DVR recouped \$454,500 from Abilities, Inc., in unspent funds from the 2022-2023 fiscal year.</p>	DVR has developed the new Abilities contract (for state fiscal year 2025-2026). The contract deliverables have been modified to accurately reflect the current demand for services. Financial consequences were also strengthened and increased to ensure contractor accountability. DVR will provide written communication to Abilities Inc., of any financial consequences to be imposed. Under the new contract, DVR will count the pre-ETS referrals at the time Abilities, Inc. makes the referral instead of waiting until a separate vendor completes the referred service. Any DVR-approved deviations to contract requirements will be	<p>Anticipated Completion Date: July 2025</p> <p>Victoria Aguilar, Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services General and Operations Manager I (850) 245-3289</p> <p>Diocelina Sandoval Morales, Bureau of Vendor and Contract Services Assistant Chief (850) 245-3412</p> <p>Monica Edwards, Bureau of Vendor and Contract Services Assistant Chief (850) 245-3344</p> <p>Kelly Rogers, Director</p>

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			documented in the contract file.	(850) 245-3270
Consumer service records had missing or incomplete documentation.	We recommend DVR review and approve eligibility determinations according to statutory requirements. We also recommend that DVR review a sample of closed CSRs during their monitoring activities.	Management Response as of January 14, 2025 Concur. DVR’s Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services, Contract Administration and Management (CAMs) Unit will work with the Bureau of Compliance and Quality Assurance (BCQA) to review and approve eligibility determinations according to statutory requirements and will review a sample of consumer service records (CSRs) during desktop monitoring, to ensure the documents are consistent with statutory requirements. BVCS will also coordinate with the Bureau of Field Services (BFS) regarding training and	DVR’s Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services (BVCS) is working with the Bureau of Compliance and Quality Assurance (BCQA) and the Bureau of Field Services (BFS) to ensure eligibility determinations are reviewed and approved according to statutory requirements. BVCS will also coordinate with BFS and BCQA on standardizing appropriate case note documentation and quality assurance of proper caseload management during DVR’s New Counselor Training to satisfy requirements outlined in the 2024 RSA Monitoring Report. BVCS is currently reviewing a sample of closed	Anticipated Completion Date August 2025 Victoria Aguilar , Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services General and Operations Manager I (850) 245-3289 Diocelina Sandoval Morales Bureau of Vendor and Contract Services Assistant Chief (850) 245-3412 Monica Edwards , Bureau of Vendor and Contract Services Chief

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		support to ensure consumer service record maintenance and documentation are in compliance with statutory requirements. The CAMs unit will communicate to the contractor any findings/concerns in a detailed monitoring report. DVR will meet with Abilities, Inc., to review the report and discuss any corrective actions to be completed by the contractor.	consumer service records (CSRs) during the biannual contract monitoring to ensure the documents are aligned with statutory requirements and terms of the contract. The new Abilities contract includes a deliverable for the monitoring of caseload management processes which includes case note documentation. BVCS will communicate to the contractor any findings and corrective actions in a detailed report following the biannual contract monitoring. DVR will also meet with Abilities to review this report and discuss next steps to be completed by the contractor.	(850) 245-3344 Jessica Campbell Bureau of Field Services Chief (850) 245-3482 Terry Hoffman Bureau of Compliance and Quality Assurance Chief (850) 245-3290 Kelly Rogers, Director (850) 245-3270

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DVR did not provide effective monitoring in accordance with the monitoring plan.	We recommend DVR conduct monitoring in accordance with the risk assessment and monitoring plan. After each monitoring event, we recommend DVR promptly provide the monitoring results in writing with any recommendations for improvement to Abilities, Inc. and ensure they complete corrective action on noted deficiencies.	<p>Management Response as of January 14, 2025</p> <p>Concur. The CAMs Unit contract manager will work with BCQA to conduct desktop and onsite monitoring in accordance with the Abilities, Inc. contract risk assessment and monitoring plan. Deficiencies will be addressed and recommendations for improvement will be communicated to the contractor and follow-up on corrective actions will be performed. Review of deliverables and supporting documentation will be regularly reviewed. In accordance with the contract, DVR will conduct desktop monitoring in January 2025 and onsite monitoring in June 2024. The desktop monitoring report will be finalized by March 2025 and the onsite monitoring to be</p>	BVCS is currently monitoring the Abilities, Inc., for the SFY 2024-25 contract in accordance with the Contract Monitoring Standard Operating Procedure, the contract risk assessment and monitoring plan. The BVCS Contract Manager is reviewing all submitted documentation from the contractor and will address any deficiencies and provide the contractor, in writing, with recommendations for improvement. In addition, there will be follow-up on corrective actions performed, as necessary. In accordance with section 287.057, F.S, the Department will establish a continuing oversight team to meet at least monthly to discuss the quality of deliverables as well as all other aspects related to the contract.	<p>Anticipated Completion Date: August 2025</p> <p>Victoria Aguilar, Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services General and Operations Manager I (850) 245-3289</p> <p>Diocelina Sandoval Morales, Bureau of Vendor and Contract Services Assistant Chief (850) 245-3412</p> <p>Monica Edwards, Bureau of Vendor and Contract Services Chief (850) 245-3344</p> <p>Terry Hoffman, Bureau of Compliance and</p>

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		<p>finalized by August 2025 for any findings and recommendations, if applicable. In accordance with section 287.057, F.S, the Department has established a continuing oversight team of five (5) members to meet at least monthly to discuss the pace and quality of deliverables as well as all other aspects related to the contract.</p>		<p>Quality Assurance Chief (850) 245-3290 Kelly Rogers, Director (850) 245-3270</p>
<p>Abilities, Inc. did not meet all required contract deliverables, and DVR failed to impose financial consequences on the final invoice.</p>	<p>We recommend that DVR consider seeking reimbursement for the financial consequences associated with unachieved deliverables in the 2022-23 fiscal year and provide written communication to Abilities, Inc. of any financial consequence to be imposed. Should DVR approve deviations from the contractual requirements in future years, DVR should ensure</p>	<p>Management Response as of January 14, 2025</p> <p>There is a yearly reconciliation meeting for Contract 18-146 that historically occurs in August. In FY23 the meeting took place on August 24, 2023. Prior to this meeting, Abilities of Florida Contracts sends the final invoice and budget reconciliation report and Abilities Vice President of</p>	<p>Post Audit, the State of Florida DVR approved a new contract for FY 25 with adjusted deliverables that were more in line with the current year and current caseloads. The new case management system has a better reporting capability that aligns with managing these deliverables. The Bureau Leaders have adjusted the deliverables again for FY 26, and we are in agreement with</p>	<p>Completed <i>Contact will be Contract Director Sharon Potts, Abilities of Florida (New Contract for FY 26 will be executed as of 7/1/25.)</i></p>

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	those approvals are documented in the contract file. We further recommend that DVR adjust the deliverables in the Abilities, Inc. contract to more accurately reflect the current demand for services. Finally, we recommend DVR count the Pre-ETS referral deliverable at the time Abilities, Inc. makes the referral rather than waiting until the referred service is completed by a separate vendor.	Operations sends the deliverable justifications to be reviewed by the Bureau Chief of Field Services. The invoice and deliverable justification documents are sent for review to DVR prior to July 31st. The meeting on August 24, 2023, included the Deputy Director of DVR, the Bureau Chief of DVR Field Services, Abilities, Inc.'s Vice President of Operations and Abilities, Inc.'s Director of Contracts. During this meeting, the justifications for all deliverables were reviewed and approved by the DVR. Immediately following the meeting, the Deputy Director of DVR at that time, sent an email to Abilities of Florida Contracts instructing us to send a revised final invoice for payment after the DVR determined that there	the negotiated deliverables. (Attached are the FY 25 Contract and Contract Amendment for the updated and current deliverables.) Tina Herzik, VP of Operations VR Program.	

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		<p>were no penalties assessed for Contract 18-146 in FY23 per our meeting. Our Certificate of Eligibility Determinations (COE's) and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE's) deliverables were justified due to current contractual goals not being adjusted since the 2020 Pandemic. State of Florida DVR referrals and caseloads were not fully back to capacity due to the Pandemic. The increased amount of potentially eligible cases on our caseloads also impacted these deliverables. The State of Florida DVR agreed with our justification on our final numbers and no penalties were assessed. For completed employment outcomes, Abilities of Florida documentation showed we exceeded the expected deliverable based on the DVR's Successful Outcome</p>		

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		<p>Matrix. Abilities of Florida VR offices almost doubled the amount expected per the Matrix. The Matrix was put in place by the State of Florida DVR and added to our contract via an amendment to address Statewide vacancies and the variance for expected deliverables between new and experienced VR counselors throughout the State. At the end of FY23, there was an impending system change by DVR to the new Aware Database system which resulted in no accurate Pre-ETS reporting received by Abilities of Florida during May and June 2023. During reconciliation for Pre-ETS services provided, there were discrepancies in the State of Florida DVR's final reporting versus the monthly reports Abilities of Florida received throughout FY23. Due to this,</p>		

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		<p>Abilities of Florida was unable to obtain accurate Pre-ETS deliverable data from the DVR. Based on the reports that Abilities of Florida received monthly throughout FY23 from DVR, this goal was achieved. The FY23 vacancy rate deliverable in the contract was the lowest it has ever been. The justification that was approved by the DVR was due to the South Florida VR vacancies. These vacancies were the result of high cost of housing and living expenses versus low pay scales for the positions in these areas. The State of Florida DVR, who also had high vacancy rates, was in process of increasing the salaries Statewide, and accepted our justification for the staffing deliverables in FY23</p> <p>In summary, we believe all justifications were appropriately</p>		

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		<p>approved by the State of Florida DVR based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FY23 deliverables not being adjusted since the beginning of the 2020 Pandemic • The large number of Transition Age Youth and potentially eligible cases throughout our units • The approved Successful Closures Matrix showing we exceeded our goals • The State of Florida DVR wage initiative not taking effect until the beginning of FY24 that resulted in a high number of vacancies in South Florida positions. 		

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Consumer service records had missing or incomplete documentation.	We recommend that Abilities, Inc. ensure closure of case files are in accordance with the DVR Counselor Policy Manual and includes appropriate case notes and any additional documentation.	<p>Management Response as of January 14, 2025</p> <p>Concur. For items found in Audit, the State Counselor Analyst did complete the approval closure screen for each closure allowing Abilities staff to successfully close the case in the RIMS case management system. In instances where the physical closure letter was not signed this was a difference in interpretation of the State of FL VR Policy Manual amongst the State Counselor Analysts. By completing the RIMS Review/Approval screen it was believed this met the criteria in the Policy for “signing off” on the closure letter. Moving forward Abilities of Florida staff will work closely with State of FL DVR staff to ensure a more consistent interpretation of the</p>	Immediately after being notified of these findings, on January 6 th , we had a meeting with all of our Management Team at Abilities of Florida VR to discuss the audit and the expectation of Counselor Analysts signing off on Closure Letters. It was discussed that we would talk to the Area that the finding came from, but that all Managers in our units were to check for the signature before signing off on the case. They were instructed to notify the Directors if they had any Counselor Analyst that was not agreeable to signing the letters. It was also discussed with all the Area Directors that Supervise the Counselor Analysts. We wrote a request to the Bureau Chief of Field Services to request a TEAMS meeting for all parties	Completed <i>Contact will be Tina Herzik, VP of Operations VR Program</i>

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		<p>policy is followed across all Abilities of FL units. Abilities Management will meet with all field staff to ensure current policy is followed as written. Abilities of FL Directors will meet with FL DVR Directors and State Counselor Analysts supporting our units to ensure we are all consistently following this policy.</p>	<p>involved to ensure that this was understood moving forward by all Areas. A meeting took place on May 20, 2025 by TEAMS with all Abilities of Florida Supervisors, Directors, and VR Area Directors in Areas 2,3,6 and 7, all Counselor Analysts supporting our contract, the Contract’s Managers, and the Bureau Chief of Field Services. It was discussed and addressed again on this call. There is a consistent understanding by all parties in all of the Areas that we serve that the Closure letters must be signed off by the Counselor Analysts. It is also understood by all Abilities Managers and Directors that if they will not sign off we will report the issue to the Bureau and not close the case until the</p>	

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			signature is obtained. Tina Herzik, VP of Operations VR Program.	
Abilities, Inc. failed to timely report employment status changes for seven separated employees as required by statute.	We recommend Abilities, Inc. ensure the change in employment status is reported to the CPBSC within the time frame required by statute.	Management Response as of January 14, 2025 Concur. There was a staffing changeover in Abilities of Florida in the position that was responsible for this reporting during the FY23 audit period. The process that is in place currently has resolved this issue.	Recommendation There was a HR staffing change in Abilities of Florida on 5/19/25. There is now a tenured manager overseeing the CRW/BGS process. The manager sets a calendar reminder for separation of the employee's final day to enter in the Clearinghouse. On that date, she processes the termination in the Clearinghouse. Since entering a separation date permanently removes the record, she waits until the official last day to ensure accuracy. The ongoing process currently ensures the	Completed <i>Ashley Keddie,</i> <i>Abilities of Florida</i> <i>HR Manager</i>

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			change in employment status is reported to the CPBSC within the time frame required by statute.	