

# Human Resources Plan and the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

## Human Resources Plan

### Data System

The Bureau of Rehabilitative Services (BRS or the Bureau) maintains a computerized system to collect and analyze data regarding our need for qualified personnel and the staff's need for personnel development.

BRS can identify staff by the number and type of personnel currently providing vocational rehabilitation services in the following categories: employee job classification (type of position), years of experience, gender, age, disability, and race.

There are four major job classifications:

- Managers
- Consultants and District Directors
- Rehabilitation Supervisors and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- Fiscal and Clerical Support Staff

The Bureau has succeeded in hiring a culturally diverse staff as specified in the 1992 and 1998 Amendments, which we believe is one important component of serving culturally diverse consumers.

<b>BRS Staff</b>	<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>Minority</b>	<b>Minority %</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>Disability %</b>
Managers	2	1	50%	0	0
Consultants and District Directors	16	3	19%	1	6%
Supervisors and Counselors	81	25	31%	10	12%
Clerical and Fiscal	36	11	31%	11	31%
<b>Total</b>	135	40	30%	22	16%

<b>Comparison Data</b>	<b>Minority</b>	<b>Disability</b>
US Census Data CT *	22.5%	16%
CT BRS Consumers - 2005	26.5%	100%

\*<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09000.html>

### **Projection of Staffing Requirements for the Next Five-Years**

- The Bureau had reduced staff significantly in recent years due to projected increases in indirect costs, high salaries, high fringe rate, and the cost of retirement pay outs, the escalating cost of case services, and the replacement of the management information system.
- The Bureau received bond funds to replace the management information system. Indirect costs were less than originally projected. A cost containment plan, directed at minimizing wasteful and unnecessary spending has significantly reduced the cost of case services. Thus, the Bureau has been able to replace more staff than initially planned while maintaining sufficient funds for case services.
- We recently added two benefits counselors and six transition counselors (who will be housed in urban school districts). BRS has proposed adding three counselors to work with consumers with psychiatric disabilities. Together, this increased staff will allow the Bureau to more adequately assist underserved minority students with disabilities transitioning from secondary schools. BRS will also provide better services to consumers with psychiatric disabilities and counseling for consumers receiving benefits.
- The Bureau is currently evaluating the level of support staff to determine if we have enough in place given the recent expansion of the counseling staff and the implementation of a new Management Information System (MIS) system.
- We are also evaluating the cost and program needs of adding an additional manager and/or consultant during the next year.
- The Bureau would ideally have many more counselors. For instance, the additional six transition counselors still leave the Bureau with inadequate staff to serve all youth with significant disabilities in Connecticut. Connecticut has 169 towns, most of which have their own school system. Current professional counselors may be able to adequately serve students with significant disabilities from the smaller schools. However, youth with disabilities in our larger inner cities will not be served effectively, even with the addition of the six transition counselors. The Bureau would need at least another 12 counselors to serve this population adequately.
- As previously mentioned, we intend to add three more counselors to increase our ability to provide services for consumers with psychiatric disabilities in the next 12 to

24 months. We doubt that the three additional counselors will be sufficient to provide the individual service consumers with psychiatric disabilities need to achieve success with employment. We project an additional three counselors would more adequately address the employment support for persons with psychiatric disabilities.

- The Bureau projects a dramatic increase in the number of consumers with Autism Spectrum Disorder. An additional five counselors would help us provide services to this population.

The projections for the staff needed to serve all persons with significant disabilities are a conservative estimate. However, the Bureau does not have sufficient funds to implement this conservative plan. The Bureau will continue to refill all existing 72 counseling positions. The three additional counselors to work specifically with individuals with psychiatric disabilities will bring the current number of counselors to 75. We will address other needs for staff when funds are available. We will seek additional funds through grants or other state or federal sources whenever possible.

In summary, BRS plans to add three additional counselors to serve consumers with psychiatric disabilities. The Bureau has added one vocational rehabilitation supervisor position and six transition counselor positions. In addition we need:

- One additional Manager and/or Consultant position;
- Two-five additional support staff positions;
- Twenty additional counselor positions; and
- Other staff positions would be needed to supervise and support the additional counseling positions.

### **Recruitment**

The Bureau can usually recruit an enough candidates with a Rehabilitation Counseling Major or related Master's degrees. The Bureau has traditionally received two hundred applicants for every counselor position. We offer the highest salary for vocational rehabilitation counselors in our region. The challenge has been finding counselors that ensure our workforce represents the diversity of our state. In addition, the Bureau has had difficulty recruiting counselors with a rehabilitation Master's degree who are also skilled in American Sign Language. We will take 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 minorities students will be targeted to generate interest in rehabilitation counseling as a vocation;
- Increase the number of graduate students who intern with BRS; and
- Increase the number of consumers we help to go into the rehabilitation counseling profession.

The Bureau will hire counselors at the Bachelor's level when we are unable to find acceptable candidates at the Master's level. We will require that the Bachelor's Degree be in a related field that includes:

- Psychology
- Social Work
- Social Science or
- A degree deemed acceptable by the Bureau.

For the instances when the Bureau will be required to hire 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 or a 60-credit Master's degree will be required within five years of the hiring date. The Bureau will require the colleges or Universities to be CORE accredited or to be in the process of receiving full CORE accreditation (Salve Regina and Central Connecticut State University).

### **Comprehensive System of Staff Development (CSPD) Requirements**

The Bureau embraces the CSPD process to ensure continuous organizational development, continuous improvement of the competencies of all staff and especially vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors and supervisors. All counselors and supervisors who were employees when the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development was initiated currently meet the CSPD requirements. Recently hired counselors will meet the CSPD requirements within the Bureau's previously stated time frames. The Bureau also seeks continuous improvements in service-delivery, the continuation of a professional level VR staff that can consistently achieve quality employment outcome as specified in the Rehabilitation Act and promised in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In addition, we continually seeks ways to grow so that we 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.

The Bureau has modified the previous plan for hiring new staff so that supervisors and counselors continue to meet the highest standards for Comprehensive System of Staff Development (CSPD).

VR supervisors and VR 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.

The modified requirements for CSPD which are based more closely on the standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors follow:

1. Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (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 or, if necessary;

Counselors or vocational rehabilitation supervisors hired with a CORE accredited Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification meet CSPD at the time of hire.

The Bureau will pay for and require the following graduate courses for new counselors or supervisors with a related Master's degree that may not meet CSPD requirements at the time of hire.

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 standard 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.

- Assessment
- Occupational Information or Job Placement
- Medical or psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities
- 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

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

- **The Connecticut Educational Standards for Rehabilitation Counselors are based on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors.**  
The Bureau 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 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. Bureau 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 does provide training at no cost, and offer CEU's, which will count toward the ongoing training requirements by CRC as well as the National Certified Counselor (NCC) and Connecticut's Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)

- In addition, new counseling and supervisory staff participant in an extensive series of trainings provided through our in-service training grant.
- The Bureau staff attends multiple trainings during the year. The trainers include current research from universities, Institute for Rehabilitation Issues and applicable rehabilitation journals during their presentations to staff. The Bureau also sends staff to training conducted by the Regional Continuing Education Program for Region 1 where new strategies based on research are shared with vocational rehabilitation staff in the New England Region.

### **Graduate Education**

There are several Institutions of Higher Education that train Bureau counseling personnel in close proximity to Connecticut. These institutions include:

- Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT (pending CORE accreditation)
  - 18 students enrolled; 18 graduates
- Springfield College, Springfield, MA – CORE accredited
  - 46 students enrolled; 18 graduates
- Assumption College, Worcester, MA – CORE accredited
  - 65 students enrolled; 20 graduates
- Salve Regina, Providence, RI (pending full CORE accreditation)
  - 25 students enrolled; 2 graduates
- The Bureau currently has six counselors who do not meet the CSPD requirements specified in our state plan. All six counselors are progressing at the agreed on schedule to fulfill this requirement. The Bureau is paying for their tuition and fees in addition to allowing 3.5 hours per week to attend classes.

### **Retention**

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

- Primarily, the Bureau has been successful with hiring staff that are committed to the importance of the work we do.
- Staff values the many chances for continued in-service training. In-service training is available to staff at all levels. Each staff member is invited to have an Individual Staff Development Plan to ensure individual staff development as well as the Bureau's continuous improvement in helping consumers reach their goals for employment and independence.
- In addition, the salaries are high; benefits are good, many staff has a thirty-five hour workweek, in addition to the choice of working a four-day week.
- Recent golden handshakes resulted in many opportunities for current staff promotions to other positions in the Bureau.

## **Staff Development**

The Bureau 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. Our in-service training is available to all staff.

The Bureau planned staff development based on a multi-faceted comprehensive needs survey. The Bureau determined training goals through:

- Quantitative needs survey of all supervisors, counselors and support staff;
- Regional New England Customer Service Survey;
- State Plan Public Hearings (2004- 2006);
- Survey of Community Rehabilitation Program staff;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;
- Training Committee; and
- Management reports, Manager, District Director, Consultant, and Supervisory feedback.

## **Current Initiatives linking CSPD of all staff with the In-Service Training Program:**

- **Retention** –A new initiative is in process to create Individual Staff Development Plans with all employees by March 30, 2006. The purpose of 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, which we believe, 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 our plan for succession.

- **Succession Planning** – The Bureau has initiated a plan to prepare for another exodus of staff due to probable retirements in the next five years. Once again, the Bureau could lose up to 20% of its staff. It is crucial to build the bench strength necessary in the younger staff so they will be able to assume new positions within five years. The succession plan has included career development training for managers to ensure they had the tools necessary to talk to their staff about their Individual Staff Development Plans. With the help of a consultant, the senior staff has begun a comprehensive plan to identify the competences 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.
  
- **Leadership and Capacity Building** – In addition to the Individual Staff Development Plans which have leadership and capacity building as a main focus the Bureau has provided all first line supervisors with training in supervision and leadership that will help them in the current job as well as any future job. Part of our plan for succession is to identify staff that can partner with existing staff to learn skills they can use both now and in the future. Examples include:
  - Supervisors co-training with a consultant who provides significant training for staff.
  - Staff who make presentations to their regional staff meetings about training they have attended.
  - Training committee or Community Rehabilitation Providers Committee members assuming leadership roles for training, policy development, and communication with other staff.
  
- **Assistive Technology:** The Bureau helped create and is a member of the New England Assistive Technology Marketplace (NEAT MARKETPLACE). The Bureau held a recent training at the Neat Marketplace so staff could learn 10-12 of the most useful computer technologies available in the market today in addition to touring the NEAT Marketplace to see other high-and low technology solutions available for consumers.
  - The in-service training grant also provides opportunities for individual staff to access training that the NEAT MARKETPLACE provides.
  - The Bureau has a Consultant who is Director of the Connecticut Technology Project. She will also provide training and consultation for Bureau Staff.
  - All new staff and supervisors participated in an in-service training at the Easter Seal Mobility Center; Connecticut's state of the arts center for evaluating a consumer's ability to operate a motor vehicle after a disability has created a barrier to driving.
  - Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.
  
- **Current Research:** One of our challenges is serving consumers from diverse backgrounds. One of our counselors took a graduate course to learn current research on providing services for consumers from diverse backgrounds. She will present some of

the information from her research to counselors in our three regions. We plan to use the information gained from this research for further data analysis on our current caseloads so we can benchmark progress with this population for the next five-years.

- We are using current research on the Adolescent Brain to guide our transition counselors in their new assignments in the school systems.
- We offered thirteen-week training in Medical and Psychology Aspects of which included current research on most of the disabling conditions included in this series.
- The Bureau continually analyzes all consumer data to identify areas where we need to increase training or vary approaches. Areas of special interest include transition students, consumers with psychiatric disabilities, consumers with Autism Spectrum Disorder, consumers with felony convictions.
- **Informed Choice:** We are building on our initiative last year of re-training all staff on eligibility, plan development and consumer choice, by providing several in-service trainings on effective methods of implementing consumer choice with consumers who have psychiatric disabilities including persons with Personality Character Disorders.

### **Affirmative Action Plan**

BRS operates under an Affirmative Action Plan of the Connecticut Department of Social Services. 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:

1. Interpreter services for persons with hearing impairments
2. Reader, Braille, large print, or oral format for persons who are visually impaired as needed
3. An architecturally accessible training site
4. Personal care assistants for those requiring this service.

### **Consumer**

The Bureau's Integrated Client Information System (ICIS) maintains data that allow computing the ratio of personnel to consumer's served. Last year, the Bureau received permission to replace our antiquated system that consolidates client and fiscal data and generates both historical and current reports in a variety of formats and across many variables. The new system was delayed but it will be in place in 12-18 months. The new Windows-based system will replicate the functions of our current system as well as provide the Bureau with the capacity to transition to an electronic case management environment. Based on similar changes in other states, we expect counselors to have more face-to-face time with consumers.

The current systems monitor our Human Resource Plan by analyzing available and projected resources; projected service needs for persons with disabilities, and changes in organizational structure, service delivery methodologies, and to use for creating adequate staffing patterns.

**Ratio of personnel to consumer's served:**

- As of March 1, 2006, the Bureau has 135 employees
- As of March 1, 2006, the Bureau has 4,719 consumers
- Therefore, the ratio of all staff (including our new staff) to consumers is one staff person to 35 consumers (1:35). The ratio of staff by job category is as follows:

Managers:	2:2360
Consultants:	13:363
Regional Directors	3:1573
Counselors	72:66
Supervisors	9:524
Clerical	32:147
Fiscal	4:1,180
- The Bureau entered the 2005 FFY with sixty-six (66) counselor positions. During the year authorization was sought and granted to expand to seventy- two (72), with the addition of six (6) new positions to focus on the transition from school to work. There has also been continued turnover of counseling staff due primarily to staff leaving to pursue other opportunities within the Bureau, as well as one (1) retirement. At the time of this writing, four (4) positions remain vacant. The Bureau is currently interviewing to fill all vacant positions. The Bureau has fifty-eight counselors that have completed six months of training and are considered counselors with active caseloads. The average caseload size for the fifty-eight active counselors as of March 1, 2006 was eighty-two (82). The average caseload size will be reduced once the newest counselors complete their initial training.
- The Bureau will have adequate staff to serve our existing consumers once the newest staff completes their initial training.

**Serving Culturally Diverse Consumers:** The Bureau will use funds from their five-year in-service training grant to help fund a collaborative conference this year on Latinos Breaking Barriers through Multi-Cultural Awareness. The Bureau's in-service grant also allows us to provide several trainings during the year that focus on the culture of origin of our consumers. The trainings this year include deaf culture in addition to the conference on breaking barriers.

The Bureau does not serve consumers from minority backgrounds with the same success as the non-minority culture. We have 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. Our in-service training will provide a major training for staff during each of the five years of our current grant.

The Bureau has succeeded in hiring a culturally diverse staff as specified in the 1992 and 1998 Amendments, which we believe is one important component of serving culturally diverse consumers.

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3. An architecturally accessible training site; and
4. Personal care assistants for those requiring this service.

### **Communications 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, appropriate modes or in native languages. Approximately 10 percent of the current staff is bilingual in English and Spanish. We can also hire interpreters in most other languages. Each district has rehabilitation counselors for the deaf (RCD) on staff to communicate with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Bureau hires full-time interpreter assistants for its rehabilitation counselors for the deaf who are in need of this accommodation. The Bureau also contracts interpreter services through the Connecticut Commission on the Deaf 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. The Bureau does serve consumers who are both deaf and blind if they communicate with American Sign Language. When necessary we provide Braille materials for consumers or staff as needed. The Bureau's goal is to provide any communication support necessary for staff or consumers with disabilities.

### **Coordination of the CSPD and In-Service Training**

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

Collaborative initiatives for this year include several joint trainings proposed by the consultant representing the Department of Education and included in the Bureau's In-Service Training Grant for 2005-2010.

Another example of the collaboration between the two departments is the initiation of a task force to help students with significant disabilities transition from school to careers. *See the Innovation and Expansion section of the plan.*

**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 and funded by the in-service training grant is that we have highly qualified staff to serve our consumers' employment and independent living needs. This state plan references a few of the training programs designed to provide quality services for our consumers. As an indication of the amount of training available, the Bureau provided 127 trainings to an unduplicated 1915 staff count during the 2005 reporting period for the in-service training grant.

**The State Rehabilitation Council** will review and comment on attachments to our state plan following the public meeting.

Information and language in this plan attachment has been taken in part from:

Achieving Employment Outcomes Through VR Counselors Who Meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Requirements, 25<sup>th</sup> Institute on Rehabilitation Issues.  
IRI Prime Study Group 25<sup>th</sup> Institute on Rehabilitation Issues 1999  
University of Arkansas, Region VI Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program  
P.O. Box 1358, Bldg. #35  
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71902  
501 623-7700

Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification  
Application Requirements  
1835 Rohlwing Road, Suite E  
Rolling Meadows, Illinois 60008 U.S.A.  
847-394-2104  
<http://www.crc certification.com/>

Census data: \*<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09000.html>