

DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

In July of 2012, Public Act 12-1 created an independent agency named the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). DORS provides a range of services to help Connecticut citizens with disabilities to live and learn independently and to work competitively.

CORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In support of its mission, the Department provides a wide range of services to individuals with disabilities, children, families and individuals who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. Our programs, policies and practices are designed to promote employment, independence, equal access and self-sufficiency.

SUMMARY OF CORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

DORS administers legislatively authorized programs, as well as a number of federal programs and other grants. The agency programs are consolidated into three bureaus, and a brief summary of the programs follows under the applicable bureau.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Rehabilitation Support Programs
- Disability Determination Services
- Independent Living Program
- Assistive Technology Program
- Driver Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities
- Counseling Unit for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Bureau of Education Services for the Blind

- Adult Services
- Children's Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Business Enterprises
- Worker's Rehabilitation

Bureau of Organizational Support

- Interpreting Unit

BUREAU OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-612 and 17b-750a through 17b-666

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Vocational Rehabilitation program administers the federal Rehabilitation Act for eligible clients by directly providing and coordinating a broad scope of services to enable the achievement and maintenance of integrated, competitive employment.

Program Description

The Vocational Rehabilitation program administers the federal Title I Vocational Rehabilitation and Title VI Supported Employment programs of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The program serves eligible consumers by assisting them to prepare for, obtain and retain integrated competitive employment. The program directly provides and coordinates a broad scope of services including but not limited to vocational counseling, community based rehabilitation services, adaptive home and vehicle modifications, prosthetics and assisted listening devices and various forms of educational and vocational training. This program also assists employers seeking qualified candidates for employment.

REHABILITATION SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Section 17b-655 and 17-650a through 17b-666

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Rehabilitation Support Programs are a compilation of federal grants and a legislatively authorized program that provide services and resources complimentary to, but not allocable to, those offered by other core programs within the Department. Through collaboration and coordination of efforts and funding, this program offers a technical assistance center that strives to reduce barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities by assisting key stakeholders and employers in navigating Connecticut's employment system.

Program Descriptions

The **Connect-Ability Program** continues to strengthen and market Connect-Ability, an initiative designed to bring Connecticut employers together with job seekers with disabilities. The cornerstone of the initiative is a technical assistance center designed to meet the needs of employers and job seekers alike. A toll-free number (1-866-844-1903) provides access to someone who can help a caller navigate the service delivery system, and a website (www.connect-ability.com) organizes information on a variety of topics relative to disability and workplace diversity. The Connect-Ability program has also created a Distance Learning platform with a variety of online training modules. The modules are comprised of various topics to help job seekers with disabilities and will be the first in the state that are fully accessible and free of charge.

The **Connect to Work Program** provides a single access point for information about the impact of wages on federal and state benefits. Benefits specialists provide comprehensive benefits analysis summaries to assist individuals with disabilities maximize income by working and using federal, state and community resources appropriately to enable sustained employment and increased self-sufficiency. Counseling is offered directly to individuals as well through workshops designed for Social Security beneficiaries and professional staff who serve them.

The **Employment Opportunities Program** enables individuals with the most significant disabilities to engage in competitive employment by providing funding for long-term supports in order to maintain competitive employment. The long-term supports are provided on a contractual basis by community rehabilitation providers.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-650a(b) and 17b-651a

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

This Program works in cooperation with the Social Security Administration to determine whether the state's applicants for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income meet the federal disability requirements.

Program Description

This program is responsible for making timely and accurate determinations about whether an individual meets the federal criteria for disability or blindness. Disability examiners obtain medical and psychological information, arrange for consultative examinations (CE) to obtain additional information, analyze medical and non-medical information, and make disability determinations for individuals applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-613 through 17b-615 and 17b-657

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

This program supports centers for independent living that are designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities. The centers provide an array of independent living services, including the core services of information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, and individual and systems advocacy, designed to promote the independence, productivity, and quality of life of at least two hundred and fifty persons with disabilities annually.

Program Description

In addition to the legislatively authorized Independent Living Program, DORS also administers Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Through this program comprehensive independent living services are provided to persons with significant disabilities. This objective is achieved via contracts with Connecticut's five community-based independent living centers (ILCs). The Department also contracts with the State Independent Living Council and oversees the administration and delivery of the federally mandated State Plan for Independent Living.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-661 and 17b-650a through 17b-666

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

Assistive Technology (AT) helps individuals with disabilities increase or maintain their independence. The statewide Assistive Technology Act program, also known as the Connecticut Tech Act Project, helps to ensure that individuals with disabilities have informed choice about which AT device and/or service is right for them, provides information on funding sources and helps to maximize funds for individuals and entities through the use of AT lending and recycling programs.

Program Description

This program serves to increase independence and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technology devices and services for use at work, school or for community living. Services include guidance and consultation; resource and information services; an alternative financing program to help individuals and families purchase equipment; four (4) AT device demonstration sites across the state; AT recycling and reutilization programs; AT device lending, as well as training and technical assistance.

DRIVER TRAINING PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Section 14-11b

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

This program is responsible for providing training services to any qualified permanent Connecticut resident who requires special equipment to operate a motor vehicle.

Program Description

This program provides driver training and determines special equipment requirements for people with physical disabilities who wish to obtain a Connecticut driver's license.

COUNSELING UNIT FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-650a and 46a-27 through 46a -33

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

To increase self-sufficiency, employability and independence of individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing through the provision of counseling services.

Program Description

The Counseling Unit provides counseling related to special language, communication, and socio-economic problems unique to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. The program seeks to collaborate with other state and local community agencies to create team approaches in service provision.

BUREAU OF EDUCATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND**CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Section 10-295(a) and (b)

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Children's Services Program provides specialized training, adaptive materials and services to children who are legally blind, visually impaired or deaf and blind to promote successful integration into educational, social, recreational and vocational settings.

Program Description

Certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired provide specialized training and consultation to classroom and special education teachers, parents, paraprofessionals and local school district staff. Mobility Instructors provide training in safe travel techniques in the school and community. Rehabilitation staff provides training in activities of daily living and utilization of adaptive technology devices. The program maintains a full-scope lending library of Braille and large print textbooks and materials and provides adaptive aids for the vision-related educational needs of the children served by the bureau. Direct services to students include Braille instruction, independent living skills training, and transition school-to-work activities.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-297 and 10-306 through 10-309.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program administers the federal Rehabilitation Act for eligible clients who are legally blind by directly providing and coordinating a broad scope of services to enable the achievement and maintenance of integrated, competitive employment.

Program Description

Clients of the program work with vocational rehabilitation counselors to develop individualized employment plans that identify career goals and the services necessary to achieve these goals. Through the utilization of a myriad of services such as post-secondary education, skills training, rehabilitation technology, low vision, and independent living training, clients acquire marketable vocational skills. Specialized job retention services to clients and employers assist individuals who are employed at the time of vision loss to receive specialized training and adapted equipment to enable successful continuation of employment.

ADULT SERVICES

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-295(c) through 10-295(e), 10-297 and 10-298.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Adult Services Program is responsible for providing specialized social, educational and rehabilitation services that enable eligible clients of the agency to achieve and maintain the highest level of independence and productivity in daily living activities. This program also serves as the single point of intake for all agency services and coordinates a volunteer services program for clients and in support of activities performed by the bureau.

Program Description

Social workers issue certificates of legal blindness for property/income tax purposes and provide counseling and referral to support services within the bureau and to community based organizations. Rehabilitation Teachers assist clients to increase independence in personal and home management, leisure time activities and communications. Orientation and Mobility Instructors teach safe community travel techniques and provide long white canes for use and identification. The program also coordinates volunteer services to assist clients with activities of daily living. The **Deaf Blind Program**, which is also administered through the Adult Services program, provides for specialized community inclusion activities through third party vendors. Public education programs are offered to senior centers and other community providers to increase awareness and access to agency services.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Section 10-303.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides entrepreneurial opportunities for adults who are legally blind to operate businesses on federal, state and municipal properties to achieve financial independence and career success.

Program Description

The BEP is responsible for the development of high-quality business ventures for participants who desire to become entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs derive full profits from the operation of businesses that range from gift shops to full service cafeterias in federal, state and municipal locations. Entrepreneurs receive training in business management and follow-up services once placed at a location. The program is funded entirely through revenues from vending machines installed at municipal, state and federal locations.

WORKER'S REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Chapter 568, Sections 31-275 through 31-355.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

Worker's Rehabilitation Services offers employment retraining to permanently injured workers who are unable to return to their former employment.

Program Description

This program provides rehabilitation services to individuals who have been injured on the job and are eligible for worker's compensation. Services are intended to help the individual return to gainful employment and might include evaluation, aptitude testing, vocational counseling, job seeking skills training, on-the-job training or formal training.

BUREAU OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Each of department's Bureaus is supported by the Bureau of Organizational Support. This Bureau provides an administrative infrastructure that supports all programs administered by the department. These supports include administration of the department's daily operations, as well as oversight of strategic planning for the agency, budget development and financial management, general facility and resource support, administrative data processing and telecommunications operations, statistical reporting, affirmative action, human resources, inventory control, contract administration and procurement. This Bureau also administers a Sign Language Interpreter Services program to increase access for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER SERVICES

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-650e, 46a-33a and 46a-33b

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

Interpreting services make it possible for the residents of Connecticut who have a hearing disability to obtain equal communication access within the community.

Program Description

This program provides Certified Interpreting Services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in situations involving the person's legal and constitutional rights, health, safety, employment, educational opportunities and personal needs. Numerous state and municipal agencies, employers, private institutions and other individuals contract with this program for the services of an interpreter.

Position Counts by Program Totals as of 1-4-2013

	Filled	Vacant	Total Positions
31002 Disabled Driver Training Program	3	0	3
51002 Disability Determination Services	107	28	135
51003 Rehabilitation Support Programs	2.08	0	2.08
52008 Assistive Technology	1.5	0	1.5
52009 Vocational Rehabilitation - General	152.62	12	164.62
52010 Independent Living	0.3	0	0.3
52011 Counseling Deaf and Hearing Impaired	3	0	3
Totals	269.5	40	309.5