

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

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[1]

Required annually except for agencies that are independent commissions do not provide this attachment.

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Required only of agencies requesting, or previously granted, a Waiver of Statewideness.

[3]

The following attachments should be submitted whenever the information needs to be updated.

[4]

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[5]

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Section 1: State Certifications

1.1 The (enter the name of designated state agency or designated state unit below)...

The Department of Social Services

... is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended [1] and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act [2].

1.2 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the... (enter the name of the designated state agency below) [3]

The Department of Social Services

... agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan [4], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations [5], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation

services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the administration of the State Plan for the vocational rehabilitation services program.

1.3 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the provisions of the supplement to this State Plan [6], the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations [7], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the Title I State Plan.

Yes

1.4 The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit has the authority under state law to perform the functions of the state regarding this State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its supplement are consistent with state law.

Yes

1.7 The (enter title of state officer below)

Yes

State Treasurer

... has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.

1.8 The (enter title of state officer below)...

Yes

Commissioner Department of Social Services

... has the authority to submit this State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State Plan supplement for supported employment services.

1.9 The agency that submits this State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

Yes

State Plan Certified By

As the authorized signatory identified above, I hereby certify that I will sign, date and retain in the files of the designated state agency/designated state unit Section 1 of the Preprint, and separate Certification of Lobbying forms (Form ED-80-0013; available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/8003/assurancesed80013.doc>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Signed?

Yes

Name of Signatory

Michael P. Starkowski

Title of Signatory

Commissioner Department of Social Services

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)

06/23/2009

Assurances Certified By

The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s) in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2010

Comments:

Signed?

Name of Signatory

Title of Signatory

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)

* The signatory of the assurance with the authority to execute and submit the State Plan will maintain a signed copy of the assurance(s) with the signed State Plan.

Section 1 Footnotes

[1] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

[3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.

[5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.

[6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[7] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

Section 2: Public Comment on State Plan Policies and Procedures

2.1 Public participation requirements. (Section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.10(d), .20(a), (b), (d); and 363.11(g)(9))

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

The designated state agency, prior to the adoption of any substantive policies or procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan, including making any substantive amendments to the policies and procedures, conducts public meetings throughout the state to provide the public, including individuals with disabilities, an opportunity to comment on the policies or procedures.

(b) Notice requirements.

The designated state agency, prior to conducting the public meetings, provides appropriate and sufficient notice throughout the state of the meetings in accordance with state law governing public meetings or, in the absence of state law governing public meetings, procedures developed by the state agency in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council.

(c) Special consultation requirements.

The state agency actively consults with the director of the Client Assistance Program, the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council and, as appropriate, Indian tribes, tribal organizations and native Hawaiian organizations on its policies and procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan.

Section 3: Submission of the State Plan and its Supplement

3.1 Submission and revisions of the State Plan and its supplement.

(Sections 101(a)(1), (23) and 625(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act; 34 CFR 76.140; 361.10(e), (f), and (g); and 363.10)

(a) The state submits to the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration the State Plan and its supplement on the same date that the state submits either a State Plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or a state unified plan under Section 501 of that Rehabilitation Act.

(b) The state submits only those policies, procedures or descriptions required under this State Plan and its supplement that have not been previously submitted to and approved by the commissioner.

(c) The state submits to the commissioner, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, reports containing annual updates of the information relating to the:

1. comprehensive system of personnel development;
2. assessments, estimates, goals and priorities, and reports of progress;
3. innovation and expansion activities; and
4. other updates of information required under Title I, Part B, or Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act that are requested by the commissioner.

(d) The State Plan and its supplement are in effect subject to the submission of modifications the state determines to be necessary or the commissioner requires based on a change in state policy, a change in federal law, including regulations, an interpretation of the Rehabilitation Act by a federal court or the highest court of the state, or a finding by the commissioner of state noncompliance with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361 or 34 CFR 363.

3.2 Supported Employment State Plan supplement. (Sections 101(a)(22) and 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.34 and 363.10)

(a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement

funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.

(b) The Supported Employment State Plan, including any needed annual revisions, is submitted as a supplement to the State Plan.

Section 4: Administration of the State Plan

4.1 Designated state agency and designated state unit. (Section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.13(a) and (b))

(a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.
2. The designated state agency is:
 - A. a state agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities; or
 - B. a state agency that is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and includes a vocational rehabilitation unit as provided in paragraph (b) of this section.
3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency

includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:

- A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
 - B. has a full-time director;
 - C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
 - D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.
2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

**4.2 State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council.
(Sections 101(a)(21) and 105 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.16 and .17)**

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

(a) The designated state agency is an independent state commission that:

- 1. is responsible under state law for operating or overseeing the operation of the vocational rehabilitation program in the state and is primarily concerned with the vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(A) of this section.

2. is consumer controlled by persons who:
 - A. are individuals with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities; and
 - B. represent individuals with a broad range of disabilities, unless the designated state unit under the direction of the commission is the state agency for individuals who are blind;
3. includes family members, advocates or other representatives of individuals with mental impairments; and
4. undertakes the functions set forth in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4).

or

(b) X The state has established a State Rehabilitation Council that meets the criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17 and the designated state unit

1. jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;
2. regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation

Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and

4. transmits to the council:
 - A. all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
 - B. all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and
 - C. copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.

(c) If the designated state unit has a State Rehabilitation Council, Attachment 4.2(c) provides a summary of the input provided by the council consistent with the provisions identified in subparagraph (b)(3) of this section; the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations; and, explanations for the rejection of any input or any recommendation.

4.3 Consultations regarding the administration of the State Plan. (Section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.21)

The designated state agency takes into account, in connection with matters of general policy arising in the administration of the plan and its supplement, the views of:

- (a) individuals and groups of individuals who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives;
- (b) personnel working in programs that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (c) providers of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;

(d) the director of the Client Assistance Program; and

(e) the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

4.4 Nonfederal share. (Sections 7(14) and 101(a)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 80.24 and 361.60)

The nonfederal share of the cost of carrying out this State Plan is 21.3 percent and is provided through the financial participation by the state or, if the state elects, by the state and local agencies.

4.5 Local administration. (Sections 7(24) and 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47) and .15)

The State Plan provides for the administration of the plan by a local agency. No
If "Yes", the designated state agency:

(a) ensures that each local agency is under the supervision of the designated state unit with the sole local agency, as that term is defined in Section 7(24) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47), responsible for the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program within the political subdivision that it serves; and

(b) develops methods that each local agency will use to administer the vocational rehabilitation program in accordance with the State Plan.

4.6 Shared funding and administration of joint programs. (Section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.27)

The State Plan provides for the state agency to share funding and administrative responsibility with another state agency or local public agency to carry out a joint program to provide services to individuals with disabilities. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency submits to the commissioner for approval a plan that describes its shared funding and administrative arrangement. The plan must include:

(a) a description of the nature and scope of the joint program;

(b) the services to be provided under the joint program;

(c) the respective roles of each participating agency in the administration and provision of services; and

(d) the share of the costs to be assumed by each agency.

4.7 Statewideness and waivers of statewideness. (Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.25, .26, and .60(b)(3)(i) and (ii))

___ This agency is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

(a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.

(b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:

1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
 - A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
 - B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
 - C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
 - D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

(c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.

4.8 Cooperation, collaboration and coordination. (Sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.22, .23, .24, and .31, and 363.11(e))

(a) Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.

The designated state agency or the designated state unit has cooperative agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide work force investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between individual offices of the designated state unit and local entities carrying out the One-Stop service delivery system or other activities through the statewide work force investment system.

(b) Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities.

Attachment 4.8(b) (1)-(4) describes the designated state agency's:

1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,

4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.
2. The State Plan description must:
 - A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and
 - B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:
 - i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with

disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;

- ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

(d) Coordination with statewide independent living council and independent living centers.

The designated state unit, the Statewide Independent Living Council established under Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364, and the independent living centers described in Part C of Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 366 have developed working relationships and coordinate their activities.

(e) Cooperative agreement with recipients of grants for services to American Indians.

1. **X** There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations.
2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following

requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:

- A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;
- B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and
- C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

4.9 Methods of administration. (Section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.12, .19 and .51(a) and (b))

(a) In general.

The state agency employs methods of administration, including procedures to ensure accurate data collection and financial accountability, found by the commissioner to be necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the plan and for carrying out all the functions for which the state is responsible under the plan and 34 CFR 361.

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

The designated state agency and entities carrying out community rehabilitation programs in the state, who are in receipt of assistance under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and this State Plan, take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms and conditions as set forth in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(c) Facilities.

Any facility used in connection with the delivery of services assisted under this State Plan meets program accessibility requirements consistent with the provisions, as applicable, of the Architectural Barriers Rehabilitation Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the regulations implementing these laws.

4.10 Comprehensive system of personnel development. (Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.18)

Attachment 4.10 describes the designated state agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified state rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated state unit. The description includes the following:

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

Development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development with respect to:

1. Qualified personnel needs.
 - A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
 - B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.
2. Personnel development.
 - A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;

- B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- C. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

(b) Plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel.

Development, updating on an annual basis, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel based on the data collection and analysis system described in paragraph (a) of this subsection and that provides for the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare and retain personnel who are qualified in accordance with paragraph (c) of this subsection, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

(c) Personnel standards.

Policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.
2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest

requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.

3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:
 - A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;
 - B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);
 - C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and
 - D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

(d) Staff development.

Policies, procedures and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training. The narrative describes the following:

1. A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology.

2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

Availability of personnel within the designated state unit or obtaining the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

(f) Coordination of personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

4.11. Statewide assessment; annual estimates; annual state goals and priorities; strategies; and progress reports.

(Sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2) and 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.17(h)(2), .29, and 363.11(b))

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:
 - A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:
 - i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
 - ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or

underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and

- iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.

B. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

(b) Annual estimates.

Attachment 4.11(b) identifies on an annual basis state estimates of the:

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;
2. number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection in accordance with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of this State Plan, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order; and
3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

(c) Goals and priorities.

1. Attachment 4.11(c)(1) identifies the goals and priorities of the state that are jointly developed or revised, as applicable, with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council, in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.
3. Order of selection.
If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order; and
 - C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:

- A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
 - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
 - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
 - D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:
- A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);

- B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
- C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):
 - A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
 - B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
 - C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
 - D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

4.12 Innovation and expansion. (Section 101(a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.35)

(a) The designated state agency reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the state under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the:

1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and
2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

(b) Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the reserved funds identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) will be utilized.

(c) Attachment 4.11(e)(2) describes how the reserved funds were utilized in the preceding year.

4.13 Reports. (Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.40)

(a) The designated state unit submits reports in the form and level of detail and at the time required by the commissioner regarding applicants for and eligible individuals receiving services under the State Plan.

(b) Information submitted in the reports provides a complete count, unless sampling techniques are used, of the applicants and eligible individuals in a manner that permits

the greatest possible cross-classification of data and protects the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

5.1 Information and referral services. (Sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.37)

The designated state agency has implemented an information and referral system that is adequate to ensure that individuals with disabilities, including individuals who do not meet the agency's order of selection criteria for receiving vocational rehabilitation services if the agency is operating on an order of selection, are provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance, including counseling and referral for job placement, using appropriate modes of communication, to assist such individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining or regaining employment, and are referred to other appropriate federal and state programs, including other components of the statewide work force investment system in the state.

5.2 Residency. (Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.42(c)(1))

The designated state unit imposes no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the state.

5.3 Ability to serve all eligible individuals; order of selection for services. (Sections 12(d) and 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.36)

(a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. No

(b) If No:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):

- A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
 - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

5.4 Availability of comparable services and benefits. (Sections 101(a)(8) and 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.53)

(a) Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, except those services identified in paragraph (b), to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the state unit determines whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual.

(b) The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;

3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

(c) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section do not apply if the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would interrupt or delay:

1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
2. an immediate job placement; or
3. provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.

(d) The governor in consultation with the designated state vocational rehabilitation agency and other appropriate agencies ensures that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination that meets the requirements of Section 101(a)(8)(B)(i)-(iv) of the Rehabilitation Act takes effect between the designated state unit and any appropriate public entity, including the state Medicaid program, a public institution of higher education, and a component of the statewide work force investment system to ensure the provision of the vocational rehabilitation services identified in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, other than the

services identified in paragraph (b) of this section, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of those vocational rehabilitation services during the pendency of any dispute that may arise in the implementation of the interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination.

5.5 Individualized plan for employment. (Section 101(a)(9) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.45 and .46)

(a) An individualized plan for employment meeting the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, except if the state has implemented an order of selection, and is developed and implemented for each individual to whom the designated state unit is able to provide vocational rehabilitation services.

(b) Services to an eligible individual are provided in accordance with the provisions of the individualized plan for employment.

5.6 Opportunity to make informed choices regarding the selection of services and providers. (Sections 101(a)(19) and 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.52)

Applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, their representatives are provided information and support services to assist in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.52.

5.7 Services to American Indians. (Section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.30)

The designated state unit provides vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the state to the same extent as the designated state agency provides such services to other significant populations of individuals with disabilities residing in the state.

5.8 Annual review of individuals in extended employment or other employment under special certificate provisions of the fair labor standards act of 1938. (Section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.55)

(a) The designated state unit conducts an annual review and reevaluation of the status of each individual with a disability served under this State Plan:

1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or
2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.

(b) The designated state unit carries out the annual review and reevaluation for two years after the individual's record of services is closed (and thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative) to determine the interests, priorities and needs of the individual with respect to competitive employment or training for competitive employment.

(c) The designated state unit makes maximum efforts, including the identification and provision of vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services, to assist the individuals described in paragraph (a) in engaging in competitive employment.

(d) The individual with a disability or, if appropriate, the individual's representative has input into the review and reevaluation and, through signed acknowledgement, attests that the review and reevaluation have been conducted.

5.9 Use of Title I funds for construction of facilities. (Sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.49(a)(1), .61 and .62(b))

If the state elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs, the following requirements are met:

(a) The federal share of the cost of construction for facilities for a fiscal year does not exceed an amount equal to 10 percent of the state's allotment under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for that fiscal year.

(b) The provisions of Section 306 of the Rehabilitation Act that were in effect prior to the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 apply to such construction.

(c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

5.10 Contracts and cooperative agreements. (Section 101(a)(24) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.31 and .32)

(a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.

The designated state agency has the authority to enter into contracts with for-profit organizations for the purpose of providing, as vocational rehabilitation services, on-the-job training and related programs for individuals with disabilities under Part A of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, upon the determination by the designated state agency that for-profit organizations are better qualified to provide vocational rehabilitation services than nonprofit agencies and organizations.

(b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) describes the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

Section 6: Program Administration

6.1 Designated state agency. (Section 625(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(a))

The designated state agency for vocational rehabilitation services identified in paragraph 1.2 of the Title I State Plan is the state agency designated to administer the State Supported Employment Services Program authorized under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.2 Statewide assessment of supported employment services needs. (Section 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(b))

Attachment 4.11(a) describes the results of the comprehensive, statewide needs assessment conducted under Section 101(a)(15)(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and subparagraph 4.11(a)(1) of the Title I State Plan with respect to the rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities and their need for supported employment services, including needs related to coordination.

6.3 Quality, scope and extent of supported employment services. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(c) and .50(b)(2))

Attachment 6.3 describes the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive supported employment services. The description also addresses the timing of the transition to extended services

to be provided by relevant state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources following the cessation of supported employment service provided by the designated state agency.

6.4 Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(d) and .20)

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) identifies the state's goals and plans with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.5 Evidence of collaboration with respect to supported employment services and extended services. (Sections 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(e))

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

6.6 Minority outreach. (34 CFR 363.11(f))

Attachment 4.11(d) includes a description of the designated state agency's outreach procedures for identifying and serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities.

6.7 Reports. (Sections 625(b)(8) and 626 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(h) and .52)

The designated state agency submits reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the commissioner may require and collects the information required by Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Part B, of Title VI and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Section 7: Financial Administration

7.1 Five percent limitation on administrative costs. (Section 625(b)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(g)(8))

The designated state agency expends no more than five percent of the state's allotment under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for administrative costs in carrying out the State Supported Employment Services Program.

7.2 Use of funds in providing services. (Sections 623 and 625(b)(6)(A) and (D) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.6(c)(2)(iv), .11(g)(1) and (4))

(a) Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act are used by the designated state agency only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive such services.

(b) Funds provided under Title VI, Part B, are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act, in providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.

(c) Funds provided under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act are not used to provide extended services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services

8.1 Scope of supported employment services. (Sections 7(36) and 625(b)(6)(F) and (G) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54), 363.11(g)(6) and (7))

(a) Supported employment services are those services as defined in Section 7(36) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54).

(b) To the extent job skills training is provided, the training is provided on-site.

(c) Supported employment services include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

8.2 Comprehensive assessments of individuals with significant disabilities. (Sections 7(2)(B) and 625(b)(6)(B); 34 CFR 361.5(b)(6)(ii) and 363.11(g)(2))

The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under Section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome.

8.3 Individualized plan for employment. (Sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 625(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.46(b) and 363.11(g)(3) and (5))

(a) An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and updated using funds under Title I.

(b) The individualized plan for employment:

1. specifies the supported employment services to be provided;
2. describes the expected extended services needed; and
3. identifies the source of extended services, including natural supports, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment plan is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that sources will become available.

(c) Services provided under an individualized plan for employment are coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.

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**State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program
and
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program**

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Required annually by all agencies except those agencies that are independent consumer-controlled commissions.

Identify the Input provided by the state rehabilitation council, including recommendations from the council's annual report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other council reports. Be sure to also include:

- the Designated state unit's response to the input and recommendations; and

- explanations for the designated state unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council.

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BUREAU OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

Input of the State Rehabilitation Council; DSU Response

The State of Connecticut has established the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) that meets the criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17. The SRC participated with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) in developing the goals and priorities BRS has identified and agrees to the proposed changes in the priority areas as defined in the goals and priorities for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010.

SRC Participation

The SRC Chair and/or members of the SRC have, along with BRS, attended or participated in the following:

1. BRS 2007 Annual Meeting;
2. Employment Summit 2008;
3. Connect-Ability □ Evaluation Sub-Committee; Hiring, Recruiting, and Maintaining Sub-Committee; School-to-Work Transition Sub-Committee; Steering Committee; Technical Assistance Sub-Committee; Transportation Sub-Committee; and Website Sub-Committee;
4. BRS Public Meeting December 2008;
5. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Review;
6. Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Spring Conference;
7. BRS Transition Committee; and
8. SRC Meetings (six per year).

Common Themes Shared at Public Meeting and in Writing

The public meetings were held December 16, 2008 in preparations for the 2010 State Plan submission and proposed changes in the policy guidance for home and vehicle modifications and hearing aid services to take effect in 2009.

Invitations were mailed to approximately 5,000 consumers and to the Community Rehabilitation Provider CRP list, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to BRS, and several organizations. Staff was encouraged to invite consumers to attend, as well.

These meetings were held in Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven. The attendance is recorded as follow: Bridgeport □ about 20 consumers/family members; Hartford □ about 20 consumers/family members with four SRC members; New Haven □ about 12 consumers/family members with one SRC member. A combined 24 members of the BRS staff also attended the three locations.

Consumers were also given time to submit written comments if they could not attend the meetings. Approximately 18 written comments were submitted by the January 7, 2009 deadline.

Comments Expressed More Than Once Either in Writing and/or at the Public Meeting:

1. How will economy impact VR budget? 3

2. How will economy impact job opportunities? 2
3. Concerns about job placement 2
4. Faced discrimination when seeking work 2
5. Concerned that BRS will not modify vehicles for college students 2
6. PCA funding 2
7. BRS services are inadequate for professionals 2
8. Bureaucracy impedes timely action 5
9. BRS needs job developers; better employer contacts 2
10. Counselors should not belittle or demean consumers or damage consumer's self-esteem 2
11. Positive comments about staff and/or services 7
12. Attended the public meeting just to listen 4

Statistics from BRS Consumer Surveys October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008

The purpose of the Consumer Survey is to assess consumers' viewpoint of their satisfaction with the vocational rehabilitation (VR) service process and the effectiveness of VR in assisting consumers to obtain and maintain employment.

The survey instrument developed by the SRC to assess 13 points is made available (without influence from the counselor) after each consumer visit to a BRS counselor. District Directors receive completed surveys for their region and forward copies to the SRC through the SRC Liaison. District Directors are able to follow-up with consumers who identify themselves and request direct contact, track any negative trends in service and note comments made about services received. The SRC Liaison forwards the surveys to the Consumer Satisfaction Committee so the responses may be entered into a data base. Results are summarized and emailed to the BRS Bureau Director, SRC Liaison and SRC Chairperson. These summaries are reviewed with all SRC members at the full SRC meetings.

Review of Surveys

Overall, consumers rate BRS services in a very positive fashion. A major portion of the surveys include written comments about the VR counselors' professionalism, the quality of information received, and overall welcoming atmosphere of BRS. Areas of concern for specific offices include a need for better parking, areas for private meeting, better office/directional signage, lack of courtesy of offices co-located in DSS offices, a need to reduce required paperwork and timeliness in scheduling appointments. In particular it was noted a concern of timeliness in scheduling intake appointments. The Consumer Satisfaction Committee also noted difficulty by consumers in answering some survey questions.

In total, 567 completed surveys were received by the Consumer Satisfaction Committee. When assessing overall satisfaction, 530 completed the question "Overall satisfaction with Visit." Responses indicated that 95% of consumers were satisfied with the services from BRS.

The SRC will continue to review data from the surveys, give reports to the SRC, and use results to plan future assessments, if needed. The SRC will take the following steps to improve the survey and the process:

* Revise current survey's wording to eliminate confusion by consumers in completing the form accurately.

* Include questions specifically for consumers with psychiatric disabilities.

SRC Recommendations

1. Based on the BRS consumer surveys of office visits and public forums, there is a continued issue related to consumers receiving appointments and communications from BRS in a timely manner.

Recommendation 1:

The SRC recommends that reasonable timelines be established and monitored both for appointments to be set and for communications to be returned in a timely manner.

Response 1:

The overall Consumer Satisfaction from the SRC surveys is very positive with a 95% satisfaction. However, there is always room to improve the timeliness of services. This year we have had some locations where we have had a decrease in staff due to maternity leaves or resignations. In these locations there has been a direct correlation to the timeliness of services. In addition, with the Governor's Retirement Incentive Program taking place on July 1, 2009, we will have a significant loss of staff. In the interim, the plan will be for supervisors to cover vacant caseloads, have senior counselors provide some clinical supervision, and provide more expedient services to consumers who have realistic career goals.

2. While consumers have the option whether or not they want to complete the survey, the response rate of consumer surveys is low and does not reflect the number of consumers seen by counselors. The SRC would like to see surveys distributed in a uniform manner and an increase in the number of surveys returned.

Recommendation 2:

To improve consistency in the distribution of the survey, we recommend that the counselor directly offer the consumer a survey in a return, postage-paid envelope prior to the start of the meeting. The counselor should remind the consumer to complete the survey at the end of the meeting. The return envelope should be addressed to the appropriate district director. Using postage paid return envelopes may increase the return rate.

Response 2:

Having a uniformed method of receiving and completing the survey would be fine for the regions. The SRC liaison can bring that issue to a monthly directors meeting.

3. Parking and/or proper directional/office signage continues to be an issue in specific BRS offices (noted per surveys were Bridgeport, Dayville, East Hartford, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Stamford, Torrington, Waterbury).

Recommendation 3:

BRS should assess office/directional signage at the above offices and address parking issues.

Note: the re-location of the New Britain BRS office and the subsequent improved parking situation has been reflected in surveys received after the time frame noted in this report).

Note: BRS has addressed the handicapped parking issue at the Stamford office after the time frame

noted in this report.

Response 3:

Some of the DSS co-located offices (Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury) have security guards to assist in directing the public to the proper office. There is signage for the DSS offices in these locations. There have been complaints about the parking in Stamford, Torrington, and New Britain. New Britain DSS/BRS office just opened in a new location and the signage and parking has greatly improved. There continues to be parking issues in Torrington and in Stamford. Our district director and Stamford DSS supervisor and security guard have worked on improving handicapped parking. The Dayville office is moving to the Danielson One-Stop and the signage will be appropriately displayed. New London and Norwich are co-located with the One-Stops and they have good BRS signage. East Hartford is the one location that is co-located with a proprietary school, Goodwin College. We will try to improve the signage in this location, if the budget allows.

4. The lack of meeting room privacy and the DSS check-in procedure for the Middletown office has consistently been reported on the surveys. Crowded and noisy waiting areas have been reported as well as lack of privacy in the designated meeting areas.

Note: Reports of "rudeness" by staff reflected in the surveys have been of DSS staff and not BRS staff.

Recommendation 4:

BRS needs to secure private meeting areas for consumer interviews.

Response 4:

The Middletown office for BRS is housed on the 3rd floor. DSS rules will not allow consumers to meet beyond the main lobby. The counselors are allowed to meet on the main floor in cubicles.

5. Consumers reported that they need to call counselors frequently to prompt them to follow up on activities established in the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).

Recommendation 5:

The SRC recommends that counselors follow-up with consumers be considered priority.

Response 5:

There is certainly a responsibility on the counselor and consumers part to stay in contact. Having upfront clear expectations and/or an action plan at the end of each meeting could clarify the timeframe and future contacts based on the IPE. SRC representatives are invited to attend regional staff meetings to explain the need for the BRS staff to clarify roles and responsibilities with their consumers. Coming from consumers or advocates may make this a better approach to change, then having management state this as a priority.

6. Technology is available for access via video-phone for deaf consumers. While the SRC has previously presented this recommendation in the past, we again recommend this enhanced form of communication that would mirror your strategy for equitable access to service in Attachment 4.11(d).

Recommendation 6:

The SRC recommends that BRS provide access via video-phone to counselors who serve deaf Consumers.

Response 6:

Since 2005, this director has asked the department to assist in the purchasing of the proper videophone that will technologically be compatible within the DSS/BRS offices. All of the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) should have a videophone as this is the updated mode of communication with deaf consumers. In the best of all worlds and in compliance with a universally accessible system there should be a videophone in all DSS offices. At this point we have one videophone in the Hartford BRS offices that is used by 2 RCDs, but housed in one RCDs office. One transition counselor in our New Haven High School, Wilbur Cross, has a videophone as an accommodation to her as she is deaf. We continue to pursue the installation of this technology in other locations.

7. In addition to enhancing CRP services for deaf consumers in attachment 4.11 (d) there have been other reports of gaps in services for individuals who are deaf. Most specifically the issues present in two areas, transition from school to work, and long-term support for individuals who have an additional disability, most notably with Mental Health consumers.

Recommendation 7:

The availability and choices of services to consumers who are deaf need to be improved. Efforts for a coordinated service system for the transition from school to work should be expanded to include individuals who are deaf.

In addition, appropriate long-term support for consumers who have additional disabilities need to be addressed at a statewide level.

Response 7:

There are seven rehabilitation counselors for the deaf (RCDs) working for BRS. Each RCD is a liaison to all high schools that have students who are deaf. If a student attends the American School for the Deaf in West Hartford, a BRS RCD from the students' home district will work with that student. There is a need for additional providers that can assist our deaf consumers in accessing employment and evaluation services. The State Coordinator for the Deaf (SCD) and the RCDs have provided two new community rehabilitation providers with technical assistance to be stronger in their service delivery system.

8. Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDP) are referenced on page 2 of attachment 4.10 as well as specialized caseloads for mental health consumers. However, all staff should have training on psychiatric disabilities and substance abuse in their ISDPs. Page 2 of attachment 4.8 (b) (1-4) refers to the relationship with the Dartmouth Center for Psychiatric Research/Johnson and Johnson project under Supported Employment but no training for BRS counselors is mentioned.

Recommendation 8:

Identify areas of need and schedule required staff training specifically in the areas of mental health, psychiatric disabilities and substance abuse;

Response 8:

All of our BRS staff is fully trained on all aspects of mental illness and substance abuse. BRS has a fully integrated training grant that provides all staff with full training on all disabilities, psychopharmacology, functional limitations and counseling techniques including the Individual Placement and Support model introduced by the Johnson and Johnson project. The SRC liaison can share the training schedule with the SRC to ensure they know all the trainings available to staff. Also the SRC should be aware through the State Plan that all counselors are required to meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) required by RSA.

9. The State Department of Education is referenced in attachment 4.8 (b) (1-4) on page 3 with a Memorandum of Understanding in place for youth however a similar MOU was not seen with a mental health governing body for this population so this recommendation still stands.

Recommendation 9:

Examine specialized service delivery for transitioning young adults with severe mental illness.

Response 9:

There is an MOU pilot being tried in Bridgeport to coordinate transition services for students with mental illness by providing the students with supports as they transfer to adult services. During the current year, the project has registered seven students in this after-school program. Services included travel training, tours of psychosocial programs for adults with mental illness, in addition to meeting Community Rehabilitation Providers and Community Work Incentive Specialists. In addition, the students were enrolled in a Wellness, Recovery, and Action Plan program that is a self-help program intended to teach the students how to manage their symptoms and teach them about recovery from their illness. If this pilot succeeds we may try these supports at additional schools.

This screen was last updated on Jun 30 2009 3:20PM by Evelyn Knight

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**State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Program
and
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment
Services Program**

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation
Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)**

Attachment 4.7(b)(3) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

Identify the types of services to be provided by the program for which the waiver of statewideness is requested.

The waiver request should also include:

- a written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the designated state unit the non-federal share of funds;
- a written assurance that designated state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect;
- a written assurance that all state plan requirements will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

This screen was last updated on Jun 30 2009 3:29PM by Evelyn Knight

[Screen 5 of 17](#)

**State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program
and
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program**

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and

- if applicable, state use contracting programs.

Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System

A. The Department of Social Services (DSS) is the designated state agency for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) and supported employment programs. This presents tremendous opportunities for collaboration with other program divisions within the department. It enables coordination of additional services for individuals with significant disabilities with the Family Services Unit in the Bureau of Assistance Programs responsible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) policy for the following programs: Temporary Family Assistance, Jobs First Employment Services, Employment Success, and Transportation for Economic Independence. The Bureau of Aging, Community, and Social Work Services provides a partnership when working on employment opportunities for individuals in the Adult Services Unit, specifically the nursing facility transition program.

The Department of Social Services has adopted a Universal Design Model to make reasonable accommodations for individuals needing DSS services. BRS has agreed to collaborate with the TANF Program to hire four state-funded TANF/VR Counselors. These counselors will be screening TANF consumers subject to sanctions for not complying with their employment plans. These screenings will be done at the conciliation interview. As part of that process, consumers are offered the opportunity to be screened in one or more of these three areas: Mental Health, Substance Abuse and/or Learning Disabilities.

If the screening results in a significant disability the consumer will be invited to apply for VR services.

B. BRS and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) continue to co-fund an Employment Consultant position. This consultant is the liaison between the vocational rehabilitation agency and the mental health staff and spends a considerable amount of time on supported employment training and initiatives across systems.

Three additional Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) have been executed that allowed us to embed three VR counselors within the clinical teams of three mental health authorities. Here, the VR counselor and the clinical team are working collaboratively to better serve individuals with significant psychiatric disabilities.

As one of three initial implementing states, Connecticut continues to participate in the Dartmouth Center for Psychiatric Research Johnson & Johnson Project. This project has provided training and technical support to assist over one-third of the state's mental health centers to adopt evidence-based supported employment practices (also called the Individual Placement and Support, or the IPS approach). BRS counselors have been active partners in this project from its inception in 2002; BRS assumed funding for its share of this project at the end of the three-year grant period. With the placement of the mental health liaison counselors at Johnson & Johnson sites, BRS staff works closely with the mental health treatment teams to plan and deliver collaborative employment services.

At the beginning of this fiscal year, we signed an MOU between BRS, DMHAS, and the University of Connecticut's Center on Aging will provide research that will be consistent with the types of research

we have collected in other parts of the program. Although we have had a resignation in one of the local mental health authorities (LMHA), we have been working with the other two regions quite actively. Our embedded counselors are working with 68 DMHAS cases, 43 of whose cases were opened during this project. Our project goal is to reach 50 cases by July 2009, when we stop collecting the new data and move to tracking the participants. Sixteen of the 43 are currently working and our counselors also are addressing the clinical staff with consultation on 15 additional cases that may be new applicants in the future.

The actual numbers do not reflect the additional learning that has occurred between the BRS and DMHAS team. The feedback from the vocational rehabilitation counselors and DMHAS has been very positive. Team building and trust have allowed the staff to build momentum. The University of Connecticut evaluators are following up with the participants on their level of satisfaction.

C. The US Department of Labor's (DOL) State Leaders Innovation Institute (SLII)

Connecticut is one of three states chosen to participate in a SLII initiative, offered by the National Technical Assistance and Research (NTAR) Center, to increase the employment of adults with disabilities. Connecticut's Core Team includes BESB, BRS, the Connect to Work Center, the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), DDS, DECD, DMHAS, DOL, the Governor's Office, the OWC, a One-Stop, and the Workforce Board in Southwestern CT.

This SLII has focused on employer outreach, employer engagement and the state as a model employer. All the partners are invested in these priority areas that will achieve the goals of this cooperative agreement.

D. Cooperative Agreements under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)

BRS and BESB are collaborating with other partners in the workforce system on a statewide on-the-job-training (OJT) model to market to employers using the additional stimulus funds. With the ARRA funds we will develop and disseminate an "Employer Toolkit" that includes information and incentives for hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.

The toolkit will include OJT material, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, and information on how to become an Employment Network under the the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work regulations.

Additionally we have coordinated with all five Workforce Boards to increase their applications for the Summer Youth Employment Program for young adults 14-25 years of age. This opportunity for young adults who have limited work experience can assist BRS and BESB to work with our consumers and build a solid career plan once they have some work experience, build up their work tolerance and succeed in summer employment as many of their peers do.

DSS received \$64.3 million to expand the Weatherization Program. Coordination among state agencies that administer energy, housing and human service programs has increased significantly and been an integral part of the planning for the expanded three-year program. Some of the agencies and organizations collaborating with DSS include BRS, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the Connecticut Community and Technical Colleges; the Community Action Agencies (CAAs); the Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority; DOL; the Governor's Office; the Institute for Sustainable Energy; Jobs Funnel Programs; the OWC; the Workforce Investment

Boards; and Work Place, Inc. Detailed plans for program implementation will continue to be worked out in the next several weeks. There are model programs in Connecticut with similar job skill requirements that successfully recruit, train and place individuals in apprenticeship positions and prevailing wage jobs in their region. Additionally, mechanisms for sustainable jobs and career-ladder opportunities based on experience and training, are included in the program planning. DSS intends to distribute the ARRA funds in ways that will increase job opportunities and provide specialized training for and access to jobs during this economic downturn. The goal is that these jobs will continue or that the skills obtained through these jobs will be transferable and marketable in the "green" job markets of the future.

The focus for BRS in the Weatherization discussions has been on recruitment, ensuring that individuals with disabilities are part of the recruitment pool for the weatherization jobs. Recruitment will target a diverse population - some skilled and some new to the workforce - focusing on low-income individuals, displaced and unemployed workers, persons with disabilities, veterans and older workers.

E. Walgreens Project

The bureau has entered into an MOA with four state agencies to develop a unified and cooperative effort to refer and train individuals with disabilities at Connecticut's newly opened Walgreens Distribution Center. The bureau, along with the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), DDS, the Department of Labor (DOL), and the State Department of Education (SDE), agreed to implement and maintain a training program on-site at the Walgreens Distribution Center.

In addition to this interagency agreement, the bureau also entered into a partnership with the United Way of Connecticut, Inc. to provide pre-employment training for these prospective employees.

F. The Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)

The bureau has an MOA with BESB, the Connecticut-Blind VR program. The MOA is designed to outline services to be provided by the bureau and by BESB in instances where an individual meets the eligibility criteria for both agencies.

G. Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI)

The bureau has an MOA with CDHI which sets forth the terms and conditions for purchasing certified sign language interpreting services. The MOA established rates, scheduling, and cancellation procedures.

H. Connect-Ability Local Level Initiatives

Through the Connect-Ability initiative, BRS awarded nine strategic planning contracts to community-based organizations to increase employment for people with disabilities by addressing three priority areas at a local level. The pilots are required to partner with several stakeholders including schools, employers, transportation providers and Chambers of Commerce. The priority areas are:

- " Transportation - to increase access to transportation through creative and innovative solutions;
- " School-to-work transition - to improve the transition process for young adults moving from school to post-secondary education or employment; and
- " Recruiting, hiring and retention - to increase the recruitment, hiring and promotion of individuals with disabilities in Connecticut businesses.

Some of the expected outcomes include increased awareness of transition practices, increased

employer knowledge about hiring individuals with disabilities, increased knowledge and availability of transportation options, travel training, advocacy, mentoring and internship opportunities. Contracts began in April 2009 and will end in December 2009.

I. Coordination with Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and Independent Living Centers (ILC). BRS entered into a three-year contract (2007-2010) with the SILC to fund its Resource Plan in the amount of \$180,000 annually, using funding under the Title I Innovation and Expansion (I&E) provision in the law. A bureau staff member also serves in an ex-officio capacity on the SILC, and has taken an active role in serving on various committees and SILC projects. Additionally, SILC staff and officers meet semiannually with the bureau director and senior management staff to review progress in meeting the objectives of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) and to resolve any problems or concerns.

BRS entered into three-year contracts (2007-2010) with each of the five ILCs in Connecticut, providing state funding for core operations (supplemental to Part C funding) in addition to Part B funding as stipulated in the approved three-year SPIL. ILC directors meet periodically with the bureau field director within their respective service areas, to further develop the working relationships between the IL and VR programs. Additionally, center directors meet quarterly with the bureau director and senior management staff to review progress in meeting the objectives of the SPIL and to resolve any problems or concerns.

J. Cooperative Agreement with Recipients of Grants for Services to American Indians
BRS has a cooperative agreement with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program that allows for cross training of staff and case sharing.

This screen was last updated on Jul 27 2009 9:44AM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials

- Describe the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate

the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.

- Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
 - consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
 - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
 - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

(2) Coordination with Education Officials

A. Higher Education

In April, 2006, BRS, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), and the Connecticut State University System entered into an Interagency Agreement which delineates the responsibilities of all parties in providing auxiliary aids and services to students with disabilities, when such auxiliary aids and services are necessary for the student to access and benefit from higher education. The intent of this agreement is to promote a collaborative approach in addressing the needs of students with disabilities, to improve the coordination of services, and to efficiently allocate shared responsibilities. The agreement clearly identifies which party provides a specific auxiliary aid or service and under what conditions it should be provided. It also includes a process for interagency dispute resolution.

B. High School

BRS has been working with multiple state agencies and workforce partners to enhance the service provision for young adults transitioning from high school to work. BRS follows the federal regulations from RSA regarding comparable services and is guided by our agency policies on transition services when students with disabilities transition from school to VR services. These policies include developing an employment plan that specifies what services and supports BRS will provide directly upon graduation from high school. The bureau's training grant focuses resources on the procedures for counselors to follow, as each counselor is assigned one or more schools to cover within each of Connecticut's 169 towns. These procedures describe the funding of services, the questions that counselors should consider in making decisions, and the parameters for funding or co-funding services. They also describe the relationship with the State Department of Education (SDE), and encourage counselors to contact the transition consultant to resolve any issues that arise.

To this end, we have the following agreements:

* The bureau has a MOU to co-fund a full-time transition consultant with the SDE. The consultant sits on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the bureau's transition committee. The consultant trains new BRS staff and provides ongoing technical assistance.

This formal MOU describes the responsibilities of the transition consultant, which include consultation and technical assistance between the bureau and the State Department of Education. The transition consultant also coordinates the transition planning between the two agencies. Beyond these roles and responsibilities, the MOU includes financial responsibilities of the two agencies, as well as outreach and identification strategies. This year, the BRS director and the SDE consultant met with the six Regional Connecticut Special Education Directors Committees covering the 169 towns to discuss IDEA regulations and the public vocational rehabilitation programs, policies, eligibility, and plan development.

* BRS has a long-standing relationship with Connecticut High Schools, Vocational-Technical Schools, the Department of Corrections, Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Public Health /Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, the Department of Social Services (DSS) Medicaid Katie Beckett Waiver and CT AHEAD (Association of Higher Education and Disability) with liaisons to each of the schools and other public education programs. These relationships continue to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from educational services in school to the receipt of VR services. In addition, Connecticut has initiated a number of new activities to increase referrals and improve services to this group.

* BRS has liaison counselors assigned to each high school in Connecticut as well as the other agencies providing alternative public education. In 2006, six counselors were added to work exclusively with students in six urban high schools. Each school provides office space at no charge to BRS under a MOU. This initiative is designed to provide added outreach in these underserved communities.

Bridgeport Mental Health Transition Project

Last year the bureau entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Bridgeport School System, an urban school district, to serve consumers more effectively by providing additional support for transition students with mental illness who will be exiting high school. BRS will provide vocational rehabilitation support to these students while they connect with adult services. The school system has

agreed they will provide the resources to sustain this endeavor after the first two years.

During the current year, the project has registered seven students in this after school program. Services included travel training, tours of psychosocial programs for adults with mental illness, in addition to meeting Community Rehabilitation Providers and Community Work Incentive Coordinators. In addition, the students were enrolled in a Wellness, Recovery, and Action Plan program that is a self-help program intended to teach the students how to manage their symptoms and teach them about recovery from their illness.

A major challenge encountered by this project was getting students willing to attend an after-school program. The Bridgeport School System finds the program beneficial and is considering incorporating it into its school day schedule. Moving this project to an in-school program will also make continuation of this project more likely.

Committees

In 2006, BRS established a Transition Committee made up of the six transition counselors, representative liaison counselors, supervisors, directors, central office consultants and the co-funded State Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education transition consultant. This committee was formed to facilitate the agency's focus on transition and support counselors as they begin working with students as young as age 14 who have significant challenges. Committee members also provide ongoing training to all staff working with transition-age young adults.

In the first year, the transition committee developed new goals and objectives for working with students in the freshmen through senior year of high school. These goals and objectives were based upon the five Guideposts outlined in the National Collaborative on Workforce and Development for Youth document funded by the Office of Employment Policy (ODEP) at the US Department of Labor. This committee also developed a tool kit of resources and assessments for young adults, families and professionals that have been distributed to the regions for counselors to use in developing effective employment plans with young adults. New outreach materials were also developed this year. These materials were targeted at high school students and their families.

Additionally, three BRS central office consultants sit on the statewide State Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education Task Force to provide consultation and collaborate with all state efforts to improve transition from school to work. This includes being part of the team that developed the State Performance Plan for transition, guidelines for the Summary of Performance and the Exiter survey.

BRS staff also participates in the Governor's Youth Vision Team, the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission/Youth Subcommittee, the Governor's Coalition for Youth with Disabilities, and the CT Youth Leadership Forum.

In 2007, the Connect to Work Center within BRS, through its Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), signed a MOU with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness to begin exploring Data Interoperability possibilities in Connecticut. This need was identified originally through the efforts of the eight state agencies that worked on the National Governor's Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Improving Outcomes for Young Adults with Disabilities. Commissioners from several state agencies work

collaboratively to determine the feasibility of this initiative. BRS, DMHAS and DDS are evaluating a small sampling of cases that all three agencies have provided services to consumers. In May 2009, a Project Director from the University of Connecticut Health Center was assigned to this project.

This screen was last updated on Jul 27 2009 9:48AM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

A. BRS initiated partnership agreements with several Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) and a One-Stop to provide employment support services for Social Security Beneficiaries of the Ticket to Work Program who exit the VR system. Connecticut's VR service providers, in conjunction with the VR agency, are developing an Employment Network Consortium. Now that the new ticket regulations have been published, the community rehabilitation providers have been meeting with the bureau to work out the new Partnership Plus Model as described in the new regulations. Consumers who require long-term supported employment will benefit from this model. Additionally, participating CRPs and the bureau will expect a benefit through increased revenue from SSA cost reimbursements.

Through a Projects with Industry (PWI) grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the Workplace in Bridgeport hires staff to find jobs for people with disabilities. In addition to the position in Bridgeport, a position has been added in Waterbury. These job developers work closely with BRS counselors to find employment for our consumers as well as other members of the community who have disabilities, but are not eligible for BRS.

The performance from October 2007 to January 31, 2009 showed that PWI served 165 individuals, an 83% increase of their goal. Ninety individuals entered employment; 65 individuals placed into employment had a significant disability; 59 of the persons placed were unemployed for 6 months or more prior to entering the project.

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

As part of our menu of services, the Bureau provides supported employment and extended services to consumers with significant disabilities, as appropriate. Bureau counselors work with each individual consumer to identify necessary services. In the process of developing an Individual Plan for Employment, the counselor and consumer make decisions about the need for supported employment or extended services. Once the services are deemed necessary, the counselor and consumer identify a source of long-term funding and meet with a representative case manager, if appropriate. Once long-term supports are obtained, the plan can be executed.

Supported employment and extended services are provided in partnership with our statewide network of Community Rehabilitation Programs. These arrangements are based on fee-for-service contracts.

We use a series of strategies to accomplish the goals of supported or extended employment, including the following:

- * Establish a menu of programs that can provide ongoing supports and services to consumers including the Ticket Program, and the Employment Opportunities Program;
- * Develop Partnership Plus/ Business Model to provide blended-funding employment supports to consumers;
- * Develop/ Best Practices/ Evidenced Based Practices;

- * Continue to seek additional avenues for long-term support for consumers that require supported employment services;
- * Continue individually developed supported employment plans with consumers; and
- * Continue to reimburse Community Rehabilitation Providers at an hourly rate for their support for consumers using supported employment services.

This screen was last updated on Jun 30 2009 3:32PM by Evelyn Knight

[Screen 9 of 17](#)

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

1. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
- projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be

served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

Section 4.10 describes the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) policies, procedures, and activities which ensure an adequate supply of qualified professionals to provide vocational rehabilitation services statewide. These policies and procedures were developed in coordination with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

During this annual update period, DSS and BRS, like other units of state government, face changes and challenges that impact our CSPD. The current budget crisis in Connecticut has resulted in changes to the way the bureau delivers training as well as increasing the length of time it takes to refill positions. A proposed retirement incentive for state employees will challenge us further even though the bureau has been actively engaged in succession planning for the past four years.

Data System on Personnel

DSS maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources and training. The computerized data system along with the BRS management information system and ongoing needs assessments provide information used to analyze personnel needs on an annual basis.

The bureau has been approved for 159 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions.

As of April 1, 2009, the bureau had 156 of the 159 positions filled. The number and type of BRS positions are identified in the personnel chart below.

Included in the staffing numbers are four state-funded VR counselors to serve consumers with disabilities currently receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The funding for the additional BRS staff resulted from a court settlement entered into by DSS in response to a lawsuit alleging that services to their consumers with disabilities were not accessible.

BRS has 21 of the 79 counselor positions serving specialty caseloads. Three of the specialty caseloads prioritize consumers with mental health diagnoses, eight prioritize transition caseloads, six prioritize individuals that are Deaf and four prioritize TANF recipients with disabilities.

All BRS field staff is given the supervision necessary to ensure that the position provides the level of direct services deemed necessary. Supervisors meet with their staff annually to address development needs for the upcoming year. Strategies for building the skills of all staff are included in Individual Staff Development Plans. The In-Service grant provides BRS with the resources to provide the training needed for the agency's goals and priorities as well as support the individual staff development needs.

Annual Information on Staff and Consumers

The bureau is currently serving 5,363 applicants and eligible individuals. The bureau is in an Order of Selection and serving 4,812 individuals that meet the Connecticut Order of Selection standard for

having a significant disability. The bureau currently has 78 VR counselors. The ratio of counselors to all consumers is 1:69. The ratio of counselors to eligible consumers is 1:62. VR supervisors often see consumers when counselors are not available. The ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:585. The ratio of VR supervisors to eligible individuals is 1:534. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:35.

Current Need for Staff

The bureau has received approval to add six two-year durational VR Counselor positions and one central office consultant to meet the added challenges brought on by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). These new VR counselor positions will also serve to mitigate the effects of staff losses resulting from the Retirement Incentive Program (RIP) of July 1, 2009, which is expected to result in the loss of up to 7 VR counselor positions. The impending RIP targets employees who are 55 or older with 10 years or more experience, and is in response to an anticipated State budget deficit of \$6-8 billion over the next two years. The bureau anticipates it will eventually receive approval to refill any positions lost to a retirement incentive, as all but four existing counselor positions are federally funded.

Even though the proposed durational positions will result in a temporary increase in staff, the bureau does not intend to permanently increase our current staffing level beyond the two year ARRA effort.

Qualified Personnel Needs - Five Year Projections

Aside from the two-year ARRA effort, the bureau expects its staffing level to remain the same during the next five years. In making this projection, the bureau considered current costs for staff, administration and case services, in addition to:

- * Projected increase in transition referrals;
- * Budget for staff increases; and
- * Likelihood of increased federal dollars for the vocational rehabilitation program

It is likely the 2009 RIP will result in personnel savings both through savings realized as positions remain vacant during the refill process and refilling positions at a lower cost (entry-level versus senior staff).

The bureau updates its four-year projections quarterly to determine the need to adjust staff/case service/administrative costs. The bureau currently uses its Integrated Client Information System (ICIS) to help monitor quarterly its Human Resource Plan by analyzing available and projected resources; projected service needs for persons with disabilities, changes in organizational structure, service delivery methodologies, and to establish adequate staffing patterns.

The bureau has taken the lead in CT for coordinating services for youths with disabilities. The transition initiatives have implications for staffing and case service funds. In FFY 2006, the bureau projected a 50% increase in transition referrals by FFY 2010. It now appears that this projection was accurate. This increase in transition cases would logically require an increase in staff. Included in the bureau's FFY 2009 State Plan was a projected need for 20 more counselors to serve the increased transition consumers. However, the bureau cannot increase its personnel budget unless it receives an increase in federal funding. The ARRA program will allow the bureau to serve more consumers during the duration of the effort, but the bureau does not anticipate any other ongoing funding that would

allow it to increase staffing levels five years from now.

In addition, the bureau continues to evaluate the level of support staff necessary to expand the counseling staff over the next several years and in light of anticipated duty changes that will occur as a result of implementing System 7, the bureau's new Management Information System (MIS) program. The first meeting to launch System 7 took place on March 18, 2008. System 7 is a comprehensive data, fiscal management and case management system, and replaces the bureau's ICIS program, which was restricted to data collection and fiscal management only. System 7 was partially implemented in February 2009; full implementation is expected in the fourth quarter of FFY 2009. A more efficient and effective case management system could affect the bureau's need for staff. The bureau will continue to analyze the benefits gained from the new system and report again in the 2011 State Plan.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Administrative Fiscal Secretarial Support Staff	41	2	9
2	Central Office Consultants	17	0	7
3	Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC)	7	0	0
4	District Directors	3	0	1
5	Managers	3	0	1
6	Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors	9	0	3
7	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors	79	1	7
8				
9				
10				

2. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure,

or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Personnel Development

We analyze the graduate information from the regional CORE universities to find schools that offer required courses or graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling. We also check with local CORE schools for the availability of distance learning opportunities for the required CSPD courses.

The following is a list of the CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education) accredited institutions of higher education in the state or region that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals. All rehabilitation counseling graduates from the colleges listed will be eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Assumption College Massachusetts	90	3	17	24
2	Central Connecticut State University Connecticut	92	14	0	16
3	Salve Regina Rhode Island	45	0	0	10
4	Springfield College Massachusetts	43	0	0	20
5					

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the Coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

Recruitment

The bureau currently sends announcements for Counselor positions to all CORE-accredited institutions of higher education that train VR Counselors in the United States. We have initiated contacts with all CORE-accredited universities so that we can continue to find well-qualified staff for the vacancies we

anticipate in the future. In addition, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally found Counselor applicants; we have staff that serve on advisory boards or teach at these institutions.

The bureau is pleased to report that we have successfully recruited a qualified staff representative of the population of Connecticut: the 30% diversity of our staff exceeds the 25% diversity of our state. We are also pleased to have recruited 14% of our staff from individuals that have disabilities. Our primary challenge has been finding Master's level counselors who are proficient with Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL). We will continue the following steps to ensure there is a sufficient pool of qualified counselors for future openings:

- * increase our on-campus college recruitments;
- * increase presentations to high school students. Inner-city high schools with increased percentages of minority students will be targeted to generate interest in rehabilitation counseling as a vocation;
- * increase the number of graduate students who intern with BRS;
- * increase the number of consumers we help to go into the rehabilitation counseling profession; and
- * increase newspaper recruitment, including newspapers that serve diverse populations, and continue online nation-wide recruitment.

The bureau will hire counselors at the Bachelor's level, only after extensive efforts to find acceptable candidates at the Master's level are unsuccessful. The bureau requires that a Bachelor's Degree be in a related field, defined as:

- * Psychology;
- * Social Work;
- * Social Science; or
- * A degree deemed acceptable by the bureau.

In those instances when the bureau hires a counselor with a related Bachelor's degree as previously defined, a 48-credit Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling will be required within four years of the date of hire. The bureau will require the colleges or universities to be CORE-accredited or to be in the process of achieving accreditation.

Personnel Standards

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that

- apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

Personnel Standards for the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

The current requirements for Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) are based on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. During the past year, the bureau was successful in changing the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services job description for

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to match our current criteria. The bureau hires counselors that meet the following:

1. Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from a CORE-accredited institution; or
2. Master's and current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification; or
3. Master's in a related field which had a Theories and Techniques of Counseling course as part of the required curriculum.

The bureau will pay for and require the following graduate courses for new counselors in permanent positions or supervisors with a Master's in a related field regarding #3 above. The number of additional required courses will depend on the previous education of the new employee as well as total months of vocational rehabilitation counseling experience. The bureau's definition of education, course curriculum, and experience is based on current standards for the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification:

* 60 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - no additional courses are required. CSPD requirements are met.

* 48 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - two of the following four additional courses are required to meet CSPD requirements.

- o Assessment
- o Occupational Information or Job Placement
- o Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities
- o Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

* 36 months of vocational counseling experience or less - four additional courses are required to meet requirements for CSPD

- o Assessment
- o Occupational Information or Job Placement
- o Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities
- o Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

Even though the bureau bases its educational standards for VR Counselors on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, it does not require counselors to have CRC certification. However, applicants with a CORE-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree should be able to sit for the CRC exam. Applicants with a related Master's degree with 36-60 months experience, applicable courses, and 12 months supervision by a CRC may also be able to sit for the CRC exam at the time of application.

BRS employees interested in CRC certification are encouraged to contact the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification at the following website: <http://www.crccertification.com/> for more specific information on their credentials and experience. The bureau does not guarantee that the above criteria will entitle a counselor to sit for the CRC exam. The bureau provides training at no cost, and offers Continuing Education Units (CEUs), which will count toward the ongoing training requirements by CRC as well as the National Board for Certified Counselor (NBCC), Connecticut's Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), and Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE).

Current Data on Achievement of CSPD Standards and Staff Certifications

The bureau currently has 85 staff required to meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Standards.

Currently, 76 counselors and all 9 supervisors are required to meet this requirement. Currently 95%, or 81, of our counselors and supervisors have a Master's degree as specified in the Connecticut CSPD Plan. Four counselors are in the process of finishing a CORE-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree.

Newly hired counselors who do not meet the CSPD standard are allowed three years to complete CSPD courses. Counselors hired at the Bachelor's level are allowed four years to complete a CORE-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree. At this time, 84% (71 of 85) of counselors and supervisors have completed all the required rehabilitation courses specified in the bureau's plan for CSPD. Sixteen percent or 14 counselors are finishing their graduate courses or degrees. Ten counselors are taking 1-4 courses to meet the Connecticut standard for CSPD, in addition to the four counselors that are finishing their full rehabilitation Master's program.

In addition to education requirements, BRS encourages staff to pursue certification in their field. The bureau is especially pleased with the number of staff holding certifications since staff fund the cost of the certification exams and yearly fees themselves.

Currently the bureau has 32 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, 16 Connecticut Licensed Professional Counselors, 3 National Board of Certified Counselors, 2 Certified Vocational Evaluators, 1 Certified Co-Dependency Counselor, 7 Certified Work Incentive and Assistance Programs (WIPA) Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC) and 5 Certified Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) or National Certified Interpreters. We also have one Consultant who is an Assistive Technology Professional (ATP).

The bureau embraces the CSPD process to ensure continuous organizational development, continuous improvement of the competencies of all staff, especially (VR) Counselors and supervisors. All counselors and supervisors who were employees when the CSPD was initiated federally meet the CSPD requirements. Recently hired counselors will meet the CSPD requirements within the timeframe specified in this section of our state plan.

The bureau also seeks continuous improvements in service-delivery, the continuation of a professional level VR staff that can consistently achieve quality employment outcomes as specified in the Rehabilitation Act and promised in the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, we continually seek ways to meet the needs of our consumers and deliver a complete array of services based on the goals of employment, community participation, and informed consumer choice. The bureau has hired a qualified, diverse, flexible and progressive rehabilitation staff to serve our current and future consumers. BRS strives toward the continuous development of desired consumer outcomes; sustained jobs, jobs with future growth and sufficient earnings.

BRS has created policy that maintains good stewardship of public funds while providing services that consumers need for employment. The bureau's goal is for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to help consumers reach independence through employment.

VR supervisors and VR caseload counselors currently have the primary responsibility for making eligibility determinations; approving the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and any amendments to the IPE; making the determination as to who is an individual with a significant disability based on functional limitations; and consulting with each Consumer to determine ineligibility and when a record of service can be closed for a Consumer who has achieved an employment outcome.

Staff Development

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

1. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology; and
2. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

Preparation/ Staff Development

BRS systematically provides adequate and ongoing training to staff. In-service training addresses retention of qualified staff, succession planning, leadership development and capacity building. All staff development activities support the bureau's mission - to increase the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. In-service training is available to all staff.

The bureau bases its plan for staff development on a multi-faceted comprehensive needs survey. The bureau uses all available information for ongoing analysis of training needs including the following:

- * A quantitative needs survey of all supervisors, counselors and support staff;
- * Regional New England Customer Service Survey;
- * State Plan Public Hearings (2004- 2009);
- * Survey of Community Rehabilitation Program staff;
- * Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;
- * The BRS Training Committee;
- * Management reports,
- * Manager, District Director, Consultant, and supervisor feedback.

In addition to CSPD requirements, BRS provides a year-long series of in-service training for new staff, including a five-session Eligibility to Plan series, as well as training on Ticket to Work, Consumer Benefits, Community Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Policy, Ethics, Post Employment Services, Counselor Assessment Tools, Motivational Interviewing and On the Job Training and Job Placement.

Retention of our Qualified Staff

Connecticut is fortunate to have several factors that ensure retention of staff. The majority of staff leaves because of retirement or choosing to stay home with children rather than leaving for another position. The reasons for retention success follow.

- * BRS recruits staff that are committed to the importance of the work we do.
- * In-service training is available to staff at all levels.
- * In addition, the salaries are high, benefits are good and most staff have a thirty-five hour workweek;

some choose to work four days a week.

* “Golden handshakes” six years ago resulted in many opportunities for current staff promotions to other positions in the bureau.

The bureau also invites staff to give input into decisions that affect the way they work.

* The bureau hosted a collaboration meeting to allow most counselors, supervisors, and consultants to plan how to implement the new stimulus program with representatives of the Board of Education Services for the Blind (BESB).

* A Forms Committee composed of front-line staff plan ways to make the bureau’s use of forms more efficient.

* With the implementation of the new management information system, a new MIS Committee is helping to plan the development and implementation of System 7.

* A Web Site Committee is helping to redesign the bureau’s website to ensure efficient and effective access to VR information electronically.

* Other on-going committees that enable staff involvement include: Staff Training, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Transition, Asperger’s and the Dartmouth/Johnson and Johnson Mental Health Project.

The committees ensure that staff have input into the work of the bureau. The committees also give staff opportunities for leadership experiences that will help them prepare for other positions in the bureau.

BRS considers additional strategies suggested in the 33rd Institute on Rehabilitation Issues: Recruitment and Retention of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. In particular, the bureau will look at strategies that will maintain its retention of Millennials and the Generation Xers. Several staff have left and then returned to work with the bureau. The bureau is currently using the talents of three persons that retired previously from the bureau under temporary employment contracts. This was another strategy suggested in this publication.

Last year, BRS re-engaged in a process to create Individual Staff Development Plans with all employees. The bureau is currently initiating year two of its plan for each staff person to create an Individual Staff Development Plan. The plans include identification of areas of an employee’s job that need further development, areas that could be developed to prepare for a future job in the agency and training needed for either. This plan will encourage staff to pursue areas of their strength and interest that hopefully will encourage them to remain employed with the bureau. In addition, the encouragement of staff development for areas in which they may work someday will build bench strength, which is an important component of the bureau’s plan for succession. Currently about 77% of staff have a written Individual Staff Development Plan.

New Performance System for Measuring Counselor Performance

The bureau implemented a new evaluation system for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors during the past year. The new system balanced a computerized report of each counselor’s success in meeting federal standards and indicators, with the supervisor’s assessment of softer skills such as counseling skills and ability to deal with people.

Succession Planning

The bureau anticipates losing approximately 21 staff due to the impending retirement incentive

effective July 1, 2009. Next year will be a test to determine whether our five year plan for succession has successfully prepared staff to fill positions left vacant by the current retirement incentive. The succession plan has included career development training for managers so they have the tools necessary to talk to their staff about their Individual Staff Development Plans. With the help of an outside consultant, the senior staff has a comprehensive plan to identify the competencies needed for the positions in the future as well as a road map to help replacement staff find the resources necessary to fulfill their duties. The next challenge will be to develop a process where the development goals included in the staffs' Individual Staff Development Plans are clearly linked to the available opportunities. Currently the process works reasonably well through discussions. The bureau hopes to develop a computerized process to ensure that it doesn't miss opportunities for staff to develop the skills they will need for future jobs.

Leadership and Capacity Building

In addition to the Individual Staff Development Plans, committee participation involving leadership opportunities, ongoing participation in the creation and updates for the state plan, the bureau has planned the following activities for supervisors and other staff:

- * Co-facilitate training with a consultant
- * Make presentations to their regional staff meetings about training they have attended.
- * Participate in Training Committee or Community Rehabilitation Providers Committee, Succession Committee, Management Information Committee, Labor Management Committee, and Forms Committee where members assume leadership roles for training, policy development, and communication with other staff.

In-Service training is also a benefit enjoyed by all staff. The bureau uses its in-service training agenda to energize existing staff while fulfilling CSPD requirement. In addition to a year-long series of training specifically created for new counselors, the bureau provided training this year on "Healthy and Ready to Work" with Patti Hackett. Ms. Hackett is a national expert on helping school transition personnel and VR Counselors assist youth with significant care needs assume responsibility for managing their own health care while simultaneously pursuing a career.

The bureau is also sponsoring training with Denise Bissonnette on helping staff become prepared for leadership positions. The bureau was fortunate to have a trainer from William Ury's company train staff on components of the best-selling book "The Power of a Positive No". The bureau thought this was important since counselors cannot always say yes to every consumer inquiry. The training helped staff learn strategies to keep the relationship even in situations when it cannot agree with the consumer's plan for employment. Staff will also receive multiple trainings on how to use the new case management system in serving consumers.

Assistive Technology - Resources and Training for Staff

BRS helped create and is a member of the NEAT (New England Assistive Technology) Center at Oak Hill. The Center is the largest assistive technology (AT) center in Connecticut where one can try AT devices for personal use, observe AT device demonstrations, donate or purchase used equipment that is refurbished and recycled, obtain loans of AT devices and receive training on the latest adaptive equipment.

- * The bureau has a consultant who is Director of the Connecticut Tech Act Project. She will also

provide training and consultation for bureau staff.

- * All new counselors participated in an in-service training at the NEAT Center to learn about new adaptive equipment and solutions that can help consumers achieve employment success.
- * Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.

Training Stemming from our Strategic Plan Goals

The bureau continually analyzes all consumer data to identify areas where it needs to increase training or vary approaches. We have identified the following topics for training goals:

- * Transition Students;
- * Individuals on the Autism Spectrum;
- * Individuals with Deafness and Hearing issues;
- * Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities; and
- * Individuals from Diverse Cultures.

Training for staff this year was conducted on how to improve employment outcomes for all the individuals with the disabilities previously listed.

Affirmative Action Plan

BRS operates under an Affirmative Action Plan of the DSS. This plan and its policies are also applicable to each of the bureau's staff development programs. Consequently, except for training specific to certain classifications of employees, training is open to all employees regardless of age, ancestry, mental or physical disability, national origin, religion, race, sex, or sexual orientation. The bureau assures the following for all training programs:

- * interpreter services for persons with hearing impairments;
- * Braille, large print, or oral format, as needed, for persons with visual impairments;
- * an architecturally accessible training site; and
- * personal care assistants for those requiring this service.

Linkage of the Bureau's In-Service Training Grant and In-Service Training Funds with the Various Components of CSPD:

The purpose of the training provided through and funded by the in-service training grant is for the bureau to have highly qualified staff to serve its consumers' employment and independent living needs. A few of the training programs designed to provide quality services for bureau consumers are listed here. The bureau provided 52 trainings with staff participating 1,261 times in a duplicated count during the 2008-2009 reporting period for the in-service training grant. The trainers include current research from universities, Institute for Rehabilitation Issues and applicable rehabilitation journals during their presentations to staff. The bureau also collaborates with the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education program from New England to remain current on new strategies based on research.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated state unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited

English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

Communication with Culturally Diverse Consumers

The DSS affirmation action plan, which encourages a diverse staff, supports the bureau in meeting its goal of serving culturally diverse consumers by having staff that mirror the cultures of consumers. The bureau has succeeded in hiring diverse staff as specified in the 1992 and 1998 Amendments.

In addition to the benefits gained by having a diverse staff, the bureau uses funds from its five-year in-service training grant to help fund diversity training each year. This year the topic is Ethics and Diversity. Even with the affirmative action plan and in-service training, the bureau does not serve consumers from minority backgrounds with the same success as individuals from the non-minority culture. Four years ago the bureau set a goal to increase our success with consumers from diverse backgrounds over the next five-years with the eventual goal to serve all consumers equally. The bureau is currently meeting the standard set by RSA for serving culturally diverse consumers. The bureau has not yet met its own more challenging goal of serving all consumers with equal success.

Communication with Diverse Populations

The bureau addresses individual communication needs of applicants for and recipients of services through the services of others able to communicate in alternate languages, appropriate modes, or in native languages. Approximately 10% of the current staff is bilingual in English and Spanish. The bureau employs staff who speak other languages as well as staff who use both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. The bureau publishes on its website all the languages its staff speaks, by district. Please see the list below for the languages spoken by current staff and the regions in which they work.

American Sign Language -Northern, Southern, Western

Croatian - Southern

French - Northern

French Italian - Southern

Hindi - Northern, Southern

Patois - Southern

Portuguese - Northern, Southern

Spanish - Northern, Southern, Western

Tagalog - Southern, Western

The bureau can also hire interpreters in most languages.

Each district has Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) on staff to communicate with individuals with hearing impairments. The bureau hires full-time Interpreter Assistants for its RCDs who are in need of this accommodation. The bureau also contracts interpreter services through the Connecticut Commission on the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired and Family Services Woodfield.

The bureau does not serve many consumers who use Braille since there is a public Vocational Rehabilitation program through the Connecticut Board of Education and Services for the Blind that serves the majority of consumers who have visual disabilities. When needed, the bureau can provide Braille materials for consumers or staff. The bureau's goal is to provide any communication support necessary for staff or consumers with disabilities.

Tracking Consumers

A new Windows-based MIS system, which will replicate the functions of the previous ICIS system as well as provide the bureau with the capacity to operate within an electronic case management environment, will be fully implemented near the beginning of FFY 2010. Based on similar changes in other states, the bureau expects counselors to have more face-to-face time with consumers.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

Coordination with the CSPD under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act):

The bureau co-funds an Educational Consultant position with the Connecticut State Department of Education's Division of Special Education and Pupil Services who has been active in the Department of Education's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council. The bureau's Coordinator of Staff Development routinely plans training with input from the Consultant in the co-funded position. The Consultant in the co-funded position provides annual training for all bureau professional staff on Transition and other provisions of the IDEA. The Consultant also meets with the management team of the bureau semi-annually to review current collaborative training and other provisions of the IDEA. This collaboration allows for coordination of the bureau's human resource plan and personnel development under the IDEA.

Other Collaborative Initiatives

Collaborative initiatives are more fully identified in other sections of this plan. One new collaboration featuring joint training was initiated between the Department of Public Health, the Department of Special Education and the Special Education Resource Center and the bureau. The purpose of this new collaboration was to ensure success with transitioning youth with significant health care needs from school to managing their own health and planning for a career. The bureau continues its collaboration with the Department of Developmental Services to augment our joint training initiative last year on job placement for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. We were pleased to work with Gail Hawkins, world-renowned expert in strategies that help individuals with Asperger's and high-functioning Autism. This year the bureau gave all counselors a copy of Gail Hawkins' book about job placement strategies for individuals in this population to ensure that all staff know how to help them succeed with their employment goals. In addition, the bureau continues to participate in a joint committee that identifies strategies that will help individuals on the Spectrum gain successful employment. This committee provides training for our staff in addition to valuable services for individuals with Autism and their families. The bureau has continued its membership in and collaboration with the NEAT Center at Oak Hill. The bureau also continues its support and involvement of the highly successful summer Youth Leadership Forum and a summer workshop for transition students with significant disabilities. Both of these initiatives involve multiple state and community agencies.

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

- individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
- individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessments

The current goals and priorities for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS or the Bureau) stem from a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities conducted in 2007. As we await the new guidance for conducting the Comprehensive Statewide Assessments from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), we are posting our most recent statewide assessment to comply with the RSA directive to submit a complete State Plan for 2010. We will update our Comprehensive Statewide Assessments to follow the new guidelines for our subsequent State Plan.

A. Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities

This has been an exciting time for Connecticut, with many initiatives converging to improve the infrastructure for individuals with disabilities seeking employment. We have capitalized on the energy and experience gained from our on-going activities and efforts, and have captured the momentum for

positive change created by the remarkable progress made in our Medicaid Infrastructure Grant's Strategic Employment Plan.

Together with our State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), the bureau began the process of assembling the components for a Comprehensive Needs Assessment by looking at sources of information about the rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities, individuals with disabilities who are minorities and who have been underserved, and individuals who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. We assembled an inventory of the agencies, disability organizations, support groups, service providers and activities across Connecticut that would provide us with that information, reviewed and studied the criticisms, suggestions, and surveys that we had gathered, added it to our appraisal of our performance within the bureau, and created this document.

This attachment describes the current initiatives that position us for this assessment, as well as our methods, partners and results from the assessment.

Culture of Continuous Improvement

The bureau strives to foster and maintain a philosophy and an attitude at all times of seeking participation and reaction from consumers, colleagues and partners, to continually assess our effectiveness in providing successful services to our consumers. We have continued to actively seek participation, criticism, advice, reaction and opinion from all associates and stakeholders engaged in expanding opportunities for employment for all of the citizens of Connecticut. We have sought ways to collaborate and partner with other agencies and groups in the state, to analyze the resources available and to understand where the gaps and overlaps in services exist. We have used the information gathered from the previous Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, October 1, 2005, to guide our activities and develop our strategies toward meeting our goals. Partnership with the SRC

In addition to pulling together all of the information from the activities and resources noted, and using it to formulate our strategies, we have worked to maintain a collaborative relationship with our SRC, bringing them into the evaluation process, involving them in State Plan activities, seeking their assistance and advice. Specifically:

- * The SRC jointly sponsors our annual Public Meetings, and members attended the public forums throughout the state.
- * The SRC Chair has participated in State Plan instruction provided through RSA and through BRS, collaborated with us to identify resources for this Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, and has accompanied the bureau Director to national meetings focusing on vocational rehabilitation (VR).
- * The SRC developed an individual consumer Satisfaction Survey utilized in all BRS offices on a daily basis. The responses to this Survey go directly to the District Director to assess, share with staff and address concerns/issues when needed. The District Director may also share this information with Central Office. The results are then shared with the SRC to note trends that BRS should address and correct or support and continue. We will use this input in our planning and on-going assessment of needs. Although the majority of the feedback gathered to date from this Survey has been positive, we notice continued concern for the need for better communication with our consumers.

Two Key Initiatives: Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and NGA Policy Academy

Medicaid Infrastructure Grant: A sizeable portion of the information that we have gathered comes from the Connect to Work Center of BRS, and the comprehensive Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG)

that the Center was awarded in 2005. The MIG is funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and is designed to identify and remove barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities.

* Needs Assessment: To achieve the goals of the MIG and to strengthen the employment infrastructure for Connecticut residents with disabilities, the Connect to Work Center developed a comprehensive, statewide strategic employment plan for Connecticut, driven by input from consumers, employers, advocacy groups and other stakeholders across the state.

* As noted in our previous Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment of October 1, 2005, the first step toward developing this Plan was to ask the stakeholders (employers, people with disabilities who were working, people with disabilities who were not working, elders, service providers, and policymakers) what the barriers were from their perspective. By partnering with Chambers of Commerce and advocacy organizations throughout Connecticut, the MIG research team received input from 286 focus group participants; gathered information from 642 mail, telephone, and in-person surveys; completed 36 key informant interviews; and received 653 mail surveys from employers. This information was compiled into a report that identified twelve major barriers to employment. (To view this report, please go to <http://www.brs.state.ct.us/StrategicEmployment.htm>)

* Employment Summit: For the next step, in June 2006, 120 stakeholders attended the first Annual Employment Summit at the Hartford Convention Center. Among the attendees were the CEOs of several Chambers of Commerce, Superintendents of school districts, and the Commissioners of 11 state agencies. There were some brief presentations, but the purpose of the morning was to study the 12 barriers and answer the question "Where would you begin?"

* Key Barriers: Four key barriers emerged: the transition from school to work; low expectations; recruitment, hiring, and maintaining employment; and transportation. This information was synthesized into the MIG's strategic plan for the first year, which was not only accepted but also held up as a national model by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

* Ongoing Activities: The on-going activities of the Connect to Work Center staff in moving this Statewide Strategic Employment Plan forward provide BRS with valuable information regarding the changing needs of our consumers and the challenges and barriers they face, as well as approaches to address those needs. This information also guides BRS toward developing, refining and pursuing our goals and strategies to address these key barriers with and for our consumers.

NGA Policy Academy for Young Adults: In another area, Connecticut BRS acknowledged the significant barriers for young people with disabilities as they move toward the transition from school to work that were identified in our previous Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, and that were also noted to be a concern for VR nationally. In recognition of the needs in this area, CT BRS sought and was awarded a technical assistance grant from the National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices Policy Academy for Young Adults With Disabilities. The bureau recognized the need for a coordinated system service structure for young adults with disabilities. The purpose of the grant was to identify statewide agency resources associated with transitioning youth with disabilities into employment. A multi-agency, multi-discipline approach was used, reviewing the services provided by each of several state agencies. This method was chosen to help determine where transition services are being provided, the type of services provided, areas of overlap and gaps in service provision.

* Resource Mapping: The first-year outcome from this grant is A Resource Map analysis of eleven state agencies and a Department of Labor (DOL) One-Stop (available at <http://www.brs.state.ct.us/NGA.htm>)

* Navigational Tool: Building on this resource map, in this second year of the grant, the team will

create a web-based Navigation Guide to provide information about supports and services for Young Adults with disabilities.

* These two unique resources, and the relationships that were built in working with the eleven state agencies involved in this grant provide a wealth of information for BRS to continue to use in improving services to our young adults with disabilities. In conjunction with this, as planned in our goals and strategies from 2005, BRS has increased our capacity to provide specific, focused services to this population by hiring six Transition Counselors, who are stationed in urban high schools, and work in coordination with the school system staff.

Data Sources

To structure these sources of information, Bureau and SRC representatives brainstormed sources of information that would target RSA priority areas. The following three lists reflect the sources included in our assessment.

Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities

1. Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) □ Needs Assessment & Strategic Employment Plan
2. National Governor's Association, Policy Academy for Young Adults With Disabilities
3. 107 Reports
4. Standards & Indicators
5. Client Assistance Program
6. Department of Mental Health and Addiction (Systems Transformation Grant; Supported Education Survey)
7. Autism Spectrum Advocates
8. Independent Living Centers
9. Consumer Satisfaction Data

Individuals from Minority Backgrounds

1. Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) □ Needs Assessment & Strategic Employment Plan
2. National Governor's Association, Policy Academy for Young Adults With Disabilities
3. 107 Reports
4. Standards & Indicators
5. African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP)
6. Waterbury Opportunities Industrialization Center
7. Special Education Exiter Survey (2004 graduates, age-out, drop out students)
8. Disability Resource Center, Southern Connecticut State University

Individuals Served by Other Components of Workforce

1. Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) □ Needs Assessment & Strategic Employment Plan
2. National Governor's Association, Policy Academy for Young Adults With Disabilities
3. 107 Reports
4. Standards & Indicators
5. Connecticut Community Providers/CRPs
6. Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) □ Connecticut Employment & Training Commission,

Youth Committee (Data Infrastructure Initiatives committee & Report)

7. Department of Education (shared staff position)

8. Department of Labor (DOL), Job Center Directors; Gov. Comm. On Employment for Persons with Disabilities

9. Connecticut One-Stops

Methods

Both formal and informal means have been used to continuously gather information about the needs of Connecticut's citizens with disabilities.

* Comments at Public Meetings: We have reviewed each comment and all of the feedback received from those who attended the Public meetings, as well as e-mails, phone calls and letters from those who could not attend.

* Review of Consumer Satisfaction Data: This data comes from two sources □

1. The SRC has developed surveys that are handed out daily to consumers as they visit BRS offices and has begun to compile responses that will be grouped by Region, source, age group, etc and examined.
2. In 2006, BRS, in conjunction with two other public VR programs, contracted with Market Decisions to do a Quality Assurance Survey of consumers statewide.

* Review of Existing Data from Other Sources: The State Plan team reviewed existing reports from the data sources listed above. The common issues from each source were identified, listed, and then compared with the other sources. Those issues that appeared more than twice were noted as a theme.

* Personal Communication with Local Level Partners: Each of the bureau's regional directors had discussions with local community partners, and reported back the issues identified in those discussions. Similar to the method used for existing data, common issues from each source were identified, listed, and then compared with the other sources. Because these issues were regional in nature, we looked for issues that arose in at least two of our three districts and noted those as themes. Those that remained regionally focused will be incorporated into local activities for the coming years.

* Ongoing participation in statewide committees: The participation of Bureau staff in a number of other activities and on statewide Committees also allows us to continue to assess needs across the state, including:

- o Participating on the Governor's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities, under the Department of Labor.
- o Sending Staff and providing financial support for the Youth Leadership Forum for students with disabilities, a program held at the University of Connecticut that brings together high school students with disabilities from throughout Connecticut for a 4-day training forum that provides a concentrated educational and motivational experience for students that are selected, focusing on community leadership skills.

- o Providing a staff representative and two scholarships for the Governor's Committee on Youth with Disabilities
- o Actively working with the Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), the Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) and the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) to bring a Walgreens distribution center into the state and to create a workplace that is conducive to hiring people with disabilities.

Other Partnerships

The bureau continues our direct alliance and teamwork with the Workforce Investment System Partners in the state. We continue to support and collaborate with the One-Stop staff and Department of Labor (DOL) programs, with BRS staff assigned to work within the One-Stops and in partnership with One-Stop and DOL staff providing services to individuals with disabilities. Our One-Stop partners share their experiences and insights with us regarding what challenges and barriers they still see from their perspective in serving people with disabilities. They notice continuing concerns regarding lack of enough accurate information for wage earners about what happens to benefits when earnings increase, the need to persevere in educating employers and training providers about people with disabilities, and the critical need for continued relationship building among partners. BRS is also incorporating these concerns into our goals and strategies for the coming years.

Results

We heard the need, expressed throughout our Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment of 2005, for "collaboration and communication". We continued to seek out ways to be collaborative and to keep communication flowing, as demonstrated by the activities described above.

The needs assessment provides the bureau with a great deal of information. It provides, in part, answers to the questions "What are we doing well that we can build upon?" and "What are the areas where we need a more concentrated focus to improve services for individuals with disabilities?" These themes demonstrate the enduring issues faced by people with disabilities:

- * Lack of information about and access to necessary supports and services (transportation, medical coverage, information about the impact of earnings on benefits, etc);
- * Attitudinal issues on the part of employers demonstrating the need for more, and more easily accessible information;
- * The importance of continued partnership and collaboration;
- * The need for more focused services for specific populations who are underserved (persons who are deaf, persons who are on the Autism Spectrum, minority populations, young adults with disabilities, individuals with psychiatric disabilities, individuals who need long-term supports, and persons with Limited English Proficiency - LEP).

The range of resources contacted for their knowledge and information, and the scope of the activities and partnerships described above have provided us with much information to be examined and analyzed, and to help us to distinguish themes that create the direction for our goals and priorities over the coming years.

The bureau will focus primarily on the areas directly related to vocational rehabilitation needs of our

consumers. The issues are categorized into 4 major themes:

- * Service Delivery;
- * Customer Service/Quality;
- * Access to Services;
- * Partnerships

The Connect to Work Center will continue to be an active partner in addressing the vocational rehabilitation needs of our consumers. Through the MIG and other grants, the Center will broaden the focus to tackle the major ancillary issues of transportation, access to benefits and medical and health services, and the lack of availability of assistive technology.

B. Assessment of the Need to Establish, Develop or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs within the State

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) currently employs over 90 Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). Since 2000, the bureau has maintained an internal committee comprised of staff at all levels of the organization to report and address concerns related to CRPs. In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2004, a limited number of CRP staff were invited to join this committee and serve as representatives in raising issues impacting all CRPs. This committee continued to meet bi-monthly throughout FFY 2006 with multiple issues being raised, addressed and resolved. In addition to the above committee, the bureau sponsors an annual statewide meeting to discuss our top priorities and present an opportunity for all CRPs to voice their concerns.

Based upon feedback from both CRP committee representatives and the input of providers in attendance at the 2006 annual meeting, a plan for increased compensation for the site development component of our situational assessment model was developed. These changes to the fee for service structure of our model were geared toward reimbursing providers more equitably when they are asked to develop short-term employment scenarios for consumers where there will be little direct benefit realized by the employer. CRPs reported that identifying employers willing to facilitate such assessments have become increasingly more time consuming and thus more costly. In response, revisions to the payment structure were implemented effective October 1, 2006.

Currently, the committee has three major initiatives underway that we expect will be completed prior to the close of FFY 2007.

1. A CRP Handbook will be developed to provide CRPs formalized guidance and an outline of expectations BRS has in delivering services to our consumers. This handbook will also contain all required forms, applicable policy manual sections and a listing of frequently asked questions.
2. Standardized referral and reporting forms will be developed for both job coaching and job placement services. With a structured sharing of information, we anticipate consumers will receive improved services regarding their individual needs. Improved communication between CRPs and BRS will realize increased efficiency.
3. Revised "CRP Approval Criteria" and a restructured application process should also be completed. In an effort to better insure that our consumers receive services being delivered and overseen by qualified professionals, BRS will amend its current criteria to more clearly define which entity will have ultimate responsibility for delivering purchased services. For the first time, we will require an organizational chart depicting the business structure of the applicant organization. Although similar educational requirements that have been in place for many years will still be demanded for those

heading each organizational chart, the language surrounding experience requirements will be clearer and the focus upon reference checks will be enhanced. Applicant organizations meeting the criteria will be "provisionally" approved for a two-year period. Formal qualitative reviews of these providers' services will take place nine and eighteen months from their approval date. Fully approved status will only be granted upon successful demonstration of competency in working with our agency and our consumers. Upon formal adoption of these criteria, existing CRPs will be expected to submit information demonstrating that they continue to meet the amended criteria at contract renewal.

Once these initiatives are in place, we will continue to monitor services to our consumers and communication between all parties to ensure improvements are on target with our desired goals.

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
 - Part B of Title I;
 - Part B of Title VI;
 - each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Services

Estimate of the Number of Individuals in Connecticut Who are Eligible Under this Plan

The University of Connecticut Health Center 2002 study indicates Connecticut had 326,913 individuals with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 64 and an additional 27,181 individuals with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 20. Based on the 2000 census, 63% of the 21 - 64 age group is currently employed. The remaining 120,958 individuals of working age with disabilities are unemployed. All 120,958 of these individuals plus the 27,181 transition age individuals may be eligible for services under this State Plan, as well as an unknown number of the 63 % referred to above who might be under employed due to their disabling condition.

In the 1998 Harris poll of working-age people with disabilities that are unemployed, only four percent are actively seeking work and another seven percent are students or are in vocational rehabilitation (VR). Therefore, 13,269 individuals (11% of the 120,630 unemployed persons with disabilities) who would be looking for or preparing for work are students or are receiving vocational rehabilitation services. However, this approach does not count individuals who do not believe that employment is a viable option, especially those with the most significant disabilities. It also does not consider those persons with disabilities who are already employed, but may require services to attain employment consistent with his/her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.

These points make it difficult, if not impossible, to accurately estimate the number of potentially eligible consumers of VR services. That number is many times more than BRS has historically served or has the resources to serve.

State Estimate of the Number of Individuals to be Served Under this Plan

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009, the bureau projects that it will complete the year having served 5,579 eligible Consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs). This is a 2.5% decrease from FFY 2008, when 5,723 individuals received services under an IPE and far below projections made at this time last year. Throughout 2009, the bureau has experienced a rash of unexpected long-term absences and attrition that has resulted in a diminished capacity to meet the demand for services in our state compared to last year. It is anticipated that this problem will be further exacerbated with the implementation of a Retirement Incentive Program (RIP) that will likely result in an approximate 10% reduction in Senior Counseling staff. This staff reduction and subsequent delays anticipated in the recruitment and refill process will likely result in a further decrease in Consumers served under IPEs by a commensurate percentage rate. Under these conditions, a total of 5,150 would be a reasonable projection for FFY 2010.

However, receipt of \$1.4 million of 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds has allowed the bureau to receive approval to fill six two-year durational VR Counselor positions which we anticipate will be in place by the start of FFY 2010. It is hoped that the availability of these durational positions, coupled with efforts to focus on more efficient Consumer engagement strategies under our ARRA project, will serve to mitigate the staff losses from the Retirement Incentive Program. We are thus projecting to serve 5,644 Consumers in FFY 2010.

During FFY 2008, the bureau purchased services for 147 Consumers under Title VI part B of the Act,

utilizing \$297,533. This represented a significant increase in use of Title VI-B funds over FFY 2007 when \$206,193 was spent serving 113 Consumers.

Throughout FFY 2009, the bureau has utilized Title VI-B funds at a pace slightly below the FFY 2008 expenditure level. As of April 30th, 179 (or 3.4%) of the bureau's 5,254 eligible Consumers met the requirements of Title VI-B funds and were potentially eligible for this funding. From this pool of eligible consumers, 84 (or 47%) had at that point been provided purchased services within FFY 2009 using Title VI-B with a total expenditure of \$132,139.

Of the 5,644 individuals projected to receive services in FFY 2010, the bureau anticipates that 190 could potentially be funded under part B of Title VI.

The bureau has been operating in an order of selection for several years now, serving only all Priority I (most significant) and Priority II (significant) Consumers. Historically, approximately 60% of eligible individuals served meet the criteria for most significant disability, with the remaining 40% meeting that of significant disability.

Costs of Services

Title I purchased services (POS) costs for Priority I and Priority II consumers in FFY 2009 is projected to be approximately \$10 million. This amount is significantly lower than the FFY 2009 projections from a year ago when spending \$11.5 million appeared likely. As mentioned above, the bureau has experienced unexpected staffing issues that have decreased our capacity to administer services at the level we forecasted.

During 2009, the Bureau undertook an analysis of purchased services expenditures and trends, in response to escalating POS costs which portended severe fiscal consequences in the coming years if left unchecked. The Bureau identified three POS areas which appeared to be the primary drivers in the escalation of expenditures: the purchase of hearing aids, home modifications, and vehicle modifications. In examining the expenditures in these areas, it became apparent that inconsistencies existed throughout the agency in the interpretation of BRS policies in providing these types of services. We addressed the concern through the issuance of new policy guidance, inviting public input, and training all staff.

Due to a variety of factors, including the uncertainty over staffing levels for next FFY and the availability of the \$1.4 million of 2009 ARRA funds, it is difficult to estimate cost projections for the FFY 2010 period. These variables notwithstanding, the bureau projects a total POS of \$10,560,000 in FFY 2010. This includes an anticipated \$10 million in Title I expenditures and an estimated \$560,000 in ARRA POS expenditures.

Row	Category	Title I or Title VI Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Most Significant		\$6,000,000	3,386	\$1,772
Significant		\$4,000,000	2,258	\$1,771
				—

			—
			—
			—
			—
			—
			—
			—
Totals	\$10,000,000	5,644	\$1,771

This screen was last updated on Aug 21 2009 2:34PM by Evelyn Knight

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**State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program
and
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program**

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.11(c)(1) State Goals and Priorities

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

- Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.
- Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
 - other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

Goals and Priorities

The Bureau, in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a comprehensive assessment of the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities and identified four major themes. These goals and priorities will be used to carry out the Supported Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. The SRC jointly agrees with BRS on these goals and priorities for the coming year.

This comprehensive assessment included a review of multiple sources including the following:

- * Standards and Indicators,
- * 107 Reports,
- * Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) ▫ Needs Assessment and Strategic Employment Plan,
- * National Governor's Association, Policy Academy for Young Adults with Disabilities,
- * Client Assistance Program (CAP),
- * Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs),
- * Consumer Satisfaction Data,
- * Centers for Independent Living (CILs),
- * African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP),
- * Autism Spectrum Advocates,
- * Waterbury Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC),
- * Connecticut One-Stops,
- * Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC),
- * Special Education Exit Survey,
- * Disability Resource Center, Southern Connecticut State University, and
- * The Departments of Education, Labor and Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Each of the themes contains a set of issues that the bureau could address in the coming year. We cannot address every issue identified as a need, but attempted to build goals broad enough to address the major themes. Priority areas were chosen based on their frequency of occurrence in the assessment.

Goal 1: To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities, as measured by consumer satisfaction.

Priority areas:

- * customer service
- * communication
- * case management system
- * implementation of the plan for stimulus funding

Goal 2: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, as measured by employment rates and earnings.

Priority areas:

- * individuals from minority backgrounds
- * young adults with disabilities
- * individuals with psychiatric disability
- * individuals with autism spectrum disorders
- * individuals with disabilities on public assistance (VR/TANF Project)

Goal 3: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities, as measured by numbers of applications in underserved populations listed in Goal 2 and additional locations of services for individuals that are deaf. (Note □ the Bureau made minimal changes to this goal after submitting last year's state plan to make our intentions clearer.)

Priority areas:

- * awareness of services
- * services for individuals who are deaf

Goal 4: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- * Board of Education and Services for the Blind (CT-Blind)
- * Businesses
- * Connect to Work Center
- * Community Rehabilitation Providers
- * Independent Living Centers

These broad goals are intended to be five-year goals, with the priority areas being flexible enough to change from year to year if necessary.

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and

State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection

- Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- Identify the justification for the order.
- Identify the service and outcome goals.
- Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

Justification for order of selection

Description of the Order of Selection,
Its Justification and the Outcome, and
Service Goals within Each Category of the Order

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) has operated under an Order of Selection (OOS) Policy since 1991 when it determined that it could not meet the needs of all eligible consumers. The Order of Selection Policy gave priority status to individuals with significant disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 required the bureau to develop, in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), criteria that define "individuals with the most severe disabilities" and to assure that such individuals receive priority status for services under an Order of Selection Policy. Consequently, effective July 1, 1994, the following Order of Selection Policy was implemented to provide services to individuals eligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Terminology has been updated to substitute the term "significant" for "severe," in accordance with more recent amendments.

The precipitating event in 1991 which led to the implementation of an Order of Selection was the expenditure at the mid-point in the federal fiscal year (FFY) of all available funds for Purchase of Services (POS) and the subsequent stoppage of all services to consumers, regardless of their degree of impairment. This led to the Bureau's development of a four-year model of financial planning. The employment of this model has resulted in the Bureau operating under its current OOS continuously since 1992 without service interruptions. The Bureau's four-year model of financial planning was cited by RSA during a 2008 RSA Monitoring Visit as a "best practice" and was featured at the RSA Fiscal and Data Conference in August of 2008.

This approach has allowed the Bureau to plan accordingly to set aside sufficient funds each year since 1992 to serve all eligible applicants to the program who meet the Priority #1 and #2 designations. Minimal waiting lists have been maintained over the years for eligible applicants determined to meet the Priority #3 designation, but these lists have dissipated over time. All eligible applicants who meet the Priority #3 designation are given the opportunity to be on a waiting list, and are provided with information on the services available from other partners in the workforce system. Connecticut has a strong workforce system, and the Bureau works with partner agencies to ensure that they have the capacity to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Most individuals in Priority #3 choose to get their services elsewhere, rather than going onto a waiting list. We currently have six consumers on our OOS Waiting List in Priority 3.

The Bureau reviews its OOS status annually. This review takes into account the information obtained from our comprehensive needs assessment and our strategic planning process. The Bureau's current strategic plan includes a set of goals and priorities designed to increase services to individuals in Priority #1 and #2. In particular, the Bureau is focused on specific target populations, including individuals with psychiatric disabilities, individuals on the autism spectrum, and young adults with disabilities. While the Bureau has increased its focus in these areas, we believe that there is still an unmet need for individuals in these priority areas. As the Bureau moves into the process of a triennial assessment early in the next fiscal year, data will be collected specific to these areas.

Fiscal Resources and Cost Projections

We are estimating our current fiscal resources, including anticipated 110 funds, ARRA funds, state match, projected program income and carry forward funds to be approximately \$33,600,000 for FFY 2010. We are currently estimating expenditures of approximately \$28,400,000, but expenditures may increase depending on how quickly we are able to refill existing vacancies. The current estimated carry forward (\$5.7 million) is expected to diminish significantly in FFYs 2011 and 2012 as expenditures increase due to negotiated collective bargaining increases, a recent increase in the fringe benefit rate of approximately 7%, an anticipated increase in POS as new counselors are trained and become fully productive, and as we successfully implement outreach strategies designed to address any unmet need within our target populations.

We are estimating projected Title I purchase of service (POS) costs for Priority I and Priority II to be approximately \$10,000,000. ARRA POS is projected at \$560,000, bringing the total estimated POS for 2010 to \$10,560,000. This projection does not separate the costs by priority. These cost projections are based on serving the numbers of individuals identified in Attachment 4.11(b).

Based upon the preceding two years service levels and POS expenditure patterns, the bureau had projected at the onset of FFY 2009 a \$12.5 million POS expenditure for Priorities #1 and #2 for that year. Even more concerning was a projection of a potential escalation in POS costs for FFY 2010 to \$13.5 million. Increases of this magnitude threatened the bureau's ability to continue providing services to Priority #2 eligible consumers. In response, the Bureau undertook an analysis of purchased services expenditures and trends. Three areas of POS appeared to be the primary drivers in the escalation of expenditures: the purchase of hearing aids, home modifications and vehicle modifications. In examining the expenditures in these areas, it became apparent that inconsistencies existed throughout the agency in the interpretation of BRS policies in providing these types of services. We addressed the concern through the issuance of new policy guidance, followed by training

to all staff, while inviting public input as well. It is estimated that this new policy guidance will result in an annual saving in POS of approximately \$1.5 million, thus facilitating the Bureau's ability to continue services under the existing OOS, without service stoppages, in the years to come. As this policy guidance was only implemented during the second quarter of FY 2009, the need to monitor related POS expenditures over FY 2010 to ascertain the true fiscal impact is evident.

Capacity Projections

The Bureau does not have the human resources necessary to increase services to individuals in Priority #3. In fact, the Bureau's capacity to adequately provide services to Priority #1 and Priority #2 is expected to be challenged over the coming year. The following issues contribute to the above concern:

- A projected 14% decline in service capacity to consumers as a result of Retirement Incentive Program offered by the State of Connecticut.
- Historical delays in obtaining necessary permissions to refill vacated positions, even in light of federal funding, coupled with time required to orient and train new staff to bring them to productive levels.
- Loss of available local office space within active communities, coupled with lengthy delays in finding alternative locations.
- Conversion to and Bureau-wide learning curve associated with migration to a new MIS system are expected to reduce capacity for the first half of the FFY.

With all of these factors in mind, the Bureau's review of the current OOS has resulted in a decision to maintain the current OOS.

Description of Priority categories

1. Individuals with disabilities shall be served in the following order of priority:

FIRST All eligible individuals determined to have a most significant disability.

SECOND All eligible individuals determined to have a significant disability.

THIRD All other eligible individuals.

2. All individuals shall be placed in the highest priority level for which they qualify.

3. Every individual within a higher priority level shall be served before individuals in the next lowest priority level are served.

4. Should funds become limited, the agency may need to limit services within a priority group. If this becomes necessary, individuals will be served chronologically on the basis of the date of eligibility determination.

Individuals with significant disability are defined as those meeting the definition in 6(21)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order

In order to be in the first priority group of persons served under the Order of Selection, i.e., individuals having a most significant disability, the individual must be determined to meet the following criteria:

1. The individual must meet the criteria for significant disability, as defined in Section 6(21)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998; AND

2. (A) Have serious functional limitations in three or more functional areas (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome; OR

(B) Will require significant ongoing disability-related services on the job in order to maintain employment following vocational rehabilitation closure from time-limited services.

All eligible consumers receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) as of the end of business on June 30, 1994, regardless of their priority status, continued to receive services as necessary until the attainment of their vocational goals and/or closure of their cases. For individuals who began receiving services under an IPE after June 30, 1994, the bureau has been able to serve all individuals in Priority Categories I and II (i.e. those individuals determined to have either a Significant or Most Significant Disability) since November 1994. The bureau will continue to serve all individuals in Priority Categories I and II to the extent that resources are available. The bureau will continue to carefully assess this situation.

Applicants shall receive services necessary to determine their eligibility for VR services without regard to the order of selection and to the extent that funds are available. Depending on their level of eligibility, individuals may be placed on a waiting list to receive services at a later date.

Service and outcome goals and the time within which the goals will be achieved

Time Frames

All priority groups will have a determination of eligibility within 60 days unless there are mutually agreed upon extensions. For those not on the waiting list (Priority Group III) employment plans will be developed and, on average, individuals will be in service within 90 days of eligibility. Delays for legitimate planning purposes will be well documented. Since the bureau is serving both Priority I and Priority II and no change is anticipated, this projection holds for both groups. Nineteen months is the average anticipated time frame for successful completion of the rehabilitation process for individuals in Priority I and Priority II with positive employment outcomes. This average is expected to rise as a greater portion of our agency caseload is expected to be comprised of transition-aged consumers who typically receive services for a longer period of time.

Formula Used for Service Outcome Goals

Rehabilitation goal/anticipated rehabilitation rate/historic percentage of cases closed from service

status

Goal 1,446

Anticipated rehabilitation rate = .61

Historic percentage of cases closed = .42

Thus;

$1,446 / .61 / .42 = 5,644$

Priority Category	Number of individuals to be served	Outcome goals 26s	Outcome goals 28s	Time within which goals are to be achieved	Cost of services
1	3,386	868	554	Nineteen Months	\$6,000,000
2	2,258	578	370	Nineteen Months	\$4,000,000
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

This screen was last updated on Aug 26 2009 2:49PM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

and

State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

State's Goals and Plans Regarding Distribution of Funds Received Under Title VI, Part B Funds of the Rehabilitation Act

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) will continue to use supported employment Title VI, Part B funds to allow maximum options in providing services to meet individual consumer needs. The Bureau will target service to those persons who are presently not served or are underserved, and who:

- * Are individuals with the most significant disabilities and who have previously been unable to maintain competitive employment due to the severity of their disability;
- * Are in need of ongoing support for the duration of their employment; and
- * Will have extended support services available beyond BRS time-limited services.

Services will be provided on an individual case basis with emphasis on methods that provide maximum integration and consumer informed choice. Therefore, BRS will continue to focus on placing consumers in individual placements with maximum integration.

BRS will reimburse service providers on an hourly basis for supports provided in the "individual placement model". This arrangement enables persons with a most significant disability to have flexibility in obtaining intensive services. It also makes cost savings possible for persons needing less intensive supports and will permit a larger number of persons to be served. Other models of support that are integrated into various work settings and provide competitive pay in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act will be provided only in those instances where consumer choice or available supports render these models preferable. Services in models such as enclaves and work crews will only be considered in rare occasions when the position meets the integration and earnings level standard for supported employment. Reimbursement for these models will be made on a per diem basis. Bureau counselors and consumers together will determine the most individually appropriate program and service model.

BRS will stay informed about new trends in employment delivery services and make efforts to offer those services that will most benefit our consumers. The Bureau will continue to investigate methods of enhancing the degree of integration through increased utilization of natural supports and generic community resources.

In FFY 2009, the Bureau has continued to explore a variety of funding options to ensure extended services to persons in the program beyond Title VI, part B. In FFY 2009, the Bureau enhanced the supported employment program by initiating Social Security's Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Program as an additional resource for consumers to engage in long-term employment supports. The Partnership Plus Program makes available to consumers a variety of long-term employment supports and helps to increase funding to providers of services.

These initiatives will reach more individuals with disabilities not typically engaged in long-term employment supports and focuses on increasing employment and self-sufficiency.

Bureau staff continues to actively seek long-term employment supports for our qualified consumers

from the Department of Mental Health, Addiction Services, the Department of Developmental Services and maintenance of the Employment Opportunities Program.

This screen was last updated on Jun 30 2009 3:34PM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies

This attachment should include required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs. See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Act and Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA.)

- Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.
- Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process.
- Describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.
- Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities.
- Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

- Identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs, if applicable.
- Describe strategies to improve the performance with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.
- Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
- Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:
 - achieve the goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
 - support innovation and expansion activities; and
 - overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.

Strategies to Achieve the Goals and Priorities

The Bureau of Rehabilitation (BRS) has developed a set of strategies designed to address the goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) of this plan. BRS will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs.

Some of the strategies are specific to one goal, while others cut across the various goals. Action steps and outcome measures will be developed to address each of the goals and priorities. The following table focuses specifically on the strategies to address the goal areas. Specific action steps and outcome measures will be developed, using these strategies as the framework.

Strategy

Goal

Standards and Indicators: The bureau will continue to focus on the standards and indicators defined by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and has incorporated these standards into performance evaluation measures since federal fiscal year (FFY) 2008. All

Local Innovation: The bureau is committed to the principle of local innovation. Staff in local and regional offices is in the best position to develop effective consumer strategies. They know their communities and their own strengths. To create a structure for local innovation, each region will develop a plan to advance the goals of the bureau. These plans will include specific activities and timelines, as well as outcome measures. All

Innovation and Expansion: To support the local innovation, the bureau will make Innovation and

Expansion funds available to regional offices. Successful proposals will effectively address one or more of the bureau's goals. All

Shared Responsibility: To create opportunities for shared responsibility, each staff person will develop goals consistent with the goals and priorities of the bureau. Along with the Standards and Indicators, these goals, will provide a foundation for performance evaluation. All

Technology: The bureau's management information system (MIS) is outdated and in need of replacement. A priority for the coming year is completing and implementing a new case management system currently in the development stage to support the work of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. The plan will integrate our existing systems into one, and provide new hardware for all staff of the program. All

Succession Planning: The bureau will continue its succession planning efforts in anticipation of significant staff turnover due to retirements over the next five years. This includes identifying short-term coverage gaps and key person dependencies; as well as long-term succession and development planning. All

Staff Training: The bureau will continue its training efforts through the Training Grant. This training will support the current goals and priorities by targeting training in the major goal areas. All

Connect to Work Center: The bureau will continue to support the Connect to Work Center which houses a series of support programs and initiatives to improve access to independent living and employment. Programs include assistive technology, independent living, Ticket to Work, work incentives planning, personal assistance services, transition, and systems change. All

Revenue Generation: The bureau will continue to focus on mechanisms for revenue generation, including Social Security reimbursements and ticket payments, as well as grants and contracts. This will provide additional dollars for innovative projects and agency needs. All

Shared Funding: The bureau will continue to share funding for two full-time consultant positions with other state agencies: State Department of Education and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. All

Stimulus Funding: The bureau will maximize the use of stimulus dollars to increase work attachment for individuals receiving services. All

Defining Quality: As the cornerstone of the bureau's goals, "Quality" is defined best by the perceptions of our consumers. In an effort to better understand these perceptions, the bureau will work with the SRC and our consumers to better define quality and to set benchmarks in the priority areas identified in the plan. 1

Equalizing Access for Minorities: The bureau will look for innovation in the local plans for outreaching to minority organizations in the community. 2

Embedding VR Counselors in Urban Schools: The bureau will continue its strategy of embedding VR

counselors in six major urban cities to improve access to transition services for minority students with significant disabilities. 2

Embedding VR Counselors in Mental Health Agencies: To address the specific needs of individuals with psychiatric disabilities, the bureau has embedded three VR counselors in the Local Mental Health Authority offices to work as part of a clinical team. This will add vocational strategies to the team discussion and lead to improved outcomes. 2

Autism Spectrum Committee: The bureau will continue to support its Autism Spectrum Disorders committee, led by a bureau-funded neuropsychologist. The committee, which also includes a parent, an advocate and a bureau consultant, meets monthly to provide recommendations to individual consumers, family members and the VR counselor. 2

Office locations: The bureau will continue to strive for maximum coverage across the state. For those areas not covered with a specific office, the bureau is providing technology such as cell phones and laptops for staff to ensure effective customer access. The bureau will also continue negotiations to gain office space in areas with the greatest demand. 3

Increasing Awareness through Partnerships: The bureau houses the Connect-Ability program, a statewide initiative to improve employment outcomes for Connecticut citizens with disabilities. 3, 4

Effective Partnerships: The bureau will strive to improve its partnerships with community entities by clearly defining our strengths and what we can offer to a partnership. 4

Participation in the NET: Although most effective strategies are formed at a local level, there are national initiatives that can have a significant impact on the VR program. The bureau will actively participate in The National Employment Team (NET), a national effort initiated by the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation. 4

The State Plan needs to clearly articulate strategies in a few additional areas. These include:

- " Strategies to provide Assistive Technology services;
- " Strategies to address equitable access to services;
- " Strategies for improving community rehabilitation programs; and
- " Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system assist individuals with disabilities.

Strategies to Provide Assistive Technology (AT) Services

The bureau administers the statewide Connecticut Tech Act Project, creating a systemic opportunity to integrate AT into the VR program. The Tech Act Project will support the VR program in the following ways:

- " Develop resources for BRS consumers to access and acquire the AT devices and services they need for work, school and community living.
- " Match individuals who have personal experience using AT to BRS consumers who need AT, to help

guide consumers through the acquisition and initial use process, to provide encouragement and follow up to ensure that the consumer integrates the new AT device into their own lives.

" Encourage participation in the project's online classifieds for AT - the Assistive Technology Exchange - where consumers can access AT devices that are no longer needed by the user and have been posted for sale or donation.

" Train VR counselors to increase knowledge regarding the benefits of AT for successful use in employment settings.

" Train VR counselors on the process of obtaining AT evaluations, AT devices, and training on the AT for VR consumers.

" Provide technical assistance to VR counselors and consumers to help identify appropriate AT with an emphasis on youth who are transitioning from secondary schools to work and/or post-secondary education.

Strategies to Address Equitable Access to Services

The bureau has struggled with the RSA Indicator around service delivery for individuals who are minorities. Local plans will address community issues. Statewide, the bureau will employ the following strategies:

" Identify best practices for providing culturally appropriate VR services.

" Provide training to disseminate best practices.

" Conduct outreach to minority populations through community organizations and faith-based organizations to improve minority access under both the VR and Supported Employment Programs.

Strategies to Improve the Performance of the State with Respect to Standards and Indicators

The bureau has consistently done well on Standards & Indicators overall. The agency does particularly well on competitive employment, significant disability, average wage, etc.

Our challenges typically fall within two major areas: Primary Source of Self Support and the Minority Indicator. As a bureau, we've implemented strategies to improve in both of these areas.

* Primary Source of Self-support and average wage are tied together. Due to the number of people that seek services from the bureau who are employed at application, we often do not see a change in source of support. We have re-structured our reporting and implemented a central office quality control check, but may continue to struggle in this area.

* As a bureau, we have failed to meet the minority Indicator in the past, but we have implemented the strategies identified above for equitable access. These strategies have helped the bureau meet this Indicator for last year, and we are on track to meet this indicator for the current year.

Strategies for Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

* The bureau has sufficient CRPs to support the needs of the VR program. Our efforts, therefore, are targeted at improvements to the current structure rather than the establishment or development of new programs.

* One gap in services from the CRP community is services for individuals who are deaf. The CRP who met this need in the past is no longer providing statewide services. The bureau is offering technical assistance to other CRPs that wish to expand their capacity to provide services to people who are deaf. There are currently five providers who expanded their services to meet this need.

* The bureau has an internal committee comprised of staff at all levels of the organization, as well as

representatives of CRP organizations, to report and address concerns related to CRPs.

* The bureau continues to encourage use of a Consumer Choice Handbook for Assessment Services. This handbook offers descriptions of the individual components and purposes of Situational Assessments, narratives written by CRPs that offer these services and key outcome data across various options. This handbook is given to consumers and can be accessed on line at the BRS Web site: www.brs.state.ct.us.

Strategies for Assisting Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

* The bureau has established working relationships with the Navigators, and will continue to work collaboratively to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

* Each of the One Stop Centers has an assigned staff liaison from the bureau.

* In two of the state's One Stop Career Centers, the bureau's offices are co-located. In the coming year, the bureau plans to increase this co-location to four offices.

* The bureau will continue to collaborate with several state agencies and the National Policy Academy for Young Adults with Disabilities, which last year brought together partners across the workforce investment system with a common goal of improving employment outcomes for young adults.

* The bureau director took a leadership role in bringing a new distribution center to Connecticut and planning for its successful hiring. This initiative will lead to employment for at least 250 Connecticut residents with disabilities, and has connected the bureau more strategically with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

* The bureau will continue its role as chair of the "Everyone Works Committee" at one of the state's workforce centers, bringing community agencies and consumers together to discuss mechanisms for better access for individuals with disabilities in the One Stop System.

Strategies for Using Innovation and Expansion Funds

The bureau will employ the following strategies for using I&E funding in FFY 2010:

* Continuation (Year 2) of Bridgeport Mental Health Transition Project - \$31,190;

* Continuation (Year 2) of "Improving Employment Outcomes for SSI and SSDI Recipients" - \$3,289;

* Funding SILC Resource Plan - \$180,000;

* Funding SRC Resource Plan - \$24,350;

* Youth Leadership Forum - \$15,000; and

* Scholarships Youth with Disabilities - \$5,000.

Strategies for Using Dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

The VR Programs nationally have been presented with a unique opportunity to use stimulus dollars to support individuals with disabilities in their employment effort.

In Connecticut, the General and Blind VR programs have joined together to develop joint planning and implementation strategies for use of the stimulus funds. We plan to focus the stimulus funding on the concepts of work attachment, going beyond the traditional definition of a successful closure and focusing on increasing the number of opportunities individuals with disabilities have to try out working. By introducing a new "placement suite" of services, we plan to provide multiple options for the consumer and counselor to make this happen, including On-the-Job Training opportunities, working interviews, situational assessments, and more.

Some of the specific strategies for the joint effort include the following:

1. BRS and the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) will collaborate on a statewide on-the-job training model to market to employers.
2. ARRA funds will be utilized to develop and disseminate an Employer Toolkit that includes information and incentives for hiring and retaining blind individuals.
3. BRS, BESB and the State Department of Labor (DOL) will collaborate on distributing a statewide flyer containing employer incentive information.
4. BRS and BESB will share job leads resulting from this statewide collaboration with other state agencies and community rehabilitation providers.
5. BRS and BESB will collaborate to design an incentive package utilizing ARRA funds to engage Temporary Agencies for job matching.
6. BRS and BESB will collaborate in designing and implementing a durational job model using ARRA funds that enables clients to acquire vocational skills and saleable experience.
7. Each Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will engage in active employer outreach, with an expectation that every counselor generate at least one On-the-Job Training opportunity.
8. BRS will hire six VR counselors with an employment-specialist focus, and one central office consultant to oversee these counselors and provide a single point of contact for employers within Connecticut and nationally.
9. BRS, BESB and DOL collaboration with the five regional workforce development boards will result in access to ARRA-funded Summer Youth jobs for BESB and BRS transition-age students.
10. Utilizing the new Employment Network model through the Ticket to Work program, employers will be encouraged to become providers of long-term support for clients who experience multiple barriers to employment.

Please see the BRS Strategic Plan listed below.

BRS Strategic Plan (Part 2 of 4.11d)

June 9, 2009

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths

1. Standards & Indicators: Competitive Employment Outcomes
2. Standards & Indicators: Employment for People w/ Significant Disability
3. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
4. Collaboration
5. Focus on Program Income

Weaknesses

1. Standards & Indicators: Minority Indicators
2. Standards & Indicators: Primary Source of Self Support
3. Technology

Opportunities to Exceed Plan

1. Mental Health and Transition Initiatives
2. Connect-Ability Marketing Campaign
3. Walgreens Distribution Center
4. Case Conferencing
5. Linked System of Performance and State Plan Goals/Priorities

Threats to Making Plan

1. Technology
2. Funding and Staff Resources
3. Attitudes/Low Expectations
4. Vocational Services for Deaf Consumers

Core Values/Beliefs

Forever

Top Ranked Values:

- Respect
- Quality
- Community
- Efficiency
- Team Approach
- Partnerships
- Risk Taking
- Creativity
- Choice
- Fun
- Integrity

Purpose (Why)

10-30 Years

The goal of the VR program is to assist individuals with physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment.

Targets (Where)

3-5 years

Sandbox / Market

* Market: State of Connecticut

**Products/Services: Employment services for job seekers w/ disabilities; Recruitment pool for employers

**Distribution Channels: SRC, State Agencies, Connect-Ability

Goals (What)

1 year

Year Ending 2009

1.1 Employment Outcomes 1,446

1.2 Rehab Rate 61.20%

1.3 Competitive Employment 99.70%

1.4 Significant Disability 100%

1.5 Hourly Earnings Ratio .62

1.6 Primary Support .53

2.1 Minority Indicator .8

Program Income \$1,104,709

Actions (How)

Fiscal Year 2008

Achieved

- 1.1 Employment Outcomes 1,445
 - 1.2 Rehab Rate 64.10%
 - 1.3 Competitive Employment 99%
 - 1.4 Significant Disability 100%
 - 1.5 Hourly Earnings Ratio .67
 - 1.6 Primary Support 27.10
 - 2.1 Minority Indicator .84
- Program Income \$1,886,423

Baseline

Historical

Year Ending 2007

- 1.1 Employment Outcomes 1,319 (P)
 - 1.2 Rehab Rate 61.2%(P)
 - 1.3 Comp. Employment 99.7 (P)
 - 1.4 Significant Disability 100% (P)
 - 1.5 Hourly Earning Ratio .62 (P)
 - 1.6 Primary Support 35.5%(F)
 - 2.1 Minority Indicator .74% (F)
- Program Income \$1,104,709

Key Thrusts/Capabilities

3-5 Year Priorities

- 1. Provide quality VR services
- 2. Develop targeted services for underserved populations
- 3. Increase vocational services for consumers who are deaf
- 4. Form effective partnerships

Key Initiatives

Annual Priorities

- 1. Customer Service, Communication
- 2. Minorities, young adults with disabilities, individuals with psychiatric disabilities, individuals with autism spectrum disorders
- 3. Vocational services for consumers that are deaf or are hard of hearing
- 4. Independent Living Centers, Businesses

Rocks & Accountability

Quarterly Priorities

- 1. Technology Ongoing
 - 2. Summer Workshops Summer
- Autism Committee Ongoing
- 3. Collaborations with Connect-Ability Campaign Ongoing

4. Employment Summit; June
Annual Meeting September

Theme
Quarter / Year
Annual Theme Name - The Changing Workplace

Q1 Theme Actions
* Exceed Expectations through the Walgreens Initiative
* Increase Efficiency and Effectiveness through Technology

Scoreboard Design

Gauges
* Earnings
* Employment Outcomes
* Satisfaction (Employee/Employer/Staff)

Warning Lights
* Consumer Complaints
* Low Referral Rate
* Unmet Employer Needs

Celebration/Reward
Film: Music Within

BHAG □ Big Hairy Audacious Goal
To be the most effective and innovative VR program in the country by rapidly responding to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and the business community within a fully integrated economic system.

Elevator Pitch
BRS creates opportunities that allow individuals with disabilities to live and work independently.

This screen was last updated on Jun 30 2009 3:34PM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation
Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)**

Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals

1. Clearly identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the FY 2008 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Goal 1: To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities, as measured by consumer satisfaction.

Priority Areas:

- a. customer service
- b. communication

Goal 2: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, as measured by employment rates and earnings.

Priority areas:

- a. individuals from minority backgrounds,
- b. young adults with disabilities,
- c. individuals with psychiatric disabilities;
- d. individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

Goal 3: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities, as measured by numbers of applications in underserved populations listed in Goal 2 and additional locations of services for individuals that are deaf. (Note □ the Bureau made minimal changes to this goal after submitting last year's state plan to make our intentions clearer.)

Priority areas:

- a. awareness of services
- b. services for individuals who are deaf

Goal 4: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- a. businesses
- b. Connect to Work Center,
- c. Community Rehabilitation Providers
- d. Independent Living Centers.

These broad goals are intended to be flexible enough for the priorities to change from year to year if necessary.

Strategies

We employed the following strategies to reach our goals.

1. Standards and Indicators
2. Local Innovation
3. Innovation and Expansion
4. Shared Responsibility
5. Technology
6. Succession Planning
7. Staff Training
8. Connect to Work Center
9. Revenue Generation
10. Shared Funding
11. Defining Quality
12. Equalizing Access for Minorities
13. Embedding VR Counselors in Urban Schools
14. Autism Spectrum Clinical Committee
15. Office Locations
16. Increasing Awareness Through Partnerships
17. Effective Partnerships
18. Participation in the National Employment Team (NET).

Use of Title 1 Funds for Achieving Goals and Priorities

The following section reports measurable outcomes from our implementation of the 18 strategies stated above. We have increased our measurable objectives for these strategies in order to help us better evaluate our progress on our goals. Whenever possible we have included information from FFY 2006 so we that we can track our progress on these measures over time. We have compared changes between FFY years 2006, 2007, and 2008 when that data are available. (This data will be the three entries following each objective. Data from 2006 will be listed first, followed by 2007, and ending with 2008 data. The years will be delineated by a semi-colon (;). This data could be in text or numerical format, or a + will indicate an area where we do not have data for the corresponding year.)

Some of our initiatives are new since FFY 2006. We have specified the time frame if the data was compiled during a calendar year rather than federal year. We have continued to challenge ourselves to increase our performance in areas that we haven't measured previously, such as the rehabilitation rate for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders, as well as the number of hours worked and the rate of pay for persons receiving SSI and SSDI. In some cases, we have met our expectation to improve our performance on the goals. We will use the data to continue to evaluate our performance in areas where our performance did not reach our goals (i.e. □ the rehabilitation rate for consumers with psychiatric disabilities and the hours worked at closure.)

Most of the strategies are crucial to meeting several of our goals. We are only reporting on the strategy under one of the applicable goals. Please see the Strategic Plan section of this state plan for further explanation of the applicability of the strategies relative to multiple goal attainment. For instance, adding Resource Mapping information online increases services to underserved populations such as transition students; increases access to services; and also improves the customer satisfaction and quality of the services we offer. To save space in this report we have only included information on Resource Mapping under one of the four goals it impacts.

To help understand the information below, please notice that number in front of the outcome measure refers to the strategies listed above and the * indicates that more information will be included in the narrative portion of this attachment.

Measurable Objectives:

Goal 1: BRS will improve the quality of VR services for individuals with disabilities, as measured by customer satisfaction.

*2-Wait time for consumer's first appointment will be two weeks or less. (Measure checked April 1, 2008.) +; +; 2 weeks

1-Percent of applicants for whom acceptance of eligibility is determined within 60 days. The BRS target is to determine 85% of all consumer eligibilities within this time period. This includes the consumers who have granted permission for an extension. 85.1%; 83.8%; 84.8%

1-Percent of plans developed within 90 days of eligibility. The BRS target is 85%. Note on this measure: BRS allows more than 90 days when sustained progress is being made toward an employment plan. 67.7%; 66.7%; 65.8%

11-Maintain or increase overall consumer satisfaction on New England Regional Satisfaction Survey of vocational rehabilitation consumers; last survey conducted in 2006. Projected time for next survey FFY 2010-11. 85%; +; +

*11-State Rehabilitation Council Consumer Satisfaction Survey of overall consumer satisfaction after meeting with BRS counselors. See attachment 4.2(c) for more details.
+; 96% satisfied; 95% satisfied

*11-Implement Consumer Choice Handbook for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) Services.
+; +; Implemented May, 2008

11-Ensure that consumers are satisfied with the services from all new Community Rehabilitation Providers. Baseline established August FFY 2008. +; +; 91% satisfied

*11-BRS staff will return calls within 48 hours. Staff was not able to return calls when there were significant staff vacancies (7%). +; +; 93% met standard

5-Assistive Technology information given to consumers and public.

a. Number of trainings +; 20; 20

b. Total participants +; 1,000; 1,385

c. Number of Web site hits +; 13,359; 25,759

*11-Maintain plan for succession. This will be measured by maintaining services for consumers. Track total numbers served under an employment plan. 5,045; 5,249; 5,363

*11-Increase the number of Benefit Consultations with consumers and the general public. The program changed between 2006 and 2007 from Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach to Work Incentives Planning and Assistance.

1,124; 788; 833 intakes and 211 follow-ups

*11-Maintain the number and percentage of our Community Work Incentive Coordinators that speak Spanish. 5/20%; 7/28%; 7/28%

11-Increase the number of consumers that have employer provided health insurance at closure. 47.2%; 49.1%; 51.4%

*17-Increase participants in Summer Youth Workshops.

11; 20; 41

*8-Web-Based Navigational Tool for Young Adults Resource Mapping available for youth and their families via the web - web hits since March 2008

+; 2,264; 9,097

*8-Transition Toolkit available for youth and their families via the Web - Web hits since May 2008.

+; +; 547

Goal 2. BRS will increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, as measured by employment rates and earnings.

1-Equal or exceed the number of individuals rehabilitated in the previous year. Comparable to RSA 1.1.

1,258; 1,319; 1,445

1-Percent of VR plans resulting in employment. Target 55%

Comparable to RSA 1.2. 61.4%; 61.2%; 64.1%

1-Percent of VR rehabilitations in competitive employment. The target is 72.6%. Comparable to RSA

1.3. 99.9%; 99.7%; 99.3%

1-The percent of employed individuals with significant disabilities that exit the VR program.

Comparable to RSA 1.4. 100%; 100%; 100%

1-Ratio of average hourly earnings of VR competitive employment outcomes compared to all employed individuals in CT. Comparable to RSA 1.5 (Target .52) .63; .62; .67

1-The number of individuals who achieve earnings equal to the state average hourly wage at the onset of the FFY year. 163 or 13%; 153 or 11.6%; 271 or 18.8%

*1-Percent from application to competitive closure of VR consumers who report earnings as the largest source of support. Comparable to RSA 1.6. 35.8%; 35.5%; 27.1%

11-Percent of all persons rehabilitated, that are employed in full-time competitive employment (35 or more hours per week). 55.4%; 53.9%; 57.4%

11-Percentage of employment closure in Technical & Managerial, Skilled Trades, Education and Medical, Science and Services (Target to maintain or increase high-end employment outcomes.) 40%; 44%; 42%

*11-BRS will achieve a rehabilitation rate for minority (M) consumers equal to the rehabilitation rate of non-minority (NM) consumers. M-53.6% NM-63.3%; M-49.5% NM-64.6.%; M-47.7% NM-69.3%

*2-The bureau will achieve a service rate for individuals from minority backgrounds that exceeds the target ratio established by RSA when compared to non-minority individuals. Target .8. .65; .74; .84

4-BRS initiated a new counselor evaluation system in FFY 2008 linking individual performance to national standards and indicators. Baseline data compiled prior to implementing system. +; Done; In Use

6-Percentage of staff invited to write an Individual Staff Development Plan (ISDP) 100%; 100%; 100%
Staff with verbal agreement for ISDP 100%; 100%; 100%
Staff with written ISDP (decrease due to retirements and pregnancy leaves). 60%; 85%; 77%

7-Number of in-service training programs and the number of duplicated participants in training events.
109/1,391; 90/1,296; 52/1,261

*13-Embedded counselors in high schools with significant portion of minority transition students will improve the overall service rate for youth with disabilities ages 14-24.
39.5%; 42.2%; 52.3%

*11-Increase services under an Employment Plan to youth with disabilities ages 14 □ 24. 1,457; 1,531; 1,709

*14-Increase success with consumers on the Autism Spectrum by providing a clinical consultation team. Measure: Rehabilitation rate for all consumers with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
66.7%; 56.8%; 50%

11-Increase the rehab rate for individuals with a primary disability of physical impairment. .57; .54; .56

11-Increase the rehab rate for individuals with a primary disability of cognitive impairment. .53; .53; .54

1-Increase the percentage of individuals not working at application but working at closure. Updated guidance re: purchase of hearing aids, home modifications, and vehicle modification should positively impact this measure in the future. 40%; 40%; 32.5%

1-Increase the percentage of individuals working at application that demonstrate a 20% or more increase in number of hours worked at closure. 17.3%; 14.2%; 7.9%

11-Increase the number of Employment Outcomes for individuals with Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).
307; 305; 300

11-Increase the number of Employment Outcomes for individuals with Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
80; 87; 76

11-Increase the rehabilitation rate of persons with SSI. 32.2%; 31.4%; 27.4%

11-Increase the rehabilitation rate of persons with SSDI. 45.9%; 46.9%; 46.1%

11-Increase the number of hours that SSI recipients work at closure. 21.6; 20.5; 23.2

11-Increase the number of hours that SSDI recipients work at closure. 22.4; 25.4; 22.1

11-Increase the rate of pay for SSI recipients.
Measure hourly wage. \$8.81; \$8.80; \$10.14

11-Increase the rate of pay for SSDI recipients. Measure hourly wage. \$10.73; \$12.36; \$11.75

11-Track the number of individuals whose income from employment is equal to or greater than Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) at closure. 74.3%; 74%; 78.4%

11-Increase the number of applicants receiving SSI. 459; 530; 516

11-Increase the number of applicants receiving SSDI. 904; 908; 914

Goal 3. The bureau will increase access to services for individuals with disabilities, as measured by numbers of applications in underserved populations and location of services for individuals who are deaf.

12-Applications from consumers with psychiatric disabilities: +; +; 1,258

12-Applications from consumers with minority backgrounds:
+; +; 1,149

12-Applications from young adults, age 14-24: +; +; 1,055

12-Applications from consumers with Autism Spectrum Disorders: +; +; 135

10-Maintain or increase the number of joint funded positions that target youth and consumers with psychiatric disabilities: 2; 2; 2

8-Increase awareness of BRS services through the Connect-Ability Web site. Site launched June 2007 - www.connect-ability.com

Technical Assistance calls: +; 450; 430

Number of unique visitors to Web site: +; 19,200; 25,500

11-Increase consumer's access to employment by providing vehicle modification services, as needed: 114; 118; 85

11-Increase consumer's access to employment by providing home modification services, as needed: 56; 73; 76

*5-Increase access by increasing efficiency. Implement new case management system. Target is that system will be launched during FFY 2010. +; +; 03/08 Testing & Evaluation Stage Initiated

9-The bureau will generate additional revenue from Program Income (Social Security reimbursements):

\$1,886,159 (corrected); \$1,618,861 (corrected); \$1,886,423

*11-The bureau will increase access by embedding counselors in mental health facilities who generate more applications. We have received 156 applicants with embedded counselors as of May 2009. The following numbers represent applicants with primary mental health impairments from all counselors: 1,048; 1,037; 1,258

*3-The bureau will fund scholarships for youth through Innovation and Expansion funds. 2; 2; 2

Goal 4. The Bureau will create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities

*17-Through the BRS partnership in the Walgreens Initiative, the following were achieved:

Kick off at BRS Annual Meeting

a. # of consumers participating in training +; +; 99

b. # of consumers hired +; +; 39

*8-Maintain the Connect to Work Center funded through The Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. Achieved; Achieved; Achieved

11-Implement a new review process for new BRS CRP Providers. Process was implemented May 2008. +; +; In Use

17-Number of joint trainings provided to CRPs:

3; 3; 2

*17-The number of CRPs serving individuals that are deaf:

+; 2; 5

17-BRS will increase regional and state wide meetings with CRPs:

4; 15; 31

Promising Practices and Additional Information Relative to Our Four Goals:

Goal 1. The bureau will improve the quality of VR services for individuals with disabilities, as measured by customer satisfaction.

Again, we have identified meeting consumer satisfaction as one of our primary goals to measure the quality of our work. We will continue participation in the New England Regional Consumer Satisfaction surveys. We continue to monitor the concerns our consumers have expressed including their visits to our offices, whether they have received return phone calls, and how soon they can meet with a counselor when they first call. The impending retirements and on-going staff leaves for personal or medical needs will continue to impact these concerns. Staff will continue to be as responsive as possible.

Projects that Measure Consumer Satisfaction

*State Rehabilitation Council Survey

The SRC's survey on consumer satisfaction with bureau services after they meet with a counselor continues to be a valuable tool. Every consumer is given an opportunity to fill out the questionnaire after his or her appointment. The results of the survey indicate 95% of our consumers who completed a survey (567) were satisfied overall with their meeting. The results of all questionnaires are passed on to the District Director for immediate follow-up, if needed. Surveys are then sent to the SRC to evaluate and track results. Information gained from the surveys aids the SRC in commenting on overall consumer satisfaction with BRS.

Consumer Survey □ CRP Services

Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) services touch approximately 41% of our consumers who receive a purchased service. In an effort to ensure that new providers meet the quality expectations of our consumers and staff, a consumer survey process was created and implemented as a piece of a comprehensive provider review protocol in FFY 2009. Consumers who were served by six of our newly approved CRPs were contacted to complete a telephone survey that focused on each provider's responsiveness, quality of services delivered, and perceived effectiveness. Ninety-one percent of the consumers contacted conveyed overall satisfaction with services they received.

The bureau experienced a significant amount of difficulty in reaching consumers by telephone to conduct this survey. As a result, we are planning to implement a written survey during FFY 2010 in an effort to increase participation. We intend to continue to utilize this consumer feedback as an important component of our CRP review process.

*Return all Phone Calls in 48 Hours

One important customer service the bureau provides is to return all phone calls within 48 hours. We know this is important to consumers because of the comments we have received as part of the Regional New England Survey of Consumer Satisfaction. The bureau has trained all staff on the importance of returning calls promptly. Returning calls promptly is crucial to meeting the expectations of our consumers and is difficult to measure accurately. The regions will discuss success with this measure during the April and October staff meetings each year. Our first survey on this measure indicates that staff returns phone calls within 48 hours about 93% of the time.

*Schedule Appointments Within Two Weeks After We Receive Initial Information

During the past year, most consumers continue to see counselors within two weeks after we receive initial information. A partial implementation of the new case management system will enhance our ability to track this measure of consumer satisfaction. There are a few locations where we are unable to meet our goal of seeing consumers within two weeks. Pregnancy leaves and retirements have impacted our ability to meet this goal.

Other Measures of Quality

The bureau continually updates all of our traditional measures of quality including clinical review of cases by VR supervisors, caseload reviews, counselor competencies and monthly management information. These measures of quality are also crucial to ensure consumers receive the services they need to go to work.

Goal 2: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, as measured by employment rates and earnings. Priority areas: individuals from minority backgrounds, young adults with disabilities, individuals with psychiatric disabilities; individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

Projects That Address Underserved Populations

The projects referenced in this section require collaborative support from other stakeholders in order to help consumers live independently and work. We have used our strengths in collaboration to develop models for reaching youth with significant disabilities and serving consumers with autism spectrum disabilities and psychiatric disabilities. Future reports will indicate whether the models that we think promising actually do help consumers become employed.

Consumers with Psychiatric Disabilities

The Bureau has a more effective working relationship with the mental health system in Connecticut by having a co-funded central office consultant and by embedding three counselors in community mental health agencies. The research component initiated last year will further strengthen our collaborative approaches. Some initial data from the research through the University of Connecticut indicates that both consumers and staff are very satisfied with the Evidence Based Practice of finding employment and providing the supports that the consumers need. We have not yet impacted more traditional measures such as rehabilitation rate, which remains low at 39%. It will take several years to determine whether our current strategies will impact the rehabilitation rate for this population. Significant numbers of our consumers are transition age, so they will remain in the system several years before they complete their plans for employment.

*Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

For the third year, the ASD Committee (a clinical team) provided a forum for consumers on the Autism Spectrum, family members, providers and counselors to jointly discuss services, recommendations, and strategies to assist consumers seeking employment help. BRS pays for a psychologist to work with the team.

As reported last year, we have identified services that might help our consumers on the spectrum develop work skills commensurate with competitive employment. We have identified three services that have promise:

" Ecological Assessments: (also known as Environmental Autopsies) allow evaluators and job coaches to assess job sites for environmental factors;

" Job Coaching on Volunteer Sites helps develop fundamental job readiness skills (delaying gratification, responsibility to boss, sustained effort) that would have been gained through volunteer jobs or clubs to become competitive workers; and

" Clinical Intervention with Families works with family members to duplicate foundational skill acquisition being done on the job, in schools, at volunteer sites, and at home.

These services are available to our consumers following consultation and approval from the ASD Committee.

Through the ASD Committee, we are able to test the efficiency of services to the adult ASD population. There is no research that defines best VR practice for persons on the Spectrum; we are developing our own with the help of advocates, public policy practitioners and clinicians expert in ASD as members of this committee. Before we make these services universally available, we must have documentation of their effectiveness.

Staff is encouraged to access the Committee for consultation and to access these services. In the same way we developed a body of knowledge and practice on serving adults with brain injuries in the 1980s, and 1990s, this process will guide our development of services for persons with ASD.

On a local level, the Southern Region has continued to partner with the Department of Developmental Disabilities - Autism Spectrum Services to provide consumers on the Autism Pilot with a team approach to service provision. Each referral is discussed with the team to clearly outline the role of the two agencies to reduce duplication of services and ensure that everyone has a clearly defined role, including the family, to improve vocational success.

It will take several years to evaluate the effectiveness of the additional services we have described in this section. Consumers accessing the new services may start with a period of time on a volunteer job prior to further education or paid work. We will continue to report on this initiative.

Projects to Increase Access and Quality of Programs for Transition Students

As stated previously, the bureau is specifically targeting increased services to youth with disabilities.

The bureau has been successful in increasing transition students on our caseloads. In fact, using FFY 2006 numbers as a baseline, we project a 40% increase in applications from transition students by 2010. Stimulus funding is available to states targeted for youth and youth with disabilities. We will collaborate with the Department of Labor Workforce Investment Boards, State Department of Education, local cities and towns to develop plans for integrating youth into competitive employment opportunities. We firmly believe that this will be cost-effective for the taxpayers and an immense benefit to youth with disabilities.

***Web-Based Navigational Tool for Young Adults**

Through the collaboration with the National Governors Association (NGA), the bureau (along with other Connecticut state agencies and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation) developed a tool for young adults, parents and educators to use in navigating the social service system. This Resource Mapping project has evolved into an online navigation guide called CT School to Work Transition GPS. This Web site, (<http://www.ctschooltowork.com/>), has generated more than 9,000 hits on the web since March 2008 and has been used by Connecticut residents and others across the country.

***Transition Initiatives**

Last year, the Transition Committee developed a number of projects to improve the quality of services for youths with disabilities and to increase access to services. They developed a PowerPoint presentation that explains BRS transition services to various audiences. By producing a presentation on disc for distribution to counselors, numerous requests for presentations are shared by staff and a consistent message is presented.

Three Transition Brochures are available targeting each of the following populations: young adults; parents/families; and school systems. The brochures for young adults and parents describe BRS, transition services, eligibility requirements, referral options, and income guidelines. The brochure for school systems describes how BRS can help school systems with transition planning for students.

The above resources and a 74-piece Transition Toolkit are available on the BRS Web site for staff, consumers and their families, and stakeholders at <http://www.brs.state.ct.us/SchoolToWork/index.htm>. It includes the following information:

- a. Transition PowerPoint presentation;
- b. Transition brochures;
- c. List of BRS transition counselors and high school liaisons;
- d. Frequently Asked Questions;
- e. Assistive Technology resources and related links;
- f. Information on Gaining Independence;
- g. Related transition web links; and
- h. Transition Toolkit.

Portions of this toolkit are also available on the Connect-Ability website. Other states have also used this toolkit with their transition programs.

Consumers with Felony Convictions

We continue to have a significant increase in ex-offenders on our caseloads. We provide training for

our staff on the strategies felony offenders have available to them to expunge their records and access the very limited community supports. The Western region ran an employment group for ex-offenders prior to the Department of Labor assuming responsibility for it in October 2008. Former Governor John Rowland shared his experiences about entering the labor force after incarceration. The Southern region continues to work with STRIVE to become a vendor. We welcome suggestions from RSA to address this growing challenge.

Goal 3: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities, as measured by numbers of applications in underserved locations. Priority areas: awareness of services; services for individuals who are deaf.

Web Sites

The bureau continues to increase web access to information on services that assist individuals with disabilities so they may make informed choices about where to receive the assistance they need. Our websites on BRS programs (the BRS site; the Connect-Ability marketing campaign and site; the Connecticut Tech Act Project site; and the sites for youth with disabilities) continue to serve our consumers well. Our new case management system currently under development will be web-based. We are maximizing our effort to provide information to consumers, employers and other stakeholders electronically. We also maintain person-to-person contact as staff still answers phones.

Connect-Ability

Connect-Ability's comprehensive marketing and communication campaign continued with the creation of a new television spot featuring Kathy Flaherty, a lawyer who lives with bi-polar disorder. New print ads were created and appeared in business periodicals to reach employers statewide. Radio spots and website banners also were used to help promote the Connect-Ability tag line, "See the ability. See how we can work together." Due to these outreach efforts, the following awards were presented to Connect-Ability in 2008: National Rehabilitation Association, Excellence in Media Award, Bell Ringer Award for Website, and CT Quality Improvement Award Partnership, Inc.

The Connect-Ability marketing campaign continues to address the barriers that exist for individuals with disabilities in the workplace. In our networking efforts with employers, Connect-Ability has partnered with the Hartford Business Journal. Through this partnership several events have been co-sponsored to reach employers and other stakeholders. One of the events was a diversity event. This was a new event that reached 75 employers and focused on including disability as part of employers' outreach for diversity.

Presentations

BRS VR counselors outreached to the community at various presentations and public settings beyond those already listed:

- a. Disability Exposition, Hartford;
- b. Helping Hand Center Inc, Bridgeport;
- c. Homeless Outreach Fair, Danbury Elks;
- d. Multiple Sclerosis Support Group;
- e. Weaver HS, Hartford - Orientation to BRS for Parents of Students in Transition; and
- f. Wethersfield HS - Student Orientation

Publications

The following BRS and Connect-Ability publications increased access to services through the printed word [(S) □ Spanish Translation also available]:

Connect-Ability

- a. Connect-Ability Brochure
- b. Connect-Ability Employer Brochure
- c. Connect-Ability Fact Sheet
- d. Connect-Ability Quarterly Newsletter
- e. Job Seeker Tip Sheets
- f. OPTIONS and Resources in Connecticut for Individuals with Disabilities

Connect to Work □ Benefits Planning (Fact Sheets/Handouts)

- a. Benefits and Unemployment
- b. Connect to Work Project
- c. It's Your Money. Earn It! Save It! Grow It! Power point/resource handout
- d. Self Employment and Benefits Power Point/ resource handout
- e. Medicaid for Employed Disabled Q & A
- f. Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)
- g. Section 301 Protections for SSI Recipients and SSDI Beneficiaries
- h. Special Needs Trusts
- i. Social Security Benefits for Youth in Transition
- j. Social Security Disability Insurance and Medicare (S)
- k. Social Security Programs Quick Facts
- l. SSI Benefits Calculation for Students Under Age 22
- m. State Supplement and Employment (S)
- n. Supplemental Security Income (S)
- o. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Youth Quick Facts
- p. Work and Benefits: What Does This Mean?
- q. Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program

Connecticut Tech Act (AT) Project

- a. AT Computer Loan Program (Flyer)
- b. AT School Swap (Flyer)
- c. CTTAP News (Newsletter)
- d. Get AT Stuff (Post Card)
- e. Medicaid Waiver Participants □ Computers (Flyer)
- f. Tips & Facts □ AT Loan Program (Flyer)

Transition

- a. Do You Want to Work?
- b. Does Your Son or Daughter Want to Work?
- c. How to Make the Most of Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities

VR

- a. Consumer Choice Handbook (for CRPs)

- b. Consumer Handbook for Vocational Rehabilitation Services(S)
- c. Services for Employers (S)
- d. State Rehabilitation Council □ Annual Report
- e. Vocational Rehabilitation and Medicaid: New Employment opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (S)
- f. Vocational Rehabilitation Program (S)

All publications can be generated in alternate formats upon request.

Increasing Access by Coordinating with the State Plan for Assistive Technology (AT)

The bureau has coordinated initiatives with the Connecticut Tech Act Project's State Plan for Assistive Technology, with a focus on increasing access to and acquisition of AT devices and services. We continue to collaborate with the Connecticut Tech Act Project in developing services and resources for BRS consumers and residents of Connecticut with disabilities to access and acquire the AT devices and services they need for work, school, and community living.

Over the past year, the Connecticut Tech Act Project (CTAP) has continued to offer core services to VR consumers and residents of Connecticut, which include statewide AT Demonstrations, AT device loans, recycling and reutilization of AT, including the NEAT (New England Assistive Technology) Center (formerly Marketplace) at Oak Hill has entered into an agreement to provide AT Evaluations and Training to VR consumers. The NEAT Center is the largest AT demonstration, AT equipment recycling, and AT training center in the state.

Through the Tech Mentor Program, individuals with disabilities who need AT can be matched with individuals who have personal experience using Assistive Technology for help and support through the process. Tech Mentors will provide encouragement and follow-up so that the individual integrates the new AT device into his or her life.

The AT Exchange in New England, (www.getATstuff.com) is an online classifieds resource where consumers can obtain access to AT devices that are no longer needed by the user and have been posted for sale or donation.

The CTAP continues to provide training to increase VR counselors' knowledge regarding the successful use of AT in employment settings. The CTAP also continues to offer technical assistance to VR counselors and consumers to help identify appropriate AT devices and services for successful employment, with an emphasis on youth who are transitioning from secondary schools to work and/or post-secondary education.

Additionally, through the CTAP, partner agencies, such as NEAT, Vision Dynamics, Southern Connecticut State University, the Corporation for Independent Living, the State Education Resource Center, and the Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County, VR consumers and residents of Connecticut have access to AT demonstrations, AT device loans (both short term and long-term loans), and AT equipment recycling. Other AT accomplishments include:

AT trainings conducted by CTAP staff and partner agencies covered a variety of AT-related topics, including: AT in transition, AT in the workplace, AT for the home, AT in the VR process, and specific AT device training.

CTAP training highlights include the following:

- a. Approximately 1,385 individuals participated in 20 trainings and public awareness events;
- b. Public awareness activities that include printed materials, such as newsletters, brochures, print ads, and Web site advertisements reached approximately 34,106 individuals;
- c. The CTAP Web site had 25,759 unique visitors;
- d. The CTAP received 542 unique inquires for Information and Referral (about 100 of these inquiries were from VR counselors or consumers);
- e. The CTAP Program Director continues to be a part of the BRS Case Conferencing Team to provide guidance around AT needs for VR consumers.

GOAL 4: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities. Priority areas: Board of Education Services for the Blind (BESB); businesses, Connect to Work Center, Community Rehabilitation Providers, and Independent Living Centers.

Initiative to Determine the Impact of a Benefit Offset on Employment for SSDI Beneficiaries

This Connect to Work pilot addresses several of our goals including increasing self-support, consumer satisfaction, and quality of services for consumers. We are all familiar with the "cliff" for individuals receiving SSDI that choose to return to work. They can keep all their benefits in addition to their salary for around 12 months at which time their SSDI payments suddenly stop. There were always some consumers that meet this significant financial challenge. However many more could not survive financially after they suddenly lost their SSDI payment. Many consumers chose not to work at all or "manage" to keep their earnings very low. Managing their income to keep receiving SSDI also kept them poor. Connecticut is very proud to be one of four states testing another model that we believe will allow individuals to grow their income instead.

A total of 265 people have enrolled in the project. As of August 15, 2008, there were 222 participating in the study (117 treatment/test and 105 Control). Those in the test group can earn above the amount traditionally allowed by Social Security and maintain their SSDI benefits on a gradually decreasing "\$2 for \$1" basis instead of losing their benefits entirely. There are currently 32 test group participants earning above the level where their SSDI benefits are being offset.

Under traditional SSA rules, the majority of SSDI beneficiaries, faced with losing their entire SSDI check, make the decision to earn under the amount allowed (SGA) and maintain their benefits. Under this pilot, 34% have chosen to earn above SGA, knowing that they can maintain partial benefits. Per Social Security statistics, less than 1% of those on SSDI earn above SGA and stop receiving their benefits after using Social Security's work incentive, the Trial Work Period (TWP). Once the TWP is completed, under traditional rules, someone who earns above SGA gets three more months of benefits before they stop.

Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) have provided ongoing support for those in the test

group. It is expected that the total number of people who have used the offset may level off in the next year. The pool of consumers who can use the offset has shrunk because some people will have completed their period of Extended Eligibility without ever having used it and anyone who hadn't completed their trial work period by December 2008 lost eligibility to use the offset. Additional people will use up their Extended Eligibility this coming year and there are no new enrollees.

The project has been awarded an additional one-year extension to continue to provide supports to Social Security beneficiaries, particularly those in the test group, and to continue research on the earnings behavior of the test subjects compared to those in the control group. During the final year, test group participants will be transitioned from receiving their primary supports to deal with the benefit offset earnings reporting requirements from our project to SSA.

Quality Initiatives with Community Rehabilitation Providers

Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP)

The BRS CRP committee reviews new provider applications. They have also proposed a new process that BRS will use to evaluate new providers to ensure that we receive quality services. The process includes consumer evaluation of the services.

Crucial Need for Vocational Services for Consumers that are Deaf

Since July 2008, the major provider of services to the deaf, The American School for the Deaf (ASD), has been unable to provide this service on a statewide basis. Although it still serves the eastern part of the state, there is a void that needs to be filled. BRS offers technical assistance to other CRPs that wish to expand their capacity to provide services to consumers who are deaf. Five CRPs are now providing services to consumers who are deaf: Kennedy Community Services, River Street School, Transitional Employment Unlimited, Trinity Health Services, and Southeastern Employment Services.

BRS staff has met with the CRPs to provide information, consultation and staff training. BRS rehabilitation counselors for the deaf (RCDs) have made referrals of both consumers and prospective staff that have the necessary qualifications to work with this population to these CRPs. BRS has provided information about training available for serving this specialized population, and BRS continues to assist the CRPs as needed. The RCDs report on-going partnerships and some very successful collaboration with these CRPs.

*Performance Based Payment System for CRPs

The bureau investigated performance based contracting systems with our CRPs about fifteen years ago. At that time, we reviewed Oklahoma's VR milestone payment method to determine if it would be beneficial to restructure any of our reimbursement methods. As a result, our placement model, increasing funding to CRPs when the consumer remains employed for 90 or more days, is similar to Oklahoma's model. We have several other performance incentives in our current payment system for vocational evaluations and job placements. For instance, CRPs receive more funding when individual sites are developed for evaluations and job placements.

Another important performance based aspect to our current approach is the addition of a Handbook for Consumers that includes data on our current CRPs, described next. We are considering making specific changes to our contracts with CRPs that will allow for the evaluation of hard performance

data against established criteria. This will be considered once we have fully implemented and adjusted to the capabilities of our new MIS system. We welcome RSA's technical assistance on performance-based systems as we consider what to include in our revised contracts with CRPs.

*Consumer Choice Handbook for Assessment Services

The handbook to assist consumers in making informed decisions when choosing a CRP continues to be a valuable tool in the selection process for services. The handbook includes information on all current CRPs including the location of CRPs; assessment sites each CRP has developed, job titles for evaluations and placements, and the hourly wage if employment was the result of the service. We anticipate updating this handbook near the end of FFY 2010.

CRP Handbook

A handbook for all CRP providers delineating bureau expectations was published in FFY 2007. The purpose of this handbook is to ensure all CRPs know about the expectations for quality services for our consumers. This continues to be updated as necessary.

Partnerships with Workforce Investment System, State Agencies and Employers

Connect-Ability

The Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) sits within BRS and continues to provide a great opportunity for job seekers to connect their ability with employers. Through the Connect-Ability initiative, we have grown as a leader and champion for seeing the possibilities that individuals with disabilities can contribute to the need for Connecticut's workforce. Additional supports for the VR program include transitional supports for students, Assistive Technology, independent living and case conferencing around the state, benefits counseling, and supported employment services. Contact: www.connect-ability.com

Employment Summit 2009

Connect-Ability will host its fourth annual Employment Summit, scheduled for October 2009. The Summit historically had been hosted in June. However, due to the economic climate and its impact on state resources, the summit has been postponed. We will report on the summit outcomes in the next state plan. The focus of the summit will primarily be on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Increasing Employment by Decreasing Barriers in Recruiting, Hiring & Promotion, Transportation, and Transition from School To Work

Connect-Ability Strategic Planning Initiatives

As previously reported, Connect-Ability identified the following barriers that impede consumers from entering the workforce: Recruiting, Hiring & Promotion, Transportation, and Transition from School To Work. No one agency can solve these issues alone. Through Connect-Ability, a Transportation Committee was developed, bringing together colleagues across the state to address transportation issues.

Transportation Committee

To address barriers that impede transportation options, the transportation workgroup developed the following strategies:

- a. Participated in the review process for transportation initiative proposals for New Freedom Initiative funding. The proposals included a request for wheelchair accessible taxis;
- b. Developed and printed transportation materials, including a resource directory called Options and Resources In Connecticut for Individuals with Disabilities, for distribution on the website and outreach to the public;
- c. Partnered with CTTRANSIT to develop and implement a Web-based trip planner to assist individuals with disabilities with their transportation planning;
- d. Conducted transportation presentations to various employers, coalitions, advocacy organizations, schools and community based organizations and Bureau of Rehabilitation Staff;
- e. Researched and developed transportation resources for the local level pilots; and
- f. Partnered and co-hosted three transportation workshops with the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT). Approximately 150 participants attended the workshops entitled Transit Oriented Development, The State of Public Transportation and The Federal Surface Transportation Authorization. Participated in United We Ride kick-off and three subsequent workshops. Topics included Funding and Regulatory Issues; Fragmented Service Delivery, Coordination and Communication; and Vision, Turf Issues and Political Will.

Connect-Ability Local Initiatives

Ten local level pilots developed and submitted their strategic plans to address three priority areas; transportation, employment and transition-to-work for individuals with disabilities. After review and approval, nine pilots were selected to implement their strategic plans during the one-year contractual period.

Technical assistance was provided to assist the pilots during the development and implementation of their strategic plans. The liaisons assigned to the local level pilots conducted one-on-one meetings with each of the pilots to finalize their outcomes and plans. The University of Connecticut research team will evaluate the process and outcomes of these nine pilots.

A transition and transportation resource list was developed and distributed to the local level pilots. Assistance was also provided to two of the pilots in their application for New Freedom Initiative funding to address transportation barriers.

The local level pilots presented their strategic plans to the Steering Committee who provided feedback and guidance to enhance their plans. Two liaisons will provide on-going technical assistance to the plans on a weekly basis in addition to the required quarterly reporting by the pilots.

Disability Program Navigators (DPN)

Connecticut received a Disability Navigator Grant from the federal Department of Labor. BRS has provided training to the Navigators on the basics of benefits and vocational rehabilitation. The regional staff is currently developing a system for efficient and effective referrals. During FFY 2009, we strengthened our partnership with DPNs through continued cross training and collaboration on employment and Ticket to Work. Two DPNs also joined a Connect-Ability training on work incentives.

One Stop Centers

The bureau has continued its practice of assigning a liaison counselor to each One Stop Center. We co-locate counselors within four of our One-Stop Centers.

*Walgreens Project

The bureau was the lead administrator of the training program for prospective employees with disabilities at the new Walgreens Distribution Center in Windsor, Connecticut. The following agencies collaborated on this initiative: the Connecticut Departments of Social Services, Developmental Services, Labor, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, Connecticut Office of Workforce Competitiveness and the United Way of Connecticut. The goal for Walgreens was to hire at least one-third of its estimated 800 employees would be persons with disabilities. In Connecticut, these employees will come from BRS referrals as well as the other participating state agencies and school systems.

A program was developed to provide pre-employment training for prospective Walgreens employees who require this additional preparation in order to succeed in employment at the distribution center. Since June 2008, 108 individuals participated in the program; 66% of the trainees were BRS consumers. Of the 57 individuals who completed all phases of the program to date, 39 have secured employment with Walgreens. Of this total, 32 individuals were BRS consumers. A majority of the remaining individuals who were trained are being considered for future positions. Due to the economy, Walgreens' hiring for the Distribution Center has been slower than anticipated. As a result, the number of individuals to be trained in the upcoming year is anticipated to be smaller than during the past year. Funding for the training comes from a combination of state bond funds (\$1.25 million) administered by the United Way of Connecticut and from a fee-for-service that will be paid by the state agencies and school systems making referrals to the program. We hired a consultant and counselor to administer the project and program referrals; their salaries are primarily funded through monies made available from the State Bond Commission.

Everyone Works Committee

The western region district director has continued to chair the Everyone Works Committee bringing community agencies and consumers together to discuss mechanisms for better access in the One Stop System.

National Employment Team (NET)

The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) is actively working with businesses, consumers and VR state agencies to develop a national VR-business network. The vision is to create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specializes in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations. The dual customer approach provides the following benefits to the customers (business, VR consumers and state VR agencies) of the national network:

- 1) Business has direct access to qualified applicants and the support services provided by the public VR system;
- 2) VR consumers have access to national employment opportunities and career development resources; and
- 3) VR agencies have a national system for sharing employment resources, best practices, and business connections.

Connecticut VR has taken an active role in developing business partnerships that will have a direct effect on the increased hiring of individuals with disabilities in Connecticut and VR consumers across the nation.

Walgreens is an example of a company that has both distribution centers and retail stores throughout the country. In developing best practices for the Walgreens distribution center in Connecticut, we contacted and worked with the VR staff in Anderson, SC.

The NET and the VR agencies have been working together in identifying large employers that have offices in multiple states. We have had numerous teleconferences and Web trainings to access these companies. In doing so, Connecticut has had hires in the following companies: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Wachovia, H&R Block, CVS, and Walgreens. This partnership with the CSAVR Business Net has proven to be a resource and a marketing component for the VR system, benefiting the VR consumer, VR counselor and businesses: a sure "win-win" for everyone.

Additional Challenges

*Management Information System:

The bureau is closer to replacing our antiquated WANG management information system. We are challenged to keep the WANG system in place until the new system is fully operational. The new system will be Web-based and easy for the staff to understand. The MIS Committee is diligently working with Libera, a private contractor to move from the testing and evaluation stage of the development of this new system to the implementation stage in FFY 2010.

Revenue Generation

BRS has additional financial resources primarily from grants written by the Connect to Work Center. This has allowed us to fund the salaries of seven CWIC counselors from grant funds. The challenge will be to find the financial resources to fund this valuable service to consumers when the grant ends. In addition, we have mentioned the need for more funds to serve transition students from grants or increased state and federal funding.

*Succession

The bureau anticipates losing approximately 21 staff due to the impending retirement incentive effective July 1, 2009. Next year will be a test to determine whether our five year plan for succession has successfully prepared staff to fill positions left vacant by the current retirement incentive. The succession plan has included career development training for managers so they have the tools necessary to talk to staff about their Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDPS). With the help of an outside consultant, the senior staff has a comprehensive plan to identify the competencies needed for the positions in the future as well as a road map to help replacement staff find the resources necessary to fulfill their duties. The next challenge will be to create a process where the development of goals included in the staffs' ISDPs are clearly linked to the available opportunities. Currently the process works reasonably well through discussions. The bureau hopes to develop a computerized process to ensure that it doesn't miss opportunities for staff to develop the skills they will need for future jobs.

Case Services Budget

Costs of Services

Title I Purchase of Services (POS) for FFY 2009 is projected to be approximately \$10 million. This amount is significantly lower than the FFY 2009 projections from a year ago when spending of \$11.5 million appeared likely. This is due in part to unexpected staffing issues that have decreased our capacity to expend funds at the level forecasted.

During 2009, the bureau undertook an analysis of purchased services expenditures and trends, in response to escalating POS costs which portended severe fiscal consequences in the coming years if left unchecked. The bureau identified three POS areas which appeared to be the primary drivers in the escalation of expenditures; purchase of hearing aids, home modifications and vehicle modifications. In examining the expenditures in these areas, it became apparent that inconsistencies existed throughout the agency in the interpretation of BRS policies in providing these types of services. We addressed the concern through the issuance of new policy guidance. The State Rehabilitation Council reviewed this guidance, staff was trained in the new guidance, and the public was invited to share input, as well.

Due to a variety of factors, including the uncertainty over staffing levels for next FFY and the availability of approximately of \$1.4 million of 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, it is difficult to project cost for the FFY 2010 period. These variables notwithstanding, the bureau projects a total POS of \$10,560,000 in FFY 2010. This includes an anticipated \$10 million in Title I expenditures and an estimated \$560,000 in ARRA POS expenditures.

The bureau maintains the following goals for managing our fiscal resources:

1. Optimize Delivery of VR Services
 - a. Maintain proper balance between staff & purchased services;
2. Provide VR services without interruptions
 - a. No Service stoppages or waiting list;
3. Maintain current Order of Selection (OOS)
 - a. Serve all Priority #1 and #2; and
4. Optimize Available Revenue
 - a. Program Income;
 - b. Re-allotment Funds;
 - c. Liquidating all available money (i.e., avoid lapsing money); and
 - d. Securing State funds for MIS Conversion and Infrastructure.

Technical Assistance Requested from RSA

We will continue to welcome technical assistance with:

1. Enhancing our collaboration with Independent Living Centers;
2. Generating parental and community support that will insure transition students from urban high schools successfully reach their employment goals;

3. Performance based contracting systems for Community Rehabilitation Providers; and
4. Increasing income for recipients of SSI and SSDI.

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Increasing Access through Supported Employment

Many of us have worked in BRS when the only employment choice for many individuals was to work in a sheltered environment. Our newer staff never has seen sheltered work as an option. All of our consumers use the strategy of supported employment work in integrated work settings and receive at least minimum wage. We are actively seeking additional ways to expand this program by using one of our strengths □ collaboration.

The goal for our Supported Employment program is to increase the numbers of consumers able to access supported employment services.

Supported Employment Programs are part of the menu of programs and services the Ongoing Supports Committee established in 2007. Business partners on this committee are building this menu by actively seeking our blended services options for providing supported employment services to consumers.

The focus in 2007 was on the new Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Model (released in the spring of 2008), along with other established employment services programs such as the Employment Opportunities Program administered by BRS. Other vocational services, supported employment programs, One-Stop employment programs and private Employment Networks under the Ticket program are involved in this statewide endeavor to coordinate ongoing employment services to mutually serve consumers.

Strategies

We used the following strategies to accomplish the goals for Supported Employment:

- a. Establish a menu of programs that can provide ongoing supports and services to consumers including the Ticket Program, and the Employment Opportunities Program;
- b. Develop the Partnership Plus/ Business Model to provide blended-funding employment supports to consumers;
- c. Develop Best Practices/ Evidenced Based Practices;
- d. Continue to seek additional avenues for long-term support for consumers that require supported

employment services;

e. Continue individually developed supported employment plans with consumers; and

f. Continue to reimburse Community Rehabilitation Providers at an hourly rate for their support for consumers using supported employment services.

Accomplishments

During FFY 2007, BRS provided supported employment services to 113 consumers. We provided 147 consumers with supported employment services during FFY 2008.

The number of individuals that joined the program in FFY 2007 quadrupled the number that join in FFY 2005. Our data show consumers continue to have greater access to supported employment services.

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2008.

Standards and Indicators

The bureau met all the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) standards and indicators in FFY 2008 except for the Standard for Self-Support (1.6). Our Project to address 1.6 is discussed below.

Projects to Increase the Self-Support of our Consumers RSA Standard and Indicator 1.6

Self-Support

The bureau has initiated several transition initiatives that will increase our success with assisting consumers to provide their own financial support. As stated previously, the bureau intends to increase the number of transition students with whom we work. Transition students are rarely supporting themselves when we meet them. Increasing our success with this population will also increase the percent of our consumers who provide their own support. The following information is about specific initiatives to accomplish this goal.

Case Conference Model for Students with Significant Physical Disabilities

The case conference model increases services to transition students in collaboration with Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) and its disability office. All counselors with students enrolled at the university attend this meeting to discuss services, employment, and individual needs.

Additionally we have partnered with SCSU to develop an internship preparation and linkage program so that all BRS students attending SCSU will have an internship and/or work experience at least one year prior to graduation.

Initiatives to Increase Self-Support for All Consumers

*Benefits Counseling

Benefits counseling is recommended to all consumers on benefits. Basic information can be provided by VR counseling staff. Triage is done so that the seven Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) are able to provide counseling to those who are likely to see changes in eligibility for a variety of state and federal benefit programs based on how much they plan to earn. Asset building tools and information on maximizing self sufficiency are provided to consumers as part of their counseling sessions. Under our new Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) award, there is a strong emphasis on prioritizing who needs individual benefits counseling sessions. By triaging, we can use our limited resources more effectively.

The WIPA award recommends that benefits counseling be done with a smaller number of people so that those who need greater supports can receive it. Our two new staff gradually increased the numbers of consumers they counsel. Because of staff changes and the new emphasis on continued support services, we have seen less people for intake than we did two years ago but are doing many more follow-up services

Additional Activities:

- a. All seven CWICs have been recertified, as required by the WIPA award.
- b. Quality control measure instituted:
 - 1) Consumer satisfaction survey for benefits counseling services showed an overall satisfaction rate of 4.8 out of 5; and
 - 2) Peer review is conducted every three months. This is used for both quality control and as a learning tool/sharing of best practices.
- c. Continued collaboration and training with state agencies, community providers, schools and BRS.
- d. There were 102 presentations done, reaching an estimated audience of 2,611 people.

Asset Building Workshops

CWICs provide Asset Building Workshops to assist consumers with mental illness learn skills to enhance their financial circumstances so they may get out of poverty.

Success in Improving Services to Minority Consumers -
RSA Standard and Indicator 2.1

*Minority Consumers

The bureau worked diligently to meet the RSA National Standard and Indicator 2.1 for FFY 2008 and as a result this goal was achieved. We ended FFY 2008 with a Minority Ratio of .84, which exceeds the national standard of .80. We have continued to closely monitor agency performance related to this measure and on April 1, 2009, our year-to-date (YTD) performance for the indicator was .80.

We continue to be pleased that our percentage of minority consumers (27.5%) is similar to the percentage of the minority population of our state (25%). We are also pleased that our hiring practices have resulted in diversity of our staff similar to or greater than the diversity of Connecticut. We currently have 29% of our staff from diverse backgrounds compared to a 25% non-white population of Connecticut.

Connecticut, like other states, has increased disparity between the rich and the poor. Many of

Connecticut's diverse citizens live in the poorest cities. As an example of this, we have included some census data from Waterbury that is one of the larger and poorer cities in Connecticut. Two zip codes within the city show a non-white population of 70.6 % and 64.4 % while the neighboring town of Watertown has 3.9% of the population that is non-white. The median household income of the two zip codes referenced for Waterbury is \$11,913 and \$31,118 while the median household income of neighboring Watertown is \$67,899. The median income for CT is \$56,617.

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09000.html>;
http://powerreporting.com/knight/ct_waterbury_republican-american.html.

BRS has embedded counselors in urban high schools with demographics similar to Waterbury, CT. We chose the urban schools because students in those schools have the greatest need for services and are from the most diverse cultures. The urban schools are also the most challenging because of the large number of students who drop out of school, the lack of parental involvement with transition students, and the poverty level of families attending our urban schools.

We have researched best practices from other vocational rehabilitation agencies and have implemented some of the methods such as increasing our contact with community organization, churches and faith-based organizations.

The bureau intends to provide increased training on assisting consumers from diverse backgrounds to develop small businesses. African-Americans currently own only 3.4% of the firms in Connecticut and only 3.1% of firms are owned by Hispanics. African-American and Hispanic are the two largest minority populations in Connecticut.

To meet the challenge of serving diverse consumers successfully in Connecticut we believe we must also address the cultural issues that keep the diverse consumers poor. That is a big challenge for a vocational rehabilitation program. We are fortunate to have the Connect to Work Center and Connect-Ability housed in our Central Office. These two initiatives address some of the systems issues that prevent people from working including medical coverage and transportation.

We have implemented the following "best practices" for serving minority consumers:

Urban Schools

We believe that we will increase our success with achieving the minority indicator and self-support by placing additional counselors in urban high schools.

*Transition Employment Plans

BRS has provided training to all counselors on using "dream goals" for our transition student for their employment plan. We are projecting that this approach will result in higher success rates with minority transition students and also for self-support.

Latino Initiatives

Our Latino counselors continue to work with community and faith-based organizations including Spanish American Merchants Associations (SAMA), local church projects, and Community Action Groups.

Latino counselors continue to conduct national research to find best practices within vocational rehabilitation for serving diverse consumers. They are currently determining if an approach used by Iowa VR would be applicable to Connecticut.

Regional Training

Regional district directors continue to provide training on serving minority consumers at their monthly staff meetings.

Native American Collaboration

Our Norwich/New London Community Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) worked with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation VR 121 Project on benefits counseling for tribal members.

*Increased Access to Benefits Counseling

Increase access for benefits counseling to minority consumers by hiring CWIC staff that speaks Spanish. Currently 28% of our CWICs can serve our Latino population in either Spanish or English.

Multilingual Staff

We believe that our multilingual staff is also important to serving consumers, including minority consumers, effectively. Current languages spoken by our staff include American Sign Language, Croatian, French, French Italian, Hindi, Patois, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tagalog. We hire interpreters to meet the communication needs of consumers that our staff cannot meet.

Performance System Tied to Standards

The bureau has implemented a new staff performance evaluation system that includes meeting the RSA standards and indicators, including self-support and minority indicator.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2008.

Use of Title 1 Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

In this section of our report on progress, we will update activities since our last state plan. The following tables lists Innovation and Expansion (I&E) projects. We have used a variety of funding for I&E projects, but the table includes only Title I funding.

Coding - The first number refers to the goals listed at the beginning of this attachment. The second number after the (.) refers to the strategy used to achieve this goal on the named project.

3.16 ABLE LIVES Public TV Series \$0

4.16 ARRA Stimulus Initiative \$0

2.12 Bridgeport Mental Health Transition Project \$31,190

4.16 Coaster Project \$0

2.10 Healthy and Ready to Work \$0

2. 3 Improving Employment Outcomes for SSI/SSDI Recipients \$3,289

- 2.11 Research Project □ Embedded Mental Health Counselors \$ 0
- 4.17 State Independent Living Council of CT (SILC) \$180,000
- 4.17 State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) \$ 24,350
- 2.11 Summer Workshops □ IL for Transition Students \$0
- 2.11 Youth Leadership Forum \$15,000
- 2. 3 Youth Scholarships \$5,000

Total funding for Innovation and Expansion \$258,829

Description of Innovation and Expansion Projects

The next section of this report provides additional information on the innovation and expansion projects funded through designated funds. This section also includes innovative projects that provide for expansion that was funded through Title 1 or other funding sources.

ABLE LIVES Public TV Series (Goal 3)

The Bureau has reported previously on the Emmy Award winning public TV series showing individuals working and living in their communities. The Bureau supported this TV series with previous I & E funding and technical assistance. We are pleased to report that the series is still available on the web. Additional vignettes were added recently on the benefits of community inclusion for individuals with disabilities and community members without disabilities. Please see the following website for further information. <http://www.ablelives.org/aliw/ep/1>

ARRA Stimulus Initiative (Goal 2)

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, BRS will receive \$2.8 million this year to create innovative strategies and systems change to improve employment outcomes for Connecticut residents with disabilities. BRS will collaborate with Connect-Ability, the Bureau of Education □ Services for the Blind (BESB), and the Department of Labor (DOL) to maximize the use of the state's allotment of ARRA funds dedicated to employment initiatives.

Outreach to Employers

Through this collaboration, 100,000 flyers were sent to employers in Connecticut listing the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Incentives such as On-the-Job Training and Tax Credits were featured on the one-page flyer. The results of the campaign are encouraging to date. We will report further on this initiative next year.

Joint Planning with BESB and BRS

Most of the counseling and consultant staff from the two VR agencies in Connecticut met March 19, 2009 to identify specific goals to increase employment for people with disabilities. The meeting was facilitated by staff from our regional Technical Assistance and Continuing Education program. The suggestions from BESB and BRS staff were grouped into five areas. BESB and BRS will coordinate their state plans to include goals addressing the following themes from this meeting:

- a. Partnerships;
- b. Customer Engagement/Readiness;
- c. Employer Engagement;

- d. Technological Savvy; and
- e. Vocational Rehabilitation Process.

Bridgeport Mental Health Transition Project (Goal 2)

Last year, the bureau signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Bridgeport School System, schools set in a mostly urban area, to serve consumers more effectively by providing additional support for transition students with mental illness who will be exiting Bridgeport high schools. BRS will provide vocational rehabilitation support to these students while they connect with adult services.

During the current year, the project has registered seven students in this after-school program. Services included travel training, tours of psychosocial programs for adults with mental illness, in addition to meeting Community Rehabilitation Providers and Community Work Incentive Specialists. In addition, the students were enrolled in a Wellness, Recovery, and Action Plan program that is a self-help program intended to teach the students how to manage their symptoms and teach them about recovery from their illness.

A major challenge encountered by this project was getting students willing to attend an after-school program. The Bridgeport School System finds the program beneficial and is considering incorporating it into its school day schedule. Moving this project to an in-school program will also make continuation of this project more likely.

*Coaster Project (Goal 4)

The Bureau gave coasters with the BRS logo to everyone at our 2007 annual meeting. The challenge to staff was to increase our contacts with employers by giving them the coaster featuring the toll-free BRS phone number and the slogan, "One Person Can Make a Difference. The Bureau devoted time during the 2008 Annual meeting to hear the various ways our staff used the coasters to connect with employers. The coasters provided an avenue to begin discussions with employers about hiring our consumers, conducting informational interviews, or offering On the Job Training (OJT) to BRS consumers. The conversations also increased the BRS counselors' knowledge about businesses in their community. Information from this project helped develop collaborative projects to increase our contacts with employers. The bureau director has personally trained staff on ways to develop OJT's for consumers. We were pleased that counselors used the coasters as one way to initiate contacts with employers that resulted in 70 OJT's during the past year.

Healthy and Ready to Work - Youth with Progressive Disabilities (Goal 2)

The Bureau received \$10,000 from the Connecticut Department of Health to improve services for youth with progressive disabilities. In addition to the Department of Health, the Bureau collaborated with the Department of Education's State Educational Resource Center (SERC) to provide training for transition staff from schools and BRS counselors on successful techniques for helping students with progressive disabilities assume responsibility for their own health care while at the same time starting

their career.

Improving Employment Outcomes for SSI and SSDI Recipients (Goal 2)

A new Innovation and Expansion project was initiated this year in our Southern Region to determine whether increased supports would increase employment outcomes for some of our consumers receiving SSI and SSDI. The supports were provided in tandem with VR services such as counseling, guidance, work evaluations, work interviews, short term training, on-the-job training, job placement and job coaching.

The specific goals of this I & E project are:

- a. To ensure consumers are engaged with BRS and employment related activities on a regular basis (at least once per week);
- b. To find solutions to the barriers interfering with employment;
- c. To increase successful closures of SSI and SSDI recipients by at least 10% (the current employment outcome rate in CT hovers around 40%);
- d. To maximize similar benefits and community collaborations; and
- e. To determine feasibility of marketing similar approaches to Employment Networks.

The pilot began as scheduled on October 1, 2008. Six referrals were submitted by counseling staff to launch the pilot. However, after team consultation on the referrals, only four of the six were designated as solid candidates for the pilot. One consumer not selected actually required vocational interventions as a precursor to entering the pilot. The second consumer was already employed and therefore not part of the target group.

Southeastern Employment Services (SES) has identified a lead vocational manager to work with consumers enrolled in the pilot while concurrently working with a job developer. During the initial months of the project (10/1 -2/09) SES has spent approximately 57.25 hours working with SSI and SSDI consumers on issues ranging from childcare to time management to help them get closer to securing employment. The total cost for the service was \$3,289.

Consumers have generally been engaged and cooperative with efforts toward restructuring their lives to help them to become successfully employed however no placements have occurred at this early point in the pilot as a result of the intervention.

At this point during the first year, the pilot concept appears to be a viable model to consider for Employment Networks. We will report on this project again next year.

Areas to improve include consumer selection, referral outline, and Community Rehabilitation Provider expectations. The Bureau will report on this project again next year.

Research Project on Embedded Mental Health Counselors (Goal 2)

The University of Connecticut was selected to measure the outcomes and effective practices of integrating vocational rehabilitation staff within the mental health treatment teams of three large

mental health agencies. The project design is based on Evidence-Based Practices, including the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. BRS staff was trained on the philosophy of Evidence-Based Practice during the previous two years of this project.

Three Bureau liaison counselors were co-located in early 2006 on mental health treatment teams to develop collaborative strategies for improving employment outcomes for shared consumers. In its role as project researchers, the University of Connecticut is measuring outcomes and effective practices for this integrated service delivery model. Initial results suggest a high level of satisfaction on the part of consumers and staff of both agencies, however further data analysis will occur during the final year (January 2009 - December 2010) of the research project. As of April 2009, 38 consumers had been enrolled in the project toward the goal of 50 by July 2009, when the data input period ends.

Between April and September of 2009, the counselor liaisons will work with their mental health counterparts to train staff in both systems on effective collaborative practices. Training for bureau staff is currently in the planning stages on the outcomes of this study. The bureau is considering implementing the Evidence-Based practices, using the employment setting as a place to receive support services rather than fixing all employment challenges prior to employment, with other consumer populations. The research data will be useful to determine whether this will become a promising rehabilitation practice for the Bureau.

Our three liaison counselors currently provide consultation to other counselors in their regions on successful approaches to providing employment support to individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

State Independent Living Council (SILC) (Goal 4)

The bureau continues to demonstrate its support for independent living services in Connecticut by funding the full resource plan of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) through I & E funds, currently at \$180,000 annually. This allows the bureau to direct all Title VII, Part B funds to support the implementation of goals enhancing independent living program delivery in Connecticut as outlined in the SPIL.

In spite of this level of support, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) was faced with significant challenges during the year which impacted the implementation of the SPIL. Both the Chairperson and the Executive Director resigned within several months of one another. During this same time period, the SILC reopened the 2007 - 2010 SPIL in order to provide increased resources to the independent living centers in light of declining fiscal and personnel resources. The amended SPIL for the remaining two years focuses on strengthening the existing network of centers in the state.

Further complicating the expenditure of Part B funds was an interpretation by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the federal regulations. This interpretation precluded BRS from subcontracting to the SILC to implement the initiatives identified in the SPIL, as had been the previous practice. All Part B expenditures must now go through the state procurement process which has resulted in delays, due in large part to these procedures.

One major undertaking by the SILC was to again financially support the Disability Expo, which occurred in Hartford in September. Over 800 individuals attended the event. The SILC distributed a

survey that enabled attendees to prioritize their top 10 disability issues and hosted a Candidate's Forum to discuss various disability agendas with representatives of state and national candidates.

In addition, the regional Centers for Independent Living held multiple planning sessions with regional staff from BRS to prepare for the very successful Summer Youth Workshops described in this report.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) (Goal 4)

BRS uses the innovation and expansion authority, as specified by the Rehabilitation Act, to support the functions of the State Rehabilitation Council. In 2008, the SRC collaborated with Advocacy Unlimited to host a conference on self-advocacy for youth at the Legislative Office building. The SRC Chair also participated in several national meetings and served on the Planning Committee for the National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils to launch the On-line Training Program for SRC members. However, restrictions on state spending have prohibited the SRC's ability to plan for similar endeavors and basic activities of operation. See Attachment 4.2(c) for more information on the SRC.

*Summer Workshops □ Independent Living (IL) for Transition Students (Goal 2)

Summer youth workshops began in our Southern region two years ago. The workshop participants are individuals with physical disabilities that have difficulties accessing information and need assistance solving issues about independent living. The workshops provide VR counselors with assessment information on their consumers.

The bureau is pleased to report that we met our goal of implementing workshops in all three regions with 41 participants, more than double the number of participants in the first year.

Feedback from the first three years of this project indicates benefits to both the consumer and the counselors. Consumer benefits include the following:

- a. Gaining information about important independent living issues that will impact employment;
- b. Increasing awareness of the relationship between independent living needs and employment goals;
- c. Meeting and interacting with adults who are working and managing independent living needs;
- d. Meeting and interacting with other young adults with similar needs; and
- e. Developing an independent living plan to incorporate into the Employment Plan

Benefits to BRS counselors included:

- a. Having an efficient way to provide information to multiple consumers with similar needs; and
- b. Having a cost effective opportunity to assess the following for multiple consumers:
 - 1) Ability to access appropriate transportation;
 - 2) Ability to direct a personal assistant;
 - 3) Ability to focus on tasks;
 - 4) Ability to participate;
 - 5) Technology needed to participate and contribute;
 - 6) Social skills;
 - 7) Stamina; and

8) Independent living plan development with support for counselors.

The information developed from this workshop during the three years will now be compiled into replicable models and posted on the BRS and Connect-Ability websites. www.brs.state.ct.us (BRS) and www.connect-ability.com (Connect-Ability).

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)

BRS is the major event sponsor for the Youth Leadership Forum contributing \$10,000 to support this event in FFY 2009. The SRC also contributed \$5,000 in FFY 2009. In addition, Department of Social Services and Bureau personnel help plan and staff the event. This annual forum hosts 40 high school juniors and seniors with physical and mental disabilities on the main campus of the University of Connecticut. YLF is an educational and motivational conference that is conducted in an intense four-day schedule. Throughout the training, small work groups explore personal leadership and career plans. Guest speakers, including successful individuals with disabilities, address such topics as disability rights laws, innovations in technology, leadership skills and resources at all levels.

Adults with disabilities, who have successfully maneuvered through many obstacles the participants encounter, serve as faculty and staff. Many other volunteers, some with disabilities, help make the program a success. After the four-day forum, YLF participants must achieve goals they establish in their team Community Action Leadership Plans. BRS and the Department of Education staff, representatives of the SRC, and former delegates helped develop and implement this program. BRS employees provide staff to the YLF and a BRS employee is a board member of the Youth Leadership Project, Inc., the YLF parent organization. BRS counselors also interview potential delegates to assist in the selection process.

Youth Scholarships (Goal 2)

The bureau funded two scholarships for Youth with Disabilities. Each scholarship was \$2,500. The Bureau also collaborated with the Governors Coalition for Youth with Disabilities by providing ten BRS staff to help judge all scholarship applications.

This screen was last updated on Aug 21 2009 1:48PM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2010 (submitted FY 2009)

Attachment 6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Program Status

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (the Bureau or BRS) is allocated \$255,000 annually for the Title VI, Part B Funds and expects to expend all of its allocation. The Bureau continues to focus on the quality service delivery system for the Supported Employment Services funding through collaborations with our state and local community rehabilitation service partners for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009. In previous years, attention has been specific to the areas of community rehabilitation provider (CRP) and vocational rehabilitation counseling staff training; establishing quality standards and minimum requirements of direct service staff; and reviewing the qualifications of the CRP vocational services Program Director. Consumer program participation increased as a result of these initiatives.

Coordination and Collaboration

Further, BRS is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The Bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Title VI, Part B funding to an appropriate ongoing employment support program. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong supported employment service program in this state.

In FFY 2009, the Bureau continued to explore a variety of funding options to ensure extended services to persons in the program beyond Title VI, part B. In FFY 2009, the Bureau enhanced the supported employment program by initiating Social Security's Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Program as an additional resource for consumers to engage in long-term employment supports. The Partnership Plus Program makes available to consumers a variety of long-term employment supports and in addition is helping to increase funding to providers of services. These initiatives will reach more individuals with disabilities not typically engaged in long-term employment supports and focuses on increasing employment and self sufficiency.

Current Goals

This foundation has guided the Bureau as it lays the framework for coordination of an ongoing employment services system with the federal supported employment services program. As documented in Attachment 4.11(e)(2), the Bureau has actively sought to increase the number of

consumers who are able to access a menu of ongoing employment services. The Bureau and its supported employment providers around the state are developing cooperative agreements, partnerships and models of employment services and supports for the diverse consumer population in Connecticut. The broad range of services and supports that are becoming available in different venues gives the state partners flexibility in administering programs and utilization of blended funding sources.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 Supported Employment definition emphasizes competitive work in an integrated employment setting for persons with the most severe disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability and who, because of the severity of the disability, need intensive support services or extended services in order to perform such work, inclusive of transitional employment for persons with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness.

It is within this context that supported employment services are determined on an individual basis. The collaborations between service providers and state stakeholders have allowed for the continuation of ongoing support services that will help to retain and increase employment options for individuals with disabilities.

Transition to Extended Services

As with all Bureau services, supported employment services will be designed and provided based on the individual needs of the consumer. The Bureau will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 18 months in length.

Future Plans

As BRS continues to utilize federal supported employment funding and other ongoing employment supports, a long-term employment tracking system is planned and will be in place when the new VR case management system is in operation in FFY 2010. As these supportive employment programs help to increase access to and retention of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, the state will be able to report on long-range successful employment outcomes for vocational rehabilitation consumers.

This screen was last updated on Jun 30 2009 3:35PM by Evelyn Knight

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number of this information collection is 1820-0500. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 25 hours per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data sources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information

collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4760. If you have any comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this form, write directly to: Carol Dobak, Chief of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program Unit, Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue S.W., PCP, Room 5014, Washington, D.C. 20202.